

THERAPEUTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE QUR'ĀN

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Abstract. The Qur'ān, more than once, has described itself as *shifā'* (cure) for man as such without any specification of the moral, the psychological, the physical and the speculative in him, which are of course different aspects of the organic wholeness that he is. A perfectly healthy person, according to the Qur'ānic teachings, is the one who is at peace with himself, with the environments as well as with God. It is with reference to the acquisition of such total peacefulness that the painful element whatever, specially that which is supposed to accompany a diseased state of affairs, stands relieved. Besides, prayers sincerely addressed to God invoke Divine causality which, in supersession of all lower causalities, operates directly and is likely to cure all diseases that are ordinarily sought to be treated through mundane methods. Even the words of the Qur'ān, being nothing less than Divine speech, are a source of comfort to the afflicted ones and a therapeutic agent in regard to all diseases.

The Qur'ān is a book of guidance for mankind; it shows to man the right path leading to the realization of the ideal of perfect manhood that it has in view. As a preparation and as a perpetual aid for the sacred, though arduous, journey on this path it has provided a whole system of ethics as well as a metaphysics and an eschatology; and also it has described various historical events, the examples of living human situations, which serve sometimes as models to imitate and sometimes as undesirable specimens of human behaviour to be avoided and not to be repeated in our own lives. Besides, the Qur'ān has described itself as a therapy, an art

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of healing; meaning to say that when a person ‘goes adrift’ and deviates from the ‘right track’ — in very wide connotations of these cognate phrases — it helps him to be on the track once again. The latter role of the Qur’ān has specifically been stated in at least three of its verses:

1. O mankind! There hath come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing (*shifā’*) for the diseases in your breasts (*sudūr*).¹
2. We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur’ān that which is a healing (*shifā’*) and a mercy to those who have faith.²
3. Say: It (*i.e.* the Qur’ān) is a guide and a healing (*shifā’*) to those who have faith.³

The last two, as it is evident, are the blanket statements insofar as they claim that the Qur’ānic teachings have a healing effect on man irrespective of the fact whether the disease involved is moral, psychological or physical. The verse at no.1 asserts that the Qur’ān cures that which is inside the breast of man. The commentators are almost unanimously of the opinion that the reference in this verse is to the ‘diseases of the heart’ which, they further hold, are the moral and the spiritual diseases which the Qur’ān takes care of. This exclusivist connotation of the diseases addressed by Qur’ānic therapy, as determined by the commentators, does not appear to be justified. Even as that which is ‘inside the breast’ is equated with the heart (*qalb*), heart after all is a physical organ and so can be infected with a number of diseases which are physical/physiological in character. Also the Qur’ān itself calls *qalb* the seat of contemplation and thinking⁴ and so subject to the diseases of fallacious reasoning. Further, there is a *hadīth* which says:

In the body is a piece of flesh so that when it functions well the whole body is well and when its behaviour goes erratic, the whole body goes erratic. Beware! this piece of flesh is the *qalb*.⁵

In fact normal functioning of the heart, the blood-pumping machine, as we all know, plays the central role in the human

organism so as to keep him alive and active and healthy in all respects.

From the above it can be easily concluded that the Qur'ānic therapy extends to all sorts of aberrations of the human person — moral, spiritual, physical, psychological and even contemplative — and not to the moral diseases only, as it is generally believed. The single proviso which is particularly mentioned in verses quoted at nos. 2 and 3 above is that the person to whom the Qur'ān's curative art is profitably applicable must be a man of faith: this is the pre-requisite. The nature and rationale of this conditionality will be made clear as we proceed with our argument.

The Qur'ān, as its general tenor of communication and direction is concerned, addresses itself to the total person as an organic whole towards whose constitution the mental, the spiritual and the physical in him have so obviously their respective shares to contribute. So must its remedial function, I believe, be relevant to the person as such. It should, however, be conceded at the very outset that this function operates differently in the different realms. In the moral-cum-spiritual realm this operation is laid down as direct and immediate: dos and don'ts in this sphere are laid down in clear and distinct verses, the *muhkamāt*.⁶ In regard to the mental and the physical disorders as well as to the phenomenon of misdirected reasoning, it is presumed to be indirect, though even in these areas we can legitimately affirm the grace of God whose direct availability to man is assured in case he has managed to acquire a keen receptivity in himself with the help of invocations and prayers. As effectiveness of the Qur'ānic therapy is thus hedged in with certain extra-natural and esoteric conditionalities, it must ordinarily be used as an effective complement to other therapies like medical, psychological etc. though in special circumstances it can surely superimpose itself on all of them and operate independently also.

Before we elaborate the above observations, a basic, widely current, misconception, which has an evident bearing on the subject under discussion, needs to be urgently removed. A sizable section of the '*ulamā*' are of the opinion that the Holy Qur'ān

subscribes to what has been known as ‘the two-substance theory’ of the human organism, one substance comprising mind or soul and the other comprising the body. Unfortunately, most of the Muslim philosophers as well as mystics uphold this view. Their mind-body dualism may have been a consequence — partly, perhaps — of the influence exercised by Greek, specially Platonic thought in this respect. Incidentally, they, in general, uphold that mind/soul and spirit belong to the same category, because morality (function of the spirit) is entirely dependent on psychology (function of the mind or soul) and *vice versa*. No one can be morally sound unless he is psychologically healthy and to the behaviour of a psychologically abnormal person moral epithets cannot be justifiably applied. Correspondingly, psychological soundness is very meaningfully relevant to moral uprightness.

