

FROM LIGHT TO DARKNESS: THE ROLE
OF PRIDE, DESPAIR, AND MORAL
RESPONSIBILITY IN THE HUMAN
JOURNEY TOWARDS GOD

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into the themes of divine light, darkness, and the role of evil in human society as portrayed in Islamic thought. It begins with the premise that God is the source of light that brings humanity from darkness into an ordered, fear-free, and grief-free existence. However, those tempted by self-aggrandizement and the pursuit of everlasting dominion are driven into mutual hostility and despair, a condition rooted in the dark force of “Shaitaniya” (Satanism). The text explores how “Shaitan” (Satan) symbolizes one who has alienated himself from God’s mercy and light, while “Iblis,” characterized by despair and alienation, becomes a central figure in opposition to divine evolution and progress.

The discussion moves to the concept of pride and its destructive impact on human society, as embodied by Iblis, who rejects divine guidance, exalting his own self above God’s plan. This rejection is framed as a rebellion against the natural evolution toward light, as Iblis clings to the principle of genesis, denying the transformative potential of creation. The article contrasts Iblis’ self-deception with the role of the angels and God’s messengers, who embody the transition from darkness to light, living in harmony with divine will.

Through an analysis of moral responsibility and the covenant between humanity and God, the article underscores the destructive power of pride and despair, both of which are central to Shaitan’s influence on human history. It highlights the Quranic perspective on personal and collective responsibility, rejecting elitism and emphasizing that every individual is accountable for their deeds. This accountability leads to the ultimate reckoning in the “appointed Hour,” a time of collective judgment when all actions are brought to light.

The article concludes by discussing the Islamic vision of moral law, which transcends causality through refuge in God. It emphasizes that while humanity may falter due to evil inclinations, divine mercy offers redemption to those who seek it, underscoring the importance of good deeds, responsibility, and the pursuit of light in overcoming the darkness of despair.

God is the light of the heavens and the earth. He it is who brings you forth from darkness into light, and bestows on you an order of mutual support as a blessed society which is not hit by fear nor is ravaged by grief, but those who are tempted, each one, to 'everlastingness' and a .dominion that diminishes not, are rent asunder by mutual hostility and pile up grief that never ends and live in fear that multiplies moment to moment.

The question is what is the source of evil promptings. The answer is 'Shaitaniya' (Satanism). It is a dark force which vitiates the human society. Those who guard themselves against it are saved, but he who succumbs to it is pulled back from light into darkness.

"Shaitan" is one who has gone remote and has alienated himself from the blessed order. He who follows God is a servant of God, but he who follows the "Shaitan" becomes a "Shaitan" himself. This stark truth enables us to comprehend the nature of "Shaitan" and obtains a fair view of his role in human affairs. When the probe goes a bit deeper, "Iblis" is noticed deeply entrenched in every "Shaitan".

The meaning of 'Iblis' is: one who lives in utter disappointment; is despaired of his future, and is blind to every bright lining. He it is that who fails to appreciate the Divine Mercy which nourishes and surrounds everything and takes his prospects dim by the better future which awaits the Creations of God. And it is Iblis who grows into "Shaitan", dissociates himself from the Divine scheme of common good as everything swims in the Mercy of God. And it is "Shaitan" who grows into self-aggrandizement and beguiles everybody to achieve his evil aims.

Now, the most important thing to be noticed is that it is despair, distrust in the future of the Universe that gathers mass, all of dark origin; and transforms into a spree after everlastingness and acquisition of a power and sway (dominion) that must never decline. Despair by nature is self-alienation from God, from man, and from all the Universe. It is therefore the supreme mark of those who are the rejecters. They have rejected God, His Mercy,

His Creation of the heavens and the earth with truth, and His Will to bring forth everything from darkness to light.

The goal of all evolution is light. Life may have any origin, or beginning, it is destined to be all light. Despair is opposition to the Divine principle of the evolution of the Universe, the law of progress inherent in every sentient being, living creature. It is finally rooted in the principle of genesis, everything must have its place and rank according to its origin, and that the future of everything ought to be governed and fixed by its origin and birth. It is the evil norm which reverses all evolution back to the abyss of darkness and destroys the entire order. All the forces of self-aggrandizement and self-promotion are in the grip of this hollow norm.

That “Iblis” lived in the Divine presence meant that light was with him and light was in him, but he could not ennoble himself to be all light in the depth of his interior which had darkness at its nucleus. The light in him was shrouding the black spot of his soul, because of which he could not participate in any project of mercy set by his Lord Most High. The darkness hidden in his piety and light thereof made his obedience to his Lord only a means of his worship of himself. This self-worship kept the interior nucleus of his being burning like a furnace. He was burning with self-pride and it was the essence of his black spot in his soul that failed to transform into light, pure light.

This truth of his interior naturally made him an outclass in the community of the angels, who were all light, from the bottom of their soul to the exterior of their existence. But this was not known to the angels themselves, as God Most High said to them:

Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the heavens and the earth and know that ye disclose and that which ye hide (Q. 11:33).

