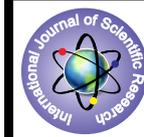


Dimension of Man in Islam and Saiva Siddhanta- A Comparative Study



Philosophy

KEYWORDS : Islam, Saiva Siddhanta, Man & Evil

Mohammed Iqbal. P

Ph.D research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Annamalai University

ABSTRACT

The comparative study about the dimension of man is an interesting one. Man is the multifaceted creature of God having a separate identity and he is broadly defined from various perspectives such as social, religious, philosophical and scientific angles. The features which distinguish man from other beings and make him as "Unique Creature by God" have been analyzed in this comparative study. The peculiarities of the dimension of man broadly defined in terms of his character, views, morality, and spirituality have been compared with the ideas of Islam and Saiva Siddhanta. In Islam and Saiva Siddhanta, the final goal is same but the path is different i.e. method of worship, place of worship, religious text etc.; But both system is good for man and avoids the evils from the society.

INTRODUCTION

Man does not, like other being, simply exist, but inquisitively asks about and interprets himself. This is not mere optional, theoretical speculation, it springs from the deepest necessity of a being that must shape itself and therefore need an orientation model to go by. Man's incompleteness is compensated for by self-understanding, which tells him how he can perfect himself. God, the Lord of the universe, has created man and provided him with a temporary home in that part of His vast kingdom which is the earth. He has endowed man with the faculties of thinking and understanding, and has given him the power to distinguish right from wrong. Man has also been invested with free will and the power to use the resources of the world however he likes. "And this is the reason as shown in Sutra 1., of Savajana Bodham, why God creates the Universe, and resolves it for the purpose of making the souls eat the fruit of the "Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil" and attain salvation".¹ That is, man has a measure of autonomy, while being at the same time God's representative on earth. "He it is who hath placed you (man) as (His) viceroys of earth".² Man performs his acts according to his own choice. It is man who is responsible for the acts of sin and vice. According to Saiva Siddhanta, "the soul takes itself to be the agent and performs good or evil deeds".³ Islam and Saiva Siddhanta offers precisely such a model and the task of this study is to attempt to extract from this philosophical system of thought those features which fall specifically within this article dealing with man.

Man and his nature

In fact, we cannot discover man and his nature in the same way that we can detect the nature of physical things. Physical things may be described in terms of their objective properties, but man and his nature may be described and defined only in terms of his consciousness. The essential nature of man is ultimately contrasted with that of the physical, empirical world, through which, in fact, the former may be realized. According to Tilak, Tagore, Gandhi and Radhakrishnan, man is essentially spiritual and he is to realize his inner spirituality and freedom. Radhakrishnan conceives that if man does not develop his spiritual personality, some creature superior to man might evolve. Therefore man cannot be regarded as the last and the highest product of evolution in the ultimate sense. Thus, one of the most significant goals of dimension of man is its attempt to construct a scientific discipline out of man's traditional effort to understand and liberate him. From the perspective of Islam and Saiva Siddhanta tradition, this goal is identical with the soteriological function furnished by the analysis of the system of categories which constitute our knowledge of the nature of ultimate reality, of which man's essential nature occupies a central position.

Various views of man

Man is a rational, moral, aesthetic and spiritual being with the inherent consciousness of freedom. When he looks upon himself as identified with this psycho-physically organism he finds himself to be one of the innumerable creatures of nature, a slave of the forces and laws operating in its various departments. He keeps a thirsty to be recognized and endeavors to the last to achieve this goal. It is the diversities of this world that supply materials for his self-preservation and self-development, that

produce various kinds of agreeable and disagreeable impressions upon him and thereby, compel him to act, which produces his own entanglements. He appears to be one of the products of nature. His existence appears to be originated from and sustained by the material world.

