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Equality of Man

Thought for the Week

"O People, verily we created you of a male and a female; and We made you in clans and tribes so that you may recognize Each other: but the most honored of you with God is the one Who is the most pious of you", (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 13).

Go deep into the history of last 1400 years and you will find the imprint of Islam on every right chapter. Take, for example, the idea of human brotherhood and equality of man with man. This wide-spread belief of today is the gift of Islam.

Before Islam, people generally believed in tribal gods. In some quarters there was an idea of a supreme being; but that supreme being was almost always the god of one's own tribe; the gods of other tribes were inferior ones. One was bound to despise those other gods, but the interesting point is that, anyhow, the other gods were recognized to exist!

That multitude of gods and semi-gods, was bound to cause conflicts and disharmonies amongst mankind, and it did cause divisions to an unbelievable extent. Theories were advanced to legalize the division of mankind into separate classes – some privileged, other persecuted and oppressed. Beliefs were fostered condemning certain branches of humanity, not because they were of bad character but just because they happened to belong to a certain tribe or clan. Different legal and social codes were invented for different classes. As there was no feeling of a Universal God, man did not have a feeling of kinship with other human beings.

The advent of Islam was the beginning of the end of such tendencies. Islam, with its emphasis on the Oneness of God, created a belief in the oneness of His creatures. Gradually the belief influenced the thought of mankind. Now the principle of equality and human brotherhood is recognized in the whole world – with certain sad exceptions. When I hear the leaders of world opinion proclaiming that racial or tribal discrimination is a sin against God, I feel proud to being to Islam which proclaimed that principle for the first time in the history of mankind. Not only proclaimed it, but made it an integral part of the Muslims' daily life.

It was Islam which explained in most realistic terms the cause of the existence of different tribes and clans and asked man to look into the qualities of soul, not on the color skin.

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