

# **ALLAH; HIS PRAISE AND DOMINANCE**

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I have been asked to say something on the exegesis of Surah al-Hamd. The fact is that the exegesis of the Qur'an is not a thing of which we may be able to acquit ourselves well. In every period of Islamic history, the top scholars including both the Sunni and the Shi'ites, have compiled a large number of books on this subject. But every scholar has written his book from the angle with which he was well conversant and has interpreted only one aspect of the Qur'an. Still it cannot be said whether even that aspect has been covered fully.

During the past fourteen centuries the gnostics such as Muhyuddin ibn Arabi, Abdur Razzaq Kashani, Mulla Sultan Ali etc. have written excellent commentaries on the Qur'an and dealt well with the subject in which they had specialized. But what they have written is not the exegesis of the Qur'an. At the most it can be said that they have exposed some aspects of it. The same case is with Tantawi, Jawhari, Sayyid Qutb etc. They have compiled their exegeses in a different style, but their books are also not the exegesis of the Qur'an in every sense.

There are other interpreters of the Qur'an who do not belong to either of the above mentioned two groups. The Majma'ul Bayan by Shaykh Tabrasi is an excellent commentary and combines what the Sunni and Shi'ah authorities have said. There are so many other commentaries, but they all cover only certain aspects of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is not a book all aspects of which may be exposed by us or by anybody else. There are some Qur'anic sciences which are beyond our comprehension. We can understand only one angle or one form of the Qur'an. Others are to be explained by the Imams who were the real exponents of the Holy Prophet's teachings.

For some time past there have appeared some interpreters of the Qur'an who are totally unfit for the task. They want to attribute their own wishes and desires to the Qur'an. Surprisingly enough, even some leftists and communists pretend to be partisans of the Qur'an and show interest in its interpretation. In fact they do so only to promote their evil designs. Otherwise they have nothing to do with the Qur'an; let alone its interpretation. They just want to pass their doctrines under the name of the teachings of Islam.

That is why I say that those who do not possess enough knowledge of Islam and the young men who are not fully conversant with the Islamic problems, have no right to meddle in the exposition of the Qur'an. But if they still try to misinterpret it for some ulterior motive of theirs, our youth should ignore their interpretation and pay no attention to it. Islam does not allow anybody to interpret the Qur'an according to his personal opinion or private judgement. Anybody who tries to impose his own opinion on the Qur'an is either a materialist misinterpreting the Qur'an or is one of those who give some spiritual meaning to the Qur'anic verses.

Both these groups interpret the Qur'an according to their own wishes. Therefore it is necessary to keep away from both of them. As far as the Qur'an is concerned our hands are tied. Nobody is allowed to attribute his opinion to the Qur'an and claim that the Qur'an says so.

The interpretation which I am going to give is only a possible interpretation. When I explain any verse of the Qur'an, I do not claim that the verse means only what I say. I do not say anything for certain. I am hinting a possibility only.

As some gentlemen have asked me to say something on the exegesis of the Qur'an, I have decided to speak briefly once a week about the Surah al-Hamd. I would like to repeat once again that the interpretation which I give is nothing more than a possibility. I do not want at all to interpret the Qur'an according to my own opinion or wish.

- It is possible that the 'bismillah' in the beginning of each surah of the Qur'an is related to the verses following it.
- Generally it is said that the bismillah is related to a verb understood (omitted), but probably it is related to the surah following it.
- For example, in the Surah al-Hamd it is related to al-Hamdu lillah.

In this case the whole sentence would mean that:

With the name of Allah all praises belong to Him. Now what does a name signify. It is a mark or a sign. When man gives a name to any person or thing, that name serves as a symbol for the recognition of that person or thing. If any person is named Zayd, people can recognize him by that name.

### **ALLAH'S NAMES ARE THE SYMBOLS OF HIS PERSON**

- Whatever little information man can get about the Divine Being, he can acquire it through His names.
- Otherwise man has no access to His Person.
- Even the Holy Prophet did not have, though he was the most learned and the noblest of all human beings.
- No one other than Him can know Him.
- Man can have access only upto the Divine names.
  
- The knowledge of the Divine names has several grades.
- Some of them we can comprehend.
- Others can be grasped only by the Holy Prophet and some of his chosen followers.

