

GHAZALI'S PHILOSOPHY OF REALITY, IMPORTANCE AND PURPOSE OF RELIGION

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ABSTRACT:

"The history of religion is as old as the world itself. That is why from Hazrat Adam to date, we find no age without divine guidance. Guidance is necessary for all human beings as the Creator of the universe; Almighty Allah addressed the first human couple while sending it to this earth: "We said," Get down from here, all of you. So, whenever 'the guidance' from ME comes to you; and whoever follows MY' guidance', they do not have to fear and they do not have to regret". Meaning: "Gm here; ate you down all frond if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve". It means the success of Allah's vicegerents, human beings, depends on their following the laws given by the creator of this world.

Keywords; religion, guidance, success, creature of this world, human beings

The purpose and importance of religion:

When Allah sent mankind to this earth He did not leave them without any guidance. He sent prophets as models to be followed. He is the All powerful and Merciful. He is the one who tests human beings after having mercy on them. He sent messengers to convey His divine message to him, declaring at the same time that Islam alone is the best religion. Imam al-Ghazali is among the greatest revivalists.

Islamic revival is neither striking compromise, nor a blending of Islamic and Non-Islamic concepts. In fact it is the cleansing of all the UN-godly accretions and presenting it more or less in its original pure from. To save the religion, he wrote many books on almost every aspect of

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Islamic teachings. Al-Ghazali gave due importance to logic. According to him, in order to understand religion, one has to apply logic and those who refuse this, are misguided.

Meaning: " we have not sent thee but as a universal (messenger) to men. Giving task of presenting and projecting the true nature of Allah as the one and only who has no partner. The one who cannot be fragmented, the prophet (P.B.U.H) made it clear that Allah is the (P.B.U.H)'s Sole master and all are His subjects; He is supreme and all exist but to obey him; He is all- powerful and there is no need of intermediaries between Him and His creations.

Meaning: nor call on any, other than Allah such will neither profit thee nor hurt thee".

The message delivered by this exalted personage is so comprehensive and universal that there is no need for a new guidance till the end of time.

Meaning: "this day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you"

This message is a complete code of life and there is no need for a new code of life. Thus the Qur'an says:

Meaning: " O ye who believe! Enter into Islam wholeheartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the evil one! For he is to you a vowed enemy".

The message given by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is indeed a message from Allah.

"Nor does he say (aught) of (his own) desire".

This message is for all times and for all peoples existing in the world.

Meaning: "O men! I am sent unto you all, as the apostle of Allah".

After Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) it is the duty of his followers to spread this message in the world.

Meaning: "Ye are the best of people, evolved for mankind, enjoying what is right, (and) forbidding what is wrong".

This is indeed a divinely ordained duty for all, but in today's fragmented and compartment world, it is above all, especially enjoyed upon the ʿUlama of Muslim ummah, as:

Meaning: "the religious scholars are the heirs of the prophets".

One of them Imam is al-Ghazali, who lived for nearly 55 years and spent most of his time reading, writing and teaching. Beside this, he had to reply to thousands of letters, which came from far and near asking for his juristic rulings and opinions. Importance and purpose of religion, as he saw them can be described as under:

The reality of religion according to al-Ghazali:

As mentioned earlier, religion as such is as the world; religion is an intrinsic part of nature of man and reflects images and demands of the living. Just as food and water are essential for the material survival of man, so is religion for his spiritual, intellectual, moral and ethical well being and survival. This is borne out by the fact that human literature is predominately religious in nature and content.

Most literature is comprised of religious thoughts.

Although one can differ in fundamental or explanation of the religions, one cannot deny its reality. For this reason, the scholars of religion have defined religions in their ways. I do not want to discuss the philosophies of religion as given by E.B. Taylor, Renan, Virgil I Leuba, Kant, Schopenhauer and All Port (11), but I want to stress that the reality of religion is present in every human being, although, different people have different images and concepts regarding religion, yet they all a common belief in an all-persuasive, omniscient and omnipresent "Supernatural power".

The word religion is derived from Latin; it means "Worshipping", when man decided and feels the importance of some super power.

This definition of religion does not apply to every religion. For example in Islam, religion means not only worship but also living-in is widest and deepest sense according to the tenets and principles of religion. Thus in Islam the will of Allah forms the basis of a successful life. As regards the reality of religion, it has been explained in the writings of Imam al-Ghazali, according to whom, religion provides a solution to every problem through the Qur'an and Sunnah. (12)

So, in the opinion of Imam al-Ghazali, the philosophy of Islam is based on fear of Allah, which brings him closer to Allah.

Meaning: "The most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you".

And we know that when man became abstinent, he became a complete man. As we see in the beginning of Sura al-Baqara that the people having the characteristics of abstinence (14), are declared successful.

Meaning: "They are on (true) guidance from their lord, and it is these who will prosper".

In the times of al-Ghazali it was widely believed that an intellectual has no connection with religion because the rules and principles of religions cannot be tested by human intellect. Not only this, but also that intellectual knowledge cannot support religion. But Imam al-Ghazali protested strongly and proved that religion and intellect can work together. (16)

Another belief of those days was that forgiveness is not a result of worship but instead a divine prerogative, i.e. Allah forgives whomsoever He desires to forgive and punishes whomsoever He desires to punish. Imam al-Ghazali was not convinced of this. According to him divine forgiveness is not necessarily contingent upon human deeds, but depends on the sincerity of heart. On this issue he adopted a rigid stance and he was subsequently able to convince others. He throws light on this issue as under:

"People think that worship is only for getting paradise in which there will be houris and rivers of milk and honey flowing; there will be fruits of every kind and those fruits which are not even seen in this world. We see people worshiping God only for the sake of these things. As such they are rather greedy". (17) Al-Ghazali against this protested strongly and declared man's aim should be not only getting to paradise. Rather it should be coming closer to Allah.

