

The Quest For True Happiness

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Man's Limitation

Complex and complicated problems confront man in his day-to-day life, and he is always plunged in anxiety to discover their solution. This is so, because human life is, in its very nature, complex. On the one hand, man possesses an unlimited urge for scaling the loftiest heights of ambition and of attaining the pinnacle of perfection in the multifarious domains of his activity. On the other hand, his limitations exist to such an extent that he is simply incapable of determining the ultimate consequences of his actions with any amount of certainty.

Man is capable of deducing the particulars from the universals, and the universals from the particulars. He possesses the power of building up philosophical axioms and postulates. He has the capacity of soaring into the realm of the Abstract on the wings of poetic fancy and speculative imagination. He can also analyse the properties of matter and break up the atom. But, with all this, he finds that the universe is too vast for his tiny, though brilliant, brain. The more he advances in his quest for knowledge, the more he becomes convinced of the infiniteness of the expanse of Reality. His discovery of a new fact is at the same time a discovery of the truth that there exist numberless un-known facts yet to be discovered. The thirst for knowledge is never satisfied.

With all his struggle for knowledge, man can only know partial reality as revealing in the present, or as recorded in the past. About the future, he is always in utter darkness. He tries to infer on the basis of the inductive method, but he himself can hardly be positively certain of that inference. He seeks the help of Astrology in this behalf, but that science also proves to be fallible. Comprehensive and infallible knowledge about the past, the present, and the future, remains a distant dream.

This limitation of man is at the basis of his inability to solve his problems with any degree of satisfaction. Add to it the conflicts between the various emotions and between emotion and reason, and you can get a fair idea of the muddle with which man is confronted.

The Physical World - A World of Limitations

Man is in a state of constant struggle for the attainment of Peace and Comfort. But he seeks them through material things, and fails. He starts in one material direction and obtains a certain amount of success. But when he evaluates it in the light of his ultimate ideal, he finds that he is far away from it. *Neither wealth, nor*

health, nor even a decent home life, can separately guarantee that peace of the mind and comfort of the soul which every one of us cherishes so intensely. They can work only as contributory factors, if the fundamental requirement of the realisation of the ideal exists.

The question is: *What is that fundamental requirement? What is that which the whole of humanity seeks but fails to find in its material pursuits? What is that which can cause a man to say: "I feel actually satisfied", or, "I have real peace of mind", or, "I have achieved true happiness".*

Common people feel envious of those who are wealthy, and think that they are capable of claiming that. But in actual fact, no capitalist can ever feel satisfaction with what he has achieved. Similarly, weak and small nations feel jealous of the imperialistic and expanding nations who can dictate their will to others, and who appear to have achieved satisfaction. But "land-hunger" is, by its very nature, something which can never be satisfied. In fact all the material pursuits of man possess that characteristic. For, the physical world is obviously a world of limitation. And it is a world of transitory and fleeting experiences.

True Happiness Through Religion

The problem before us is the fundamental problem of man, i.e., **the quest for True Happiness**. In my experience as an individual, I have tried to grasp it and to solve it. I have travelled from country to country and from continent to continent. I have seen the world from end to end. I have sought the reality in the universities and the libraries. I have tried to be in contact with the scientific endeavour in the laboratories. I have observed the trends of humanity in the marketplace and the industrial enterprise. I have passed through the ups and downs of life. The happiness and the satisfaction obtainable from material things is not unknown to me. But, of all my experiences, if there is one experience which is certain and clear and vivid, it is that such happiness has always been *temporary* and *fleeting* and *momentary*, ultimately to be concealed behind a storm of worries and anxiety, even as the dense black clouds cover the fair face of the moon in a pitch dark night of rain and thunder-storm and permit it to show itself only at long intervals.

I have sought the peace of the mind, the satisfaction of the heart, the comfort of the self, -in short, I have sought *True Happiness*. The material world did not give it to me. The material world has no concern with it, as a matter of fact. Neither the market – place, nor the industrial factory, nor the scientific laboratory, are the places where it can be found. It is only in true religious pursuit, which opens the vistas of the spiritual and moral worlds, that it can be available. *It is in religion alone that we can seek it*. Because, it is religion alone which claims to deal with it. In fact, it is the vital concern of religion.

What Do We Mean by Religion?

This brings us to the question: *What do we mean by religion? What is religion in its truest sense?* Today, the world is full of religions, and cults, and “isms”, by the score. If we define religion as “an ideology which deals with human life fundamentally and in its totality, namely, which is a philosophy of life”, there are numerous ideologies which claim to provide it. During modern times, many a scholar and thinker has stood up as a Teacher, has propounded a new “ism”, and has claimed for it the function of religion. *Marx-ism*, *Hitler-ism*, and *Gandhi-ism*, are some instances. Among the older “isms”, *Confucianism* and *Shintoism* have played important roles in human life.