As to the Qur’ān, the ‘*ulamā*’ generally derive support for their standpoint that ‘the soul of man is an independent substance’ from the following verse which relates to the event of the creation of Adam, ‘the progenitor of the human race’:

When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and
breathed into him of my soul, fall ye down in obeisance
unto Him.⁷

Now if we accept the literalist⁸ meaning of this verse — and this is what the arguers appear to have inadvertently done — it would imply, for one thing, that a portion of God’s spirit or soul separated from Him and got deposited into the ‘bodies of the human individuals’, or at least into the ‘body of the first man fashioned by Him’. That would so evidently tend to violate the unique, immaculate oneness of the Divine Person and necessarily amount to the statement that He is compounded, *i.e.* made up of parts: this is simply unacceptable and in fact heretical on the very face of it. The verse really, I hold, is symbolic and can be interpreted to mean that Divine attributes have been woven into the primeval nature of man as the supreme ideals of excellence which he, as a moral agent, should perpetually seek to approximate more and more throughout his life. A verse of the Holy Qur’ān corroborates this interpretation. The Qur’ān says:

Therefore set right your face for the obedience of Allah, being one devoted to Him only. The established pattern of Allah upon which He has created mankind.⁹

Elsewhere,

The Qur'ān posed to the Christians: (We) took the dye of Allah and whose dye is better than Allah's and we worship Him alone.¹⁰

Another phenomenon which has sometimes been quoted to prove he disembodied, and hence independent, character of the souls, as demonstrated by their veritable existence before they were incorporated into different bodies for their career in the present world, is the well-known Grand Covenant described by the Qur'ān as follows:

... And when thy Lord brought forth the Children of Adam, from their loins, their descendents and made them bear witness about themselves. Am I not your Lord? They said: yes, we bear witness, lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: we are unaware of this.¹¹

The 'historical' incident, as described here, makes, directly or indirectly, no reference to 'the assembly of souls' from whom God elicited the promise of allegiance to His lordship so that they would not back out later on when they happen to assume an embodied appearance in the present world that we know. It rather talks of an 'assembly of the descendants of Adam'. In other words, it, at the most, can be construed as the first *en masse* creation of the human beings which took effect for a specific purpose only and there was no implication of any moral responsibilities etc. during that period, their second creation being the one that they have in the present spatio-temporal world, the *dār al-'amal* where every one of them appears, stays as a moral agent for an appointed period of time and then disappears into death to be raised again on the Day of Judgement to give an account of his life therebefore and face the consequences thereof. Symbolically, however, this recorded incident simply means that faith in God and a living assurance of his existence is ingrained in the very nature of man as it is here and now.

So from the Qur'ānic point of view, insofar as I have been able to understand, the human individual is an organic whole: different terms like *nafs*, *rūh*, *fu'ād*, *qalb*, *sadr* etc. have been used, some of them (or any one of them on some occasions) for the individual as such, and some of them (or any one of them on some occasions) for particular aspects of his behaviour.¹²

As pointed out above, the expressly direct and basic relevance of the Qur'ānic teachings is undoubtedly to the moral and spiritual realm of human activities. There are to that effect general as well as particular down-to-the-earth directives available in the Book of God: disvalues are not to be allowed to take roots in man and values are to be firmly rooted in him. God is the bearer of the Most Beautiful Names¹³ and the men of faith have been advised to inculcate in themselves the values implied by these Names. The Holy Prophet (peace be on him) once said: I have been divinely ordained to vouchsafe the excellence of morals.¹⁴ In his own person, he was the most perfect moral example to be followed.¹⁵

The question that has unfortunately been rendered problematic and debatable — to which reference has already been made — is in regard to the relevance of the Qur'ānic teachings to mental abnormalities as well as towards physical ailments of the individual. Is the Qur'ān a *shifā'*, a cure, positively, and does it prescribe preventive measures in these spheres also? Address of the Qur'ān being to man as such, answer to this question, I reiterate, must be in the affirmative. As to exactly how this is the case I hope to show during the account that follows.

On this occasion let us parenthetically make a passing reference to another concept of the Qur'ān which has meanings conveniently comparable to that of the concept of *shifā'*. This other concept is *hidāyah* (guidance) which is undoubtedly the most central and a very persistent theme of the Qur'ān and in fact the basic purpose of its revelation. The Qur'ān, introducing itself, says:

This is the Book: in it is *hidāyah* (guidance) sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah, who have faith in the Unseen.¹⁶

Broadly speaking, *shifā'* and *hidāyah* have the same field of operation: only, *shifā'* is an activity that comes into operation when man actually goes erratic and his error is to be removed. It has more of a negative connotation, although, positively, it does have the additional implication of putting man on to a healthy way of life. *Hidāyah*, on the other hand, has a more expressly positive meaning: when various alternatives are open before man or when he has a tendency to go astray, the Qur'ān guides him to the right path. Anyway, thus defined, *hidāyah*, like *shifā'*, is relevant to man as such and is required by him in all departments of his behaviour. The Qur'ān would see to it that man does not go amiss in his thinking, in his psycho-moral attitudes, in his socio-economic behaviour, even in his eating habits, and what not. Further the recipients of *hidāyah* as well as of *shifā'* must both be men of faith as shown by the relevant verses quoted above.

