

Man and The Holy Quran



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Chapter 1

Man and the Holy Qur'an

According to Islamic conception man has a wonderful story. The man of Islam is not merely a 'biped homo erectus', who speaks and has wide nails. From the viewpoint of the Holy Qur'an, this being is too profound and too mysterious to be defined in such a simple way. The Holy Qur'an has at one and the same time lauded and disparaged him.

It has praised him very highly, but it has also slighted him in the most disparaging terms. It has described him as superior to the heavens, the earth and the angels, but at the same time has also declared that he is inferior even to the Devil and the beasts.

The Holy Qur'an is of the opinion that man is a being who has enough power to control the entire world and put the angels to his own service, but he often falls to the lowest ebb. It is man who takes decision about himself and determines his final destiny. We begin with the merits of man as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an.

Merits of Man

(i) Man is the vicegerent of Allah on the earth:

The day Allah wanted to create man, He intimated the angels of His intention. "They said: 'Will You put on the earth one who will make their mischief and will shed blood?. He said. 'I know what you do not know.'" (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:30)

"It is He who has appointed You vicegerent on the earth and exalted some of you in rank above others, so that He may test you by means of what he has given you." (Surah al-An'am, 6:165)

(ii) Of the entire creation man has the highest capacity to acquire knowledge:

"He taught Adam all the names (all the realities of things). Then He presented those things to the angels and said- 'Tell Me the names of those if what you say is true'. They said: 'Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except that which You have given us. (We can learn nothing, except that which You have taught us direct). Then Allah said to Adam: 'Tell them their names' ' and when he had told them their names, He said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the heavens and the earth? (I know what you do not know at all). And I know what you disclose and what you hide'." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:31 - 33)

(iii) Man's nature is such that he intuitively knows that there is one Allah. Any disbelief or doubt is an abnormality and a deviation from real human nature.

"When the children of Adam were still in the loins of their fathers, Allah creatively made them testify His existence." (Surah al-A'raf, 7:172) "So set your face resolutely for religion. That is the nature framed by Allah in which He has created all men." (Surah ar-Rum, 30:30)

(iv) Besides the material elements existing in the inorganic matter, plants and animals, there in the nature of man exists a Divine and angelic element also. Man is a mixture of what is natural and what is extra-natural, of what is material and what is not material, of body and soul:

"Who made all things good. And He began the creation of man from clay. Then He made his seed from a draught of despised fluid. Then He fashioned him and breathed into him of His spirit." (Surah as-Sajdah, 32:7 - 9)

(v) The creation of man is well-calculated and not accidental. Man is a chosen being:

"Then his Lord chose Adam, relented towards him and guided him." (Surah Ta Ha 20:122)

Man has an independent and free personality. He is a trustee appointed by Allah and has a mission and a responsibility. He is required to

rehabilitate the earth with his effort and initiative, and to choose between prosperity and misery:

"We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. On the other hand man assumed it. Surely he has proved a tyrant and a fool." (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:72)

"We created man from a drop of thickened fluid to test him. Therefore We made him hearing, knowing. Surely We have shown him the way to be either grateful or disbelieving. (He is free to go either the straight way that We have shown him, and prosper, or be ungrateful and deviate from it)." (Surah ad-Dahr, 76:2 - 3)

(vii) Man enjoys a dignity and nobility. Allah has made him superior to many of His creations. Man feels his real self only when he realizes his dignity and nobility and regards himself above every kind of meanness, bondage and lewdness:

"Surely We have honoured the children of Adam. We have put the land and the sea under their control, given them sustenance and have exalted them above many of those whom We have created" (Surah Bani Israil, 17:70)

(viii) Man has been endowed with a sense of moral insight. He knows what is good and what is evil by means of a natural inspiration:

"By the soul of man and Him who perfected it and inspired it with the knowledge of vice and virtue." (Surah ash-Shams, 91:7 - 8) (ix) Man does not feel satisfied with anything except the remembrance of Allah. His desires have no end. He soon gets fed up with anything that he gets or achieves. It is only his attachment to Allah that can satisfy him:

"Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest!" <(Surah al-Ra'd, 13:28)

"Man, you strive hard to get closer to your Lord, and so you will finally meet Him." (Surah al-Inshiqaq, 84:6)

(x) All the good things of the earth have been created for man.

"He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:29)

"He has made subservient to you (men) whatsoever is in the heavens and in the earth." (Surah Jathiyah, 45:13)

Hence, man has a right to make a lawful use of all things.

(xi) Man has been created to worship his Lord alone and to take orders from Him. Hence it is his duty to obey the commands of Allah:

"I created the jinn and mankind only so that they might worship Me." (Surah al-Zariyat, 51:56)

(xii) Man cannot find himself except by worshipping and remembering his Lord. If he forgets his Lord, he forgets himself, and does not know who he is, what for he is, what he should do and where he should go:

"Do not be like those who forgot Allah, and therefore He caused them to forget themselves." (Surah Hashr, 59:19)

(xiii) When man leaves this world and the curtain of body which screens his soul, is removed, many realities which are hidden now are disclosed to him:

"We have removed the veil from your eyes, and so your vision will now be sharp and strong." (Surah Qaf, 50:22)

(xiv) Man does not exert himself for material gains only. To secure the material necessities of life is not his sole motive. He often moves and stirs up for the sake of higher objectives. It is possible that all his efforts be confined to seeking the pleasure of his Creator:

"O well-contented soul! Return to your Lord well-pleased, well-pleasing." (Surah al-Fajr, 89:27 - 28)

"Allah has promised the believers, both men and women, gardens underneath which rivers flow and in which they shall abide. (He has promised them) nice dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. What is more, Allah

shall be pleased with them. That is the supreme triumph." (Surah Tawbah, 9:72)

Hence, from the viewpoint of the Holy Qur'an man is a being chosen by Allah to be His vicegerent on the earth. He is semi-angelic and semi-material being. He is instinctively conscious of Allah. He is free, independent, holding a Divine trust, responsible for himself and the world. He controls nature, the earth and the heavens. He is inspired with good and evil.

His existence begins with weakness and proceeds towards strength and perfection. Nothing can satisfy him except the remembrance of Allah. His intellectual and practical capacity is unlimited. He is endowed with inherent dignity and honour. Often his motives have no material aspect. He has been given the right to make a lawful use of the gifts of nature.

But in all cases he is responsible to his Lord.

Chapter 2

Demerits of Man

At the same time the Holy Qur'an has strongly reproached and censured man. It says that:

"He has proved a tyrant and a fool." (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:72)

"Surely he is very ungrateful." (Surah al-Hajj, 22:66)

"When he thinks that he is self-contented, he revolts." (Surah al-'Alaq, 96:7)

"Man is very hasty." (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:11)

"When misfortune befalls man, he prays to Us, reclining on his side, standing or sitting. But as soon as We have relived him of his suffering, he passes on as if he never invoked Us in connection with his affliction." (Surah Yunus, 10: 12)

"Man has always been very grudging." (Bani Israil, 17:100)

"Man is more contentious than anything else." (Surah al-Kahf, 18:54)

"Man has been created impatient - fretful, when evil befalls him, and when good befalls him grudging." (Surah al-Ma'arij, 70:19 - 20)

Chapter 3

Is Man By Nature Good or Bad?

What conclusion can we draw from all this? Is man from the viewpoint of the Holy Qur'an good and bad simultaneously, and not only that but extremely good and extremely bad at the same time. Is man two-natured? Is one half of him light and the other half darkness? How is it that the Holy Qur'an on the one hand praises him so highly and on the other denounces him so badly?

The fact is that the Holy Qur'an does not praise and censure man because he is a two-natured being and one half of his nature is laudable and the other half is censurable. The Holy Qur'an is of the view that potentially man has all the good points, but he has to actualize them.

It is he who is the builder of himself. The main condition of man's actually attaining the good qualities which he potentially possesses is his 'faith'. Faith begets piety, meritorious deeds and effort for the cause of Allah. Through faith knowledge becomes a useful implement instead of being a tool of evil desires. Therefore it is the real man, the vicegerent of Allah before whom the angels prostrate themselves. Everything is for him who possesses all human virtues that is the man plus faith, not the man minus faith.

The man minus faith is defective. Such a man is greedy, bloodthirsty, miserly and stingy. He is an unbeliever and worse than a beast.

In the Holy Qur'an there are verses which make it amply clear what type of man is commended and what type of man is denounced. These verses show that a man lacking in faith and unattached to Allah is not a true man. The man who gets attached to the single Reality and gets satisfaction in believing in Him and remembering Him, he possesses all the superb qualities. But if a man is unattached to that Reality, that is Allah, he

is like a tree which has been disconnected with its root. As an example we quote here two verses:

"By the time, surely man is in a state of loss, save those who believe, do good deeds, exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance." (Surah al-Asr)

"We have created for Hell many of the jinn and men. They have hearts, but do not understand with them; they have eyes, but do not see with them; and they have ears, but do not hear with them. They are like beasts or even further astray." (Surah al-A'rif, 7:179)

Multi-dimensional Being

From what has been said it may be derived that though man has many things in common with other living beings, yet he is quite different from them. Man is a material as well as a spiritual being. Each of the points which make man entirely different from other living beings, gives him a new dimension. The areas of difference are three:

- i. Area of the discovery of the self and the world.
- ii. Area of the tendencies which act upon human mind.
- iii. Area of the way how man is influenced by his natural tendencies and how he makes a selection out of them.

As far as the discovery of the self and the world is concerned, an animal knows the world by means of its senses. This quality is shared by man with other animals. In this respect some animals have even a keener sense than man. But the information which is fed by the senses to animals or man is only superficial and external. Senses cannot go deep into the nature of things, nor into their logical relations.