## **THE WHOLE WORLD IS A NAME OF ALLAH**

- The whole world is a name of Allah, because the name of a thing is its sign or symbol and as all the things existing are the signs of Allah, it may be said that the whole world is His name.
- At the most it can be said that very few people fully understand how the existing things are the signs of Allah.
- Most people know only this much that nothing can come into existence automatically.
  
- Nothing, the existence of which is only possible, can come into existence automatically.
  
- It is intellectually clear and every body knows it intuitively that anything the existence and non-existence of which is equally possible, cannot come into existence automatically and that there must be an external force to bring it into existence.
- The first cause of bringing into existence all possibly existing things must be an eternal and self-existing being.
- If it is supposed that the imaginary upper space, and it must be imaginary because it is a non-entity, has always existed, then it possibly can neither automatically turn into anything nor anything can come into existence in it automatically.
  
- The assertion of some people that in the beginning the whole world was an infinite vacuum (anything being infinite is questionable in itself) in which subsequently appeared a sort of steam from which everything has originated, does not stand to reason, for without an external cause no new thing can appear nor can one thing change into another thing.
  
- For example, water does not freeze nor does it boil without an external cause.
- If its temperature remains constant and does not go below 0 degrees nor above 100 degrees it will always remain water.
  
- In short, the existence of an external cause is essential for every change.
- Similarly, nothing, the existence of which is only possible can come into existence without an external cause.
- These facts are self-evident truths.

## **ALL EXISTING THINGS ARE A SIGN OF ALLAH**

- This, much can be easily understood by all that all existing things are a sign and a name of Allah.
- We can say that the whole world is Allah's name.
- But the case of this name is different from that of the names given to the ordinary things.
  
- For example, if we want to indicate a lamp, or a motor car to someone, we mention its name.
- The same thing we do in the case of man or Zayd.
  
- But evidently that is not possible in the case of the Being possessing infinite sublime qualities.

## **ANYTHING WHICH IS FINITE IS A POSSIBLY EXISTING THING**

- If an existing thing is finite, it is a possibly existing thing.
- As Allah's existence is infinite, He should evidently possess all sublime qualities, for if He lacked even one quality, He would become finite and as such possibly existing.
- The difference between a possibly existing being and an essentially existing being is that the latter is infinite and absolute in every respect.
- If all the sublime qualities of the essentially existing being were not infinite, that being would not be the essentially existing being and the source of all existence.
- All the things caused by this source of existence are endowed with the qualities possessed by the essentially existing Being, but on a smaller scale and in varying degrees.
- What is endowed with these qualities to the utmost possible degree is called the Grand Name or al-ism al-a'zam.

## **WHAT IS THE GRAND NAME?**

- The Grand Name is that name or sign that is somewhat endowed with all the Divine qualities to the greatest possible degree.
- As compared to other existing things it possesses the Divine qualities most perfectly, though no existing thing lacks them completely, for everything has been endowed with them according to its nature and capacity.
- Even those material things which appear to us to be totally devoid of all knowledge and power, are not really so and possess some degree of perception and knowledge.

## **ALL EXISTING THINGS GLORIFY ALLAH**

- As we are veiled, we cannot perceive it, but it is a fact that the sublime qualities are reflected even in the things lower than man and animals.
- At the most these qualities are reflected in them according to the capacity of their existence.
- Even the lowest creations possess the quality of perception.
- The Qur'an says: There is not a thing that does not praise Him, but you do not understand their praise. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:44)
- As we are veiled and do not understand the praise of all existing things, the ancient scholars did not know that the imperfect beings also possessed perception.
- That is why they took this praise to mean the praise indicated by the creation of all things, but in fact this verse has nothing to do with that kind of praise, which is quite a different matter as we already know.
- According to a tradition once the people heard the pebbles in the Holy Prophet's hand praising Allah.
- They could understand the praise of the pebbles, but this praise was such that the human ears were quite unfamiliar with it.
- It was in the pebbles' own language, not in any human language.
- Hence, it is clear that the pebbles possess perception, although of course according to their existential capacity.
- Man who considers himself to be the source of all kinds of perception, thinks that other things are devoid of it, but that is not a fact, although it is true that man has a higher degree of it.
- Being veiled, we are unaware of the perception of other things and their praising Allah, and think that there is no such thing.

