

Qur'anic Guidance About the Reality of Man and the History of Mankind

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Mankind was but one people; so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves; whereupon Allah guided, by His will, those who believed to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the straight path. (Qur'an, 2:213)

This verse explains why religion was promulgated and mankind obliged to follow it, and why differences occurred in it.

Mankind, having been created with a natural urge to remain together and cooperate with each other, were in the beginning one single group. Then occurred differences about the acquisition of the necessities of life. These differences could only be settled by creating laws to give each one his right and to make his respect the rights of others.

Allah has ordained the law and sent it down as religion, accompanied by good tidings of reward for those who obey and a warning of punishment for the offenders. This religion was made perfect by the institution of worship. All this was accomplished by sending the prophets and the apostles.

After that, people differed again – this time about the knowledge of religion, or about matters concerning the beginning and end of mankind. Thus, religious unity was disrupted and various groups appeared on the scene, and their differences contaminated the other aspects of life. These second differences only occurred because of the revolt of the very people who were given the book, after the fundamentals and characteristics of religion had been fully explained to them and the proof of Allah had been completed for them.

It is clear that they were two differences: first, the difference about worldly gains, which was but natural; second, the difference between matters of religion which was based, not on nature but on the revolt of mischief-makers. Then Allah guided the believers to the truth about which they differed; and this guidance was done by his Will; and Allah guides whomsoever He pleases to the straight path.

The divine religion is the only means of happiness and felicity for the human species, and it keeps life in order. It creates a balance between various human instincts and urges, and keeps

them on the middle path, preventing them from going towards either extreme. Thus, there appears the best system and the highest discipline in the human life both of this world and of the Hereafter, the material as well as the spiritual. This is the outline of the social and religious history of human beings, as given in this verse. .The details may be seen in various verses throughout the Qur'an

How Mankind came into being

It appears from various verses, found in various places in the Qur'an, that mankind did not develop from any other species – neither from any animal nor from any plant. It is a species which was created by Allah directly from the earth. There was a time when the sky existed with the things of the earth; but there was no man.

Then Allah created a couple, male and female, of this species and all present human beings are descended from that couple. Allah says: O men! Surely we created you of a male and female, and made you into tribes and families so that you may recognize each other . . . (49:13); and He says: He it is who created you from a single being and of the same (kind) did he make his mate. (7:189); again he says: as the likeness of Adam; He created him from dust . . . (3:59).

The theory of scientists that one species changed into another, and that homo sapiens developed from some kind of ape or, going further back, originated from some water animal, is just a hypothesis. A hypothesis is not a definite fact; it is just a supposition made as a basis for reasoning, or as a starting point for academic investigation.

There is no harm in treating it as a reality or as a possibility, because its only function is to provide a basis for scientific research, and to find out whether it can explain the causes and effects of a given matter. It has no more value than that. We discuss this subject fully under the verse (3:59), Surely the likeness of 'Isa is with Allah as the likeness of Adam; He created .him from dust, then said to him 'Be' and he became

His composition from Soul and Body

When Allah created this species, He created it composed of two parts; a material substance, the body, and a non-material one, the soul or spirit. Man's body and soul remain together during his life in this world; then the body dies, the living soul departs and thus man returns to his Creator. Allah says: And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, then We made him sperm, in a firm resting place, then We made the sperm a clot, the We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then

We did grow it into another creation, so Blessed by Allah, the best of the creators. Then after that, you will most surely die; then surely on the Day of Resurrection you shall be raised. (23:12-16) (See it what stage Allah says did grow it into another creation. The same meaning is found in the verse, So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down making obedience to him (38:72).

Then we come to the words of Allah, where he describes the creation of man goes on to say: And they said: What! When we have become lost in the earth, shall we (even) then be returned into a new creation? Nay! They are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord. Say: The angel of death, who is given charge of you, shall cause you to die then to your Lord you shall be brought back (32:10 –11).

In this verse, Allah first mentions the 'argument' of the unbelievers that there was no possibility of being raised to life again because all the limbs and organs of the body disintegrated and turned to dust after death. Then comes the reply that the angel of death causes them to die and fully takes hold of them; they are something different from the mere body; the bodies are lost in the earth but "they" i.e. their souls, are neither lost, disintegrated nor dead.

