

Status of Man, Biology and Theology

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Abstract: Man's instinct has instigated him to assess the status of this world and the creatures therein. This desire of man has led him to raise questions on his own status in this world. Various branches of knowledge, philosophy, psychology, anthropology and biology etc. discuss this problem of man.

Modern biological knowledge has reduced man's status to an animal being. This is in contradiction to anthropological studies and theology. Theological knowledge raises man's status to the vicegerent of God; manipulator manager and organizer of these worldly resources. There are many distinctions that are the proof of his dignity.

With the advancement of science and technology, man is becoming more and more materialistic in his approach. He measures everything around, with scale of reasoning and evidence. If man finds the evidence, he becomes satisfied, if not, he criticizes. In accordance with other branches of sciences, natural sciences are also advancing which have a direct approach to the beginning of the universe and the origin of man. As the process of origin of man has stopped now and its propagation is through sexual activity only, man is reluctant to accept its origin without any intermediary stages. The scholars of natural sciences, studying the biological happenings ignore the metaphysical aspect. Due to this tendency, an atheistic ideology develops. A theory, based on simple reasoning may prove fatal to the development of knowledge in that branch of science. It is the transcendental knowledge that is unchangeable. Islam, the last message of Allah, has given, man the best vision about himself and the happenings of nature. Ultimately, man made concepts become falsified and we have to consult these sources of knowledge. Similar is the case of human status in the universe.

Modern Man's assessment of himself in relation to the animal kingdom has passed through several phases. At the end of 17th century, western philosophy became enthralled with the idea that "all living things were directly related in the form of what was called a great chain of being."⁽¹⁾

During the 18th century, the idea that each successive form could have emerged or evolved without discontinuity from the form below it, rather than being directly created, began to be tentatively proposed. In the 19th century the concept of evolution was crystallized. Darwin contributed that the evolutionary process was carried forward progressively by natural means without the need of supernatural intervention at any stage.

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As William Howells says,

“In fact after several generations of anthropologists had believed that man, in his skeleton and skin, was an extraordinarily variable animal.”⁽²⁾

The views of Man portray that:

1. Man is an animal
2. Man is a direct descendent of the anthropoid apes
3. Man’s existence is not preplanned
4. Man has no superiority over other creatures
5. Man’s image as presented is materialistic
6. Man, though the most advanced of his antecedents but not a unique entity
7. Man’s existence is just by chance

If this animal status of man be assumed for a moment and compared with his immediate antecedents, then we may observe that there are too many differences that may be observed. We may enumerate them as:

a. Skeletal Differences

If we look at the skeleton, we may find the differences. Theodosius Dobzhansky has elucidated the fact as:

“In apes the arms are longer than the legs; in man the opposite is true. The long, straight pelvis of the ape provides support for quadrupedal locomotion; the short, broad pelvis of man curves backward, carrying spine and torso in bipedal position.”⁽³⁾

Similarly Jay M. Savage has enlisted eight differences between man and ape.

1. In apes cranium expanded; maximum brain size 750 cc while in man cranium greatly expanded; maximum brain size 2200cc.
2. Occipital condyle posterior in apes while occipital condyle anterior in man.
3. Strong nuchal crest, reaching high up on to back of skull in apes while low nuchal crest, not extending high up on to back of skull in man.
4. Palate long in apes while palate reduced in man.
5. Incisor and canine teeth large in apes while incisor and canine teeth reduced in man.
6. Anterior premolar in lower jaw strong and pointed in apes while in man anterior premolar in lower jaw is small and bicuspid.
7. Pelvis narrow and elongated in apes and pelvis broad and flattened in man.
8. Limited use and no manufacture of tools in apes but extensive use and manufacture of tools in man.⁽⁴⁾

In the light of these differences, it may be inferred that man and anthropoids are not equal as regards their characteristics and properties of their skeleton. It implies the difference between the two. Man is distinctive not only

in skeleton but he has been granted with special quality of inventiveness. This skeletal composition and his creativity are the basic traits that make him unique.

Daniel D. Chiras makes the point:

“Although humans are similar to many other organisms, we also possess many unique abilities, and an enormous ability to reshape the earth through ingenuity and technology.”⁽⁵⁾

There are many differences between man and other anthropoids.

1. Anthropoids are tetrapedal while man is bipedal.
2. Anthropoids cannot walk permanently and consistently on two legs while in man the situation is inverse.
3. Man's nose is prominent and elongated as compared to other anthropoids.
4. Man has a well marked chin as compared to other anthropoids.

