
Why do we believe in God? An Analysis of the Motives of the Believing Behaviour in Human Beings

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the motives of the human believing behaviour. The author postulates that to believe in God is natural and not to believe is a deviation from the true and pure human nature. This fact has, also, been admitted by many philosophers, psychologists and geneticists. A brief debate with reference to philosophy, anthropology, psychology and genetics has been presented to have a review the opinions of some eminent philosophers, psychologists and anthropologists about the believing behavior of the human nature. The traces of the religiosity of the primitive tribes without exception are a further evidence for the said fact. Some evidences have been presented from history and also from the examples of some living primitive tribes of Australia and Africa to accentuate the stance that to believe in God is a natural, innate, instinctual motive in the human nature. Author also quotes certain verses from the Qur'an to confirm the conformity of the historical, philosophical, psychological and genetical facts and findings with the Qur'anic stance about the believing behaviour of the human nature.

The motives behind human behaviour in believing God are counted by the author as: rationality, anxiousness for God and the Life hereafter, Love of God, Affiliation with the native culture, Influence and Inspiration, Religion: A Remedy or Solution and Preaching in Terms of addresses.

Keywords: Motive, Anxiousness, Genetics, Meme, Sufism, Affiliation, Inspiration, Remedy

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Introduction:

To believe in God is an undeniable tendency of human nature. The author having debated this fact through philosophy, psychology, genetics and history, tried to determine that in what ways this natural tendency to believe in God works. It is observed that anxiousness or consciousness of God, love of God, affiliation with native culture and environment, inspiration and influence of the characters of the preachers and nobility of their birth and origin, the influence of power, religion as a remedy for certain problems, and address of preachers in terms and norms of their addressees are some of the most prominent factors, which motivate human beings to believe in God. This motivational study of the believing behaviour of human beings is then examined in the light of the Holy Qur'an and supported by the historical facts.

Is to Believe Natural or not?

Sigmund Freud, though, does not believe in God, admits that to believe is natural and instinctual:

"Religion is an illusion and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls in with our instinctual desires".¹

"We shall tell ourselves that it would be very nice if there were a God who created the world and was a benevolent Providence, and if there were a moral order in the universe and an after-life; but it is a very striking fact that all this is exactly as we are bound to wish it to be."²

Where does this believe come from? To Freud, man conceives his idea of God and religion from his inspiration from his parents, initially from his mother and then, from his father:

In this function (of believing in God) the mother is soon replaced by the stronger father, who retains that position for the rest of childhood. But the child's attitude to its father is coloured by a peculiar ambivalence. The father himself constitutes a danger to the child, perhaps because of its earlier relation to its mother. Thus, it fears him no

less than it longs for him and admires him. The indications of this ambivalence in the attitude to the father are deeply imprinted in every religion... When the growing individual finds that he is destined to remain a child forever, that he can never do without protection against strange superior powers, he lends those powers the features belonging to the figure of his father; he creates for himself the gods whom he dreads, whom he seeks to propitiate, and whom he nevertheless entrusts with his own protection. Thus his longing for a father is a motive identical with his need for protection against the consequences of his human weakness. The defense against childish helplessness is what lends its characteristic features to the adult's reaction to the helplessness which he has to acknowledge - a reaction which is precisely the formation of religion³

Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo⁴ says the wish or need of God is natural and unavoidable, he writes:

The fact that man wishes God to exist has, after all, no bearing at all on the question whether He really exists or not. He may quite well exist, and simultaneously man may have a great need for His existence. The creation of the utter dependence of a child of his loving parents may very well have been the way through which God built the foundation for man's capacity to believe and trust in Him.”⁵

H.C. Rumuk, in his book, “*The psychology of Unbelief: Character and Temperament in relation to Unbelief*, writes (in the words of Heije Faber)⁶:

Religion is part of the normal structure of human life. But during the years when he is coming to maturity, man can be led astray by a great variety of hindrances in his development and he can thus fall victim to unbelief. Often, it is a question of disturbances, which take place in the unconscious.⁷

So, we can say that it makes us sure that the human nature is prone to believe. His nature wishes for a God. However, to Freud,

wish for God is, otherwise, a human weakness, but to Rumuk, and to Cardozo, wish to believe in God is not only natural to man, but also necessary for the smooth human development, while not to believe is a deviation, due to certain external factors, hence an unnatural phenomenon. It implies that if a man is left, uninfluenced in the matter of believing or not believing in the divinity during the development of his life, he will incline to believe in divinity and transcendental values.

