

## The concept of paradise

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*Excerpt:*

*In his talk, the Maulana explains why paradise is the real extension of man's unfulfilled present-day life. The most significant aspect of paradise will be God Almighty Himself! Paradise will be the place where the creation will meet its Creator. Being able to finally meet his ultimate Benefactor will be supremely joyful for man! These blessed souls who would get selected for paradise will dwell in the company of angels and the best men from amongst the entire history of mankind. The thrill of interacting with such beings that would be pure and positive to the core would be unparalleled. Amidst all these joys that man would experience, would be the joy of fulfilment of his desires!*

*Paradise he explains is the world where man would be able to think the way he wants to think; see what he desires to see; listen to the sounds that give pleasure to his ears in the real sense; touch those things which give him the highest degree of pleasure; be in the company of those people who make his life highly meaningful, where the winds would be life-giving zephyrs for him, where he would eat such food as he eternally craved for and sip such drinks as are only beautiful figments of his imagination today. In paradise, all the factors of fulfilment and relaxation will exist. Man with his entire existence is desirous of this very Paradise and Paradise with its entire existence awaits him!*

*The lesson:*

*The present world, in actual fact is not paradise; it just makes paradise understandable to us. By nature, the present world is an imperfect and limited model. It however gives us some glimpses of 'perfect' things that give us an introduction to paradise. If our eternal life is a journey, it is just a waiting room and not the final destination of the journey. But man often mistakes it for his destination, and his life thus becomes one of missed opportunities. Having seen a glimpse of paradise on this earth, he should become its seeker in his heart of hearts. Intellectually, spiritually and morally he should make himself deserving of an abode in the extreme refinement of paradise. He should devote this present life span to preparation for the eternal life in the hereafter.*

## Introduction

Before sharing my thoughts on today's theme, I would like to narrate a recent experience. All my life, I observed that the prime concern of parents was their children; I found no exception in this regard, except myself. I could not explain this phenomenon until recently when I read an article where the author explained that every father considers his son as his 'extension.' To this explanation, I added that without exception, every father (wealthy or poor) lives in a sense of unfulfillment. In fact, I once did a research to find out how the lives of super achievers ended and came to know that all of them had died in despair. Putting the (above) author's explanation and my analysis together, I concluded that man is born with a high ideal in his mind, which he yearns to achieve. For instance, in my childhood, I used to read Alif Laila (or Arabian Nights) in Urdu. This book of stories described a romantic life, which I too had begun aspiring for.

Man harbours a high sense of ideal in his mind and seeks to attain its fulfilment. When he is not able to actualise these desires, he directs his energies towards his child so that the son can get what he could not. This is why people make their children their sole concern; children are almost worshipped in present-day families. In doing so, parents bury themselves in a graveyard of desires put forth by their children and family. A glaring outcome of this phenomenon is corruption. Those on high positions try to maximise their wealth in order to fulfil the desires of their family.

Here I recall a Hadith, which is so powerful that it can transform a person's life,

**Aakhirat mein sab se bura injaam us insaan ka hoga jo dusre ki duniya banana ke liye  
apni aakhirat ko kho de (Ibn Maja)**

*On the Day of Judgment, he shall meet the worst end who lost time to plan for his hereafter  
because of being involved in the matters of others.*

When I reflected on this Hadith, it occurred to me that this is not said in the context of one's neighbours. No one does anything to fulfil their neighbour's requirements and needs.

For example, parents spend a huge amount of money to secure admission for their children in the best possible school but they don't think about instituting a good school. Everyone is busy – actively or passively - earning more and more for their children. There is no exception to this.

### **The real extension of man's life**

The real extension of man's life is the life hereafter. Children are only an imaginary extension. Unfortunately, man does not undertake any preparatory work for his real extension. Here I am reminded of the following verse in the Quran

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

Man always look for an extended support – a being who may compensate for his feelings of helplessness, and may serve as a source of confidence and conviction. This vacuum in human nature was in actual fact to be filled by God, but many people choose something or someone other than God for this purpose. But the truth is that in this universe of God, no one save God possesses any power or greatness. God alone can grant paradise and as such He alone has the power to decide the fate of the real extension of man. Unfortunately, in today's world, people expend their energy and resources towards fulfilling the endless desires of their children without reflecting and preparing for the hereafter.

At a conference, during the course of my discussion with a Muslim cleric, I said, '*Pata nahin mera aakhirat mein kya hoga.*' (I don't know how I shall be dealt with in the hereafter!) The reply of the cleric shocked me and he left soon after. He said, '*Aap ye sab sochiye, hamari jannat toh pakki hai!*' (You may continue to think about all these issues; my entry into paradise is guaranteed!) This man who yearned to send his son to America, being extremely worried about his well being and settlement, did not bother to reflect and prepare for the real extension of his life that would unfold in the post-death period.

