

THE PROCESS OF CREATION A QUR`ANIC PERSPECTIVE

(4)*

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THE INTELLECTUAL & SOCIAL EVOLUTION OF HUMANITY

According to a published paper of Dr. Rafi-ud-Din, referred to earlier in this monograph, the period from the creation of Adam down to the present day can be taken generally as the period of conceptual or ideological evolution. However, in all humility and modesty, I beg to differ from him here and dare to present a more analytical, detailed and deeper view of humanity's evolutionary process. I believe that the first stage of evolution consisted of purely physico-chemical changes and mutations. And the second level or stage of evolution, i.e. the biological evolutionary process, has already passed through two stages of evolution; while the third stage is presently under way.

In my estimation, the first stage of the human developmental ladder can be referred to as the phase of "intellectual evolution" the climax of which enabled man to transcend the limitations of physical/material existence and appreciate the ultimate ontological reality of the one true Lord, the Creator, on the basis of his own pristine pure nature and uncorrupted reason without the help of revealed knowledge and guidance. This indeed represents a major leap from the contingent and created beings to the affirmation of the existence and reality of the Creator and Initiator of the heavens and the cosmos. And this means not just the recognition of the one true Lord, rather it also means that, far from being earth-rooted or a person interested in immediate material gain here and now or taking blood relations as above all else, God becomes the ideal of all moral-devotional pursuits and developing rapport with Him is seen as the *summum bonum* or the highest moral/spiritual achievement leading to the eternal bliss and felicity.

Not obsessed with the material ephemera, the trivial and the immediate, he rejects all false demi-gods. This leap of faith brings him away from the maelstrom of daily life, suspending it. Calmness, resolute determination and peace characterize it. The monotheistic believer is led to think of the timelessness of God and the transience of life on earth making the Lord the ultimate object of his spiritual and moral endeavour. This indeed represents

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the first evolutionary stage of the intellectual development of humans which achieved its highest zenith in the person of Abraham عليه السلام --- roughly after 5,000 years of the appearance of Adam عليه السلام.

The biographical details of the life and conduct of Abraham عليه السلام are highly telling. He lived among the Chaldeans who worshipped stars and other heavenly bodies. The ancestral idols were also worshipped and, in addition to this, the political ruler Nimrod was too believed to be invested with divine powers. Three verses of Surah *An`aam* (76-78), according to one interpretation, show the stages of reasoning through which Abraham passed and finally reached --- on the basis of rational human thought --- monotheistic belief in one God, the Creator. Some may argue here that Abraham's reasoning only led to the negation and rejection of polytheism i.e. associating partners with God, whereas a positive insight into the unity of the Creator --- the true spiritual enlightenment --- is the result of divine grace. Nevertheless, the element of rational reasoning and argument is quite clear in Abraham's dialogue with his father and idolatrous people and refuting them conclusively. The whole thrust of Abraham's reasoning in verses 76-78 is directed against the superstitious beliefs of his people and demonstrate the folly of worshipping stars and other heavenly bodies. As such, his statements may be seen as premises of his arguments against polytheism and nature worship. The English translation of the verses reads:

“So when the night darkened on him, he saw a star. He said: This is my Lord. But when it set, he said: I do not love the setting ones.”

“So when he saw the moon rising, he said: This is my Lord. But when it set, he said: If my Lord had not guided me, I should certainly be among the people astrayed.”

“When he saw the sun rising, he said: This is my Lord. This is the greatest. But when it set, he said: O my people! I quit that you associate (with Allah).”

[6:76-78]

True knowledge shows that stars, sun and moon --- indeed all heavenly bodies --- rise and set according to laws whose author is Allah. What folly and how foolish to worship creatures, when we might turn to the one true God. Let us abjure all these follies and proclaim the one true God, argued Abraham. Thus, he expresses his final conclusion in these words:

“Surely I have set my face towards Him who has created heavens and the earth, firmly and truly upright, and never shall I give partners to Allah.” [6:79]

This total and enthusiastic commitment to one Lord made Abraham عليه السلام place Allah at the forefront of his personal loyalties. Abraham, the iconoclast of the

Quran is the highest of the typical seminal religious figures and a staunch believer in the oneness of God. The monotheistic belief fully permeated his entire self and conduct and therefore the Quran rightly calls him a friend of God [*Khaleel Allah*; 4:125]. On the other hand, he was declared a leader (*imam*) for the entire humankind [2:124]. He was subjected by God to all trials of greatest magnitude and he failed in none of them. In every thing, Abraham عليه السلام fulfilled Allah's wish and thus became the epitome of "Islam". As such, he fully deserved the promised leadership of the people for all times to come.