In general, the concept of disease is quite evidently understandable only against the context of health and that of abnormality against the context of normality. Now what, according to the Qur'ān, is the concept of a normal, healthy, sound and upright person? In order to furnish an analysis of these concepts, let us go one step further back and try to find out what exactly is the Qur'ānic view of the nature and destiny of man which he is required to carry out. Islam being the primordial religion, man is born a Muslim — literally, one who is at peace (with himself and with his environments). This is characteristically the natural state of affairs in regard to man. According to a well-known saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ (*Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*) “every child is born on nature”¹⁷ or, alternatively, “every child is born on the nature of Islam.” Both of these versions ultimately mean the same thing. Being ‘natural’, this state is amoral. In other words, the ‘ought’ that is ingrained in the nature of man and that in fact happens to be his exclusively distinctive feature in the entire universe, is, to begin with, just a form without content, just ‘an existence without essence’, in the terminology of the existentialists of modern times. The content or essence begins to be provided when the individual, under the *aegis* of the formal directive principle with which his nature is congenitally inspired, starts living in, and enters into a constant mutual contact with, the

spatio-temporal world. His self is, in fact, sustained by this contact. The *hadīth*, only a part of which has been quoted above, refers to this phenomenon of giving form to the formless content that man is. The full text of the *hadīth* is: Every child is born on nature (or the nature of Islam), it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian.¹⁸

During the process of invasion and counter-invasion between the individual and his environments, which of course continues to occur throughout man's existence in the world, sometimes it so happens that the psycho-moral aspect of his person, *viz.* the soul the Divine reflector in man, is rendered opaque and so inoperative, and consequently Satanic forces take hold of him. This is the stage of '*nafs-e ammārah*',¹⁹ according to the Qur'ān, at which the person concerned exercises his moral freedom almost invariably in favour of the evil way. Sometimes, good sense prevails in him and he begins to censure and reprimand himself. Thus he becomes the bearer of what the Qur'ān calls *nafs-e lawwāmah*.²⁰ The highest stage in the development of human personality is reached when the warring conflict with the environments calms down, when he in fact transcends the tension which ego ordinarily is. Such a person would be living in the world as if he is not living therein but rather belongs elsewhere. That is the stage of *nafs-e mutma'innah*.²¹ This does not mean that one who is stationed at this level is a recluse and does not actively participate, or has no occasion to exercise his freedom of choice, in the world. He does live in the world and he constantly does exercise his freedom of will and choose between good and evil, but it so happens that his choice is always in favour of the good alternative. This is what Iqbāl calls 'higher fatalism' as opposed to 'lower fatalism'²² or *qismat* which stands for a belief in the pre-determination of all human activities and, in consequence, the denial of any 'moral freedom' whatsoever in the usual sense of this term. Between 'higher fatalism' and 'lower fatalism' is the state where an individual, an ordinary man-in-the-world exercises his freedom sometimes in favour of the good alternative and sometimes in favour of the evil alternative. Thus, a contented person is one who by his perseverant mood and concerted efforts gets himself elevated practically to the amoral,

i.e. the natural stage, analogous to the one from which he started his journey as a soldier of the moral ideal; he is now disturbed by no contending alternatives of moral significance from among which to choose. This is the ideal state of affairs which perhaps no ordinary individual can attain completely but which he can approximate more and more. We can as well call this process a kind of self-realization. With perhaps some stretch/shift of meaning we can apply the well-known dictum *كُلُّ شَيْءٍ يَرْجِعُ إِلَىٰ أَصْلِهِ* (everything returns to its origin) to this phenomenon of one's return to nature.

A contented person, thus evolved, is a unity that abhors all disunities. He has no disharmonies within and no conflicts without; no either-ors within and no either-ors without. God Himself being an uncompromising Oneness, He is happy with the 'ones' among human beings and they too are happy with Him: so no dissonance with the Divine either. It is a person of this stature who can duly be recognized, in the words of 'Allāma Iqbāl, as the one who is a co-worker with God in the realization of the supreme ideals of life and existence. God says to the *nafs-e matma'innah*:

Come back thou to thy Lord – well pleased (thyself) and well-pleasing unto Him.²³

Man's return to his Lord and his journeying to the state of contentment is, as shown above, at the same time a return to his initial, *a priori* state of being in which he was born. The only — *albeit* very important — difference is that the latter is congenitally woven into the fabric that man is whereas the former has been described as consequent upon his qualifying a 'test' given to him by God, which amounts to how best he delivers the trust of his free personality.

He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six days — and His throne was over the waters — that He might test you, which of you is best.²⁴

As God would forgive any sin that he chooses to forgive, but would not at all forgive that His oneness be violated and other gods be associated with Him,²⁵ so He also holds the unique

singular oneness of man — His state of peace within and peace without — in very high esteem. Anything that amounts to the disruption of this unity and peace is a serious digression from being ‘healthy’, directly in the moral sense but not very insignificantly in the physiological and psychological senses of this term also and so a disease to be seriously reckoned with. After all, how can a diseased person, in any sense of these terms, be peaceful and undisturbed!