The reference to ‘that which ye hide’ was obviously about the one who was burning with the passion of self-glory as it was clear from the further development;

And when We said unto the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam, they fell prostrate, all save ‘Iblis’. He turned away, glorified (his self), and became of the (class of) rejecters (Ibid: 34).

The Angels

God enquired of him about his conduct, and said:

O ‘Iblis! What hindereth thee from falling prostrate before that which I have created with both of My hands? Art thou too proud or art thou of

the highest exalted? He said: I am better than him. Thou createdst me of fire, whilst him thou didst create of clay (Q, 38: 76-77).

Everyone who goes along with God is led from darkness (of his origin) into light and what one perceives in oneself is light, pure light. The angels and the messengers of God are the examples. No one knows the origin of the angels, because God did not invite anybody to witness the creation of heavens and earth, and witness the creation of angels. Yet everybody knows that the angels are light from end to end. There is nothing but light in them. And so far as the messengers of God are concerned, they are the creatures of clay, yet they are pure light in themselves. When they do introspect they find nothing but light as the substance of their being.

But Iblis' perception of himself, inner vision of his own soul as burning fire meant that he had not gone along with His Lord Most High. His participation in the Divine light was but a device of his mean worship of his own self and boosting up of his position at the cost of all Divine scheme. No ray of light penetrated his interior and he did not allow it, otherwise the fire in him would have turned into light and he would not have been one of the class of rejecters.

In his inner experience, he found himself all fire and when he looked on man he found him a creature of clay. He was completely deceived by his own perception. Therefore, when God asked the angels and apparently Iblis was one of them to bow down to honour man, he saw his own destruction in the act and took God as simply unjust to him. He rebelled against the Divine scheme of making the creatures of clay a unique light in the Universe. He became "Shaitan," got himself out from all Divine purpose, and took upon himself to frustrate it.

He voiced before God as the supreme champion of the principle of genesis. Everything must remain loyal to its origin. Their future must be what they were in the past.

The Divine order of Guidance, Mercy and Light has its basis so to say in *telesis*. Things will not be judged by what they were, but will be ranked by what they have become. In this principle, all pride which is entrenched in the dark continuum of genesis and origin, all usurpation of power and place for self-amplification see its prospects frustrated. And in the flame of self worship the God looks to his morbid mind as the treacherous Lord who has betrayed the one who is all fire in one's soul. "Iblis" said to His God:

My Lord! Because Thou has sent me astray, I verily shall adorn the path of error and shall mislead them every one. Save such of them as are Thy perfect devotee (Q.15:39-40).

Pride and its ruling norm of genesis as the measure of all things takes the form of open hostility to all progress of mankind, beguiles the innocents, invents deceits, indulges in conspiracies, develops devious networks to catch them and makes them subservient to its ends. It is the evil force which circulates in human societies and finds as its medium those who are themselves “Iblis” in the heart of their hearts.

Inward Experience

Iblis’ role in human history is of far-reaching consequences. He works by producing his own kind in it. All of them are embodiment of “Shaitan”; nay, but Shaitan in themselves. When they look into themselves, who were indeed creatures of clay, they experience themselves as fire, incessantly burning fire. Its heat and gleam overwhelm them. And other men appear to them as mere toys of filth, mud and clay. Human society is ruptured by those men and classes who are made of fire. They are set against the people and classes made of filth and mud.

Immediate and inward experience of the one of fire is that ‘I am better than him of clay and mud.’ This immediate experience which knows no bounds becomes the driving force let loose on the society. When everyone is fire within, then every other man is clay, mere mud in perception and everyone is set to use the clay for building his own everlasting empire of fire and flame. All are tossed to and fro in the dark continuum from which all light has gone. They are stationed alienated from the Divine Mercy. They are violators of all laws which sustain life and make it bright. Invisible black flames consume them.

A nation which does not believe and participate in the good future of mankind in its basic core is one which is distrustful of God and finds its future dark. It turns Iblis and reverts to the principle of genesis as the norm which ought to have decided all the future of the universe.

When the nation looks into itself, it finds itself as the firebrand people, but when it perceives other nations and peoples, it takes them as depictible humble creatures, and fails to see anything beyond clay in them. Therefore, instinctively it proclaims that “I am better than them.” This is how Iblis works in human history.

Many a time it happened that the groups raised to serve as light unto the world, after one or two generations began to change into fire as they began to proclaim that they were superior to and better than all mankind. In history they were destined to fall from one score of darkness to another. And there was no end to it. Their path was laid down by Racialism.

They transformed the God, God of all mankind into their racial God and zealously guarded the light bestowed on them and confided it to themselves. All that was the shining light which with them no longer remained light became fire which consumed them yet consumed them not; they lived burning in it.