Besides his senses man has another power which enables him to perceive and discover himself and the world. This mysterious power of understanding is not possessed by other living beings. Man with his power of understanding discovers the general laws of nature and by means of this knowledge he practically controls nature and makes it of service to him.

In the earlier discussions also we referred to this kind of knowledge which is peculiar to man and pointed out that the mechanism of intellectual understanding is one of the most complex mechanisms of the existence of man. If this mechanism works accurately, it opens a wonderful

way to man knows himself. By means of it man can discover many realities which he cannot make contact through his senses.

It is through this mysterious power which is peculiar to him that man can acquire the knowledge of the things which are beyond his sensual perception, especially the philosophical knowledge of Allah.

As far as the area of tendencies and urges is concerned, man like other animals is influenced by the natural and material urges and impulses. His inclination to food, to sleep, to sexual affairs, to rest etc., pulls him towards matter and nature. But these are not the only urges which man has. He is attracted toward many other things which are not material, that is they have no size and weight and cannot be measured by any material yardstick. The spiritual tendencies and urges which have so far been identified and accepted are as follows:

(i) Knowledge and Information:

Man does not want knowledge only to apply it to nature and to utilize it for improving the quality of his material life. In man there exists an instinct of inquisitiveness and finding out the truth. Man requires knowledge for its own sake and enjoys it. Besides being a means of living a better life and discharging the responsibility in a better way, knowledge as such is desirable.

As far as man's life is concerned it makes no difference whether he knows or does not know the secrets of what exists beyond the galaxies, but he still prefers to know them. Man by virtue of his nature dislikes ignorance and is keen to acquire knowledge. Hence knowledge is an intellectual dimension of man's existence.

(ii) Moral Goodness:

Man performs certain acts not with a view to get any benefit out of them or with a view to avert any loss or damage, but purely under the impact of certain sentiments called moral sentiments. He performs them because he believes that his humanness requires him to perform them. Suppose a man has been stranded in a desolate wilderness.

He has no food and expects no relief. He is threatened by the danger of

death every moment. In the meanwhile another man appears. He helps him and saves him from death which seemed to be imminent. Thereafter these two men are separated and do not see each other. After many years the man who was one day in distress, sees his old saviour in a pitiable condition. He recollects that this very person saved his life one day.

In such circumstances, will not the conscience of this man direct him to take some action? Will it not say that a favour must be matched with a reciprocal favour? Will it not tell him that he is under an obligation to show his gratitude to his benefactor? We think that the answer is in the affirmative.

If this man renders immediate help to that person, what will the conscience of other people say? If he remains indifferent and does not show slightest reaction, what will their conscience say?

There is no doubt that in the first case the conscience of other people will appreciate his action and will applaud him and in the second case will blame and disparage him. It is moral conscience of man which says: "The reward of goodness is nothing but goodness" (Surah ar-Rahman, 55:60)

Hence, he who requites goodness with goodness should be acclaimed and he who remains indifferent to the acts of favour done to him should be blamed and criticized. Acts performed at the instance of moral conscience are called acts of moral goodness.

Moral goodness is the criterion by which many of human acts are judged. In other words, man does many things only because of their moral value without taking into consideration their material side. This is also one of the characteristics of man and one of his spiritual dimensions. Other living beings have no similar standard by which their actions may be judged. Moral goodness and moral value have no meaning for an animal.

(iii) Beauty:

Another mental dimension of man is his interest in beauty and appreciation of the beautiful. His aesthetic sense plays an important role in all spheres of his life. Man wears clothes to protect himself against the heat of summer and the cold of winter. But he gives equal importance to the

beauty of colour and stitching of his clothes. He builds a house for living in it. But he pays more attention to the beauty of the house than to anything else.

He observes the aesthetic principles in the selection of his dining table and dining crockery and even in the arrangement of his food on the table. Man likes his features to be beautiful, his clothes to be beautiful, his name to be beautiful, his hand-writing to be beautiful, his city and its roads to be beautiful and all spectacles before his eyes to be beautiful. In short he wants a hallow of beauty to encircle his entire life.

For an animal the question of beauty does not arise. What is important to it is its food and not the beauty of that. It is not interested in a beautiful saddle, beautiful scenery, a beautiful abode etc.

(iv) Adoration and Worship:

The sense of adoration and worship is one of the oldest and the most stable manifestations of the human soul and one of the most important dimensions of the existence of man. The study of anthropology shows that wherever and whenever man has existed, adoration and worship have also existed.

Only the form of worship and the deity to be worshipped have differed. The form of worship also has varied from dances and rhythmical group movements accompanied by some liturgy and recitations to the highest form of humbling oneself and the most progressive recitations. The deity has varied from pieces of wood and stone to the eternally self-existing being free from all temporal and spatial restrictions.

Worship was not invented by the Prophets. They only taught the proper way of its performance. In addition they prevented and prohibited the worship of any being other than Allah, the One.

According to the indisputable religious teachings and the view expressed by some scholars of the history of religion like Max Mueller, the primitive man was a monotheist, worshipping one single true Deity. The worship of the idols, the moon, the stars or the men is a sort of later deviation.

In other words it did not happen that man began with the worship of idols, the men or any other creatures and gradually with cultural development reached the stage of worshipping Allah, the One. The sense of worship which is often called religious sense generally exists among most individuals. We earlier quoted Erich Fromme as saying that:

"Man may worship living beings, trees, golden or stone-idols, the invisible God, a saint or a demon; he may worship his ancestors, his nation, his class, his party, or money and prosperity... .. he may be conscious of his religious beliefs as distinguished from his non-religious beliefs or, on the contrary, he may think that he has no religion. It is not the question whether he has or has not a religion; the question is what religion he has?"... ..

William James, as quoted by Dr Iqbal, says:

"The impulse to pray is a necessary consequence of the fact that whilst the innermost of the empirical selves of a man is a self of the social sort, it yet can find its only adequate socius (its 'great companion') in an ideal world... .. Most men, either continually or occasionally, carry a reference to it in their breasts. The humblest outcast on this earth can feel himself to be real and valid by means of this higher recognition". (The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 89)

Professor William James in regard to the universality of the presence of this sense among all individuals says:

"It is probable that men differ a great deal in the degree in which they are haunted by this sense of an ideal spectator. It is much more essential part of the consciousness of some men than of others. Those who have the most of it are possibly the most religious men. But I am sure that even those who say that they are altogether without it deceive themselves and really have it in some degree". (The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam)

The creation of the fictitious heroes out of the athletes, intellectuals or religious men is due to the human sense of sanctification which wants to have a laudable and adorable being and to extol him so lovingly as to make him supernatural.

Modern man's exaggerated praise of the national or party heroes and his adoration of his party, doctrine, ideology, flag, homeland and his readiness to make sacrifice for these is due to this very sense. The sense of adoration is an instinctive desire to worship the supermost perfectness and beauty free from every defect, deficiency or blemish. The worship of any created thing in any form is a sort of deviation of this sense from its normal course.

By means of worship man wants to soar from his limited existence and join a truth not subject to any defect, deficiency, annihilation or limitation. The great scientist of our times, Einstein says:

"In this state the individual realizes the paltriness of his aims and ambitions and feels the greatness and awe produced on his mind by what is supernatural and metaphysical ... Prayer as a means of spiritual illumination is a normal and vital act by which the little island of our personality suddenly discovers its situation in a larger whole of life". (The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam)

Worship and adoration indicate a possibility, a desire of going out of the sphere of material things and an inclination to join a higher and wider horizon. Such a desire is peculiar to man. As such worship is another mental and spiritual dimension of man.

The variation from individual to individual in being affected by various urges and impulses and the choice he may exercise between them, are the questions which we propose to discuss next.

Chapter 5

Diverse Powers of Man

Power or force need not be defined. The factor from which some effect is produced is called power or force. Everything existing in the world is the source of one or more effects. Therefore everything whether it is inorganic matter or a plant or an animal or man, has some power or force, which if accompanied by consciousness, perception and desire is called ability.

One of the differences between the animals and man on the one hand, and the plants and the inorganic matter on the other is that unlike the inorganic matter and the plants, the animals and man can use a part of their power as motivated by their own desire, intention, inclination or some fear. A magnet has the property of attracting iron automatically as a result of some sort of natural compulsion.

But the magnet is neither aware of its working nor does by its own inclination, desire or any fear demands that it should attract iron. The same is true of fire which burns, of a plant which grows of a tree which blossoms and bears fruit. But the animal when it walks knows what it is doing. It walks because it wants to do so. It is under no compulsion to walk. That is why it is said that the animal walks of its own choice. In other words, some powers of an animal are subordinate to its choice, and work only when it wants.

The same is the case with a part of man's powers also. Some of his powers are subordinate to his choice. But there is one difference. The choice of an animal is controlled by its natural and instinctive inclinations. An animal has no power to resist the dictates of its instincts. As soon as it is internally attracted to a certain direction, it is automatically drawn to it.

It can neither withstand its inner inclination, nor can it consider its pros

and cons. It cannot think of any action to which it is not inclined presently but which is demanded by far-sightedness.

But that is not the case with man. He has the power to withstand his inner inclinations and impulsion and not to act according to them. Man has this power of discrimination because he possesses another power which is called will and which in turn works under the direction of reason or man's intellectual faculty. It is reason which forms an opinion and it is will that puts it into practice.

It is clear from what has been mentioned above that in regard to his various powers man is distinct from animals in two respects. Firstly, he possesses a number of inclinations and spiritual drives which enable him to extend the sphere of his activities to the higher horizon of spiritualities while other animals cannot step outside the limits of material affairs.

Secondly, he is equipped with the powers of reason and will; and as such can withstand his natural inclinations and can free himself from their compelling influence. He can rule over all his propensities and bring them under the control of his reason. He can fix a limit to each of his inclination, which is the most valuable kind of freedom.