.We shall explain in a proper place the teaching of the Qur'an about the soul of man

His Perception and Connection with other things

Allah made man and gave him perception, and created in him hearing, sight and the heart (wisdom). He has been given the quality of mind which is known as intelligence and thinking–power. By those difficulties, he looks at the present, finds out about the past and surmises about the future; he has a sort of comprehensive knowledge of the things around him. Allah says (Allah) taught man what he know not (96:5); And Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers, you did not know anything, and He gave your hearing and sight and the hearts (wisdom) so that you may give thanks (16:78); And he taught Adam all the names . . . (2:31).

Allah has given him such faculties so that he can establish relation and connection with all things and can derive benefit from all of them; he can establish that connection either directly or through instruments and machines, the aim all the time being to use them to his own advantage. Look at the innumerable discoveries and inventions, and you will know how Allah has made everything subservient to man. For example, He says: He it is who created you from all that is in earth (2:29); And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all from Himself (45:13).

His Practical Knowledge

The two faculties – intelligence and the ability to exploit other things – produced a third wonderful facility: to find out new avenues of knowledge and perception, so as to use them in his exploitation of other things to his advantage.

Suppose you were looking at this species of homo sapiens for the first time. You would be overwhelmingly astonished to see how each member of this species used an unlimited amount of knowledge and ideas to make his life comfortable. That knowledge and those ideas were acquired, analyzed, compared and developed either through the five senses, which provided knowledge of the external world, or through the five faculties of the mind, or through the power of thought, using and reusing the knowledge acquired by those senses.

Then if you were to look at that knowledge and perception, you would find that they could easily be divided into two groups. First, the knowledge which had no direct bearing on man's own actions.

For example, the perceiving of the earth, the sky, men, horses, etc. or that four was an even number, or that water was a liquid. Such precepts are acquired by man's reaction to the world outside his own being. To acquire those precepts, man does not have to have any intention or action on his own part; they are just information of the outside world for which he is not obliged to do anything.

The second group is opposite to the first one. You will hear him saying: This is good; that is bad; this should be done; that must be avoided; justice is good; injustice is evil. Then, also, you might find him thinking about the ideas of ruling and subjection; of membership and slavery. Such thoughts and precepts have a direct bearing on his actions and activities. All his intentional actions depend on those precepts and knowledge.

And, unlike the first group, these precepts do not originate outside his being; they are formed in his mind either involuntarily, by his instinct, or voluntarily, through his own thinking, or feeling.

For example, he has a system for digestion and nourishment and another for reproduction. These systems are governed by some inner motivating forces, which make him desire what helps in these functions and dislike what hinders him in pursuit of those pleasures. This inner reaction creates in him such emotions and feelings as love, hate, inclination and desire.

These emotions and feelings compel him to think about what is good and what is bad, what is desirable and what is undesirable, what compulsory, and what permissible, etc. Then taking such ideas as a base, he decides his course of action and uses the things around him accordingly.

It is clear from the above that those ideas, morals or ethics (whatever you call them) have no value unless and until they are acted upon. As mere ideas they are worthless. Therefore, we

may call them practical knowledge.

As mentioned above, Allah inspired man with these morals to prepare him for action and make him ready to exploit the hidden forces of the world: "in order that Allah might bring about a matter which was to be done". Allah says: Our Lord is He gave everything to its creation, then

guided it (to its goal.) (20:50); Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High,

Who created, then made complete, and who made (things) according to a measure, then guided (them to their goal.) (87:1-3). The guidance, mentioned in these verses, is the general guidance bestowed on every creature, sentient as well as insentient, to lead it to the perfection

of its being, and to encourage it to act for its own protection and maintenance.

Allah says, especially about the man: And (I swear by) the soul as it is made perfect, and He inspired unto it (about) its vices and its piety. (91:7-8). It shows that man knows about vice and virtue through a divine inspiration which is implanted in his nature. These two precepts – 'should do' and 'should not do' – have no existence outside his mind; and perhaps that is why

Allah used the pronoun "Its" (i.e. soul's) about vices and piety.

Also, Allah says: And this life of the world is nothing but a vain sport and play; and surely the abode of the Hereafter is certainly the life, if they but know (29:64). Sport or play is in the attitude of the mind. If the same action were done as a responsibility or as a job, it would lose

its charm.

