

The great meeting-ground of Islam and Theosophy is the principle of Universal Brotherhood.

Two Types of Knowledge

Mention is made in the Hadis Sayings and oral instructions of the Prophet Muhammad of two distinct sources of knowledge commonly accepted in Islam: IImi-Safina or knowledge of the book, and IIm-i-Sinah or knowledge of the heart. The same idea occurs in the teaching of The Voice of the Silence, a theosophical classic about the spiritual life, which distinguishes between the Doctrine of the Head, which is exoteric knowledge, and the Doctrine of the Heart, esoteric wisdom. The former refers to the intellectual apprehension of religious teachings, while the latter implies a transformative perception of underlying laws and principles, making the seeker a co-worker with the Divine.

Oneness

One of the most important teachings in Islam is the doctrine of Tawhid or the blessed Oneness. Says the Quran: "La Illaha Illallah!" (Muhammad, Chapter 47, Verse 19). "There is no god but God". It means there is nothing but the Divine in the whole universe. Everything that exists, whether animate or inanimate, is the Divine. In his article "The Philosophy of Islam" (The Theosophist, January 1929) Nadarbeg K. Mirza points out that "in Islam all the prayers and meditations have been so arranged as to direct the attention of the disciple to an abstract idea of God". Says the Quran: "O Thou! whose abstract nature is free from illustrations and whose attributes are beyond examples". (Al-Saffat, Chapter 37, Verse 80). Mirza explains that God's "attributes are beyond description and cannot adequately be even conceived by a human mind".

In Theosophy the Proem to The Secret Doctrine speaks of "an Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human

expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought".

Islam means and implies resignation, submission, peace and striving after the truth, regardless of caste, creed and colour. (Mirza, The Theosophist, October 1928). Islam also recognizes other religious traditions, as taught in the Quran: "Say that we believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to us, and in that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, to Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes, and in that which was given to the Prophets from their Lord. We do not make any distinction between any of them". (Al-Baqra, Chapter 2, Verse 136).

Universal Brotherhood

In her article "Where Islam and Theosophy Meet" (The Theosophist, March 1929), Mary K. Neff says that the great meeting-ground of Islam and Theosophy is the principle of Universal Brotherhood. She quotes the Quran: "Ye people, hearken my speech and understand the same. Know that every Moslem is the brother of every other Moslem. All of you are on the same equality". (Al-Hujurat, Chapter 49, Verse 10). And adds: "Theosophy takes no man from his religion, if this were not so, how could there be Theosophists in every faith under the sun -- Hindu, Buddhist, Parsi, Jain, Sikh, Hebrew, Christian, Muslim?"

Contribution of Islam to the Western Culture

The contribution of the Islamic culture to the revival of learning in Europe, for example, in the fields of science, philosophy and education, during the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries C.E., is a testimony of the profound wisdom enshrined in that religious tradition. In a lecture she gave at the Islamia College, Aligarh, India, in November 1901, Annie Besant said that it was the followers of the Prophet Muhammad "who brought science back to Europe, when Europe was

lying in the darkness of the Middle Ages. Universities were established in different towns of Southern Europe by the Moors. It was from these Universities that the light spread through Europe and made the revival of learning. Many books of philosophy and science were written at that time".

The Spiritual Life According to Islam

The fundamental principles of Islam are known as "Pillars of Faith". They are: belief in the Unity of God and the acknowledgement of Hazrat Muhammad as His Prophet, prayer, charity, pilgrimage and fasting. These have a purifying effect on the whole of consciousness. The Islamic teaching about prayer is a deep one, bringing it closer to the nature of meditation. Says the Quran: "There is no prayer unless the heart is present". Prayer, with or without words, must be the voice of one's true nature ("The Theosophy of Islam", The Theosophist, November 1929), for "when the soul is full of praise of Allah, there is no room for wicked or evil thoughts". (Quran)

The Quranic view of charity is equally profound: "Thou shalt never attain to righteousness unless thou givest out what thou lovest". (Al-Imran, Chapter 3, Verse 92). It is pure altruism, self-sacrificial service. In the article mentioned above Nadarbeg K. Mirza says that "the main idea underlying the institution of pilgrimage is the promotion of universal Brotherhood. ... There (in Mecca), every year Muslims from all over the world meet and exchange ideas. They meet as equals, irrespective of caste, colour or nationality". He adds that Muslims bring back, when they return, the spirit of love and tolerance. The principle behind the idea of fasting is also to abstain from idle talk and from all things which are not essential to existence.

In conclusion, we quote a passage from the Quran which shows how faith and devotion can help in spiritualising the human life and bring it closer to the Divine:

“When the Quran is recited, listen to it in silence so that you may be shown mercy. Remember your Lord deep in your soul with humility and reverence, and without ostentation: in the morning and in the evening; and do not be negligent.

Those who dwell with your Lord do not disdain His service. They give glory to Him and prostrate themselves before Him.”

(Al-Araf, Chapter 7,
Verses 204 to 206)

Theosophy and fundamentalism

There is currently much discussion about fundamentalism in all religions. From a theosophical point of view, deep and sincere belief are a personal matter, but the imposition of these views on others is not helpful. Violence cannot be attributed to any religion as an expression of that faith; it is always a purely human reaction to a particular cultural or political setting and not a part of the religion.

Islam is not to blame any more than Christianity or Hinduism for the extreme acts of a small number of their respective followers. All the great religions teach peace and goodwill as the ideal for their adherents. It is an unfortunate fact of history that this is more often ignored than observed.

Vision and Mission of the Theosophical Society

Vision

To inspire and serve the spiritual evolution of humanity.

Mission

To encourage enquiry with open hearts and minds into world religions, philosophy, science, and the arts; and to support the individual's endeavour to understand and apply the ageless wisdom, respect and honour all life, and achieve spiritual self-transformation.



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