This great power is peculiar to man and is not shared by any other animal. It is this power which has made man fit to be obligated to observe the precepts of religion, has given him the right of choice and has made him a really free, volitive and choosing being.

Inclinations and drives are a sort of bond between man and an external centre, which pulls him towards itself. The more he submits to his inclinations, the more he loses his self-control and enters a state of internal lethargy and misery. His destiny falls into the hand of an external force which may pull him to any direction. On the contrary the force of reason and will is an inner force and a manifestation of the real personality of man.

When a man procures the support of his reason and will, he gets together his own forces, breaks off with external influences, makes himself free and becomes an 'independent island' in the ocean of this world. By means of his reason and will man becomes master of himself, and his personality gains strength.

To gain control and mastery of one-self and to get rid of the influence of impulses and drives are the true objects of Islamic training which aims at spiritual freedom.

Chapter 6

Self-Consciousness

Islam very keenly wants that man should know himself and should find out his position in the universe. The Holy Qur'an has laid all that stress on man so that he should know himself as he is, and should realize his position and status in the world with a view to occupy there a high position befitting him.

The Holy Qur'an is a book which teaches man how to build himself. It is not a book of theoretical philosophy concerned only with discussions and views. Whatever view it puts forward is meant for implementation and taking action.

The Holy Qur'an wants that man should discover himself. But this discovery of self does not mean that he should find out what his name is; what his father's name is; in which year he was born; which country he belongs to; with whom he has married or how many children he has.

This self is the same thing which has been given the name of 'Divine spirit'. To know this self means that man should be conscious of his dignity and nobility and should apprehend that his indulgence in any kind of meanness is far below his high position. He should realize his own sacredness so that the sacred, moral and social values may have a meaning for him.

When the Holy Qur'an says that man is a chosen being, it wants to make it clear that he is not an accidental being brought into existence by certain blind and deaf incidents like the accidental combination of atoms! The Holy Qur'an says that he is a chosen being, and for that reason has a mission and a responsibility.

There is no doubt that in this terrestrial world man is the strongest and

the most powerful being. If we compare the earth and all that exists on it to a manor, we can say that man is the lord of this manor. But let us see whether man has been chosen to be the lord or he has imposed himself on the world by means of some force or fraud.

Various schools of material philosophy assert that it is a mere accident that man has come to power. It is obvious that with this presumption the question of any mission and responsibility becomes meaningless.

From the viewpoint of the Holy Qur'an man has been selected to be the lord of the earth by virtue of his competence and fitness. He has not come to power by force or as the result of any struggle. He has been chosen by the highest competent authority, which is none other than Allah, the Almighty, and as such, like any other selected being he holds a mission and bears a responsibility. His mission being from Allah, his responsibility is also towards Him.

The belief that man is a chosen being and has been brought into existence with a purpose, produces one kind of psychological effects in the individuals, and the belief that he is the outcome of a number of aimless accidents produces another kind of psychological effects.

Self-consciousness means that man should realize his real position in the world. He should know that he is not merely a terrestrial being. He has a reflection of Divine spirit in him. Man should know that he is ahead of the angels in cognition. He is free, has the power of choosing and willing, and is responsible for himself and others. His responsibility includes improving the world and making it thrive. The Holy Qur'an says: "He has brought you forth from the earth and has made you husband it." (Surah Hud, 11:61)

Man should know that he is a trustee appointed by Allah and that he has not gained superiority by chance. Hence it does not befit him to despotically acquire everything for himself and think that he has no responsibility or duty.

Promotion of Talents

Islamic teachings show that the sacred school of Islam has paid equal attention to all dimensions of man, whether they are physical, spiritual, material, moral, intellectual or emotional. It has paid deep attention to all these dimensions, whether they are individual or collective, and has not overlooked any aspect of them. It has paid special attention to the promotion and development of all of them in accordance with certain well-laid down principles. Here we give a brief account of them one by one:

Development of Body

Islam is severely opposed to paying too much attention to body in the sense of indulgence in licentiousness and lewdness. But it considers it to be a duty of man to keep his body healthy and sound and regards every action that is injurious to body as unlawful. If on any occasion an obligatory act (such as fasting) is judged to be injurious to health, it not only loses its imperativeness, but may be prohibited.

Every unhealthy practice is unlawful in the eyes of Islam, and many rules of conduct have been prescribed for the sake of ensuring physical health from hygienic point of view.

Some people may not differentiate between looking after the body, which is a question of health, and indulgence in bodily pleasure, which is a moral question. They may think that as Islam is against bodily indulgence, it is also against looking after physical health. They may even hold that the actions injurious to health are moral actions from the viewpoint of Islam. This kind of thinking is generally wrong and dangerous. There is a vast difference between looking after health and sensual enjoyment.

Islam is against licentiousness and leading a sensual life. Sensual enjoyment hampers spiritual development. It is not only harmful to spiritual health, but is also injurious to the healthy development of body. It may ruin physical health, for it leads to excess which basically disturbs all bodily systems.

Development of Soul

Islam has paid great attention to the development of mental faculties and acquisition of independent thinking. It combats all that is opposed to the independence of reason, such as the blind imitation of the ancestors or some prominent people and following the majority heedlessly and without examination. The promotion of will-power, acquisition of self-control and freedom from the absolute control of impulses is the basis of many articles of Islamic worship and other Islamic teachings. Islam pays particular attention to the promotion of the sense of seeking truth, acquisition of knowledge and the development of aesthetic sense and a taste for worship.

Man's Effective Role in Building His Future

There are two kinds of things existing in the world: organic and inorganic. The inorganic things such as water, fire, stone and dust are lifeless and have no role in forming or perfecting themselves. They are formed purely under the impact of external factors and occasionally acquire perfection under the impact of the same factors. We do not find these things making any effort to build or develop themselves.

On the contrary we see that the living things like plants, animals and men make continuous efforts to protect themselves against any injury or mishap. They assimilate some other matter and to procreate the like. The plants have a number of natural faculties effective in the making of their future. They have power by means of which they absorb and assimilate matter from the earth or the air. They further have power which helps them from within to grow and develop. Similarly they have power which makes it possible for them to procreate.

In the animals all these natural powers exist in addition to a number of

other conscious powers such as the senses of sight, learning and touch and the urges, impulses and inclinations mentioned earlier. An animal by means of these powers and faculties, on the one hand protects itself against any mishap and on the other takes the necessary measures to ensure its individual growth and the survival of its species.

In man there exist all the natural and conscious powers and faculties which exist in animals and plants. In addition, he has a number of additional impulses and drives as explained earlier. Further, he is equipped with reason and will which put his destiny to a great extent in his own hand and enable him to determine his future himself.

It is clear from what has been said that a certain part of the existing things, namely the inorganic matter, has no role in making its future. There are some other things which have a role in making their future, but their role is neither conscious nor free. Nature directs their inner powers in such a way that they unconsciously protect themselves and make their future. This is the case with the plants.

Still some other things have a greater role. Their role is conscious, though not free. They endeavor to ensure their survival with a sort of self-consciousness and some knowledge of their environment. That is the case with the animals.

But man has a more active, more effective and more extensive role in making his future. His role is conscious as well as free. He is conscious of himself as well as of his environment. By means of his will and power of reasoning he can choose his future as he likes. Incidentally man's role is far more extensive and vaster than that of an animal. The extensiveness of the sphere of man's role in regard to his future originates from three characteristics peculiar to him:

(i) Extensiveness of the range of his information:

Man by means of his knowledge extends the range of his information from the superficialities to the depth of nature. He knows the laws of nature and by using them can mould nature to be in a harmony with the requirements of his life.

(ii) Extensiveness of the range of his desires:

We have mentioned this characteristic of man earlier under the following two headings: Man and Animal, and man as a multidimensional being.

(iii) Man has a special self-making ability:

No other being can be compared to him in this respect. Though in certain other living organisms also like plants and animals certain changes can be brought about by means of special training factors, none of them can make these changes independently. It is man who introduces required changes in them. Moreover, as compared to man, their changeability is very limited.

In regard to his qualities and habits man is only a potential being that is he is born devoid of any qualities and faculties. In contrast, each animal is born with a number of its special qualities. As man lacks any sort of quality and habit and at the same time he is capable of acquiring a lot of them. Acquiring them gradually he secures for himself a number of 'secondary dimensions' in addition to his inborn dimensions.

Man is the only being to whom the law of creation has provided with a painting brush to paint his features as he likes. Contrary to the formation of his physical organs, which is completed while he is still in his mother's womb, the formation of his psychological organs known as his qualities, habits and moral character, is mostly completed after he has been born.

That is the reason why every being, including the animals, is only what it has been made. Only man can be whatever he wants to be. It is also for this reason that all the individual animals belonging to one species have the same psychological characteristics and qualities in the same way as they have the same physical limbs and organs. All cats have one set of habits; all dogs another; and all ants still another. If there is any difference between the individuals, that is insignificant. But the difference in the habits and moral character between individual human beings has no limit. As such man is the only being which himself can choose what he should be.

The Islamic traditions say that on the Day of Resurrection men will be raised in a form appropriate to their acquired spiritual qualities and not in the physical form of their body. In other words men will be raised in

the shape of the animals nearest to them from the viewpoint of their acquired moral qualities. Only those individuals will be raised in the human shape whose moral qualities and secondary spiritual dimensions conform with the dignity and eminence of human beings; in other words, whose morals and manners are human.

By dint of his knowledge man subdues nature and employs it to meet his own needs. Having the power of self-making he makes himself as he likes and thus becomes the master of his future destiny.