People do not have a broad concept of paradise. The vigour that Companions demonstrated in striving for paradise, no longer exists. The present-day Muslims have not discovered paradise and harbour only a reduced concept of it in their mind.

## **What is paradise?**

In the context of paradise, a German lady once said to me, ‘*Why paradise, we have everything here itself!*’ Upon analysing this statement, it becomes clear that because man has a very limited understanding about the concept of paradise, he has not made striving for it, his sole concern. Only when man understands paradise as the real extension of his life, will he be overwhelmed by the need to strive for it. A verse in the Quran reads,

**No soul knows what joy is kept hidden for them as a reward for their labours. (32:17)**

According to a Hadith

**Jannat woh jagah hai jise na kisi aankh ne dekha, na kisi kaan ne suna aur na kisi dimag ne socha. (Muslim)**

*Paradise is that place which has not been seen, heard or thought about!*

Paradise is an ideal world created by God, where man shall live in everlasting joy and bliss; with no turmoil or pain; with no anguish or calamity; trouble-free with infinite blessings; and neither death, boredom nor grief. It is where the creation shall meet the Creator.

A scientist once wrote that all men put together can neither add nor subtract a single particle from the universe. This is the extent of man’s helplessness on one hand and God’s greatness on the other.

According to the Quran, those who would inhabit paradise would be

**In the seat of truth with an all-powerful sovereign (54:55)**

The present world is a world of trial and so God has given man the freedom to act per his will. Therefore, in this world it is possible for a man to gain prominence, even if he lives a life of falsehood. But nothing of this sort will be possible in the hereafter. In the hereafter, the manifestation of the perfect authority of God will guarantee that standing on any ground except that of Truth will be of no avail to anybody.

### **Why should one strive for paradise?**

The most significant aspect of paradise is that it will be the place where creation will meet the Creator! The Almighty God, who created the sense of pleasure, beauty, taste, and the entire life support system without which man cannot survive, what an experience it would be to see such a Creator! According to a tradition, a companion once asked the Prophet, ‘*O Prophet, will we see God in paradise?*’ Prophet replied, ‘*Yes, just as you see everything in this world.*’

A Guruji once visited Delhi and crowds thronged to pay him a visit. From this I realised that when catching a glimpse of Guruji is so important, what would it be like to catch a glimpse of the Creator! It is unimaginable!

While visiting Dubai, I met a person who said that he believed in God but could not understand paradise. I told him that when Pharaoh ordered killing of Asiya, his wife because she had accepted the faith propagated by Prophet Moses, she prayed,

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

The highlight of Paradise is God himself. Man must reflect on Creation and discover the greatness of his Creator. Instead, he is engrossed in admiring his children; what a wasteful act! I have never met a person who by virtue of this thought has realised how beautiful will that God be who created my son! If man discovers God and realises that the biggest blessing in paradise will be meeting God, his prime concern will be to strive for paradise.

The *second* aspect of paradise would be the *companionship of angels*. According to a Hadith

**Zameein mein ek baalisht jagah nahin hai, jahan ek farishta na ho (Musnad Ahmad)**

*There is not a single inch of land on Earth, which is devoid of the presence of angels.*

The fact that man speaks and listens is no short of a miracle. None of these activities would have been possible without help from angels.

I once read about a scientist who was working in a laboratory where his daughter came to meet him. While talking to her, he started reflecting upon the thinking, speaking and listening faculties of man; upon realizing that his thoughts were leading him closer to God, he quickly snapped them and started working.

Man must acknowledge that this universal infrastructure that we observe and partake is run by angels; it is not operating on its own. Meeting, interacting and sharing experiences with the angels who are running the entire scheme of things for God will be thrilling beyond words!

The *third* aspect of paradise will be the *companionship of the best people from amongst the entire history of mankind* – from Adam till the end. According to Bible,

**Woh log chhant diye jayenge.**

*They will be separated from the rest of the lot.*

Throughout human history, there have lived individuals who were flower-like personalities and who radiated peace and highest ideals. They were positive thinkers who lived their lives in remembrance of God and lived in the world as givers and not as takers. They acknowledged others and could rise above the trivialities of life. Such people would be selected by God to inhabit His perfect world of paradise!

While at the societal level, such a collection of individuals could not come into being but at individual level, there always existed such people who were positive in the ultimate sense of the word. How will it be to live in the vicinity of such completely positive souls!

According to the Quran,

**Whoever obeys God and the Messenger will be among those He has blessed: the messengers, the truthful, the witnesses and the righteous. (4:69)**

The *fourth* aspect of paradise would be *fulfilment*. Man is born with an innate sense of pleasure, which is unique to his existence. No other creation – stone, planet, animal, ocean has the sense of please.