They divided the whole world into those who were invested with light and those who were left ignorant. And said to one another that God chose us amidst the whole lot of mankind and abandoned all the rest to grope in darkness. It is we and our stock, our family tree that was preferred over all mankind, nations and races. By genesis and birth we are noblest of all. What actually happened was that they alienated themselves from their God and were attracted to blazing fire and its sparks which they took as light so as to make their future bright.

Again there arose families and households with the teachings of scriptures and wisdom in their hand. They began to convince their progeny that all of it, the knowledge of the scriptures and wisdom should be well guarded lest others of different or lower seed achieve access to it.

Those phenomena, all workings of Iblis in human history, took into grip several societies drying up all the seed of goodness in them.

God, Most High, raised his messengers and prophets in all mankind. There was no human populace in which a guide was not sent. But it has never been necessary that all of them be known to us. What is necessary for us is to realize that God sent or raised the prophets in the enlightened people and in the ignorant people as well.

All mankind is near and dear to Him. All Divine Guidance and the messages with which the Messengers of God, raised anywhere in the World, were invested with, always cut across the principle of genesis and rescue mankind from its pull to bring it forth into light.

Darkness, in human situation, is return to pastness; it is cleaved to origin and shuns every thing good beyond glory to oneself.

Light in its nature is future-looking. By nature it radiates and spreads out and therefore is against racism and is against the spree of:”, I am better than him” drive. Obedience to God means sublimation from obsession with genesis, deliverance from despondency and march in the lead of God to the brightest future.

Responsible Man

It is participation with God in bringing about a better world. Therefore, the fundamental religious consciousness in Islam is grounded in the idea of the responsible man.

It addresses man and puts him to the great disillusionment of his being his own beast of burden. The structure of the world and the nature of the ultimate reality is such that “no bearer of burden bears another burden and if one heavy laden crieth for (help with) his load, naught of it will be lifted even though he (unto whom he crieth) be of kin (Q.35:18).” These plain words in one stroke demolish all claims of a privileged house, chosen line, or a blessed race.

Survival by the genetic principle (all glory to one’s seed and ancestry), the law propounded by Iblis is impossible in the spatio-temporal structure of the universe. Forefathers will not be responsible for their progeny and rescue them from their load, nor would the posterity carry the load of their ancestors. The principle of kinship has no future in the ultimate analysis of the human situation.

There is no such thing as racial responsibility. There is no race of God; there is no race of the messengers and prophets of God, and there is no race of the chosen people and no race of the abandoned people.

Whosoever goeth right, it is only for him self that he goeth right, and whosoever erreth only to his burden. No bearer of burden bears another’s burden (Q.17:15).

The verses define the ultimate destiny of man.

One of the most immediate and natural consequence of this ultimate responsibility of every man for his deeds and loads, means that elitism and the idea of the privileged classes, as shepards of the people, is dismissed in Islam.

The Messengers of God directly address the people. Mankind must harken to them. Islam asks them to march forward taking their load on their own shoulders and warns them not to be deceived by tall promises of others that they would certainly take over if not all, part of their load in future and would save them from the great calamity of the Last Day. As such Islam is the religion of common folks and holds them responsible for everything of their private and public life.

Plain Main

Humanity in general is populated by ordinary men who are raised from their mothers (Umm), grow in mutuality and make their living uninfluenced by special training and attainments. They are the plain people who apparently are as unsophisticated in their maturity as were they at the time of their birth. Therefore, they are called Ummiyun, (i.e. those who are just as they were from mothers).

Islam dismisses elitism and burdens the plain men, the Ummiyun with the responsibility of their own selves as the indubitable hard core of the metaphysical structure of the human world encompassing all history and destiny, here and hereafter.

The plain man (Ummi) as unsophisticated as born of his mother (Umm) resides in every adult, be a desert nomad or an urban doctor. All human beings in their frame are primarily Ummiyun and therefore are capable of following the teachings, intents and commands of the Universal religion of all creation.

Common men understood the sermons of Musa, the servant of God. And again, they were the common men who listened to Isa bn. Maryam. It was all Islam. All of the people can follow Divine teachings irrespective of the facts whether they are literate or illiterate, philosophers with special sense or just mature working men endowed with common sense.

Islam is common man's revolution. It ends all sorts of elitism. These are the general people who carry the purposes of Islam and have ultimate responsibility for human goodness and its concrete order.

What are the ingredients of a blissful social order? Nations which cherish idleness as the most coveted norm consider the life of toil as a curse on man and dream of a state of no work and no care as the most blissful of all states. The hard core of higher

morality perceived as idleness, entrenched as such in their soul deeply, moulds their social values and collective behaviour.

Thus those who can afford, escape the sweat of labour and live as leisure classes to live on the fruits of the working men and women believed to be suffering from the Divine curse more acutely than those others who have to do light work. Then they regress into infantilism and take the joyful innocence of a baby as the brightest core of all blissful living.

How innocent is a baby? It is not even aware of its shame, and its joy knows no good and evil. Pervading their moral sentiments and futurism, this infantilism relentlessly goads them to shun the world and live beyond its good and evil.

