

Chapter 1: Role Of Faith In Human Life

Faith

"Faith" is an Arabic terminology that has turned into a localized word in Islamic lands to the extent that today every Farsi, Turkish and Urdu-speaking individual is familiar with it. In pure Farsi, "faith" has generally been translated as "belief" or "adherence", though none of these two words appears to be a clear and complete equivalent for "faith".

Although we have stated that the word "faith" in itself is general and a commonly discernible term, with a view to have an explicit and uniform idea of it, it is better to find, with the help of few examples, a clear-cut definition which could properly delineate the scope of its meaning and concept.

When we are so assured of the virtuous nature of an individual that we can, with peace of mind and without any reluctance, concern, anxiety, hesitation and wavering, repose faith in his life, we can then declare that we have "faith" in that person.

Whenever the veracity of an issue becomes evident to us to the extent of certainty, we say that we have "faith" in it. When we have firm belief in a mental system, known as an "ideological" system in European terminology and "doctrine and principle" in our own interpretation and feel such a degree of powerful interest and zeal that prompt us, in a reassured manner or even beyond that, with inclination, willingness and excitement, to make it the infrastructure of our life, and to base the program of our work and life on it, we then call this doctrine "faith".

In the light of these examples, we can assert that "faith" is tantamount to "trust" or cordial confidence in an individual or a principle".

Doubt And Hesitation

The point in contrast to "faith" is "doubt", hesitation and wavering, whether these be toward an individual, an issue or a principle. Doubt and hesitation might exist in the form or total indifference that is being

self-hearted or these might be accompanied by optimism or pessimism. In any case, their natural outcome is faithlessness.

While there exist doubt and hesitation, even if these might be coupled with one sort of optimism, it is impossible to have faith in a doctrine and to adhere to it, especially in cases where in the wake of this allegiance, one has to practically withstand probable or certain dangers, and to show stiffness in their face.

Let us now review, in a sagacious manner, the life of man and observe as to what is the "role of faith" inhuman life. Not in the past eras but in our own era which has been labelled as "an era of disbelief". Are we really living in an era of disbelief, in an era when, on account of the scientific and industrial advancement, the generalization of the means of public instruction, and the upgrading of the level of human knowledge about himself and also the world around him, there is left no avenue for "faith", so that it could have a role in human life? To sum it up all, has, with the progress of science; the era of "faith" come to an end?

Where To Start From?

Where should we start this objective survey from? From the exciting scenes of brave Struggles of the Algerian. Palestinian. Vietnamese and other similar people, or from more quiet scenes such as the warm environment of families or schools?

Since this discussion is being designed, in the first place, for university students, we would be speaking of the appropriate issue in case we go straightaway to the scenes of social struggles. It is advisable for us to make a vaster survey of the role of faith in human life in order to better discern the subject.

Period Of Childhood

The psychological factor of top significance in the life of a child in this very era of science, technique and conquest of the space is his faith, and his life revolves mostly round faith. This relates to the acts done in emulation of or through persuasion by others, his faith in the individuals around him, like parent, brothers, sisters, family nurse, kindergarten tutor, and soon, and in the act which he performs of his own assessment. These are acts aimed at finding his own direction.

For instance, when you deprive the children of a family, living in one of the most advanced, scientific and industrialized countries of the present day, of this faith for a few days, replacing it with doubt and hesitation, you would observe that these helpless children become extremely unhappy.

By applying all the scientific and technical methods of our era, you may try to bring back childish zeal, excitement and activity in them and most probably you may succeed in your efforts in but one way: by returning to them their faith and fully eliminating doubt, which, in other words, is again "faith".

Faith Enjoyed By Mother, Father, Tutor, Teacher

Prosperity of a child and his proper and proportionate growth in life are linked, to a great extent, with the faith possessed by mother, father, tutor, teacher and all those individuals who shoulder any responsibility towards him. Only those individuals are capable of fulfilling this sensitive assignment who hold faith in their own task and obligation.

A father who endeavours with devotion and faith to cater to the welfare and to the safety of body and soul of his family members, as well as the teacher and tutor who assume the precise and responsible task of educating children in utmost faith and zeal undoubtedly play an effective role in the success of a child.

Such family environments which are devoid of compact affection, faith and confidence of parents and children, and their heart-felt respect towards one another's rights are considered, from the viewpoint of this advanced science or the present times, as the most significant elements responsible for the misfortune of the children .