Religious view of Man

The religious view of man in an orthodox manner, is a being created by God and is made in God's own image. Man stands at the point where nature and spirit meet. The fact that man is a finite creature, bound to the earth, explains his weakness and his sinfulness. The fact that man is in part a spiritual being, that transcends nature, explains his uniqueness, worth, and almost unlimited possibilities. Man is born with brute nature, but he has the privilege of realizing God immanent in him. Hence this particular privilege has made him man by differentiating him from other lower creatures. This differentiating factor made him proud of being a unique creature by God.

Scientific view of Man

In the scientific view, man is merely a more complex or higher form of life. Man is a physical order of nature, like other objects. He has size, weight, shape and colour. The scientific view of man does not consider the realm of science to extend beyond the objective facts, but man can be manipulated, formed, and developed in much the same manner as any other animal.

Philosophical aspect of Man

The philosophical aspect, philosophy is what encourages man to make more of him in every dimension, including cultural, spiritual and transcendental. Man is the root of all passions and desires. Man's religious nature is closely related with his moral life thus religion without morality has no meaning. Leading a life upholding the moral values makes a man religious. Man, who loses his moral basis, cannot claim himself to be religious. Moral values will never remain isolated in a man of religion. Modern Indian philosophers have given immense importance to the development of man's moral, ethical and social nature along with the spiritual ethics.

The concept of man in Islam

Man according to Islam, is a real unit of existence. Man is the creation of God. The Holy Quran has clearly stated that man has been created from clots of blood. Although he has been created by God and he is absolutely dependent upon Him, his status is very insignificant before God. His only duty is to serve God in humble submission. Man is possessed of no right against God, he has only duties. Therefore, his only duty is to pray to God and serve God. Quran itself declares that man has been given the instincts of both the evil and good, and ultimately it has left the whole moral choice to the individual's discretion, which way he wants to follow. "The mind of man is ever ready to incite to evil".⁴ This means that it is characteristic of the human self that it incites man to evil and is opposed to his attainment of perfection and to his moral state, and urges to him towards undesirable and evil ways. The natural state of man as long as he is not guided by reason and understanding, his natural bend in doings is like an animal. When a person is guided by reason and understand-

ing, brings his natural state under control and regulates it in a proper manner, which ceases to be his natural state and is called his moral state. "In Islamic concept, human nature is a creation of God. Hence, the formative potential for goodness far exceeds than for evil".⁵

According to Quran, the natural state of man has a very strong relationship with his moral and spiritual states. If the natural state of a person is subjected to the control of the directions of divine law, it becomes his moral state and deeply affects his spirituality. God lays down rules for the reform of the natural condition of man and then lifts him gradually upwards and desires to raise him to the highest spiritual state. First, God desires to teach man the rules of social behaviors and thus to deliver him from the animal behavior and thus bestow upon him social culture. He then desires to regulate his moral habits so that they should acquire the character of high moral qualities. Morality is the basic principle of life since it controls passions and impulses of man which can also lead to violence. In fact, the sense of morality or conscience of man is his inner guide to lead him to higher destiny. In other words, morality is the inner voice of man. This inner voice controls men's conduct and behavior. The almighty has addressed the prophet, in words "Thou dost most surely possess high moral excellence".⁶ This means that all high moral qualities such as benevolence, courage, justice, mercy, bountifulness, sincerity, high mindedness etc., were combined in the person of the prophet. In short the purpose of its insights and admonitions and directions is to rise man from his natural condition of barbarity to a moral state, and then to lift him from that state to the limitless ocean of the spirituality.

Concept of man in Saiva Siddhanta

The scholars of Saiva Siddhanta are of the view that man lives a wandering life enslaved by his senses and mind without invoking the spirit and realizing the ideal. Next to God, man seems to be the secondary concept par excellence. Man's birth in Saiva-Siddhanta is considered to be real. It is only on earth that the embodied human soul can attain salvation by enjoying in full the bliss of the Lord. Saiva Siddhanta states that man is influenced by egoism which is called Anavamala or the primary impurity. "Anava is eternal and beginningless. It is connoted to the souls as verdigris is to copper".⁷ Man's pure intelligence and omniscience are obscured due to Anavamala and the intelligence is manifested only to a limited extent. No man is free from malas. Man indulges in activities influenced by Anava and with the feeling of "mine", he realizes the fruits of his activities.