Likewise, the aspect of this life – prestige , riches, progress, backwardness, mastership, servitude – are only in the mind of man. These aspects do not exist outside the mind. For example, we say, 'a man who is president' or 'a cloth which is possessed'. Now 'a man' and 'a cloth' are the things which exist outside the mind of the speaker; but that man's 'presidency' .and that cloth's being 'possessed' are not so. These aspects are in the mind only

His exploitation of other things

To make a long story short, one of these ideas is the belief that men must take all necessary steps to preserve his own life; and because of this belief he makes use of all the materials available to him. He exploits matter to fulfill his needs – the knife to cut, the needle to sew, pots to keep water, ladders to climb and innumerable such tools and machines for their benefit. Likewise, he uses plants and vegetables for food, clothing, housing, etc. And subjugates animals to support his own existence; and takes advantage of their meat, blood, hide; hair, wool, tusks, horns, excrement, milk, bones and other such things. He benefits not only from the parts of their bodies, but also from their actions, as he rides a horse or uses the oxen for pulling carts and ploughs.

Man's exploitation does not end here. He goes further and exploits his own kind, subjugating other human beings, or taking advantage of them in other manners, as much as he can

Man is Social by Nature

But man found, to his chagrin, that other men in their turn wanted to subjugate him in the same way as he was thinking about them. The result was a mutual understanding that they would take advantage of him as much as he benefited from them. The "give-and-take" prompted men to live in society and to cooperate with each other in their affairs. It necessitated the safeguarding of the rights of every member of that society to keep a balance between their rights and their duties. This is called social justice.

Society and social justice were founded on the unavoidable compulsion of the above-mentioned situation. Had it not been for that compulsion, man would not have agreed to it at all. This is the reality behind the claim that man is social by nature and that he follows the dictates of social justice! The fact is that this sociability and social justice came into being under the compulsion of the mutual tendency to exploit each other.

That is why whenever a man acquired power over his fellows, the dictates of social justice are forgotten; and the mighty one ignores the rights of the weaker ones. It is as much true in the case of individuals as in that of nations and states; and this has been going on from the early history of mankind until the present, which is called the age of civilization and freedom!

This has been hinted in the verses: Surely he (i.e. man) is unjust, ignorant (33:72); Surely man is created avaricious (70:19); Surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful (14:34); Nay! Verily man is wont to rebel as he sees himself free from want (96:6-7).

His social justice being the primary urge of his nature, most of society would have been overwhelmingly just and equitable. But what we see is always opposite to that. Always the demonstration of 'might is right' comes in front of our eyes; powerful ones coerce weaker ones into subjugation; victors humiliate the vanquished, and exploit them for their own advantage

Difference among human beings

So there is the natural instinct to take advantage of others. Then there are the necessary differences among individuals in bodily physique, in habitat, habits, character and things like that, in their turn create a difference in strength; some become stronger, others weaker. At this stage, the stronger men start ignoring the dictates of social justice and they no longer pay attention to the common weal of the society.

The mighty one exploits the weaker one and gives him little in exchange; the victor takes advantage of the vanquished without giving him any benefit in return. The weak person makes it up by deception and trickery, always waiting for a chance to get the upper hand. And as soon as he gets the chance he avenges himself with a most severe reprisal. Thus the difference leads to chaos, disorder and disturbance. Humanity comes near to extinction, and the happiness and felicity depart from society. It is this aspect to which the verse under discussion as well as some other verses refer: And men were naught but a single people, then they differed (10:19); and they shall continue to differ except those on whom your Lord has mercy (11:118-119).

This disunity and difference was bound to occur in society. As has already been mentioned, men were different in the build of their bodies and the bent of their minds. Of course, they were all human beings and to a certain extent their activities and thinking were similar. But at the same time, their feelings, character and condition were different from each other. That resulted in a difference in their ambitions, sins and goals of life, which in its turn motivated them to different types of actions, and finally led to the disruption of the social system. The disruption and disturbance made it necessary to legislate such comprehensive and fundamental laws as could remove that disturbance, difference and disagreement by, giving each one his due right. Also, it was essential to make people obey those laws.

Nowadays, societies use one of two methods to enforce the law:

1. Compelling the people to obey laws (which are legislated to make all people share in the means of livelihood and to give everyone what could take him to the perfection of his life) and discarding religious tenets like belief in God and higher moral values. Faith in God is completely eradicated, and morality is made to follow the trends of society. Whatever is liked by a sizable section of the community is accepted as virtue.

One day chastity is held in high regard, the next day it is ridiculed and debauchery becomes the norm of the time. One day, truth is respected, the next day falsity is glorified. One day trustworthiness, and the next day embezzlement and so on.

