

## **The Search of Man**

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*Excerpt:*

*In his talk, the Maulana explains why in the present world no man – rich or poor – is able to fulfil all his desires to the level of perfection he seeks. All die without having achieved the goals they had set out for themselves. This brings up the question: Why has man been so unsuccessful throughout history? Maulana explains that this is so because the true habitat of man is paradise and that is where his desires shall find fulfilment. Paradise will be where he would think the way he would want to think; where he would see what he desires to see; where he would listen to the sounds that give pleasure to his ears in the real sense; where he would have the company of those people who would make his life highly meaningful, where he would eat such food as he eternally craved for and would sip such drinks as are only beautiful figments of his imagination today.*

*However, he also cautions that given his urge for perfection, man is deluded by Satan into striving for ideals. Whereas in reality man shall never attain these ideals as this world is not his real habitat. Thus, neither an individual nor a leader or movement ever achieved the ideal they set out for themselves.*

*The lesson:*

*Paradise is the real habitat of man but he finds himself outside his habitat. As he finds himself in this world, man must remember that the present world has not been made as a place of luxury and comfort, but rather as a period of trial and as such as will help determine whether he is eligible or not for the eternal life in Paradise.*

## Introduction

Since childhood I have been searching for answers to questions pertaining to man's search. The most important aspect of my search has been the story of Adam and Iblis, which is mentioned in the Quran. According to the Quran, at the time of creation of Adam, Iblis issued a challenge to God:

**“I will bring all but a few of his descendants under my sway.” (17:62)**

Iblis challenged to lead astray majority of mankind from the path of God. What he claimed seems to have become a reality today. Iblis was indeed successful in mission of driving away the majority from the path of God and from the Creation Plan of God. As I set myself thinking, I began deliberating on what led to this occurrence. It was yesterday that two incidents aired on radio triggered my mind and offered an explanation for this phenomenon. The first incident pertained to a young scientist from South India who completed his initial education in India and went to America for higher studies. Upon his return to India, this passionate and ambitious man built a university. He however, died at the age of thirty-five. This incident made me realise that no man – whether rich or poor, an ordinary man or a king - is able to fulfil his desires in this world.

The second incident pertains to the situation prevalent in Egypt. Since last sixty years, its inhabitants have either been killing or getting killed. In the last one year alone, about one thousand people have died in Egypt! The Muslim Brotherhood has been working in Egypt for sixty years now. Their leader Syed Qutb wrote a book in Arabic called *al-Adalah al-ijtimaiyyah fil-islam (Social Justice in Islam)*. He gave the goal of implementing social justice in Egypt, which did not come into being despite bloodshed and feuds. First, in 1952 King Farouk was ousted in a coup and General Naguib assumed power. After some time, General was removed from office and he was succeeded by Gamal Abdel Nasser. Following Nasser's death, Anwar Sadat assumed office but he was assassinated in 1981. Then, Hosni Mubarak came into power in Egypt and he remained the premier for thirty years till recently in 2011 he was forced to relinquish his office. It was after this ouster that Muhammad Morsi was elected President, and now within a year of his rule he was deposed on July 3, 2013. This leads us to a question: what happened to the idea of social justice envisaged by Egyptian leaders? Why could they not realise their goal? This question does not pertain to the above cited incidents only. In reality, no one is able to fulfil his dreams in this world. Be it leaders, political parties, or individuals, all die without having achieved the goals they had set for themselves. Why has man been so unsuccessful throughout history?

In the morning today, I became overwhelmed at the uniqueness of my creation – observing my hands, feet and the rest of my body – I realized that man was designed to inhabit paradise! The desires of man can find fulfilment in paradise alone! This becomes understandable when we realise that none of our desires get fulfilled to the extent we want them to be fulfilled. The level of perfection does not match the level we desire. This perfection can only be had in paradise, a world, where a creation such as man attains his complete fulfillment, where he thinks the way he wants to think; where he sees what he desires to see; where he listens to the sounds that give pleasure to his ears in the real sense; where he touches those things which gives him the highest degree of pleasure; where he has the company of those people who make his life highly meaningful, where he eats such food as he eternally craved for and he sips such drinks as are only beautiful figments of his imagination today.