The conception of man according to Saiva Siddhanta, it would be useful to have a brief account of Vedic and Upanishadic conception of man because Saiva Siddhanta accept the authority of the Vedas and Upanishads, besides the Agamas and build up their philosophical doctrines and ethical codes. The Vedas and the Upanishads insist that man should be emancipated from the deluding factors. The Vedas prescribe practical devices through the performance of rituals etc. to overcome the ordeals in life and to show the pathway of perfection. The Upanishads, on the other hand, enlighten the people through scholarly approaches and philosophical doctrines. The five sheaths (kosas) namely "1. Food sheath, 2. Vital air sheath, 3. Mental sheath, 4. Intellectual sheath is an internal sheath and 5. Bliss sheath"⁸ veil the human beings from reaching the supreme reality. These two early scriptures conceive man as a being who is given to agonies caused by his own nature; i.e., senses and mind and by the natural phenomena. Several means have been adopted to eschew the veils

confronting man, if he has to realize his pristine purity and the depth of divinity in him.

The Siddhantins have given three classes of human beings. "In terms of their evolution they are classified into three groups, Sakalars, Pralayakalars and vijnanakalars".⁹ "Souls for whom evolutes (maya) and deeds (karma) have resolved and who are yet tainted by evil (Anava) alone are called vijnanakala. Those for whom maya alone has been resolved and hence who are covered by Anava and karma are called pralayakalar".¹⁰ Depending on the force of Anava only from a wild state to a mild one it affects the Sakala in the form of sthula, the Pralayakala in the form suksma and the Vijnanakala in the form adisuksma. Man's temperament undergoes modification with reference to the object with which it comes into contact. When man is in the company of Siva and His devotees he naturally entertains noble thoughts, speech and deeds. If he is attracted by mundane things and becomes a victim of evil tendencies, then he lands himself in a miserable condition. The Siddhantin explains it as "Sadasat", Man's tendency to assert him and to own material goods for himself brings down his reputation. It is obvious that man in his birth becomes a slave of his passions and suffers due to his egoism which results in a Trans -migratory existence.

Conclusion

Man has been created by God for a specific purpose, though his first and foremost duty is to elevate his self. Gradual increase, in the present and in the future, within oneself, of knowledge, happiness, peace and the spirit of impartial justice in elevation of the self and contrary to this, turning of the mind towards ignorance, error, unrest and injustice, is degradation of the self. Man should devote himself to the effort at self-elevation and restrain himself from act that leads to degradation.

The man at present signifies his essence, structure and organization quality and character. The man in future is governed by his necessity and destiny. By necessity means his natural impulses, unconscious motivations and conscious aspirations and the likes. By destiny means his moral ideal spiritual faith, union with God and so on. The man in future is governed by two things. One is the cessation or elimination of all earthly limitations and the other is the natural effort of man to overcome them steadily and consciously. Man is nothing in the beginning, and he will not be anything until later when he becomes what he alone makes of himself. Every individual has his hunger for spiritual awakening. If this awakening is there, then a man truly becomes man unless there is such an awakening an individual constitutes to be a child. But this form is not a human being, even though he may add years to his life with all the crude hungers, he continues to be an animal. As a rational animal but not a man, one must realize the goal of human life and must stand face to face with it as it is the destiny of man.

Generally speaking, both the schools assert that the eradication of all the earthly limitations and the emphasis given to love, compassion, sympathy with the other creatures. As for the dimensions of man discussed with reference to the Quran, Vedas and Upanishads, both the schools i.e. Islam and Saiva Siddhanta stress the fact that man's final goal is release or moksha from bondage and hence the bound nature of man as found in the two schools is discussed here. At the same time the path is different i.e. method of worship, place of worship, religious text etc.; But both system is good for man and avoids the evils from the society.

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