

## Chapter 22: 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 there 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 a 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.

## 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)

## 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 conditions 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 a 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 makes 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's knowing 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, a 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.

## **Diverse Powers of Man**

Power or force need not be defined. The factor from which some effect is produced is called power or force. Every thing 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.

## **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 to improve the world and make 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 every thing 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 help 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 endeavour 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 himself 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 moulded 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 moulding 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.

### **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 himself 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 involves 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 means 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.

## 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 fulfil 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 are his acts, whether they be 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 prayers.

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 prayers 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, no. 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)

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