The irony is that despite being created for paradise, man finds himself in a world where his desired remain unfulfilled; a world that is not his habitat. Just as a fish struggles for life when kept out of its habitat (water), same is the case of man. This is alluded to in the following verse of the Quran:

**“We have indeed created man in the best of mould, then We cast him down as the lowest of the low.” (95:4-5)**

Paradise is the real habitat of man and he was created in order to reside in paradise but man finds himself outside his habitat. All along his life in this world, man keeps yearning for his true habitat and dies. This realisation of paradise being man's real habitat made me understand the strategy that Satan deploys to lead man astray. According to the Quran, Satan deceives man through *tazeen* (8:48). *Tazeen* refers to 'beautification'. This word is quite ambiguous in commentaries. In my understanding, *tazeen* refers to the state of deception Satan creates to make man believe that he can pursue ideal goals in this world: goals he cannot achieve. Every man is deluded by Satan into striving for ideals. Whereas in reality man shall never attain these ideals as this world is not his real habitat. Thus, neither an individual nor a leader or movement ever achieved the ideal they set for themselves. Let me explain the case one by one.

### **The case of an individual**

Man is said to be an ideal-seeking or perfection-seeking animal. He keeps searching for the perfect in this world. But the truth is that he cannot achieve ideal in this world as ideal can only be attained in paradise: man's true abode. Being deprived of his real habitat, the case of man becomes similar to a fish when it is taken out of water!

The limited period before death is meant to be a test for man, while the eternal period after his death will be the period for his reward or punishment, based on his performance in the test in this life. This is the scheme of existence for this world as devised by its Creator. The real aim of creation is to select those who are fit to inhabit the world of Paradise. According to this Creation Plan of God, human beings are placed in situations where they have to face hardships from time to time at every moment throughout their lives as part of their test. Difficulty and sadness are integral part of the creation plan of the Creator. No man has the power to extricate himself from this life of trial and tribulation. This arrangement is to remind man of the fact that the present world has not been made as a place of luxury and comfort, but rather as a period of trial and as such as will help determine whether he is eligible or not for the eternal life in Paradise. In spite of tremendous development in the present world, adverse conditions are still very much in evidence. But people, owing to their lack of awareness of God's creation plan, do not understand why this is prevalent. They do not realise that in order to find a place in the eternal abode, man is required to take a test in this world. This world is therefore a preparation ground so that man develops the personality that will make him eligible to inhabit paradise. The analogy of a fish illustrates the case of man in this regard. A fish will struggle in any place outside water. Similarly, the world that man desires, in accordance with his taste, is paradise, not the present-world. In this world, man can only strive to make himself a deserving candidate.

### **The case of a society**

All great thinkers from Plato to Aristotle wanted to establish an ideal system. However, all of them failed in their efforts. There is no difference between a Muslim and non-Muslim in this regard. We have the example of the most influential Muslim organization, Muslim Brotherhood, which failed in Egypt. Sixty years passed, several lives and resources were lost but without any result. This is because, their goal was the establishment of an ideal society; Syed Qutb's book can be consulted in this regard. Thus, the ideal society or ideal system, towards which they expended their energies and for which the entire Arab world supported them, could not come to pass. The most recent example being the ouster of Dr. Morsi, which led to killing of nearly one thousand people. The Quran says:

**“Whoever killed a human being—except as a punishment for murder or for spreading corruption in the land— shall be regarded as having killed all mankind.” (5:32)**

The killing of one thousand people in Egypt was equivalent to killing of all human beings one thousand times and all this without any result! What is the reason behind this failure? The reason is only one: they all are running toward achieving the non-achievable. They will keep striving for it and will never attain it.

At this point, it is important to understand why the goal of bringing into being an ideal society is unachievable? God has granted freedom to all and therefore man's hands are not tied. That is the reason why we see instances in history such as killing of Prophets. Prophet John was killed and so was Caliph Umar. Even reformers like Mahatma Gandhi were assassinated. These instances show us that even if someone builds an ideal system temporarily, soon it will be jeopardized by the misuse of freedom of a single individual. It is important to understand that if freedom cannot be abolished, ideal society cannot be brought into being. If we lived in a world of robots, an ideal society could have come into being. But that is not the case. This is a world of free men, who are free to do what they want.

What is the solution? The solution has been provided in the Quran but present-day Muslims are unaware of it. An individual should seek the fulfilment of his desire to the extent of need-fulfilment. According to a Hadith,

**“If a person has a place to reside, food to eat, and a servant to serve him, then it is as if he has been given everything in the world”.**

But man follows greed and not need and it is this behaviour which destroys him. For the individual, Islam advises contentment and a need-based life. For the society or the socio-political system, Islamic teaching is given in this verse:

**“Let them not dispute with you on this matter. Call them to the path of your Lord.” (22:67)**

In the socio-political realm, certain issues are inherently contentious. For example, seeking a change of government shall entail a confrontation with the existing one. In such cases, status-quoism must be practiced. I shall take our example. We do peaceful dawah work in India and have not faced any confrontational situation whereas Egypt and Pakistan are constantly in a state of violent turmoil because they are unable to reconcile with what they currently have.

