

Islamic Unity and Happiness

Islamic Unity and Happiness



Murtadha Mutahhari

**Translated by
Dr. Alaedin Pazargadi**

Al-Islam.org

Author(s):

[Murtadha Mutahhari](#) [1]

Publisher(s):

[Bethat Islamic Research Centre \(BIRC\) Qom – Iran](#) [2]

The text consists in two sections.

In Section One the writer discusses the contribution of scholar Amini in his book "Al-Ghadir" towards Islamic unity and its urgent need in the world of today.

In Section Two the writer discusses about happiness and analyses the issue from a religious and philosophical point of view.

[Get PDF](#) [3] [Get EPUB](#) [4] [Get MOBI](#) [5]

Translator(s):

[Dr. Alaedin Pazargadi](#) [6]

Topic Tags:

[Islamic Unity](#) [7]

Translator's Introduction

The martyred scholar, Murtadha Mutahhari was born in 1918 in the town of Fariman of Khorassan. He studied for 16 years in the Divinity college of Qom in the branches of literature, jurisprudence, philosophy and other Islamic subjects, and then taught there and later at the Divinity College of Tehran University as professor of theology and philosophy for several years. He was then engaged in research which resulted in the publication of many books on religious, philosophical and social topics.

He was an erudite and versatile scholar, as is proved by his lectures, pamphlets and books, a total of 35 published works. He was martyred by assassins in Tehran in April 1980. His well-known books are: Islamic World Visions, Man in the Qur'an, Islamic Revolution, Men and Faith, Divine Justice, Society and History, Revelation and Prophethood.

This booklet consists of two sections. In section one the writer discusses the contribution of scholar Amini in his book of "Al-Ghadir" and Islamic unity and its urgent need in the world of today. In section

two he analyses the question of happiness from different points of view, both religious and philosophical.

In Persian and Arabic texts wherever the name of Imam Ali or other Imams is mentioned, it is customary to add a phrase after its meaning in English «peace be upon him», or the letter as an abbreviation for it in the English translation .too, this symbol is used in such cases.

In translating this booklet, my acknowledgement is due to Mr. Muhammad Khurshid Ali, editor of Be'that Foundation, for his most helpful suggestions in improving the quality of the translation and useful abridgement to avoid unnecessary repetitions.

A.P.

Part 1: Al-Ghadir and Islamic Unity

The noble book "Al-Ghadir" has raised a great wave in the Islamic world, and Islamic thinkers have paid a deep attention to it from various angles: literary, historical. theological, traditional , social, and analytical. What interests us from the social angle is Islamic unity. Islamic reformers and enlightened scholars of our era consider the unity and adherence of Islamic nations and sects as the most urgent of Islamic need, particularly under the present conditions when they are being assaulted by the enemy from every side, who is constantly employing all kinds of means to develop old offenses and invent new ones.

As we know, Islamic unity and brotherhood have principally been an important objective of Islam and of the deepest interest to the holy lawgiver of Islam, as testified by the Qur'an, and Islamic traditions and history.

For this reason, a question is raised by some as to whether or not the writing and publication of a book like "Al-Ghadir" the contents of which are anyhow the oldest of Muslim ethical topics, will not create an obstacle in the way of achieving the sacred goal and noble ideal of Islamic unity.

We consider it necessary first to clarify the main topic, that is, the meaning and scope of Islamic unity ,and then explain the role of the fine book "Al-Ghadir" and its noble writer, scholar Amini (May God grant him Heaven).

Islamic Unity

What is meant by Islamic Unity? Does it mean that one religion should be chosen from among its different sects, and the rest be put aside? Or does it mean that what is held in common in all of them should be adopted, and the differences ignored, thus creating a new faith which would not resemble any of them? Or again, does it mean that Islamic unity has no relationship whatever with the unity of

religions, and the meaning of Muslim unity is the union of the followers of various sects against Non-believers in spite of all their religious differences.

Those who are opposed to Muslim unity, in order to give the word «Islamic unity» an illogical and impracticable sense, call it a religious unity to defeat it at the very beginning.

Obviously the purpose of the enlightened and learned men of Islam in coining this phrase is not limiting all the sects to one religion, or adopting the common points and laying aside differences which is neither reasonable, and logical, nor desirable and practicable. Their purpose is the unification of Muslims in one line against their common enemy.

These learned men say that the Muslims have sufficient sources of conformity which could be used as a basis of a solid unity. All Muslims worship the unique God, and believe in the prophethood of the holy Prophet. Their Book is the Qur'an, and the direction of prayers is Kaaba. They perform the rites of pilgrimage together and in the same way, their prayer and fast are similar, their making of a family, their dealings, their bringing up of children and the burial of their dead are all alike. There are no differences between them in these matters except in details.

