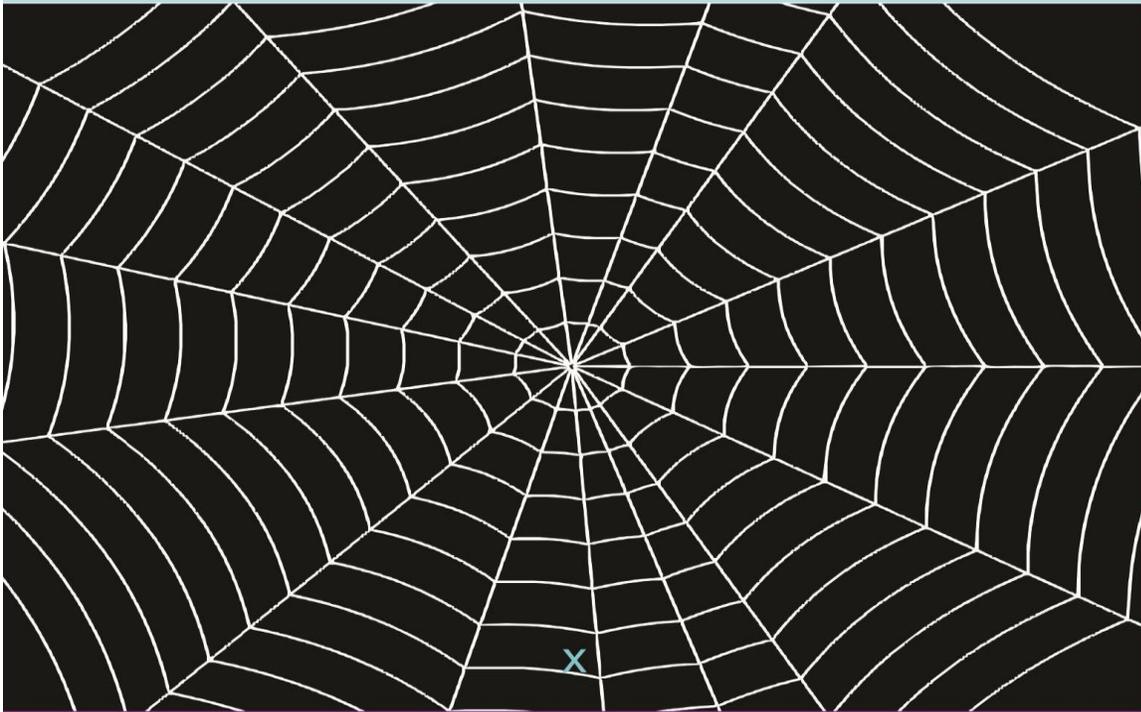


SHIFT IN ORIENTATION!



Mohammed Laminu Dangata

DEVELOPING A GENUINE SENSE OF PURPOSE!

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Mohammed Laminu Dangata is a Ghanaian and Salaga born and bred. He is a servant of Allah(swt), whose preoccupation is pursuing research into problems and challenges in Islam, with emphasis on Religious Sectarianism and Secularism.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all “Ansarullah” (Allah’s Helpers), particularly the Muslim “Shabbab,” the disciplined, humble, and enthusiastic Muslim youth, who are relentless in their efforts towards upholding and defending the long-established Islamic Values.

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Finally, I would appreciate further contributions in respect of this project. I am therefore contactable at the following: senseofislam@gmail.com.

INTRODUCTION

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL!!!

Any Guide to a Destination that falls short of a genuine sense of direction is, relatively speaking, a rotten plank of the latter boat.

There is no doubt that many a people are shrouded in darkness of ignorance or in self-induced blindfold of arrogance. They are of course plunged into various degrees of wrong-doings, ranging from such Unrighteous Deeds as injustice, malicious gossip, indecent exposure, dishonesty, and illegal sexual intercourse to Impious Practices like Soothsaying, Ancestral Sacrifice, Coptic Exorcism, Spiritual Healing, and Demonic Protection.

For this reason, the need for mankind to make complete but significant shifts in orientation from intellectual, spiritual, moral, and material Misguidance to intellectual, spiritual, moral, and material Guidance is imperative.

Changes in aims from what is religiously unrefined to what is religiously refined are in fact necessary for leading a well-regulated life-style, the hallmark of the True Believer.

Noticeable, meaningful moves not only in thoughts, but also in intentions, Faith, words, actions, and inaction from what is impious and unrighteous to what is pious and righteous are note-worthy, at least for the sake of completeness.

Definitive changes in focus from Misguided Beliefs, False Worship, and Immorality to Guided Beliefs, True Worship, and Religious Moral Values are the surest way of getting closer to Allah the Almighty.

Guidance is of the essence, for Allah the Exalted, out of His incalculable ocean of Love and Mercy, reveals this Favour, which humans, bereft of hope due to the Devil's uncompromising, aggressive stance or calculated deception, invariably stand in dire need of.

Indeed, children of Adam (pbuh) have had the privilege of being shown the Two Ways, of the uncorrupted spiritual soul being inspired to know and understand the differences between them, of sound, open mind being guided by clear conscience (angels whispering virtue through the intellect as opposed to the devils' whisper of evil), of the corrupted soul being guarded or protected by angels, and of it receiving Prophets and Revelations.

We need to avail ourselves of such remarkable Favour, needn't we?

CHAPTER 1

GUIDANCE IN PERSPECTIVE

It is an established fact that the uncorrupted spiritual soul was originally inspired to distinguish virtue from vice, a fact that depicts its understanding of the difference between the two. When corrupted, however, it was then shown the Two Ways, Right and Wrong, mercifully reinforced with angels as guards, guardians, or protectors, with Prophets and other rightly guided individuals, as well as Allah’s Revealed Books as an obvious, reliable Source of Guidance for those who are inclining towards Faith.

For this reason, humans, fully aware of this sense of limited free-will, cannot plead ignorance of their chosen ways and their consequences. Obviously, we can never ever say that we do not know anything at all about Allah’s chosen Way and its ultimate Destination, Paradise, and the Devil’s time-worn path and its Destination, Hell. It is categorically stated: “And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger (Muhammad—pbuh) after the right path has been shown clearly to him, and follows other than the believers’ way, We shall keep him in the path he has chosen, and burn him in Hell—what an evil destination! Q. 4:115 Moreover, “And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam...and made them testify as to themselves (saying): ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said: ‘Yes! We testify.’ Lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: ‘Verily, we have been unaware of this.’” Q. 7:172 (also see Q. 18:50)

1.1. DIRECT GUIDANCE

This is the Right Guidance, which is directly related to Allah the Exalted. It is Allah’s Guidance, which He, out of His infinite Wisdom, Love, and Mercy, has bestowed on His well-chosen Servants, particularly the Prophets and other pious persons, by opening their hearts to receive the Light of Faith.

Such flawless Favour, the everlasting, true Guidance, is either acquired at birth or earned through intellectual orientation, the intelligent thoughts and understanding of or direct, reflective observation on the Wisdom of Creation. The very “Kitabullah” has cast light on

Allah's matchless Guidance: "And some of their fathers and their progeny and their brethren, We chose them, and We guided them to a straight path. This is the Guidance of Allah with which He guides whosoever He wills of His slaves..." Q. 6:87-88 (also see Q. 93:7)

1.2. INDIRECT GUIDANCE

This is the Guidance of those who have already received Guidance. It is indirectly related to Allah because it is obtained through preaching, admonition, advice, exemplary life, et cetera. The Prophets and other righteous, pious individuals have been able to relay Guidance to those who have followed their footsteps by wholeheartedly listening to their voice of reason, admonition, or preaching; by accepting them completely and without doubt and then by acting accordingly. This fact is supported by the following Qur-anic Words: "They are those whom Allah had guided. So follow their guidance..." Q. 6:90

Indeed, it is indisputable that only those who are on Guidance can guide others, leading them from darkness of unawareness about religious values or from self-induced blindfold of pride to Light of Guidance. The Final Message has impliedly proclaimed: "...Had Allah guided us, we would have guided you..." Q. 14:21

This is a clear indication that through the guided, others have developed burning religious convictions that the Promise of Allah is absolutely true, consequently finding themselves on the Path of Guidance, with their hearts being guided to the Truth. In essence, they have been guided on account of Faith. The Guardian of Believers states: "...and whosoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart [to the true Faith with certainty..." Q. 64:11

1.3. THE THREE CATEGORIES OF MUSLIMS

All Muslims, irrespective of their individual or collective religious orientation, have been categorised into three main groups on the following bases: absolute lack of Faith, relatively inadequate Faith, and relatively absolute Faith. These are False Believers (Hypocrites in Faith), Ordinary (Weak) Believers, and True (Strong) Believers respectively.

To truly understand the logics of Guidance, we need to relate it to these three categories of Muslims, based on Faith, not forgetting Worship and Moral Values.