The societies which are hit by inequities often eulogize this life as the supreme end of all wisdom accessible to man. Living untainted with good and evil, sages, holy men, and artists swarm the streets of the iniquitous societies.

Moral Sense

Ordinary men establish rapport with them. Most of them find comfort in their grief and hardship by their swing into poetic and mystic values which reign beyond this world of good and evil. They begin to live as neutrals just like leisure classes. Moral indifference and apathy flourishes like anything in those societies as the law of the people.

That there was a blissful state man lived in haunts the memory of nations and they do visualize it in accordance with their social and spiritual values. One thing which is, however, quiet obvious is that as one of the terminal points of the long chains of biological evolution man's emergence without the sense of good and evil is ruled out from the outset.

Other species which though resembles him yet are far inferior in mental equipment like apes have glimpses of moral sense. Chimpanzee maintains an elaborate social organization. Its complex patterns are impossible without a touch of good and evil in their conduct. The behaviour of dolphins is also a case of moral conduct. Those evidences rule out the rosy thought that when man emerged, he and his wife were free from this sense like an innocent baby and that they lived in a child-like bliss.

The blissful life, according to the Holy Quran consisted living in accordance with the sense of good and evil. There was no question of infantile simplicity in the state of bliss.

Thus in the beginning, man lived in an awakened state of morality and he knew the permissions (good) and prohibitions (avoidance of evil) on which his blessed order rested. All blissful orders follow the same constitution eternally.

Covenant with God

The Glorious Quran reveals that the original blissful order had its foundation in a covenant with God as follows: (1) Man was not to pay heed to the promptings of the Shaitan (Satan), meaning thereby the one who had gone remote and became alienated. Man was forewarned that heeding to the alienated one would drive him out to hardship and unhappiness. (2) The evil things were shown to man and he was put under obligation not to approach them. All things thus forbidden are branches, petals and fruit of a tree - the tree of evil. The knowledge of the tree and where it grew was given to man so that he could stay away from it. (3) Man was shown all the other trees and their fruits and he was allowed to live under their shade and enjoy their yields.

In return for those obligations that man had to honour under the covenant, God, Most High vouchsafed unto him that (1) He would not go hungry (2) Nor would be thirsty. (3) Nor would be naked, (4). Nor would he be exposed to heat. In this way, the blissful order was in continuation. It was a moral and spiritual order with full material guarantees of good and pleasant life to him.

All was good and continued well. Man fulfilled his obligation, lived by the granted permissions and abstained away from all revealed prohibitions, and he had all what was guaranteed to him. The good order lasted over a time. But on the promptings from the alienated one, man committed breach of the covenant which sustained the entire order. All was destroyed and man fell into all sorts of grief and hazard. All blessed orders follow the same constitution and history. Everyone is composed of a guarantee to man.

There is therein for thee not to go hungry, nor to go naked, nor to suffer from thirst, nor from the sun's heat (Q. XX: 118-19).

But man must follow its constitutional law, the covenant which details the permission in it and the prohibitions of it. In fact the

permissions and prohibitions are sustaining pillars of the guarantees and assurances that it offers to man. The pillars eroded, all the arrangements made for the good of man and all the guarantees built in it fall apart and man is left to grapple with miseries. The original order of bliss was destroyed in that manner, and all subsequent good orders were destined to destruction in that very manner.

We had taken the covenant of Adam. But he forgot and we found not firmness on his part (ibid: 115).

Thus he succumbed to the suggestions of the alienated one (The Shaitan) that if he desired and cherished everlastingness and undiminishing dominion (power and property) his path laid across the prohibited things. And so he approached the evil tree and tasted its sour fruits.

In their love for permanence, power, and property men committed transgressions against the order, adopted evil as their measure. Mutual hostility flared up amid them. Grief and suffering way laid all of them. Their weaknesses became horribly exposed to one another. They looked shamelessly naked.

Then they took refuge behind fragile things to cover up their shameful exposure to one another, but of no avail. Their sufferings multiplied.

Then his Lord “picked him up. He turned to him and guided (Ibid, p. 122).

Restoration of Man

After the disorder, miseries, shameful exposure before one another following the breach of original covenant, a new order of happiness thus came into existence on the Divine reorientation to man. The original order could not come back because history moves forward. The new order of blessings was also based on a covenant which detailed its own permissions and prohibitions as contents of the Divine guidance. Man pledged to abide by it and God vouchsafed once again a good life, free from evils. Man was also informed of the Divine intention of sending guidance from time to time.

Those who remember God honour their covenant; and those who honour their covenant remember God. It is how the good order is sustained with all of its old promises.

But whosoever turn away from my remembrance, verily for him condition for living will be narrowed down and We will raise him blind on the Day of Rising . (Ibid, p. 124)

He who forgets God commits excesses and aims at self permanence, sway over others and grab big property. But he is simply blind. He commits evil, and the evil overpowers him. If he does not open his eyes soon, he is blind for ever, and if he does not realize today, tomorrow will he realize that he has amassed grief and sorrow, hunger and thirst in his pursuit of permanence and dominion for himself.