The formula I recommend is: status quoism in politics and activism in dawah work. In other words, one must practice ‘status quoism’ in confrontational fields and ‘action’ in non-confrontational fields like dawah work. This is the Islamic formula. Further, one should adopt a need-based principle in matters pertaining to family, children etc. Once your family understands the significance of a need-based style of living, they would be content with it. Man protests against atrocities and injustice because he does not plan his life in accordance with the Creation Plan of God. In reality, there is no oppressor or oppressed, man pays the price of his transgression.

If man restricts himself to his field of work, he shall not be oppressed. For example, Kashmir witnessed the killing of Muslims, over a long period of time because they transgressed bounds. Muslims in Kashmir should have accepted the 1947 post-partition, political status-quo. But they didn't accept it and instead started violent protests and as a result, they had to face dreadful consequences. Same was the case with Palestine. The people of Palestine should have accepted the 1948 Balfour decision but they did not do so. Had Kashmir and Palestine observed status-quoism on their political situation, there could have prevented all the bloodshed and loss of lives.

The Quran says:

**“If you persevere and fear God, their designs will never harm you in the least.” (3:120)**

This verse has a very important teaching. It teaches man to remain patient so that he does not become a target of others' conspiracies. If on the other hand, man saves himself from choosing a wrong course, he would not become the target. The present-day Muslims are paying the price of their own absurd policies. They do not understand that politics is the art of the possible. Instead of planning to achieve the achievable, they strive to attain that which is unachievable. Arabs for instance, planned to achieve the unachievable and nationalised the Suez Canal. They have been paying the price of their wrong steps. Moreover, we must understand that God did not create us for the purpose of fighting. We have been brought into existence to achieve a positive result, that is, the development of our personality. We are required to develop our personality so that we may become deserving of being settled in Paradise. This is the real goal of man. But Muslims are engaged in fighting and bloodshed, and thus are not being able to attain this positive goal at all. This is a great deprivation!

Man's prime concern should be paradise, his true habitat. Unfortunately man has taken other objects and ideas as his goal and is headed towards great deprivation. After death the reality of Hereafter shall serve as a great shock to those who spent their lives in vain pursuits. The Quran describes the scene of the Day of Judgement in these words

**On the Day when some faces are bright and some faces are dark (3:106)**

In a nutshell, as far as individual life is concerned, man's goal shouldn't be an ideal family or business. Rather he should be content with what fulfils his need. He will then have enough time to develop himself as a muzakka (purified) personality.

Similarly, with regard to the social system, he must know that in this world, ideal cannot be achieved. Keeping this in mind, he must then chart out a feasible course of action. If this is not followed, man's condition in the Hereafter shall be as is alluded in this Biblical verse

*There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew, 13:42)*

I pray that you do dawah work and chart out the course of your life in accordance with the Creation Plan of God.

### **Question and Answer**

*Q1. Can we pray for virtuous children?*

A1. There is no verse which requires one to pray for children. But if they are born, then for one should pray for their virtuousness. There is a verse in the Quran in this regard:

**“Lord, grant us joy in our wives and children and make us a model for the righteous.” (25:74)**

*Q2. How to remain on the path of Paradise?*

A2. Keep thinking. Everything is dependent on thinking and doing dua.

*Q3. What is the difference between history-making and history-writing?*

A3. History-making is not within man's capacity. History-writing is correct and should be undertaken.

*Q4. How to determine mistake in tabir-e-deen (interpretation of religion)?*

A4. Compare the interpretation with the Quran and Hadith and you will know the mistake. Any mistake in interpretation is committed only when there is deviation from the Quran and Hadith.

*Q5. People are ready to accept: “all have freedom”, but they don't want to accept: “ideals cannot be achieved”. What to do in this regard?*

A5. The latter is against the Creation Plan of God, and history bears witness that ideals cannot be achieved; therefore it is borne out of facts.

*Q6. How to develop wisdom to differentiate achievable and unachievable?*

A6. If man is sincere, he will examine thoroughly the matters which are achievable and unachievable, he won't remain unaware.

*Q7. Muslims have created many sects which keep fighting amongst themselves. What fate will God decide for them in the Hereafter?*

A7. You should not think about others' fate in the Hereafter. You don't even know what will happen with you. As far as the issue of various sects is concerned, you can read my book Tajdeed-e-deen.

*Q8. A member of Muslim Brotherhood said that they will resort back to violence to restore order. Why don't they learn from their mistakes?*

A8. They've created a wrong belief. That is, they think that if they succeed in their goal, they consider themselves victorious, and if not, then they regard themselves as martyrs. Thus they believe that they are successful both ways. This is a wrong notion and has nothing to do with Islam.