The renowned psychiatrist and atheist Anderson Thomson⁸ (born 1926) and his colleague Clare Aukofer, in their book, *Why We Believe in god(s)*, forward the theory of evolution in terms of genetics to establish that the inclination and propensity that humans demonstrate to believe in transcendental and metaphysical values and ideas are the result of genetic inheritance from their ancestors, who first developed such ideas to 'fill in the blanks of the life' and to fulfill the requirement of their emotional and physical needs. In other words, when human beings could not find the answers to the natural phenomena of their life and of the wonderful world around them, they solved the problem by conceiving the idea that a God or gods could have created all these. Also, they found themselves helpless and humble before natural forces. They felt need of someone who could protect them from the unbridled forces of nature, so they conceived a Being or beings, who had the powers to help them against these forces. Then, the developments of such ideas in human minds transmitted to next generation through the process of thousands of years. This process of genetic evolution in attitude of believing gave the human beings a ready-made propensity to believe in the values transcendental. In this way, to believe in God became natural.

Anderson supports his postulation with some evidences. For example, He says that children all over the world have such a fear that some apparition would come out from under the bed. The universality of this fear makes us believe that this fear has come to us through genes, because human ancestors who would sleep in trees

had the fear of animals beneath them, that animals might climb up to attack them (cf.).⁹

This is what Richard Dawkins¹⁰ (born March 26, 1941) explains through the concept of ‘*meme*’¹¹, which states that cultural values, ideas, habitual attitude, etc., had been imitated for long and then transmitted through genes or memes, and then they become genetic behaviour.

The author disagrees with the speculation of this postulation about the conceiving of the idea of God to ‘fill in the blanks of life’, though this can partially be true in many cases where sound religious knowledge has not been available to people. But God has numerous evidences of His existences in the universe and the divine scriptures, especially the Holy Qur’an. However, this is another debate, which is out of scope of this paper. The point is that genetics too, admits the propensity of human nature of believing in God. This implies that atheism is a deviation from this genetic behaviour of believing.

To believe in transcendental values is natural. This postulation can further be asserted by another known fact that the earliest traces of human existence are never found without the ideas regarding religion and religious liturgy. The earliest communities were priest-head communities. Such kinds of tribes with the same primitive traits are still found in the far flung forests of Australia and Africa who are un-contacted from the rest of the world. They did not seem to receive any education from any outer source, yet they do have their beliefs in transcendental values. They bury their dead and say prayers. Their liturgies show they have faith in the life after death. The idea of life after death has been found in all primitive tribes.

Living primitive tribes of Australian Aborigines and Masai of Africa believe in one God, the Creator. He is neither male nor female, they name him Ngai,¹² whereas, Australian Aborigines believe in many gods.¹³ The point is that neither of the tribes is without belief, nor were the ancient primitive tribes; their ruins

provide the evidences of their temples and deities, which confirms our assertion.

We learn from the Holy Qur'an that the natural tendency of human beings to believe in God was inculcated in their nature with their very existence:

﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَن تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا أَوْ نَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ۗ وَعَنفَلِينَ ۗ أَلَمْ نَكُنْ بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ﴾¹⁴

And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." [This] lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware." Or [lest] you say, "It was only that our fathers associated [others in worship] with Allah before, and we were but descendants after them. Then would You destroy us for what the falsifiers have done?"

The renowned exegete al-Bedawi¹⁵ (died. 1292), in his classical exegesis *Anwar'al-Tanzil wa Asrar'al-Tawil* interpreting the above-mentioned Qur'anic verse, writes:

ونصب لهم دلائل ربوبيته وركب في عقولهم ما يدعوهم إلى الإقرار بها حتى صاروا بمنزلة من قيل لهم فنزل تمكينهم من العلم بها وتمكينهم منه بمنزلة الإشهاد والإعتراف على طريقة التمثيل¹⁶

"Evidences of God's providence have been established before them (the human beings) and installed in their intellect, which invite them to the admittance of God, so much so that these evidences became as if they are told to them. The consolidation of this knowledge is as if they were held witness to it and they profess it, this all is described allegorically."