2. Making people obey laws by character-building and by training them to respect the laws – but after removing religion and religious teachings from the training programs.

The first method uses the sheer force of the rulers, the second, combines force with moral teaching. Apart from the rot that sets into society as a result, both methods are based on ignorance and negate the reality of human existence. Man is created by Allah; his existence depends on his Master; he came from Allah and to him he will return. On his departure from this world his life will continue in the next world forever and ever without disruption. But the

quality of the next life will depend on upon this life – how he behaved here, how he maintained the relation with his Creator, and which characteristics he developed and which qualities he acquired. If a man builds his life here on the foundation of the rejection of the divinity, he will surely destroy his "self" and ruin his next life.

Let us take the example of a caravan. The company of the travellers start for a far away place with sufficient provision for the journey. They camp in a caravanserai for a while, no sooner are they lodged for the night then they start quarrelling among themselves. They do not stop at any misdeed; they fight with each other, murder and defame one another, plunder belongings and commit many other atrocities.

Then appalled by the carnage, they sit together to find a way to save their lives and property. Someone says: "Let us jointly use, and benefit from, all these provisions, and allow every individual a right to enjoy them according to his service to the group. We have nowhere to go from this place. Anyone opposing this scheme will be severely punished."

Another person says: "Let's make a law to remove the difference; each of us shall concentrate on his building his character, we must behave with kindness towards our companions, we should not deviate from the path of love, gallantry and nobility. Therefore, we should jointly enjoy the provisions which we have. After all, the provisions are for our own use in this very place."

There is no need to point out that both advisers are mistaken. They forget that the whole caravan is still on its way; and that the traveller in all conditions and at all times, should remember his final destination and manage the affairs of his journey with only one goal in view: "What is the best way of his reaching home?" If he forgets this fundamental truth, there will be nothing left for him but becoming lost in the wilderness, and disaster and death.

A sensible adviser would have advised them with these words: "Use these provisions according to what you need of tonight; save the rest for other stopping places on the way; because your final destination is still very far and you must think to save some of the provisions for use after ".reaching home

Religion removes the difference

This is why Allah created laws, basing them on the belief of the oneness of Allah, on true faith, on fine character and good deeds. In other words, these laws were made to teach people the reality of life, from the beginning up to its final destination; to make them realize that this life should be spent keeping the next life in view, and that this short life is but a preparation for the next one which will last forever and ever.

It is clear that it is only divine law which is based on knowledge. No other law was ever built on that foundation. Allah says: Judgment is not but Allah's; He has commanded that you worship not but Him; this is the right religion, but most people do not know. (12:40)

And He says in the verse under discussion: So Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners and he sent down with them the book with the truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. Here the sending of the prophets to bring good tiding and to warn has been joined with sending down the book which contains the laws and rules, so as to remove their differences.

Another verse says: And they say: "There is nothing but our life in this world; we die and live and destroys us but time"; and they have no knowledge of that, they only conjecture (45:24). This instance of theirs was not only to refute belief in the hereafter; its real motive was to wriggle out from the responsibilities which result from that belief.

Reason says that if you believe in the life hereafter, you must make this life subservient to that one; you must worship the Creator and obey the laws ordained by Him which will guide you in all the spheres of life: worship, social dealings, and the penal law. In short, belief in the hereafter makes it obligatory to follow the dictates of religion, to always keep the improvement of the next life in view. That was the reason why the unbelievers rejected that belief and based their social norms on the assumption that there was nothing beyond life in this world.

Again Allah says: they do not follow anything but conjecture, and surely conjecture does not avail against the truth at all. Therefore, turn aside from him who turns his back upon Our reminder and does not desire anything but the life of this world. That is the (last) reach of their knowledge . . . (53:28-30).

In this verse Allah makes it clear that they base their lives on conjecture and ignorance, while Allah invites them to the Abode of Peace and His religion is based on truth and knowledge, and which the prophet calls them towards what gives them life. Allah says, O you who believe! Answer (the call of) Allah and the Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life . . .

(8:24). Life which is mentioned in this verse has been explained in the following verses: Is he who was dead when we raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like unto him whose similitude is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot forth? (6:122)

Is then he who knows that what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth, like unto him who is blind? Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind. (13:19)

Say this is my way. I invite (you) unto Allah; with clear sight (are) I and he who follows me; and glory be to Allah, and I am not of polytheists. (12:108)

Say are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind. (39:9)

. . . an Apostle from among themselves who shall recite to them their communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them . . . (2:129)

There are many verses like these in the Qur'an extolling the virtues of understanding, calling people to acquire knowledge and follow the path of wisdom. It attaches so much importance to knowledge that has named the pre-Islamic days "the period of ignorance".