When we have a look on man, we may realize that he has no weaponry in his body as effective as other animals possess but with his mind he intelligence he is able to cope with the situation he faces. This is the reason that he may adopt himself to any circumstances. As Margaret S. Willis elucidates:

“Regarded purely as an animal, man is anatomically very unspecialized for any particular mode of life: he has no natural weapons of attack or defense, such as horns, hoofs, teeth and claws; he has neither the speed, strength, nor agility of the beasts, but must rely solely on his highly developed brain in his struggle with the natural environment.”⁽⁶⁾

In the previous century, some fossil record was presented in favour of man's evolutionary outcome from the apes. But all the biologists do not agree with that. Negating the view of fossil record of man, Andrade & Huxley also have marked the difference:

“The earliest known skeletons of men are more like apes than men of today.”⁽⁷⁾

Apart from the above, there are certain characteristics peculiar to man. A few among those are being discussed here.

Ubiquity of Man

Man is present all over the world. It is only man's specialty. In hot climate areas of the world man is surviving and in the cold areas he also has managed to secure himself from the harsh weather. This thing does not exist in other organisms especially in the anthropoids which are considered to be man's ancestors. They can survive only in those terrains in which the weather conditions are favorable to them. Margaret S. Willis has wisely elucidated:

“At the present day it is generally admitted that man is closely allied to the existing man like apes. These show a rather remarkable distribution : the two most closely allied to man, the gorilla and the chimpanzee, are confined to

certain area in Africa, while the orangutan is found only in Sumatra and Borneo, and the gibbon in the southeastern Asia and Sumatra. The most man like of the existing apes is the gorilla, but the controversy still rages over the question of whether man on the one hand and the gorilla and chimpanzee on the other have a common ape like ancestor separating them off from other existing apes, or whether man and the anthropoid apes as a group have evolved in diverging directions from an original primitive stock which was neither ape nor man.”⁽⁸⁾

Similarly Conard Philip Kottak’s view is:

“Humans are the most adaptable animals in the world. In the Andes of South America, people awaken in villages 16,000 feet above sea level and then trek 1,500 feet higher to work in tin mines. Tribes in the Australian desert worship animals and discuss philosophy. People survive malaria in the tropics.”⁽⁹⁾

Man, The Tool Maker

Man, though devoid of natural weapons of defense, has invented new tools for protection and also to make his life more luxurious. Man has made such an extensive variety of tools which has exalted him to the master of this universe. Niles Eldredge & Ian Tatter have rightly observed:

“People have realized at least since classical times that man’s propensity for making tools sets him apart from the rest of the nature. And even though we know today that tool making and use, in the strictest senses, are not our exclusive process, it is nonetheless clear that the complexity of our technology, even as it is expressed in the earliest of human societies, is altogether unique. Certainly chimpanzees strip and prepare twigs to “fish” for termites in their earthen mounds. Copuchin monkeys use stones to crack open hard nuts. Baboons kill scorpions with rocks before removing their stings and eating them; and even others use stones to beat open shellfish. But this gray area, much as has been made of it, is largely of academic interest. Man alone is distinguished not only by the richness and variety of tools he makes___and of the things he makes with those tools___ but by the fact that he has become dependant on his tools for his very survival.”⁽¹⁰⁾

Social Behavior

Instinctively, man is social. He does not and cannot live secluded. This is the unique attribute of man. This property exists in some arthropods and other animals to a well developed extent but it cannot be compatible with the man’s behaviour. For example, ant is a social animal and there lies a well developed division of labour in various parts of ant community but in the words of Ruth Benedict:

“The pattern of entire social structure she committed to the ant’s instinctive behaviour, there is no great chance that the social classes of an ant

society or its patterns of agriculture, will be lost by an ant's isolation from its group than that the ant will fail to reproduce the shape of its antennae or the structure of its abdomen.”⁽¹¹⁾

Similar observation has also been given by Julian Huxley:

“One question that has always puzzled hominid social evolution is the existence in all known human societies of the “**Nuclear Family**”. In rather few primates has a one male plus one female plus young unit been reported, only in fact gibbons, siamangs, night monkeys, callitrichid monkeys and marmosets. In these species, families are antagonistic to each other and do not form larger units, so they cannot be considered of the human type.”⁽¹²⁾

Sexual Behaviour

Man as compared to other anthropoids is distinct in his sexual behaviour. For example discussing the sexual behaviour of apes Theodosius Dobzhansky narrates:

“These things vary from species to species, but most often one or a small number of strong, adult, and active males assemble a “harem” of females with whom they mate whenever the females are receptive. Adolescent, weak and old males are driven out of the band and forced to live singly or in small groups on the outskirts, however, remain ever eager to break in and supplant the dominant males.”⁽¹³⁾

“If man is “pre-eminently a sexual animal,” he has at least managed to make his sexual urges less acutely competitive than they were in his remote ancestors.”⁽¹⁴⁾

Man's female is always receptive while the female counterpart in animals is receptive after a specified duration. This has given rise to sexual fidelity in human being which cannot be even imagined in animals.