All Muslims possess a universal perspective; they have a common culture, and share a great and magnificent civilization of longstanding. The unity of perception, culture, record of civilization, perspicacity, religious beliefs, worship and devotion, and social customs and traditions, can easily make a single nation of them and create a great power before which all the world's great powers may feel humble, especially as this point has been affirmed in the context of Islam.

According to the explicit text of the Qur'an, all Muslims are brothers. and are related by means of special rights and duties. In the face of such a situation, why should the Muslims not benefit from all these wide possibilities bestowed on them by the blessings of Islam?

From the viewpoint of this group of Islamic scholars there is no necessity for the Muslims to seek reconciliation, compromise or forgiveness in their major and minor points of religious differences for the sake of Islamic unity. Similarly, there is no necessity that they should avoid discussing their differences about major and minor matters or writing books concerning them.

The only thing that is required by Islamic unity in this respect, is that they should be self-possessed enough to prevent being provoked and inflamed by hostility, or accuse one another to give the lie to each other, to scoff at one another's logic. to blame each other, or to hurt each other's feelings and go beyond the bounds of logic and reason. In fact, they should at least observe for themselves the limits that Islam has considered necessary in inviting a non-Muslim to Islam.

Some people have supposed that only the sects that differ on minor points, such as the Shafe'i and Hanafi sects can be like brothers and stand together in one line while those which differ on major points can never be like brothers at all. In the opinion of this group religious principles are an inter-related

collection, or in the words of Methodists they are of the kind of minimum and maximum relationship.

The injury of one is the same as the injury of all, so, when the principle of the leadership of the Imam receives a set back and is sacrificed, the question of unity and brotherhood is negated, according to the supporters of this principle. For this reason the Shiites and Sunnis cannot shake each other's hands as brothers and stand in one line against an enemy, whoever he may be.

The answer is given to this group by the first group is: We have no reason to consider the major points as an inter-related collection or to follow the principle of "either all or nothing." Here the rules of "What is facilitated does not render null what is difficult", and "Not securing all does not mean abandoning all" holds true, and the way of Ali, Commander of the Faithful, is for us the best and the most instructive example. He adopted the most logical and reasonable way which was worth by his exalted position.

He left no stone unturned in order to secure what was his right. He did all that was possible to revive the principle of the «Imamate», but he never followed the motto of "either all or nothing". On the contrary, he used the motto of "not securing all, does not mean abandoning all" as the basis of his actions.

Ali did not rise against those who deprived him of his right, and his refraining from rising was not due to compulsion, but a well-considered and voluntary step. He had no fear of death, so why did he not rise? The worst was that he would be killed. Being killed in God's way was his utmost wish. He was always longing for martyrdom, and he was more familiar with it than a child is with the mother's breast. In his correct reckoning, Ali had reached this conclusion that the interest of Islam in those circumstances was to abandon the idea of rising and resort to co-operation. He himself repeatedly clarifies this point.

In one of his letters to Malek Ashtar (letter 62 of Nahjul Balaghah) he writes: «At first I withdrew my hand until I saw that some people turned back from Islam, and invited men to annihilate the religion of Muhammed. I feared then that if I did not rise to aid Islam and Muslims, I would witness a split or destruction in Islam the calamity of which would be far greater than foregoing a short period of caliphate.»

In the Council of Six, after Othman was nominated and selected by Abdo-Rahman-ben-Owf, Ali explained his protest as well as his readiness for co-operation in the following words (Nahjul Balaghah Sermon 72):

"You yourselves know that I have more merit for the Caliphate than all others. And now I swear to God that as long as the affairs of the Muslims are in order, and my rivals are content with leaving me aside and only I am being treated unfairly, I will show no opposition and will submit."

These are the evidences that Ali rejected the principle of "either all or nothing" in this case. There is no need to elaborate Ali's way and method any further. This matter is abundantly testified by history.

Scholar Amini

Now is the time to see to which group Scholar Ayatullah Ibrhim Amini, the noble writer of Al-Ghadir belongs, and what he thinks. Did he consider the unity of Muslims acceptable only within the circle of the Shiite sect, or did he think that the circle of Islamic brotherhood should be more extensive? Did he believe that Islam which is verified with the confession of the creed of the two Muslim testimonies, willy-nilly creates certain rights of Muslims in connection with other Muslims, and preserves the bond of brotherhood between all Muslims, as affirmed explicitly in the Qur'an?

Scholar Amini himself has given thorough consideration to this point that he must clarify this question and also whether the role of "Al-Ghadir" in Islamic unity is affirmative or negative. And in order not to be misjudged by critics, including those who appear for the opposite side, and those who pretend to belong to the group favoring the idea, he has repeatedly offered explanations and clarified the matter.