All educational institutions, moral schools and religious teachings are meant to guide man as to how he should make his future. Straight path is the way that leads man to future prosperity, and devious way is that which leads him to future ruin and misery. In the Holy Qur'an Allah says: "We showed man (who is the free agent) the way so that he may choose, of his own accord either the way We showed him and be grateful or go the other way, that is the way of ingratitude and disbelief." (Surah ad-Dahr, 76:3)

From the foregoing discussion we have come to know that out of knowledge and faith each of them has a separate role in making the future of man. The role of knowledge is to show the way of making his future. Knowledge enables him to make his future as he likes. Faith tells him how to make it in such a way that it may be beneficial to him and society. Faith prevents man from making his future on a material and individualistic basis. It gives direction to his desires and makes them embrace spiritualities instead of being confined to what is materialistic.

Knowledge serves as a tool for the achievement of man's desires. It help him turn nature as he wants. But knowledge is not concerned how nature is molded and whether one uses it for the benefit of society or for advancing the interests of some particular individuals only that depends on what kind of men are those at whose disposal knowledge is. But faith works as a checking power.

It controls man's impulses and directs them to the course of truth and morality. Faith makes man, and man builds the world with the power of his knowledge. Where faith and knowledge are combined, both man and the world are brought to the desired state.

Man's Will and Range of His Freedom

Though man has enough freedom to be able to develop his psychological organs, to bring his natural environment to the desired state and to make his future, obviously he has many limitations and his freedom is only relative. In other words the range of his freedom is limited and only within that range he can choose his good or bad future.

There are several aspects of man's limitations:

(i) Heredity:

Man comes to this world with human nature. His parents being human being, he also has to be willy-nilly a human being. From his parents he inherits a number of hereditary traits like the colour of his skin and eyes and some other features of his body which often continue to be transmitted for several generations. Man cannot choose them for himself. They are forcibly transmitted to him by inheritance.

(ii) Natural and Geographical Environment:

Man's natural and geographical environment and the region in which he is brought up, invariably produce a number of effects on his body and spirit. Each of the hot, cold and temperate regions has certain inevitable effects on the spirit and morals of the inhabitants of that region. The same is true of the mountainous and the desert areas also.

(iii) Social Atmosphere:

Social atmosphere of man is an important factor in the formation of his spiritual and moral characteristics. Language, social etiquette, customs and religion are the things which are mostly imposed on man by social

atmosphere.

(iv) History and Time Factors:

From the viewpoint of social environment man is influenced not only by the present time, but the past events also play a considerable role in molding his character. On the whole, there is a definite link between the present and the past of every existing being. The past and the future of a being are not like two points totally separate from each other, but are like two pieces of a continuous process. The past is the seed and the nucleus of the future.

Chapter 10

Man's Revolt Against Limitations

Though man cannot totally sever his relation with his heredity, natural environment, social atmosphere and the factors of history and time, yet he can revolt against the limitations imposed by them and to a great extent can free him from the way of these factors. Man by dint of his knowledge and intellect on the one hand, and his will and faith on the other, can bring about changes in these factors as he wishes, and can become the master of his destiny.

Man and Divine Fate

Generally it is believed that Divine fate is the main factor that imposes limitation on man, but we did not mention it while recounting the factors that limit man's freedom. Why?

Does Divine fate not exist, or is it not a limiting factor? There is no doubt about the existence of Divine fate, but it imposes no restriction on man. Divine fate has two parts known as 'qaza' and 'qadar'. Divine qaza means a Divine decree in respect of the occurrences and events, and Divine qadar means estimation of the phenomena and the events.

From the viewpoint of divinity it is indisputable that Divine fate does not apply to any event direct. It necessitates its occurrence only through its causes. Divine qaza requires that the world order should be based on the system of causation. Whatsoever freedom man may have on account of his intellect and will and whatsoever limitations he may have because of the hereditary, environmental and historical factors, he has been made by decree of Allah subject to a definite system of causes and effects in the world.

Therefore Divine qaza is not considered to be a factor imposing any

restriction on man. Whatever restrictions it imposes are the result of man's heredity, environmental and historical conditions and nothing else. Similarly whatever freedom he has, that also has been decreed by Allah. He has decreed that man should have intellect and will, and within a limited sphere of his natural and social conditions, should to a large extent, be independent of these conditions, and thus be able to take his destiny and future in his own hands.

Man and Obligations

One of the principal characteristics of man is that he has the capability of being obligated to observe religious precepts. He alone can live within the framework of the laws enunciated for him. No other being can follow a law other than the natural compulsory laws. For example, it is not possible to lay down law for the stones and timber or for the trees and flowers or for the horses, the cows and the sheep. They cannot be obligated to abide by any laws framed for them and in their interest. If any action is required to safeguard their interests, that action has to be imposed on them.

Man is the only being which has the distinction of being able to conduct himself within the framework of a series of contractual laws. As these laws are framed by a competent authority and then imposed on man, they naturally involve a sort of hardship for him. That is why they have been given the name of 'obligation'.

In order to bind man to carry out a certain obligation, the law-giver has to observe certain conditions. In other words only a man fulfilling certain conditions shoulders the responsibility of carrying out the obligations. The conditions which must be fulfilled in case of every obligation are as under:

(i) Puberty:

When man reaches a certain stage of his life there appear some sudden changes in his body, his feelings and his thoughts. The appearance of these changes is called puberty. It is a natural stage attained by everyone. It is not possible to determine an exact time when one attains puberty. Some individuals reach this stage earlier than others. That largely depends on the personal characteristics of the individuals as well as their

regional and environmental conditions.

What is certain is that women reach the stage of natural puberty earlier than men. From legal point of view it is necessary to fix a definite age of majority in order to achieve uniformity. It may be either the average age of puberty or the minimum age of it (in addition to another condition of maturity which is understanding as described in Islamic jurisprudence).

On this basis an individual may reach the age of natural puberty, but may not be considered to have attained legal majority. In accordance with the view held by the majority of the Shi'ah Ulema the legal majority of man from the point of view of age has been fixed at his completing 15 years and entering the 16th year and that of a woman at her completing nine years and entering the 10th year.

Legal majority is one of the conditions of the legal capacity for the implementation of obligations. In other words, a person who has not reached this stage, the law is not addressed to him; unless it is proved that he has attained natural puberty before reaching the age of legal majority.

(ii) Sanity:

Another condition of the liability for the discharge of obligations is sanity. A lunatic lacking the power of understanding has no obligations, his case being similar to that of a minor during the period of his minority. Even on attaining majority a person is not obligated to perform acts which he missed when he was a minor. For example an adult is not obligated to complete the prayers which he did not offer during his infancy, for at that time the law was not addressed to him. A lunatic during his lunacy is also not obligated.

Hence if he later regains his senses, he will not be obligated to perform the prayers and the fasts which he missed during the period of his lunacy. He will be obligated only to carry them out subsequent to his recovery. Same is the case of the religious taxes like, Zakat and Khums, which may become due on the property of a minor or a lunatic. A minor or a lunatic is liable to pay them only after reaching the stage of being obligated, if not already paid by his legal guardian.

(iii) Knowledge and Awareness:

Obviously a man can discharge an obligation only if he is aware of its existence. In other words, a man must have been informed of his obligation before he is expected to discharge it. Suppose the law-giver lays down a law but he does not convey it to the person who has to act according to it. In this case that person will not be obliged, or rather will not be able to put that law into effect.

If he violates that law, the law-giver cannot justifiably punish him. To punish a person who is not aware of his obligation and his ignorance of law is not due to any fault of his, is bad and such a punishment is unsound. This case is known as 'abominableness of punishment without exposition of law'.

The Holy Qur'an has repeatedly mentioned this truth and has stated that no people are to be punished for the violation of law unless they have been duly warned and the provisions of law have been conveyed to them.

Of course the condition of the awareness of law as a prerequisite of its application does not imply that anybody can keep himself intentionally ignorant of the law and then can put forward his ignorance as an excuse. It is the bounden duty of every man fit for the application of law to acquire knowledge of it and act accordingly. A hadith says that on the Day of Judgement some sinners will be produced in the Divine Court of Justice and will be questioned about their failure to discharge some of their responsibilities. They will be asked why they did not do their duty. They will say: "We did not know". It will be said to them: "Why did you not know and why did you not try to become aware of the law?"

Hence when we say that awareness is a condition of the applicability of a law, we mean that if an obligation has not been conveyed to the person to whom it is applicable and he could not become aware of it in spite of his making due effort to acquire necessary knowledge, such a person is excusable in the sight of Allah.

(iv) Ability and Power:

A man can be obligated to do only what he can perform. An act which he cannot perform, can never become his obligation. There is no doubt that

man's ability is limited. Hence obligations should be imposed on him only within that limit. For example, man has the capacity of acquiring knowledge, but the scope of his acquiring it, is limited from the viewpoint of time and the amount of information. Howsoever an individual may be a genius; he must cross the different stages of knowledge gradually and over a length of time.

To force a man to complete within a short period an academic course, which normally takes several years, means to force him to do a task which is beyond his power and capacity. Similarly to force a man to undertake the study of all the sciences of the world mean asking him to do something totally impossible. Such an obligation will never be imposed by a just and judicious source. In the Holy Qur'an Allah says:

"Allah does not take a soul beyond its scope." (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:286)

In other words Allah does not impose an obligation on anyone beyond his capacity. If somebody is drowning and we can rescue him, it is incumbent on us to do so. But if, for example, an aircraft is crashing and we are absolutely unable to do anything to save it, we have no obligation in this respect. Allah will not punish us for not preventing the crash.

Here there is a point to be noted. The fact that obligation is conditional on awareness, does not mean that it is not our duty to gain knowledge, similarly the fact that obligation is conditional on ability does not imply that we are not required to gain the necessary power and ability. In certain cases it is indeed incumbent upon us to gain such power.