1.3.1. FALSE BELIEVERS (HYPOCRITES IN FAITH)

"They wish that you reject Faith, as they have rejected Faith, and thus you all become equal..." Q. 4:89

This category is representative of those who have broken Faith with their Lord by confusing Piety and Righteousness with Impiety and Unrighteousness. These advocates of pretense, the real enemies of Islam, not only bear Islamic names, pray, fast, give charity to the poor,

the needy, etc., but they simultaneously seek Demonic Protection by believing in and wearing talismanic rings, belts, smocks, bracelets, turbans, etc.; practise Soothsaying (Divination) by sand, calabash, and so on; offer neo-Ancestral Sacrifice by being commanded by “occult malams” to slaughter a black, red, or white, but not yellow, cow, ram, cock, cat, or pigeon in sacrifice to the devils (jinn) or pagan ancestors, according to the demand of the day; cast money, market, love, hatred, fame, curse, or divorce spells; produce events during sleep (nightmare/magic dream), with the aid of the devils (jinn); apply magic pomade or traditional, magic eyeliner (witches’ eyeliner); fly on animal skin, magic carpet, knot, or broom; practise Spiritual Healing or Coptic Exorcism; bury talismanic horns, hoes with beard, human statues, etc.; protect marriages by burying talismanic objects; tie magic string or chain round wooden or metal, cylindrical object made up of human rib, hair, etc. (a.k.a. “akadi” or “kobri”); “metamorphose” or turn into dogs, vultures, lizards, rats, peacocks, chameleons, eagles, snakes, tabby cats, I could go on ad infinitum.

From the foregoing available facts, it is quite obvious that the course which the double-sided have taken has diverged completely from their intended route, ultimately leading them to the Evil End, Hell. Instead of maintaining their stance by being on “Tariqa Jannah” (the Way to Paradise), they have made a dramatic U-turn, thereby joining “Tariqa Jahannam” (the Way to Hell).

These are Muslims in name, but not in reality. Indeed, their pretense of Faith, which more often than not translates into action by acting in accordance with the prescribed ways of Salat, Fasting, Pilgrimage, etc., can be seen in the following utterance of theirs: “And when they meet those who believe, they say: ‘We believe,’ but when they are alone with their Shayatin (devils...), they say: ‘Truly, we are with you; verily, we were but mocking’...” Q. 2:14-16

It is important to note that even if these “Hypocritical Kuffar” remain unrepentant, remorselessly persisting in ignorance or pride, the fact that they are still alive, they cannot be referred to as disbelievers. However, if they die as hypocrites, then they can be called as such.

Needless to say, because these deviants, the supposedly religious, remain unrepentant, they are certainly not on Guidance. Allah states: “Shaitan (Satan) has overpowered them. So he has made them forget the remembrance of Allah. They are the party of Shaitan (Satan). Verily, it is the party of Shaitan (Satan) that will be the losers!” Q. 58:19 And indeed, “...These are they who have purchased error for guidance, so their commerce was profitless. And they were not guided.” Q. 2:14-16

We must reiterate that repentance of sins, especially of disbelieving ones including hypocrisy and pride, is absolutely necessary, for without it such disbelieving Muslims will be automatically deprived of the Divine Mercy, in this World and in the Hereafter. The following Qur-anic Verses have pointed to this fact: Say: “O ‘Ibadi (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil...)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: verily, Allah forgives all sins...And turn in repentance and in obedience with true Faith (Islamic Monotheism) to your Lord and submit to Him...” Q. 39:53-54

Nonetheless, in the event that the disbelieving wrong-doer has tasted Faith before disbelieving and then persistently taken delight in committing disbelieving sins, they might have their door of repentance closed for eternity, let's bear it in mind. It is proclaimed: "Verily, those who disbelieved after their belief and then went on increasing in their disbelief, never will their repentance be accepted..." Q. 3:90; "Verily, those who believe, then disbelieve, then believe (again), and (again) disbelieve, and go on increasing in disbelief; Allah will not forgive them, nor guide them to the (Right) Way... Give the hypocrites the tidings that there is for them a painful torment." Q. 4:137-138

I suppose those who are willing to turn over a new leaf can now make a dramatic shift from this category to the next, can't they?

"Or do those whose hearts is a disease (of hypocrisy), think that Allah will not bring to light all their hidden ill-wills...Had We willed, We could have shown them to you...; but surely, you will know them by the tone of their speech!..." Q. 47:29-30

1.3.2. ORDINARY (WEAK) BELIEVERS

This group is, comparatively speaking, composed of Muslims who are of little Faith, ranging from 1% to 49%. These believing sinners, whose evil deeds outweigh their good deeds, usually confuse their Faith with non-disbelieving wrong-doings, the potential Faith reducers.

Such seeming minor sins, because they are committed persistently, eventually outnumber the virtuous deeds, rendering the weak Believer unable to escape from the temporal torment in the Hell Fire, according to the scales of deeds and balances of justice.

Fortunately, after having enough share of the hellish entertainment, such wrong-doers, because they possess at least an iota (1 %) of

Faith in their hearts, will, through the Intercession of The Prophet (pbuh), of angels, of other privileged Believers, and above all of Allah the Almighty, be removed from the Hell Fire, washed, and then taken to Paradise, their final Destination.

Clearly, without this intervention, the rescue for drowning Believers from the ocean of Fire, and Allah's Promised Mercy of forgiving them of their wrong-doings, they will certainly not enter Paradise. Thus on account of Faith and/or repentance, those believing sinners are duly qualified for such Salvage and Mercy as well.

Let's face it, although it is sometimes difficult to draw distinction between disbelieving and non-disbelieving sins, to safeguard our Religion and dignity, we must always err on the side of caution by avoiding them.

Ideally, in order not to enslave ourselves to unreasonable desires, we ought to strictly avoid,

suppress, or give up the following: lust, envy, lying, slander, mischief (“sharri”), plot (“maakirchi”), and persecution (“fitna”), but not “trial fitna” (“jarrabta”), as well as homosexuality, pornography, promiscuity, or prostitution.

Remember, “And Allah will never lead a people astray after He has guided them until He makes clear to them as to what they should avoid. Very, Allah is All-Knower of everything.” Q. 9:115

And remember, the most appropriate remedial action against following one’s base desires or animalistic passions is for one to first of all accept Guidance without disputing it, to repent of one’s sins with a sense of urgency and of guilt, and to seriously think, understand, and then act in ways that are consistent with the set patterns of Piety and Righteousness in Islam.

Well, if everything goes according to plan, the weak Believer will, without a shadow of a doubt, stand a sure chance of increasing their Faith and Guidance, thereby moving towards the core, the narrow confine of the True Believer. The Good Book informs: “The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a fear in their hearts and when His Verses (...Qur’an) are recited to them, they (i.e. the Verses) increase their Faith; and they put their trust in their Lord (Alone)...” Q. 8:2-4

I believe we can now make a significant shift from this group to the next, can’t we?

1.3.3. TRUE (STRONG) BELIEVERS

This category comprises the following: Believers whose good deeds outweigh their evil deeds, Believers whose good deeds are on a par with their bad deeds, and Believers who are sinless, so to speak.

The True Believer, the embodiment of love and mercy, always strives hard to please their Creator by not compromising their Spiritual and Moral Values for the sake of being accepted by or of receiving some worldly gains, benefits, or rewards, or of pleasing others besides Him. This is particularly true of the sinless Believers who, by virtue of their enduring sincerity and strictness, do not allow their religious duties such as Salat/Prayer, “Zikr,” and recitation of the Qur-an to be lowered, firmly not considering them less important than secular values or recreational activities like soccer; and they really don’t subjugate themselves to pagan traditions either. Such are they whom Allah is always pleased with.

It is interesting to note that those whose virtues equal their vices will be the last of the three groups of True Believers to set off for the Good End, Paradise. These are the “As-habul A’raf,” those on the elevated hall between Paradise and Hell.

We must say again that Believers in general are, on account of Faith and/or repentance, entitled to Allah’s Promised Mercy and, with that, they are said to have prepared for every eventuality.

Indeed, had we not been privileged to have the Divine Mercy bestowed on us on the basis of Faith, we wouldn't have even hoped to inherit Paradise, given our vulnerability to the Devil's uncompromising, aggressive stance or calculated deception. The Final Message has buttressed this point in the following Words: "The believers...Allah will have His Mercy on them. Surely, Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise." Q. 9:71

Truly, without Allah's Mercy, all humans would have followed a lost cause, becoming perpetual victims of ruination of sins. It is confirmed: "...And had it not for the Grace of Allah and His Mercy, not one of you would have been pure from sins..." Q. 24:21

CHAPTER 2

BELIEVERS' FRAME OF REFERENCE; THE HOLY QUR-AN

Kitabullah, the Book of Allah, is arguably the most reliable Source of Knowledge of Guidance. Its detailed explanations and plainness, as well as authenticity cannot be compared to even a much heralded literary work, let alone a rotten plank, a fact that greatly reflects its Divine Nature.

No doubt, the Qur'an is full of insightful explanations, pieces of advice, analysis, and logics that instill a sense of discipline in the Believer, especially the True Believer. They vividly explain their behavior, opinions, and decisions. In fact, the Dictates of the Qur-an are reflected in their religious, social, economic, or political life. The Qur--an is indeed a Book par excellence with Verses that are truly shown in its believing, not hypocritical, readers' Prayer, Fasting, "Remembrance of Allah," (Animal) Sacrifice, and Pilgrimage, as well as patience, justice, compassion, honesty, and decency, among others.

And so, it is incumbent on Believers to emulate the exemplary life of "Rassulul Amin," the Trustworthy Messenger, Muhammad (pbuh). We really have to try to be like The Prophet (pbuh), "Al-Amin" (the Trustworthy) --the very model of excellence. The very intellectual Base of the faithful connects: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad--pbuh) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day, and remember Allah much." Q. 33:21

It is no wonder that The Prophet (pbuh) typifies the embodiment of Piety and Righteousness.

