

Eid ul Fitr

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Excerpt:

In his talk Maulana explains that man was created with a mind with unlimited potential capacity. By initiating the thinking process and undertaking contemplation and reflection, man was required to attain that level of God-realization, which he was potentially capable of. According to the Quran, God-realization had two attributes: *fear of God* and *love of God*. And while throughout the Muslim history (except the period of the Prophet and his companions), there exist names of several men who were God-fearing, no names strikes as being God-loving.

The Maulana elucidating the reason behind the paradox cites that love or fear, until personalized, does not become a deep emotion. Through several examples, he clarifies that while personalizing fear is easy because man can sense it and then his instinct suffices to arouse fearfulness; personalizing love requires man to activate his mind and engage in continuous reflection to understand the world around him and the blessings he partakes.

He concludes by saying that everyone has been given equal potential by God. Unfortunately man is neither able to recognize this nor does he save himself from distraction so as to engage in the task of converting this potential into actual.

The lesson:

Love or fear, until personalized, does not become a deep emotion. While instinct suffices to arouse fear of God, man needs to activate his thinking and personalize every blessing to experience love for God.

Introduction

Today is Shawwal 1, 1433 A.H and the day of Eid ul Fitr. I would begin by relating a dream that I saw today (between 2:00 am and 4:00 am). While I lay asleep in C-29, I dreamt that am sitting in a multi-storeyed building with my team; we are sitting on a floor, which is at such a height that everything outside appears dwarf. The modern-day multi-storeyed buildings usually have a lift but this building did not have a lift. I think the absence of lift indicated that it is the same building in which we are seated right now. For us, there is a glad tiding in this dream that God has given us a high level of spiritual development, a level where all others appear dwarf. When I got up at 4:00 am and started thinking about this dream, I remembered the following verse of the Quran

We could have used these signs to exalt him, but instead he clung to the Earth (7:176)

This verse addresses man and according to it God wanted to exalt man but he chose otherwise. As I started reflecting on this verse, I realised that has God created man with a great potential and it is man's responsibility to convert this potential into actual. All other creatures (in material, plant or animal world) are just the way they are by virtue of their creation. Man has been created with a potential, actualizing which is his responsibility. This brings us to the question - what is it that man must strive to attain in this world? The answer is *marefat* (God-realization).

Marefat (Realization of God)

Man has been created in this world with a mind that has unlimited capacity so far as it's potential is concerned. By initiating his thinking process and through contemplation and reflection, man can attain that level of God-realization, which he is potentially capable of.

One aspect of God-realization pertains to the existence of God but this is not my topic at the moment because doubt on existence of God is now an anachronistic belief. Science today has reached the stage where it has accepted that the universe has an intelligent design (for more details, refer to Fred Hoyle's *Intelligent Universe*). When Intelligent Design is proved in creation, an Intelligent Designer is proved automatically.

As a part of this discussion, I want to explain the question pertaining to how man can attain a high level of realization. In this context, I would like to point out a strange observation I have made during the course of my extensive study of the Muslim history.

According to the Quran, God-realization has two attributes: *fear of God* and *love of God*.

Those who tremble with fear of their Lord (23:57)

Those who believe love God most. (2:165)

Fear of God is aroused in man when he realizes that God alone is his Sustainer and Provider. The realization that man is the taker and God is the Giver, allows man to evaluate the reality of his existence and makes him afraid of the all-powerful God.

Love refers to the feeling of strong affection towards the Creator who created man, the entire life support system, the sun, the moon, water and billions of blessings to ensure that the needs of man are met.

My observation is that throughout the Muslim history (except the period of Prophet and his Companions) there exist several examples of believers who were fearful of God but there exists not even a single example of a person who could develop strong affection or love for God. This is as per my study of the Muslim history and it may be that I am unaware of such people who developed strong love for their Creator.

My mind had this question since a long time. I always wanted to understand why people could not develop love of God. Now after about fifty years, I found the answer as to why in history we have examples of fear of God but not of love of God. I learnt that a strong emotion of either fear or love develops only when man is able to personalize the emotion. Let me take an example. The mere news of fire breaking out in a place would not have much effect on a person. If however, fire breaks out in front of a person, it would swing him into action. This is because so long as it was a news, the situation is not personalized but when fire starts raging before one's eyes, the situation is personalized and it swings man into immediate action.

The phenomenon of personalization

Love or fear, until personalized, does not become a deep emotion. But it must be understood that the ability to personalize fear is instinctive, that is, it is not required to think and personalize fear. For example, the appearance of a Cobra in a room would instinctively activate the sense of fear in man and he would get to action.

