

## **Islamic way of thinking**

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## **Introduction**

Many books have been authored on similar lines like, “*Islamic way of life*,” “*Islamic way of social behavior*,” or “*Islamic way of politics*” but most crucial is to understand the Islamic way of thinking. This is because all these titles are related with the form and not the spirit whereas Islam focuses on spirit and not form.

This title came to my mind as I was reflecting upon the case of Japan. Ever since the severe earthquake and tsunami ravaged Japan, life has been severely disrupted in one of the world’s most technologically advanced nations. The damage in the nuclear reactors has become a cause of serious concern. While on one side, the world was witnessing a catastrophe unleash, the Muslims on the other hand reacted very strangely at what unfolded. They labeled this calamity as the wrath of God (*azaab-e-khuda*). This is a grave matter because those who claim such things are also implying that they are on the safe side. Such a belief is purely false and worthy of punishment. It is certainly not the Islamic way of thinking.

## **Islamic Way of Thinking**

Islamic way of thinking in this regard is that when a believer is informed about the death of his fellow human beings in a catastrophe he rushes to pray and weeps before God because he could not spread the word of God to those who died.

Spreading the word of God is the foremost responsibility of a believer. In other words, only those who spread the word of God to mankind will become a part of the community of believers (*Ummat-e-Muhammadi*). According to a Hadith

*Imaan wale khuda ke shuhada hain, is zameen par* (Al Bukhari)

Believers are witnesses of God (on this Earth)

It is crucial to bear in mind that discharging the dawah responsibility is the pre-requisite to becoming a part of the *Ummat-e-Muhammadi*. This is correct thinking as it reminds man of his responsibility. One must derive lesson from every occurrence and think what is it that should have been done. Unfortunately, this Islamic way of thinking eludes the minds of present day Muslims.

Had the Muslims adopted sincere and honest approach, they would have tried to assess the situation throughout the Muslim world, which is undergoing grave unrest. Instead, they attribute these events to enemy conspiracy. It has become a practice amongst the Muslims to label a catastrophe that befalls the secular world as God's wrath (*azaab*). If on the other hand, a disaster strikes the Muslim world, they call it enemy conspiracy. This is a grave contradiction because in all such situations only one principle can hold true. Therefore, the disaster which strikes the Muslim world must also be called as '*azaab*.' Unfortunately, the Muslims do not follow the Islamic way of thinking and instead create hue and cry about form, identity, culture, milli-work and communal thinking. According to a Hadith

*Amal ka dara-o-madar niyat par hai* (Al Bukhari) [Action depends upon intention]

This is a very authentic account of Hadith. It means that intention (*niyat*) is not a mysterious thing; it is a way of thinking. In other words, man will be rewarded commensurate to his thinking.

### **Right way of thinking**

Right way of thinking is the positive way of thinking, one that is free from all complexes, hatred, prejudices and other negative emotions. Only when man's thinking becomes completely positive, does he attain God-realisation (*marefat*). And the souls who will find entry into the paradise will be none other than the souls who attain God-realization in this world.

I used to often think about the gist of the Quran. It has over six thousand and five hundred verses but after long time, I realized that the first verse itself is the gist of Quran. It reads

*All Praise is due to God, the Lord of the Universe (1:1)*

The very first verse of the Quran presents the gist of the Quran and teaches man to live in the spirit of *hamd* (acknowledgement). The principle that can be derived from here is that if man lives in the psyche of protests and complaints, he will not live in the spirit of acknowledgement.

*Hamd* (acknowledgement) is an outcome of thinking whereby man realizes the innumerable blessings that God bestowed upon man by creating such a beautiful world and providing the entire life support system to ensure man's survival.

Unfortunately, the present-day Muslims do lip service. While verbally they say, "Alhamdulillah," their actions are contrary to what this acknowledgement demands. In order to live in the spirit of *hamd* (acknowledgement), man will have to discover this world as a "phenomena of *hamd*." Those who acknowledge God such will become entrants to the divine world of paradise. A verse in the Quran states that those believers of God who entered paradise, will say upon entering into paradise

*Praise be to God who has taken away all sorrow from us. (35: 34)*

This means that paradise will be a world devoid of sorrow or sadness. As I started thinking about the activities that would engage man in paradise, the following verse came to my mind,

*They [dwellers of paradise] will say, 'This is what we were provided with before,' because they were given similar things. (2:25)*

In other words, activities similar to this world will engage man in paradise as well. But paradise will be a world of blessings. Thinking about this difference, I realised that if man considers today's world as a blessing then, paradise will appear as a blessing to him. According to a verse

*He will admit them into the Garden He has already made known to them. (47:6)*

This means that man must discover the present world as an introduction to paradise. The present world has all those things which paradise will possess. In other words, man will first have to discover the present world as a paradise-like world. Thinking about the difference between this world and paradise, I realized that while paradise will be without sorrow (*hazan*), the present world is not. The following verse of the Quran describes the state of the present world,

*We [God] have created man into a life of toil and trial. (90:4)*

This means that man will first have to discover this world as *paradise-with-sorrow*. Only then, will you get entry into *paradise-without-sorrow*. This discovery is the gist of faith, religion and Islamic way of thinking.

