

Purpose of Human Life

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Excerpt:

In his talk, the Maulana discusses the eternal question pertaining to the “purpose of human life.” He explains how throughout human history, all philosophers, thinkers and writers – directly or indirectly –raised this question through poems, speeches and writings. The reason why they could not find an answer to this question is that these men sought an answer without accepting the role of God! Citing his own example, the Maulana says that it was his long and relentless quest that led him to find the answer to this question in the Quran.

Sharing deeper realisations, the Maulana explains that it is now a known fact that everything in this universe has been put to man’s service. A scientist has aptly said, “Universe is a custom-made universe”. Man required light so that his eyes could see, so God spread light everywhere! He required oxygen and water to sustain, God created it in abundance! He required air to hear and speak, so air exists, all around! And likewise for so many countless blessings that God has bestowed upon man so that he can think and attain Marefat (God-realisation) – the purpose of his existence!

Introduction

The question pertaining to the “*purpose of human life*” has always overwhelmed thinkers throughout human history. All philosophers, thinkers and writers – directly or indirectly – have raised this question, in poems, in oratory and in their writings. These men were not successful because they wanted to find an answer without accepting the role of God. But it could not happen.

As per an anecdote, a Greek philosopher was yearning to find the answer to this question. He was once found sitting on a tree branch and an onlooker asked him who was he and why was sitting on the tree? He said, *I don't know who I am that's why I am perched on this tree!*

Personal Experiences

Since youth days, I yearned to find an answer to this question – what is the purpose of human life? Nothing else interested me and my long quest led me to find the answer to this question in the following verse of the Quran,

Do you imagine that We created you without any purpose and that you would not be brought back to Us? (23:115)

Man is a different type of creation, unique from the rest of the universe. This means that it is imperative that this different being has a different purpose and a different end. Not believing this is akin to considering this creation as useless.

I was born in a remote village in Uttar Pradesh. My village was small and there was no technological advancement there. Outside my village, was a river which had a bridge. In my young days, I used to sit on that bridge for a long time. My time was spent in silent contemplation, the only other sound being that of a river flowing under the bridge. Looking at the trees, the birds, the sky and the green fields, I used to wonder how different I was from all of these creations! While my thinking was not very mature, I could only reach the stage of comparison and unconsciously discover that I (man) was different from the rest of the universe and no other creation was quite like me! This idea was etched in my mind!

My search continued and I began reading scientific books, which added a new dimension to my understanding. In the world that science discovered – macro and micro – there was no other creation like man!

I would like to add here that I personalise things because unless you do that you don't become a focussed thinker. For example, torch has a focus knob, if you increase focus, visibility becomes better. If you think in terms of all mankind, it reduces focus but a philosopher cannot think like this. A philosopher thinks, "Who am I?" This was my mindset from the beginning and therefore this question pertained to my being.

Science made great progress to fathom the secrets of the universe but in no corner of the world has it so far reported the existence of another being like man. This complex question is linked to many other questions because when I am a different being, it is important that I have a different purpose, a different role and a different end.

I had read the Quran in a madrassa (seminary) which actually leads to only a degree but when I later read it, I came to know the purpose of life and understood the meaning of the above verse.

A mere study of the Quranic commentaries will not suffice to explain the meaning of the verse and it will appear rather ambiguous. I could understand because I had a background, which helped me realise the meaning of this verse.

The above verse has an implicit aspect - that man is born as a different being and as such it is necessary that he has a different purpose, a different role and a different end. He who is not able to discover this will die blind. This is the first phase of discovery for man. He who does not pass this stage, will develop only a limited understanding of truth.

Philosophers wanted to fathom the purpose of man's life without accepting the existence of *wahy* (revelation). Science accepts that,

"It gives but only a partial knowledge of reality". For discovering reality in the complete sense, man needs *wahy* (revelation) which is preserved in the form of Quran.

Man's unique possessions

Man has two very unique possessions which no other creation possesses. First is man's mind – no sky, mountain, planet, thinks. Other animals (besides man) are capable of very limited kind of thinking, which revolves around food and safety. There is no comparison between man's thinking mind and that of an animal. Thinking on why man has a thinking mind, I reached the understanding of what God describes as the purpose of creation. According to the Quran,

I created the jinn and mankind only so that they might worship Me (51:56)

In Chapter Al Rehman, the following verse has been repeated more than thirty times,

Which of your Lord's wonders would you deny? (55:13)

Marefat (or God-realisation) is the phenomena of unfolding the potential in nature. It was man's task to discover the secrets of nature and attain God-realisation (*Marefat*). This goal is imperative for man to achieve because *Marefat* is the price for paradise.