In such environments, lacking in spirit and luminosity, a child has no sense of tranquillity and reassurance, becomes gradually suspicious towards everything, even towards himself, and is thus deprived of the most worthy elements leading to progress and perfection, faith in himself and his living environment.

Basically, a child's faith, to a large extent, is a reflection of the luminosity of faith which is observed in the affectionate believing complexion of the parents, and their devotional attitude towards him or towards one another, and which affects his heart. Similar is the case with the faith held by a teacher and a tutor in school, especially in the early years of education.

It can be said without doubt that some of our best memories are related to those days when we benefited from the education imparted by a sincere, faithful and dutiful teacher and tutor at elementary or secondary school, or at university.

Pillage Of Doubt And Hesitation

With the advent of the age of maturity, the faith of the childhood days comes on the verge of being pillaged by doubt and hesitation. In his childhood too, a child off and on comes to face some incidents and events which divest him of his faith in an individual or a thing. But in this period, there comes another type of faith in place of the divested faith, and it is faith in a direction opposed to the previous one, and not doubt and hesitation.

Often a child alters his belief speedily and successively, gets angry for an hour with his playmate to eventually make peace with him later, and that too in a sincere reconciliation and often in a several-hour

long play. This scene of getting angry and then reconciliation is repeated time and again.

This period gradually comes to an end to usher the period of development and maturity wherein human being undergoes various physical and mental changes.

Among them is a stage when man develops doubt and hesitation about many of the issues in whose reality beheld faith during childhood. The degree of this doubt and hesitation varies in individuals. In some it has a vast expanse nearly embracing everything and practically leaving nothing unaffected.

Constructive Doubt

The type of doubt, emerging during the maturity period is however indicative of one of the very effective element of human perfection, provided it is coupled with some son of affection and faith related to investigation and probe. It is only this type of doubt which can be named "constructive doubt" notwithstanding the fact that doubt always ends up in spoiling whatever we had believed in so for.

This constructive aspect relates to investigation and probe that we initiate in the wake of this destruction. However, we do not fall on our way of in investigation and probe until our weak and shaky beliefs of the childhood days are not done away with. If you do not take it strictly, we would consider doubt to also have a share in this constructive task and term it as "constructive doubt".

Again, The Role Of Faith

With the doubt emerging during the maturity period, there is generally created an eagerness for research in man as if he might be seeking to discard the instruction-oriented knowledge of the pre-maturity days, to stand on his own feet in this sphere as well similar to many other spheres, and free himself of being a "child" or dependent upon others.

Therefore the infrastructure of the doubt is a son of faith in oneself to the effect that we must stand on our own feet and see for ourselves what we are capable of discerning. With the doubt of the maturity period, we find ourselves face to face with a new world abounding in unknown and unrecognized phenomena.

It is then that there is aroused a fervent desire in us for knowledge, and we while endowed with utmost hope, or even beyond that, mostly possessing faith in the fact that we can now, by relying upon the faculty of recognition, probe and research, have access to a pure and more reliant cognition about such unknown phenomena, go after research and delve into the reality.

Had this not been the law for recognition and faith in research, on account of that all-embracing doubt, there would have remained neither any cheerfulness nor any efforts in us. Then, there would have existed the "destructive doubt" of the maturity period. Rather, it would have been the "destructive doubt" shaking our confidence in everything, anti-indulging us in a pitiful and painful hesitation. As such, in this

blooming of the maturity period too, the main role must go to the cred it of faith that creates in us an urge to put in efforts for knowing everything anew.

Role Of Faith In The Progress Of Science And Industry

Scientific and industrial achievements are generally the result of the efforts of such individuals who engage in sustained tests and experiments. In these efforts, they often have, in order to discover a phenomenon, to carry out hundreds of experiments or to test something several times, and thus test the veracity or otherwise of the new scientific or industrial thoughts which have found their way into their mind.

I myself have observed at close range the specimen of the works of these scientific researchers as to what degree of perseverance, joy and courage, they pursue their task, and their faces are lit with the flash of faith in their job and in science and research....

You friends are undoubtedly involved in your work, with such scientific figures adherent to science and research, and you have observed with your own eyes what we contend. Perhaps such a zeal, joy and faith have repeatedly come to you even, bringing the sweet taste of the experience gained in the process.