Scholar Amini is an adherent of Islamic unity, which he regards with broad-mindedness and enlightenment. He has expounded this idea on various occasions within the covers of Al-Ghadir, parts of which are quoted below:

In the preface to volume one, he makes a brief reference to the role that Al-Ghadir will have in the Islamic World, and says: "We consider all this as a service to the religion and to the elevation of the word truth, and revival of the Islamic community."

In vol. 3, page 77, after quoting the falsehoods of Ibn Timieh, Alussi and Ghassimi to the effect that the Shiite look upon some members of the Prophet's household such as Zaid-bin-Ali-bin-Hussein as enemy, says under the heading "criticism and amendment" These lies and accusations sow the seeds of depravity and rouse hostility between Muslim communities, producing disunity and dispersion, contrary to the interests of all Muslims...

In Vol. 3 page 268 he quotes the accusation of Sayed Rashid Reza against the Shia sect to the effect that the Shias are pleased at any defeat that the Muslims suffer, so much so that they in Iran celebrated the victory of Russia against the Muslims and says: These lies are forged by people like Sayed Muhammed Rashid Reza. The Shias of Iran and Iraq who are apparently accused, as well as the Orientalists, explorers and foreign representatives in Islamic countries etc. who have frequented Iran and Iraq, know nothing at all of this happening.

The Shias without exception have a respect for the population, blood, honour and property of all Muslims, both the Shiite and Sunnis, and whenever and wherever a calamity has befallen the Islamic world, irrespective of any sect, they have shared its sorrow. The Shia has never limited Islamic brotherhood which has been affirmed by the Qur'an and traditions, to the Shiite world and has not believed in a difference between the Shias and Sunnis.

Again at the end of Vol. 3, after criticising some books of older writers such as Aghd-el-Farid of Ebn-Abd Raba; Al-Entessar of Abol-Hossein Khayat Mo'tazeli, Al-Fargh-Beyn -Al-Fargh of Abu Monsoor Bagbdadi, Al-Fasl of Ebn-Hazm Andolessi, Al-Melat-van-Nahl of Muhammed-ben-Ab-el-Karim Shahrestani, Menhaga-Sana of Ebn-Timia, and Al-Bedya-van-Nahaya of Ebn-Kathir, as well as several books of modern writers such as the History of Islamic Nations of Sheikh Muhammed Khezri, the Dawn of Islam of Ahmad Amin, Al-Jowlat-Fi-Robu-e-Shargh-el-Adna of Mohammad Sabet Mesri, As-Sera'e beynel-Islam-val Vathina of Ghassimi and Al-Vashia of Mussa Jar-oLah, he says:

"Our aim in criticizing these books is to warn the Islamic Community, and awaken them to the great dangers that these books create for them. For, they constitute a primary factor endangering Islamic unity and disperse the rank of Muslims.,,

In the preface to Vol. 5, Scholar Amini explains his view very clearly about this matter entitled "A generous opinion, in connection with a letter of appreciation received from Egypt about Al-Ghadir, and leaves no room for doubt.

He says: "Opinions and views are free about religions, and never break the tie of Islamic brotherhood which has been affirmed by the Qur'an in the sentence: "Truly believers are brethren." However heated scholarly religious discussions and theological arguments, the way of the predecessors and above all that of the Prophet's Companions and followers has been unanimously accepted.

We writers in various parts of the Islamic world, inspirer of our differences on major and minor points, have a common bond and that is belief in God and His Prophet. In all our bodies reigns one spirit and one feeling, and that is the spirit of Islam and the word "devotion."

We Islamic writers live under the banner of truth and perform our duty with the guidance of the Qur'an and the mission of the Holy Prophet. The message of us all is: "Islam is truly the religion before God," and our motto is "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet." Yes, we are of God's party and upholders of His religion."

Scholar Amini in the preface to Vol. 8 entitled "Al Ghadir united the ranks of the Islamic Nations" enters a direct discussion of the role of Al-Ghadir in Islamic unity. He strongly refutes the charges of those who say Al-Ghadir causes a greater dispersion of Muslims, and proves that on the contrary, Al-Ghadir removes many of the misunderstandings and brings the Muslims closer together. He then offers as evidence of this, the confessions of Islamic scholars and in conclusion, he quotes the letter of Sheikh Muhammad Sa'id Dahdooch in this connection.

To avoid a lengthy explanation, we dispense with the quotation and translation of all his discourse on Islamic unity, for, what we have already quoted is sufficient to prove our point.

The positive role of Al-Ghadir in Islamic unity lies in this that firstly it clarifies the reasoned Shiite logic and proves that the inclination of a hundred million Muslims towards Shiism contrary to the poisonous

propaganda of some people, has not been due to political, racial or other circumstances, but rather to a strong logic based on the Qur'an and traditions.

