

### Man: God's Supreme Creature Yet So Weak???

Is man, in his pristine nature, a weak or a powerful creature? How does he compare in strength with other creatures? Let us examine this subject in the light of the Holy Qur'an and tradition.

Man may boast for success in penetrating the outer space and land on the moon. He may claim big strides in technological and scientific advancement. In trading circle, one may boast in having offloaded containers after containers of goods irrespective of the dubious ways and unfairness to others. Yet in the course of his egoistic and arrogant thinking, he does not realise his inherent weakness.

The Holy Qur'an has declared this fact in no unclear terms when in Sura Al Nisa v.28, Allah (SWT) says:

"Allah desires that He should make light your burdens, and man is created weak"

Modern science may have enabled man to invent sophisticated and amazing automatic and supersonic machines. Yet man's weakness is apparent in the fact that he has failed to put into form and provide life to even a tiny creature like mosquito. In this respect, the challenging words of Ali b. Abi Talib A.S in Nahjul Balagha are worth noting wherein he says:

"Even if all the animals of the earth, whether birds or beasts, stabled cattle or pasturing ones, of different origins or species, dull people and sagacious men..., all jointly try to create (even) a mosquito, they are not able to bring it into being and do not understand what is the way to its creation.... Their powers fall short and fail and return disappointed and tired, knowing that they are defeated and admitting their inability to produce it, also realizing that they are too weak (even) to destroy it."

#### **Man's Comparison With An Ant**

Big animals like elephant, rhino or lion are well known for their ferocious strength. Let us consider an ant, one of the tiny and small creatures of Allah (SWT). It is mentioned that it can lift more than twice its own weight whereas man can hardly do more than his personal body weight. It can also withstand the blow of a strong wind without being swept away.

Ant is an instinctively intelligent and aware creature. During warm days, it collects and stores grain inside the ground holes. It knows very well that during wet and cold months, it would not be able to go out to search for food. For fear that grain collected may sprout because of wetness around, it splits it into two or more pieces. At times, during moonless nights, it brings it out of its underground stores for drying and preservation against decay. The holes underground are made with such care as to prevent rainwater for getting into them.

By nature, ant is not a selfish creature. Whenever it finds some store of food grains, it runs up to its group and guides its fellow-ants to that place. It shows everyone of them its own find of the store. They work in full cooperation of one another. But comparatively how weak is man who is unable to subdue his selfish interests and quest for personal glory to work for common good. How shamefully weaker is man who exploits fellow human beings.

Once Palestine was overtaken with a major famine. In order to pray for rains, Prophet Sulaiman came out with his people and assembled in an open place in the desert. Suddenly he saw an ant standing on its two legs, raising its hands towards the sky and uttering these words:

“Oh Allah (SWT)! We are very tiny among all Thy creatures. We cannot survive without Thy grace. Please bestow upon us Thy sustenance and do not punish us because of the sins of human beings. Please send down the rains so that trees can grow, farms become green and grain become available and we have our food to eat.”

Prophet Sulaiman, who was divinely endowed with understanding of the language of all animals, on hearing the foregoing words told his people:

“Let us go home, the prayer of this ant is sought”

It then rained heavily and all the land became green and productive.

If a tiny creature like an ant through sincere prayer can attract rains from the sky, how weak is man comparatively when he forgets his Lord and lacks faith in raising his hands in prayer.

Thus the life of an ant, that small creature, is a profound lesson to mankind if only man were to observe and ponder upon. Sura Naml (The Ant) in the Holy Qur’an is a chapter named after this tiny creature for mankind to draw lesson from. And 1400 years ago, Ali b. Abi Talib (a.s) was on the pulpit of Kufa delivering a sermon when he said:

“Look at the ant with its small body and delicate form. It can hardly be seen in the corner of the eye, nor by the perception of the imagination, how it moves on the earth and leaps at its livelihood. It carries the grain to its hole and deposits it in its place of stay. It collects during the summer for its winter, and during strength for the period of its weakness.

Its livelihood guaranteed, and it is fed according to fitness. Allah (SWT), the Kind, does not forget it and does not deprive it, even though it may be in dry stone or fixed rocks.”  
(Nahjul Balagha saying 184)

The foregoing words of Ali b. Abi Talib (a.s) provides us with profound food for thought. If a tiny ant is not denied its sustenance, how come man displays his weakness in doubting the ability of Allah (SWT) to provide him with needed sustenance? Why does man need to find dubious and exploitative means for earning his livelihood?

Man’s inmate weakness is lucidly described by Ali b. Abi Talib in his following words:

“How wretched the son of Adam (man) is. His death is hidden, his ailments are concealed, his actions are preserved, the bite of a bed-bug pains him, choking causes his death and and sweat gives him a bad smell” (Nahjul Balagha sermon 42). How true it is that man is unable to foresee his forthcoming calamities and check them. How unknown to him is his ultimate death that

when and where it is to make him totally motionless. And how his minor illnesses not responding to treatment make him so upset as to run from one doctor to another.

Thus is man so weak yet unaware and negligent.