

### Fast 19: The attributes of God — man's goal to attain them

- **Divine attributes as the great ideal to be attained:** Just as belief in the Unity of God is a source of man's uplift, making him conscious of the *dignity* of human nature, and inspiring him with the grand ideas of the *conquest of nature* and of the *equality of human beings*, so the numerous attributes of the Divine Being, as revealed in the Quran, are really meant for the perfection of human character. The Divine attributes really serve as an ideal to which man must strive to attain. In the Quran Muslims are told to say to others:

“(We take) **Allah's colour**, and who is better than Allah at colouring, and **we are His worshippers.**” — 2:138

The word for “colour” here is *sibghah*, which also means immersing in water. Therefore a Muslim must immerse himself in the attributes of Allah and acquire the same colour in his life, on the human scale. Christians baptise by immersing in water, but it is by immersing yourself in the attributes of God that a change for the good comes over a person. This verse also makes clear that the purpose of *worship* of Allah is to emulate His attributes.

- God is *Rabb al-‘ālamīn*, the Fosterer and Nourisher of the worlds; keeping that as an ideal before himself, man must endeavour to make the service of humanity, even that of dumb creation, the object of his life.

Referring to the opening verse of the Quran which describes Allah as *Rabb al-‘ālamīn* (Lord of the worlds), Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad writes:

“Our God has not withheld His bounty from any people. The powers and faculties which He bestowed on the ancient peoples of India, have also been bestowed on the Arabs, the Persians, the Syrians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Europeans and the Americans. For all of them, the earth of God serves as a floor, and for all of them His sun, moon, and stars give light, and also perform other functions. All of them derive benefit from the air, water, fire, earth and other things created by God, and all of them use the produce of the earth, its corn and its herbs, its flowers and its fruits. These liberal ways of God teach us that *we also should do good to all mankind, and should not be narrow-minded, nor limit our sympathy...* Divine bounty being so broad, it behoves us to imitate it.”

- God is *Rahmān*, conferring benefits on man and showing him love without his having done anything to deserve it; the one who seeks to attain to perfection must do good even to those from whom he has not himself received, and does not expect to receive, any benefit.

- God is *Rahīm*, making every good deed bear fruit; man must also do good for any good that he receives from another.
- God is *Mālik*, requiting evil, not in a spirit of vengeance or even of unbending justice, but in a spirit of forgiveness; so must man be forgiving in his dealings with others, if he is to attain to perfection.
- So it is with all His other attributes. As to love and mercy, God is Affectionate, Oft-returning to mercy, Forbearing, Pardonner, Multiplier of rewards, Author of peace, Granter of security, Restorer of loss, Benign, Bestower of sustenance and so on; all this man must also try to be.
- Again let us take His attributes of knowledge. God is Knowing, Wise, Aware, Seeing, Knower of hidden things. Man must also try to perfect his knowledge of things and acquire wisdom. In fact, where man is spoken of as having been made a vicegerent (*khalifa*) of God, his chief characteristic, that which marks him out as the ruler of creation, is stated to be a knowledge of things:

“And He taught Adam all the names.” — 2:31

God teaching Adam all the names signifies the vast capability of human beings, bestowed upon them by God, to acquire knowledge of all things.

- Then there are His attributes of power and greatness and control of all things. Man is told again and again that everything in the heavens and in the earth has been made subservient to him:

“Do you not see that Allah has made subservient to you all that is in the earth, and the ships gliding in the sea by His command?” — 22:65

“Do you not see that Allah has made subservient to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and granted to you His favours complete outwardly and inwardly?” — 31:20

Therefore man too should exercise control over nature through acquiring knowledge of it, and use it for his material development. He must also act as its guardian, in his position as the *khalifa* of God.

- It is true that man’s love, mercy, knowledge, wisdom, and control of things are all insignificant as compared with their Divine models, but however imperfectly he may achieve it, the fact remains that he has before him the ideal of Divine morals, which he must try to imitate.