Suppose we are confronted with a mighty and powerful enemy who wants to encroach on our rights or intends to commit an aggression against the territory of Islam. In this case if we know that we are unable to fight him and to make any such attempt simply means the loss of our forces without there being any present or future prospect of achieving a result, obviously we are not obliged to take action and resist the aggressor. But it has always been and still is our duty to acquire enough power so that in similar circumstances we may not be helpless spectators. The Holy Qur'an says:

"Make ready for them all you can of force and of horses tethered so that thereby you may dismay the enemy of Allah and your enemy." (Surah

al-Anfal, 8:60)

Just as an individual or a society that neglects to acquire enough knowledge is liable to be Divinely blamed and his or its ignorance is not to be accepted as an excuse, similarly a weak individual or a weak society that has neglected to gain enough power is to be Divinely blamed and punished. Weakness cannot be an excuse.

(v) Power of Choice and free-Will:

Another pre-requisite condition of an obligation is free-will. In other words, man is obligated to perform a duty only when no coercion or compulsion by force of circumstances is involved in the act. No act can be obligatory if coercion or compulsion by force of circumstances is involved in it. The following examples illustrate the cases of coercion: If a person is forced by someone not to keep a fast and is threatened that his life will be in danger if he ignores the threat, obviously fasting will not be obligatory for him. The same will be the position of a man who has the means to go on pilgrimage, but is threatened by a tyrant with dire consequences to himself or his dependents if he goes. The Holy Prophet has declared:

"There is no obligation if there is any coercion."

In the case of force of circumstances the individual concerned is not threatened by any other being. He himself takes the decision. But his choice is the result of harsh circumstances which he faces. For example, a man is left helpless and hungry in a desert. Except carrion he has no food to allay his hunger and keep himself alive. In these circumstances the rule about the prohibition of carrion is naturally waved. The difference between coercion and compulsion by the force of circumstances is that in the case of coercion some person is threatened with dire consequences by a tyrant force, and in order to save himself and avert an expected danger he is compelled to act contrary to his normal duty.

But there is no such threat in the case of compulsion by force of circumstances. In this case the circumstances on the whole develop in such a way that they impose an undesirable situation on the man concerned. He in order to get out of the situation that already exists, is compelled to act contrary to his normal duty. Hence there is a two-fold difference

between coercion and compulsion by force of circumstances:

i. In coercion there is a threat by some human being but there is no such threat in compulsion by force of circumstances.

ii. In the case of coercion the man concerned takes an action to keep off an undesirable situation, but in the case of compulsion by force of circumstances he takes an action to alleviate an existing situation.

Anyway, there is no general rule with regard to the effect of coercion and compulsion by force of circumstances on an obligation. Their effect depends on two things: first, on the extent of harm or injury, that is to be warded off or alleviated; and secondly on the gravity of the act to be performed as a result of coercion or compulsion by force of circumstances. Obviously no action endangering the life of others, causing damage to society or harming religion can ever be allowed to be taken under any pretext. Of course there are certain obligations, which must be discharged even at any loss or damage.

Chapter 11

Conditions of Validity

So far we have spoken about the conditions prerequisite to the applicability of the law to the obliged. In the absence of these conditions no one is bound to carry out an obligation or duty. There are also some other conditions known as the conditions of the validity of an act.

As we know all juristic articles of acts, whether they are acts of worship or transactions, must fulfill certain conditions and have certain qualities so that they may be regarded as valid and sound. Hence a condition of validity is that without which a man will not be considered to have discharged his obligation correctly. An act performed in the absence of any of these conditions is invalid and void.

Like the conditions of the applicability of law, the conditions of the validity of acts are also numerous. They are divided into two broad categories of general and special. The special conditions are those which are peculiar to a particular act and are learnt while learning how to perform that act. Besides them, there exist several general conditions which we propose to mention here.

There are some conditions which are the conditions of applicability and validity both and there are some other conditions which are the conditions of either applicability only or of validity only.

The conditions of validity are again of three kinds. Some of them are the conditions of the validity of both the acts of worship and transactions; some of the validity of the acts of worship only and some of the validity of transactions only.

Mental soundness is a condition prerequisite to applicability and validity both. An insane person is neither fit for the application of law nor is his

acts, whether they are acts of worship or transactions, valid.

For example, if a lunatic performs pilgrimage on behalf of somebody else, his pilgrimage will not be in order. Similarly he cannot offer prayers or fast on behalf of anyone else, nor can he be an intermediary between the imam (one who leads the prayers) and the mamums (followers) or between the various sections of the mamums in a congregational prayer.

Ability like sanity is the condition of the applicability of law as well as that of the validity of acts. Same is the case with non-coercion. The obligation of a man forcibly constrained is waived. If a person under duress carries out a transaction or enters into a marriage contract, his action will be void and invalid.

Puberty is the condition of the applicability of law but not that of the validity of an act. A minor is not himself obligated to observe the precepts of religion, but if he is possessed of enough understanding and can perform a religious act correctly like an adult, his act will be valid. As such in a congregational prayer a child can be an intermediary between the imam and the mamums or between the various sections of the mamums.

He can also perform acts of worship on behalf of others. The fact that puberty is not a condition of the validity of the acts of worship is indisputable. But what about transactions? Some Ulema are of the view that puberty is the condition of the validity of transactions also, and as such even a boy possessed of full understanding cannot independently carry out a transaction, neither for himself nor on behalf of anyone else. For example, a minor cannot sell, purchase or let anything nor can he pronounce the marriage formula.

Some other Ulema hold that a boy possessed of understanding cannot carry out a transaction independently for himself, but he can serve as an agent of others.

Knowledge and awareness and similarly non-compulsion by the force of circumstances are the conditions of the applicability of law but not that of validity. As such, if a person unconsciously performs an act, whether it is an act of worship or it is a transaction, it will be valid if it is by chance perfect in all other respects.

Similarly if a man is compelled by force of circumstances to carry out a transaction or a marriage contract, it will be valid. For an example, there is a man who owns a house which he likes very much and is not interested at all in selling it. But all of a sudden for some reason or other he gets badly in need of money and is forced to sell it. In this case his transaction is valid.

Take another example. A man or a woman is not in any way inclined to marry. But a disease so develops that the physician advises that man or woman to marry immediately and thus he or she is forced to do so. This marriage is also valid. This shows that from the viewpoint of validity there is a difference between a transaction carried out under duress and a transaction forced by circumstances. The former is not valid, but the latter is.

Here it appears to be necessary to explain why a transaction entered into under duress is not valid and a transaction forced by circumstances is valid. It may be claimed that the real consent of the doer of the act is lacking in both the cases. Just as a person who sells his house or business under a threat, is not actually willing to do so in his heart of hearts, similarly a person who is forced by circumstances (for example, has to meet the expenses of the treatment of a disease) to sell his house or business, is also not willing in his heart of hearts.

A man, who is forced to sell his house because he has to pay for the treatment of his ailing son, cannot be happy with this transaction. He must be deeply grieved. As far as the willingness is concerned, the position is not changed by the fact that the man under threat wants to ward off a danger and the man pressed by the circumstances wants to fulfil a pressing need. It also makes no substantial difference that in the case of coercion some human hand is directly involved in the form of some tyrant, and in the case of compulsion by force of circumstances, human hand is involved only indirectly in the shape of exploitation, colonialism etc.

The fact is that the reason why Islam makes a difference between a man under duress and a man pressed by circumstances and regards the acts of the former as invalid and of the latter as valid lies somewhere else. Both the man under duress and the man pressed by circumstances have an urgent need. The need of the man under duress is to avert the

mischief of the tyrant which is possible only by taking the action required by him. Here Islamic law comes to the aid of the man under duress and declares that the action imposed on him is illegal and void.

On the contrary the man pressed by circumstances is in direct need of money which he tries to obtain through a desperate transaction. Here again the law comes to the aid of the afflicted person and declares the transaction legal and valid. If it had declared it illegal, the result would have, been to the disadvantage of the afflicted person.

Suppose in the above instance the sale of the house is declared void. The result will be that neither the buyer will become the owner of the house, nor the seller will become the owner of the money which he badly needs for the treatment of his son. That is why the jurists say that to declare a transaction carried out under duress as illegal is a favour to the man coerced. But to declare a desperate transaction as illegal not being to the advantage of the man hard-pressed by circumstances, will not be a favour to him.

Here arises another question. Is it allowed that other people take advantage of the desperate need of a man in distress and purchase his goods at a price much less than the fair price and regard action as legal? Of course, not! Now a further question arises. Is this transaction, though forbidden, still valid, and if valid, will the exploiter be asked to make up the loss and pay the actual market price? All these points require further discussion.

Mature understanding (*rushd*) is a prerequisite condition of validity, but not that of the applicability of law. Under Islamic law, it is necessary that anybody, who wants to undertake any act affecting society, for example, entering into a marriage contract or into such independent transactions at the disposal of his personal property, must possess discretion and judgement, that is enough understanding and intelligence necessary to carry out properly the act which he intends to undertake, besides satisfying other general conditions such as puberty, sanity, ability and free-will.

Under Islamic law to be able to marry or to dispose of one's property it is not enough to be sane, to have attained the age of majority and to be entering into a transaction of one's free will. The marriage of a boy or a girl will be operative only if he or she possesses enough intelligence to be

able to know what is meant by marriage, what for it is contracted, what responsibilities it entails and how it affects the destiny of an individual. No boy or girl should blindly embark upon an act of such a great importance.