When man read the Quran and Hadith, he learnt that Hell and Hellfire may eternally become the fate of man. This aroused fear of God within him as he was able to personalize the situation. Quran refers to Hell repeatedly and entreats man to save himself from it. Upon realizing that after death, man will come face to face with his fate, he was able to personalize the context and this developed fear of the all-powerful God within him. Fear therefore developed instinctively and did not require due thought in order to be felt. Let me explain with another example.

An acquaintance of mine in my hometown, Azamgarh, inherited a piece of property after his father's death. This property had been usurped by the late father by undue means. Reading the following Hadith, brought the son into instant action

Agar koi kisi aur ki zameen galat tarike se qabze mein le leta hai toh wo uski gardan mein latka di jayegi (Muslim)

[Whoever usurps an inch of [someone's] land wrongfully, it will be hanged on his neck on the Day of Resurrection.]

He returned the land to its rightful owner. Though he acted decisively out of fear of God, I never found this man making any mention of love of God. When I tried to understand its reason, I realized that it was so because man is not able to personalize love of God unless he activates his thinking. For example, man gets oxygen for breathing irrespective of where he stays, but this is considered to be a general phenomenon which is being availed by all human beings. This kind of thinking does not allow man to personalize the blessing and feel thankful for it.

In other words, while instinct sufficed to arouse fear of God, man needed to activate his thinking and personalize every blessing to experience love for God. This is what the above verse (Chapter 7) means - man was required to initiate his thinking process but unfortunately he failed to do so.

Love of God

According to a verse of the Quran

He has subjected whatever is in the heaven and on the earth to you. (45:13)

According to a recent research, the entire universe is custom-made to meet the needs of man. The verse cited above is in the context of entire mankind but if man was to personalize the same verse, he would realize that *God subjected the whole universe to his service*. Thinking so, a sea of love would arouse within man and his entire being would be immersed in thanksgiving to God.

According to the Quran

**We have honoured the children of Adam...exalted them above many of Our creatures.
(17:70)**

The above verse means that man is the best of all creations. One way of thinking is to consider all men as best of creations; the other way is to consider that 'I' am a unique being – my body, my mind and my senses are most unique. No animal, mountain, ocean or planet have been created as such. Upon personalizing, you would be immersed in gratitude for your Creator's beneficence.

It becomes clear therefore that personalizing fear was easy, only instinct sufficed and people were able to do it. Personalizing love on the other hand required man to activate his mind and engage in continuous reflection to understand the world around him

Sunnat of Prophet Muhammad

According to a Hadith

Main sardar hun mankind ka par is mein koi faqr ki baat nahin hai

[I am the leader of mankind but it not worthy of being proud.] (Miskhat)

In this Hadith, Prophet Muhammad adopted the principle of personalizing a common blessing of God. Instead of feeling proud, such thinking is meant to arise within man a sense of thankfulness for all those blessings that he is surrounded with.

Once I was travelling in a bus in Haryana. The roads in Haryana had poor infrastructure in those days. While treading on one such road, our bus slipped into the unmade part of the road and tilted so much that passengers thought the bus would topple. In a haste, the passengers started escaping from the bus and one of them grew so afraid that he jumped out of the window of the bus and broke his leg. This man was not concerned about what may happen to the rest of the passengers. In the face of fear, he could only think about himself and personalized danger to such an extent that he frantically jumped out of the bus. This example clearly illustrates how man, by instinct is able to personalize fear. Am reminded of another occasion when I was at a gathering and frantic panic set in amongst the audience due to a rumour of there being a Cobra! The audience began to disperse hysterically, with too little a consideration for anyone else!

Similarly, when a believer learnt about the fire of hell, he could personalize it instantly. But he could not personalize blessings like water, oxygen, a shining sun, a complete life support system and countless such items that were worthy of man's gratitude.

Developing love for God

Man is bestowed with an exceptional mind. Being surrounded by blessings of God, it was required that man develops the ability to personalize these blessings and in return loves God for being his ultimate benefactor. Those who could develop a strong affection towards their Creator, would be raised to positions of honour in the life hereafter.

Salvation would also be for those who followed their instinct and developed fear of God but those who loved God would be placed higher because they activated their minds and discovered the bounties of God through diligent reflection. This quality of being self-made in comparison to learning from others is what made the former special.

According to Islam, God created man and divided his life span into two parts – pre death and post death. Man cannot escape from the post-death period. On the Day of Judgment, those who did not acknowledge God would be cast in the universal litter bin (hell). Those who would be selected for paradise would fall into the following two categories:

1. Those who developed fear of God by following their instinct;
2. Those who activated their mind by developing their intellect and rose to such level of spirituality that they learnt to personalize the blessings of God.

