

حقیقۃ حضورہ تعالیٰ فی کل مکان وعظمتہ

GOD'S
OMNIPRESENCE
& HIS GREATNESS

IS GOD PRESENT IN EVERYTHING?

Comments on an Editorial Panel of *The Indian Express*, Madras

AND

SPIRITUALITY OF ISLAM

A letter to *The Life*, New York

by

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A Qayyimah Book



GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE

From an editorial panel

“The Idol worshipper sees God in the stone image. God is omnipresent. If it is wrong to seek God in a stone how is it right to seek Him in a book called the Gita, the Granth Saheb or the Quran? Is not that also idol worship?” — Daily Editorial Panel, *Indian Express*, Madras, April 19, 1955.

Analysis and examination

This statement contains two different arguments. The first is that, since God is omnipresent, He is present in the idol; therefore, worship of the idol is worship of God Himself.

The second is that since God is omnipresent, He is as much present in a stone-idol as in a Holy Book. Therefore, to deny His presence in an idol and to assert it in a Book is self-contradiction; and that Book-worship is identical with Idol-worship.

If the first argument be valid, then God's presence is proved in every conceivable object in the Universe. Consequently God is proved to

be present in every dirty, foul and offensive object, such as filth and excrements, the Demon and Satan, etc. Therefore, these objects are as much worthy of our worship as the idols of stone. There can be no difference between these different objects as far as God's presence is concerned.

But the idol-worshipper does not worship these loathsome objects. He does not even worship each and every stone he comes across, on the plea that God is omnipresent. But he selects a particular stone or stones, gets an image carved in it by human hands, picks out by fancy one or more such images, calls them by the name of some deity or other, and begins to worship them. Either he is wrong in supposing God's omnipresence in this crude fashion, or else he is needlessly whimsical in the choice of his object of worship.

Is God present in Divine Books?

The second argument presupposes that the followers of Divine Books believe in the personal presence of God in these Books, and hence they worship the Books themselves, just as an idol-worshipper worships stone-idols. Neither of these assumptions is true, however. No follower of a Divine Book claims God's personal presence in it, nor does he worship it. He merely believes that Book to be revealed by God through some of His prophets as His message and guidance to mankind. God is surely to be found in such

Books, since they provide information about God, His religion and His worship. But He does not exist in these Books according to the idol-worshipper's misguided notion, that God exists in the idol and in everything else.

Every true Divine Book calls man to worship God, the Lord of the Universe alone. True followers of Divine Books, therefore, truly deny idol-worship, book-worship, or any worship other than the worship of God Himself alone.

Implications of wrong omnipresence

Those who interpret God's omnipresence as His personal presence in everything, unconsciously do Him the greatest dishonour. Because this assumption implies divine association with things unworthy of even human association. It further implies the One True God's division into innumerable parts—a thing man would not tolerate for himself. It conceives forms and shapes to the God Who is Matchless in His existence. It lowers the supremely Exalted God into every mean and low abode. It seeks to deify every conceivable object, instead of glorifying the One and Only God.

Creation the manifestation of God's workmanship

The simple truth, however, is that God the Creator is perfectly different and distinct from all kinds of creation. The Creator no more mixes Himself with His creation than does the craftsman mix himself with his craft. He has

no need, nor is it worthy of Him, to do so. His unique Greatness demands an unmixed, separate and supreme existence.

Of course, God's perfect Attributes are plainly manifest in every object of creation, just as every human craft betrays the craftsmanship of its architect. In this sense we can and do find God in every created object. From the immensity, thoroughness, appropriateness and beauty of this created Universe, for instance, we deduce the great Majesty, Wisdom, Mercy and Perfection of its Maker. It is just like our estimate of the skill and workmanship of the architect of the Taj Mahal from its artistic beauty, symmetry and charm. But God Himself exists in this Universe no more than does the architect exist in the Taj.

But although so simple, many a sage has been misled into the fatal misconception of God's personal presence in all the created things. We have just seen the unthinkable implications arising out of this theory, leading us not to idol-worship alone, but to the worship of every object of creation—high and low. We must, therefore, never mix the idea of all the Creation as the manifestation of Divine Perfection with the idea of God's Own presence in it.

In this connection, I further recommend to the reader the study of my paper, "The A B C of Universal Religion".

Are holy Saints God's Incarnation ?

The popular belief that God manifests Himself through certain pious personalities as His Incarnation is another form of this very misconception. Here, instead of an all-pervading divine presence, a partial or limited amalgamation with the divine Essence is conceived. Human beings are thus invested with divine powers and perfections, giving rise to saint- and prophet-worship.

Like the concept of wrong omnipresence, this conception also implies a number of indignities to the Godhead. For instance, the incomprehensible immensity of God's Being is ridiculously curtailed into a single human being. The highly Exalted God is made to reside in an abode of human frailties, wants and weaknesses. He is made to feel hunger and require sleep, to suffer disease and death. He is also obliged to change His residence again and again from person to person. Should more than one Avatar coexist, the One God must be split into several Gods. Obviously, all these and other monstrosities are quite contrary to the supreme dignity and sublime existence of the Lord of the Universe.