The other thing that man has is – the capacity to enjoy. No other creature has the capacity to enjoy. Animals do not possess taste buds as developed as man. Man can relish the taste of food, derive pleasure from the sound of music, walk leisurely on grass, barefoot – everything has a sense of enjoyment for man. This sense of pleasure is a prediction for man that if he uses his mind and reaches God-realisation, his sense of fulfilment would find an ultimate resting place!

Man is a storehouse of desires

I often think that man is a storehouse of strange desires and wants. Yet no man in this world died in fulfilment of all his desires, everyone dies with unfulfilled desires. What then is the reason behind man possessing such a sense of enjoyment - only to die and perish?

It is therefore impossible to think that man is created purposelessly. It is remarkable to note that science has discovered that the universe we live in is a very meaningful universe. Then, how can man, the most unique creation of this meaningful universe, have a purposeless existence?

It means that the thinking ability in man is itself a proof that he must think and contemplate on something. What is that *something*? The answer is – he must contemplate upon the wonders of the world! The unlimited sense of enjoyment in man must find its fulfilment and the answer to it would be paradise.

This is why the biggest rulers, who died, passed away with a sense of unfulfillment. Because the material comforts they collected were limited but the sense of enjoyment was unlimited and hence they could find no satisfaction! It is this contradiction because of which, man lives and dies in contradiction.

Quran has two very unusual verses, one with respect to this world and the other in context of the hereafter,

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

It means that everything in this universe has been put to man's service. A scientist has aptly said, "*Universe is a custom-made universe*". It is a strange realisation! If we want light for our eye to see, God spread light everywhere! Man required oxygen and water to sustain, and it exists in large quantities. He required air to hear and speak, so there is air! It is required that Earth's gravity is in just the right proportion for man to exist and it is so!

The question then is that man can still not enjoy in this world. There exist limitations, disadvantages, accident and death. It is for this reason that God has made paradise. Quran says,

**A Paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, which has been prepared for the God-fearing.
(3:133)**

The above description of paradise is not in terms of area but in terms of enjoyment. This means that there will be universal opportunities, to enjoy, endlessly. Man's unlimited sense of enjoyment seeks complete fulfilment and this is where he gets the answer!

Satan's incitement

Satan has always been active to incite man to derail him from the right path. But his biggest ploy to derail the man from right thinking is that of Theory of Evolution! This concept was prevalent in Greek times as well and talks about how man has "evolved" from other beings over a period of time. What Greek philosophers had thought continued but Darwin presented it in a much organised way. He put in man's mind that there is no difference between man and another being. There are common ancestors between me and a lizard, me and an ant! There is no difference between these beings! In other words, Darwin demolished the belief that man is different from other beings. This led to elimination of right thinking from man because the concept of difference marks the beginning of right thinking!

There was a time when Darwin's Theory held sway in the world, it still does! But this is an absurd theory. Those interested, may read Lunn's book, *Revolt Against Reason*, which demolishes Darwin's Theory.

Beginning of Marefat

The beginning of *Marefat* is that man discovers himself as a different being! If man fails to do this and thinks that he is like a monkey and a horse, he ceases to consider himself a different being! What science discovered is 50 percent of knowledge and the remaining 50 percent has to be taken from Book of God and the guidance of Prophet Muhammad. If man does not do this, he will keep groping in dark.

I often think that God wanted to create something that is better than everything else, except God's own being! So, he created paradise! He now wants deserving candidates for paradise – people who would be able to attain God-realisation and follow the righteous way of living life. In other words, the criterion for being selected to inhabit paradise is that man will have to transform himself to become a “purified soul”.

What is purification?

Purification is expressed in the following verse,

Which of your Lord's wonders would you deny? (55:13)

I once read that a European lady was very eager to see the Taj Mahal and when she saw it, all she could exclaim was, “*Wonderful!*” God's wonders are hidden in creations!

According to the Quran,

If all the trees on earth were pens, and the sea [were] ink, with seven [more] seas added to it.

The words of God would not be exhausted. (31:27)

Such a discovery is called “Marefat.” It is not a technical discovery. If for example a computer discovers these things, it will continue to be a computer (machine) but man who is composed of sentiments, emotions and feelings – when he discovers what happens is described in the following verse of the Quran,

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

Why should man love God most?

The act of discovering the wonders of the universe cannot be mechanical in nature. Due to this discovery, a sense of *shukr* (acknowledgement) arouses within the discoverer. This *shukr* converts the discoverer into what has been termed in the Quran as “**one who loves God most**”. The term used in the Quran is “*Hubb*” which means “strong affection”. Because discovery is enormous, so is its response. Once man passes this phase of discovery, the realisation and the following response from him make him a deserving candidate for paradise!