2.1. THE HEALING PROPERTIES OF THE QUR-AN

Islam is a holistic way of life, and problems are part of our day by day existence; therefore, we must seek their solutions in social, religious context.

People usually starve for nourishment because they lack or have not enough of what helps them live, grow, and stay healthy. Similarly, some, if not most, people starve for intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and material nourishment in that they do not discipline their minds, hearts, souls, and other essential parts of their bodies, particularly the senses.

This suffering is often caused by ignorance or arrogance. Inadequacy or even lack of religious knowledge and understanding, or a sheer refusal to submit to Guidance after knowing its Truth is partly, if not wholly, responsible for such human deficiencies.

Rationally, because we are vulnerable to temptations or the devils' evil suggestions or promptings, hunger, poverty, etc., we should consciously rely on our Lord for Guidance on or remedial actions against such misfortunes or potential threats. The indispensable Source of healing, the Qur'an, substantiates: "...Say: 'It is for those who believe, a guide and a healing. And as for those who disbelieve, there is heaviness (deafness) in their ears, and it (the Qur'an) is blindness for them...'" Q. 41:44

2.1.1. THE INTELLECTUAL HEALING PROPERTY OF THE QUR-AN

As a source of Knowledge of Guidance, the Divine Message has broadened its reader's horizons, serving as the healing property on ignorance. By expanding the limits of their knowledge, the Qur'an has truly offered intellectual stimulation to the believing reader and moved them to action through logical explanations and analysis or reasonable arguments, thereby enhancing their religious understanding. Such improved religious understanding has, in turn, served as the healing property on religious misconceptions and intellectual arrogance.

To add force to our efforts towards acquiring religious Knowledge and enhancing our understanding, we must invoke Allah or supplicate to Him, using the following healing properties of the Qur'an on ignorance, fallacies of thinking, or misconceptions: "... and say: 'My Lord! Increase me in knowledge.'" Q. 20:114 Moreover, "My Lord! Bestow Hukm (religious knowledge, right judgement of the affairs...) on me, and join me with the righteous." Q. 26:83

2.1.2. THE SPIRITUAL HEALING PROPERTY OF THE QUR-AN

Allah's Statements are spiritually nourishing. The Dictates of the Book of Allah make the Believer's heart healthy and strong. Reciting, reading, or listening to the Verses of the Qur'an always softens their heart so that they can easily and unquestionably accept Guidance, thereby facilitating the healing process.

In effect, reciting, reading, or listening to the Dictates of the Final Message illuminates the heart of the believing reciter, reader, or listener, filling it with the Light of Faith. Ruhul-Quddus, the Holy Spirit, revealed: "Allah has sent down the Best Statement, a Book (...Qur'an)...The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver from it (when they recite it or hear

it). Then their skin and their heart soften to the remembrance of Allah. That is the guidance of Allah..." Q. 39:23

"Kitabullah" not only softens the Believer's heart but also strengthens it. Going by its Dictates usually reinforces the healing process. It helps the heart develop the necessary spiritual capacities to resist any form of disbelief or the urge to accept envy, hypocrisy, covetousness, arrogance, and so on.

Indeed, the Qur-an prepares the heart of the faithful servant for a spiritual warfare against the Devil's potential for arousing excessive desires in it, gradually making it evil-resistant.

For specific remedial actions, the following are some of the spiritual healing properties of the Qur-an on disbelief or spiritual deficiencies of the heart: (They say): "Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate (from the truth) after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from You. Truly, You are the Bestower." Q. 3:8 (also see Q. 3:193-194, Q. 23:97-98, and Q. 2:255, as well as Chapters 112, 123 and 114 of the Qur-an)

2.1.3. THE MORAL HEALING PROPERTY OF THE QUR-AN

Both intellectual and spiritual healing properties are necessary for moral healing. With a mind dominated by clear conscience and a heart filled with Faith, the True Muslim finds it extremely easy to internalise Islamic moral values and then externalise them, making them not only as an important, natural part of their life, but also as expressed words and actions/deeds.

Of course, the combined effort of Faith and clear conscience will facilitate the moral healing process if and only the Believer acts according to prescriptions—the Dictates of the Holy Qur-an.

The following supplications are some of the healing properties of the Book of Allah on moral wretchedness, wounds, illness, deficiencies, or decadence such as hatred, envy, illegal sexual intercourse, malicious gossip, and deceit: (They say): "Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate (from the truth) after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from You. Truly, You are the Bestower." Q. 3:8 (also refer to Q. 3:192-194)

2.1.4. THE MATERIAL HEALING PROPERTY OF THE QUR-AN

Islam is a holistic way of life. As a well-regulated life-style, it encompasses not only the Believer's intellectual, spiritual, or moral life, but also their material well-being. The True Faith of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad (peace be upon them) et al. places great importance on the Believer's basic needs like health, education, occupation, food, clothing, marriage, and shelter, which need to be met daily or from time to time throughout life.

So in order to enjoy the best provisions of the two Worlds, we must strictly adhere to the following healing properties of the Qur-an on Monasticism, Materialism, miserliness, or extravagance: “Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire.” Q. 2:201 (as opposed to Materialism--Q 2:200 and to Monasticism--Q 57:27)

Finally, it is encouraging to note that in utter darkness of ignorance of religious Principles, even those with eyes cannot see; so reasonably, with the Light of Guidance, we certainly don't have to blindfold ourselves, do we?

CHAPTER 3

SHIFT IN ORIENTATION

As with change, letting go of an old, bad way is a matter of absolute necessity. Completely shifting our thoughts from what is impious and unrighteous to what is pious and righteous is in fact a vital ingredient in change. Irreversible changes in aims from believing in and practising Soothsaying, Coptic Exorcism, and Spiritual Healing, as well as envy, pride, and lust to believing in and obeying Allah in “Istikharat” (Act of Seeking Allah’s Guidance), Divine Exorcism, and Faith Healing, not forgetting love, humility, and decency, among other things, are the way forward.

Giving up or avoiding evil in its entirety signals the beginning of an end, an essential element in change. With a remarkably noticeable ending, a new beginning can be launched and, with that, a complete, meaningful change is said to have taken place. Otherwise, there is no change.

Let’s not forget that shaking damaged, unusable furniture within the classroom without taking it out of it does not represent any change at all. Slightly moving these tables and chairs from side to side without actually taking them out of the classroom does not in any way make a difference. What really makes a difference, however, is their complete removal from the classroom, signaling the beginning of an end, followed by replacing them with new, usable ones, representing a new beginning, which, if sustained, will produce a distinct change.

Again, leaving the classroom empty during the transition is equally of no essence because there is no new beginning. And adding the brand new furniture to the already damaged ones will not yield the desired result, since there is no ending.

If so, then it stands to reason that any cursory glance at the present arrangement will reveal that the classroom is indeed in a state of disarray, a fact which shows that before launching a new beginning, an ending is always inevitable.

To fully understand the logic of our discussion, we have to put the various significant shifts into perspective by relating them to intellectual, spiritual, moral, and material types of orientation, vividly explaining them not only in abstract terms, but more importantly in

concrete terms, indicating the specific moves within each type of orientation and making fresh connections between the four types of orientation.

3.1. INTELLECTUAL ORIENTATION

“...Say: ‘Are those who know equal to those who know not? It is men of understanding who will remember.’” Q. 39:9

This orientation centres on knowledge and understanding, the barebones of Religion as a way of life. It is a complete, meaningful move from ignorance of Religious Values to Knowledge of Guidance. In particular, it refers to switching from the darkness of ignorance of the Divine Essence, of fallacies of thinking, or of theoretical possibilities to the Light of Knowledge of Guidance.

Actually, the Shari’a (Islamic Law) expands the horizons of the intellectually inclined, gradually broadening the limits of their knowledge. Again, it offers stimulation to them through logical explanations and analysis, which, if gone by, will enhance their religious understanding.

The intellectually oriented, guided by clear conscience and genuine sense of purpose, stand a clear chance of exploring the difference between the Truth and Falsehood. By frequently aiming at moving towards Islamic Teachings, they might develop a sense of direction, with the tendency to think, understand, and then behave in ways that are in agreement with the acceptable standards of behaviour in Islam.

The intellectual Base of the faithful has thrown light on the importance of this orientation with respect to people of Knowledge and understanding: “And that those who have been given knowledge may know that it (...Qur’an) is the truth from your Lord, so that they may believe therein, and their hearts may submit to it with humility. And verily, Allah is the Guide of those who believe, to a Straight Path.” Q. 22:54 Moreover, “...We have (indeed) explained in detail Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, etc.) for a people who know...We have explained in detail Our revelations (...Qur’an) for a people who understand.” Q. 6:97-98

Nevertheless, those who prefer ignorance, intellectual freedom, or arrogance to humility or Knowledge of Guidance are said to be lower than animals in intelligence, for such heedless individuals do not meet their thoughts, knowledge, understanding, or expectations with Guidance—the Divine Truth. It is connected: “And surely, We have created many of the jinn and mankind for Hell. They have hearts wherewith they understand not, and they have eyes wherewith the see not, and they have ears wherewith they hear not (the truth). They are like cattle, nay even more astray; those! They are the heedless ones.” Q. 7:179

The most important thing to remember is that it is knowledge of Faith (Religion) and with Faith (Belief), but not without it, that matters most. Thus the disbelievers’ including the False Believers’ knowledge is to no avail. What a lost cause!