Similarly a boy or a girl having personal property received through inheritance or otherwise cannot take possession of his or her wealth simply on reaching the age of majority. It is essential that such boys and girls should be tested to see if they possess enough understanding and judgement to keep and utilize their property and wealth. If they have not developed sufficient judgement and discretion, their property will continue to be administered by their legal guardians. The Holy Qur'an says:

"Put orphans under observation till they are of marriageable age. Then if you find them capable of sound judgement, hand over to them their property." (Surah an-Nisa, 4:6)

Chapter 12

Human Knowledge

Man is self-conscious as well as world-conscious. He wants to have more and more knowledge of himself and the world. His evolution, progress and happiness depend on these two kinds of knowledge. Which of these two kinds of knowledge is of greater importance and which of lesser? It is not so simple to answer this question. Some attach more importance to the knowledge of oneself and others to the knowledge of the world.

One reason of the difference in the answer to this question may be a difference in the way of thinking of the East and the West. Another reason may be the difference in the outlook of science and faith. Science is the means of knowing the world whereas faith is the outcome of self-consciousness.

Anyway, science tries to make man aware of himself in the same way as it tries to make him aware of the world. Various branches of psychology bear this responsibility. But the self-consciousness given by science is dull and lifeless. It does not enliven the spirit of man nor does it awaken his dormant faculties. In contrast, the self-consciousness provided by religion makes man aware of his reality, removes his apathy, fires his soul and makes him compassionate and sympathetic.

That task cannot be undertaken by any science or philosophy. Not only that, science and philosophy sometimes even add to man's insensitivity and make him oblivious of himself. That is why many scientists and philosophers are insensitive and selfish like the proverbial dog in the manger. They are unconscious of their selves while many an uneducated man is self-conscious.

Religion calls for self-consciousness. The headlines of its teachings are: Know yourself so that you may know your Lord. Do not forget your

Lord so that you may not forget yourself. The Holy Qur'an says:

"Do not be like those who forget Allah, and so He caused them to forget themselves. Such are really the wicked." (Surah al-Hashr, 59:19) The Holy Prophet said:

"He who knows himself, knows his Lord," Imam Ali said:

"The most useful of all knowledge is the knowledge of oneself". He has also said:

"I wonder how a man, who looks for the things lost by him, does not look for himself".

The basic criticism leveled by the knowledgeable circles of the world against the Western culture is that this is the culture of knowing the world and forgetting oneself. Here lies the real secret of the fall of humanity in the West. If a man, in the words of the Holy Qur'an, loses himself, what is the use of his gaining the world? As far as we know, it is Mahatma Gandhi, the late leader of India who from this point of view has most aptly criticized the Western culture. He says:

"The Western man can accomplish great feats which according to other nations can be accomplished only by God. But he cannot do one thing. He cannot look into his inner self. This fact alone is enough to prove the worthlessness of the false glitter of modern culture".

"If Western culture has led the Europeans to indulging in wine and sex, it is because they are bent upon forgetting and wasting their 'self' instead of seeking it. Most of their great and heroic achievements and even their good deeds are the outcome of their forgetting themselves. The practical ability of the Western man to make discoveries, inventions and provision of war equipment, originates from his escape from 'self' and not from his extraordinary self-control. If man loses his soul, what is the use of his conquering the world?"

Gandhi further says:

"There exists only one truth in the world and that is the knowledge of self. He who knows himself, knows God and all others. He who does not

know himself, does not know anything. In this world there exist one force, one freedom and one justice, and that force is that of ruling over oneself. In this world there exists only one virtue, and that is the virtue of liking others as much as one likes oneself. In other words, we should look upon others as we look upon ourselves. All other questions are imaginary and non-existing". (Introduction to My Religion, 1959)

Whether we attach more importance to the knowledge of self or to the knowledge of the world or we attach equal importance to both of them, it is certain that expansion of knowledge means expansion of human life. Life is tantamount to knowledge and knowledge is tantamount to life. He who has more knowledge of himself and the world has more life.

It is obvious that in this context the knowledge of self does not mean the knowledge of the contents of one's identity card, which include one's name, names of the parents, place of birth, place of residence etc. Nor does it mean the knowledge of one's biology which can be summarized in the knowledge of an animal higher than the bear and the monkey. To make clear what is intended, we refer briefly to the various kinds of self-consciousness. We skip over the figurative and unreal self-consciousness as that of identity card. We have several kinds of real self-consciousness:

I. Innate Self-Consciousness:

Man is self-conscious innately. It is in his nature to be self-conscious. It is not so that first man's ego is formed and thereafter he becomes conscious of it. The birth of ego is tantamount to the birth of self-consciousness. At that stage the knower, the knowing and the known are one and the same. Ego is a reality which in itself is the knowledge of self.

In later stages when man more or less becomes aware of other things he knows himself also in the same way as he knows other things. In other words, he forms a picture of himself in his mind. Technically speaking, he becomes aware of himself through acquired knowledge. But before knowing himself in this way and even before knowing anything else, he knows himself through innate and ever-present self-consciousness.

The psychologists who usually discuss the question of self-consciousness, take into consideration only the second phase of it, that is the

acquired mental knowledge, but the philosophers mostly concentrate on the first phase, that is the stage of non-mental innate knowledge. This kind of awareness is the same which in philosophy is described as one of the convincing proofs of the abstraction of ego.

In the case of this kind of knowledge there is no question of any doubt or such questions as: "Am I or am I not? If I am, who am I?" Doubt arises only in the case of acquired knowledge that is in that case in which the knowledge of a thing is different from its actual existence. But where the knowledge, the knower and the known are one and the same, and the knowledge is of ever-present kind, the existence of doubt cannot be imagined. In other words the existence of any doubt in such a case is impossible.

It is here that Descartes made a basic mistake. He did not realize that 'I am' cannot entertain any doubt, and hence there is no need to remove it by saying: "I think, therefore I am".

Though innate self-consciousness is real, it is not a thing to be acquired. Like the existence of ego it is a basic human characteristic. Hence this inborn self-consciousness is not that self-consciousness which man has been called upon to acquire. Mentioning the various stages of the development of a fetus in the womb, the Holy Qur'an describes the last stage by saying: "Thereafter we made it a different creation".

This verse refers to this very innate self-consciousness which develops as a result of the change of non-conscious matter into a self-conscious spiritual substance.

A philosopher wants to know the real nature of self-conscious ego. Is it a substance or a form? Is it a matter or an abstraction? What relation does it bear to the body? Did it exist before the existence of the body; or did it come into existence alone with it; or has it sprung out of the body? And so on.

At this stage of self-consciousness the main question is: What is the nature and the class of ego? If a philosopher claims to be having self-consciousness, that means that he claims to know the nature, the class and the substance of ego.

Chapter 13

III. Universal Self-consciousness

It means the knowledge of self in its relation to the world - the knowledge of the answer to such questions as: Where have I come from? Where am I going to? In this kind of self-consciousness man discovers that he is a part of a whole called the world. He also discovers that he is not an independent being, but he is dependent on some other being. He has not come on his own; does not live on his own; will not go on his own. At this stage man tries to determine his position in this whole known as the world.

These significant words of Imam Ali visualize this sort of self-consciousness:

"May Allah bless the man who knows wherefrom he has come; where he is and where he will go".

This kind of self-consciousness creates in man the highest and the most subtle kind of longing for truth which does not exist in animals or in any other being. It is this self-consciousness which makes man inquisitive, and persuades him to look for satisfaction and conviction. It inflames him with the fire of doubt and denial and makes him waver from one course to another.

It is the same fire which impassions the souls of the "Gazalis", makes them so restless that they can neither sleep nor eat, brings them down from the seat of the head of the Nizamiyah, and makes them wander about in the deserts and pass many restless years of their lives away from their hearth and home. It is the same fire which makes the 'Inwan Basris' run after truth from house to house, from street to street and from town to town. It is this self-consciousness that draws the attention of man to the idea of destiny.

IV. Class Self-consciousness:

Class self-consciousness is a form of social self-consciousness. It means a consciousness of one's relation to the class to which he belongs. In a class-dominated society from the point of view of the style of life and its blessings and miseries everyone has to belong to a particular stratum or class self-consciousness is the realization of one's class position and class responsibilities.

According to certain theories man has no ego beyond his class. The ego of everyone is the sum-total of his psychic forces that is the sum-total of his feelings, thoughts, intentions and desires. These all take shape within the framework of a particular class. The proponents of this theory are of the view that man as a mere human being does not exist. His existence as such is only conceptual, not real.

What actually exist are the aristocrats and the masses. Man as such could exist only in a classless society, had there been any. Hence in a class-dominated society social self-consciousness is identical with class self-consciousness.

According to this theory class self-consciousness is equivalent to the consciousness of one's own interests, for its philosophy is based on the view that the personality of every individual is governed by his material interests. In any social structure the most important factor is its economic basis. It is common material life and common material interests which give the individuals belonging to a particular class, common conscience, common taste and common judgement.

Class life begets class out-look and class out-look makes a man look at the world and society from a particular angle and interpret them as the class interest demands. Accordingly his efforts and social out-look are always class-oriented. Marxism believes in this kind of self-consciousness, which may be termed as Marxist self-consciousness.

V. National Self-consciousness

It means the consciousness of one's relation to the people with whom one has national and racial ties. Man as a result of passing a common life with a group of people having a common law, a common way of life, a common history, common historical successes and failures, a common language and literature and finally a common culture, develops a sort of fellow feeling and a sense of oneness with that group. As an individual has an ego, similarly a nation also by virtue of its having a common culture develops a national ego.

A common culture resulting from belonging to a common race brings about similarity and unity among human individuals. Nationhood backed by a common culture turn 'I's' into 'We' for the sake of which people often make sacrifices. They take pride in its successes and feel ashamed of its failures.

National self-consciousness means the consciousness of national culture, national personality and national ego. Basically there exists no world culture. Various cultures exist simultaneously, and each one of them has its own basic characteristics and distinguishing features. Therefore the idea of one single world culture is absurd.

