

Ashab-ul Jannah

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Sunday, October 10, 2010

Introduction

The phrase *Ashab ul Jannah* is used in the Quran to refer to those men and women who shall dwell in paradise. Here, I would like to share a recent incident. During the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi, many Buddhists took much interest in reading our literature, particularly the one entitled, '*Does God exist?*' Considering that Buddhism is deemed as a *godless* religion, this incident made me very curious. As per my understanding, such behaviour is a result of non-fulfilment of the inner urge of man. Man is born into the world in such a condition that he knows neither what he is nor why he has been put here. When he examines his own being, it appears to him as an amazing accumulation of intellectual and physical powers. Yet, he did not will himself into being, nor did he play any part in the making of himself. Then he looks at the world outside himself and a universe of such extreme vastness, that he can neither encompass nor traverse it, nor can he count the innumerable treasures it contains. What is all this, and why is it there? Where did this world start from and where will it end? What is the purpose of existence? He finds himself completely in the dark on these subjects. Despite material developments, man remains dissatisfied because his inner urge is unfulfilled yet. Two goals therefore keep troubling man – who is my creator and what is my goal? Every person is in search of his Creator – *He who made him* and is desirous of getting the answer for "*What is the purpose of my life?*" Because although every man envisages the idea of an ideal world, he soon dies without attaining it.

The prime task therefore is to provide the answer to man's questions at rational level. This is the aim of the dawah mission. When I started this mission, many ridiculed it because they thought man would never be interested in knowing such things. But experience suggested that the biggest need of man is to fathom truth.

A unique research finding

A recent research finding has proffered a unique discovery which corroborates the teachings of the Prophets. The research was conducted to detect the causes that led to the coming into existence of the universe. The findings suggest that the universe has been created keeping in mind the needs of man. It is this fact which was revealed in the Quran fourteen hundred years ago. The verse reads

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

This means that everything in universe is destined to serve man. When this was said in the Quran, it was simply a statement but the extensive research conducted with most modern amenities and equipments, has compelled the scientists to deduce that this complex yet meaningful world seems to have been designed for man. The article in the newspaper was entitled '*custom-made universe*'.

Custom-made is the procedure of customising an article to the needs of an individual. The events in nature indicate that they have been customised to meet the needs of man. For instance, the report cites that it is exceptional how frozen water in seas (icebergs) is lighter in density than its liquid form. Exceptional as it is, the lesser density ensures the continued existence of marine life as instead of submerging, the iceberg floats on the surface of water and forms a protective cover which keeps underwater temperature warm. The other example is of the gravitational constant. A slight fluctuation in it can either render the climate too hot or too cold for man to thrive. This report reminded me of the following Hadith,

Man should have yearned for paradise, but I found him most neglectful (Al Tirmidhi)

This Hadith indicates that God created man for inhabiting paradise but man is unaware of this reality. It is a matter of fact that while the basic needs of man attain fulfilment his desires do not. This is because man seeks an ideal world but is compelled to live in less-than ideal and an imperfect world. He wants to stay healthy and not meet accident, turn old or die, yet his goes through these times. Created as a seeker of paradise, man reduces himself to being a seeker of this world.

Custom made world in hereafter

The above and other examples of such nature clearly explain that there exists a custom-made physical world to cater to the needs of man. Similarly, in the world hereafter, a perfect custom-made spiritual world shall exist. The idea '*custom made*' is explained through the following verses of the Quran. According to a verse, the present world has been described as follows:

He has given you all that you asked of Him (14:34)

The idea for a custom-made paradise is described as:

Therein you shall have all that your souls desire, and therein you shall have all that you ask for
(41:31)

Man is unable to come to terms with the contradiction occurring between his want of a perfect world as against his leading a life in the imperfect present world. An idealist put in a less-than ideal world, his mind starts yearning for fulfilment in this world itself. However, sincere thinking and serious contemplation over the Creation plan of God lead him to become a seeker of Paradise.