A FACTUAL ACCOUNT OF INTELLCTUAL ORIENTATION: (PROPHET ABRAHAM'S ENCOUNTER)

The factual account of Prophet Abraham's encounter with his Lord, prefaced with his searching investigations, is an important historical background to Intellectual Orientation. The Messenger of Allah, Abraham (pbuh), being prompted by what his father, Azar, was worshipping, consciously began to search for a Supreme Being worthy of Worship. Realising that worshipping idols was no better than cultivating crops on stony ground, he first of all directed his searching gaze towards the evening star, tentatively attributing Lordship to it. But because he was open-minded, upon a second thought based on the disappearance of the star, the architect of the Holy Kabah reasonably concluded that that was certainly not his Creator.

Prophet Abraham (pbuh), the genius on Faith, was relentless in his effort. Indeed, his searching investigation continued when the moon was in full sight. Upon sighting it, he presumed that that was his object of search. When it however disappeared, he then came to the conclusion that the satellite of the earth was not his Maker.

He didn't stop there; he conducted a further searching investigation in the following morning, searchingly gazing at the sun. Being overwhelmed by its enormity, arguably the largest of the three heavenly bodies, the Trust-worthy Messenger of the Ever-Living Being could not help but conclude that the sun was indeed his Lord. Nonetheless, just when it set in the evening, he realised that his course diverged completely from his intended route, so he conclusively asserted that the sun was not his object of Worship.

As you would expect, he paused and orientated himself. That is to say, after much soul searching, he eventually came to the conclusion that it was the Brain behind the existence of the Heavens and the earth, including the stars, the moon, and the sun, not their own existence, that was his Lord.

At this significant juncture, he actually sought his Creator by intelligently connecting logic to Faith.

That was indeed a turning point in his life and in the history of mankind; he was shown the Kingdom of the Heavens and the earth. And upon seeing the Wonders of Allah, the hidden Divine Essence, he couldn't help but develop unshakeable Faith with Him, resulting in him being guided to the Right Path.

After having received Guidance, "Khalilullah" (Prophet Abraham--pbuh), the friend of Allah, was endowed with religious Knowledge and understanding, with which he enthusiastically but cautiously put his father right on polytheism, the belief in and worship of others besides the Creator, Allah. The Final Message corroborates: "O my father! Verily, there has come to me of the knowledge that which not came to you. So follow me, I will guide you to a Straight

Path...” Q.19:43-45

3.2. SPIRITUAL ORIENTATION

The intellectually, religiously inclined are, generally speaking, psychologically prepared to orientate themselves towards Islamic Spiritual Values, making fresh connections between logic and Faith, as well as between Faith and Worship. For instance, the Belief in Resurrection is not based on presumption, but it is backed by proofs. That is, sleep is illustrative of death, and wakefulness of Resurrection. This is without doubt a convincing evidence. What a logical example!

Obviously, such empirical proof of burning religious conviction that there is life after death is in fact a wake-up call to all professed freethinkers or materialists who strongly hold the belief that death is eternal sleep.

On a more serious level, to be spiritually uplifted, we need to completely shift focus towards establishing a harmonious Spiritual Relationship with Allah the Exalted by always moving towards understanding Faith and Worship, as well as the connections between them. This means that we should constantly aim at knowing the meaning of the usual Islamic Beliefs and their various manifestations, including Prayer, “Zikr,” and Fasting. (For details, see “Belief And Disbelief”—by the same author)

Having understood these Spiritual Values, our next logical step is to establish a link between Faith and Worship by intending to please our Creator. Of course, it is nothing but sincerity that bridges the gap between the two, rendering Acts of Worship, not forgetting Deeds of Righteousness, acceptable in the Sight of Allah.

Strictly speaking, in order not to undermine our efforts towards attaining spiritual fortification, we should be absolutely sure of having strong, refined, humble, and sincere hearts filled with Faith and therefore ready to commune with Allah.

To this end, we must strictly avoid or give up the following definite and specific Faith destroyers: Soothsaying, the practice of producing events during sleep (nightmare/magic dream), Spiritual Healing, Coptic Exorcism, and “human metamorphosis” (humans turning into tabby cats, etc.), not forgetting envy, hypocrisy, and pride.

It is heartening to note that the preceding Acts of Impiety and the like are occult. This is for the obvious reason that they are demon-inspired (the devil/jinn-inspired).

Thus certainly, believing in and acting according to such Magic and Sorcery related practices is a reason for absolute lack of Faith in the Merciful. The following Textual Evidence has left nothing to the imagination: “...Verily, We made the Shayatin (devils) Auliya (protectors and helpers) for those who believe not.” Q. 7:27

3.3. MORAL ORIENTATION

A good combination of Intellectual and Spiritual Orientation is necessary for boosting the emotional strength of the Believer, whose heart is, on account of Faith, guided by Allah the Almighty.

For one to be morally uplifted, one has to always accustom oneself to the acceptable standards of behaviour in Islam. One should, as a matter of religious obligation, aim at switching to understanding such Moral Values as love, compassion, justice, mercy, tolerance, honesty, and decency. Having known the meaning of these praise-worthy values, one then internalises them by absorbing them in one's life and then externalises them by expressing them in words and actions.

Let's not send a mixed message; we need to state clearly that the immoral Believer is a weak Believer, who, like a drowning person, is in dire need of something to hold on to in order to survive. At least, they have to be rescued with a sense of urgency. And at best, they need to prepare for every eventuality by conforming to Guidance.

So in pursuit of improved moral standards, we must always owe it a religious obligation to successfully capture the moral high ground by constantly aiming at competing for excellence in note-worthy Deeds of Righteousness like love (not lust), compassion, gentleness, decency, peace, mercy, and bashfulness, but not in craftiness, in amassing wealth, etc.

3.4. MATERIAL ORIENTATION

This type of orientation is a nice complement to the previous ones. Each forms an integral part of our every day existence. They complement each other. In essence, they go well together.

As earth-bound creatures, we have to fulfill our material needs by leading healthy and happy life. To achieve this, we should necessarily aim at living within the narrow confines of the True Believer's life in Religion.

The Shari'a enjoins us to seek Allah's Bounteous Provisions in a lawful manner and to utilise them judiciously. We are encouraged to make complete, irreversible shifts from being worse off materially to being well-established materially.

In Islam, Believers are, unless otherwise dictated by necessity, obliged to earn their livelihood from lawful trade, farming, teaching, and so on. In fact, the Divine Law usually instills a sense of social, economic responsibility in the adherents of the True Faith, a fact that depicts the seriousness of the Religion towards work. It is stated: "O you who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves unjustly except it be a trade amongst you, by mutual consent..." Q. 4:29 And indeed, "Then when the (Jumu'ah) Salat (Prayer) is ended, you may disperse through the land, and seek the Bounty of Allah (by working, etc.), and

remember Allah much: that you may be successful.” Q. 62:10

The Shari’a also recognises the human sexual urge and its influence on behaviour. It therefore allows the faithful to meet this essential need through marriage, but not premarital or extramarital relationships, homosexuality, pornography, sexy but insinuating movies or music or indecent exposure, exchanging handshakes and hugs between people of the opposite sex or between males and females who are not couples, lustful thoughts or glances, etc.

In fact, a believing man is permitted to marry one, two, three, or four believing woman/women, insofar as they are mentally, sexually, and economically able to satisfy the requirements of marriage.

Even if circumstances do not allow us to take delight in marital sex presently, we are still enjoined to resist the urge to indulge in such undignified acts. The Good Book casts light on the non-permissiveness of premarital, extramarital, or promiscuous relationships: “Verily, those who like that (the crime of) illegal sexual intercourse should be propagated among those who believe, they will have a painful torment in this world and in the Hereafter. Allah knows and you know not.” Q. 24:19 Moreover, “O you who believe! Follow not the footsteps of Shaitan (Satan). And whosoever follows the footsteps of Shaitan (Satan), then, verily, he commands Al-Fahsha [i.e. to commit indecency (illegal sexual intercourse)]...” Q. 24:21

I think by now we have averted our thoughts from pornography, promiscuity, obscene movies and music, and the like, haven’t we?

That is not all, but also, Believers are enjoined to seriously aim at fulfilling their health needs. Being conscious of their physical, mental, and emotional well-being, they switch to eating balanced diet, to doing regular exercise, to keeping their bodies, clothing and environment clean, to having enough sleep or rest, but not to drinking alcohol, smoking weed and cigarette, sniffing cocaine, eating pork, et cetera.

Indeed, a healthy mind is found in a healthy body; a sound heart truly thrives in a sound body; and an able body of the True Believer is compatible with a decent environment or a just and civilised society.

Well, according to the sources of the Shari’a (the Qur-an, Sunnah...), the well-to-do and the Muslim Community as a whole owe it an obligation to help the poor, the needy, and the wayfarer meet their material needs. Instead of investing in a confusing number of cattle, in a flashy, unproductive fleet of cars, in flamboyant buildings, and so on, they should enthusiastically but cautiously shift focus towards assisting the less fortunate ones in fulfilling their educational, occupational, health, accommodation, sexual, and other basic human needs.

