



ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Journal of the All-Pakistan Islamic Education Congress

MARCH & APRIL

1968

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ALL PAKISTAN ISLAMIC EDUCATION CONGRESS

WHAT IS MAN

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The question "What is man" is extremely important for the educator. For unless he knows what man is he cannot hope to mould the young specimens of humanity committed to his care in a manner that is really desirable or satisfactory. So far the scholars of the West who are supposed to be the intellectual leaders of mankind have, on their own confession, failed to give a convincing answer to this question, an answer, I mean, which may be consistent with all the known and established facts of human nature and human history and which may be, therefore, considered to be intellectually satisfactory. They admit that the present chaos in human affairs, which has manifested itself in what seems to be an endless series of world-wars and which is fraught with the possibility of a total collapse of civilization is traceable to a single cause and that is the absence of man's knowledge of his own nature. In the absence of this knowledge all the human and social sciences including Education, are in a state of confusion and all the wonderful advancements of humanity in the knowledge of physical sciences and technology are proving dangerous instruments of self-destruction. Skinner an eminent psychologist writes in his book *Science and Human Behaviour* :

"Science has evolved unevenly. By seizing upon the easier problems first, it has extended our control of inanimate nature without preparing for the social problems that follow . . . There is no point in furthering a science of nature unless it includes a sizable science of human nature because only in that case the results will be wisely used".

McDougall another eminent psychologist writes in his *World Chaos* :

"Our ignorance of the nature of man has prevented and still prevents the development of all the social

sciences. Such sciences are the crying need of our time; for lack of them our civilization is threatened gravely with decay and perhaps complete collapse”.

Alexis Carrol, a Nobel Prize-winner writes in his book *Man the Unknown* :

“The making of humanity requires the development of institutions- wherein body and mind can be formed according to natural laws and not to the prejudices of the various schools of education. In truth our civilization has created certain conditions of existence which render life impossible. The austerity and the woes of the inhabitants of the modern city arise from the political, economic and social institutions, but above all from their own weaknesses The only possible remedy for this evil is a much more profound knowledge of ourselves”.

In order to comprehend the exact nature of the problem posed by the question “What is man?” we have to consider first of all the difference between a man and an animal. It is true that an animal is a bundle of innate desires and impulses and so is man. But the difference between a man and an animal is a difference of class and not of degree. Man is not a higher kind of animal, nor is animal a lower kind of man. Man is a class of creatures apart from the animals.

Imagine a coach being pulled by a dozen horses each of which is free to move in any direction it likes. A coach of this kind will move sometimes towards the right and at other times towards the left and will occasionally come to a stop. Its movement will be fitful and haphazard. This happens if there is no driver inside the coach to direct and control the horses. If, on the other hand, the coach happens to be moving swiftly and smoothly in a definite direction, turning the corners and bends of its path easily and confidently, it will be right to conclude that there is a driver inside the coach who directs and controls the horses and keeps each of them in check to assure

the swift movement of the coach in the direction of his own choice.

The animal is like a driverless coach. Each of its inborn desires known as instincts seeks to satisfy itself independently of all its other desires. Every instinct of the animal is an inflexible, unalterable tendency to act in a particular manner for the preservation of its life and race. Whenever an instinct is stimulated the animal is forced by an internal biological pressure to start and complete the activity that is necessary for its satisfaction. It cannot check, oppose or limit the satisfaction of any of its instincts for the sake of a higher end. Indeed it has no higher end to pursue. Whenever an animal is forced to oppose any of its instincts the opposition is not the result of a voluntary choice. It is always the case of one instinct opposing another, the stronger taking the place of the weaker and the weaker yielding automatically to the force of the stronger.