"Lord" Christ, "Lord" Krishna, "Lord" Buddha, etc., are nothing but imaginary creations of their unworthy followers or admirers. Never did Christ, Krishna, Buddha, or any other saint or prophet, claim Lordship for himself, in the sense that he should be worshipped. Each one,

on the contrary, invariably said, "My Lord and your Lord is God, so worship God and follow me." They were God's Messengers who preached God's worship alone. How could they claim that people should worship them? They themselves were the most ardent worshippers of the One God. No doubt, they were perfect specimens of humanity, and matchless models worthy of being truly followed and honoured. They were God's most chosen favourites too. But they themselves always remained human beings and God's perfect slaves, after all. They could not be transformed into divine beings, nor God descended into them.

This is why Muslims regard their Prophet, Muhammad—Peace and Blessings be upon him!—as "God's Slave and Prophet," just as they regard Jesus Christ and all other Prophets. When early Muslims were persecuted at Mecca by their fellow-people, some of them migrated to Abyssinia, a Christian kingdom, to seek safety. There they were publicly called upon to declare their belief in Christ. Says Ibn Is-haq, Muhammad's biographer:

"So when they went into the royal presence and the question was put to them, Ja'far (their spokesman) answered, 'We say about him that which our prophet brought, saying, he is the slave of God, and His apostle, and His spirit, and His word which He cast into Mary the blessed

virgin'. The (king) Negus took a stick from the ground and said, 'By God! Jesus, son of Mary, does not exceed what you have said by the length of this stick'. His generals round about him snorted when he said this, and he said, 'Though you snort, by God! Go, for you are safe in my country'' (A. Guillaume's Transltn., Oxford 1955, p. 152).

Here we are apt to be misled by the term "slave", but let us remember that there is a world of difference between a "slave of man" and a "slave of God." To be the first is as much of a stigma as the second an honour.

True conception of God

Of all the things we know, our conception about God ought to be extremely clear and precise. Because we are here first and foremost to worship Him, and worship Him constantly and exclusively. How can we worship God without knowing about Him correctly?

True Divine Books reveal God's identity as the Creator Lord of all the Universe. The Lord of the Throne of Grace. The Throne itself is so tremendously mighty and immense that it easily encompasses all the created heavens and earths and everything between them. This is enough for us to imagine its Lord's own colossal Majesty and Greatness by comparison. The inconceivable immensity of this Universe itself

is surprisingly too small before Him. Compared to Him, the whole creation is no more than as a grain of mustard seed in our hand. God can hurl or handle the entire creation just as a boy handles a toy.

But even His Mighty Throne is nothing to Him at all. It does not support Him in any way, as we might imagine from the thrones of kings. Rather, He supports the Throne and the Throne-bearers, as He supports everything else in existence. He does not need for Himself the Throne or anything else as such. He is perfectly Self-supporting and Self-dependent, while everything else depends upon Him for its support. He has been existing from Eternity; nothing did exist before Him or with Him—no, not even the Throne. The Throne also is one of His creations that came into being only after He created it. True, His Eternity is staggeringly unfathomable.

He is the Highest of the High, above everything else whatsoever—seen or unseen. The whole Universe is spherical, and we know that the surface of a sphere from all its sides forms the top, or the highest part of the sphere. Like the surface of the earth, no part of it can be called low as compared to any other part, the lowest part of a sphere being its centre. God is high above the entire Universe. Our natural instinct too says God is above.

He is the First, nothing else being before

Him ; the Last, nothing else being after Him ; the Outward, nothing else being above Him ; the Inward, nothing else being nearer than Him. So very High and Exalted, yet He is nearer to us than our jugular vein. He is unlike our conception of anything material, which cannot combine the two extremes—that of extreme height and that of the closest proximity. God is High and yet near to everything by His comprehensive, minute Knowledge, and His comprehensive, complete Power.

God's real Omnipresence

His omnipresence is His omniscience and omnipotence. That is to say, His knowledge is all-comprehensive. Nothing, not even the smallest atom or thought, can ever escape His knowledge. Similarly, His might is all-comprehensive. Everything lies completely under His power and control ; nothing can ever escape it either. Thus He is omnipresent by His all-comprehensive, perfect power over, and knowledge of, everything, without mixing Himself with anything at all. This is in keeping with His matchless Majesty and Sovereignty. He is High, High above everything of His Creation—an unmixed, separate, supreme Entity, controlling, governing, sustaining all creation ever and anon, without as much as the semblance of fatigue or weariness.

Withal, naught is His likeness, either in His Essence, Qualities or Acts. He is Unique

in everything. He has no rival, no equal, no partner, in anything at all. He is the One, the Eternally Besought of all. He begetteth not, nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him. He is attributed with every perfection, worthy of every praise and glorification, free from every defect or deficiency.