In all truthfulness, we don’t have to allow greedy miserliness to supersede generosity. No one in the community should be deprived of the fundamental human needs such as clothing, housing, and food. What these less materially endowed individuals, like a drowning

person, need is rescue, not complaints or excuses.

Thus in pursuit of the objectives of the Shari'a, we must always remember that the poverty-stricken, those who are at the bottom of the heap, have the right to money from their capable family members; and that they are entitled to charity (Zakat and Sadaqat) or to help from a special fund, if any. What a sense of social responsibility!

Available known facts have lent credence to the preceding sense of righteousness, vividly reminding us of the need for such open-handed assistance, the readiness and willingness to assist others without any pretended reason. This is a genuine sense of obligation, the hallmark of the True Believer. It is proclaimed: "Verily, the Muttaqun (the pious) will be in the midst of Gardens and Springs (in Paradise)...They used to sleep but little by night [invoking their Lord (Allah) and praying, with fear and hope]. And in the hours before dawn, they were (found) asking (Allah) for forgiveness. And in their properties there was the right of the Sa'il (the beggar who asks) and the Mahrum (the poor who does not ask others)." Q. 51:15-19

It is heartening to note that non-payment of Zakat, the annual charity, adds up to "Kufr" (Disbelief). The following Qur-anic Verse has supported the forgoing available known fact: "Those who give not Zakat...they are disbelievers in the Hereafter." Q. 41:7 And indeed, "On the Day when that (Al-Kanz: money, gold and silver the Zakat of which has not been paid) will be heated in the Fire of Hell and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs, (and it will be said to them): 'This is the treasure which you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what you used to hoard.' " Q. 9:35

Generally speaking, the Holy Qur-an has strongly refuted individualism (self-reliance), selfishness, or Materialism: "Those who are miserly and enjoy miserliness on other men and hide what Allah has bestowed upon them of His Bounties. And We have prepared for disbelievers a disgraceful torment." Q 4:37 (also see Q. 17:26, Q. 9:60, Q. 2:215 and Q. 51: 15-19)

Well, the Believer, acting within the bounds of the Divine Law, always aims at avoiding Monasticism and Materialism. This is for the obvious reason that practitioners of the former unreasonably deny themselves of even the beautiful, lawful things of this world, with the unquenchable but farfetched thirst for the Blissful Entertainment in the Hereafter; whereas followers of the latter, guided by instincts for survival, support the notion that death is eternal sleep.

Allah the Almighty has further refuted these mistaken notions and put those deviants right on the figments of their imagination; He has cautioned: "The mutual rivalry (for pilling up worldly things) diverts you, until you visit the grave (i.e. till you die)...Verily, you shall see the blazing Fire (Hell)!...Then on that Day you shall be asked about the delights (you indulged in, in this world)." Q. 102:1-8 (also see Q. 57:27)

It is worth remembering that, in order to enjoy the best provisions of the two Worlds, we need to strike the right balance between the two extremes of Monasticism and Materialism by leading refined lives or well-regulated life-styles, devoid of excesses.

3.5. THE EMERGING PURIFIED SOUL

The preceding types of orientation, if genuinely pursued, have the potential for transforming the Believer. Their interplay, unquestioning obedience, nourishes the spiritual soul, which is likely to experience inner peace and comfort, resulting from a combo of clear conscience, Faith, and controlled emotions and actions. Such undisturbed soul, if not adulterated with Impiety and Unrighteousness in the course of time, will ultimately experience eternal Bliss after its departure from the body.

The Shari'a instills a sense of discipline in its believing readers.

Genuine pursuance of these types of orientation is a form of training that produces obedience in them. In fact, their conscience, Faith, and sense of morality will not allow them to commit sins, even if they do, to persist in doing so. This is for the obvious reason that they always feel a pang of remorse for attempting to do or for having done evil, a fact that shows that such Believers are guided by clear conscience, Faith, and indeed a sense of morality.

But for those who are not inclining towards this orientation, they often persist in carrying out wrong-doings, for doing so does not prey on their conscience. And because they do not feel guilty, they are as remorseless as the sadist, the barefaced product of faithlessness, distorted conscience, and emotionalism. Such are those whose souls are insensitive to sins because they do not normally react or resist the urge to involve in them.

Indeed, the spiritually purified soul is a truly successful person, the reigning champion of both the material and the spiritual Worlds. The Good Book supports: "Indeed he succeeds who purifies his ownself (i.e. obeys and performs all that Allah ordered, by following the true Faith of Islamic Monotheism and by doing righteous good deeds). And indeed he fails who corrupts his ownself (...)." Q. 91:9-10

CHAPTER 4

SENSE OF PIETY

This pious sense denotes understanding Faith and Worship. In particular, it refers to knowing the meaning of the fundamental Beliefs in Islam and of their various manifestations in respect of Acts of Worship such as Prayer, Fasting, “Zikr,” and Pilgrimage. It is the understanding of what it takes to measure up to Monotheism, the Belief in and Worship of Allah and Allah Alone. We really have to worship Allah to show that we have Faith in Him.

In view of this, we need to understand the following journalistic questions with respect to our obedience to Allah in Deeds of Piety to see whether we are on course or not:

“Who?”

“Why?”

“Where?”

“When?”

“How?”

4.1. A SENSE OF “WHO TO BELIEVE IN AND WORSHIP?”

This is the understanding that because Allah is the Creator of the Heavens and the earth and all that, He Alone deserves Belief-cum-Worship. This monotheistic sense denotes that the worshipper’s wholehearted acceptance of Allah and their obedience to His Commands are as inseparable as the head and the neck.

Their sincere recognition of Him as the One and Only Lord of Creation, as the Only Being worthy of Worship, and indeed as the Only One Whose Names should be invoked must be tied to their obedience to Him in respect of Prayer, Fasting, etc. This fact is supported by the following Statements of Allah, the Wise: “How can you disbelieve in Allah? Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life (on the Day of Resurrection) and then unto Him you will return.” Q. 2:28 And of course, “O mankind! Worship your Lord (Allah), Who created you and those who were before you so that you may become Al-Muttaqun (the pious).” Q. 2:21 (further reading: Q.

10:3 and Q. 36:60-61)

Even though Faith and Worship are as inseparable as the head and the neck, they are separable by insincerity, a fact that shows that only an Act of Worship or a Deed of Righteousness that is pleasing to Allah is rewarding. It is connected: "...That Allah may reward them according to the best of their deeds..." Q. 24:37-38

It defies Monotheism for the Believer to invoke, supplicate or pray to, fast for, or offer Sacrifice to humans or spirits; to use blood in writing some parts of the Qur-an, for example, Chapter 36 in addition to magic symbols (atumi) as a spiritual shield against gun shots or bullets; etc.

Therefore, since the other Beliefs are limited to just acceptance of and obedience to the true existence of angels as Allah's Messengers, as human guides or guardians or protectors, as removers of souls, etc; to the Messengership, Message, or Tradition of Allah's Prophets; to the authenticity of His Revealed Book; and to the Reality of Resurrection and the aftermath, the Right to obedience in Worship is exclusively Allah's. Need I say more?

4.2. A SENSE OF "WHY OBEY ALLAH IN WORSHIP?"

This is a sense of purpose, the discernible reason behind obedience to Allah in Deeds of Piety. As it stands, the primary purpose for creating human beings and jinn is to worship the Creator, Allah; therefore, we worship Him because He is our Creator, generally speaking.

But specifically, the reason for worshipping Allah is to manifest our Faith in Him in appreciation of His Love of Creation by pleasing Him in Salat (Prayer), Fasting, etc., expecting some rewards, the ultimate of which is the Good End, Paradise.

It is important to note that if our Prayer, invocation, or supplication is pleasing to Allah, then it is said to have truly manifested itself in Faith, deserving rewards. The Merciful has illustrated this point in the following Words: "Men whom neither trade nor sale (business) diverts from the Remembrance of Allah (with heart and tongue), nor from performing Al-Salat...That Allah may reward them according to the best of their deeds..." Q. 24:37-38

Otherwise, such Act of Worship has not manifested itself in Faith; Faith is not manifested. This means that that Pious Deed is not rewarding, thus defeating the very purpose for which we worship our Creator.

Therefore, the possibility of worshipping Allah without seeking His Pleasure is a useful reminder to all those who are unmindful of the acceptance of their Deeds of Faith, especially Prayer and all that.

With Faith, good intention (sincerity), and humility, among other things, we can please our Creator by acting according to the divinely prescribed rules of Prayer, "Zikr," etc. Indeed, matching Faith, good intention, humility, fear, and hope to obedience to Allah is a necessary precondition for acceptance of deeds. What a winning combination in Worship!

At best, we must worship our Lord with a genuine sense of purpose, without having our religious values lowered by considering them less important than such acts of self-indulgence as watching movies and listening to music. Instead of following our lust or inordinate desires or animalistic passions by instantly but unreasonably gratifying our senses, we ought to demonstrate the courage of our conviction by strictly adhering to Salat, recitation of the Qur-an, “Zikr,” and the like.

In the event that the worshipper disobeys Allah by acting according to some Deeds of Impiety and of Unrighteousness including visiting soothsayers or “occult malams” and believing in what they are telling them; wearing of dreadlocks/jointed hair (rasta), or of ear-rings by males, or of garments decorated with drawings/pictures of humans and animals; and producing music while praying, then even their obedience to Him in Prayer itself is ironical because it is the wrong result, non-acceptance, which is within reach.