Secondly it proves that a number of the charges leveled against the Shia which have led other Muslims to keep some distance from the Shia, such as the claim that the Shia prefers a non-Muslim and is pleased at the defeat of non-Shia Muslims by non-Muslims, or that the Shia makes pilgrimage to the Shrines of Imams instead of pilgrimage to Mecca, or performs certain rites in prayer, or observes special rules in temporary marriage, are all false and without foundation. Thirdly it introduces to the Islamic world Ali, the Commander of the Faithful himself who is the most injured and the least appreciated personality in Islam, who can be the leader of all Muslims, to be imitated, as well as his chaste progeny.

Others' View of Al-Ghadir

What others think of Al-Ghadir is what we have explained Muhammed Abdol-Ghani Hassan Mesri in his Commendation of Al-Ghadir in his preface of Vol. I, Second edition, says: "I pray God to make your limpid water (Ghadir in Arabic means 'a pool') the means of peace and delight of the two brothers, Shias and Sunnis, so that they join hands and build up the Islamic nation.

Adel Ghaaban editor of the journal Al-Kerab, in his preface of Vol.3 says: "This book clarifies the Shia logic which enables the Sunni sect to know the Shias truly. This knowledge will bring the two sects closer together to form a united rank."

Dr. Muhammad Ghallab, professor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Religious Principles of Al-Azhar, writes in his commendation of Al-Ghadir, printed in the preface to Vol. 4: "I received your book at an opportune moment, for I am now engaged in the collection of materials for writing a book on Muslim life from different angles. Therefore, I greatly desire to obtain reliable information concerning the Imamia Shiite. Your book will help me much, and I shall not be misled like others about the Shia sect."

Dr. Abd-ar-Rahman Kiali Halabi in his commendation, printed in the preface of Vol. 4, after a reference to the Muslim decline in contemporary times and discussing the factors that can save the Muslims, and after suggesting that a proper understanding of the holy Prophet's administrator may be considered one of these factors, says:

"The book Al-Ghadir and its rich contents is something worthy of being known to every Muslim, to inform them how far historians have shown negligence and where the truth lies. We should by this means make up for the past, in order to receive heavenly reward for our effort in the way of Islamic unity.

* *

That was the view of Scholar Amini concerning the important social question of our time, and this is its fine reaction in the world of Islam. May God grant him heaven.

Part 2: Happiness

The question of happiness is one of the oldest of the philosophical topics of mankind, which belongs to the field of practical philosophy. The learned men of ethics and sociology are engaged in the discussion of its nature, conditions, causes, barriers, and its inconsistencies; and if the question of happiness and adversity is raised in speculative philosophy and theology, it is related to one of the minor points of this problem, that is, whether happiness (as well as adversity) is confined to the physical and material, or it is of the following two types:

- (i) Physical and material happiness
- (ii) Spiritual and mental happiness

Theologians propound this question for this reason that they wish to prove spiritual and mental happiness and adversity to be much greater and more considerable.

Bu-Ali (Avicenna) in section eight of "Esharat", and Sard-ol-mot'ale-hin in vol.4 of "Asfar", in propounding this matter, consider only this branch of the question of happiness, and have disregarded other aspects of it. On the other hand, we have not so far come across a comprehensive discussion of this topic in Islamic and non-Islamic books of philosophy.

Although what the reader meets in this essay cannot be considered a complete discussion of this topic, yet it may be regarded as a brief survey. The questions raised here are as follows:

- 1 – What is happiness?
- 2– Happiness and pleasure
- 3– Is man by nature desirous of happiness?
- 4 – Happiness and aspiration.
- 5 – Happiness and satisfaction.
- 6 – A social discourse.
- 7 – Types of happiness.
- 8 – Stages of happiness.
- 9 – Factors and causes of happiness.
- 10 – An overview of a series of discussions.

11 – Does man need guidance to attain happiness?

At first both happiness and adversity seem to be clear in meaning, and if there is an ambiguity and difficulty, it is related to other problems, for, if you ask anyone whether he desires happiness, he will without hesitation give an affirmative answer. And if you ask:

"What about adversity?" you will undoubtedly hear a negative answer. No one pauses before this question, and no one says: "Explain the meaning of happiness and adversity first, so that I may see which one I desire," Therefore, it is evident that both happiness and adversity have a clear meaning for all people, and so they are among the matters which need no definitions.

But I should say that it is not enough to suppose that happiness needs no definition. Many ideas seem like that at first, but as soon as we employ the Socratic Method, and compare that meaning with other meanings which are close to it and analyse it, we see that clarity gradually gives its place to a kind of ambiguity and indefiniteness.

Happiness is for many people synonymous with pleasure, tranquility, success, attainment of desires, joy, satisfaction with the course of events and similar others. But as soon as we compare happiness with each of these, we see that those are appropriate in meaning, yet these ideas are not quite the same. Therefore, it is necessary first to make their comparisons so that later on during these comparisons we find a definite meaning for happiness.