Paradise is a supreme form of art and to appreciate this, God seeks a superior mind, hence God created man. And He gave man all the qualities to unfold the wonders of God. This is not a simple fact. It forms man’s personality. Personality building is directly linked to this.

Paradise is not where all the unworthy shall be dumped. People underestimate God and paradise and hypothetically assume that paradise is for them! I got a phone call from United States of America and the caller told me that an Islamic scholar, addressing a gathering of people in America, said that they would get paradise, if they love Prophet Muhammad! This is a baseless thing, which is neither in the Quran nor in Hadith.

The present-day ulema (Islamic scholars) do not have rational arguments that would appeal the modern mind. Instead of trying to convince the audience with self-styled criteria, these ulema must propagate the Quranic criterion of getting entry into paradise.

I was talking to an American Professor who asked me why is it that the Muslims hate the Western civilization? I told him that an Arab proverb says,

Log jis baat ko nahin jante, uske dushman ban jaate hain!

[People become enemies of that which they know not.]

Muslims do not know what Western civilisation is! They must understand that nudity or alcohol is not the real part of the West. The real aspect is that they discovered the wonders of God, though they utilised these discoveries primarily for material advancement. But there is no other civilisation in the world, which could discover the wonders as the West did. Hence, they have a supportive role in the journey which leads to discovery of God.

I studied in a seminary but became a staunch agnostic because what was taught to me, did not appeal my mind. But later when I read the books of the western authors, I got a different level of Islam, which was at the level of my intellect. I did not find this level in seminary etc. I then, reverted to Islam. What I am saying is not in our conventional literature, it is in the modern books and it led me to a renewed conviction. Till the time man develops a strong conviction at the level of his conscious mind, he cannot accomplish a big feat. He cannot discover God's greatness. The language of fatwa cannot make one a dawah hero! It is only when man discovers God, as such, with all His wonders; he is filled with a great feeling of imparting the message of God to all humankind. This is why the Companions became heroes!

I once read an incident of an American Professor who was researching on the subject of law of universe. He did it for years and eventually discovered it as per his understanding. He set out of his house and wanted to shout and tell people about it. He got to know that the theatre was playing for that night so he went there, got onto the stage and took the microphone! He said, *'Stop everything, I have discovered the law of universe, that I have to tell you!'* This is the spirit of a dayee. Fatwa or poetry does not make dayees. A dayee must play a global, universal role, which he can do only if he has had a discovery as big as that of the scientist! This is why there are no dayees that come up in the madrassa (seminary); there they study the traditional literature and get the degree.

When man discovers the wonders of God and loves God the most as a result, he then emerges as a person who is a dayee and works unlimitedly. He does not care about what others may think! The personality of a dayee is heroic! An orientalist wrote about the Companions that before Prophet Muhammad, Arab was an infamous area, without any constructive activity. But after the Arabs discovered the truth through the Prophet, the entire community became a *"nation of heroes!"*

Every dayee is therefore a hero, anything less is not a dayee! This can happen only when you have discovered wonders of God and such a personality has come into being! To discover truth at the level of wonders would lead to a strong connection between you and God and you will be filled with the feeling that everyone should get to know about it! You will be devoid of all fears!

Islam therefore is not a culture, which is seen in present-day Muslims. Islam is a living force, which strengthens mind of man.

I pray that you discover Islam as such and become heroic dayees!

Question-Answers

Question 1: Who is going to be like you, after you?

Answer: There is no need for it. In this world, the biggest movements have stood upon literature, be it Marxism, or others, all have increased on the basis of literature. In our case as well, there is such a literature which is a replacement. According to Quran,

Do not despair of God's mercy (39:53)

I often think why God refrained man from succumbing to despair! It struck my mind that it cannot be that God leaves man in a world of despair and says do not be in despair. It means that help comes from God, Himself. I will tell you an example from yesterday. A programme happened in Delhi where only 2 speakers had to deliver the talk – a Professor from Georgetown University and I. It was the first time that I was sharing the stage with such a Professor and I was shaken from within! English was his mother tongue and I studied only in a seminary. I was thinking that something may happen, like I may faint and I may get an excuse to escape but I could not get up and go. So, in extreme sense of helplessness and anxiety I prayed to God in my own words,

O Khuda! Tu Gabriel ko dobara zameen per bhej de.

Mein human face ke taur par jaa raha hun par Gabriel bolen!

(O God! I urge You to send Gabriel on earth, once again.

I would only be the human face and he would speak!)

And it so happened that people later told me that they felt that the level of confidence that I had, even the Christian professor did not have! People only know to pray to God for their material comforts but do not know to pray to God for dawah work!