Such Act of Worship can best be described as a product of mere parental indoctrination, but not of Taqwa (the fear of Allah), since the conditions necessary for its acceptance are often being violated by the worshipper.

I believe such a worshipper can never ever please their Lord in this violation of norms, can they?

It therefore defies commonsense for the Believer in Islamic Monotheism to obey other creatures by, say, squatting in front of them as a mark of obedience and respect, while at the same time disobeying their Creator in the abovementioned.

Such misdirected obedience, the product of repeated, undue parental training, is certainly not pleasing to Allah, even though it has become an important, natural part of the worshipper’s life, let’s remember and consider it.

The following Qur-anic Verses have explained the significance of obedience, providing us with real insights into some of its benefits, advantages, or rewards: “And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger (pbuh), fears Allah and keeps his duty (to Him), such are the successful...If you obey him, you shall be on the right guidance...” Q. 24:52-54 (other relevant citations: Q. 4:59, 64, 65 and 69)

I think by now we have developed a clear sense of purpose, haven’t we?

4.3. A SENSE OF “WHERE TO OBEY ALLAH IN WORSHIP?”

The question as to where to obey our Creator in Pious Deeds is a matter of great concern. In its strict sense, it is the understanding that places of Worship must meet the requirements of Sacredness, Holiness, Decency, Tranquility, et cetera. Mosques, private places of Worship and other religious sites have to relate to Allah and His Religion.

Ideally, Worship, especially Salat (Prayer), should be observed in tranquil and decent or religiously acceptable places, but not in shrines or on tombs of the pious or the so-called pious persons (notorious ancestors or religious sectarian leaders or “occult malams”—invoking, praying, or supplicating to them, instead of invoking Allah, praying, or supplicating for them); in demonic sites that are seemingly religious; in places decorated with pictures or drawings and statues of human beings and animals, not forgetting the Cross (†), as these are utterly abhorrent to angels and indeed to Believers; and so forth.

In all seriousness, we ought to be mindful of our Worship and its acceptance. Necessarily, we must aim at pleasing Allah in Deeds of Faith by acting in accordance with the divinely established ways of Worship and at the same time by strictly avoiding places of Worship where acts of deliberate disregard for the Shari’ah, including the preceding, are comfortably tolerated.

It is interesting but sad to see or hear that a religious group idolises their deceased leader by going round his raised, well-decorated tomb and putting money on the quasi-Kabah, not forgetting “nose whistling” by females.

Remember, using observance of Prayer amidst noise or music and indecent exposure or pictures of humans and animals in our private places of Worship as a reason for doing same in the Mosque is not justifiable because there is no good reason for it. Even doing so in our rooms, work places, etc. is beyond all reason, since we are obliged to go by the principle of Moral Universalism, but not of Relativism. What a retrogressive move!

4.4. A SENSE OF “WHEN TO OBEY ALLAH IN WORSHIP?”

“By time, verily man is in loss. Except those who believe and do righteous good deeds...” Q. 103:1-3

Have we wasted our time labouring hard in visiting “occult malams” (soothsayers) or in communicating and colluding with them via the telephone; in seeking demonic protection for ourselves, our children, businesses, or marriages; in burying animals alive or in slaughtering them in sacrifice to the devils/jinn or even in chopping them to death; in prostrating on saliva, mucus, or phlegm; in inserting talismans in corpses’ mouths; in giving “charity” [“sadaqat”—a collection of old currency (coins, paper), cowries, needles, eggs, rags of varying colours, cola, charcoal, grains, etc. to “naml” (large ants) at the entrance of their abode—black magic]; in flying on magic carpet, animal skin, broom, or knot; in burying human statues; in tying magic string or chain round a cylindrical object made up of human rib, hair, mirror—in some cases, etc. (“akadi” or “kobri”—miniature god); in producing events during sleep (nightmare; magic dream); in casting love, divorce, money, market, curse, or fame spells; in pouring saliva, phlegm, or mucus in magic pots containing concoction—witchcraft; in chewing witches or wizards’ chewing sticks; in drinking magic potion or concoction; in being hypocritical by pretending to obey Allah in Prayer, Fasting, “Zikr,” etc. while at the same time doing the real thing by obeying the Devil in such impious practices

as Soothsaying, Demonic Protection, Ancestral Sacrifice, Spiritual Healing, and Coptic Exorcism?

If “Yes,” then the Remembrance of Allah is a forgone alternative; we have forgotten Him by not having our free-will limited by His Will. And as a result, He has caused us to forget ourselves by not guiding us, resulting in us being locked in sins.

Therefore, because we are as remorseless as the sadist, by time, we have followed a lost cause. May Allah forbid! Amen!

If “No,” then we are certainly on course. So by time, we have not incurred any loss in our religious transactions because “Except those who believe and do righteous good deeds...” Q. 103:1-3

The question as to when to worship Allah can best be answered by connecting time-consciousness to Allah-consciousness. Apart from “Zikr,” which is, in a sense, done in abundance, the other Acts of Worship are usually observed at specific times.

For one thing, at appointed times, Believers are obliged to regularly carry out the compulsory five daily Prayers, to perform Hajj annually in the month of Dhul-Hijja, to fast for twenty-nine or thirty consecutive days in the month of Ramadan, etc.

For another, in their spare time, the faithful are enjoined to perform optional acts of devotion. These supererogatory acts have specified times for observing them. Examples of these include the following: fasting on Mondays and Thursdays or for three consecutive days during the white days, that is, the 12th, 13th, and 14th or 13th, 14th, and 15th of every lunar month; performing four “rakats” immediately before and two “rakats” immediately after “Zuhr”; and doing regular “Zikr” in the mornings and evenings, not forgetting the recitation of the Qur-an at dawn.

The Final Revelation has lent credence to the above-mentioned facts: “...and glorify the praises of your Lord before the rising of the Sun, and before its setting...” Q. 20:130 In addition, “...and recite the Qur’an in the early dawn (i.e. the Morning Prayer). Verily, the recitation of the Qur’an in the early dawn is ever witnessed (attended by the angels in charge of mankind of the day and the night...” Q. 17:78-79

But the most important thing to consider is that both compulsory and optional acts of devotion are obligatory because they are necessary parts of the whole---unquestioning obedience to Allah in Deeds of Piety and of Righteousness; Worship and Morality respectively.

Let’s not forget that the rule of the game is moderation; moderation in all things. That is to say, our loyalty and love for Allah must be within a range of possibilities, convenience, capabilities, and times. And so, we need to devote ourselves to Him by giving some special times and efforts for His Worship, which should be neither too little nor too much, or negligent nor superfluous.

Such is a sense of time, the recommendable, understandable occasion for obeying Allah in Acts of Worship.

4.5. A SENSE OF “HOW TO OBEY ALLAH IN WORSHIP?”

In what particular way or by what particular method do we worship our Lord? To answer this easy-to-ask-but-difficult-to-answer question, we need to take a long, hard look at the way we worship our Creator, comparing that to the generally accepted way to see whether we are really doing the right thing with our knowledge and understanding of Monotheism or not.

We need to truly serve the purpose of our creation. We should of course seek Allah’s Pleasure by being mindful of the necessary conditions in Worship and all that.

Let’s now use the sense of “How?” to achieve that of “Why?”---since it is the “How?” that determines the “Why?”

. DECENCY, CLEANLINESS, PURIFICATION

To develop a sense of piety, we have to first of all create and maintain a decent home, work, or Mosque environment and practise personal hygiene alongside ritual purification. Necessarily, we need to ensure that urinals or bathrooms and places of ablution are thoroughly tidy, without traces of filth such as saliva, mucus, phlegm, blood-stained cotton or rag, chewed cola, and used chewing sticks; religiously unacceptable practices and materials including pictures, drawings, or statues of humans and animals; talismanic rings, belts, chains, smocks, turbans, etc.; noise, music, or movies; and conversation during ablution, “Azan” (the call to Prayer), recitation of the Qur-an, or in the bathroom, urinal, or lavatory.

Having cleansed our surroundings of both physical and ritual impurities, we must regularly take the usual bath and/or the unusual (ghusl); adorn our bodies with clean, silk-free, picture-free, non-transparent garments, including those which do not expose our thighs, buttocks, armpits, navels, breasts, etc.; wear perfume, usually males, but unusually females in the presence of their husbands; practise oral hygiene with chewing sticks and/or toothbrushes; perform ablution without conversation; make our hair tidy by combing or shaving or trimming it; remove our pubic and armpit hair; trim or shave the moustache; cut the finger and toe nails; wear simple sandals or shoes or belts or use purse made from rubber or synthetic material, but not from any forbidden animal’s leather---if possible avoid leather, etc.

Remember, cleanliness is next to Godliness, so we must live up to an impressively high standard of decency, mustn’t we?

. MIND CLEANSING

The need to discipline our minds is exceedingly important. Training our intellect might save us from degrading the quality of our Worship. Reasonably, strict adherence to positive thoughts and pure Islamic Teachings, as well as strict avoidance of such components of intellectual arrogance as intellectual freedom, individualism (self-reliance), liberalism, disenchantment with Religion, and moral relativism will enable us to have a clear sighted vision of our purpose in life and indeed of what we are doing, resulting in us being guided by clear conscience.

With such a disciplined mind coupled with a tranquil atmosphere, our thoughts are likely to be focused on the Words and actions in Prayer, without any distraction in our thought process or being in a state of mental confusion.