The most basic kind of such a diseased attitude of man recognized by the Qur’ān is, of course, the association of other gods with the one Supreme God. *Shirk* or polytheism is a grievous iniquity.²⁶ It disintegrates the personality of man. Loyalty to many gods makes him the arena of a multiplicity of mutually-at-war opposites and affects him with an absolute lack of a sense of direction. Like a man lost in a trackless jungle he is thoroughly non-plussed and bamboozled and does not know which way to go. Those, on the other hand, who are, exclusively committed to One Supreme God, Who not only created the entire universe but also sustains it and Who guarantees that those who are sincerely directed towards Him, never lose their track, need not go elsewhere in search of helpers nor accept the unqualified domination of anyone else. The Qur’ān says:

Behold! Verily on the friends of Allah there is no fear,
nor shall they grieve.²⁷

‘Allāma Iqbāl succinctly remarks

یہ ایک سجدہ جسے تو گراں سمجھتا ہے
ہزار سجدے سے دیتا ہے آدمی کو نجات²⁸

[This one prostration (to God) that you are reluctant to perform would in fact make you dispense with a lot many other prostrations (to those besides Him).]

So faith in the singular, inviolable unity of God creates the sentiment of self-regard and self-confidence in man. An Almighty God being his helper – his co-worker as Iqbāl would say²⁹ – and the One Whose grace is perpetually available to him, he operates of his own and continues exploiting his potentialities to the

maximum towards the realization of ideals. It also creates in him a sentiment of humility. The One Supreme God being All-Powerful and All-Knowing, only He knows to what consequences, good or bad, one's actions will lead. On a number of occasions it so happens that a person does something with utmost sincerity and good intentions but he does not get the corresponding result. So a moral agent must invariably move in what **he** considers to be the right direction. However, insofar as the desired consequences are concerned, he should, with modesty and a with a genuine feeling of helplessness in the face of the Supreme Divine providence, pray to God for producing the needful because only He has complete control over all the positive as well as negative conditions which are essentially conducive to any occurrence in nature to take place. Faith in One God also promotes mutual toleration and fellow-feeling, and tends to create universal brotherhood among human beings. Allegiance to One God and the sentiment of self-regard which it engenders must necessarily tend to the conception of the entire humanity as a kingdom of ends.

While involved in a passion for approximation to, and assimilation of, the ideal, the real is of course not to be ignored by the human agent. The Qur'ān teaches man to pray to God for his welfare not only in the world hereafter but also — in fact, primarily — in the world here and now. Metaphysics, as conceived by the Qur'ān grows out of our concept of the physical world; so both are organically related mutually. Dislike and even positive hatred for the world and its renunciation that is recommended by a section of the mystics — the life-denying, fact-avoiding mystics — is not at all a normal, a healthy, and so a desirable attitude. Earthly life is genuine and real; it has a meaningfulness and sacredness of its own. The proviso of course is that it is not the be-all and end-all of everything but only a means. The means are to be taken seriously if goals are to be achieved. We have to live in the world, be involved in our mutual transactions with it, and in our capacity as its residents carry out all our rights and duties; however, during all this business we have to keep ourselves constantly reminded of the need to rise above and transcend it for the realization of noble objectives

which it duly subserves. Love of the world for its own sake, we all know, leads to such immoral, passionate behaviour patterns as greed, rancour, malice, hatred, pride, false sense of possession and so on. Once allowed to take roots, these passions have an in-built tendency to grow and develop endlessly. Their consummate and total satisfaction being a practical impossibility, they ultimately result into complexed, disintegrated and tension-loaded personalities, further leading to various kinds of mental disorders and physical disequilibriums. Sigmund Freud, the well-known 20th century psychoanalyst, has been criticized, rightly or wrongly, on many counts and a number of alternative psychotherapeutic techniques have been suggested since his times but his basic observation that still appears to hold is that the cause behind most of the abnormalities of mind and of stunted personalities can easily be traced back to one or more of the unfulfilled desires of the individual concerned, specially, his sex desires.

Enumerating the specific moral-cum-cultural disvalues that would rob the individual of his unity, integrity and authenticity the Qur'ān puts *munāfiqat* (hypocrisy) almost at the top. For this ailment, the Qur'ān specifically uses the word *marad*³⁰ (disease). Those who are afflicted with this disease and choose to adamantly stick to it will, in the hereafter, be lodged in the lowest depths of the Fire.³¹ A *munāfiq* is one who has a double personality: he outwardly and publicly proclaims allegiance to Islam and feigns to be of the class of the faithful but inwardly holds on to unfaith and infidelity. By this dissimulation he seeks to deceive others and, as if, God also but he in fact deceives himself, says the Qur'ān.³² Whatever be the objective of this deceptive attitude of the hypocrite what is relevant to our present context is that his personality is, in consequence, thoroughly deformed and split into two which is not at all a desirable state of affairs for his moral as well as psycho-physical health. We can as well, in general, say that the faith of a *munāfiq* as he proclaims it is not genuine: it is farcical and fake. Thus, a *munāfiq* is one whose actions do not emanate from, or grow out of, his faith whereas it is a patent fact that the Qur'ān subscribes to the thesis otherwise; almost invariably it characterizes the men of faith (*mu'minūn*) as the men of good actions (*a'māl-e Sālih*) — and perhaps *vice versa* also.

