

TRAVEL IN PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

(*Rihlah fī Ṭalab al-`Ilm*)

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A cursory look at the Qur'ān and history reveals that the institution of travel in pursuit of knowledge and right path was not alien to different nations and sharā'ih in pre-Islamic days.

The Qur'ān⁽¹⁾ and *ḥadīth*⁽²⁾ have recorded the journey of Prophet Moses in search of a learned person to acquire knowledge from him.⁽³⁾

Salmān al-Fārsī, before Islam, travelled extensively in search of right path.⁽⁴⁾

The available material reflects that this practice was also rooted in the cultural and spiritual stirring among the 'Arabs on the advent of Islam. A good number of individuals of the tribe of Quraysh, in the *ḥanīf* group, roamed the earth in search of knowledge and right path among *ahl al-Kitāb* and other religious denominations.⁽⁵⁾

Islam not only encourages the travels (*rihlāt*) in pursuit of *al-`ilm*⁽⁶⁾ but also institutionalised it through Qur'ānic injunction: ⁽⁷⁾

فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَ
لِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ .

The verse urges the representatives from each tribe or community to go forth in search of religious knowledge and to return and teach their respective people what they had learned. Standard works on *ḥadīth* and *'ulūm al-Ḥadīth* have a section on the *rihlah*.⁽⁸⁾

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1 Al-Kahf/60.

2 Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi'*, *kitāb al-tafsīr*, v/230, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut.

3 Ibid.

4 *Siyar*, I/506, 507, 508.

5 *Siyar*, I/27.

6 In the beginning of Islam the term *al-`ilm* generally denoted for religious knowledge i.e. Qur'ān, *ḥadīth* and *Fiqh*, but particularly it meant *'ilm al-Ḥadīth* (Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Ḥajj*, *bāb wujūb al-Ṣafā wa'l-Marwa*, II/70; *Fāsil*, 368, 372, 414; *Jāmi'*, I/73, II/28; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr and Khaṭīb al-Baghdadī have rightly named their books *Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm* and *Taqyīd al-'Ilm* respectively).

7 Al-Tawbah/122.

8 *Concordance*, II/506, IV/8-11; *Fāsil*, 229-232; *Jāmi'* I/32-39, 92-95; *Ma'rifah*, 7-9, 27; M. M. Abū Zahu, *al-Ḥadīth wa'l-Muḥaddithūn*, 118 ff; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdadī appropriately named his book *Kutāb al-Rihlah*.

seen by the eyes, with twinkling stars. It should be made clear that limits of his observation and investigation are beyond these stars."²⁰

Wherever the introduction of God has been made referring to the huge signs along side the tiny creatures like bee, mosquito etc, it has been meant to show His grandeur and perfection. For Example,

'And thy Lord Taught the bee to build its cells in hills, on trees and in (men's) habitations."²¹

The above quoted verse has been beautifully elaborated by Maulana Mufti Mohammad Shafi. He writes, "the system of life of this crippled animal runs on the principle of human politics and administration. After observing her strange and astonishing system and consolidated laws and discipline of her life, a man is amazed. The queen of these bees delivers six to twelve thousand eggs in only three weeks."²²

In Short one who recites Holy *Quran* to get Acquainted with God, *Quran* links him with God provided one meditates over the signs described by the *Quran*.

(20) Islahi, Amin Ahsan, *Tadabbur-e-Quran* (Faran Foundation) Vol. 1
Page : 145

(21) Al-Nahal : 68

(22) Mufti Mohammad Shafi, *Ma'arif-ul-Quran* (Dar-ul-Ulum Karachi) Vol.
5 Page 350

"Knowledge derived from *Quran* has five categories, one category among them is about the creator of earth and heavens and reveler to mankind of their necessities and it also deals with perfect characteristics of God."¹⁶

On one hand man himself is a supreme specimen of God's creation but on the other the whole universe is also showing him the glories of God that have been described in *Quran* in superb manner.

"See ye the fire which ye kindle? Is it you who grow the tree which feeds the fire or do We grow it? . We have made it a memorial (of our handwork) and an article of comfort and convenience for the denizens of deserts."¹⁷

With reference to above verses Maulana Maudoodi explains "If man does not fall victim to stupor and become unconscious then merely fire is sufficient to remind him that from whose blessings and mercies he is getting benefits for himself in this world."¹⁸

Earth and heavens are the greatest signs in this universe, and *Quran* has reiterated that God is creator of the both.

"It is He who hath created for you all things that are on earth; Moreover His design comprehended the heavens, for He gave order and perfection to the seven firmaments; and all of things, He hath perfect knowledge."¹⁹

'Elucidating these verses Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi says, "the allusion to the seven skies is just to remove this misconception on the part of man that the universe is not confined only to the sky which is

(16) Shah-Wali-Ullah, *Al Fauz-ul-Kabeer* Page : 4

(17) Al-waqia 71--73

(18) Moududi, Abul-A'la, *Tafheem-ul-Quran* (Idara Tarjaman-ul-*Quran*)
Vol. 5 Page : 290

(19) Al-Baqra 29

"Despite all the arrogance and haughtiness of mankind in its own capacity, man is impotent before God that he can not alter the situation inflicted on him by God."¹¹

After God and the Holy Prophet, mother is the dearest relation of man, this relation is also gifted by God.

Therefore, it is said: "We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents. In pain did his mother bear him and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the (Child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months."¹²

In the words of Abu-al-Kalam Azad, " No power on the globe can equal mother's love. The very creator of this passion is also the same God who has bestowed in her instinct the love for her child."¹³

Quran uses symbols to introduce God and exhorts man to use his own intellect because wisdom has been awarded to him for this very purpose. Even *Quran* puts a question to those who do not use their intellect.