Nationalism which was popular in the nineteenth century and is still more or less being preached is based on this very philosophy. In this kind of self-consciousness everything, that is evaluation, decision making and orientation, has a national aspect and moves along a national orbit, whereas in class self-consciousness everything has a class aspect.

Though national self-consciousness does not fall within the category of the consciousness of self-interest, yet it belongs to the family of selfishness. It suffers from all the maladies and defects of selfishness, such as

prejudice, partiality, over-looking one's own faults, conceit and vanity. As such, like class self-consciousness it also has no moral side.

VI. Human Self-consciousness:

It means consciousness of one's relation to all other human beings. Human self-consciousness is based on the philosophy that all human beings taken together form one single unit and are endowed with a 'common human conscience'. A sense of love of humanity and fellow-feeling exists in all men. Sa'di, the world famous Persian poet says:

"All men are like the organs of one body. A man who has no sympathy with others, does not deserve to be called a human being". That is the idea which is entertained by those who like Auguste Comte have been and are still in search of a religion of humanity. That is also the fundamental principle of humanism which is more or less a prevailing philosophy subscribed by most of the broadminded people of our times.

Humanism looks at all men as one single unit irrespective of their classes, nationalities, cultures, religious affiliations and races. It rejects every kind of discrimination and distinction. The charters of human rights issued in the world from time to time are also based on this philosophy. They too preach such a kind of human self-consciousness.

If this kind of self-consciousness is developed by an individual, his feelings and desires become human, his efforts are oriented towards humanity and his friendships and hostilities take a human colour. He begins to like knowledge, culture, healthy activities, human welfare, freedom, justice and kindness, and to dislike ignorance, poverty, cruelty, disease, feeling of suffocation and discrimination. If developed, this kind of self-consciousness, in contrast with national self-consciousness and class self-consciousness, will have a moral significance.

Though this kind of self-consciousness is more logical than any other kind of 'it and though there has been much fanfare about it, but in actual practice it is something which is comparatively rare. Why? The secret lies in the actuality of man. The nature of his actuality is different from that of all other existing things, whether they be any kind of inorganic matter, or a plant or an animal. Everything in this world other than man is actually what it has been created.

Its nature, its actuality and its characteristics are fixed by the factors of creation. But as far as man is concerned, the stage of what he will be and how he will be, begins after his creation. Man is not what he has been created. He is what he wants to be. He is what he is made by the factors of up-bringing, which include his own will and choice.

In other words, with regard to its nature and quality everything else is actually what it has already been created, but man from this point of view has been created only potentially. There exists the seed of humanity in him in the form of his potentialities. If it remains unaffected by any pests, this seed shoots up gradually from the existence of man and develops into man's instincts and later into his human and natural conscience. Contrary to the inorganic matter, the plants and the animals, man has a person and a personality.

The person of man that is the sum total of his physical systems comes to the world in an actually existing form. From the point of view of his physical systems man is as 'actual' as other animals are. But in view of the later development of his human personality he is spiritually only a potential being. Human values are present in his existence, ready to develop and mature.¹⁵

The spiritual and moral formation of man is one stage subsequent to his physical formation. His body is formed in the womb by the creation factors. But his spiritual and moral systems and the components of his personality have to be developed later. As such every man is the builder and the engineer of his own personality. The brush which paints the personality of man, has been given in his own hand.

Separation between anything other than man and its nature is unimaginable. A stone cannot be separated from its stoniness. The same is true of a tree, of a dog and of a cat. Man is the only existing being in the case of which there is a difference between himself and his nature that is between man and his humanity. There are many men who have not been able to attain humanity and like some barbarians and nomads have stayed in the state of animality.

There are many others who have been dehumanized, as is the case with most of the quasi-cultured people. As regard to the question how the

nature of a thing can be separated from the thing itself when its nature is essential for the existence of everything, it may be said that if the existence of a thing is actual, its nature also will consequently be actual, but if a thing exists only potentially, it will naturally be lacking a suitable nature.

That is the only correct philosophical explanation of the existentialist theory maintaining that existence is basic and that it is man who chooses his nature. The Muslim philosophers, especially Mulla Sadra, have laid ample stress on this point. It is with this view in mind that Mulla Sadra says:

"Man does not belong to one single species, but is a multi-species being. In fact an individual may one day belong to one species and another day to a different species".

From here it becomes clear that the biological man is not the real human being. Biological man only provides the ground where the real man can exist, and in the words of the philosophers, has the susceptibility of having humanity, but does not possess it actually. Evidently it is meaningless to talk of humanity without accepting the basic role of soul.

After going through this preliminary discussion we are now in a better position to understand the meaning of human self-consciousness. As we have already pointed out, human self-consciousness is based on the conception that all men collectively form one unit and are equipped with a common human conscience transcending their religious, national, racial and class conscience.

Now it needs to be explained what kind of men collectively have one ego and are governed by one spirit and who are the people among whom human consciousness develops and creates fellow-feeling? Does it grow and develop only in the men who have actually attained humanity and human values, or in those who have not yet crossed the stage of potentiality or in those who have been transformed into worst animals, or in all of these together? It is obvious that the question of mutual sympathy and fellow-feeling arises in the case of only those, who are compassionate and feel that all men are the organs of one body.

Naturally all cannot have this feeling. A wild man who is still in the

stage of childhood; whose human nature is still dormant, cannot have a feeling of active sympathy. He cannot be governed by a common spirit. The case of the dehumanized is too obvious to admit any comments. It is only the men who have attained humanity and whose human nature has fully developed, those actually are the organs of one body and are actually governed by a common spirit. Only the faithful can be the men in whom all natural values may develop, for it is faith which is the basic and the most important human value.

It is a common faith, not a common race, a common country or blood-relationship that actually turns people into 'we' and infuses a common spirit in them. This miracle is brought about by faith only.

A Moses can have no sympathy with a Pharaoh, or an Abuzar with a Mu'awiyah.

What is an actual fact as well as an ideal is the unity of those real men who have attained humanity and acquired virtues. That is why the Holy Prophet instead of making a general statement to the effect that all men are the organs of one body, has said:

"The faithful are the organs of one body. When one organ is afflicted with pain, fever or sleeplessness, other organs automatically sympathize with it"

There is no doubt that a man who has attained humanity, shows kindness to all human beings or rather to all things, even to the dehumanized men whose nature has been deformed. That is why Allah has described His Prophet as a blessing to the whole universe. Those who have attained humanity, show kindness even to those who are hostile to them. Imam Ali in respect of Ibn Muljam Muradi said:

"I like him to live although he likes me to be killed". Only in a society of the faithful it is possible to talk of mutual love and mutual sympathy."

Evidently love of mankind does not mean total peace, lack of responsibility and indifference to what the wicked do. On the contrary real fellow-feeling imposes heavy responsibilities in this field.

In our times Bertrand Russell, the outstanding English thinker and

mathematician and Jean-Paul Sartre, the well-known French existentialist thinker, are the two figures best known for their humanism. Incidentally Russell has based his moral philosophy on a principle which is contrary to his humanism in two ways: His philosophy is based on pragmatism in personal gains that is in ensuring optimum personal gain while abiding by the moral principles. He does not believe in any other moral philosophy. Hence his humanism emanates from giving importance to personal interests only.

That enthusiastic bourgeois, who conquered the past and unfurled the banner of nationalism, has no longer anything to think of except thoughtlessness. The young generation of Europe is standing at the point of absurdity. Today the West is receiving back what it once exported. Social confusion, despair, bewilderment, nihilism are the things which it used to impose on other nations and cultures... .. The nihilist thinks that if a thing is not mine; let it not be of anybody else also... .. That is why he tends to self-destruction.

We see another reaction to this situation is the emergence of Romantic Movement, a sort of pro-human philosophy that has engaged the attention of the Western people on various levels. At one end of it is Russell with his simple and practical views and at the other end is Sartre with his complex and restless philosophy. In the middle there are many broad-minded politicians and economists who try to find a practical solution of the problems facing them and others.

As for Sartre, he, with his free outlook and complex theory of responsibility, is another manifestation of Western spirit which with some sense of guilt wants to make amends for the past mistakes. Like the stoics, Sartre believes in the brotherhood and equality of mankind as well as in the world government and in freedom and virtue being the highest good.

He today represents that tendency of the broad-minded people of the West who try to overcome their mental uneasiness caused by the hollowness of the Western culture by throwing themselves on the lap of abstract humanity and replacing religion by humanism. They seek for themselves and the entire West the forgiveness of humanity as a whole which, according to them, has replaced the idea of God.

A glaring outcome of Sartre's humanism is that every now and then he

sheds crocodile tears for the alleged injustice done to Isra'il and for the so-called tyranny of the Arabs, especially the Palestinian refugees. The world has seen and continues to see the practical demonstrations of the humanism of Western humanists, who have signed high-sounding charters of human rights. These demonstrations need no comments.

Social self-consciousness, whether it is national, human or class consciousness has come to be known in our times as the liberal-minded consciousness.

A liberal-minded is he who has got some variety of social consciousnesses, is interested in the national, human or class problems and makes efforts to uplift and liberate his class, his nation or the whole mankind. He tries to transfer his consciousness to others and make them work for social emancipation.

VII. Mystic Self-Consciousness

Mystic self-consciousness is the knowledge of self in relation to Allah. According to the mystics this relation is not of that kind which normally exists between two things existing side by side, such as the relation between a man and other members of his society. It is that kind of relation that exists between a main and a subsidiary, or a genuine and a figurative. In the terminology of the mystics themselves, it is the relation between the limited and the absolute.