### **Adopting the Islamic way of thinking**

In order to adopt the Islamic way of thinking, man will have to live as a tension-free soul and eliminate all negative emotions from within him. Learning the art of *hardship management* is the test of man. In this world, man will have to live as a positive person even amidst negative situations. Only then will he be rewarded with a world that will be completely free from negativity.

In this present world, God has given freedom to man to put him to test. Man is free to use or misuse his freedom despite being amidst situations of complaints and protests. According to a Hadith, once a man came to the Prophet and asked, “*O Prophet, give me a master advice which will enable me to manage all the affairs of my life.*” The Prophet told him: “*Don’t be angry.*” As anger is always the result of provocation, he was actually saying, “Don’t be anger, even when provoked.” (*Mishkat*)

That is to say, stick to positive behaviour in all situations. In fact, in normal conditions man is governed by his own nature. And nature always takes the course of peace. When man is provoked, his mind derails into negativity. So the Prophet advised people never to take the negative course of action, and to keep to a peaceful and positive behaviour in all situations, even in the face of provocation. This means that even in negative situation, man must learn to give positive response. In negative situation, man must live with a positive mindset. This is the certificate for paradise.

God created Earth as a unique planet for man to survive. If man were to travel in space, he would only find barren rocks and planets but the moment he would land on Earth, he will be baffled to see trees that supply oxygen, greenery and water. On Earth, God provided everything for man’s sustenance but alongside He created toil. The rose plant is a demonstration of this principle. Despite having thorns, the rose plant bears a beautiful flower.

Similarly, if man starts complaining, it means he is reacting negatively to the situation and has failed the test. In such a situation, man will neither discover this world as a paradise-like, nor the beneficence of the Merciful God. Man will be able to repeat some words only as a ritual but he will never imbibe the spirit.

It is desired that man lives in the spirit of *hamd e-khudavandi* (acknowledgement of God) for which he will have to learn to live with a positive mind even in negative situations. Unless he does so, man will not be able to discover the greatness of God!

Only a positive soul will become thankful to God and consequently discover this world as paradise-like world. In other words, paradise will only be rewarded to such a person who lives in paradise-psyche while living in this world. On the contrary, if a person lives in the psyche of hatred, revenge, anger, violence, enmity – he will not develop the personality worthy of being settled in paradise.

### **Discovering paradise-like world**

Pharaoh was the ruler of Egypt, at the time of Prophet Moses. The wife of Pharaoh, Asiya became so inspired with the message of Prophet Moses that she adopted his faith. When Pharaoh came to know of Asiya's new faith, he threatened that if she did not revert to the old ways of worshipping, he would cast her out of the palace and kill her. Asiya, steadfast in the worship of One God, prayed to Him saying

*My Lord, build me a house in nearness to You in paradise. (66:11)*

This prayer introduces paradise as being God's neighbourhood. It is therefore quite understandable that God will not allow those with satanic psyche to live in His neighbourhood. Satan had a negative mind and he challenged God saying that he will mislead the majority of mankind. This is recorded in the Quran as follows

*I will surely come upon them from before them and from behind them and from their right and from their left, and then You will find most of them ungrateful. (7:17)*

This means that Satan has vowed to deflect man from the path of Truth. Satan accomplishes his purpose by derailing the thinking of man such that despite being the recipient of innumerable blessings, he remains ungrateful to his Benefactor. Let me take another example.

In 1947, the partition of India took place. Not only those who relocated to Pakistan but the Muslims all over, were in favour of creation of the state of Pakistan. After its creation, Muslims declared Pakistan as an “Islamic state”. By this logic, India should have been declared as a “Hindu” state but this did not happen. Instead India was declared as a secular republic but no Muslim ever became grateful for this.

It is therefore important to understand that only when man changes his mind and becomes completely positive, he can live in the spirit of *hamd-e-khudawandi* (acknowledgment of God).

## Conclusion

Unless man discovers the present world as a paradise-like world, he will not become entitled for paradise. He will have to discover this world as paradise with sorrow in order to become eligible for entry into the paradise without sorrow.