I met a young person yesterday who has been involved in the CPS mission. He said to me that although he had been engaged in dawah work but his level of confidence was very less. I told him that he too was present at the programme and he saw that on one hand was an American professor and on the other hand, was I, a Maulana. But whose level of confidence he thought was more? He agreed that mine was higher! I told him that it is for this reason that the Christ had said,

Mango to milega. Darwaza khatkhataoge to khola jayega! Woh kaun baap hai ki uska beta us se machli mange aur woh uske haat mein saanp rakh de!

[Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you.

Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?]

With this mission, not only Quran and literature but God and his fleet of angels are there! Then, what is there to fear? If you live with such little conviction, then will you be able to face God with it? These are Satanic incitements and you must seek refuge from God to ward them away!

Question 2: Women spend their time in eating and setting up their house. It comes to my mind that if there were no such things, women would have put themselves to spiritual pursuits?

Answer: This is not correct. European ladies do not spend time as housewives but they do not have spiritual pursuits. The correct way of thinking is that it is our responsibility to instil such ladies with what is required in life and how they can use their potential.

Question 3: Is organ donation permissible in Islam?

Answer: Yes, it is. Those who give fatwas against this have no knowledge of the subject. Often, fatwas are fatwas of unawareness. Once I had a discussion with one such cleric who had given this fatwa and he said it was unislamic because it was a case of disfiguration. I told him that he had no knowledge of the process of organ donation. At the time of removal of organs or tissues, the appearance of the body is not altered. A highly skilled surgical transplant team removes the organs and tissues, which can be transplanted in other patients. Surgeons stitch up the body carefully, hence no disfigurement occurs. I consider it as “*Sadqa-e-jariyah*” that is even after a person’s death, the deed done by him continues to help some other person.

Question 4: What is importance of accepting someone as a “Guru” in order to lead a purposeful life?

Answer: If you find a true Guru, you must accept. Besides, Nabi (Prophet), no one can claim himself to be a Prophet. It is therefore upon us to discover and then accept once we recognise that a person has these traits.

Question 5: I can say this with conviction that an Al-risala reader may get entangled in other diseases but will not succumb to stress?

Answer: I think this is correct but for those who read Al-risala properly and that is why I had written that he who reads it once, hasn’t read it, twice only read it and the reader who reads it multiple times is the one who derives benefit from it.

Question 6: What can modern-man do to put his child on the right path? Should parents beat them to make them disciplined?

Answer: Beating the child is counter-productive. But I believe that in modern times, the biggest enemies of the child are their parents because they pamper their child. They earn and give easy money to their children. Easy money is the worst thing! And therefore, rectification of children would begin from rectification of parents. Those parent who want to hit their children, should hit themselves as they are the ones who spoilt their child. Parents put a wrong criterion of love in the mind of the child, whatever he says is done. When he steps in the world outside, he realises that he is not going to get by asking alone! He would have to work towards getting what he wants. So, children grow up loving their parents and hating everyone else!

I once went to Saharanpur where four Hindu boys came to meet me. They told me that when they were at home, their parents used to get whatever they wanted but when they stepped into the outside world, they realised that they get only what they had worked for!

So, parents in effect are preparing individuals who grow up harbouring hatred for all other men. The environment at home is “*receiving without giving*” but when the child steps outside, the environment is, “*in giving, that we receive*”. Such parents are enemies of humankind!

Question 7: What is the significance of interpretation of dream? What is its importance in Islam?

Answer: Among the books of Hadith, there is a book of dreams (*Kitab-e-Ruiya*). According to a Hadith,

Dream is the 46th part of prophethood (Sahih Al Bukhari)

There are three kinds of dreams – one which is a depiction of what one has in his mind, another is a Satanic dream and a third which is a glad tidings from God.

Question 8: What is “Qaza - e-umri” (pending Namaaz)?

Answer: This concept emerged when namaaz only became a form, devoid of spirit. This is despite a Hadith that says, *namaaz is where khushu (spirit) is*. This was a later-day creation which was not in Islam. The principle is that the day man realises, he must become active about it. And instead of performing kazai umri, man must run to do pending dawah work!

Question 9: How can we increase the conviction to do better dawah work?

Answer: This feeling will increase manifold when you will think that I alone possess the preserved book, no one else does. There is no other book that is preserved, all have had changes and the historical credibility of none of them is proven. This conviction makes a dayee very powerful. This is similar to when a merchant realises that he has that which no one else has! He would spring into action. So, when you arise with Quran, you will jump everywhere without fear and distribute it to all.

Question 10: A person said, we can control the feelings of God that is, if man performs good deeds, God will be happy and if he commits wrongful deeds, he will make God angry?

Answer: The point is that man does not know whether the deed performed by him is good or bad. God alone knows whether the deed was good or bad. It is not in the control of man! Whatever man does, will be held worthy, only if God accepts it. That is why, all the Companions used to live in fear thinking what they did might not be accepted by God.