In a contemporary exegesis of the Holy Qur'an, Fi zilal '1-Qur'an, Seyyed Qutb (1906-1966) writes:

على أن هناك تفسيراً لهذا النص بأن هذا العهد الذي أخذه الله على
فقد أنشأهم مفضولين على الإعراف له. ذرية بني آدم هو عهد الفطرة
بالربوبية وحده. أودع هذا فطرتهم فهي تنشأ عليه، حتى تنحرف عنه
بفعل فاعل يفسد سواها، ويميل بها عن فطرته¹⁷

“One interpretation of this statement suggests that the pledge God has taken from the offspring of Adam’s children relates to their nature. He has established in their nature the tendency to acknowledge His Lordship as the only God in the universe. They grow up with this tendency until they deviate as a result of external factors of one sort or another.

This is what the nature is:

﴿فَطَرَتَ اللَّهُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا يَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ﴾¹⁸

...in accordance with the natural disposition which God has instilled into man: [for] not to allow any change to corrupt what God has thus created...

That is why, the first human and the first human community was monotheist:

﴿كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً﴾¹⁹

Mankind was [of] one religion [before their deviation]

Ibn Kathir writes:

عن ابن عباس، قال: كان بين نوح وآدم عشرة... قال ابن جرير:
قرون، كلهم على شريعة من الحق، فاختلفوا، فبعث الله النبيين مبشرين
ومنذرين²⁰

Ibn e Jarir writes on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas that between Adam and Noah there passed ten centuries; all the people were on the religion of Islam (submission to one God), then people began to differ from one another (and

worship of idols and other false gods started) then Allah sent the prophets giving good tidings to them and warning them (of God's scourge).

Since then, human beings have been transmitting this behaviour of believing through genes. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) says:

مَا مِنْ مَوْلُودٍ إِلَّا يُولَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ فَأَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهِ أَوْ يُنَصِّرَانِهِ أَوْ يُمَجِّسَانِهِ
كَمَا تُنْتَجُ الْبَهِيمَةُ بِبَهِيمَةٍ جَمْعَاءَ هَلْ تُحْسِنُونَ فِيهَا مِنْ جَدْعَاءَ²¹

Every child is born in nature, then his parents make him a Jew, or a Christian or a Magian as an animal delivers a perfect baby animal. Do you find it mutilated?"

The Qur'anic stance, to believe is natural and not to believe is unnatural, is evident from the very word "Kufr". The literal meaning of Kufr as Imam Raghīb Isfahani depicts:

"The actual meaning of Kufr is to hide something. The night is called Kafir, because it hides everything. Similarly, the farmer is called Kafir since he hides seed in the ground."²²

It implies that Kafir (one who denies religion or God) is in fact hides or deviates from his true nature, which is, otherwise, prone to believe.

Motives of the Believing Behaviour

Rationality:

The fact is that man is incapable of knowing the reality. French Enlightenment writer, historian and philosopher, François-Marie Arouet Voltaire (1694-1778) says, "*Four thousand volumes of metaphysics will not teach us what the soul is.*"²³ Man can only understand a phenomenon but he cannot find or know reality in real. Thomas Reid²⁴ (1710-1796 CE) while concluding the skepticism of David Hume (1711-1776 CE) writes:

"...the author undertakes to prove two points: First, That all that is called human knowledge (meaning demonstrative

*knowledge) is only probability; and, secondly, that this probability, when duly examined, evanishes by degrees, and leaves at last no evidence at all: So that, in the issue, there is no ground to believe any one proportion rather than its contrary, and "all those are certainly fools who reason or believe anything."*²⁵

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970 CE) says, “*There can be nothing real, or at any rate nothing known to be real except minds and their thoughts and feelings*”.²⁶ It is not possible for human beings to verify the existence of God through direct empirical evidence and also the truth of religion, yet, a believer does have good reasons to believe in God and religion. This believing attitude with reasoning is epitomized in the anecdote of ‘the believing man’ of the Qur’an. The Qur’an tells that a man from the family of Pharaoh or from royalty, secretly accepted Moses’ invitation to the faith. However, he admitted that he did not have direct knowledge to verify whether Moses is true or not; but he believed him for the reasons Moses came up with, i.e., Moses’ miracles and convincing arguments in favour of the oneness of the creator:

﴿ وَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَكْتُمُ إِيمَانَهُ أَتَقْتُلُونَ رَجُلًا أَنْ يَقُولَ رَبِّيَ اللَّهُ وَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَإِنْ يَكُ كَذِبًا فَعَلَيْهِ كَذِبُهُ، وَإِنْ يَكُ صَادِقًا يُصِيبْكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي يَعِدُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ كَذَّابٌ ﴾²⁷

At that, a believing man of Pharaoh’s family, who [until then] had concealed his faith, exclaimed: "Would you slay a man because he says, ‘God is my Sustainer’ – seeing, withal, that he has brought you all evidence of this truth from your Sustainer? Now if he be a liar, his lie will fall back on him; but if he is a man of truth, something [of the punishment] whereof he warns you is bound to befall you: for, verily, God would not grace with His guidance one who has wasted his own self by lying [about Him].