Undoubtedly, a sound, refined intellect and calmness and peacefulness of a place of Worship are essential for enjoying reflective recitation of and full concentration on the Verses of the Qur-an.

Therefore, to be sure of what we are doing, we should, as a matter of urgency, distance ourselves from such impediments to clear conscience as drunkenness and smoking. This is for the evident reason that, because “occult malams,” witches, or sorcerers operate through the intellect, those who have got caught up in these deviant practices are often swayed by the devils’/jinn’s evil suggestions or promptings, the obvious cause of demoniacal behaviour.

Let’s not allow ourselves to become victims of secular reasoning. Instead of disputing Guidance with preconceived notions about it, we ought to seriously think and act in ways that are consistent with the generally acceptable standards of behavior in Islam. In effect, we need to always match our thoughts, reasons, or expectations to the Dictates of the Shari’a, rather than acting on the dictates of our intellect, the obvious cause of stubborn resistance against the Divine Command or any form of Islamic Civilisation.

. HEART CLEANSING

The disciplined Believer, guided by a sense of cleanliness and a clear conscience, strives to make themselves spiritually ready for Worship. They often embark on a series of heart cleansing exercises preparatory to obeying their Lord in Deeds of Piety like Prayer, Fasting, and Eid-Adha Sacrifice by following a set pattern of acceptance of Guidance and of repentance of sins, as well as of going by the Dictates of the Shari’ah.

Acceptance of the Truth is an integral part of the process of heart cleansing. Receiving Faith without disputing or doubting or questioning the truth about it is in fact an essential component of not only intellectual preparedness, but also of spiritual readiness in Worship. The heart plays a major role in this process, confirming reasoning by the intellect.

At the same time, letting go of all disbelieving sins is absolutely necessary. Giving up or avoiding all Acts of Impiety, not forgetting all major Acts of Immorality, is a necessary precondition for raising the spirituality of the heart to the foundation level of Faith, ready for Worship.

As well, going by the Dictates of the Shari'a is a nice complement to both acceptance of Guidance and repentance of wrong-doings. Acting according to the acceptable standards of Worship and Morality will facilitate the process of spiritual purity, resulting in increased Faith.

Indeed, to follow acceptance of the True Faith of Islam and repentance of evil with Deeds of Faith will boost the spiritual purity of the heart and its moral strength as well. It is proclaimed: "Those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah—Islamic Monotheism), and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah: verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." Q. 13:28

It is encouraging to note that the worshipper's efforts and willingness are shown in not only their eagerness to, say, pray, but more importantly, in their adequate spiritual and moral preparedness to effectively communicate with their Creator, Allah. For this decisive reason, they need a heart that is ready for every eventuality, since it is the focal point of Allah's Attention. The Noble Qur-an attests to this reality: "O you who believe....and know that Allah comes in between a person and his heart..." Q. 8:24

In all seriousness, we don't have to allow Faith destroyers, which have already engulfed most worshippers, to go unchallenged. We must have a heart to resist the urge to indulge in such heart pollutants as Soothsaying, Spiritual Healing, Coptic Exorcism, and Demonic Protection, or to repent of and resolutely regret for having committed them and indeed to promise not to repeat them.

We need to reiterate that the foregoing deeds of impiety and the like are demon/jinn-inspired. So truly, practising them is one of the reasons for absolute lack of Faith in Allah. The Good Book insists: "...Verily, We made the Shayatin (devils) Auliya (protectors and helpers) for those who believe not." Q. 7:27

Let's not forget that the heart needs to be cleansed of other forms of disbelief besides Impiety—"Shirk." These include: arrogance, hypocrisy, and envy.

The combo of these three factors will lay the groundwork for Faith to comfortably dwell in the heart of the true Believer, filling the spiritual vacuum. No doubt, the heart of Faith, not the rotten heart of faithlessness, is the residence of Piety and Righteousness, with which the worshipper stands ready to commune with their Lord. The following Statement of Allah confirms: "The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, except him who comes to Allah with a clean heart [clean from Shirk (polytheism) and Nifaq (hypocrisy)]." Q. 26:88-89

. SINCERITY OF INTENTIONS AND ACTIONS

An action or a statement is said to be justifiable if and only there is a good, not bad, reason for it. This means that the value of the action or statement is derived from the discernible reason behind it. Otherwise, the action or statement is of no value because it is not backed by a genuine reason.

Actions are judged according to intentions, according to The Prophet (pbuh). Of course, every deed obeys the dictate of its intention; the intention always matches the deed. For instance, a good intention matches a good deed, and vice versa.

But remember, that is a Divine Determination in which the inward (intention) is used to judge the outward (deed). This is an abstract explanation of sincerity.

Let's try to explain sincerity in concrete terms to see whether we are off course or not. In definite and specific terms, we normally use the outward to judge the inward, without knowing the real intention, which is beyond the scope of our judgment. What a sheer prejudice!

We don't have to confuse perception with reality. The truth is that acting according to the Dictates of the Shari'a alone does not necessarily validate an act in that the intention might be to please others besides Allah.

If so, that is, if the intention is not sincere, then the act is said to have been carried out with the pretended intention of pleasing Allah by openly or otherwise doing so accordingly, simultaneously but craftily hiding the real intention of displeasing Him in occult practices like the wearing of talismanic rings, chains and belts, as well as in showing off, in hypocrisy, in envy, and in pride.

It is emphasised: On the authority of Sulayman b. Yasar, it has been narrated: "People surrounded Abu Hurairah. Natil, a Syrian, said to him, 'O Sheikh, relate (to us) a hadith you heard from the Messenger of Allah.' He replied, 'Yes. I heard the Messenger of Allah (upon him blessings and peace) say: The first of those men (whose case) will be decided on the Day of Judgment will be the man who died as a martyr. He shall be brought before the Judgment Seat and Allah will make him recount his blessings (i.e. blessings which He has bestowed upon him) and he will recount them (and admit having enjoyed them in his life). (Then) will Allah say: 'What did you do (to requite these blessings)? He will say, 'I fought for You until I died as a martyr.' Allah will say, 'You have told a lie. You fought so that you might be called a brave warrior, and you were called so.' Then orders will be passed against him and he will be dragged with his face downward and cast into Hell.

Then will be brought forward a man who acquired knowledge and imparted it (to others) and recited the Qur'an. He will be brought, and Allah will make him recount his blessings and he will recount them and admit having enjoyed them in his lifetime. Then will Allah ask, 'What did you do to requite these blessings?' He will say, 'I acquired knowledge and disseminated it and recited the Qur'an seeking Your Pleasure.' Allah will say, 'You have told a lie. You

acquired knowledge so that you might be called a scholar, and you recited the Qur'an so that it might be said, 'He is a Qari' and such has been said.' Then orders will be passed against him and he will be dragged with his face downward and cast into the Fire.

Then will be brought a man whom Allah had made abundantly rich and to whom He had granted every kind of wealth. He will be brought, and Allah will make him recount his blessings and he will recount them and admit having enjoyed them in his lifetime. Allah will (then) ask: 'What did you do to requite these blessings?' He will say, 'I spent money in every cause in which You wished that it should be spent.' Allah will say, 'You are lying. You did (so) that it might be said about 'you': 'He is a generous fellow' and so it was said.' Then orders will be passed against him and he will be dragged with his face downward and thrown into the Hell."

I think we can't still use the outward to judge the inward, can we?

If not so, that is to say, if the intention is sincere, then that act is validated by the (good) intention. This means that the action derives its value from the good intention.

Obviously, in the first place, if going to war is for the sake of Allah, then seeking demonic protection is absolutely ironical; if donating money to the poor or the needy is to seek Allah's Pleasure, then using spirit (blood) money is superfluous; if loving some people is to please the Creator, then envying others is highly hypocritical—loving others because of those you envy; if hating a disbeliever is to facilitate the process of getting closer to the Almighty, then hating a Believer contravenes logic, or if loving some people is to please Allah, then hating a Believer is beside the point; and if acquiring knowledge is to seek Allah's Countenance, then drinking magic potion or concoction or alcohol, wearing a talismanic turban (with a magic symbol—The Prophet's footprint on it), being aided by the devils/jinn, smoking weed or sniffing cocaine in doing so is against the intellectual's better judgment.

Such deeds are certainly not pleasing to the Lord of Creation because they are bereft of genuineness, a fact that is indicative of insincerity of intentions and indeed of actions.

Now, what do we say of a worshipper who, through Soothsaying and other means of occultism, tries to manipulate other people's destiny by aiming at preventing what Allah has ordained from happening, doing so knowingly or otherwise? Of course, their Piety or Righteousness is likened to Pharaoh's generosity, which was to no avail.

But as for "Auliyallah" (Allah's beloved Ones), they almost always act with sincerity. Even if their good intentions are not actualised, they are still rewarded for their sincerity.

Indeed, those who are at the heights of their nearness to Allah are not swayed by any worldly reward or enjoyment in carrying out Deeds of Faith—Worship and Moral Values. The Glorious Book explains: Say (O Muhammad—pbuh): "Verily, I am commanded to worship Allah (Alone) by obeying Him and doing religious deeds sincerely for His sake only." Q. 39:11

The following Hadith Qudsi confirms: Allah states: “Sincerity is one of My Divine Secrets and I bestow it upon the servants whom I love. Neither an angel can discover it to record it, nor can a devil discover it in order to spoil it.”