## **THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT WE DO NOT KNOW**

- There are many things about which man thinks that they do not exist, but in fact they do, though we may be unaware of them.
- Every day new discoveries are being made.
- Formerly it was believed that the plants were inanimate objects, but now it is said that they have a hearing system.
- If you put the tissues of a tree in hot water and pass a voice through them, there will be a reaction and you will hear some voices in response.
- We do not know how far this report is correct. But it is certain that this world is full of voices and sounds. The whole world is living and is a name of Allah. You yourselves are a name of Allah. Your tongues and your hands are names of Allah.

## **ALL MOVEMENTS ARE THE NAMES OF ALLAH**

- The praise you make of Allah is His name.
  - When you go to the mosque after washing your feet, you go with the name of Allah.
  - You cannot part with the name of Allah because you yourselves are His name.
  - The beat of pulse, the throbbing of heart and the blowing of wind are all names of Allah.
  - Perhaps that is what is meant by the names of Allah in this verse.
  - There are many other verses in which the phrase: "With the name of Allah" has been used.
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- As we have said, everything is the name of Allah, and the name has passed away in the named.
  - We think that we have an independent existence, but that is not a fact.
  - If that Being, who has brought everything into existence by means of His will and the reflection of the light of His glory withdrew His light for a moment all the existing things would be annihilated immediately and return to their pre-existing state.
  - Allah has created the whole world by the light of His glory which is the true nature of existence and the name of Allah.
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- The Qur'an says: Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth.
  - Everything is illuminated by His light.
  - Everything has appeared by dint of His light.
  - This appearance itself is a reflection of His light.
  - Man's appearance is also a light.
  - Therefore man himself is a light.
  - Animals are also a light of Allah's glory.
  - The existence of the heavens and the earth is a light from Allah.
  - This light has so passed away in Allah that the Qur'an has said: Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth.
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- It has not said that the heavens and the earth are illuminated by the light of Allah.
  - The reason is that the heavens and the earth are a nonentity.
  - Nothing in our world has an independent existence of its own.
  - In other words there is nothing here that is self-existing.
  - In fact there is no existent other than Allah.
  - That is why the Qur'an says: With the name of Allah all praise belongs to Allah. 'With the name of Allah say: He is Allah the One'.

Perhaps the Qur'an does not ask you to utter the words: 'With the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful ' It actually mentions a fact. By asking you to say so with the name of Allah, it means that your saying so is also a name of Allah. The Qur'an has said: 'Whatever there is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him.' It has not said whoever there is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. That means that everything whether animate or inanimate praises and glorifies Allah, for all are a reflection of the light of His glory and it is His glory that causes all movements.

### **EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD IS A MANIFESTATION OF HIS GLORY**

- The cause of all that occurs in the world is the manifestation of Allah's glory.
- Everything is from Him and everything returns to Him.
- No creature has anything of its own.
- If anybody claims to have anything of his own, he virtually wants to compete with the source of Divine light, while as a matter of fact even his life is not of his own.
- The eyes you have are not your own.
- The light of Divine manifestation has brought them into being.
- The praise of Allah that other people or we express, is a Divine name, or it is because of a Divine name.
- That is why the Qur'an says: With the name of Allah and praise belongs to Allah.

### **THE WORD ALLAH IS A COMPREHENSIVE MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE GLORY**

- It is a manifestation that includes all manifestations.
- Allah's names, Rahman (the Compassionate) and Rahim (the Merciful) are the manifestations of this manifestation.
- Because of His mercy and benevolence Allah has bestowed existence in the existing things.
- This is itself is a show of mercy and kindness.
- Even the existence conferred on the harmful and obnoxious things is a show of His favor, which is common to all existing things.
- It is the manifestation of the glory of His name, Allah, which is a true manifestation of His glory in every sense.
- Allah is a station.
- It is a comprehensive name, which is itself a manifestation or Divine glory in every sense.
- Otherwise the Divine Being has no name apart from His Essence or Person.

- Allah; His names including Allah, Rahman, and Rahim are only the manifestations of His glory.
- In the 'bismillah' His names Rahman and Rahim have been added to His comprehensive name Allah, because they signify His self-sustaining attributes of mercy, favor and compassion.
- His attributes of retribution, anger etc. are subservient to these attributes.
- The praise of any kind of excellence is actually the praise of Allah.
- When a man eats something and says how delicious it is, he praises Allah unconsciously.
- When a man says about another man that he is a very fine man or that he is a great scholar or philosopher, he praises Allah because a philosopher or a scholar has nothing of his own.
- Whatever there is, it is a manifestation of Allah's glory.
- The man who understands this fact, he and his intellect are also a manifestations of Allah's glory.