After the completion of intellectual evolution in the person of Abraham عليه السلام, it was the right moment for the kick off of gradual human social evolution. In Abraham عليه السلام, the monotheistic belief was internalized to the maximum degree as a result of which he became a paragon of the highest moral virtues like truthfulness, fidelity, affability and gentleness. Of course, this was all at the level of an individual's thought and behaviour. At this juncture of human history, however, the need of the hour was to externalize these moral virtues in human collectivities and corporate life. The society and the state, as a result of this, should fully reflect the Divine sovereignty and His universal providence and sustenance --- thus exemplifying God's attributes of "The Just" and "standing firm on justice" [3:18]. The Quran mentions three messengers --- Noah, Hud and Saleh عليهم السلام --- who came before Abraham عليه السلام and contains extensive detail about the preaching of these probably all Arabian prophets. They were sent to wayward tribes in pre-Islamic times in regions that were, judging by clues in the Quran, close to locales and haunts fragmented by the contemporaries of Prophet Mohammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. Prior to Abraham عليه السلام, people generally indulged in only one error: the erroneous belief in polytheism, otherwise living a simple and moral life. The evils of civilization had not yet tainted their life and conduct. Therefore, the earlier messengers only focussed on the affirmation of *tawheed* (monotheism) and negation of *Shirk* (polytheism).

With Abraham عليه السلام we see that human societies, going beyond the earlier simple lives, started showing all sorts of imbalances and moral turpitude. They indulged not only in all types of sexual perversion, but also exhibited social disruption through trade and monetary irregularities and worst economic and political exploitation. The civilizational divide between the strong and arrogant exploiters and the weak oppressed class surfaced for the first time in history. Therefore, Prophet Lut عليه السلام was sent to Sodom and Gomorrah where the people of these two places indulged in the worst sexual perversion of homosexuality. The religious career of Shoaib عليه السلام was concerned with morally reforming the malpractices of monetary plundering and looting rampant in and around Midyan (or Madain). Similarly, in its accounts of the Moses-Pharaoh confrontation, Moses عليه السلام preaches pure

monotheism to the Pharaoh and to the Egyptians; his mission is not restricted to the Israelites. Moses ﷺ challenges and denies the divinity of the Pharaoh. Pharaoh claimed himself to be God --- not only one god among many but the only god: “I am your Lord Most High.” [79:24] Apart from that, for a king or ruler to make invidious distinction between his subjects, and especially to depress or oppress any particular class of his subjects, is a dereliction of his kingly duties, for which he is responsible to Allah. We read in verse 4 of Surah *Al-Qasas*:

“Surely, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and divided its people in groups, weakening a group among them, slaying their sons and letting their daughters live. Indeed, he was one of the mischief makers.” [28:4]

Pharaoh elated himself in the land and broke up its people into sections. He terribly brutalized and victimized the Israelites, subjecting them to the worst persecution and humiliation. All three Prophets --- Lut, Shoaib and Moses ﷺ --- succeeded in their mission only in the sense that their opposing and recalcitrant people were eliminated completely from the surface of the earth. However, none of them met success in the sense of transforming them in favour of the true monotheistic faith and piety. Moses ﷺ, no doubt, went beyond the other two prophets in securing freedom and emancipation of his people (the Israelites) from the political yoke of Pharaoh and his savagery --- though it is a fact that Moses ﷺ could accomplish all this only with special divine help and grace, through miracles and extra-natural events. But then, with the passage of time, Israelites touched the lowest moral and spiritual ebb by distorting the teachings of their prophets and by assigning too much weight to formal aspects of law instead of sticking to its substantial essence or core. Their political and religious leadership, both scholars and devout ascetics, exhibited the worst type of perverted mentality in limiting themselves to soulless rituals’ formal precision without the least regard for the inner spiritual kernel of devotional religious practices and modes of worship. Prophet Jesus made stern criticisms of their religious hypocrisy and sensitivity to formalism and legalistic niceties at the cost of utter disregard for the real significance and spirit of those commandments. Instead of paying heed to Jesus’ admonitions, the Jews tortured him and wanted to kill him by putting him on the cross. And as far as they were concerned, they did it but Allah’s decision prevailed over their planning as we read in the following verses:

“That they said (in boast): We killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah. But they killed him not, nor crucified him. But so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjectures to follow. Surely they killed

him not. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in power, Wise.” [4:157-158]

The above lines vindicate that all prophets --- from Abraham ؑ down to Jesus ؑ --- fought against the social, economic and political iniquities, wayward and unscrupulous behaviour, wanton cruelty and oppression. But none attained concrete results in his prophetic career. It may be noted here parenthetically that Dawood ؑ and Sulaiman ؑ were, firstly, not prophets in the full connotation of the word. They were only *anmbia* or messengers. Secondly, their political leadership and monarchy in which justice and equity reigned supreme, was the result of divine grace and not at all the outcome of their prophetic missionary human endeavours. Indeed, both of them were divinely appointed kings and their justice-based kingly governance and leadership was a special gift of God, and not something achieved through human toil and labour.