We can as well say that the 'good actions' of a *munāfiq* are not the outcome of his good intentions whereas from the Islamic point of view actions and intentions must corroborate each other if the former are to have any positive moral value.³³

There is a roughly corresponding state of affairs which too is a deviation from the concept of an ideally well-integrated man of the Qur'ān. An individual, good by himself, who does not pronounce his goodness for the fear of opinion of those who may have a different definition of goodness and who, incidentally, are so important in society that he cannot dare oppose them; and the one who encounters in the society what he considers to be an evil but neither tries to stop it by force nor publicly declares it to be so, etc. are, both of them, suffering from dissimulation and are deviations from the kind of man the Qur'ān seeks to build up. There is a *hadīth*, according to which, if the man of faith finds evil prospering around him, he is duty-bound to prevent it by force; if he cannot do that, he should verbally pronounce it to be evil and condemn it; if he cannot even do that he should at least strongly dislike it from the core of his heart: this last one is the weakest level of faith.³⁴ It would be interesting to refer here to the concept of moral freedom and responsibility given by Sartre, the Existentialist, for whom man is 'condemned' to be free not simply in regard to himself but in regard to all people and consequently also be responsible for the entire humanity.

'Telling of lies' is another evil that roughly belongs to the same category as *nifāq* or *munāfiqat*. In fact, the former is the blanket term that subsumes under it the latter and much more. 'Telling of a lie' is opposed to 'speaking the truth' Now truth, broadly speaking, is of three kinds (and so, correspondingly, there are three kinds of lying also).

Firstly, there are logical and mathematical truths which are purely implicative and conditional: we simply see whether the conclusion necessarily follows or does not necessarily follow from the premise/premises. For instance, it is true to say that if all men are mortal and if also Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal; or if all students are intelligent and some men are students, then some men are intelligent. And it is false to say (I

would be telling a lie in case I say) that if all men are two-legged and all students are two-legged, then all students are men; or if all flowers are beautiful and all women are beautiful, then all women are flowers. There are certain rules of implication which are purely rational, deductive, axiomatic and *a priori* in nature. One who violates these rules, tells a lie. *By so doing he violates his rational nature.*

Secondly, there are truths of experience. These are further of two kinds. There are truths of correspondence, according to which one asserts what is the case in the external world; and there are truths of inductive reasoning according to which we have the 'perceptually known' as our premise and a conclusion which relates to the 'unknown'. From the fact that the sun has invariably risen in the East we conclude that it will rise in the East tomorrow; or from the fact that all the crows that have been seen were black we conclude that all crows are black. Such reasoning being a 'leap in the dark' is, unlike deductive reasoning, always risky. Anyway, it has its own laid down rules and regulations which ought to be taken care of. One who violates these laws tells a lie. *By so doing, he violates his empirical nature.*

Thirdly, there are truths of subjectivity, truths which relate to my I-ness, my self, my ego. Ego has two levels: the real and the apparent, the noumenal and the phenomenal, the appreciative and the efficient. Subjective truths at the former level, *i.e.* the level of our day-to-day existence, are such as my ordinary pleasures and pains, likes and dislikes, loves and hates, desires and aspirations, etc. whereas those at the latter level are my deeper convictions and commitments, my attitudes towards life and existence, the articles of religious faith to which I subscribe, and so on. The first level is 'subjective' in the ordinary sense of the term whereas the second one is trans-subjective as in this case the person concerned transcends his phenomenal self and has a contact with the roots, the essence, of his existence as such. *One who does not speak the truth in the subjective sense of the term violates his whole being* — sometimes at the efficient level and sometimes at the appreciative level. It is, by and large, against the context of compromise and peace with the appreciative self of

man that the relevance of the Qur'ānic significance of therapy for him can be traced, as we shall presently see.

In the beginning of this essay I ventured to submit that the Qur'ān is a remedy for all kinds of ailments of the human individual. During the above account, oblique, though deeply meaningful references, have been made to the validity of this submission. Let us now dilate on the subject directly and in some detail.

Insofar as the normative character of the activities of man as a social agent is concerned, his intentions behind these activities, as we have already seen, are very intimately relevant. 'Actions are (to be evaluated) by (*i.e.* with reference to) intentions,'³⁵ goes a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thus, in order to finally judge whether a particular act is desirable or undesirable we have not to look to its visible consequences or its actual results that are registered but to the intention that prompted the performance of that action. Now intention, the psychologists tell us, includes, besides the actual/targeted results, all the direct as well as indirect means that a person proposes to adopt for the realization of these results and also the objective that he has in view. Thus in fact the real determiner of the value judgments in regard to various human states and actions is the attitude of the subject of these states, his broader view of ends and means — in fact his whole philosophy of life. It is this attitude, this vision of life and values, which really matters, not simply for the determination of the merit of actions and states and their demerit but also of good and evil, of pleasures and pains, of well-being and affliction, and so on. When the former changes in a specific way, the latter correspondingly undergoes a transvaluation. The evil becomes good and the good, evil. If you give money in order to give financial relief to a needy person, your action is good; if you do so as a bribe to get some illegitimate favours from a person, your action is evil. If a business-minded doctor operates upon a person and removes his healthy kidney in order to sell it to someone else, the action is bad; if a healthy kidney is removed in order to be transplanted in the body of another person to whom it has been voluntarily donated by the man concerned, the action is good; and the donor is rather thankful to the doctor in spite of all the pain and the

physical loss that he has incurred. Such examples from our daily life can be multiplied endlessly.