With this background, you will realize how unjust is the claim that religion is based on blind faith and ignorance, and is opposed to knowledge and learning.

This allegation was laid by some scientists. They spent their time in natural and social sciences and they did not find in these physical sciences anything which could prove anything metaphysical. And they thought that the "non-existence of proof" is a "proof on non-existence".

It is obvious that they were mistaken in that conjecture.

Going further, they looked at some myths which some entranced interests had imposed on the masses in their countries, claiming that it was religion, and which in fact was nothing but polytheism – and Allah and His Apostle repudiate the polytheists. Then they had the preaching of priests exhorting the public to accept, without any questioning, the dogma and tenets of that mythical religion.

All these factors led them to declare that religion was against knowledge. But the true religion is too great to encourage ignorance or blind faith, or to exhort to act without understanding. The true religion never uttered a word without proper guidance or without an illuminating book. And who is more unjust than the one who forgets a lie against Allah or gives the lie to the truth (when it has come to him? (29:68

Difference in Religion itself

Allah informs us in this verse that differences and disunity in the affairs of society and worldly life were removed for the first time by religion. If there are any laws which are apparently non-religious, they too are based on that first religious teaching.

Then Allah informs us that later on there occurred differences in the religion itself. These differences were created by the followers of the religion, who were given the clear book and who possessed knowledge of it. It happened because of their revolt, injustice and rebellion.

Allah says:

He has prescribed for you the religion which he enjoined upon Nuh, and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and Musa and 'Isa, to establish the

religion and be not divided therein . . . And they did not become divided until after the knowledge had come to them, out of rivalry among themselves; and had not a word gone forth from your Lord till an appointed time, certainly the affair would have been decided between them . . . (42:13-14)

Also He says: And mankind was not but a single people, then they differed and had not a word already gone forth from your Lord, the matter would certainly have been decided between them in respect of that concerning which they disagree. (10:19)

The word which had gone forth was the promise given to Adam: and for you there is in earth an abode and a provision for a (fixed) time. (7:24)

The difference among the followers of religion was based on rebellion and revolt, not on any dictate of nature. The divine religion is based on nature and normally people cannot go astray in a natural thing. Nor can the demand of nature change. Allah says: Then set your face upright for religion, in natural devotion (to the truth) – the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no change in the creation of Allah; that is the right (established) religion . . . (30:30)

.This in short is the foundation upon which this verse is based

Man after the world

Then Allah informs us that man shall soon depart from this world and his intermediate station will be a place called barzakh (barrier,), and the final destination is a place called the Hereafter. His life, after this life is an individualistic one; there will be no social cooperation, mutual help or partnership. Man shall leave this physical world behind, returning to his Lord and Creator. There shall be no room there for that knowledge which we named earlier 'practical knowledge'. There will be no exploitation or taking advantage of others; no civilization, social "give-and-take", nor any other of the paraphernalia connected with the life of this world. His only companion will be his deeds which he did in this world; he will see the good and bad results of his actions. Reality will become clear to him, and he will clearly know the Great News about which they had differed.

Allah says:

And We will inherit of him what he says and he shall come to Us alone (19:80)

And certainly you have come to Us alone as We created you at first, and you have left behind your backs the things which We gave; and we do not see with you your intercessors about whom you asserted that they were (Allah's) associates in respect to you; certainly the ties between you are now cut off and what you asserted is gone from you (6:94)

There shall every soul become acquainted with what it sent before and they shall be brought back to Allah, their true Master and what they did fabricate shall escape from them (10:30) What is the matter with you that you do not help each other? Nay! On this day they are submissive. (37:25-26)

On the day when the earth shall be changed into a different earth, and the heavens (as well); and they shall come forth before Allah, the One, the Subduer. (14:48)

And that there is not for man (aught) except what he strives for; and that his striving shall soon be seen; then shall he be recompensed for the fullest recompense. (53:39-41)

These and many such verses clearly show that man's system of life shall change after death. There shall be no cooperation and not striving. There he shall see the result of his striving and the fruits of his actions. All his striving shall appear before him in its true color and he shall be .recompensed for it with the fullest measure