Seeing God with our mind

We have to conceive of such a High, Glorious, Sublime, Mighty and Majestic Being, whenever we think of God, or utter His name. We must think of Him thus in our reverential worship, devotional remembrance, and dominating love of God. We have not to fear aught before Him, hope or seek aught beside Him, or love and prefer aught over Him. The highest form of divine adoration is to "worship Him as if we are actually seeing Him with our eyes." Though invisible, we must learn to see God with our minds, just as we see the moon with our eyes.

This is the true worship of the One, Almighty, Eternal, Omnipresent God. Can worship of idols, or of anything else, ever stand the slightest comparison with this?

With courteous respects, and humble regards, to my dear friend, the writer of the Editorial Panel, *Indian Express*, Madras.

Your sincere brother,

Abdus-Samad Sharafuddin,



SPIRITUALITY OF ISLAM

The Editors, LIFE International, New York.

Sirs,

Your LIFE International of August 8, 1955, has placed before its readers an illuminating survey of "The World of Islam." It is a magnificent effort to collect and present facts about this mighty religion. But the riddle how Islam spread so quickly remains unsolved. Here is an answer.

Islam is no doubt remarkably down-to-earth in telling how to live this life correctly. There is hardly a problem of our life for which it does not provide an ideally practical solution. Taken in by these features, we must not lose sight of the subtle but most vital spiritual aspect of Islam.

Its spirituality lies in its teaching how to truly recognize God and His rights. God is One, and we should pray and worship Him alone. It is His sole right which we must not let anybody else share with Him. This is a spiritual message good for the whole of mankind. Muhammad was charged to proclaim it universally.

Naturally when man learns this divine message properly, he attains God's pleasure and gets in harmony with the Creator's natural and universal laws. When he goes out to teach it to others he receives tremendous divine support.

It was this dynamic force that lay behind Muhammad and his men. This is why they did not know defeat and won against odds of ten to one—the victory of spirit over body.

Always forced to fight in self-defence, the early Muslims never warred for self-aggrandizement. Whenever thus obliged to take up arms against any people, they first invited them to become their brothers-in-faith by worshipping the One Almighty God. If not, they still offered the next alternative of remaining safe by paying a tribute. Only when these humane offers were rejected that they crossed their swords.

The truth is that this spiritual message is as much true in this atomic age as it was then, and as it will ever be. It is as much worthy of being faithfully followed and spread for whole-world unity and happiness.

Not force, but a heroic effort to prove its merits by living example is as urgent as ever. If properly explained and understood, the world seems prepared today, as never before, to accept this overwhelming Truth.

Next comes the spiritual ideal of the Hereafter. Islam compares and proves this life in

the Life After Death to be a mere drop in the ocean. Life looks grand, but it is so vain and illusive that we can hardly call it 'life'. Real life exists only in the Home of the Hereafter.

Muhammad lived, and taught to live, solely for that ideal. In this world he was like a rider resting awhile and quitting for destination. Not asceticism this, but freedom from wordly love.

Wealth and poverty are tokens of trial. All wealth belongs to God, and we must use it for Him as a trust. We are neither grieved at loss, nor glad at gain. 'Umar distributed all state wealth, but wore a patched gown and partook frugal fare. "It isn't poverty that I dread," says Muhammad, "but that Fortune may smile at you and ruin as it ruined others." Very little is enough, too much redundant, for worldly needs. Scorn the world and it follows, seek it and it flees.

Contempt for wealth makes man selfless. He sacrifices his all before his Lord. Muslims of Medina shared their whole lot with Meccan refugees. One offered to divorce either of his two wives the Meccan would like to choose. The latter thankfully declined.

It was men of such metal who disdained wealth, ruled with justice, flirted with death, fought as lions, and pined after the Hereafter. They were men who could build Islam with rare valour and hurricane speed. History lacks

their equal. Is it any wonder the world laid its treasures at their feet ?

With such sublime love for God and the Hereafter, nothing is dearer to man than divine worship in every form. The daily prayers become a spiritual heaven ; but without this love they are a burden and a farce. Out of tune with his Lord through worldly contact, such man finds himself as soon as in prayer.

Without realising this spiritual aspect of Islam, it is not possible to know really what Islam is. It is here that our study and application fall short. Nevertheless, it is *the* living spirit of Islam. It is *the* key to the mysterious historical phenomenon of the spectacular rise and spread of Islam. It is *the* answer to the crucial spiritual problems of today.

“*ad-Darul-Qayyimah*”

Bhiwandi, 5-10-55 Abdus-Samad Sharafuddin

Note : LIFE International was pleased to publish the *one* underlined sentence in its issue of November 28, 1955.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Idol-worship v/s God-worship. God's Unity the one essence of every true Religion. An impartial refutation of remarks against the Prophet of Islam in Filmindia of March 1952. Revised 2nd edition, 1954, pp. 20. 5 Annas



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Published as a QAYYIMAH BOOK

by Abdus-Samad Sharafuddin, "ad-Darul-Qayyimah", Bhiwandi (Thana)