It was after a long break consisting of 600 years since Prophet Esa ؑ (Jesus) that last of the prophets --- Prophet Muhammad ﷺ --- was raised in Makkah and sent for the guidance of all humanity. Allama Iqbal, in his moving poetical lines, has very rightly characterized him as the climax and culmination of a very long evolutionary process:

Of this varied world
Thou art the meaning long sought
Long sought by multitudes of men
From every corner of the earth

(*Ecstasy: Gabriel's Wing*)

Indeed, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was the goal and objective of the entire evolutionary process of creation involving the variegated stages or the levels of the divine creative activity, reaching its apex in the person of Muhammad ﷺ who established a socio-political order in Arabian Peninsula based on the sovereignty of the One Almighty, the Sustainer of all and His universal providence. The Prophet thus fully externalized and reified the Islamic monotheistic belief in the form of a polity and government thus establishing the ideal and perfect Khilafah (vicegerency) of Allah on earth. And this historical fact in principle completes the sociological evolution of humanity to its climax. As a digression it may be noted here that Allama Iqbal's couplet:

Your blessed appearance has realized the ideals of both
inquisitive mind/reason and devotional love and anxiety-filled
presence and togetherness

may refer to the blessed Prophet ﷺ through whom both:

- i. The potential of ordinary human beings; and

- ii. Prophethood (prophets coming in a long chain starting from Adam عليه السلام and ending in Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم)

reached the last highest pinnacle of evolution; the latter in the sense that he fully realized and successfully accomplished a most balanced and just polity based on the sovereignty of Allah, thus exemplifying the divine attribute of “standing firm on justice” [3:18] and fully realizing the objective of prophecy and revelation described in the words “... that mankind may uphold justice and equity” [57:25]. And the former in the sense that he established this system of social justice and equity through struggle on purely human level employing the strategy of a determined revolutionary leader confronting all odds and obstacles and going through all ordeals. This in itself vindicated the highest spiritual status and dignity of human beings. The struggle, endurance, sacrifice and perseverance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions رضي الله عنهم were really exemplary and proved beyond an iota of doubt that man is the apex and crême of Divine creation. Allah has imbued him with limitless potential and strength.

To sum up, the long chequered process of creation, passing through several stages of descent and evolution, finally reached its zenith in the form of “most perfect man” and “most perfect messenger” as exhibited in the person and prophetic career of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. However, only one step in its full fruition yet remains to be taken.

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, fourteen centuries ago, had achieved a great feat by establishing Islamic polity in the vast expanse of Arabian Peninsula: a great stride forward indeed in the socio-political evolution of humanity and indeed no mean achievement. But now this Arabian revolution has to be extended to encompass the entire globe so that the whole of humanity tastes the mercy and compassion of Islamic faith and weltanschauung (world-view). This, in fact, would be the last evolutionary stage towards which humanity is willy nilly moving slowly and gradually, because whatever gems of knowledge and wisdom and, in particular, positive goodness of higher social values it has, is due to the legacy of Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. All these can be traced back to him, emanating from his teachings enshrined in the Quran and the prophetic example. Humanity is engaged in seeking the ultimate realization of goodness in its search (though unawares!) of the Prophet’s guidance --- the climax of man’s long odyssey in search of truth and goodness. This was expressed beautifully in a couplet by Allama Iqbal thus:

Wherever you see in the world of colour and scent
 Out of whose soil springs the plant of desire
 Is either already illumined by the light of Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم or
 Is still seeking and moving towards him (and his guidance)

It is, therefore, absolutely certain that humanity will definitely attain this last stage or plenitude of psycho-social evolution and the entire globe will witness the Islamic system of justice and equity fully implemented --- a sure proof and manifestation of Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ universal mercy and compassion. There are strong and authentic Ahadiths in various collections of prophetic sayings which foretell the future corroborating this truth. I shall here mention two of these reports.

Imam Muslim رحمته الله has narrated, on the authority of Thauban رضي الله عنه that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is reported to have said: "Almighty Allah folded up the whole earth for me (in a vision) so that I was able to see all the easts and all the wests, and surely the domination of my followers will be established over all those places that were shown to me by thus folding the earth".

According to an other tradition narrated by Imam Ahmad رحمته الله on the authority of Miqdad Ibn Aswad رضي الله عنه, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is reported to have said: "There shall be no house on the entire earth, neither of bricks nor one made of camel's skin, but God will cause the word of Islam to enter it, either with the honour of one who deserves honour, or with the subjugation of the one who is defeated. That is to say, God will confer honour on some and they will embrace Islam, and He will cause the others to give up fighting and they will surrender before the rule of Islam." On hearing this, the reporter is on record to have uttered the words: "Thus will fulfil Allah's assertion "... and religion be wholly Allah's [8:39]." The Quranic word *deen* is, as is well known to all, a very comprehensive term. Its connotation implies the ideas of indebtedness, duty, obedience, judgment, justice, faith, religion, customary rites etc. So the real meaning is that everything (both individual probity and piety and collective socio-political behaviour) pays subservience to God's commandments given in Shariah which is supreme.