When the evil spirit takes a whole people in its grip, all of them have their day of reckoning very soon, as all of them have become blind and follow in utter madness their selfish ends. The result is that they are in hell, they are burnt in the furnace of their social disorder. God is not in them, nor His guarantees, nor His remembrance, nor His permissions, and nor His prohibitions. They are the disgraced people on earth.

Man is sure to taste what he sows. Without this law no spiritual life is possible. But this very law despiritualizes man. That his misdeeds will beget unforeseeable horror to him, sinks him into utter hopelessness.

Now he is Iblis, desolate and disappointed. Then he grows into a monster. He is Shaitan, the egoist self-seeker. The law enormously fulfils itself in his doom. He is doomed for ever.

The law of good and evil is, however, only a segment of the universal law of cause and effect which seems to possess all things in its grip and indifferently rules over all existence.

But positive morality comes only when there is a refuge from the evil or tragic effects of this law and yet this refuge is not likely to destroy the law itself. Cultures and religions arose to meet the challenges of this problem.

There were sages who could go beyond existence and fix their gaze on nothingness. It is nothing which escapes the fist of causality. Therefore, culture arose on the foundation of nothingness as sure opening from the dread of causality. But morality is a question of existence. Founded on nothingness, they advanced to flourish as amoral cultures and became breeding grounds of those who were morally indifferent. And moral apathy

produces Iblis, the despair of all creation. And Iblis eventually grows into Shaitan.

Islam dismantled the idea that it is nothingness which is beyond the grip of causation. It gave the message that the Absolutely Existent, the Eternal One is beyond its fist and hold:

Say, He is Allah, the One. All the eternally besought of all. He begetteth not, nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him: (Q, 112: 1 to 4).

God is above the cycle of causality. He surrounds and circumscribes all causes and all effects. On this vision is founded the moral law in Islam.

Refuge in God

God is the light of heaven and earth. Moral law is His light in the human world and permeates all causation from here to hereafter. In it is offered the concrete refuge in God. The Holy Quran ends at the Surah Al Nas (Chapter: 114) and asks man to seek refuge in God.

Say, I seek refuge in the sustaining Lord of mankind. The King (holder of power) of mankind. The God of mankind. From the evil of the sneaking whisperer. Who whispereth in the heart of mankind. (Be he) of the Jinn and (or) of mankind.

He who has sought protection of God from all evil suggestions coming into him from the seen or unseen individuals is saved from the evil of causality.

But refuge from evil whispers is not sufficient as the Surah Al Falaq, the last but one chapter of the Book teaches. Things of the world have aspects which are evil and disturbing. Fellow beings are also full of evil (if not protected from it):

Say, I seek refuge in the Lord of Daybreak. From the evil of the darkness when it is intense. And from the evil of malignant witchcraft, And from the evil of the envier when he envieth.

It is this multi-dimensional refuge in God, reinforced by His remembrance and prayers for it, that breaks the inevitable doom, latent in causal series and redeems one of its evil. This is how the moral law has permeation in causal series. Those who live in God are rescued from evil. God removes the evil consequences of their past deeds and the causal series take a new course:

O ye who believe! If ye fear Allah. He will grant you discernment and remove from you (all) evil. (afflicting) you and forgive you (8:29).

If a wretched soul starts to live in God, it is redeemed of evil which is in pursuit of it. The Causality is given a new turn by the Lord who reigns over all causes and all effects:

That Allah will remit from them the worst of what they did, and will pay them reward of the good, they used to do (29:35).

All causality will fulfill in the following way by virtue of the moral law which is fundamental to mankind.

The day when He shall gather you unto the Day of Assembling, that will be a day of mutual disillusion. And whoso believeth in Allah and doeth right. He will remit his evil deeds and will bring him into gardens undenearth which rivers flow, therein to abide for ever. That is the supreme triumph (64:9).

The dread of causality is completely overcome in this supreme triumph.

In spite of belief in God, the Mighty, the Merciful, there are cults which could not get rid of the dread of causality. In them, human situation appears doomed for ever. He has to suffer because the law of causality is inexorable and man is sinful. Cast in evil, never can he surmount its mischief. His deeds must bring forth the evil of his nature and therefore from the very start he is condemned in himself. But man cannot accommodate with this gospel of gloom.

Therefore the cults which mystify men emerged by proclaiming that salvation is a free gift of God. Deeds or misdeeds are of no consequence to it. How is it? It is an incomprehensible mystery. They declared that Man will be saved by his faith and not by his deeds. This occultism thus obliterates the moral law.

In their sloth and stupor men succumb to its traps and rehearse the grand ritual of salvation as a spiritual outing by reliving the 'sorceric' feats of God whereby men, condemned *ab initio*, are redeemed of their doom which was inevitable.

The God is merciful God. Nevertheless His mercy does not lie in sorceric feats and their ritualistic versions, but in His guidance to man to build his order with moral law as its moving force on the solid foundation of cause and effect with His Gracious sway to wipe off its evil effects if man turns to goodness with firm resolution.