Such is not the case with man whose personality is like a coach which is being controlled by a driver. Man possesses all the instincts of the higher animals such as feeding, sex, escape, pugnacity, self-assertion, self-abasement etc. Yet, unlike the animal, man is able to oppose and check the expression and satisfaction of any instinct he likes up to any extent in order to organize, unify, guide and control the activity of all in a chosen direction. The opposition of man to his instincts is not automatic and involuntary, as in the case of the animal, but the result of a voluntary choice. He opposes his instincts in such a manner that the impulse of no particular instinct is found to be in the process of satisfaction during the opposition. So often he would rather starve his instincts and even give up his life for the preservation of which the instincts are meant to function, than abandon a particular course of action chosen by him. The life of an animal consists of a series of isolated compartments of activity each dominated by an instinct and no compartment has anything to do with the one preceding or following it. On the other hand, the life of a human being

tends to become an organized whole and the activity of each instinct, to whatever extent it is allowed to have its way, is directed and controlled in such a manner that it becomes organically related to this whole. This organisation, this unity, this control or direction of instinctive desires in man arising out of his ability to oppose them, is impossible, unless there is in him a desire which is powerful enough to dominate and rule all of them. *It is this mysterious desire of man which is the driver of the coach of his personality.* To know this desire is to know "What is man?" For it is this desire which is the motivating force of all human activities whether they are social, legal, military, economic, ethical, educational, intellectual, religious or artistic. It is this desire which has made history what it is, for history is nothing but one long effort of the driver of the coach of human personality acting in the individual and the society to reach his destination. -

This means that it is impossible for us to understand the nature, the purpose or the scope of any of the activities of man mentioned above, whether they are of the individual or of the society, unless we develop first of all an acquaintance with this driver of the human coach and know his purpose or destination. In other words, no writer on the philosophy of History or the philosophy of Ethics or the philosophy of Education or the philosophy of Law or the philosophy of Economics or the philosophy of Religion or the philosophy of Art or the philosophy of Science or the philosophy of War or the philosophy of any other human activity has any right to offer his philosophy for the consideration of others if he does not lay the basis of his philosophy on some view of that desire of man which is the motivating power of his activities. His view of the nature of this desire may be wrong and incapable of being justified or defended on the grounds of logic or rationality but if he ignores this desire entirely and starts to write his philosophy of a human activity without any view of it, his philosophy will be lacking in the very first requisite of a philosophy of that activity and will not deserve any consideration. He will have a confused

mind from the very beginning and his so-called "conclusions" or "findings" will be more of the order of fanciful conjectures than of the nature of reasoned inferences. He will merely waste his own time and that of his readers by writing his philosophy:

Thousands of books have been written so far in all languages of the world on the philosophies of History, Economics, Education, Ethics, Law, Art, Science or of other human activities. Yet, unfortunately, none of their writers is known to have founded his philosophy on any definite view of the desire of man that is the motivating force of his activities. Karl Marx is the only exception to this rule. He has constructed his philosophy of Economics, which is in effect, a complete Philosophy of Man and the Universe, on a definite view of the desire that is, according to him, the fundamental cause of human motivation. But unfortunately neither his view of the motivating force of human activities nor the philosophy that he has built on its foundations can bear examination.

But what is exactly the nature of that desire of man which is the real driver of the coach of his personality and the motivating force of his activities?

We have already known one mark of this desire—that it is the special privilege of man not enjoyed by any other animal.

All the modern writers of the West who have expressed their views about the nature of man agree that man has a desire to love an ideal and that this desire is not possessed by other animals below him on the ladder of evolution. Is it this desire, then, that enables man to rule, direct and control his instincts and functions as the driver of the coach of his personality and the motivating force of his activities?

That an affirmative answer to this question should be true is quite obvious. But the Western scholars who believe that knowledge must remain Godless at all costs (ever at the cost of logic and reason) are afraid of this answer and rule it out

without even thinking of it because it necessitates a spiritual interpretation of man and the recognition of the idea of God as an intellectual concept. For if man's urge for an ideal rules and controls his instincts for the sake of its own ends and needs, the conclusion cannot be avoided that its ends and needs are different from those of the instincts and that as a consequence it is an independent urge of human nature which can be the cause of instincts but not their result. In such a case the following question arises :—

“The object of the urge of the instincts in man is the maintenance of his body and the continuation of his race. What is the object of man's urge for an ideal—the object which even his instincts subserve and for which he employs them to maintain his life ?”