Discovering Paradise

As I was thinking about this in the morning, I remembered an incident. A company had the vacancy for the job of a manager and a qualified candidate approached for interview, he however was rejected. This man said to the interviewer, *I am the one who is competent to be the manager of your company and you are rejecting me?* This made me realise that the same was true for paradise. Paradise is waiting for those selected individuals who will be able to admire its scenic beauty, taste the delicacies it offers and derive pleasure from the occurrences. This thought made me so overwhelmed that I prayed saying, “O God! If you did not allow man to enter paradise, then who will enter it? O God! If man’s need is paradise then Your need is to help man so that he enters paradise or it will remain vacant.”

It is important to cite here that if man understands the truth of his existence, he will be able to discover Paradise. It will become clear to him that paradise and man are incomplete without one another. In other words, it becomes a test of the seeking spirit of man and eventually leads him to realisation.

But man is forgetful and seldom thinks. Living such, man puts his selection for paradise at risk. He must consciously discover that this world is less than ideal so that such men as will stand the test may be selected for inhabiting the perfect world of paradise. This discovery inculcates yearning for paradise because man realises the meaninglessness of his existence without it. Similar to the act of keeping a fish outside water, this situation is described in the Hadith as follows

This world is a prison for momin (Sahih Muslim)

I recall here an incident of *Khalid bin Waleed* in days prior to his acceptance of Islam. Once, on his way to Medina, he met *Amr bin Aas*. Upon *Amr*’s enquiry about what bound *Khalid* to Medina, he replied, “*Muhammad and others have accepted Islam. Now no men of taste are left in Mecca.*” (Al-Baihaqi)

Becoming a seeker of paradise

Upon recognising the truth about his existence, the present world and paradise, man becomes an aspirant for paradise, that is, *talib-e-jannat*. Such mindset revolutionises the thinking of man and he strives to develop the personality as would be eligible for inhabiting paradise. The Quran says

They will not hear therein any vain or sinful talk, only the words of peace and tranquillity
(56:25-26)

In other words, dwellers of paradise will be free from all forms of negativity. But in order to prove his eligibility for paradise, man will have to strive to maintain his positivity in this world. The first step to this process is *self-discovery*. It allows man to understand that he has been made such so that he can inhabit the perfect world of paradise. Self discovery will also inculcate a strong personality in man capable of utilising every opportunity to increase his positivity. But for this to materialise, man must be a sincere thinker and must deliberate, that is undertake *tadabbur* and *tafakkur* (contemplation). This is crucial because only then will he be able to understand his helplessness and God's powerfulness. The Quran says,

Believers, remember God often (33:41)

It is thinking that leads us to develop an understanding of the deep facets of life. For instance, many must have read the report about existence of universe but I discovered paradise in it.

Towards the end

In this world, everything exists in pairs. Man therefore needs both custom-made physical and custom-made spiritual world. And given this need, it is impossible that the Creator may create one world and not the other. Observing the custom-made physical world, gives us a clue that God must have created a custom-made spiritual world as its pair. Be it particulate matter comprising positive and negative charges or animals, everything in this world exists in pairs.

We must learn to live in the world with awakened senses and active mind so as to derive lessons from life's occurrences. This is *Tazkia* and it paves way for the development of man's intellectual faculties. The realisation of a custom made spiritual world or paradise must fill the heart of man with gratefulness towards God and well wishing for rest of the mankind.

Dawah work is also a form of tazkia and teaches you to progress in life. Let me explain this through an analogy. A person got a job in a rubber factory in Mumbai. While everything else was fine, the only drawback was his knowledge about the rubber industry. He however did not lose hope and started studying the rubber technology. In a short span of time, he became an expert whose advice was now sought by others. Similar is the case with dawah work. Dawah spirit makes you a well wisher for man and you then try to learn the culture and language of the madu so that you can perform effective dawah work.

Man must first discover himself and consequently discover paradise. Doing so is the only profitable option for him. Any other choice will lead him to doom.