We note that he put forward his argument with 'if'. It means he was not sure in terms that he knew the reality, yet he believes because there was no reason to deny, and there were many good reasons to believe. This rational attitude to attain or deduce faith has been certified by God.

Human knowledge can never claim to have attained all knowledge, therefore, man maintains that empirically not provable does not mean nonexistent.

﴿لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ﴾²⁸

No human vision can encompass Him.

The narcissistic demand to have empirical evidence for the transcendental value leads to disbelief:

﴿بَلِ أَدْرَاكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْهَا بَلْ هُمْ مِنْهَا عَمُونَ﴾²⁹

Nay, their knowledge of the life to come stops short of the truth: nay, they are [often] in doubt as to its reality: nay, they are blind to it.

Man believes because it is but religion that gives definite answers to the Basic Questions: The origin of man and the universe; the purpose of creation; the relation between creation and the Creator and about the life hereafter. These questions have kept the humanity perplexed since man became able to think. Man made out divergent philosophies while in his quest to find out the answers to these questions, but these answers are mere speculations. And when man failed to find satisfactory answers, he hid his embarrassment in the fold of atheism, agnosticism and skepticism. The American biologist, Cecil Boyce Hamann, has this to say:

Where the mysteries of digestion and assimilation were seen as evidence of Divine intervention, they now are explained in terms of chemical reactions, each reaction under the control of an enzyme. But does it rule God out of His universe? Who determined that these reactions should take place, and that they should be so exactly

controlled by the enzymes? One glance at a present-day chart of the various cyclic reactions and their interaction with each other rules out the possibility that this was just a chance relationship that happened to work. Perhaps here, more than any place else, man is learning that God works by principles that He established with the creation of life.³⁰

This rational attitude, which leads to believe, is described in the Qur'an as:

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي
الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي ۝۱۰
الَّذِينَ خَلَقُوا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا سُبْحَانَكَ قِنَاعًا عَذَابِ النَّارِ﴾³¹

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding. Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.

To disprove the existence of God is not possible, those who do, just speculate, and speculation has nothing to do with reality:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَطْلًا ۚ ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ﴾³²

AND [thus it is:] We have not created heaven and earth and all that is between them without meaning and purpose, as is the surmise of those who are bent on denying the truth: but then, woe from the fire [of hell] unto all who are bent on denying the truth!

﴿أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ﴾³³

Did you, then, think that We created you in mere idle play, and that you would not have to return to Us?"

Man believes because he can assess the intrinsic truth of the divine source of knowledge revealed through the Prophet (S.A.W), his teaching or the book of divine knowledge. The best example is of the Holy Qur'an, the only unalterable divine book on the face of the earth:

﴿أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا﴾³⁴

Will they not, then, try to understand this Qur'an? Had it issued from any but God, they would surely have found in it many an inner contradiction!

The more one ponder upon the Qur'an the more one is convinced of the truth of the Qur'an.

Anxiousness for God and the Life Hereafter:

The people concerned to find out real knowledge and secrets of life and this universe and are in search of answers to "The Basic Questions", are prone to believe. This consciousness or anxiousness is termed in the Qur'an as "Fear".

﴿إِنَّمَا نُنذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ الْغَيْبَ﴾³⁵

You can (usefully) warn only the one who follows the advice and fears the Raḥmān (the All-Merciful Allah) without seeing (Him). So give him the good news of forgiveness and of a noble reward.

﴿سَيَذَكَّرُ مَنِ يَخْشَى﴾³⁶

The one who fears (Allah) will observe the advice...

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ﴾³⁷

﴿أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ﴾³⁷

And who give whatever they [have to] give with their hearts trembling at the thought that unto their Sustainer they must return: it is they who vie with one another in doing good works, and it is they who outrun [all others] in attaining to them!

