

Fast 29: Some miscellaneous points for consideration

- In this Study I will refer to three unrelated points on which I will throw some light from the Quran. This is only for your reflection and pondering, and you may come to your own conclusion, different from mine, about them.
- 1 In a television programme, skilled craftsmen in a Muslim country were shown making tiles with patterns on them. It was said that the tile makers *deliberately* introduce a small imperfection in the pattern because they believe that *only Allah* can make things perfectly, man cannot do so. It struck me that this makes Allah dependent on man to keep Him in His position of being the Perfect Maker! If man so wanted, he could at any time become equal to Allah in being the Perfect Maker by not deliberating introducing a mistake in the pattern. In fact, an atheist could produce a perfect pattern and say to a Muslim: By your own admission, I now possess an attribute of your God!
 - But one of the attributes of Allah is *ghani*, meaning “self-sufficient” or “above need”. Using that term, the Quran says:
 - “surely Allah is above need of the worlds” (ch. 3, v. 97, ch. 29, v. 6)
 - “surely Allah is above need of you” (ch. 39, v. 7)
 - This attribute also occurs some 14 times without being followed by “of”, and is translated there as “self-sufficient” (ch. 2, v. 263, ch. 2, v. 267, etc.)
 - So, quite clearly, Allah does not need any human being to maintain Him in His position of being the only One Who can make things perfectly. Man can do his utmost, without any self-imposed restrictions, and will never equal Allah in any way. As the Quran says: “O people, it is you that have need of Allah, and Allah is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised” (ch. 35, v. 15).
 - 2 It is said in the famous verse *Ayat-ul-Kursi* about Allah:
 - “He knows what is before them and what is behind them. *And they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He pleases.* His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both does not tire Him.” (ch. 2, v. 255)

Why does it please Allah, or why is it His will, to withhold some knowledge, in fact a lot of knowledge, from man? Let us think about how man acquires knowledge. It is by observing with his senses, chiefly with his sight and hearing, and by analysing the acquired information with his brain. But his senses are limited in their scope of detection, and his brain is limited in its capacity of processing and retention. To go

beyond these limitations, he has invented a range of instruments. But all of these are also limited in their scope. In fact, his senses, his instruments and his equipment are a part of the same universe which he is trying to observe and are subject in their operation to the laws of nature, just as the universe is. It is all these limitations that may be meant when the Quran says that man cannot encompass anything out of the infinite knowledge of Allah except as Allah pleases, except as He has allowed him.

3 In a well-known passage in the Quran, it is said by Allah:

- “And We shall certainly try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits. And give good news to the patient, who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: ‘Surely we are Allah’s, and to Him we shall return.’ Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord; and those are the followers of the right course.” (ch. 2, v. 155–157)

This obviously relates to material losses of various kinds which believers suffer.

Losses suffered while upholding the cause of Islam may be particularly meant here, but it may also be more general, referring to losses suffered in the course of ordinary human circumstances — the kind of losses suffered by all members of humanity.

So what is the reaction of many Muslims when they suffer such a loss, or a friend of their suffers such a loss, like loss of or damage to prosperity, health, possessions, etc.? They attribute it to the action of someone’s “evil eye”. They appear not to realize that any such loss *does not diminish them* in Allah’s estimation; in fact, if they are patient in face of the loss, they are raised in Allah’s estimation, as stated in the verses above. These verses give *good news* to the patient who suffer a misfortune, but many Muslims give *bad news* to their friends, saying you have been struck by the evil eye.

It is interesting to note that all losses which people attribute to the action of someone’s evil eye are purely material losses. If someone suffers a moral or spiritual loss, no one attributes it to the evil eye. For example, if someone was an honest, upright person, and he falls into bad ways of behaviour, you will not find anyone saying: “people had become jealous of his good morals, so their *nazar* struck him, and from being an honest person he started taking bribes”. But that person certainly falls in Allah’s estimation. On the other hand, if someone fails an exam, gets a cut on his handsome or beautiful face, has a slight fever, has an accident which dents his new car, etc., that is the kind of material and worldly loss we worry about, and which we attribute to other people’s jealousy and their evil eye.