For discovering this world as a paradise-with-sorrow man will have to learn to abstain from negative thoughts. He will have to make every occurrence a matter of introspection so that rightful and objective thinking can be inculcated within him. Several examples of this approach can be seen in the life of Prophet Muhammad. For instance, at the time of Battle of Uhud when the Muslims lost and suffered heavy losses of life and property, the following verse was revealed in the Quran admonishing the Muslims

*Your courage failed you and you disagreed among yourselves [concerning the Prophet's direction] and disobeyed it (3:152)*

Battle of Uhud was fought when the aggressors attacked the Muslims at the juncture of Uhud. Instead of putting the blame of loss on the aggressors, God asked believers to introspect so that they can realize where they went wrong and do not succumb to the psyche of complaints.

Another example is of Prophet Muhammad himself. He had migrated from Mecca to Medina after thirteen years of endless atrocities that they suffered at the hands of the Quraysh. But not even once in any speech at Medina did he make a reference of the ill-treatment that was meted out to him.

This was so because his complaints would have been at the cost of eroding the spirit of thanksgiving to God, which was unaffordable. Unlike the policy of the Prophet, present-day Muslim media revels in highlighting complaints. They have become thankless to the blessings that they partake on a daily basis. It is important to cite here that paradise will not be for thankless people; else Satan would have been allowed entry into paradise. Despite being bestowed with countless blessings, Satan had become ungrateful to God. A verse in the Quran cautions man from such wishful thinking. It reads

*It is not your desires, nor the desires of the People of the Book that shall prevail. Anyone who commits evil will be rewarded accordingly. (4:123)*

Recently, I got a phone call from an alim, who told me of a gathering that took place in South India to discuss how ulema can participate in dawah work. An alim stood up and started talking the language of conspiracy and zulm. I was deeply hurt to hear this. How can one do dawah work while hosting negative emotions? The loss for such people is immense – not only do they lose the opportunity of dawah work in this world, they also lose the opportunity of being eligible for paradise in the hereafter. A dayee must be a well-wisher. If he does not wish well for his madu, a dayee cannot do dawah work.

It must be borne in mind that man will invariably undergo negative experiences in this world. He must learn the art of conversion so as to convert the negative into positive. By culling out each negative item from the mind and converting it, he will become hundred percent positive. Only such persons can become true well wishers and develop a personality which is deserving of entry into paradise.

Man must always remember that on the Day of Judgment, justice will prevail and man will be adjudged proportionate to his deeds. Living in complaints will not let man discover the paradise-like world. He must therefore constantly introspect and quit living in complaints; thankfulness begins from here. Taking an excuse and becoming negative is not justified; the principle is that, *if you have a good excuse, don't use it*. No justification will be accepted before God in this regard. Man will have to live in this world as a positive soul, there is no choice for him.

### **Question – Answer**

*Q1: It is being widely said that the occurrence in Japan was a result of misuse of freedom, which led to God's wrath in the form of tsunami and earthquake. Please comment.*

A: This is wrong thinking. Those who think so consider themselves to be on the safe side. Such occurrences are actually a sign of warning, it is wrong to refer to them as “*azaab*”. Let me explain why.

Firstly, the term “*azaab*” has a special connotation in the Quran. It has been used in context of communities where dawah work was done in the best possible manner and it reached the stage of completion (*itmaam-e-hujjat*). In other words, the unawareness of people had been broken and the message of God reached them in clear and precise language. But at the same time, it is not necessary that each time such stage is reached, God's wrath unleashes.

Secondly, the term “*azaab*” cannot be used loosely. Even during the golden period of Islamic history, many instances of famine and floods took place. For instance, severe famine struck the city during the caliphate of Umar. When considered as signs of warning, such events demonstrate how easily God can alter the balance of this world. Whatever happened in Japan was due to changes in the law of nature. It can happen anywhere else. God warns man through such instances so that he may awaken and prepare himself for his afterlife.

The master formula is that man must save him from negative explanation and explain everything in a positive manner. According to a verse in the Quran

*As for man, when his Lord tests him, through honour and blessings, he says, 'My Lord has honoured me,' but when He tests him by straitening his means of livelihood, he says, 'My Lord has disgraced me.'* (89:15-16)

The correct perspective is *nafs-e-mutmainna* (89:27). That is in both conditions, man must seek a positive explanation and save himself from negative explanation.

*Q2: What is importance of "aafiyat" (safety and peace) and its best dua?*

A: Man must take every opportunity to do dua to God. He must pray saying

*Ae Allah, mein tujhse mangta hun maaf aur aafiyat, is duniya mein bhi aur aakhirat mein bhi*  
(O God! I seek from you forgiveness and peace in this world and in the hereafter)

*Q3: In the hotel industry, club and bar is very important. But according to Islam, liquor and earnings from it are haraam. Is working at such a place also haraam?*

A: If man does not have an alternative and he is not getting any job, it is legitimate to work there. Jurists (Fiqh scholars) opine that *urgency justifies the work*. One is that you open a bar yourself; the other is that someone else has opened a bar and you have no option or alternative, you may do a job there. Infact instead of thinking bad about it, you must do dawah work with them. Islam does not teach man to remain cut off because evil is not only in the bar, it is everywhere.