The verse in Chapter 7 explains that acknowledgement of divine blessings is an outcome of relentless intellectual development. When such an individual observes the entire life support system, the universe and all the blessings that he is surrounded with, his soul wants to cry out in acknowledgement of his Benefactor.

Unlike man, material, plant and animal world are strictly governed by the laws of nature. They do not have to think and live; their life is as per the rules ordained in nature. Man on the other hand has been created with a mind. Man thinks and prepares himself for future. In order to develop further, man must learn the ability to personalize. When I first landed at the airport in California, I was overwhelmed to realize that I was getting oxygen here as much as I was getting it in Delhi, India. I was filled with thanksgiving for God's beneficence. Such outpouring of gratitude is felt when man undergoes a high level of realization.

Illustrative example

Before the discovery of oil-fields, people lived in nomadic camps in Saudi Arabia. After oil was found, the inhabitants suddenly grew rich. I read about one such Arab who became very wealthy in the wake of oil discovery. His friend, who was also the custodian of his money, thought of surprising the Arab and bought a fully furnished house for him in Switzerland.

He took the Arab on a tour of the country which was a captivating experience for the Arab. Never before had he seen such luxury or grandeur. Compared to the hard life of nomadic camps, everything that he witnessed now left him enthralled. Then, he was taken to the house and shown around. The exquisiteness of the house had left the Arab, spellbound. At the end of it, his friend took out the keys and handed them over to the Arab! The Arab fell down in prostration. From a tent to riding on camels to this house, it was for him an unbelievable experience! Until then, the Arab was at the level of fascination, seeing all that he did as blessings that others possessed. But when he came to know that the house was owned by him, he could not control his emotions and fell on the ground. This is a perfect example of personalization of blessings.

In the life hereafter, to attain the level that God has ordained for those who would have developed strong affection for their Lord, man must learn to personalize the blessings of God. Upon seeing a glass of water, when thirsty, if man simply drinks from it, he merely gets water from it. If instead, he is able to personalize the creation of the vast universe (the Big Bang, cooling of earth followed by creation of plants and animals), the seas, institution of the system of rain cycle to realize that God has created all this so that he can get water, man will be able to truly thank God. Such a person would be soaked in gratitude and will start living in glory of God. It is for such souls that God has revealed in the Quran

No soul knows what joy is kept hidden in store for them as a reward for their labours.

(32:17)

According to a Hadith

Na kisi aankh ne dekha na kisi dimag ne socha (Muslim)

[It contains what no eye has seen, no ear heard, no human mind ever imagined.]

Conclusion

In order to attain a higher level of paradise, man must strive for a higher level of realization. The case of the Arab in Switzerland is extremely illustrative. The Arab only felt a sense of awe until he had not personalized the blessings and thought everything including the house belonged to someone else but when he got to know that it belonged to him, a tempest of gratitude broke within him. Before that he was only experiencing awe and not thanksgiving.

Unless man learns the principle of personalization, he cannot develop love of God. This is because fear is by instinct but love requires man to develop thinking and save himself from distraction. Developing focused thinking and initiating a thinking process allows man to personalize the blessings of God. Such a person remains immersed in a deep sense of gratitude towards his Creator. It is for such people that God has ordained in the Quran

There are two gardens for one who fears standing before his Lord. (55:46)

The reference to two gardens is in the context of there being one paradise for those who discover God instinctively and another one for those who develop their thinking and come to love their Creator.

According to a Hadith

Quran ka ek matlab wo hai jo upar se samjh aata hai aur dusra wo jo deep thinking karne pe samajh mein aata hai (Mishkat)

[The verses of the Quran have an apparent meaning and a hidden meaning; while the former is manifest, latter is understood by reflection and contemplation.]

All these principles are in the Quran developing an understanding requires deep reflection, which can be undertaken only when man saves himself from all forms of distraction. Newton was once recorded to have said, *I have no special sagacity, only the power of patient thought!* In fact, I would extend it to say that no man has anything special. All men are equal but the price for converting the potential into actual is to save oneself from distraction. Newton was referred to as a 'woolgatherer' as a child but this habit made him a focused thinker.

Everyone has been given equal potential by God. Unfortunately man is neither able to recognize this nor is he able to save himself from distraction so as to engage in the task of converting this potential into actual.

May God grant us the ability to accomplish in this world, the work He desires us. May He accept our efforts and open new opportunities for us and make it easy for us to tread the straight path. May He help us in this world and in the hereafter!