Indeed, if we ponder deeply, the major and minor premises of the Quranic argument also ratifies the belief of global domination of Islam and appears to be an impeccably logical conclusion. The following assertion of the Quran appears at three places in absolutely identical wording in surahs *Taubah*, *Al-Fath* and *As-Saff*:

"It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth (Islam) so that he may make it prevail over all religions....." [9:33, 48:28, 61:9]

This verse clearly and unambiguously states that the objective of the calling and mission of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was to make Islam dominant over all man-made ideologies. Moreover, at five places in the Quran we read the statement that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has been sent for the whole of humanity. The most clear and emphatic wording in this context occurs in verse 28 of Surah *Al-Saba*:

“And We have not sent you except as a bearer of good news and a warner to all mankind.....” [34:28]

The very fact that the Prophet ﷺ is a divine messenger for all humanity till the end of time necessitates logically that his prophetic mission would attain its climax and final victory only when Islam reigns supreme across the globe; thus vindicating the truth of the two above-mentioned Ahadiths. In a line of ode from *Gabriel's Wing* (excelling in sublimity of thought and its rapturous nature) Allama Iqbal's piercing glances can ruffle the moulds in which He manifests Himself and thus as a visionary has divulged the future scenario that lay in the womb of time:

The sky will shine mirror-like with the morning's light
 And the night's darkness will be speeding away!
 The hearts will again recall the message of prostrations
 The foreheads will become acquainted with the Harem's dust
 Whatever the eye is seeing cannot be described by the lips
 I am lost in amazement as to what the world will become!
 The night will eventually disappear by sun's appearance
 This garden will be filled with the light of Tawheed!

However, here two points should clearly be kept in mind. Firstly, the global domination of Islam will be possible only as a result of immense sacrifice, endurance, resilience and fortitude of the believers having staunch Iman and commitment for executing the commands of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. They will have to replicate the same enthusiasm and undertake similar gigantic struggle that the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions رضی اللہ عنہم showed against all odds in establishing the supremacy of Islam in Arabia. Secondly, before the final global victory of Islamists, Muslim Ummah will face Allah's wrath for its misdeeds and complacency. Deviation from the Right Path will incur terrible punishment from Allah the details of which are found in various chapters of Hadith collections, e.g. chapters of “*Fitan*”, “*Genocidal Wars*” and “*Signs of the Last Hour*”. However, after this chastisement, the light of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ will shine in its full exuberance all over the globe. Neither the Satan (or his acolytes from amongst humans and jinn) nor the most sophisticated and high-tech armament of the opposing forces will be able to check and thwart its global ascendancy.

And this will be the last stage of the psycho-social evolution of humanity immediately prior to the end or Doomsday. The entire cosmic heavens, which started off with the primeval “Big Bang” and continued to expand ever after, will be rolled back and brought to a naught, as we read in Surah *Al-Anbiya*:

“The Day that We roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books Even as We produced the first creation.....” [21:104]

The world --- the universe --- as we know it, will be folded up like a scroll of parchment, for it will have done its work. And may be --- who knows! --- the Creator Who everyday is in a new splendour [55:29] will spread out and unfold a new chain of being. All we know with absolute certainty is:

All that is on earth will perish: but will abide (forever) the face of thy Lord --- full of Majesty, Bounty and Honour.

(Concluded)

The treatise of Dr. Israr Ahmad “*Ejad o Ibda-e-Alam say Alami Nizam-e-Khilafat tak Tannazzul aur Irtiqa kay Marahil*”, the English translation of which under the title “The Process of Creation: A Quranic Perspective” is completed with this 4th part, was very much appreciated by a number of scholars and intellectuals who took the trouble to read it closely and thoughtfully. Among others, Dr. Munawar A. Anees, an internationally acclaimed critic and writer, referred to this tract as a major contribution in Cosmology. In his Iqbal Memorial Lecture given on July 05, 2012 under the auspices of Department of Philosophy, University of the Punjab, he presented the following lines to the audience in his published article:

“... one of the eminent students of Iqbal, Dr. Israr Ahmad made remarkable interpretations of his philosophy with a unique blend of Quranic teachings and modern knowledge. **His short treatise on the origins and evolution makes him a man way ahead of his times.** Perhaps his work could serve as a precursor for an Islamic cosmology in congruence with the emerging thought as exemplified by biocentrism and biosemiotics.”