Culture-the Human Domain

Culture as developed by man through the centuries of inhabiting this land is a man's distinction. Such an intuition does not exist in any other organism. Man is too selective in his eatables, utilities and luxuries. He has rendered the earth asunder. He has reached to moon and other planets. He has made this earth to produce as per his desire and it seems that all the living and non living creatures are under his command. It is beautifully expressed in these words:

“The Bible states that after creating man in his own image God blessed him woman and said, “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air.” But the man does not stop here. His increasing love for life of ease and comfort stimulates him to open up new frontiers of development, exploit natural resources but beyond measure.”⁽¹⁵⁾

It is this instinct of man that he has made too much progress not on the land but to the far off atmosphere. He is creating new horizons of his progress in the conquest of stars. Conard Philip very rightly explicates:

“Human beings have walked on the moon. The model of the starship enterprise in Washington’s Smithsonian Institution symbolizes the desire to seek out new life and civilizations to boldly go where no one has gone before.”⁽¹⁶⁾

It is the effort of man since centuries that has been obtained. If it lost then the whole effort will be spoiled. This is due to the man’s faculty of organization and maintenance. Man, not only beautifies the existing scenario but also reshapes it. As Daniel D. Chiras has given:

“Although humans are similar to many other organisms, we also possess many unique abilities and features, and an enormous ability to reshape the earth through ingenuity and technology.”⁽¹⁷⁾

Man, the Speech Maker

Articulate speech is the mean of communication only in human beings. Other animals are not provided with articulate speech. Man conveys his ideas with speech and also comprehends others’ because of it. This means of communication is with him from his birth. Theodosius Dobzhansky recounts:

“The beginning of language cannot be dated, even approximately. The fact that without exception all human populations have language suggests (but does not prove) great antiquity for this form of communication.”⁽¹⁸⁾

Apart from the above mentioned differences there are many more:

1. Man is the fire maker
2. Self awareness is found only in man
3. Aesthetic sense and Instinct
4. History and knowledge
5. Learning and Family Integration
6. The concept of sin and virtue is found only in man
7. Concept of Deity
8. Awareness of death
9. Concept of the life hereafter
10. Insight and generalization
11. Use of symbols and language
12. Art, values and wisdom
13. Innovation in every field of life
14. Planning for the future

Man in the Religious Scripture

If the religious scriptures be consulted the dignity of man is depicted in the revealed religions. According to this, man is the pivot of this universe, a paragon of existence and master of universe. All the religious commandments

revolve around man. The do's and don'ts are for human beings. Other objects of nature have been numerated as subservient to man.

Man and the Holy Bible

Bible attributes dignity to man in this universe. According to Bible man is not a remote creature of this universe but granted dominion over the rest. Bible elaborates the man's status in the universe in these words:

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”⁽¹⁹⁾

It means according to Bible man did not evolve from lower anthropoids rather he was a special creation and God's soul was in his body. There is no intermediary stage from dust to man. Defining the status of man in the universe Bible recounts:

“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moved upon the earth”⁽²⁰⁾

It implies that man has been given dominance over all other creatures of the universe. He is not an evolutionary outcome of the lower animals but a manipulator of the universe. God created man in his own image.⁽²¹⁾

“But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”⁽²²⁾

“That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”⁽²³⁾

“I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High, But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.”⁽²⁴⁾

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou maddest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet. All sheep and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.”⁽²⁵⁾

Man and the Holy Qur'an

Islam is the torch bearer of the fact that man is superior to every creature of the universe and every thing has been made for the benefit of man. Like many other blessings of Islam, it is Islam which has given man the status of superiority over rest of the universe. The Holy Qur'an dignifies the man both by nature and by birth. The Qur'an gives the evidence that he, by adopting the path to be followed, may raise himself to the peak of the best among creatures or to the pettiest ones. The dignity of man is based on four points as elucidated by the holy Qur'an. In the story of the creation of Adam it is stated that he was granted the soul of the Lord and the angels were asked to bow before him.