But even though man expends all his energy in the pursuit of total fulfillment, he fails to construct the dream world for himself in this world. A perfectionist man finds himself living in an imperfect world. According to a verse in the Quran

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

Man has never been able to free himself from hardships. This shows that he is subordinate to God. Despite being an idealist and a perfectionist, man has to adjust to an imperfect world. This is in accordance with the Creation Plan of God. I received a call from an eighty year old who told me that his organs had gradually started deteriorating. Despite being born with an innate sense of pleasure, man has to face such deprivation.

According to a verse in the Quran

**He has given you all that you asked of Him; and if you try to reckon up God's favours, you will not be able to count them. (14:34)**

To the most wonderful extent, the present world bears the testimony to God's existence. The rotation of stars and planets in the vastness of space; the provision and sustenance for life on the earth, the abundance of water; man's ability to run his vehicles on land, sail on water and fly in space; the earth's being favourable to man with the help of rivers and mountains; the regularity of the seasons and the occurrence of day and night with the help of the sun and the moon – all these are phenomena too great to be adequately expressed in words. There is such perfect coordination between man and the universe that every imaginable or unimaginable necessity of man has already been provided for here in abundance.

It is Paradise where the personality of man shall achieve fulfillment in the fullest sense. The sense of pleasure in man does not get satiated until he experiences pleasure in totality. Fulfilment of one desire does not give him all the happiness. Only when all the factors come together, does man feel satiated and happy. Paradise is the name of the ideal world; the desire for which is lodged in the hearts of every man and woman.

Paradise is that world, where man would be able to think the way he wants 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 touch those things which give him the highest degree of pleasure; where he would be in the company of those people who make his life highly meaningful, where the winds would be life-giving zephyrs for him, 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. In paradise, all the factors of fulfilment and relaxation will exist. Man with his entire existence is desirous of this very Paradise and Paradise with its entire existence awaits him. If man thinks in terms of all this, he would realise what paradise would be like! According to the Quran

**It is for the like of this that all should strive. (37:61)**

Paradise will be a world of aesthetic and noble activity. There will be interesting meetings; there will be enjoyable experiences; intellectually stimulating conversations and all kinds of limitations and unpleasantness will come to an end.

Believing in hereafter does not mean a simple acceptance of it but rather considering the existence of the Hereafter as so very real and so very important that its concept should prevail over one's entire life and one should be prepared to risk one's all for its sake. Those who had thought of believers who were ever conscious of the Hereafter as being mad will be wonderstruck on seeing their success in the Hereafter. On the other hand, the believers in the Hereafter will be surprised to see their own glory, finding it difficult to believe that God could have rewarded them so generously for their small acts of goodness. How strange is one who does not pine for such a heaven and who does not perform such deeds as will help him achieve it. In other words, paradise is the place which man must seek as the extension of his real life. Because people don't know what paradise is and have not realised and discovered paradise, they are not able to seek it as the extension of their lives!



## Conclusion

In this world everyone suffers frustration and failure. The reason is that everyone wants to find his desired world in this present world itself, whereas the present limited and ephemeral world is not created for this purpose. That is why, despite all efforts, one fails to find one's dream world in this life. The present world, in actual fact is not paradise; it just makes paradise understandable to us. By nature, the present world is an imperfect and limited model. It however gives us some glimpses of 'perfect' things that give us an introduction to paradise. If our eternal life is a journey, it is just a waiting room and not the final destination of the journey. But man often mistakes it for his destination, and his life thus becomes one of missed opportunities. Having seen a glimpse of paradise on this earth, he should become its seeker in his heart of hearts. Intellectually, spiritually and morally he should make himself deserving of an abode in the extreme refinement of paradise. He should devote this present life span to preparation for an unlimited life in the hereafter. Successful is one who has realized the eternal world of paradise in this temporary world; who has discovered in the failures of the present world, the secret to eternal success in the next eternal world.

In the world of the Hereafter, all evil people will be separated from the good. Only good people will be given a place in the dwellings of paradise. Besides this, all such worldly events, like death, disease, and accidents, and mental states such as tension and boredom will be eradicated forever. According to a Hadith,

**Maut ke vajood ko mita diya jaeyga (Muslim)**

*Death will no longer exist*

In that world all the sources of comfort and pleasure will be gathered in their ultimate form. How thrilling it would be to live in that world! So every man and woman must strive to make paradise their destination. They should devote themselves to preparing for this world of tomorrow. A paradisiacal person, that is, one fit to inhabit paradise, is such an ardent seeker of paradise that he begins to feel as if he is living in paradise while remaining physically in this world. If he has found paradise in terms of such a feeling, in the next world he will physically become a resident of paradise.