Most often, in a diseased state, whether physical or mental — and even moral — it is the element of uneasiness and pain that is sought to be eliminated in any therapeutic technique that is ordinarily administered and it is the painful element itself that can be adequately looked after, managed and may ultimately be reduced to insignificance by — complementarily or even alternatively — the appropriate attitude of the man concerned, because a person — as shown by examples in the above paragraph — who is inspired by moral considerations or sacred sentiments, who concentrates on nobler objectives with a passionate involvement in their realization, any disease with all its usual accompanying discomforts would simply be eliminated. The noblest objective available to man as recognized by the Qur'ān is the realization of his own true self. In view of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ saying that God has created man after His own image³⁷ and in view of the Qur'ānic observation that God's nature is that on which He has created human beings,³⁸ self realization by man amounts to the assimilation of the attributes of God and consequently to be His friend and associate and a co-worker with Him. Being graced with nothing less than the companionship with God, man achieves the maximum amount of complacency and satisfaction which knows no worries. How unambiguously the Qur'ān proclaims:

Behold! Verily for the friends of Allah there is no fear,
nor shall they grieve³⁹

meaning to say they have nothing to worry about. And if they have nothing to worry about they feel well and they are healthy for all practical purposes.

This unique experience of being with God — or the experience that God is with me — incidentally amounts to the certitude that is connoted by the Qur'ānic concept of *īmān* or *īmān bil ghaib*. *Īmān* is most often rendered into English as 'belief' but sometimes as 'faith;' the latter alone, I hold, is the appropriate translation. Philosophers of language tell us that belief is a mode of knowledge that is characterized with partial

certitude and partial ignorance; so with more of observation and thinking it is liable to change, improvement and sometimes even total replacement by another belief. Faith, on the other hand, is an attitude of total commitment, a 'living assurance begotten of a rare experience';⁴⁰ it can neither be changed nor replaced unless the personality of the man of faith goes through an entire metamorphosis and he becomes a new man altogether. Further, faith is always faith in a person (or an object personified!); meaning to say, it is the sentiment of unconditional resignation in favour of, handing over of oneself to, the being in whom it is reposed. In the Qur'ānic perspective, it is resignation in favour of God translated into a corresponding behavioral policy characterized by intense love for Him and by patience and perseverance towards the carrying out of this policy.⁴¹ It is this God-directedness — almost God-intoxicatedness — of the man of faith that would comprise an instrument of *shifā'* for physical afflictions and mental tortures and an assurance that one is rightly guided and on the true path. The Qur'ān says

... but give good tidings to those who patiently persevere — who say, when afflicted with calamity: to Allah we belong and to Him is our return — They are those on whom (descend) blessings from their Lord and mercy; and they are the ones that are the recipients of guidance.⁴²

Just imagine the passionate zeal of a person thus committed who plunges into the battle-field and lays down his very life in order to hurriedly meet God, the Beloved, well-pleased and well-pleasing to Him.⁴³ In fact throughout his life he would pray for, simply relish the idea of, this kind of death.

Prayer, the core and pith of all religious activities, occupies a very important place in the therapeutic role of the Qur'ān. Being basically an instrument of encounter and dialogue with God, it helps the prayee towards the fulfilment of his desires and the alleviation of his sufferings; all this is affected in many ways. For one thing, it is an appeal to the One Whose knowledge extends over everything, Who is all powerful, and Who is a friend of the men of faith. When I talk to Him about my failings, express to

Him my desires which I, with the means at my disposal I have not been able to realize, and when I speak out my worries to Him, my mental pressure is released and I feel a sort of relief: I have done the maximum; what else can I do? So, I have to be peaceful now!

Further, being a *mi'rāj* for the believers,⁴⁴ an experience of being in the company of God, prayer by itself — even if does nothing else — at least emits grace, a strong sense of holiness and tranquil ease in the face of which all mundane anxieties, inconveniences and unease lose their poignant pinch. This is the philosophy of withness. “Man is known by the company he keeps’ is a very wise saying which capsulizes the general truth in this regard. If you sit in the company of a good, peaceful person you yourself tend to become the same. If authorized to change the environment of a person we can mould his character as we desire, is the claim of a number of social thinkers. How beautifully Rumi says

یک زمانہ صحبت با اولیاء
بہتر از صد سالہ طاعت بے ریا

[One moment of time in the company of the friends (of Allah) is better than an unostentatious servitude (of Allah) extended over hundreds of years.]