“When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him my spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him. So the angels prostrated themselves.”(15:29, 30, 38:72, 73)

This verse depicts that the man bears the soul which was breathed into him by Allah. Due to this breath he is to be respected. Man is the special creation of God almighty. He created man in the best stature. Man has been granted such a grandeur and superiority that all the creatures of the universe have been appointed upon the service of man. Qur’an mentions:

“We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation.”(17:70)

In this verse the dignity of man has been presented on being human, there is no distinction of race, colour richness and terrain. After this three favours of Allah have been enumerated;

1. The ridings in river and on land
2. The eatables which have been provided
3. The superiority of man over rest of the creatures.

The first point is to be pondered over is that God has granted man ridings in sea and on land. This implies that it is only man that has been granted dominance over rivers, seas, mountains, fields, air space and the rest of the world. The dominion of all other creatures is limited and restricted to a specific area.

Tabri elucidates the fact by saying:

“The reason of man’s grandeur is that God has granted dominion to man over rest of the creatures. After writing the quotations of Qur’anic commentators, he says, the real cause of man’s superiority is the favour of Allah which has been granted to him in the form of wisdom. The similitude of shariah is like the sun and that of wisdom is an eye. As with healthy eyesight, man can become aware of all the reality and detail of all the happenings around him. Similarly if a man is sound minded, he with the guidance of shariah may reach the reality of all the things of this world and the world hereafter.”⁽²⁶⁾

Subsistence of man is on neat and clean things whereas the survival of many other creatures is in filthy things.

Then is the superiority of man over other creatures. Amin Ahsan Islahi is of the view that it is partial not whole as there are many creatures upon which man has not been granted the superiority.⁽²⁷⁾

Ibn-e-Kathir has demonstrated that man is superior to the angels. He has quoted the tradition on the authority of Zaid Ibn Aslam, “The angels requested to Allah that he has granted man the worldly life, they eat drink and enjoy. May Allah grant them the life hereafter as they are deprived of the worldly life. God Answered, “I will never equalize the pious progeny of that

whom I have made with my own hands to that which have been created by my order (Kun). Similarly he narrates on the authority of Tabrani, "None will be as respectful in the eyes of Allah as the man. It was asked that whether the angels will also be not so respectful. It was answered that they will not be so respectful as they are bound like the sun and the moon."⁽²⁸⁾

In Tafsir Namoonah, commenting on this verse it has been argued that the prostration of angels before man is a sign of the fact that he is superior to all creatures of God.⁽²⁹⁾

Mufti Muhammad Shafi demonstrates that man is superior to all creatures small and great. If it be visualized with reference to the angels then the pious people are superior to the common angels and the angels like Gabriel and Michael are superior to these pious people. The Prophets and the like are superior to the angels. The atheist, polytheists and the pagans are much inferior not only to the angels but even to the animals.⁽³⁰⁾

He enlists following points as the cause of the superiority of man.

1. Beauty of his outlook
2. Moderate body posture
3. Articulate speech
4. Moderate Temperament
5. Comprehension
6. Moderate stature
7. Use of symbols

He says that apart from these, man has been provided with wisdom which is the uniqueness of man. He may overcome his self carvings and temptations to avoid the disobedience of Allah. All these faculties have not been granted to any other creature.⁽³¹⁾

Pir Muhammad Karam Shah elaborates with reference to Maulana Syed Naeem-ul-Ddin Muradabadi's comprehensive statement;

"The dignity of man is due to intellect, knowledge, articulate speech, outlook beauty, moderate stature, contrivances of worldly life, captivation of all other things and many more." He also quotes Muhammad Ibn Ka'ab with reference to Aaloosi that Muhammad (SAW) is the cause of dignity for all the humanity."⁽³²⁾

Allamah Saidi has given fourteen points for the dignity of man.

1. Man is the vicegerence of Allah
2. Man's knowledge and the prostration of angels before Adam
3. God made man with his own hand
4. God made man on his own image⁽³³⁾
5. God created man of the best stature
6. Every creature bends its head while eating whereas man eats with his head upward

7. Man walks with his erect posture while other creatures either crawl or walk in the bent position
8. Man is provided with all the capabilities while other creatures have either one or the other
9. Man can inform about his pain and sufferings while animals are deprived of that
10. The knowledge of man
11. Man has been made of the basic four elements so that he may get benefit of all the divine blessings in this world
12. Man is superior to all the creatures as he has God's recognition in his mind, faith, repeated invocation of God and his limbs are busy in the obedience of Allah. So, as he is near to Allah, he is superior to all other creatures
13. God has granted man the riding conveyance for traveling and goods transport
14. Man's dignity is as he has been provided with good things to eat and all things have been made captive to man."⁽³⁴⁾

Allamah Thana-ullah Pani Patti has pointed that man is superior to other creatures due to the fact that man has been provided with both wisdom and lust but he controls his lust with his wisdom.⁽³⁵⁾

Ibn-e-Kathir enumerates nine reasons for the dignity of man.