Since ideals are always the ideas to which men ascribe the highest qualities of beauty and perfection known to them, the immediate answer to this question should be obviously as follows :—

“The object of man's urge for an ideal which his instincts subserve and for which he lives is to strive after an ideal which really possesses all the highest qualities of beauty and perfection”.

If we say that such an ideal can be no other than God of the purest and the most perfect concept, the view will be justified, for as Hegel has pointed out, God is that Being Who possesses all the qualities of beauty upto the highest degree of perfection and if God has any defect or lacks any of the qualities of beauty and perfection, He cannot be God at all.

Thus an affirmative answer to the question whether man's urge for an ideal is or is not the motivating force of his activity implies that the true ideal of man can be no other than God and that God is an intellectual concept which fulfils *the* greatest and the most important intellectual as well as practical need of man.

How could the Western writers with their pre-conceived idea or dogma of the Godlessness of knowledge face these extremely disturbing implications of this answer? Consequently, they felt obliged to search for a different answer and their search has resulted not in one answer but a variety of answers each suited to the whim of the writer who attempts it and none fit to be described as reasonable. The common factor of all these answers is that the real and basic desire of man which motivates all his activities is one of his animal instincts or a combination of all his animal instincts and the desire for an ideal is a distorted or modified form of this real and basic desire.

Thus Freud is of the opinion that the driver of the coach of human personality is the sex instinct. Whatever a man does he does for the satisfaction of his sex desire in one form or another. As regards his desire for an ideal of beauty manifesting itself in the pursuit of religion, science, morality and art, it is only a modified and distorted form of his sex desire which assumes this form on being obstructed or suppressed. According to Adler, the motivating power of human activity is the instinct of self-assertion or the desire for power which has been operating all along in the history of organic evolution for the protection of the life of the animal against other hostile and aggressive animals. As regards the exclusively human desire for an ideal, it is only a false representation of the desire for power. When an individual is unable to satisfy his desire for power he imagines that he desires an ideal and strives after it to compensate himself for his sense of inferiority. Karl Marx is of the view that the real motivating force of human activity is the instinct of feeding accompanied by other allied instincts which together give rise to the economic needs of man. The urge for an ideal in man is only an unconscious distortion of his economic urge. Man strives after an ideal apparently but really his activity is motivated by his economic urge. McDougall is of the opinion that the real source of the motivating power of human activities is the animal instincts of man and the desire for an ideal in him is the result of the occasional re-inforcement of his sentiment of self-regard—itsself a mysterious compound of all his instincts

—by the instinct of self-assertion. But since none of the theories of these writers is consistent with the facts of human nature and human history, it is easy to show that none of them can stand a critical examination. The common fault of these theories is that none of them explains adequately how an instinct or a combination of all the instincts which is meant to function for the preservation of life, can give birth to the desire for an ideal in man which may require him to starve his instincts and even to lay down his life for its sake. It does not occur to any of their exponents that if the instincts which, of course, man shares completely with the higher animals, cannot produce the urge for an ideal in the animal they cannot produce such an urge in man.

The fact is that the desire which is really the driver of the coach of human personality and the motivating force of all human activities is no other than the desire which is the special privilege of man not possessed by other animals, namely the desire to love an ideal which can be perfectly satisfied only by an ideal of the highest beauty and perfection.

It is admitted by eminent psychologists that while the animal knows, feels and thinks, man not only knows, feels and thinks but, when he does so, he also knows that he knows, feels or thinks. This is expressed by saying that while an animal is only conscious man is self-conscious or possesses a self-consciousness or self. This self-consciousness or self is the real man in the human being as distinguished from the animal in him which is constituted by his animal instincts and if there is any special capacity in man not possessed by the animals, it can be only due to his self-consciousness or self. It follows that man's urge to love an ideal is a property of his self-consciousness or self. The ideal of a society is the core of its ideology. It develops into an ideology in the course of its application to the various aspects of their natural activity as a group of human beings.