Thus salvation is never a free gift. But a hard earned award. The idea of work (deed) and its wages (consequences) in Islam is rooted in this moral law. Islam is thus an antiritualistic religion and also it is a religion which is against false hopes.

According to Islam, one is an obvious rejecter if he pretends to believe in God, but places false expectations in Him and indulges in the reverie of being honoured and awarded as His servant notwithstanding one's life of greed, show and arrogance.

This one is a rejecter of God and his belief is unbelief. The Surah al Kahf (Chapt. 18) of the Quran makes it clear by a narration: "Coin for them a similitude. Two men, unto one of whom We had assigned two gardens of grapes and We had surrounded both with date-palms and had put between them tillage. Each of the garden gave its fruits and withheld naught thereof. And We caused a rivulet to gush forth therein.

And He had fruit. And he said to his comrade when he spake with him: I am more than thee in wealth, and stronger in respect of men. And he went into his garden, while he (thus) wronged himself. He said, I think not that all this will ever perish. I think not that the Hour will ever come, and if I am brought back unto my Lord I surely shall find better than this as a resort (18:33-37).

False Hope

It is exactly this kind of self conceit coupled with great expectations which spreads like a contagious disease in all spiritually hollow and pretentious men, classes and civilizations. Their achievements and magnificent buildings look durable .

Feverishly they compete for more and are overjoyed to have an edge over others. They project a bright future for themselves in arrogance and callous disregard of others. Their sole business is to envy one another and exceed all others in wealth, pomp and show. They find no time to think of the Hour to come, the Hour of question and answer. And when hardly it comes into their head that one day they have to meet their Lord, they take refuge in auto-suggestion that He would surely lodge them in far better abodes than they have. Every self-seeker has this kind of illusion.

There is no doubt that in Islam, disappointment and pessimism are strongly condemned as the offshoots of the rejection of God: (Ibrahim) said:

And who despaireth of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray (15:56)?

But the optimism which springs from arrogance and hankering after the worldly glory for oneself and insatiable lust for a higher and still higher standard of living for oneself and one's family is simply a grave miscalculation.

Their hope that God will continue to award them handsomely in all future is a false hope of such an enormity that God is rejected in it as the comrade of the owner of gardens exposes it:

And his comrade, while he disputed with him exclaimed; Disbelvest thou in Him who created thee of dust, then of a drop, and then fashioned thee a man (18:38).

They fancy themselves as believers, but they are those who disbelieve in their Lord and work against the causality which unfolds in the moral law operative beneath the Throne of the Beneficent:

Wealth and children are an ornament of the world. But the good deeds which endure are better in thy Lord's sight for reward, and better in respect of hope (18:47).

Civilizations which flourish on a mad show of the 'ornaments of the world' for which every one leaves behind everyone else breed false hopes in respect of the future, but are destined to violent ends. It is how the causality inherent in the moral law proceeds forward:

There doth every soul experience that which it did aforesaid, and they are returned unto Allah, their rightful Lord, and that which they used to invent hath failed them (10:31).

Greater is their indulgence in worldly decor and self-adoration, larger are their false hopes in God and nearer is their doom. They are *ab initio* Godless people whose belief is equivalent to unbelief. Worst is their abode and darkest is their future. Peace and salvation is a hard earned bounty of God.

Religions are of two kinds: The Religions of worship and the religions of obedience. Worship has its origin in a complex of emotions which manifest themselves in dancing and dancing around the cherished object. It materializes its Deity, idolizes Him, carves out His images and lavishes all of its sentiments on them in a state of frenzy.

Obedience has its roots in the determination of man to be good and lead a good life. The religious feeling, which sprouts from this will-to-be-good, approaches the Deity as the proper Guide to and Guardian of good life. What it produces is not an emotional response of ecstasy but a volitional act filled with utmost awe and reverence. It does not, therefore, worship and idolizes the Deity but calls on Him and prays:

Thou do we obey and Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight path. The path of those on whom Thou hath bestowed grace, those whose (lot) is not wrath and who go not astray (Q. I: 5-7).

The consciousness flowing through the religions of worship does not take the world seriously for its purposes. Its highest vision places the Universe and the infinity of its colours and forms in the idea of a 'play' of the Deity. The ultimate good its gnosis seeks is to surmount the attractions of this play and get undone in the ocean of the Infinity.

The world consciousness of the religions of obedience takes everything very seriously.

Our Lord! Thou hath not created this (world) in vain (Q, 3: 191).

The Lord says:

Not for (idle) sport did We create the heavens and the earth and all that is between (Q, 21: 16).

And says:

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that in between in vain, (38:27).

Man's Trial

Blessed is He in Whose hand is the Dominion and He over all things hath Power. He Who created death and life, that He may try which of you good in deed (action). And He is the Exalted in Might, Oft forgiving (67: 1-2).