### **NO PRAISE IS OF ANYONE ELSE'S PRAISE**

- Whenever we praise anybody, we say that he has such and such good qualities.
- As everything belongs to Allah, the commendation of any merit of any person or a thing virtually amounts to praising Allah.
- We, being veiled, do not realize this truth and think that we are praising Zayd or Amr, the sunshine or the moonlight.
- When veil is lifted we will come to know that all praises belong to none but Allah and that everything we praise is nothing but a manifestation of Allah's glory.
- The Qur'an says: Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth.
- In other words, every excellence and every sublime quality, wherever it may be, is attributable to Allah.
- He is the cause of the whole world and the whole world is a manifestation of His glory.
- The things we do, are not actually done by us.

Addressing the Holy Prophet Allah said in the Qur'an: You did not throw (the pebbles), when you threw (them), but Allah threw (them). (Surah al-Anfal, 8:17) Consider the words: 'You threw' and 'You did not throw.' Both of these phrases are a manifestation of 'but Allah threw.' There is another verse that says: Those who swear allegiance to you, swear allegiance only to Allah. (Surah al-Fath,, 48:10)

- Being veiled as we are, we do not understand the truth these verses imply.
- As a matter of fact we all are under a veil except the Holy Prophet who was educated direct by Allah and the Holy Imams of the Holy Prophet's Progeny who received training from him.
- So there is a possibility that the preposition 'bi' and the noun 'Ism' in 'bismillah' may be related to al-Hamdu; meaning, 'With the name of Allah all praises belong to Him.'
- It is a manifestation of the glory of Allah that draws every praise to it and does not allow any praise to be a praise of anyone other than Allah, for howsoever you may try, you will not find anyone existing other than Him.
- Therefore whatever praise you express, it will be a praise of Allah.
- It may be noted that praise is always made of positive qualities.
- The defects and faults being negative qualities, do not actually exist.
- Everything that exists has two aspects.
- It is positive aspect that is praised and it is always free from defects and faults.
- There exists only one excellence and one beauty and that is the excellence and beauty of Allah.
- We should try to understand this truth.
- Once we are convinced of this fact, everything else will be easy.
- As a matter of fact it is easy to acknowledge something verbally, but it is difficult to persuade oneself to believe even a rational thing firmly.

**TO BELIEVE SOMETHING INTELLECTUALLY IS ONE THING AND  
TO BE CONVINCED OF IT IS ANOTHER**

- To be convinced of the truth of a thing is different from believing it intellectually because of the existence of some scientific arguments to prove it.
- The impeccability of the Prophets was due to their firm conviction.
- A man who is fully convinced of a truth, cannot act contrary to his conviction.
- If you were sure that somebody was standing near you with a drawn sword in his hand and that he would kill you if you uttered a single word against him, you would never say anything against him because your first concern was to save your life.
- In other words, as far as this matter was concerned, you were so to stay infallible.

- A man who was convinced that if he slandered anybody behind his back, his backbiting would assume the shape of a dreadful animal with a long tongue stretching from the slanderer to the slandered and this animal would be crushing him, he would never indulge in backbiting anybody.
- If a man was sure that "slandering is the food of the dogs of hell" and the slanderer would be ceaselessly devoured by them, he would never stoop to this vice.
- We occasionally indulge in backbiting only because we are not fully sure of the consequences of this bad habit.

### **MAN'S DEEDS WILL ASSUME A CONCRETE SHAPE**

- If man was convinced that whatever deeds he performed would be embodied in the hereafter, the good deeds assuming a good shape and the bad one a bad shape, and that he would have to give an account of all that he did, he would not commit a bad deed even unconsciously.
- We need not go into the details of this affair.
- It is enough to say that everything will be reckoned.
- If a person slandered anyone else, he would be accountable for doing that.
- If anybody harassed or injured the faithful, he would go to Hell.
- The good men would get Paradise.
- One must be fully convinced and sure of this procedure.
- It is not enough to read the law in the books or to understand it rationally.
- Knowing and understanding are quite different from heart-felt conviction.
- By heart I mean the real heart, not an organ of the body.
- Man often knows and understands a truth, but not being firmly convinced of it, does not act according to what a belief in it requires.
- He acts only when he gets fully and firmly convinced.
- It is this firm conviction that is called faith.
- Simply knowing a Prophet is of no use.
- What is beneficial is having faith in him.
- It is not enough to prove the existence of Allah.
- What is necessary is to believe in Him and to obey His commandments whole-heartedly.
- With the true faith, everything becomes easy.
- If a man was convinced that there was a Being who was the source of this world, that man was accountable and that his death would not be his end but would only mean his shifting to a more perfect stage, he would surely be saved from all errors and slips.