Obviously, one who bothers strives, and one who strives finds. The Bible says: “*The fear of the Lord teaches man wisdom.*”³⁸

Love of God

Man finds in his heart a natural love for his Creator, which leads him to believe in God. Such a natural, instinctual tendency of love is evident in the peoples of every culture and religion. The Bible says:

*“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”*³⁹

Human history past and present provides numerous examples of men, who forsake the pleasures of the world and the world itself, they get ready to sacrifice their lives and the most beloved belongings for the sake of God. For example, the Bhakti Yoga in Hinduism is an exclusive practice to demonstrate human love for God by surrendering oneself to God.

*[It] is a religious practice to attain Divine Being through devotional love.”*⁴⁰“*Bhakti means devotion to the Lord. One need only to surrender all doubts, fears and worries and express genuine love and devotion to the almighty Lord of the Universe.*”⁴¹

The Hindu religious book, Gita, teaches the divine love, “*Who fixes his mind and his reason on me and loves me; he is dear to me*”⁴²

The same goes for Christianity, in which asceticism was introduced to seek the pleasure of God:

﴿وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ﴾⁴³

But as for monastic asceticism – We did not enjoin it upon them: they invented it themselves out of a desire for God’s goodly acceptance.

The Holy Qur’an confirms this natural love of man for God:

﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّوهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ

ءَامَنُوا أَسَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ﴾⁴⁴

And yet there are people who choose to believe in beings that allegedly rival God, loving them as [only] God should be loved: whereas those who have attained to faith love God more than all else.

Mawlana Rumi (1207-1273)⁴⁵ says:

“O (God) lovers! The religion of the love of God is not found in Islam alone. In the realm of love, there is neither belief, nor unbelief.”⁴⁶

Affiliation with Native Culture and Tradition

Affiliation with one’s culture and traditions is the strongest influence on human beings to follow the tradition of faith whatever they have in their culture and tradition. Man believes in God because he is born to a believing culture or family. If he is born to a monotheist family and culture, he adopts it as it is. His affiliation with his culture or family and the inherited tradition of monotheism make him believe in one God, just like a polytheist or atheistic society or family, which makes one stick to polytheism or atheism. The only difference can be that in contrast to a polytheist or an atheist, a monotheist feels his nature and conscience in conformity with the inherited monotheism.

Influences and Inspiration:

Human history tells that certain religions spread on a large scale not because their addressees had investigated their intrinsic truth, but they got inspired to believe in them for various reasons.

a. Influence and Inspiration of Nobility

People get inspired by the persons of noble birth. It seems that observing this human tendency of inspiration, God chose his prophets from the noble birth. People loved to see them speak their language and dialect and talk their problems. This is what Caesar of Byzantine, Hercules, showed his understanding of the fact for the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) in his meeting with Abu Sufyan while inquiring after the Holy Prophet (S.A.W):

وَكَذَلِكَ الرُّسُلُ تُبْعَثُ فِي أَحْسَابِ قَوْمِهَا⁴⁷

“This is the case with the prophets; they are the descendants of the noblest among their people.”

We know no prophet who was not from the noble birth.

b. Influence and Inspiration of Character

The great religions of the world spread because the carriers of those particular religions demonstrated a sublime character, which inspired people to embrace their religion. For example, the sanctity of character, determination and endurance of the early Christians against severe persecution for their faith inspired people to believe in Christianity. Buddhism spread among the commoners due to the high morality, its preachers and followers had to adopt. Also, Islam spread by the higher ethical manners of the Muslim Arab, especially in the subcontinent where the Arab traders inspired the masses with their moral values and, later, the Muslim Sufis inspired the masses with the extraordinary sanctity of their character and ethics.

c. Influence and Inspiration of Power

Another inspiration for the masses comes from the demonstration of power. The famous maxim goes:

الناس على دين ملوكهم

People follow the way of their kings.

We note that Buddhism and Christianity had been facing very hard time when they were being preached by the poor preachers to the commoners. But as soon as the kings and emperors accepted these religions they became not only the state religions but also the masses rushed to embrace them.

“In the mid-third century BCE, for example, Buddhism spread throughout northern India as the result of the personal endorsement of King Ashoka.”⁴⁸

Christianity spread when Constantius II (337-361), Vales (364-378) and finally Theodosius I (347-395) accepted it as the state religion (cf.)⁴⁹.

For the same reason, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) wrote letters to the emperors of the Roman and Persian empires and to other kings and governors of his time inviting them to embrace Islam or they would be responsible for the Kufr of their people, because their people would follow them. In his letter to Hercules, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) wrote:

I invite you to embrace Islam so that you may live in security. If you come within the fold of Islam, Allah will give you double reward, but in case you turn your back upon it, then the burden of the sins of all your people shall fall on your shoulders.⁵⁰

It is historically evident that most of these kings and emperors did not bother the invitation of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W), nor did their masses, but when the companions of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) conquered these lands; the whole conquered lands fell into the fold of Islam without any coercion! This was because Islam was now in power and power inspires.