There is no need to discuss the literal root of happiness and pleasure, to see whether happiness is used in its special cases with the meaning of assistance, so that a happy person may supposedly be one who is helped by the turn of the world, while adversity may be considered its opposite, or that word has from the beginning had the senses of distress, pain and misfortune, while happiness was taken to mean its opposite, that is, freedom from pain and hardship.

Apparently from a lexicological point of view, we cannot find two opposite meanings for these two words, but in their general and particular usage they are placed on opposite sides, as they are so in the case of the Qur'an:

"A day will come when no one speaks without His permission, and some are fortunate and some unfortunate; those who are unfortunate groan in the fire.... while those who are fortunate are in heaven." (11: 104-5).

Happiness and Pleasure

Happiness and pleasure are very close together (like adversity and pain) but they are not synonymous and securing pleasure is not the same as attaining happiness. In the same way bearing pain is not absolutely adversity, for a pleasure may be followed by a greater pain, as a pain may be the prelude to a greater and more important pleasure. It is also possible that getting a pleasure causes greater and more

important pleasures to be lost, or a pain prevents greater and more severe pains.

In all these cases the reality of pain and pleasure is preserved, that is, we should not suppose that a pleasure which prevents a greater pleasure, or causes a greater pain is no longer a pleasure. But such a pleasure is not happiness. In the same way a pain which is the prelude to a greater pleasure or checks a greater pain must not be viewed adversely.

Happiness is applied to something the attainment of which causes no regret, and adversity is tolerating something which cannot by any means be accounted for; that is, man has adopted the sense of happiness for his final desire, and adversity for its opposite point, namely, what he should always avoid.

In other words, happiness is man's unconditional wish, and adversity is his unconditional abhorrence. Therefore, if a person or a faith or school claims bringing happiness to mankind, it means: "What I claim to show direction for, is not something better than which could be supposed." But pleasure is not so. If someone claims giving a pleasure, whether it involves a greater pain or the loss of a greater pleasure the case is different.

Pleasure is related to a special power and ability of men or animals, but happiness depends on the whole powers and abilities and living aspects of man. Pleasure is the ruler of the pleasant and unpleasant, while happiness is the ruler of what is advisable and inadvisable. Pleasure is related to the present, while happiness extends equally over the present and future. Pleasure as well as pain are related independently to every aspect of man's life, while happiness is an overall matter.

For this reason it is easy to distinguish pleasure and pain, while it is very difficult and sometimes impossible to distinguish happiness and its opposite. A psychologist who recognizes only mental processes, is able to express an opinion about pain and pleasure, while expressing an opinion about happiness and adversity is a philosopher's concern, since he claims to know the world, the society and man. The kind of opinion of that philosopher about happiness and adversity completely depends on his knowledge of men and of the world. For this reason the suggestions of philosophers about happiness are so very much different from one another. One of them considers happiness as securing pleasure, while another thinks it to be abandoning pleasure and killing the will.

Someone pays attention to material things, and another to the spiritual. One of them considers this moment important, and another chooses far-sightedness as his motto. But as pleasure and pain are the special products of the self, they are subject to investigation and testing, and it is easy to reach unanimity of opinion about them.

The reason why people, in spite of their claim that they desire happiness, follow different goals and choose different ways of attaining them, is this that they differ in the personal way of thinking or their attachment to a particular school or faith concerning man and the world. There is also another reason for this, which will be discussed in the question as to whether happiness is absolute or relative.

Is Man by Nature Desirous of Happiness?

The difference which we mentioned between happiness and pleasure shows that pleasure is one-sided and happiness many-sided. Pleasure is one aspect of the self's special product and subject to the conscience, while happiness is a general and independent matter which is obtained by the comparison and calculation of all pains and pleasures.

The idea of happiness has occurred to man by his ability to compare pains and pleasures and study their various aspects, and adopt a way of securing greater and better pleasure and enjoyment on the whole and reduce to naught all pains and sufferings. But pleasure is a mental state, depending on the mildness of something or a power, or an ability or a human organ. So, pleasure and pain are distinguished by nature and instinct.

But instinct and nature do not distinguish happiness and adversity; this is done by intellect. Whether intellect directly claims to make this distinction or guide man to the faith or school which leads to happiness, anyhow the act of distinguishing happiness is not instinctive.

Therefore, when it is said that everyone is by nature desirous of happiness and always seeks it, it is not true. What people seek is pleasure. We can say someone seeks happiness, whether he chooses the right way or not, only when he makes a proper calculation and compares the losses and benefits and chooses a way from among them .

So, in answer to this question as to whether man by nature desires happiness, it must be said that if it is meant that all people always run after lost happiness, but only they often err in their distinction, it is not right, for, people often follow their nature, not their intellect , and desire pleasure, not happiness. And if it is meant that if human intellect distinguished his happiness and naturally sought it, it would be a correct statement.