The fact that the urge for an ideal is the motivating force of all human activity is so simple and intelligible, fits in so well

with the established facts of human nature and human history and has become so obvious in this ideological age, that it is impossible to doubt its validity.

The question arises what are the actual qualities of the ideal the love of which can really satisfy the human urge for an ideal. The answer to this question is contained in the very nature of man's urge for an ideal which can be satisfied only by an ideal of the highest beauty and perfection, that is by an ideal:—

- (a) which is free from every defect or blemish that we can possibly think of and
- (b) which possesses upto the highest degree of perfection all the qualities and attributes that we can by our nature look upon as lovable, admirable and beautiful.

Defect is the enemy of love. Hence the awareness of the presence of the slightest defect or of the absence of the smallest element of beauty in a man's ideal turns the whole of his love for it into hatred. A man can love a low, ugly or imperfect ideal too but only as long as he can attribute to it all the imaginable qualities of beauty and perfection and can deceive himself that it does possess all these qualities in actual fact.

From these general premises we can deduce the specific qualities of the ideal of a human being very easily.

We can know, for example, that the beauty of his ideal must be unlimited and eternal. For, if he knows that its beauty has a limit beyond-which it cannot go, he must believe that a part or an aspect of it is ugly. If again he knows that its beauty will come to an end after sometime, he must consider it to be ugly even now.

His ideal must be alive. He cannot take for his ideal, consciously and deliberately, the idea of anything that he believes to be dead or lifeless. He is himself alive and cannot therefore love, admire, adore or serve, with self-sacrifice, the idea of anything that appears to him to be lifeless and therefore inferior to himself. Moreover, the life of his ideal, like its beauty, must be eternal, for, if he is convinced that it must die some-

time in future, he must feel that it is potentially dead even today.

That is not all. His ideal must possess, upto the highest degree, all the attributes of life with which he is familiar in his own case. This means that it must hear, see, understand, feel, love and respond, must have a purpose to be achieved in the human world and have the power to act for and succeed in the realization of that purpose. In other words, it must have certain likes and dislikes and possess the power to encourage and support what it likes and discourage and destroy what it dislikes, to reward its lovers and helpers and to punish its enemies and opponents. In brief, it must have all the qualities of love and hatred and must express them for the achievement of its purpose. If a man's ideal lacks any of these qualities and he becomes aware of it, it becomes impossible for him to love and serve his ideal any more.

Love always demands action in the service of the beloved and the object of such action is to please the beloved and to have the satisfaction of winning the favour or the nearness of the beloved. Having an ideal or loving an ideal has no other meaning except striving after it, serving it and thereby approaching it more and more. But if the ideal that a man loves has no likes and dislikes, no criterion of discrimination between right and wrong, *i.e.* no purpose to be achieved in the human world, no purpose in which its lover can co-operate with it, how can the lover know what he should do and what he should not do, in order to serve it? Man wants to act and to know how to act, in the service of his ideal. He cannot be satisfied with a love that is incapable of being translated into action. If he thinks that his ideal cannot hear, see, feel, know, understand or respond to what he does in its service, he will derive no satisfaction from his actions and will have no incentive to continue them. What a man regards as virtue is, strictly speaking, never its own reward. It is always rewarded by the pleasing conviction that it is approved by his ideal which he always imagines to be a person or a personality.

A man's ideal must be powerful. For if he thinks that his ideal is not powerful enough to reward its supporters and punish its enemies, he will feel that loving and serving it is a useless task.

The reason is that, while he will do his utmost to change the world in accordance with the demand of his ideal, its opponents will undo his endeavours and unmake with ease and impunity what he has made. In such a case he will feel that his ideal is weak and helpless and unworthy of his love and devotion.