The world as it exists with its rounds of death and life, life and death is a field of action, an arena of good and bad deeds. Man is on trial in it. Successful are those who have trust in their Lord and spare no chance to accomplish goodness. The success may not be immediate and may take lot of time. The most important thing is that future belongs to it.

The religions of worship and idolization cannot comprehend time in the manner in which it is unfolded in the religions of

obedience. In the gnostic vision which intensifies in idolization, Time is of no importance, as it is an aspect of the 'play' and is not different from the play itself. It is an infinity of succession in which the play and its parts are in repetition as the Divine sports. The past, present and future are uniform; all elements of the time. The gnostic tries to escape Time and Play with equal intensity.

In the religions of obedience, Time is laden with a definite structure in which no deed, small or great is missed; everything is recorded, and finally is ripe with all of its consequences. The process of time has an inward thrust towards an 'appointed Hour,' in which every creation and every intelligent being has to give the account of his activities.

The appointed Hour is an integral element of the structure and nature of Time. It is of such an essence that everyone who lived even at the remotest portion of the past will have to face and pass through it. In other words, all the moment of time, all past and all present, are assembled and summed up in it. Every present moment perishes here and now, but it will be present in the summation of the appointed Hour, in its much more real and concrete existence as it will mature with all of its details. Everybody and every deed will be totally manifest in its duration.

Resurrection

This unique structure of time, that all the perished past is completely and elaborately resurrected in the appointed Hour, no creature can guess and speculate about it. The knowledge of all creatures is humbled down as regard to it. Only God in His Infinite Mercy intimated His servants about it. To Musa (Moses) said He:

Verily the Hour is to come - My design is to keep it hidden - so that everybody is awarded by the measure of his endeavour. Therefore, let not such as believe not therein but follow their lust, divert thee therefrom, 'lest thou perish (Q, 20: 15-16).

Our scientific knowledge and astronomical observations may suggest to us the death of a star system or the complete collapse of a galaxy. It may possibly make calculations on the basis of the physical laws of motion and electromagnetism about shrinking and destruction of our part of the Universe or that of the entire Universe, which now appears to be expanding. But non of these conjectures and predictions indicate the time of the coming Hour. What at best all of those efforts may bring to notice is only this much that the present series of temporal events and the successive

states of the galactical mass comes to halt or finish at a future time. To put it differently, their probes are about the last event or chain of the present series.

The appointed Hour on the other hand is not the last of the series of time, but in itself a unique Hour in which all the hours, all the moments and all the series of Time are synchronized in a 'togetherness'. It is Hashr (collection of all). No human knowledge can predict about its coming and its timing. It is independent of the present laws of the Universe, and therefore defies calculation on their basis. Nothing in heaven and earth can contain the indication of its Coming moment. Even the angels cannot bear the knowledge of its occurrence.

Every messenger of God has been intimated of its being sure to come, and every book handed down to man for guidance contains reference to it. But no book given before the Glorious Quran discloses its various aspects with pertinent details. In fact, the Quran completes its knowledge which had been in transmission since the beginning of the human race as a divine communication and warning. But no one knows its timing except God Himself.

The consciousness which underlies worship, idolatry and gnosticism is oblivious to its importance and inevitable coming. The estimation of world as a play and not more than a play has a blinding effect and incapacitates men to understand it. Many people who believe in God, believe in Him as the Creator and Sustainer of the world, are unable to believe in it.

They swear their strongest oaths by God, that God will not raise up those who die. Nay but it is a promise (binding) on Him in truth. But most among mankind realize it not (Q, 16:38).

Human will, good will coupled with the consciousness of accountability are such marvelous events and truths that they cannot be accommodated in a serial time, the series of succession of the uniform moments. Their very being as such signifies a higher time which makes the appointed Hour as the logical and meaningful destiny of all human endeavours. The belief in the appointed Hour is one of the basic elements of the religion of good will and obedience, i.e. of Islam.

The Idea that man deserves reward for his obedience and is liable to punishment for his defiance is a universal element of all human civilizations. But it has several interpretations. In Islam only

that interpretation of it is admissible which accords with the notion of man's basic responsibility and ultimate accountability.

Many a civilization lacks this notion. A number of them have a distorted view. In some of them, for instance, man is not responsible for his role and station in the society. Others decide it. His duty is to submit to their will. Intransigence puts him to punishment. Thus his responsibility shrinks to mere servitude.

There are others among whom the commoners are not called for to discern between good and evil. The elites do it and the former are only required to say to them: We hear and obey.

Islam is replete with a unique sense of human situation and destiny. It holds a man responsible not only for his obedience in the above sense but also accountable for what he obeys and what he ignores, what he rejects and what he accepts.

The religious consciousness of Islam impels man from within to stand on his own feet and get himself released from his bondage and docile submission to others. According to it, every human self is endowed with the discrimination between right and wrong, good and evil. And the entire system of law and public order has to be raised on that basis.