Happiness and Aspiration

Certainly everyone has a number of wishes and has a great desire to attain them. If he is asked to describe in what things his happiness lies in order to attain them, he would present his needs and aspirations.

Some people suppose that happiness is the attainment of aspirations and success in desires, and whoever reached them all has attained perfect happiness, and he who has not attained any of them is quite unhappy; or he who attained some of his aspirations, has to the same extent secured some happiness in that shape of its. Thus, he has not only not been treated unfairly, but has also been granted benefits as a member of an unfortunate class.

But we may say that happiness is the attainment of maximum possible enjoyments and the banishment

of maximum pains or minimizing them. In other words, happiness is derived from an harmonious use of one's material and intellectual resources, in the process of overcoming any situational obstacles and contradictions leading to pain and suffering.

This assumes, of course, that one is aware of his inborn abilities and is able to recognize the possibility of using the same, as provided for in the natural order of the world of creation. In this context, it is notable that sometimes an exploited or weak section of people may decide that they are happy with the material advantages that their exploiters find it necessary to extend to them.

Actually, their happiness cannot be real while they allow themselves to be exploited by the shrewd opportunists and self-seekers. The injustice that is caused in this way is much more tragic than that produced by dissatisfaction, for, the injustice that is felt by the other party, is like a painful illness which compels a patient to seek a remedy, but an injustice like the above is like a painless sickness which prevents the patient from seeking a remedy.

The maximum service rendered by the well-to-do class to the weaker class is to have removed their sufferings by means of creating satisfaction in them, but happiness is not only freedom from suffering; it is not the negation of pain, but securing overall joys, benefits and pleasures. As it was said, such sufferings cannot be compared with physical pains like eye-ache and toothache, and in any case their removal may not be thought a service. Such sufferings are the means of social awakening and alertness, and their diminution in this respect is another sin and crime.

Types of Happiness

If we attribute happiness to man who is a combination of body and spirit, there is only one type of it. But if we suppose body and spirit as something separate, then, there are two types of happiness: physical and spiritual. Physical happiness is the overall and complete attainment of physical pleasures with regard to the duration, intensity, strength or weakness of pleasures and the maximum banishment of physical pains. Spiritual happiness is the overall and perfect attainment of spiritual pleasures and the maximum removal of spiritual pains.

We may also separate the happiness of each organ from that of the other organs, and divide it on the basis of each power and organ, such as the happiness of sight, hearing, reason, etc. However, in any case, happiness is different from pleasure. Happiness of sight is different from the pleasure of sight.

Something may give pleasure to the eye, but as it may involve a loss to the eye, it cannot be considered happiness. Unlike pleasure, when we attribute happiness to anything, whether it is to man, body or spirit or an organ, we must not ignore its overall significance.

Stages of Happiness

Pain and pleasure, which are the main bases of adversity and happiness, respectively, have stages. Their impact differs from individual to individual. Individual differences in feeling pleasure, or perceiving it, are evident not only in physiological satisfaction and enjoyment, but in intellectual, aesthetic and religious perceptions. Human beings are created with naturally different capabilities and talents. Accordingly, the degree and stages of happiness are different, and individuals do not attain the same level of happiness. Moreover, external factors which give activity to talents or check pains and sufferings are not equal for all people. So, happiness which depends on these factors will be different. Happiness is an overall attainment.

This overall attainment may take place in a perfect manner and to its utmost limit or it may be otherwise. For this reason there appear stages and degrees of happiness.

What we have explained so far shows that happiness is wholly dependent on the motion and evolutionary course and human attainment of perfections for which he has potentiality. So happiness is related to perfection, but motion and movement are not in themselves perfection but the means of attaining perfection, that is happiness. Happiness and perfection are of the same order.

Now we can approach a higher meaning of happiness, and consider happiness and essence as fellow-riders. Each creature in proportion to his capacity for development enjoys happiness. This capacity for development is proportionate to his proximity to the descending or ascending curve to the everlasting source and origin of existence, and human beings benefit from happiness in proportion to their proximity to this origin, and suffer from adversity in proportion to their remoteness from it. The ability of man for attaining happiness with all its various manifestations consists of his ability to attain Divine proximity.

Factors of Happiness

One of the important topics especially from a practical point of view are the factors of happiness.

There are a number of questions here, such as those which follow:

- 1) Do factors which make man really happy exist at all, or is happiness only a dream and fancy? Are pain and suffering and adversity and their causes the only things that are created in this world? A great number of ancient and modern philosophers of the world who have adopted cynicism, think so. Obviously this way of thinking is by no means in harmony with divine philosophy, and no such people can be found among theological philosophers, while material philosophy has produced a great many such people. But this is not a place to discuss this point.
- 2) Is the factor of happiness only one thing which must be found, or does it depend on several factors?
- 3) Is that factor (or factors) inherent in human existence itself or in the external world where it should be

secured? Or is one part of the factors internal and another part external?