Religion: A Remedy or Solution

The slaves and people of humble origin and low strata of the society embraced Buddhism and Islam for the same reason. They found a salvation for their miseries and outlet from disgraceful status, the society had forced them to live in. One of the motives of the people of Madinah to embrace Islam and invite the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) to Madinah was that they wanted to ensure peace in Madinah after the long battle of Bu'ath between the tribes of Aws and al-khizraj. The Islamic teaching of equality and fraternity, well-practiced by the broad based Sufism, impressed the suppressed Hindu social classes of the lower strata, who were subject to disgrace by the Hindu caste system, and they embraced Islam in great numbers.

“Sufism in India has commonly been viewed as a secular attempt for the eternal quest of the soul for its direct experience of the ultimate Super Power. For centuries, the Hindus accepted Sufi shrines as symbol of communal harmony. A large number of them have been offering prayers in Sufi shrines without any reservation.”⁵¹

Preaching in the Terms of the Addressees

Another psychological motive to believe in God is that man is prone to listen and accept a message given in his own language and dialect and in terms of his own culture and norms. For example, Christianity spread to Greece and Rome, when it adopted the norms of their religion, which had the concept of mother goddess who gave birth to the god and the concept of triple deity.

There were several reasons for Christianity's eventual acceptance into Celtic society. One reason was the concept of the Christian Godhead being a Trinity, or three persons in one God. The fact that the Christian God took three separate forms, which were the Father (creator), Son (saviour), and Holy Spirit (sanctifier), was also a concept familiar to the Celts since their own deities took different forms depending on their functions.⁵²

And

The Church allowed pagan symbols of fertility, such as the egg and the rabbit, to represent the resurrection of Christ during Easter; these symbols had previously represented pagan gods (such as Osiris) rising from the dead. It is possible that many of the similarities between Christianity and the pagan religions were intentional, to help new converts identify with the religion. This aided greatly in the spread of Christianity.⁵³

Muslims preachers adopted Sufism in India, which had a parallel in the Indian mysticism and philosophical literature and way of life, for example, the concept of the unification of the Being (wahdat-ul-Wujud) and a mild asceticism similar to Sadhu or Yogi Way of Hinduism, appealed Hindus to accept Islam, because they had almost similar ideas in their religious system.

“A section of Sufis under Chistiyya order was not against adjustment with Hindu saints of Bhakti cult and used even Hindi language for Islamic devotional songs.”⁵⁴

CONCLUSIONS:

To believe in God is a natural and instinctual behaviour of human beings. Philosophy, history, psychology and genetics admit this fact. This is further confirmed by the religiosity of all the primitive tribes without exception. This natural inclination to faith works in many ways:

- Rational behaviour, which means that human intellect, finds no other satisfactory answer to the chain of cause and effect. He finds the ultimate cause, the first cause, God at the end of this chain. He finds the only answer to “The Basic Questions” is religion.
- Man believes in God due to his consciousness or anxiousness (Taqwa or fear) to find out about God and his relation with him and the life after death. This is the rational behaviour, which leads many to believe. Man studies the universe and

feels and understands the intrinsic truth of the divine scriptures, especially of the Qur'an, and gets convinced of God.

- There is a natural love in man for his creator and sustainer. The examples of this divine love are found in almost every religion and every society in the world for example, Bhakti, Sufism, etc.
- Man also shares some common grounds of believing and disbelieving, for example, affiliation with his culture and environment or his family tradition makes him believer or non-believer.
- Man believes in God when he gets inspired by the character, nobility and morality of the prophets or the preachers of a religion.
- The power factor influences man to believe if the believers or the religion comes into power. It is observed that influence of character and the nobility of preachers work on individuals, and the influence of power works on mass conversion. This phenomenon can be observed in the history of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.
- Man believes in a particular religion when he finds in it a remedy for his problems and miseries.
- Man inclines to believe an invitation to a faith when he hears it in its own language and dialect and finds it in correspondence with the cultural norms and ideas, he is familiar with. For this purpose, a Greek version of Christianity was introduced to Greek and Roman lands. And in the subcontinent, Islamic Sufism in correspondence to the sadhuism and Bhakti of Hinduism spread Islam in local terms, dialect and idiom; and it worked.

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