The feelings of a mystic or a sufi are different from that of a liberal-minded. They do not represent the consciousness of the inner anguish felt by man as a natural need of him. A liberal-minded first becomes aware of the anguish prevailing outside and then feels it within himself. On the other hand, the anguish of the mystic is an inner consciousness of a spiritual need just as a physical pain is the warning of the existence of a physical need.

The anguish felt by a mystic is different from that felt by a philosopher also. Both of them long for truth. But the philosopher wants to know the truth, whereas the mystic wants to reach it and be absorbed in it.

The anguish of a philosopher is a characteristic that distinguishes him from all other phenomena of nature - the plants, the animals and the inorganic matter. No existing thing in nature except man longs to have knowledge. But the anguish of the mystic is that of intense love and spiritual exaltation. It is a thing which is missing not only in animals, but even in angels whose very essence is self-consciousness. The anguish of a philosopher is the proclamation of his instinctive need of seeking knowledge, which man by nature wants to acquire.

The anguish of a mystic, on the other hand, is the proclamation of the

instinctive need of his sense of love which wants to soar and cannot be satisfied unless he touches the truth with his entire existence. A mystic believes that real self-consciousness is nothing other than having knowledge of Allah. According to him, what the philosopher calls the ego of man is not the real ego. It may be man's spirit, soul or the factors determining his existence. The real ego is Allah. Only by breaking through the factors determining his existence, man can know his real self.

The philosophers and the scholastic theologians have written a great deal on the subject of self-consciousness. But no knowledge of self can be obtained through such methods. Those who believe that what these philosophers have discovered concerning self-consciousness is a fact are sadly mistaken. They wrongly take swelling for fatness.

In reply to the question, what self and ego are, Shaykh Mahmud of Shabistar has composed his celebrated, mystic poem known as *Gulshan-i Raz*. In it he says:

"When truth assumes a fixed shape because of determining facts, in words it is expressed as 'I' and 'You'. But in reality 'I' and 'You' are mere manifestations of one real existence. Bodies and souls are the reflections of the same light which sometimes appears in a lamp and sometimes in a mirror".

Criticizing the views of the philosophers about soul, ego and self-consciousness he says:

"You think that the word 'I' always refers to the soul. You do not know what is self, because you follow reason. 'I' and 'You' are above body and souls, for both of them are a part of the ego. 'I' does not refer to any particular person so that it might refer to his soul. Try to be above all creation. Renounce the world and you will automatically become the world yourself".

So according to the mystic soul or life is not the ego, nor the knowledge of them amounts to self-consciousness. Soul and life are only the manifestations of ego and self. The real ego is Allah. When man annihilates himself and breaks the factors determining his existence, no trace of his life and soul is left. At that time the drop of water which had separated from the sea, returns to the sea and is obliterated there. That is the stage

of real self-consciousness. At this stage man sees himself in everything and everything in himself. Thus he becomes aware his real self. VIII. Prophetic Self-Consciousness:

Prophetic self-consciousness is different from all other kinds of self-consciousness. A Prophet has a Divine consciousness as well as a profane consciousness. He is devoted to Allah as well as to His creation. That does not mean that he believes in any sort of dualism or that half of his attention is towards Allah and another half towards the creation. His goal and objective are not divided at all. The Holy Qur'an says:

"Allah has not put two hearts into the bosom of any man." (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:4) With one heart one cannot have two sweethearts.

The Prophets are the champions of monotheism. There can be no question of any trace of polytheism in all that they do, neither in their doctrine, nor in their goal, nor in their devotion. The Prophets love every particle of the world as a manifestation of the person and the attributes of Allah.

A poet says:

"I am happy with the world because this thriving world is His and I love the whole world because the whole world is His".

The love of the holy men for the world is a reflection of their love for Allah and not a love for anything besides Him. They are concerned with the creation only because of their devotion to the Creator, and not for any other reason. Their sole aim and desire is to go up (promote their spiritual power) step by step towards Allah and lift others along with them.

The career of the Prophets begins with an intense Divine love which pushes them forward to the proximity of Allah and quickens their evolution. It prompts them to undertake the journey which is known as 'the journey from the created to the Creator'. The keen and intense feeling of this Divine love does not allow them to rest for a moment till they, in the words of Imam Ali, reach the "place of security".

The end of this journey is the beginning of another journey which is

known as the "journey from Allah to Allah". It is during this journey that they are filled with truth and achieve still another kind of evolution.

A Prophet does not stop even at this stage. Having been filled with truth, completed the circle of existence and having become conversant with spiritual stations, he is raised as a Prophet and then begins a third journey of his, which is from Allah to people. But this does not mean his return to the point from where he had started and the loss of all that he had achieved. He returns with all his achievements intact. His journey from Allah to the people is performed with Allah and not away from Him. This is the third stage of the evolution of a Prophet.

His being raised as a Prophet at the end of his second journey means the birth of self-consciousness in respect of people out of his self-consciousness in respect of Allah and the birth of devotion to people out of his devotion to Allah.

With his return to people the fourth journey of a Prophet and a fourth period of his evolution begins. During this journey he moves among the people alone with Allah. He moves among them in order to lead them to unbounded perfection by the way of truth, justice and human values and to give a concrete shape to their limitless hidden capabilities.

From here it is clear that what is the final goal to a liberal-minded reformer is only one of the stages to a Prophet to cross which he helps people. Similarly the highest point which a mystic or a Sufi may claim to have attained is only a point on the way of a Prophet. Describing the difference between prophetic and mystic types of self-consciousness, Dr. Iqbal says:

"Prophet Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by Allah that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned". These are the words of a great Muslim saint, Abdul Qudus of Gangoh. In the whole sufi literature it will probably be difficult to find words which in a single sentence disclose such an acute perception of the psychological difference between the Prophetic and the mystic types of consciousness.

The mystic does not wish to return from the repose of unitary experience; and if he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much

for mankind at large. The Prophet's return is creative. He returns to insert himself into the sweep of time with a view to control the forces of history and thereby to create a fresh world of ideals". (The Reconstruction of Religious thought in Islam, pp. 143 - 144)

At present we are not concerned whether the mystic interpretations are correct or otherwise. What is an indisputable fact is that a Prophet in the beginning has an intense longing for Allah. That is the only anguish which he feels. He seeks Allah and soars towards Him. He draws on that source. Then he feels sympathy with his fellow-beings.

The sympathy of a Prophet is different from that of a liberal-minded reformer or a philanthropist. It is not simply a human sentiment, nor is it like the feeling of pity excited by the sight of a crippled man. A Prophet's anguish is of an entirely different nature and bears no resemblance with the other compassionate feelings and sentiments. His self-consciousness in respect of people is also unique. The fire which inflames his soul is quite different.

It is true that the personality of a Prophet gets so expanded that not only his life gets united with the lives of all others, but his personality takes the whole world under its fold. He feels sorry for the sufferings of mankind. The Holy Qur'an says: "There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves to whom your misfortune is too hard to bear and who is eager to see that you prosper." (Surah al-Tawbah, 9:128)

Addressing the Holy Prophet it says: "Yet you will possibly destroy yourself with grief, feeling sorry for them if they do not believe in this statement (the Quran)." (Surah al-Kahf, 18:6)

It is true that a Prophet is grieved for the hunger, deprivation, disease, poverty, persecution and harassment of the people. He feels so worried that he cannot sleep peacefully because of his apprehension that somebody might be hungry in the farthest corner of the country. Imam Ali once said:

"What a bad idea it would be that I should ever be overwhelmed by my evil desires and should be led by my greed to choose tasty dishes while there may be in Hijaz or Yamamah somebody who has no hope of getting coarse bread and who has never eaten to his fill! Is it reasonable that

I should sleep satiated while there are empty bellies and burning hearts around me?" (Peak of Eloquence, Letter-45)

These sentiments should not be considered to be the result of simple compassion, kind-heartedness or fellow-feeling. A Prophet, being a human being, has in the beginning of his career all human virtues in the same form and colour as other human beings have. But after his entire existence is inflamed by a Divine flame, his virtues take a new shape and a new colour that is a Divine colour.

Those who are trained by a Prophet are absolutely different from those who are trained by a liberal-minded reformer and the society that is formed by him is different from the society formed by the thinkers and the intellectuals.

The main difference is that a Prophet tries to stir up the instinctive forces of man. He stimulates man's mysterious consciousness and kindles his hidden love. A Prophet calls himself a 'reminder' or an 'awakener'. He creates in man sensitiveness to the entire existence, and transfers his own self-consciousness in respect of the whole existence to other people. As for the liberal-minded reformer, he at the most awakens the social conscience of the individuals and acquaints them with their national or class interests.

Chapter 16

Notes

15. Islamic conception of man's innate nature is different from that of Descartes, Kant, etc. Man's innate nature does not mean the actual existence of certain amount of understanding or the actual existence of certain tendencies and desires in him from his very birth, or as the philosophers say that man is born with rationality and will.

Similarly Islam does not accept the theory of the Marxists and the Existentialists who deny the existence of innate nature and say that man is born like a blank sheet and is equally receptive to any idea which is imprinted on his mind.

According to Islam in the beginning of the period following his birth man has certain potential tendencies towards the realization of which he wants to move. An inner force drives him towards his goal, of course with the help of, external conditions. If he actually achieves what is befitting of him, he secures what is called humanity.

If an actuality other than that is imposed on him by compelling external factors, he becomes a deformed being. That is the only plausible explanation of the metamorphosis of man of which even the Marxists and the Existentialists talk.

From the point of view of this school, the relation between man at the birth and the human values and virtues is similar to the relation between a sapling of pear and a fully grown tree of it. An inner link with the help of external factors turns a sapling into a tree. This relation is not similar to that existing between a plank of wood and a chair, for in this case only external factors turn the former into the latter.

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Imam Ali (as)