If all those factors or some of them are inherent in human nature, are they in his body and in his physical powers, or in his spirit and spiritual powers? Or are some parts in his body, and some in his spirit?

These are among numerous questions which lend themselves to discussion, and about which much has been said, and briefly all of them ask: "Where is the source of happiness?"

As we know, some have claimed that happiness must be sought within oneself. Most of these thinkers consider happiness freedom from pains, and believe that contamination with the external world produces pains and sufferings, and the more one frees oneself from the external world, and severs one's relation with it, the more one benefits from happiness, which is nothing but deliverance from pain.

In Indian philosophy and mysticism and Buddha's thoughts, as well as in the philosophy of Greek cynical philosophers the most famous of whom is Diogenes, and in the teachings of Manes and his followers we come across such ideas.

Unfortunately this way of thinking which is the product of philosophical cynicism and quite contrary to Islamic monotheism has, as a result of association with and propagation of the ideas of nations accustomed to them become prevalent among the Muslims under the name of asceticism, piety, renunciation of the world or even Sufism, and take such a root that it is supposed to be an Islamic necessity by some ignorant people.

Another group considers the source of happiness to be the external world, and say that man is a part of the world, and is influenced by its forces, and it is for this reason that he continues to live and enjoy its pleasures – what man possesses of his own is poverty and need. Pleasure is produced by a kind of nervous susceptibility and reaction against some material actors, such as the reaction produced by optic nerves at seeing, or those of the mouth, tongue and digestive organs at contact with food, or the sense of touch at the mutual touch of a man and woman. The only thing that can be said to be produced internally in a human being is pain and suffering caused by insufficiency of food or other deficiencies.

In the opinion of this group, happiness depends wholly on external factors, but adversity may have an internal cause produced by the shortage of material necessities, or it may have an external cause, such as the pain one suffers at being beaten or imprisoned or by the usurpation of his rights. That is what materialists believe about the factors of happiness.

There is a third view, and that is that a belief in thinking happiness to be only due to internal or external factors is an exaggeration. Man is built so that he cannot do without external factors and attain perfection and happiness without their aid (or in philosophical terminology, man is not independent of the essence and its interior¹). Nor is he so subsidiary and parasitical that all his joys should be provided from without. In his spiritual interior a man has centres of pleasure which, if he can exploit, are much richer and greater than material centres. It should be wrong to assume that pleasure is solely produced by material

nervous reactions. There may be pleasures which have no external or nervous root, and no connection with external material factors either.

Here we cannot refute or accept this claim or give reasons, but spiritual scholars hold this view. Great Gnostics have tried to introduce such pleasures, and to consider material pleasures as trifling compared with them. In their opinion, man is such an original creature that he is able to make himself a centre of pleasure and a boundless sea of happiness.

Mowlavi in introducing this centre and hinting that the external sources of pleasure are trifling and nothing against this great fountain-head and ocean of the interior, addresses him who seeks pleasure in wine and drinking, and says:

"What do you wish to make of self with all that sea?
What non-existence do you seek with all that existence?
You are happy and good and a mine of every joy, Why do you, then, beg favor of wine?
What is wine, or coition or music, From which you seek joy and benefit?
Are you seeking knowledge from unworthy books?
Are you seeking taste from the sweetmeat of bran? Man is the essence and the world a form,
All are shadow and subsidiary, but you the purpose.
When did the sun beg a particle for a loan?
When did Venus beg a vat for a cup?
You are a soul without joy, imprisoned by inebriation,
And a sun jailed by perplexity; what a pity!"

Most of the learned men of the world consider happiness related to both internal and external factors, though there is a great difference of opinion concerning the degree of the value and influence of the factors.

Aristotle has divided these factors into three kinds: external, physical and spiritual. each of which has been limited to three subsidiary factors:

1 – External factors: Wealth, rank, family and tribe.

2 – Physical factors: Health, strength, beauty.

3 – Spiritual factors: Wisdom, justice. courage.

Obviously the factors of happiness cannot be confined to the above ones, and in each of the three factors, other factors may be mentioned such as the social environment suitable for progress, freedom, security, favorable natural and geographical conditions, fine race, children, worthy consort, sincere friends all of which are external factors; then there are a good voice, work, good deeds which are physical factors; and lastly there are faith, noble sentiments, mental health, a strong will, artistic and

technical talents etc.. which are spiritual factors.

There are some factors common between the body and spirit, such as worship, and some, like books, which are common to all the three main factors.

An Overview of a Series of Discussions

There are a number of other topics, which will not be discussed here to avoid lengthy explanation, such as the value and degree of the influence factors, namely which one is of the first rank and which one is of the second rank; in other words, the percentage of each: one percent, ten percent, or more?