1. Man's creation is the best
2. Man is of the best stature
3. Man's erect posture
4. Man is diligent while eating
5. Man is anxious about the worldly life
6. Man has been granted riding conveyance for traveling and goods transport in sea and on land
7. Man has been granted with good flavoured and palatable things
8. Man has been provided with dwellings to inhabit and clothings to clad
9. Man has been provided with all kinds of means of transportation⁽³⁶⁾

The purpose of man's creation as demonstrated by God is humanism and to perpetuate it which means God's revelation has been granted to man.

This superiority of man is for all human beings not to a particular group. Giving the answer Nasir Makarim Shirazi express his view that all human being are superior but based upon the capacity and capability meaning that all human being have this ability and status but if they don't benefit from it and descend from this status, then it is on behalf of them.⁽³⁷⁾

Some Aspects of Dignity of Man

The concept of man's dignity as presented by Islam is based on the following aspects.

Vicegerence of Allah

Each and every man is respectable as he is the vicegerent of Allah. As God says:

“Behold, thy Lord said to the angels, “I will create a vicegerent on earth.” They said: “Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises, and glorify Thy holy (name)? He said, “I know what ye know not.” (2:30)

This verse is categorical that the man is vicegerent of Allah upon earth. His creation is not meaningless but he has been created for some special purpose. Moreover it is evident from the verse that the angels raised questions on the creation of man. They concluded from the knowledge granted about the nature of man that if man is given discretion and will, he will destroy the world system and will create seduction. But God made them calm by saying that they don't know what the God knows. No other creature is participant with man in this dignity. None is eligible for the vicegerence. Qur'an calls it a trust and man is its trustworthy as all the creatures refused to carry the load of this faith. Qur'an says:

“We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains, but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it- He was indeed unjust and foolish.” (33:72)

The trust here means vicegerence. The unjust means that the man took the responsibility of this but did not fulfill it. It has been said with reference to most of the people who did not fulfill their responsibility, became ignorant to Allah in the obedience of His. It is the duty of man to be submissive to Allah and call others to this compliance. It is not his job to be God himself and make the other creature of Allah as his slave. Man is vicegerent of Allah in this world and not the master himself. His powers are not his own but are God granted. If he considers himself as the master and goes astray from the commandments of Allah, it is mutiny against his creator which is not acceptable. So, each man should strengthen the system of the obedience of Allah, in it is the dignity and excellence.

Knowledge, the Cause of Superiority

The cause of superiority of man over the angels is knowledge which the God granted to man. Qur'an has elaborated this fact.

“They said, “Glory to Thee: of knowledge we have none, save what Thou hast taught us: in truth it is Thou Who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom. He said, “O Adam! Tell them their names,” When he had told them, Allah said, “Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal.” (2:32, 33)

This verse entails that God armed man with knowledge and then descended him down to this world. It was this knowledge which was the cause

of his esteem before the angels. When the angels admitted their scarcity, they were asked to bow before man.

“And behold, we said to the angels: “Bow down to Adam:” and they bowed down.” (2:34)

To bow before him, of the angels was the sign that all the angels in the universe should follow man. As he is the vicegerent of Allah in this world, so it was ordered that all the forces should accompany him if he uses the God’s granted powers in any field, nothing should resist his way. Which knowledge was granted to the Adam due to whom he was made superior to the angels, it has been answered variously by various scholars.

- a). It were the names of all the creatures of God
- b). These were the languages of different countries
- c). These were the names of the prophets and pious people
- d). These were the names of the Allah
- e). These were the properties of various things
- f). These were the things of daily use⁽³⁸⁾

Not only knowledge has been granted but to express his inner ideas man has also been given the mean of communication which the animals are devoid off.

The Holy Qur’an elucidates the fact:

“(Allah) Most Gracious! It is He Who has taught the Qur’an. He has created man: He has taught him speech (and intelligence).” (55:1-4)

It illustrates that articulate speech is since the creation of man. It is not a gradual and evolutionary outcome. The knowledge is the cause of superiority is also the teaching of Buddha. He says:

“The root cause of sin is ignorance. By eliminating ignorance you may get rid of sins.”⁽³⁹⁾

As sin is the cause of man’s downfall in the eyes of Allah. If a man avoids sin, he will be exalted in the eyes of Allah. This is not only the Islamic manifesto but other religions have also laid stress to get knowledge.