According to a Hadith

**Qayamat ke din, Allah zahir ho jayega (Bukhari)**

*On the day of judgement, God shall manifest Himself*

God's angels will welcome those men and women, who reach the Hereafter after being successfully granted entry into paradise. The angels will come forward and say: "Congratulations, O Blessed Souls! Enter God's heaven by divine decree. Here, there is no death and no parting from this joyous world. The good life has been given to you for all eternity."

The following Hadith is a solace to every heart. According to it, God shall announce for the paradise dwellers,

**Ae bandon mein tum se raazi ho gaya aur ab mein kabhi tum se naraaz nahin honga  
(Mishkat)**

*O blessed souls! I am pleased with you and I shall remain pleased with you forever.*

It must be borne in mind that God alone has the power to decide the result of man's doing and in turn cast him to his final abode – hell or paradise. When God will manifest Himself before the paradise dwellers and give them the glad tiding, their thrill would be unmatched. It will become a source of eternal happiness for them! People have not yet realised these profound aspects of paradise and as such they do not feel for paradise as they should. They recite the Quran but do not imbibe its meaning.

I pray to God to guide us to the righteous path and grant us the wisdom to understand the Quran and take guidance from it.

## **Question – Answers**

*Q1: Why did God create such people who do not care about attaining paradise?*

A: The fact that people do not care about attaining paradise is an outcome of satanic thinking. Satan is man's avowed enemy and wants man to remain ungrateful to God. He wants to shift the focus of man from the blessings that God has bestowed upon him. In response to a similar question, I had told a high ranking official that when he does not have the same thinking about the present world (when his material attainments are at stake) how he can harbour such thoughts about the hereafter. Any thought which decreases man's gratefulness towards his Creator is satanic thinking. The rule is: *Apne mile hue par shukr aur dusron ke liye dawah.* (Gratitude for what you have and Dawah with others).

*Q2: Will man enter paradise or hell soon after dying?*

A: This is an irrelevant question. I fail to understand why people drift to think about issues that neither strengthen their faith nor increase their sense of gratefulness. Once I had a visitor who had travelled all the way from Moradabad to ask if a person who had died thousands of years ago, would be burning in hellfire since then. I strongly advise all of you to think before thinking. You must evaluate your thought to find out if it strengthens your faith or enhances your gratefulness. If it does not augment either of these, the thought should be forsaken.

*Q3: Why does shirk still exist in India despite remarkable scientific development?*

A: Shirk (polytheism) in India is not a living Shirk. Owing to superstitious thinking, idols are seen as a source of blessing and hence worshipped. It was different in olden times when belief in Shirk was the deciding factor of whether a person shall live or not. The entire functioning was centered on Shirk. God finished this form of Shirk and made it extinct.

*Q4: What is rational thinking?*

A: Rational thinking is the opposite of emotional thinking. While emotional thinking is a result of one's conditioning, rational thinking takes place when man is able to extricate his mind from conditioning and thinks logically. Majority today, is devoid of rational thinking. Former Prime Minister, Mr. Jawahar Lal Nehru said, 'What India lacks most is the 'scientific temper,' that is, the ability to take decision basis facts.

According to a tradition, Prophet used to pray to God to show him truth as truth, falsehood as falsehood and the true nature of things, as they are. The first step to rational thinking is to de-condition the mind and make it free of prejudices and obsessions.

*Q4: What is the importance of intellectual development?*

A: By referring to it as ‘intellectual development,’ I merely use a new word for ‘*tazkia*.’ God created man with unlimited capacity, but this capacity, which is a gift of nature, is in the form of potential. Man needs to turn this potential into actuality by thinking, reflecting and contemplating. When faced with situations, the natural process within man gets activated and leads to intellectual development.

*Q5: A Christian missionary when questioned on apparent irrationality of Trinity said that the problem is that man tries to understand God within his limited framework of understanding. Please clarify.*

A: Upon being asked about Trinity, a Professor at Delhi University said, ‘*If you don’t ask me, I know but if you ask me, I do not.*’ It must be remembered that belief is that which subscribes to rationality. The concept of Trinity which was created by Church (and does not exist in New Testament) refers to God as being three-in-one and one-in-three.

*Q5: What is Islamic concept of meditation?*

A: Meditation is not prescribed in Islam. Some claim that the Prophet Muhammad used to practise meditation inside Cave Hira. Even if I accept this for the sake of argument, the fact is that he left everything after attaining prophethood. And, the model period is that which began post-prophethood.

*Q6: Why does the heart hardens? And how should we save ourselves from it?*

A: Quran refers to hardening of heart as ‘*kasav*,’ which refers to becoming insensitive. Life depends on sensitivity. I have not come across people who are sensitive about paradise; rather they are sensitive about irrational and worldly things. To save oneself from this, it is important to engage mind in meaningful reads and company of people who would help prevent erosion of faith.