"On the earth are signs of those of assured faith. As in your own selves: will ye not then see?"¹⁴

Maulana Abu-al-Kalam Azad says, '*Quran* declares it as against the intuition, that after studying the system of sustenance, man could not get firm awareness about the sustainer and provider of worlds."¹⁵

Shah-wali-Ullah with regard to Quranic knowledge describes,

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- (11) Maududi, Abul-A'la, *Tafheem-ul-Quran* (Idara Tarjaman-ul-*Quran*)
Vol. 3 Page : 766
- (12) Al-Ahqaf 15
- (13) Azad, Abu-al-Kalam, *Umm-ul-Kitab* Page : 40
- (14) Al-Zariyat : 20--21
- (15) Azad Abu-al-Kalam, *Umm-ul-Kitab* Page : 55

beings and He is superb and matchless in making discipline of these things and this fine conduct is His identification'.⁷

Abu-al-Kalam further elaborates his point in this way,

"The indispensable items of life have been bestowed, in abundance"⁸

To find the existence of God through these bounties and tokens demands deliberation on the part of a man.

"And He has subjected to you, as from Him all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold that are signs indeed for those who reflect."⁹

The *Quran* describes the vastness of universe and its objects as argument of God's existence. Besides it also describes the every organ of man, the various phases of his life, fluctuations in his life as signs of God's omnipotence and omniscience. the events of mans life from birth to death are bound to abide by the God's will.

"It is Allah who created you in a state of (helpless) weakness, then gave you strength after weakness then after strength gave (you) weakness and a hoary head. He creates as He wills and it is He who has all knowledge and power".¹⁰

With reference to above mentioned verses, Maulana Maudoodi writes,

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- (7) Azad, Abu-al-Kalam, Umm-ul-kitab (Islami Academy Urdu Bazar Lahore) Page:36
(8) Ibid : Page 36
(9) Al-Jathiya : 13
(10) Al-Rum : 54

'*Quran* has directly awakened sense of gratitude of mankind which is in its instinct². God invites mankind for contemplation in this way.

"Have We not made for him a pair of eyes. And a tongue and a pair of lips. And show him the two highways".³

"In the above mentioned verses man has been given a choice to opt between truth and falsehood. It is upto him to think it over. *Quran* says,

"It is Allah who hath created the heavens and the earth and sendth down rain from the skies and it bringeth out fruits where with to feed you. It is He who has made the ships subject to you, that they may sail through the sea by His command and the rivers (also) hath. He made subject to you".⁴

The description of God's blessings and signs and description of order in the universe go hand in hand in *Quran* and all this is presented as a specimen of God's craftsmanship.

"Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure."⁵ And We send down water from the sky according to (due) measure, and We cause it to soak in the soil. And We certainly are able to drain it off (with ease). With it We grow for you gardens of date palms and vines.

"In them have ye abundant fruits; and of them ye eat and have enjoyment."⁶

Maulana Abu-al-Kalam, making the best use of logic says, "Why it all happened so, why it didn't happen that water would be present but not in existing order and arrangement, hence God is the creator of worldly

(2) Nadvi, Muhammed Hanif, *Mutalia-e-Quran* (Idara Saqafat-i-Islami) page 232

(3) Al-Balad : 8-10

(4) Al-Ibrahim : 32

(5) Al-Qamar : 49

(6) Al-Muminoon : 18--19

QURANIC CONCEPT OF ALMIGHTY GOD

Ishtiaq Gondal*

God's being is invisible but the way *Quran* has introduced God, does not make it difficult for any wiseman to get comprehension of His being. With reference to the Holy Book one feels Him more near than life vein.

Quran has given in this respect two kinds of arguments.

- 1) The arguments pertaining to human life.
- 2) The arguments dealing with the universe.

The *Quran* does not present its ideas in a mere philosophical and epheremal way : on the Contrary, it leaves indelible imprint on the readers with the help of convincing arguments and inspiring precedents.

Maulana Taqi Usmani says, 'Logical and philosophical quibbles and riddles can silence a man but sometimes they do not appeal the heart.¹ These can not cure a patient of suspicion. The very object of *Quran* is not to silence anyone but to inculcate the truth in the hearts. If the concept of God presented by the *Quran* can not form the part of man faith, then it becomes very difficult to adopt the system of life introduced by the *Quran*. It often invites the people to God's blessings and urges them to meditation. In the wake of this meditation muslims have created a literature of Tafseer in abundance.

With regard to the verses in which the blessing has been mentioned . Maulana Hanif Nadvi writes,

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(1) Mohammad Taqi Usmani, *Ulum-ul-Quran* (Maktaba Dar-ul-ulum Karachi) Vol : 1 page : 301

Editorial

The tragedy of the present age is not only the emergence of various problems of very heinous nature following the domination and tyranny of an unnatural social and political systems coined by the narrow-ranged minds, but also the lazy, lethargic and passive attitude of the *Ummah*, that besides having divine guideline is inactive to solve these problems.

The reason is that the Muslims of today are within the clutches of scepticism and are quite suspicious towards the perfection and superiority of Islamic code of life. The faith of the Muslims can only be revived if the scholars, intellectuals and researchers pay more heed to find out the reason for the domination of Western social, political and economic systems.

The main purpose of "AL-Adwa" is to draw the attention of research scholars towards this burning issue and to resolve this mystery. We hope that our learned contributors would cooperate with us in this regard, so that *Ummah* can guide and give a message of hope to the frustrated humanity.

Chief Editor