Subjugation of Universe

As man is the masterpiece of God’s omnipotence, he has appointed all the existing things for the service of man as being his servants. No nuisance and natural demand of the man is such that which finds no solution in this needful world. Qur’an narrates it in a much beautiful way as:

“It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth; then He returned to the heaven and made them into seven firmaments. And of all things He hath perfect knowledge. (2:29)

“He has made subject to you the Night and the Day.” (16:12)

“And cattle He has created for you (men): from them ye derive warmth and numerous benefits and of their (meat) ye eat.” (16:5)

“It is He Who has made the sea subject, that ye may eat thereof flesh that is flesh and tender, and that ye may extract there from ornaments to wear, and thou seest the ships therein that plough the waves, that ye may seek (thus) of the bounty of Allah and that ye may be grateful.”(16:14)

“Seest thou not that Allah has made subject to you (men) all that are on earth and the ships that sail through the sea by His command? He withholds the sky (rain) from falling on the earth except by His leave: for Allah is Most Kind and Most Merciful to man.” (22:65)

“The same Who produces for you fire out of the green tree, when behold! Ye kindle therewith (your own fire).” (36:80)

“Then let man look at his food, (and how he provides it): for that We pour forth water in abundance, and We split the earth in fragments, and produce therein corn, and Grapes and nutritious Plants, and Olives and Dates, and enclosed Gardens, Dense with lofty trees, and fruits and fodder- for use and convenience to you and your cattle.” (80:24-32)

These verses elucidate the fact that all the things of this world have been deputed for the service of man by the almighty Allah. There are two ways to give the dominion over something.

- a). To subjugate something under someone and give him freedom to use it as per his own desire.
- b). To bind the thing with such a regulation with which the thing may become useful to the individual. God has overpowered man over all the things of the world in both meanings. Air, water, vegetation, minerals and cattle are subjugated in the first meaning and moon and sun etc. in the second meaning. This is the reason that all the activities are going on for the benefit of man. This fact needs no external proof. There is close relation between universe and human demands.

There is a perfect unanimity and unity in all the things ranging from this wide spread universe to the body of man itself. All this is devised for man. If man thinks about himself, he will come to know that all his requirements are present around him. If our lungs need air, it is present in the surrounding environment, similarly if our limbs need some field of work that is also present therein. It means everything is subservient to man.

But if this unanimity is not realized, then looking at the marvelous things, man bends before them, though he is not supposed to do so. These plants, animals, seas, mountains, day, night, the moon, the sun and the stars all are the servants to man. Man is superior to all these things, then why he should bend before these things! Man should recognize his status and being the vicegerent of Allah; he should utilize these things with his wisdom, according to his needs and should resolve the difficulties of humanity.

Best Stature

One of the reasons for the superiority of man is that God has granted man the best stature as per his outlook. He has been granted such a beautiful physique that has not been granted to any other creature. God has given:

“We have indeed created man in the best of moulds.” (Al-Tin, 95:4)

Qadī Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabiyy Mālikī has said that no creature except man has been made superior to all. None has been created in the best posture like man. God has made man, alive, knowledge bearer and along with it man has been granted with articulate speech, vision statesmanship and wisdom. All these traits belong to almighty Allah. ⁽⁴⁰⁾

Man has been granted not only this beautiful physique but also such best capabilities which have not been granted to any other creature. He has been granted special distinction in wisdom along with frugality in the body, temperateness and rectitude in height. With this he may subdue the animals which are much powerful in comparison to him and commands over them though he is much feeble as compared to the animals. The comprehension which has been granted to man is not granted to any other creature. Man eats with his hands while other animals eat with their mouth. Moreover all the animals eat simple things while man makes compounds of these things to make them tasty and useful. The best reason for superiority is wisdom with which he recognizes his creator and master. Mufti Muhammad Shafi makes the point:

“The division of creatures according to wisdom and sense is such that animals have envies and desires but no wisdom and sense. The angels have sense and wisdom but not carvings and concupiscence’s. Man possesses both things, he has sense and wisdom and also carvings and convoitises. That is the reason when he overcomes his ambitions with the help of astuteness; his status raises high to many of the angels of God. ⁽⁴¹⁾

Maulana Maududi has given that best of moulds means finest body, noblest faculties of thought, knowledge and intellect. The most sublime model, the Prophets having the most exalted rank. ⁽⁴²⁾

God has created man fit and polite in all respects and by keeping the capabilities of all kind in its body, he has been persuaded to cover a great arc of ascendance. In Tafsir-e-Namunah it has been elucidated:

“Though man is small bodied but he has been granted place in the greater universe. He has been granted so much capabilities and politenesses that has become fit for the creation of the high esteemed.” ⁽⁴³⁾

Man is such a making of God which is free from all defects. Muhammad Farooq Khan elucidates this fact as:

Each thing of this universe is the manifestation of God’s wisdom and sagacity. We do not find any defect in God’s making. So the best making of God is also free from all defects which have been made by Allah. ⁽⁴⁴⁾

The best manifestation of man's superiority and excellence are the Prophets. No creature may get this high status that it be selected for the prophet hood. Maulana Maududi considers this facet as the cause of distinction.⁽⁴⁵⁾

All the activities of other creatures are controlled by unsensed, natural inclination. Their revelation works in the guise of their instinct, whereas only man has the self esteem. Muhammad Farooq Khan elaborates the fact:

“Man establishes concepts based upon his intellect and his wisdom deduces results from these concepts. At this stage of intellect man gets the decision power. Will power may urge a man to do or leave something.”⁽⁴⁶⁾

Man is the combination of brutal characteristics outwardly and angelic inwardly. By using his angelic capabilities he may reach to the level of angels. The balance between these two traits is humanism. But when he loses this balance,. He may have deviated from the level of humanism. So it is essential to keep balance between apparent and intrinsic traits. It is the teaching of Islam which is a religion of nature. This was the teaching of all the prophets and it is the cause of success and prosperity for humanity.

Language

The God who has gifted man with so many favours of body posture, adored of the angels, has bestowed to man the eminence of language which the other creatures are deprived of. To express the hearteous feelings by writing or expressing something is the sole property of man. Ismail Salfi expresses this as:

“There is machine granted by God in between the teeth which unintently goes on making new words of its own. In mouth with the movement of air and its deluge to the last part of throat come out millions of words in a few minutes which are distinct and new in meanings. The hurdle of teeth and that of lips is helpful in making and speaking the words and their pronunciation. Though man has many other body parts also but speaking machinery has been installed in the mouth only. How happy will be the man who used this for conception for the first time and how much he would have been gratified to God.”⁽⁴⁷⁾

God has kept too much unanimity and conformity in various body parts of man. Each part has its own known and specific duty. If eye is to look with, the ear is to hear with. Similarly the speaking responsibility is assigned to the tongue. The organ specific to certain job can only be used only for that not for some other job.

Dignity of Man and Hadīth Literature

Like the holy Qur'an there are many traditions of the holy Prophet(SAW) in which dignity of man has been elucidated. The holy Prophet(SAW) said:

“God created man on His own countenance.”⁽⁴⁸⁾

What does it mean? One dictum is that it is about the Adam, the second is that it is about the man being beaten. Can a creation on God's image be an animal just like the others?

Similarly many other traditions of the holy prophet throw light on the majesty of man. For example, He said:

(49) "When one of you punishes his servant, should not beat him on the face."

"When anyone of you fights with his brother, should not stroke on his faith."⁽⁵⁰⁾

These traditions confirm that the holy Prophet(SAW) has laid an extraordinary stress on the respect of man and the similitude of man's face to that of God is the embellishment of the dignity. Pointing to this self-esteem of man, the holy Prophet(SAW), once during his pilgrimage, said while addressing to the holy Ka`bah.

"How much chaste you are! And how much agreeable is your atmosphere! and How much is respectable your status! But swear of Allah in whose hands is the life of Muhammad(SAW), the respect of a Muslim's life, his wealth and his blood is much more than your sanctity in the eyes of Allah."⁽⁵¹⁾

This was one facet of human dignity. Let us see how the holy Qur'an has pointed to the reality of man to break his pride and smugness.

"Man should look at the fact from which he has been created, gushing water which comes out of the back and the ribs." (86:5-7)

"O mankind! If ye have a doubt about the resurrection (Consider) that We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of a leech like clot, then out of morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We may manifest (Our Power) to you; and We cause whom We will to rest in the wombs for an appointed term, then do We bring you out as babes, then (foster you) that ye may reach your age of full strength; and some of you are called to die, and some are sent back to the feeblest old age, so that they know nothing after having known (much) and (further), thou seest the earth barren and lifeless, but when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life), it swells, and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth in pairs." (22:5)

"O man what has thee from thy Lord Most Beneficent?- Him Who created thee, fashioned thee in due proportion, and gave thee a just bias; in whatever Form He wills, does He put thee together." (82:6-8)
Demonstrating to man his reality it has also been elaborated:

"Every soul shall have a taste of death: in the end to Us shall ye be brought back." (29:57)

"Wherever ye are, death will find you out, even if ye are in towers built up strong and high!" (4:78)

In the holy Qur'an these realities have been elaborated with such sagacity that he may become respectful to his fellow beings and should not be a prey to any misconception about himself. Dr Khalid Alvi writes:

“The second important thing which has been visualized is the relation of God and man. With little power he sometimes became prey to delusion and assumed himself as master rather he considered himself as God. It is the other peak on which he should not reach at any cost.”⁽⁵²⁾

And the reality is this that man is neither incorrigible nor he has been created vain. He is responsible for his deeds in his personal life. He should remain in this world as the vicegerent and slave of Allah. As man is the slave of God not god himself. When a man thinks like this, his undue pride will vanish and also will comprehend the dignity of man and his true status will be determined.

Superiority of Man or Superiority of Nation

Islam negates the superiority of one group over the other but it deems justice among all stratas of society. Islam counts them as the descendants of Adam only. If they create a distinction based on ethnicity, it will be a cause of impishness

“Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the mees) that the hands of men have earned. That (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from evil). (30:41)

It is quoted on the authority of `ayad ibn Himar Majash`ai, “Surely God has revealed upon me that you should be humble so that no one should show superiority over others and none should tyrannies others.”⁽⁵³⁾

It is quoted on the authority of Abu Hurairah, “The people who pride on their dead forefathers are like the insect in rubbish that probes into with its nose and be proud of them is a flame of hell.”⁽⁵⁴⁾

It is quoted on the authority of Jubair ibn Mut`am, “Who called to the `asbiyyah, who fights for `asbiyyah, does not belong to us.”⁽⁵⁵⁾

“The Arab has no superiority over the `ajam.”⁽⁵⁶⁾

Abū Hurayrah narrates:

“God has taken away from you, the pride and vanity of the days of ignorance and to be proudy of your forefathers.”⁽⁵⁷⁾

Conclusion

A bad reduction of the modern biological approach is that human beings are nothing but animals. Biological sciences have not provided any evidence that human mind is just the extension of anthropoid brain, man's erect posture is the evolutionary phase of lower primates, and man's articulate speech perhaps the most distinctive feature is a great question mark. Moreover, biological differences also differentiate man from other primates. Similarly

man's life span, his tool use, his culture, his speech, his social and sexual behaviour and his knowledge and aesthetic sense are the peculiar features of human life. If the religious scriptures be considered, they also portray that man is not simply an evolutionary outcome but a unique creation of God. He is granted with such faculties which the other creatures are devoid of. Divine revelation is disposed to the dignity of man, rather the superiority of man over other creatures. Man's knowledge is based upon assumptions having too many missing links but God's granted knowledge is the final authority to be accepted. So, man should not remain keeping faith on the unapproved and man made assumptions. He should keep faith in Allah's revelation and be aware of his position in the universe which is the unique one. Man is the vicegerent of Allah. He is the master of the universe. He is the manipulator of God's universe. God has granted him with wisdom, faith and repeated invocation of God, so he should act like the most civilized and the dignified creature of this worldly life.

If the man is the evolutionary outcome of the lower anthropoids, then it was made possible only by natural selection. If it so then the rule of the survival of the fittest has made it possible. This assumption will make the man aggressive and selfish to attain the maximum available resources for his own benefit. In this way competition will develop among the human community which will result in a great bloodshed and disaster of the human culture that has been achieved by the centuries struggle of man.

Likewise, if the man be considered as an animal, there will be jungle rule in human community and he will justify himself doing all the inhuman activities committed by animals. There will be no difference between men other anthropoids but religion persuades man to get benefit of this world and have superiority over the other creatures and subdue them. Anjum Khurshid has rightly analyzed the situation in these words:

“In order to achieve world piece, the human race will undoubtedly find it necessary to reassess a number of prejudices and preconceptions. Among the first to be relinquished must be the belief in our fundamentally selfish and aggressive nature. Such a belief represents a gross distortion of the human character, and does not take into account our distinguishing feature; the human spirit. The despairing picture of man as a biological robot, an accidental prodigy of the ape family devoid of free will and purpose, will surely fail to inspire humanity with the confidence to respond to the challenges of his age.”⁽⁵⁸⁾

Keeping in view the all above mentioned, we may conclude that man is man not an animal, master of the universe, paragon of existence and vicegerent of Allah. Only this vision may keep the man's humanism intact it will prosper and flourish in the universe. Otherwise, the values will lose their meanings.

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