Not only indirectly through the prompting of certain higher sentiments which render all sorts of afflictions meaningless and almost relegate them to a state of oblivion, prayer also operates directly towards the alleviation of all unhealthy states which, to all appearance, have their causes in the sub-Divine world. It is a matter of ordinary experience that there is a gradation in the universe from the lowest to the higher and higher levels of causality. At the lowest level there are material causes, then there are biological causes, then psychological causes, and the highest one ordinarily known to us is the causality of the moral realm that is specific with human beings. These levels obviously do not subsist independently of one another: they have rather mutual impacts. When a higher causality has an impact on the relatively lower causality, the laws of the latter stop being operative as such and undergo a change. Two seeds placed on the palm of my hand,

for example, are material objects for all practical purposes. If one of them is put under the soil and it gets appropriate environments in the form of moisture, light etc. causal agency of the life principle begins operating on it and it starts behaving in a way in which material objects normally do not. We can as well say that its behaviour is 'supernatural' or miraculous from the point of view of the seed that is still on the palm of my hand. Same is the case with other pairs of uneven causalities in nature including the causality of human beings whose actions are morally free and charged with a sense of accountability. Now, in a theistic frame of reference, God Himself is a person with His own purposes and plans and so with a level of causality peculiar to Himself. Being the supreme causality, it may have an impact on all the other causalities that are of course lower than it: it may transform them to God's convenience and make them subserve His objectives which are the Unseen and so lie hidden from our common sensibilities. Now in an act of prayer which is addressed to God what actually happens is this: the prayee, who is the co-worker with God and the one who is the bearer of His Beautiful Names in the form of ideals of excellence ingrained in his nature which he is sincerely on the way to realize more and more, appeals to, and through concentration invokes, Divine Causality. When operative in response, this Causality amounts to all the lower causalities being held in abeyance/suspended/transformed. It is in this context, for example, that when a patient is declared incurable by doctors in the hospital they say in despair: 'take him home and pray for him; now only a miracle can save him!' – meaning to say that he cannot be saved by natural causal factors. Sometimes a miracle does save him and he suddenly begins to recoup and recover. The Qur'ān says:

Pray to Me, I shall accept your prayers.⁴⁵

Prayers, says 'Allāma Iqbāl, "is an expression of man's inner yearning for a response in the awful silence of the universe."⁴⁶

For the sort of invocation referred to in the above paragraph, the prayee, I reiterate, must have gone through a lot of self-culture so that his will has become the will of God or else he is so much at peace with the Will of God that this Will becomes his own will.

These either-ors are mutually inclusive and, in the last analysis mean one and the same thing. When the Qur'ān says about the Holy Prophet ﷺ

He does not speak out of his own fancy. This is no other than an inspired revelation.⁴⁷

it refers to such an identity between the Will of God and the will of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Iqbāl refers to this phenomenon in general when he says

خودی کو کر بلند اتنا کہ ہر تقدیر سے پہلے
خدا بندے سے خود پوچھے بتا تیری رضا کیا ہے⁴⁸

(Consolidate and ennoble your ego to that extent that, every time before you are going to meet some fate, God Himself would ask you: what is your choice?)

This highest stage of the development of ego Iqbāl terms *Niyābat-e Ilāhi* (Vicegerence of God). Elsewhere, he says, it amounts to looking at one's own self with the light of God (دیدن خود را بنور ذات حق); that is to say its perfection is authenticated and certified by Divine consciousness itself. There is a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to that effect:

God says: My devotee continues approximating Me till I love Him; and when I love him, I become his ears with which he hears, his eyes with which he sees, his hands with which he holds, his feet with which he walks. If he prays to me for something, I grant him the same⁴⁹

Adoption of a particular orientation of mind and an appropriate philosophy of life as well as the establishment of a contact with God through prayers are not the only therapeutic techniques guaranteed by the Qur'ān. There is something more to it also. The Qur'ān besides its socio-moral teachings, besides its propositions and statements, having a lexicographic significance, and besides its dos and don'ts, has another very meaningful aspect: it comprises the verbal revelation of God. Not the content only: the words were also revealed. The verbalized speech was

written down as such and has been saved since then throughout the ages.

Now, it is a patent fact that a writing is what the author of the writing, to all obviousness, has to say; what we 'read between the lines' refers to the real, intended, esoteric connotation of the message delivered; and as to who the author is determines the degree of the effectiveness of the communication of that message, the level of its sanctity, its impact on the readers and its reliability. Suppose there is a person who is known to be a confirmed liar; how can he advise others to tell the truth? The advice is good but it will carry no weight because the adviser does not have the required authenticity of his person. A sermonizer, himself loose in morals and fake in religiosity, abases the very words — howsoever honorific they may appear — that he uses in his sermons whereas an authentic, noble individual sanctifies and ennobles the words that he uses, howsoever ordinary and commonplace they may appear to be. Thus, words have a sacred authenticity or otherwise depending on the fact as to who utters them. The verbalized Qur'ān is the speech of God. The words used therein, irrespective of, and over and above, the dictionary meanings that they convey, have an immaculate holiness about them which derives from the holiness and majesty of God, their Author: both are mutually bound by an in-built intimacy. The Qur'ān in its text uses similitudes of the lowest things like gnats,⁵⁰ spiders,⁵¹ and flies.⁵² The unbelievers would say lightly: after all what does God intend to convey by such similitudes! But the men of faith, who recognize the intimate bond between the words and their author say: they are the truth from their Lord!⁵³ It is obviously with reference to the holiness of the written words, I am inclined to believe that God says, in fact commands, that none shall touch the Qur'ān unless he has cleansified himself.⁵⁴