Organizational Faith

Organizational work basically rests on faith: faith and ideology, or goal and organizational procedure; faith in the capability and competence of an individual in his position to the best of efforts; faith in a leader or the leadership cadre; faith in obligation and.... In case of absence of this faith or in their plurality, the work of some individuals, solely for the reason they have come around or intend to accomplish some task, cannot be termed as "organizational and collective work".

There is need, prior to anything else, in a collective work for organizational discipline which cannot be realized in the absence of faith in goal, strategy and leadership, and without obedience by every member coupled with faith. Organizational discipline means that every single member sincerely considers himself obligated to carry out the organizational instructions being issued by the leadership cadre rather than reviewing, every instruction personally, and deciding to implement it after his personal reviewal brings him to the conclusion that such an act is essential or useful.

If everyone seeks, in respect of a task entrusted to him or an order issued to all and sundry, to await for the results of his own personal reviewal and opinion, then even if a work, in appearance, seems to be collective, it would be no more than chaotic in nature. And chaos, coupled with superficial arrangements and organizational title, would bring nothing else, and it would never turn into an organizational task.

Academic Doubt And Practical Doubt

It is very necessary to pay attention to this point that academic doubt is different from practical doubt. Undoubtedly, the first step in research is that we have doubt in the veracity of our own knowledge, but it is not essential that such a doubt totally make us errant in our life. Prior to our indulgence in this doubt, we based on our earlier training, felt ourselves duty-bound to the observance of a series of practical systems in life, and considered ourselves obligated to perform some acts and refrain from some others.

A sublime principle of life says: we must, during the period of doubt, probe and enquire into the veracity or falsehood of our earlier knowledge, in practical measure, continue on life on the same former program until the emergence of a clear-cut result of this research. It also says that we should remain loyal to those former things, barring such cases whose preservation prevents us from undertaking an open research.

The reason is that if we simultaneously with the start of the period of doubt, abandon all the former obligations, we would gradually become habitual to indiscipline. Such indiscipline and a trend to lead life devoid of a mission bring about in us a negative attitude towards accepting every duty inspiring ideology so much so that we would no more participate seriously and for the purpose of genuine enlightenment and acceptance of a serious mode of living in ideological discussions.

The trend of leading a life without discipline weakens or eliminates in us a groundwork for accepting any serious issue however vivid and documented, and seeming if we live to constantly live in a state of doubt lest we may not become involved with obligations! This type of doubt is no more an academic with doubt, but it's a practical doubt, meaning thereby that it is a doubt turned into a habit and inclination.

This type of doubt is not only a lack of progress but also causes regression and underdevelopment, because doubt is of an academic nature contributing to the progress of science and research till the time it is not turned so. It is no more a "constructive academic doubt", but a destructive sophistry and obsession, and in fact, a mental illness which often turns into even a contagious social illness.

The Danger Of Being Without An Ideology

This contagious disease, prevalence of sophistry and obsession in a society, which directly causes aimless and non-investigative doubts confronts the society with a major danger: the danger of being without an ideology. In such a society, there can hardly be traced even a few 'co-thinking' individuals. No sooner a few persons come together, that fallacy, obsession and unfounded doubts influence them beyond description.

There neither exists any unity in such a society nor can there be stabilized any ideology. After becoming devoid of an ideology, society is easily and without any appreciable resistance enslaved by others. Due to this reason, spread of doubt and combat against belief in every type of constructive and effective

principle constitute one of the significant programs of colonialists in the colonized lands.

Role Of Faith In Social Endeavours

Social endeavour, in a complete sense, is a struggle undertaken through organization, an organized leadership, resistant and self-sacrifice. Such a struggle, in the first place, needs a goal and ideological contents which are adhered to by the participants. Even in the seasonal and unorganized efforts that are undertaken on account of various crises in the deprived societies, especially in the colonized ones against the ruling elites and agents of colonialism, faith plays a prime role.

In the fundamental struggles of sustained and organized nature, the role of faith is even more significant. Such a struggle would never last in case the leaders have no faith in the struggling forces in the goal and strategy of the struggle, and consequently the struggle is bound to be crushed and dismembered in the face of the governing powers and power networks of colonialism in more time.