The point is so pertinent and profound that the Glorious Quran reveals the entire Universe as to bear testimony to it:

By the sun and its brightness. And the moon that follows it. And the day when it manifests it. And the night when it enshrouds it. And the heaven and Him who built it. And the earth and Him who spread it. And the nafs (self or soul) and Him who composed it. Then inspired it with what is wrong or right for it. Verily, the successful is he who makes it (the soul with its inspiration of right and wrong) grow; and verily, a loser is he who stunt it (Q, 91:1-10).

In other words, the world, its structure and temporal process consisting of nights and days have no place for those who stifle their sense of good and evil, and resign to mere obedience to others. The universe, as God has created and maintained it, paves the path of success for one who looks after one's own discrimination between good and bad, right and wrong, exercises it, and thus rears it to its full bloom. The passive ones who live on 'we hear and obey' with their reins in others' hands are simply destroyed as they have extinguished their own that sense of right and wrong, they were inspired with.

The Glorious Quran exposes all those relations between man and man, groups and groups, classes and classes which dupe the people and stifle their feeling of that they are responsible for all the commendable and apprehensible things they confront.

A responsible man, according to Islam, orders his affairs by himself in exercise of his judgment. And a responsible group of mankind, a nation, also orders its affairs by itself and on each occasion its members feel themselves accountable for its every development.

But minds are enslaved and men are reduced to chattels when they are befooled to be carefree and not to bother about anything as all responsibility has been taken over by the chosen few who enjoy a special position in their social milieu. This kind of mutual arrangement and the social system built on it ultimately fail to the limitless sorrow and absolute loss of those who live in it, for the nature of the universe and its temporal process is such that no soul can draw the wages of another one and has to bear its own burden itself.

The sort of partnership and mutual dealing in which the plebeians and the downtrodden masses are usually held in grip by the elites and the prestigious classes is spun around the idea of intercession. It ends in catastrophe. The commoners are told that they have nothing to worry about. All their troubles would be taken over by their masters and Leaders from the upper classes, their Lords and Authorities.

The commoners are destined to realize at last that they were cheated. The responsibility was entirely theirs for all that happened to them and occurred in their milieu. None of the prestigious ones of the ruling nobility could stand as their intercessor to save them in the hour of their need, despite their having served the former blindly for the purpose. History did not spare them because they were simply clients of their so-called intercessors.

And verily Ye come to Us solitary (just) as We created you: for the first time. We behold not your intercessors whom Ye presumed to be your partners in your affairs. So now all relations between you are cut off. And what Ye presumed is lost by You (Q. 6:95).

Learned classes emerged in human societies, magnified themselves and posed as false lords unto the people. They put the high claim that it was a must for the people to follow them without questioning. Similarly, priestly classes appeared with the like claims.

Often the learned and priestly classes were identical. Then there were the ruling classes to stultify the people by their several conceits. Islam, in very clear terms, denies their long pretensions and rejects their overlordship as having no roots whatsoever in the constitution of Reality. It abolishes all the relations of superordination and subordination on those false bases.

No Bargaining

Man, whether he is learned or unlettered, a priest or a humble farmer, cannot take the place of another man in the matter of responsibility. Therefore, there are no privileged or prestigious classes who are to be obeyed by the believers in the matters of right and wrong for the conduct of their affairs. The decision with regard to their affairs has to be taken by themselves; in one's affairs individually, and in collective affairs collectively. Every man is irreplaceable and is accountable for what he has done and is doing in the society.

Then guard yourself against a day when one soul shall not avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted for her, nor shall compensation be taken from her, nor shall anyone be helped (Q,2:48).

The various modes in which the people are duped, have been exposed and described in the above revelations. The real thing is as:

O Ye believe spend out (in good works) of what We have provided for you before the Day come when no bargaining (will avail) nor friendship, nor intercession (2: 254).

It is the Day of accountability, everybody must take care of. It admits of no bargaining. One's responsibility cannot be bargained for, nor can be bartered away or sold out. There is no way to escape from the accountability. No claim of friendship or no favouritism will hold good on that Day. And no hope of intercession will materialize.

No Compromise

The Day casts its reflection in human history, and a day like it comes in the history of a nation when all of its own falsehood and the untruths of its public order are exposed. No one is spared. Its doomsday has come. And before it one crisis after another heralds its fortune.

The masses who sold out their sense of good and evil to their power elites against the false promises of intercession in their favour, or bargained the exercise of their own discretion for lowly

comforts in life are trampled under the heels of time. Darkness reigns everywhere and the entire nation is reduced to earth in no time, as other nations prey on it. Now, it is neither alive, nor dead.

In Islam, no individual can compromise with his sense of right and wrong or his discretion of good and evil and resign from it. The responsibility with which the people are endowed cannot be transferred. They are responsible before God for their collective and individual actions. Their own sense of good and evil, of the obligatory and prohibitory must grow along with those actions so that they are qualified for success.

The Light of God is for every man. His revelations are addressed to all mankind. Therefore, the entire people bear their own burden. It is of no consideration whether one is petty one or belongs to the highest rungs of the society.