Incidentally, it is against the above perspective that we can justify the popular stance of Qur'ānic therapy, known as *ruhāni 'ilāj* (spiritual treatment) that is commonly suggested and practically applied by our '*ulamā*' in the mosques and the *Sūfīs* in their *khānqāhs*. People throng them with different kinds of ailments — physical, mental, spiritual — besides various pressing

social problems that they are facing. The therapists would advise them to repeat a particular Name of God or a particular verse from the Holy Qur'ān etc. for a specific number of times every day or give them an amulet, bearing a writing of some Qur'ānic words, to be worn round their necks etc. or they themselves recite some verses of the Qur'ān and then blow upon the patient. And so on. All these methodologies have a prayer-like quality. Use of sacred words in various ways is in fact an invocation to the One Whose words they are and an appeal to Him by the appellants for the redress and alleviation of their sufferings. That this invocation is affected by a holy man or is even recommended by him does make a difference by itself: it surely adds to the effectiveness and reach of the act of prayer. In the *Sūfī* literature there is a mention of some sacred texts etc, from the Qur'ān or otherwise for the repeated recitation of which it is specially suggested that an *ijāzah* (permission) of the one who is authorized to grant it must be obtained.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 Qur'ān, 10:57.
- 2 *Ibid*, 17:82.
- 3 *Ibid*, 41:44.
- 4 *Ibid*, 7:179.
- 5 *Araba 'in Novī, hadīth* No. 6 (recorded by both *Sahīh Bukhārī* and *Sahīh Muslim*).
- 6 The Qur'ān has classified its verses into the *muh'kamāt* and the *mutashābihāt*. The former are generally considered to comprise the categorical orders of the *Shari'ah* which are plain to everyone's understanding (vide 3:7).
- 7 Qur'ān, 15:29.
- 8 The modernists sometimes resort to the symbolic interpretation of 'Adam' and 'of the story of his creation'. By 'Adam' they mean not a particular individual but the whole human race; 'creation of Adam', for them means arrival by the animal race at a stage of evolution where it attained the level of self-consciousness and the capacity to make free choices.
- 9 Qur'ān, 30:30.
- 10 *Ibid*, 2:138.

- 11 *Ibid*, 7:172.
- 12 For some details on this subject see Dr. Abdul Khaliq, *Problems of Muslim Philosophy*, pp. 112-116.
- 13 Qur'ān, 7: 180.
- 14 *Musnad Ahmad b. Hanbal*.
- 15 Qur'ān, 33:21.
- 16 *Ibid*, 2:2.
- 17 *Sahīh Bukhārī* and *Sahīh Muslim*.
- 18 *Ibid*.
- 19 Qur'ān, 12:53.
- 20 *Ibid*, 75:2.
- 21 *Ibid*, 89:28.
- 22 *Reconstruction of Religions Thought in Islam*, pp. 87-88.
- 23 Qur'ān, 89:30.
- 24 *Ibid*, 11:7.
- 25 *Ibid*, 4:48.
- 26 *Ibid*, 21:13.
- 27 *Ibid*, 10:62.
- 28 'Allāma Muhammad Iqbāl, *Kulliyāt-e Iqbāl* (Urdu), p. 550/50.
- 29 'Allāma Muhammad Iqbāl, *Reconstruction of Religious thought in Islam*.
- 30 Qur'ān, 2:10.
- 31 *Ibid*, 4:145.
- 32 *Ibid*, 2: 9.
- 33 *Sahīh Bukhārī* and *Sahīh Muslim*.
- 34 *Sahīh Muslim*.
- 35 *Sahīh Bukhārī* and *Sahīh Muslim*.
- 36 *Musnad Ahmad*.
- 37 اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَلَقَ اٰدَمَ عَلٰى صُوْرَتِهٖ *Musnad Ahmad*.
- 38 Qur'ān, 30:30.
- 39 Qur'ān, 10:62.
- 40 'Allāma Muhammad Iqbāl, *op cit.*, p. 87.

- 41 The Qur'ān also speaks of having faith in idols, satanic forces and false gods (4:51) from which only evil actions follow.
- 42 Qur'ān, 2:155.
- 43 *Ibid*, 89: 28.
- 44 الصَّلَاةُ مِعْرَاجُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ — a popular saying, sometimes attributed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.
- 45 Qur'ān, 40:60.
- 46 'Allāma Muhammad Iqbāl, *op cit.*, p.74
- 47 Qur'ān 53:3.
- 48 'Allāma Muhammad Iqbāl, *Kulliyāt-e Iqbāl* (Urdu), p. 384/60.
- 49 *Sahīh Bukhārī*.
- 50 Qur'ān, 2:26.
- 51 *Ibid*, 29:41.
- 52 *Ibid*, 22:73.
- 53 *Ibid*, 2:26.
- 54 *Ibid*, 56:79.