Another point is, which factor is basic for happiness which cannot be done without, and which one is not basic, which may add to the perfection of happiness, yet its absence does not change happiness into adversity?

Still another point is, which of these factors are direct and which indirect, that is factor of factors?

Furthermore, are these factors changeable or constant? Is something which has at one time been a factor of happiness for men, has always been and will always be so, or is it possible for it to be a factor of happiness in one era or period, and in another era a factor of adversity?

Is it possible to have a comprehensive plan of happiness for man, even through revelation and prophethood, to be adequate for all times? Or is this fundamentally impossible? Those who are against religion have offered this argument and have claimed that, in the past, religions have been the factors of the happiness and progress of mankind, but in the present era, unlike the past, they have been factors of misfortune, retardation and decadence. This topic is worthy of attention and investigation from the view point of Islam, especially as a last religion the injunctions of which are offered for all times.

There is no doubt that some factors of happiness are changeable, in the same way that some others are constant. But a criterion must be found to see which is changeable and which constant. Can it be said that direct factors are constant, and indirect ones changeable and that the laws of happiness, in so far as they are related to direct factors, are unchangeable and when they are related to determining factors, they are changeable? If we wished to continue this discussion in connection with Islamic rules, we would have a long chapter before us.

Another question is whether happiness is absolute or relative. Is something which creates happiness exactly the same for all individuals, all nations, every zone and every race, or must they be different for individuals or at least for nations, zones and races due to differences in their ways of thinking, habits and bodily and mental structures?

Is it possible to have one single law for the entire world, all individuals, all nations and zones equally productive of happiness or not? This subject too is extraordinarily noteworthy in its application to Islamic

rules.

These are the topics for which we are compelled to offer only a panorama; otherwise a book will hardly be adequate to do justice to them.

Does Man Need Guidance to Attain Happiness?

If happiness consisted only of pleasure, and adversity of pain, and if both pains and pleasures were confined to limited physical pains and pleasures within the bounds that an animal has of which it is instinctively aware parallel with its natural and bodily growth, there would be no need for guidance. Again, if human needs were limited to at least what he himself could understand through his intelligence and knowledge and thus obtain a panorama of his happiness and distinguish it, it would be enough for him to follow his way gradually through knowledge, technique, development of civilisation and collaboration.

But happiness is not only a question of instinctive pains and pleasures. Neither is it a number of noticeable needs such as illnesses or insecurities which might allow us to say that man will eventually, by his endeavour, find the way of safety and secure the means of happiness. The needs are not limited to one or two.

The most obscure fact for man is man himself and his inherent talents and potential abilities. With all the great progress man has made in Science and industry, and in spite of all the discoveries made in the world of the solid, plants and living creatures, man is still an unknown quantity.

Mankind is now able to agree on the physical constitution of an atom and on the nature of outer space. Views on problems concerning the atom or outer space are identical everywhere, including in the Soviet Union and the United States. However there is no agreement as yet on the question of what constitutes happiness and the way man should choose to attain perfect happiness. The differences that existed in the minds of the scholars and philosophers twenty-five centuries ago on such questions still exist why?

Because the interior of the atom has been recognized, but man is still unknown. Preparing a plan for human happiness depends on the recognition of all the talents, capacities and accomplishments of man and his evolutionary process, all of which lead to infinity. Is happiness anything but the blossoming of all talents, and filling up of all capacities and activity of all powers and following the direct way which takes man to the highest peaks of existence?

On the other hand, can it be agreed that if such a great need exists, the lack of fulfillment of which would cause perplexity or even the destruction of mankind, would the great and regular system of Creation which always exhibits its master pieces in the way of needs, accept such a vacuum, and ignore this need, and refuse to guide mankind from the horizon which is beyond human foresight, that is, the horizon of revelation, through chaste and well-prepared individuals, for spiritual enlightenment?

Avicenna says at the end of his book An-Nejat (Salvation):

"The need of mankind for a man who can guide it with supernatural aid is much greater for human survival than that of eyelashes created for the eyelids, or eyebrows for the eyes, or for the hollows on the sole of the feet or similar other things which are in themselves useful, but do not represent any special or urgent necessity for their creation."

Source URL: <https://www.al-islam.org/islamic-unity-and-happiness-murtadha-mutahhari#comment-0>

Links

- [1] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/murtadha-mutahhari>
- [2] <https://www.al-islam.org/organization/bethat-islamic-research-centre-birc-qom-iran>
- [3] <https://www.al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/41731>
- [4] <https://www.al-islam.org/printepub/book/export/html/41731>
- [5] <https://www.al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/41731>
- [6] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/dr-alaedin-pazargadi>
- [7] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/islamic-unity>