*Q4: I visited Japan and found their attitude very positive. They seemed like true followers of Islam yet dawah work was not done with them. What is your opinion about them?*

A: Doing dawah work in Japan was a responsibility of the present-day Muslims, which they could not discharge. I wrote an instance in Al Risala where I cited how King Miyagi of Japan, wrote to the Caliph in Turkey inviting representatives to talk about Islam alongside the Christian missionaries who were working in Japan.

The Turkish caliph gave the charge to Jamaluddin Afghani but he did nothing to avail the opportunity. I once met a Japanese who had accepted Islam. He said, “*Japanese are potentially Muslims,*” but unfortunately even then the Muslims could do nothing to do dawah work in Japan. Free of all forms of religious persecution, there was nothing that could have served as a barrier for doing dawah work in Japan. The only requirement was to learn Japanese but Muslims failed at it.

*Q5: I understand that we have to discover this world as paradise with sorrow to get paradise without sorrow. I want to understand the wisdom behind first making man discover paradise without sorrow.*

A: Man has been created in this world for the purpose of a test. In other words, this world is a paradise but man is on test here. According to the Quran, God created this world as paradise but man’s corruption created war, blood-shed etc. While in nature man can take an experience of paradise, the only difference is that this world is ephemeral. Man should become capable of detached thinking so that he is able to discover this world as paradise despite the human follies. Doing so alone will make man eligible for entry into paradise. The following couplet is an example of detached thinking,

*Hai daad ke qaabil meri tajreed-e-tasavurr (detached thinking),  
karta hun tujhe ghair ki mehfil se juda yar*

*Q6: It is said that Japan was the first to ban Hijab and Quran, that is why it incurred the wrath of God?*

A: Muslims are standing upon falsehood. They generalize singular events. Even in Muslim countries, ladies move without Hijab. Japan developed zero-defect industry. Near to the doomsday, God has shown that even if you put up zero-defect industries you will still not escape doom. If it would have struck underdeveloped countries, it would not have been a very big news. It came in a very developed nation and became a big news. God showed that when doom strikes, the entire world will be upside down, all civilization will perish. This has been shown that doom will be so severe that it will not spare anyone because this world will be re-constructed.

*Q7: The argument that the 'present world is a testing ground,' may not sufficiently address the modern mind. Please comment.*

A: One is that you say, this world is world of action and the hereafter will be a world of reward. But it must always be borne in mind that answer to the question should be in the language (understandable) of the addressee. In order to address the modern mind therefore, he will have to be told that the present world is actually a *preparatory period* (*darul tadreeb*) whereas the hereafter will be a *period of activities* where man will get the opportunities to realize his full potential (*darul amal*). In paradise, all activities will happen at the level of enjoyment. Those who prepare themselves in this world will become eligible candidates for entry into God's paradise.

*Q8: What is meant by the term "derailment"?*

A: Islam at the time of the Prophet and his Companions was spirit-based. Since the advent of jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), the focus shifted to form - this is an example of derailment. Another example of derailment occurred at the time of Sufis. While the thinking at the time of the Prophet and his Companions was *marefat-based*, Sufis shifted the focus to heart-based thinking. Yet another derailment occurred when the focus shifted from dawah work to political interpretation of Islam. Another example of derailment was the loss of introspection amongst the Muslims. According to traditions, it is said that at the time of fast blowing winds, the Companions used to rush to the mosques to pray, fearing that it might be their last day. But it is no longer the case.

*Q9: What is the starting point for converting negative thinking into positive thinking?*

A: One must begin with introspection. Negative thought emerges when man makes some event as an excuse to become negative. He must learn the art of managing the negative thoughts that come to mind so that thinking is developed on positive lines. Personally, if someone troubles me, I pray to God so that he may learn to mend his ill ways, I do not hold a grudge against him.

*Q12: A Hadith says that after namaz, he who reads 33-34-33 times, all his misdeeds are washed away. Please comment.*

A: To support this belief, people cite the tradition of Fatimah, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad. She had to look after her house on her own and did not have any domestic help to support her with the household chores. Once she came to the Prophet to ask for a domestic help. Prophet could not attend to her then but upon coming to know the reason for her visit, the Prophet told her that he will give her a better thing. He then asked her to exult and glorify the name of God 33-34-33 times after each prayer and said that this will help her better than having a domestic help.

However, the present-day Muslims take this literally and think that mere lip service will lead them to paradise. It was meant to inculcate the spirit of remaining in remembrance of God till some time after the prayer. So that man does not immediately revert to the worldly ways. In today's times, no father is such that when his daughter may show him her problems, he would only tell her a dua. But the thinking of present-day Muslims is confined to the traditional framework.