When we consider those “isms” seriously, the very first fact that strikes us is that they are the products of human brains, which however embellished they may be with intellectual development, are after all human. Even when we grant that those human beings who created them were sincere and impartial in their approach, and possessed the best information humanly possible, the fact remains that, as human beings, their capacities were limited, their knowledge was limited, and their angle of view was limited. Neither can their knowledge be credited with the attribute of certainty, nor their conclusions about the consequences.

How, then, can we rely on those “isms” and those Teachers for the attainment of our ultimate salvation and success and happiness? And, consequently, if a rational and sensible human being adopts their guidance and follows them blindly, what else can we say but that he is acting in an irrational manner.

In fact, the very first requirement which might lend authority to those “isms” is absent. As for the fallacies inherent in their teachings, this is not the occasion to state them in any detail. Suffice it to say that they are the creations of human brains, which, in the very nature of the case, are not, and have never been, infallible.

An imperfect instrument of knowledge like the human brain can never be regarded as a sure dictator in matters on which rests our ultimate salvation. Sure and comprehensive and trustworthy guidance can be only that which comes, not from the finite and the imperfect, but from One who is Infinite and Perfect, One whose knowledge comprehends the whole past, present and future, One whose vision is above the limitations of Time and Space, One whose knowledge of the reality of things leaves nothing to be desired.

Is there any such Being? Is there any such means or medium through which knowledge could be obtained from Him? Can that knowledge and guidance, when followed faithfully, ensure success in life and True Happiness? Is there any practical and positive proof that those who followed that guidance achieved the ideal? These are the questions which have to be answered. These are the questions to which we should attend as wise and rational persons, because on them seems to rest the solution of our difficulties and problems.

When we see the universe around us - the starry heavens above and the multifarious creation below - and observe the order and design which exist everywhere, we are unavoidably led to the conclusion that there must be a Great First Cause, a Designer, a Creator. It is rationally inconceivable that this mighty system of the universe could have come into existence without a Maker. The idea of the existence of the Creator is inherent in the very fact of creation. Commonsense leads to it. All true and un-biased philosophical and scientific thought upholds it. And logical inquiry brings out that that Creator must of necessity be All-Powerful, All-knowing, All-Seeing and omni-Present.

This belief has been universal in the life of humanity, except in the case of those whose emotional bias led them to think irrationally. Side by side with it is the fact that if we study history closely, we come across a special group of persons. Their special attribute was that they did not receive any schooling in philosophy or science, and were invariably born in an environment which was corrupt and dark; and yet they served as Teachers of high wisdom and sublime morals. They rose from the background of illiteracy and proclaimed their status to this effect - "We do not speak anything on our behalf. What we say is not the creation of our brains. We were without knowledge, when some Superior Power taught us of His own accord and appointed us as Teachers. We are entitled to teach only what He commands us to teach. We are authorised to proclaim only what he makes us to proclaim."

This process of receiving Guidance is called, in religious terminology, Revelation and Inspiration. Those who were blessed with this high office were, all of them, essentially human beings. But they were born with a special faculty, endowed specially by God, —the Faculty of Receiving Divine Revelation. Those of us who possess the experience of the workings of the faculty of Intuition, which is the universal possession of humanity, can form an idea of how those Special Personages received the Messages from God for delivery to the people.

It was this function of receiving Messages from God and conveying them to His creatures which gave them the titles of "Messenger" and "Prophet", according to the religious terminology. Deprived of all schooling and apparent education, they could yet teach the highest wisdom and knowledge. Lacking all human opportunities of imbibing sublime morals, they could yet bring about the moral transformation of whole communities. In this lay the greatest proof of their status as Messengers of God. Further proof of their truthfulness and greatness and ability of guiding humanity aright lay, and lies, in the fact that those who followed them could achieve true success in their lives, could attain to heights of human perfection in accordance with their capacities, and could obtain true Happiness.

The Qur'anic Guidance on True Happiness

It is a well-known fact that man possesses the faculty of perception and distinction, under which works the power of the will. It is this power of the will, this power of thought combined with emotion, which plays the most important part in our life. The power of thought fixed on a certain point assumes the form of belief, which effects our whole activity. If a person thinks he is feeling feverish, even though he may have no actual attack of fever, his physique will begin to give way under the pressure of that thought until the feverish condition will actually come into existence. In fact, the effect of our mental attitude on our physical life is a matter of common experience. We realise it in the ordinary turns and twists of our life. It should not, therefore, be difficult to understand that it is the fundamental beliefs of man concerning his destiny and the universe around him which play the greatest part in making or unmaking his life.