Again, his ideal must possess all the moral qualities or the qualities of Goodness upto highest degree of perfection. For, we look upon these qualities as lovable, admirable and beautiful. Should he think that his ideal lacks any of these qualities or lacks any of them upto the highest degree, he must consider it to be a defect and must cease to love it.

His ideal, moreover, must be unique and without a peer or a partner in its qualities. For if he thinks that there is another idea which shares its qualities, he will be called upon to love two ideals at the same time and this is something which his nature makes it impossible for him to do. On the other hand the nature of beauty or perfection is such that it can belong only to one ideal.

Finally, the whole creation of the world must be subservient to the purpose of his ideal. This is not possible unless his ideal is itself the Creator as well as the Controller of the Universe and possesses all the qualities implied in these two attributes. If this is not so, the laws operating in the Universe on the physical, biological and psychological planes—laws which will not be the creation of his ideal in such a case—will come into conflict with the common purpose of his ideal and his own and neither he himself nor his ideal will be able to achieve this purpose. Moreover, if he believes that the Universe, including his own person, has come into being of itself and is out of the control of his ideal, he will feel that his ideal is inferior to him

or at the most equal to him and will not, therefore, feel the urge to love, admire, adore or serve it.

These are the qualities that the best of the religious men have been, from times immemorial, attributing to the idea of God which derives support from the revelation of thousands of prophets including the Last Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him). The latest discoveries in the fields of Physics and Biology such as those discussed in the philosophical writings of Physicists like Jeans and Eddington and Biologists like Bergson and Driesch point to consciousness as the Ultimate Reality of the world and if we work out the qualities of this consciousness from our study of nature we can be sure that it is no other than God of the prophets.

We are thus forced to arrive at the conclusion that the driver of the coach of human personality or the motivating power of all human activities is *Man's desire to love God*.

This is the essence of the teachings of the Holy Quran which says that devotion to God is the immutable nature of man and God has created human beings so that they may love and worship Him

فطرة الله التي فطر الناس عليها لا تبديل لخلق الله

(Devotion to God is that nature of man created by God according to which He has made all human beings. The creation of God is unalterable).

ما خلقت الجن و الانس الا ليعبدون

(I did not create the Jins and the human beings except for this purpose that they may worship Me.)

Worship, of course, is the brightest manifestation of love and admiration.

Another important point without which the answer to the question "What is man" cannot be complete is that man's urge for God which is, of course, in the form of a powerful drive in the unconscious mind, is capable of being misunderstood and misdirected towards other ideals which do not really

possess the qualities of beauty and which are, therefore, imperfect and wrong.

The reason is that this urge is very powerful, irrepressible and irresistible and demands immediate expression and satisfaction. Consequently, when an un-informed or un-intelligent individual is unable to have a personal feeling or realization of the beauty of Divine qualities and cannot love God as a consequence, he begins to love a wrong and imperfect ideal instead and suffers from the evil consequence of his inability or error later on. His case is similar to that of an individual who cannot find healthy and nourishing food on account of his poverty or other reason and feels obliged to take an unhealthy and injurious food in order to satisfy his hunger although his health is certain to suffer later on. The wrong ideal of an individual may be a stone, an idol, a nation, a race, a country, or a creed it may be a concrete object or an idea, yet its lover behaves towards it as if it is a *person* endowed with the qualities of life, power, beauty, goodness and truth, which belong only to God.

Mere information about an ideal's beauty is not sufficient to induce its love. An ideal can be loved only when its beauty is actually felt and realized. As an obstructed river must change its course and flow to the next level of the ground that can receive its flowing waters, regardless of consequences, so when a man cannot feel the beauty of God, the powerful current of his urge for an ideal is misdirected towards and finds an outlet in, an idea the beauty of which he is able to feel and which appears to him to be the most beautiful of all the ideas known to him (though, of course, its beauty will be only imaginary and he will be only the victim of an illusion). What actually happens in his case is that some qualities of beauty appear to him (of course wrongly) to be clearly visible in this idea. Hence attracted by these qualities and in order to have a full satisfaction of his urge for an ideal, he begins to love the idea as a whole imagining wrongly again that it has all the qualities of beauty that he desires. Thus he attributes to the idea, un-