He gave due importance to fiqh saying that with the help of it one comes to know the rules and regulation for completing the religion. And if it is removed from the soul of the religion it will take people towards evil. For instance, there are rules of buying and selling (Ijara Salam) which, if not followed, will lead to destruction.

At the same time he gave importance to Qur'an, Hadith and Tafseer, and not only this but also to other knowledge such as political science and culture. He also studied those disciplines, which have no connection whatsoever with religion stating that, since one has to live in this world one must give due importance to these branches of knowledge as well.

He also said that this would greatly help religion, and Ulama and caliphs should make arrangements for the propagation of such knowledge. He said that his demand is Allah's demand; so to fulfil this, one has to be responsible, punctual, and virtuous, which are all intrinsically connected with Ibadah.

Al-Ghazali says that one cannot draw a line of demarcation between the wordly life and religious life. And if one decides to follow the Kitab Allah and Sunnah for guidance, all problems will be solved, provided one firmly believes in divine unity. All aspects of life have a connection that cannot be made unless and until each thing is connected. Imam-al-Ghazali says there is no doubt in it and one cannot ignore it and amendment is not possible in it. In Imamiyat he says that there are some places which one cannot explain without the help of Qur'an or Hadith which we cannot ignore or think it to be false.(18)

Next, Imam al-Ghazali states that pillars of the religion are Fiqh and Basirat. He says that for the importance of the religion and for the worship of Allah there is nothing more important than the understanding for the religion for which he says that man who has got the power of understanding, he can overcome all situations. Every-thing has its foundation on which it is based and the foundations of Islam are Fiqh and Basirat. (19)

The aim of humanity is based on two words, 'world' and 'religion' and nobody can deny the importance of the religion. The system of the world cannot be secured unless and until it is based on religion because this is the only alternative for freeing oneself from the punishment of Last Day and it is not ever lasting. He says that religious knowledge is the only thing, which has connection with wisdom, perfection and excellence. On the basis of these things, Allah's trust is being given to him. He says that it is not necessary that those people, who are not happy with religion, do not do good action. In the same way, if a ruler or king loves a people for the love of Allah, he becomes nearer to Allah not because he is good in religion but because of his good deeds and actions. Imam al-Ghazali says that those people are the best who overcome self-interest and if they can't control themselves they are animals not human beings. This leads him towards error and destruction and because of this he even tries to evidence for it, which are not worth

following. So one should always pray and control himself. When he becomes the follower of Shaitan, he does not need any kind of evidence.(20)

Imam al-Ghazali considers prayer to be the important pillar of religion on which all the other prayers are based. The difference between Kafir and Muslim is seen through the prayers. And those who do not pray, their punishment are death and because of these qualities he says that prayer is the pillar of the religion. (21)

The man who indulges himself in worldly affairs and business and neglects religion, his fate is only destruction. Then he says that whosoever came from Allah as the messenger to the world, his religion was Islam. And all the revealed books had the teachings of Islam. And, after Islam whatever religion came, was only to fulfill the interest of the people for their selfish desires.

Al-Ghazali says that the religious destruction for the Christians is only because they considered Jesus to be the messenger as well as the son of Allah and His partner. If they just remove their basic mistake, they can easily return toward correct religion because they say Adam, Noah and the family of Abraham to be the messengers of Allah and those they are human beings and they are born from the same race. Among them nobody was god and their qualities were such that they were chosen for the correcting of the society.

Al-Ghazali interprets the meaning of Allah's rope as His religion and it is being mentioned that this is only relationship through which our connection with Allah is formed. And on the other side, it brings together all the people of Imam to one group or community. Then he says that meaning of holding the rope strictly is that, among the Muslims the real importance should be of religion only. (22)

Imam al-Ghazali also says that the sheikh does not get his fame due to his strength, length, body or wealth but due to the method that he adopts and the expressions and intellect he applied. Not only this, but also due to the experiences and difficulties he came across in getting his title. He came to know what is good and bad and was able to tell people about the harm and advantages. He made sure that the only way of knowing this is Qur'an, Hadith and Ijma'. (23)

Imam al-Ghazali was not against saints; hence he used to go the shrine of celebrated Aulia' (saints). He, however said, though going to the shrines is not farz (duty) yet there is no harm in it either. (24)

CONCLUSION: -

From the above views of Imam-al-Ghazali we come to know that he was a staunch supporter of religion and his aim and purpose was to make people the followers of religion. He presented such a rational interpretation of the fundamental beliefs of Islam that their validity could not be questioned on rationalistic grounds for centuries afterwards. Besides this, he explained the wisdom and merits of the injunctions of the "Shariah" and gave the people such a clear conception of the religion.

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 2. Qur'an, 07:13
 3. Qur'an, 34:28
 4. Qur'an, 10:106
 5. Qur'an, 05:03
 6. Qur'an, 02:208
 7. Qur'an, 53:03
 8. Qur'an, 07:158
 9. Qur'an, 03:110
 10. Imam Muhammad Ismail Bukhari, "Sahih Bukhari", 1355 A.H., Egypt, Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1355 A.H. Kitab Al-ʿIlm.
 11. These are the orientalist, who have discussed about the reality of religion in different ways.
 12. In this connection if only the "Ihya al-ʿUlum-al-Din" is studied, we feel that Imam al-Ghazali has treated every aspect of life in the light of Islam, in the light of religion.
 13. Qur'an, 49:13
 14. These characteristics stated as hereafter. (Under: who believe in the unseen, are stead-

fast in prayer, and spend out of what we have provided for them. And who believe in the revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Qur'an, 2:305).

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