Consequently, the first lesson which is taught in the school of Islam is that, when your innate feeling and your reason leads you to realise that there is a Creator of this universe Who is All-Powerful, All-Knowing and All-Seeing, you should not stop at that formal belief, but should move towards Him with all the intensity of your love, regarding Him as the Source of all Life and Light and Perfection, and considering Him as the Bestower of all Blessings, and believing Him to be close to you every moment, watching you not only in your actions but also in the most secret thought running through your mind, and sustaining you at every stage. This consciousness, this belief and this concentration of thought will endow you with a new life and will create in you a new power. Let me illustrate it by an analogy. In your day-to-day life, you all experience the fact that if you come in close relation with any human being who possesses any attribute of power, you begin feeling a new power within yourself. What, then, about the effects of closeness to Him who is the Source of all Life and Light and Perfection and Power?

Here a question might arise in your minds: "How can we actually come close to God, and how can we know that we are close to Him?"

I have just told you that God is Infinite, and He can neither be confined in the bounds of Space nor in the limitations of Time. Time itself is a dimension of physical existence. And Space as a dimensional fact is, of course, well known to all. We are accustomed to think of closeness always in terms of Space and Time. But God as the Infinite Being cannot be conceived in those terms. He is certainly close to us, as religion teaches us and as we ourselves realise when we concentrate on Him rightly. God Himself tells us in the Holy Qur'an:

"And when My servants question thee concerning Me, then surely I am near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me..."

Chapter 2 Verse 186

But the question may be asked: How is it that most of us remain un-conscious of that closeness? Let me explain it by an illustration. Suppose you have in your pocket near to your heart something which is very dear to you. But during your moments of absorption in other things you totally forget its closeness to you, nay, even its existence. In actuality, it exists and remains close. Only your thought wanders away and creates a distance and a gap between you and the thing. Similarly, without attempting perfect analogy, we can say that so far as God is concerned, He is near to us every moment, but so far as we are concerned, we are either conscious of His nearness or unconscious of it in our thought. It is, thus, by the effort of our thought that we can realise His nearness, and it is by remembering Him constantly that we can make that realisation permanent. The more permanent that realisation is, the more at rest will be our heart, and the more shall be the happiness that we shall achieve. The lesson, therefore, which the Holy Qur'an teaches us, is: -

“Verily, in the remembrance of God do hearts find solace”

Chapter 13 Verse 28

True Happiness is born of the remembrance of God. But is there any special way for making that remembrance truly efficacious? Has God Almighty, Who loves us more than a father or a mother, and Who has, therefore, taken upon Himself the obligation of guiding us through His chosen Messengers, - has He taught us the best way of remembering Him also? Are the symbolic forms of worship, or worshipping once in a while, fruitful or sufficient? These are the questions which arise in our minds and which the Holy Qur'an has answered. We have been told there to keep up the institutional prayers five times a day and to maintain God's remembrance in every moment of our life. In the words of the Revealed Book: -

“The wise (are those) who remember God standing, sitting and reclining on their sides.”

Now this remembrance has two forms. Firstly, we have to remember at the turn of every moment that all power and all goodness proceeds from Him, and we are but recipients. Secondly, we have to remain conscious on the occasion of every action of ours whether or not that action is in accordance with the Laws revealed by God and taught by His Messengers.

Such a comprehensive and constant remembrance will serve as a feeder of the soul until the human personality will gain extra-ordinary and ever-increasing strength from within and will attain that vision where all weaknesses and miseries fade into oblivion, and the heart becomes the repository of True Happiness and Abiding Peace.

The lesson which I have expounded to you is only a theory for you. But, just as in the case of science, the theory does not provide a complete understanding unless it

is supplemented by practical experiment, so too in the present case I would appeal to you to test it practically by practising it. Such a procedure will by itself prove to you the truth of the theory. When you will build the structure of your activity on the foundations of God's remembrance, you will soon find your life being moulded in a harmonious pattern in accordance, with the Divine Will. You will feel its sweetness and you will realise that you are in a realm where bitterness and frustration continuously diminishes. There you will hear with your own ears of the soul the glad tidings given by the Holy Qur'an in these words: -

“Lo: those who say: Our Lord is Allah, and afterward are upright, the angels descend upon them, saying :Fear not, nor grieve, but hear good tidings of the paradise which ye are promised.

We are your protecting friends in the life of the world and in the Hereafter. There ye will have all that your souls desire, and there ye will have all for which ye pray: a gift of welcome from One Forgiving, Merciful”

Chapter 41 Verse 30 & 31

Let me now summarise the Message which I have expounded so far. The Message is: Remember God. Regard Him as Omni-Present and All-Knowing in every moment of your life. Search for His message in its authentic form, and when you have found it, practise it. Mould your morals and your habits in conformity with the Divine Laws. Remain conscious that God alone is your real Master and King. Bow down to His commands, and take as your model His Messengers, the last of whom was the Holy Prophet Muhammad (God bless him!). Follow this course and preach the same to others. Walk on this Path and attain Real Success, Abiding Peace and True Happiness.

***May the Beneficent and Merciful God Guide us all unto Himself.
Ameen!***