The miraculous role of faith in the giving permanence to or in fructifying social struggles can easily discerned in the recent events of our own era. Prominent examples of these valiant and sustained struggles of our era, such as the century-long struggle of the Algerian people against French colonialism, the staunch and zealous combat of the Vietnamese people against the French Japanese and American colonizers, as well as other struggles of the deprived and tyrannized nations of the Orient and the Islamic world can give us a glimpse of the role of faith in a goal or ideology as affected in the continuation or fructification of these campaigns.

Faith, Constructive And Effective In Practice

The discussion which we have initiated on faith and its role in human life relates to such a faith which is constructive and effective in practice. But such a type of faith which is instrumental in solely keeping hope alive in man in hard times without playing an effective role in adopting a posture and in formulating his approach towards various issues though it deserves discussion and reviewal and whose positive and negative roles in human life need to be investigated, is beyond the scope of our present survey.

The Holy Qur'an too declares this type of faith as inadequate for human prosperity even if it were in the form of faith in the Creator of the world. Tens of Qur'anic verses explicitly say that human prosperity hinges on faith that is accompanied by a worthy deed proportionate to the object¹.

In several of its Verses, the Qur'an strongly admonishes the practice of such individuals whose devotion to Allah, the Creator, is seasonal, who resort to deviations in their ordinary life, compromise with the worldly gods and masters, and remember God, the Creator, only in the moments of need and desperation². The Qur'an, in many verses, calls deeds as a means of test for faith.

In Chapter "The Spider", no. 29, Verse 2, the Qur'an while referring to those persons who chant Islamic

slogans but refrain, at sensitive moments, from participating in the procurement of expenses for a struggle and Jihad (religious war), or joining the ranks of the combatants and strugglers:

"Do the people reckon that they will be left to say 'We believe', and will not be tried?!"(29:2)

Belief In Ideology Eliminates Indiscipline

A faith, constructive and effective in practice, automatically brings forth certain constraints and obligations for man. Each serious ideology is governed by a certain system and regulations. Anyone truly adhering to that ideology must, prior to anything else, know that he can no more lead a life to his own liking and in an undisciplined manner.

Even those groups who have declared "lack of ideology" as their doctrine and do not accept any of the social systems, have certain set rules for this "lack of ideology" of theirs, and these regulations are to be observed by members of those groups. The clubs which are set up with the intent of combating social restrictions, no one is allowed to enter with ordinary etiquette since such an act obstructs the "undisciplined system" of these groups.

When "lack of ideology and indiscipline" has an obligatory system for itself, how do certain individuals expect that a "constructive and even revolutionary ideology" be offered to it without binding it to any obligation and commitments? In particular, the intellectual class of our society must familiarize itself further with this reality. The non-obligatory intellectuals, opposed to restrictions, not to speak of a sustained social endeavour, cannot play any significant role even in an ordinary evidentiary task.

And Now A Question

Prior to engaging in the discussion of the last part of this issue, that is, "faith and knowledge" we want to know your opinion on it: Whether you too have, as a result of the issues discussed so far, reached the conclusion that "faith is one of the needs of human life, even of the present-day human being".

Now pay attention: The question about faith as such is in the sense of its vastness. Presently, it does not matter as to what subject, goal and doctrine is faith reposed in. At the first step, it is essential to clarify our position vis-a-vis "ideology and lack of ideology".

Continuation of these ideological discussions is useful for those persons alone who could have responded to the above query in the positive, and who are among those individuals who have truly and seriously reached the conclusion that "one must adhere to an ideology in life, abandoning indiscipline".

After man has gone through this phase, there comes the turn of the next phase governing the query "What ideology"?

Knowledgeable Faith

The faith of the childhood period with all of its purity and serenity has a drawback that it has not originated from knowledge coupled with analysis. Rather, it is mostly passive being affected by the environment and is, in fact, some sort of reflection. Due to this reason, faith of the childhood days cannot resist in the face of the doubtfulness or the period of maturity.

As said earlier, the faith of childhood days is shaken up in many things with the advent of the maturity period. Truly speaking, the period of childhood cannot be expected to possess faith beyond this simple and initial level. But in the maturity period and beyond that, there exists the possibility for us to have a “knowledge-oriented” faith, something which we have acquired following calculations, reviewal and thorough analysis.