- The question is how can he be convinced?
- I have already described one aspect of the verse saying: 'With the name of Allah all praises belong to Allah.'
- I once again emphasize that what I say is only a possibility, not a definite interpretation of the Qur'an.
- Anyhow, it appears that a man fully convinced that all praises belonged to Allah, could never have any polytheistic ideas in his mind, for whomsoever anybody praises, he actually praises some manifestation of Allah's glory.
- Anybody who composes or intends to compose an ode in honour of the Holy Prophet or Imam Ali, that ode of his is for Allah because the Holy Prophet and the Imam are not but a great manifestation of Allah, and therefore their eulogy is the eulogy of Allah and His manifestation.
- A man who is convinced that all praises are due to Allah, would never indulge in bragging, boasting and self-praise.
- In fact man is self-conceited because he does not know himself.
- 'He who knows himself, knows Allah.'
- A man knows Allah only when he is firmly convinced that he himself has no significance and that everything belongs to Allah only.

In fact, we neither know ourselves nor Allah. We have faith neither in ourselves nor in Him. We are neither sure that we are nothing nor that everything is Allah's. So long as we are not certain of these things, all arguments to prove the existence of Allah are of little use, and all that we do is based on egoism. All claims to leadership and chieftaincy are the result of self-conceit and personal vanity.

### **SELF-CONCEIT IS THE CAUSE OF ALL TROUBLES**

- Most of the troubles man faces are the result of his vanity and empty pride.
- Man loves himself and desires to be admired by others.
- But that is his mistake.
- He does not realize that he himself is nothing and that he is the property of another Being.
- Man's self-conceit and love of power are the cause of most of his troubles, sins and vices, which ruin him and drag him to Hell.
- Because of his selfishness man wants to control everything and becomes the enemy of others whom he rightly or wrongly considers to be a hindrance in his way.
- He knows no limits in this respect and that is the cause of all troubles, misfortunes and calamities.

## **ALL PRAISES BELONG TO ALLAH**

- It appears that the Book of Allah begins with the question that includes all questions.
- When Allah says: 'All praises belong to Allah', we feel that so many questions have appeared before our eyes.
  
- The Qur'an does not say that some praises belong to Allah.
- That means that if somebody says to another person: 'I know that Allah is Almighty and Omnipotent, but still I am praising you, not Allah', even then his praise would go to Allah, because all praises are Allah's praises.
  
- The Qur'an says: 'All praises belong to Allah'.
- This means that all kinds of praises in all conditions belong to Him.
- This short verse resolves many problems.
- This verse is enough to cleanse man's heart from the impurity of all kinds of polytheism provided he is fully convinced of its truth.
- He who said that he had never committed any sort of polytheism, said so because he had intuitively discovered this truth and grasped it mentally.
  
- This state of conviction cannot be secured by any argument.
- I do not mean that argument is of no use. It is also required. But it is only a means of understanding the question of Allah's monotheism according to one's intellectual capacity.
- To believe in it is the next step.

## **PHILOSOPHICAL REASONING IS NOT MUCH EFFECTIVE**

- Philosophy is a means not an end.
- Philosophical arguments help in understanding the problems, but they do not lead to a firm faith, which is a matter of intuition and taste.
- Even faith has several grades.
- I hope that we will not be contented with reading and understanding the Qur'an, but will have a firm faith in every word of it, because it is the Divine Book that reforms man and wants to turn him into a being created by Allah from His 'Ism A 'zam' (grand name).
- Allah has gifted man with all kinds of faculties but many of his potential capabilities are dormant.
- The Qur'an wants to raise man from this lower position to the high position worthy of him.
- The Qur'an has come for this very purpose.
- Allah, the Prophets have come to help man in getting out of the depths of selfishness and seeing the Divine light so that he may forget everything other than Allah.
- *May Allah bestow this favour on us also!*