consciously, the remaining qualities of beauty *i.e.* those qualities of beauty which do not appear to him to be clearly visible in it and which he cannot attribute to it consciously. In other words, he mistakes it for God, his true ideal. He, therefore, loves, admires, adores and serves it with the whole of his being *i.e.* with all the love, admiration, adoration and service which he commands, which are deserved only by God and which he himself would, by his true nature, give only to God. This means that the driver of the coach of human personality—be it that of the individual or the collective personality of an ideological society—drives his coach always in the direction of God to the best of his knowledge although sometimes the god that he has in mind is owing to his ignorance, a false one, to which he is wrongly attributing the qualities of true God. Whenever he has the misfortune to commit this serious error, he enters with his coach into a blind alley through which he may continue to drive happily and confidently for some time, but from which he has ultimately to retrace his steps or perish. The Holy Quran mentions this aspect of the nature of man in the following words :—

و من الناس من يتخذ من دون الله انداداً يحبونهم كحب الله
و الذين امنوا اشد حباً لله

(Yet there are some men who take for themselves objects of worship besides Allah whom they love as one should love Allah. And those who believe are very strong in their love for Allah.)

The Holy Quran alludes to the fruitlessness of the activity which results from the love of wrong ideals or false gods in the following words :—

و الذين كفروا اعمالهم كسراب بقيعة يحسبه الظمآن ماء

(And those who disbelieve in Allah and believe in wrong ideals, their deeds are as a mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man deems to be water).

مثل الذين كفروا بربهم اعمالهم كرماد اشتدت
به الريح في يوم عاصف لا يقدرون منه ان كسبوا على شيى

(And the parable of those who disbelieve in their Creator and believe in false gods, their deeds are as ashes on which the wind blows hard on a stormy day. They have no power over aught they have earned).

14 : 18

In due course of time, however, a man's intimacy with his wrong ideal as well as the growth of his knowledge of himself (*i.e.* of the ideal that his nature desires) reveal to him the hidden defects of the ideal. These defects come into a contradiction with the qualities of beauty which he had consciously attributed to the ideal. He, therefore, concludes that his ideal has *no* qualities of beauty *whatsoever*. The result of his disillusionment is that he abandons that ideal and adopts immediately another ideal which appears to him to possess all those qualities of beauty which were discovered by him as a result of his bitter experience to be missing in the previous ideal. But if he has not acquired a realization of the beauty of God in the meantime, his choice of the ideal is bound to be wrong again. Naturally, this process of trial and error continues as long as he does not choose God as his ideal.

The fact that the motivating force of all human activity is man's urge to love God implies that history is an effort (sometimes mistaken and at other times right) of the driver of the coach of the human personality, functioning in the individual and the society to drive the coach in the direction of the ideal of God. Since this driver is always able to correct its own mistakes, a time must come sooner or later when God becomes the ideal of the entire human race. It implies further that a human activity whether it is ethical, social, educational, intellectual, economic or legal, which is not meant for the expression and realization of man's desire for God and His qualities of Beauty and Excellence, cannot be at its best and highest and cannot be permanently valuable, fruitful and con-

ducive to the continued evolution of humanity. It is not only wasteful of human energy but also fatal to the community that happens to indulge in it. Since such a community cannot serve the aspirations of the forces of ideological evolution, it is forgotten by them and allowed to disintegrate and disappear from the face of the earth like dinosaurs and so many other species which were forgotten by the forces of biological evolution and allowed by them to decay and disappear because they could not prove themselves fit to serve their aspirations. It also implies that all the human and social sciences with their present Godless attitude towards life and its activities are wrong and must be reconstructed and re-written with a view to giving them a correct foundation in the light of the purpose and destination of the driver of the coach of human personality functioning in the individual and the race.