The degree of success in acquiring this knowledge-oriented faith varies in different persons. There are many persons possessing a very simple and limited type of doubt in the age of maturity, and it does not influence many of the issues to which they have faith since childhood.

The faith possessed by such individuals in respect of these issues, even when they attain mental perfection in later years, is more or less a continuation of the same faith of the childhood days but which has, in the following years, secured relatively greater support, and hence it cannot be termed as “knowledge-oriented” faith.

These individuals are abundant even amongst noted scholars of various fields. There exist many great scientists and scholars who are, in real terms, noted and known models, but when opting in favour of an ideology or doctrine, or a political and social strategy, fall, without having any political knowledge and experience, and in the absence of any analysis befitting their academic status, into the same path which is shown to them by the environment.

Islam disfavours this approach. The most sublime source of Islamic teachings, the Holy Qur’an, constantly calls us to delve, to think, to ponder, and to have an objective observation coupled with logical survey and analysis. The Qur’an denounces blind adherence to religion and doctrine, and notes: “Nay, but they say, ‘We found our fathers upon a community, and we are guided upon their traces’.

“Even so We sent never before thee any warner into any city, except that its men who lived at ease said, ‘We indeed found our father upon a community, and we are following upon their traces’”. (43:22-24)

Further, the Qur’an says:

“And when it is said to them, ‘Come now to what God has sent down, and the Messenger, they say, ‘Enough for us is what we found our father doing’, what, even if their fathers had knowledge of naught and were not guided?’” (5: 104).

The Holy Qur'an specifically stresses this point with regard to faith and choice of doctrine and ideology: "Faith must rely upon knowledge and reassuring reviewal".

A faith which is devoid of an informative infrastructure is of no worth, and does not make man independent of seeking reality. The Qur'an, in Chapter "Jonah", no. 10, Verse 36 says after bringing some rational arguments on combating the superstition of idol-worship:

"And the most of them follow only surmise and surmise avails naught against truth. Surely God knows the things they do"(10:36)

In Chapter "The Star", no. 53, Verses 27 and 28 have restated this sublime Islamic idea on a different occasion:

"Those who do not believe in the world to come name the angels with the names of females. "3(53:27-28)

They have not any knowledge thereof; they follow only surmise and surmise avails naught against truth: (and do not make us independent of putting in efforts for seeking knowledge about justice).

The Holy Qur'an, in various Verses⁴ speaks of the ignorant faith which is solely reliant on suspicion and surmise and has no firm base intellectually, and criticizes it in different ways.

In the opinion of the Qur'an, man is irrespective of the ideas being presented to him by parents or the environment, and in disregard of what he acquires in childhood from his own surroundings, obligated to apply his well-equipped faculty of knowledge and cognition, to closely observe himself and the world around him, ponder with forbearance, and continue with this pondering prudence until arriving at a conclusion.

He should then adhere to this result, hold faith in it and make it into the infrastructure of mental and ideological system as well as of the scientific system in his personal life.

The Qur'an describes the objective observation of the universe, and urges us to observe, in an objective manner, man with all of his miraculous intricacies, nature with all those varying phenomena, the earth and sky with all their grandeur, and the animals with their secretive creation. The divine book wants us to observe in an inquisitive manner and to ponder much over each one of them. This is a more proper observation and pondering for recognizing reality.

So, the Holy Qur'an not only does not consider practical sciences, anthropology, a scientific and investigative recognition of nature and an unrestricted thought to be any obstruction and contrary to faith, but it also believes them to constitute the most suitable path for locating the valued quality of faith. This path is open to every broadminded individual, which leads us to 'knowledge-oriented' faith and which we now along with you dear friends are about to traverse.

- [1.](#) Refer to: Chapter "The Cow", no. 2, verses 82 and 277, as well as many other verses
 - [2.](#) Refer to: Chapter "Joseph", no. 12, Verse 22, Chapter "The Spider", no. 29, Verse 65, and "Luqman", no. 31, Verse 32.
 - [3.](#) Something similar to goddesses and divinities in ancient Greece and Rome.
 - [4.](#) Refer to: Chapter "The Cow", no. 2, Verse 78. "Cattle", no. 6, Verses 116 and 148; "Jonah", no. 10, Verse 66, "Crouching", no. 45, Verse 24, and "The Star", no. 53, Verse 23
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