I hope by now we are almost out of the wilderness, aren't we?

. HUMILITY, FEAR, AND HOPE

“Invoke your Lord with humility and in secret. He likes not the aggressors.” Q. 7:55

Our discussion, prefaced with concerns preparatory to Worship, has now reached its climax. Allah's devotees, whose intentions are sincere, are obliged to be persons of great humility. Being aware of their own weaknesses or defects, they willingly allow their free-will to be limited by Allah's Will—Guidance.

Humbled by the Divine Presence or the fear of hopelessness or nothingness on the Last Day, they stand absolutely motionless; place their right hand on the back of their left palm, wrist and forearm, unless otherwise dictated by necessity; focus their gaze on the point of prostration; recite the Qur'an in a reasonably low but slow tone and in a reverent style; gradually bow their head; gently bend at the waist, firmly putting their palms on their knees, with a brief pause before returning to the usual standing position, saying “Subhaana Rabbee-yil Adheem” —How perfect is my Lord, the Supreme (3 times); carefully prostrate with their forehead and the nose, with a brief pause before raising their head from the ground, saying “Subhaana Rabbee-yil Aa'laa” —Glory be to my Lord, free from all imperfections, the Most High (3 times), occasionally shedding tears; lay their left foot flat and sit on it, and then erect their right foot, with the toes pointing at the Qiblah; properly place their right palm on their right thigh, and their left palm on their left thigh, with their right index finger, which is stared at, pointing at the Qiblah, etc.

Remember, the humble, patient worshipper always remains calm immediately after the Tasleem (As-salaamu alaikum warahmatullahi—to the right, the same to the left), utter the following Words of Allah's Remembrance: Astaghfirullah (3 times), Allahuma Antas-salaam... (3 times), Subhaanallah (33 times), Alhamdulillah (33 times), Allahu Akbar (33 times), and then Laahila'illalahu Wadahu Laa sharikallahu Lahul Mulk Wallahul Hamd Yuhi Wayumitu Wa Huwa Alaa Kulli Shaieen Qadiir (None has the right to be worshipped except Allah Alone. He has no partner. His is the Dominion. His is Praise. And He is capable of doing all things).

Simultaneously, the worshipper's heart must submit to Allah. Its submission to Him in “Salat” (Prayer) in particular will, if sincerely carried out, put fear and hope in it.

The heart will be full of hope for the consequences (Rewards, Mercy, Grace, Favor, Intercession, etc.) of expressing positive emotions such as love, patience, and compassion.

In the same way, it will be filled with the fear of the effects of expressing such negative

emotions as hatred, envy, lust, covetousness, hypocrisy, and pride. These effects include: punishment—100 lashes for fornication, stoning to death for adultery, cutting the hand for stealing, and worst of all hellish entertainment, temporarily for ordinary Believers and for eternity to disbelievers, etc.; retribution—earthquakes, diseases, epidemics, famine, flood, storm, draughts, and other natural disasters.

With such humility of the heart, the worshipper readily strikes the right balance between over-confidence and despair, balancing hope against fear, and fear against hope.

Truly, the heart of the True Believer is the abode of Faith in which sincerity, the indispensable link between Faith and Worship and between Faith and moral values, thrives.

Indeed, it is the “How?” that decides the “Why?”—for it is by going by the ‘How?’ that the “Why?” can be achieved.

“...and invoke Him with fear and hope. Surely, Allah’s Mercy is (ever) near to the good-doers.” Q. 7:56

CHAPTER 5

SENSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Narrated Abu Umamah (RA): ‘Allah’s Messenger (pbuh) said...And [I (also) guarantee] a home in the highest part of Paradise for a person who has a high standard of character.’
”

This righteous sense is the understanding of Faith and Morality. Or better still, it refers to knowing the meaning of the six Fundamental Beliefs in Islam and of their various manifestations in respect of Religious Moral Values such as love, justice, and patience. These praise-worthy qualities and the like are an expression of Faith; Faith finds expression in Moral Values.

Before we proceed with our discussion, we need to put matters right; we don’t have to confuse Immorality with Amorality. The immoral are religious, whereas the amoral are secular. While the former are religious people who have strayed from the generally acceptable standards of behaviour, the latter, whose behaviour is largely influenced by the dictates of their intellect (intellectual freedom), have had no such Divine Standards to follow.

But now, the question is, Are they two sides of the same coin? In one sense, “Yes,” that is, if the former are locked in major Acts of Immorality like homosexuality, persecution, slander, greedy-miserliness, envy, and pride, then they are on a par with the latter, even if they worship, since both have broken Faith with Allah.

In another sense, “No,” that is to say, if members of the first group are only involved in minor Acts of Immorality, which have not deprived them of their Faith, then they are still Believers, even if of little Faith. Thus the former, the religious deviants, are the best of a bad bunch in terms of deviant behaviour.

The righteous Muslim always behaves with strictness, consciously living within the boundaries of the Divine Law. They not only act within the bounds of the Shari’a but also frown on its defiance by disapproving of or by expressing their disgust at it. They truly show

their displeasure as a mark of firmness, the hallmark of the righteous.

It is important to know that Faith is often shown in forbidding evil with our hands, tongues, and hearts. The following Narration attests to this fact: “Abu Sa 'id Al-Khudri (RA) relates having heard the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) saying, ‘Any one of you who sees an abomination should change it with his hand; if he could not, then with his tongue; if he could not, then in his heart; and this is the faintest in Faith.’ ” And indeed, “...Ibn Mas 'ud (RA) relates that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said...These were followed by successors who professed what they did not practise and practised what they were not ordered. He who struggles against them with his hand is a believer; he who struggles against them with his heart is a believer; and he who struggles against them with his tongue is a believer. Beyond that, there is not a grain of Faith.”

To be able to fulfill this religious obligation, we need to ascertain our secondary purpose in life—namely, the relationship between you and I. We truly have to obey Allah in Moral Values by acting in accordance with the acceptable standards of behaviour in Islam and indeed by relating to other people as well.

It is therefore imperative that we further explain this moral sense by relating it to the following journalistic questions:

“Who?”
 “What?”
 “Why?”
 “Where?”
 “When?”
 “How?”

5.1. A SENSE OF “WHO TO OBEY AND RELATE TO?”

“...So fear Allah and adjust all matters of difference among you, and obey Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad--pbuh), if you are believers.” Q. 8:1

Every Believer owes it a religious obligation to obey Allah in Moral Values by obeying and relating to other Believers in a manner befitting their Righteousness, not forgetting their Piety. Their obedience to and relationship with fellow Believers is often shown in respecting, confiding in, helping, seeking help from, visiting, seeking reconciliation with, seeking advice from, being loyal to, establishing a strong bond of love with, being just to, seeking justice from, and indeed sharing intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and material support with them.

This righteous sense is the understanding that in fulfilling our secondary purpose in life, we need to show obedience to the Creator, Allah, by obeying the obedient and relating to them in ways that are in conformity with the Shari’a. It refers for the most part to knowing the meaning of obedience to fellow human beings, which is of course obedience to Allah.

Thus obeying our religious leaders, parents, and other Muslims in lawful things and indeed relating to them in the best comportment is a religious duty, obedience to the Divine Command. The following Statements of Allah have pointed to this reality: “O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad—pbuh), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. And if you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger (pbuh) if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination.” Q. 4:59 (other relevant citations: Q. 4: 64, 65 and 69; Q. 24:52-54)

Now that we know those to whom obedience is due, we ought to understand some, if not all, of their distinguishable features. Among the characteristics that make such true adherents of Islam identifiable, the following are note-worthy: enduring seriousness about matters concerning Allah and His Religion, solemnity and submissiveness in Prayer, a sense of decorum, patience, loyalty, chastity, trusteeship, generosity, peacefulness, decency, truthfulness, strictness, humbleness, love, justice, mercy, and compassion.

True followers of Islam are however forbidden from obeying those who often show deliberate disregard for the Shari’a by openly opposing Allah, His Messengers, and other Believers, stubbornly resisting their Message, Tradition, admonition, or advice. Thus according to the Qur’an, these include disbelievers in general and nominal Muslims (Hypocrites in Faith) in particular: “And obey not the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and harm them not (in revenge for their harming you till you are ordered). And put your trust in Allah, and Sufficient is Allah as a Wakil (Trustee, or Disposer of affairs).” Q. 33:48

As for Hypocrites in Faith, their defiance against the Divine Command can obviously be seen in practising and/or condoning lottery, Gambling, wearing of dreadlocks (the hairstyle of Rastafarians) or jointed hair/rasta; watching pornography, sexy dance or movies; listening to profane or sexy but insinuating music; and indulging in illegal sexual intercourse, among others things.

And of course, there is no point relating to such enemies of the Gracious, Allah, knowing very well that they are a party of Satan, an open enemy of Allah and indeed of Believers as well. We should neither bear names nor wear pictures of nor listen to music produced by nor watch movies made by those who have denied the Holy Qur-an, followed their lust, and achieved notoriety for misleading the masses. We really don’t have to show affection towards them by following their ways or by emulating them. This fact is supported by the following Textual Evidence: “O you who believe! Take not My enemies and your enemies (i.e. disbelievers and polytheists) as friends, showing affection towards them, while they have disbelieved in what has come to you of the truth...And whoever of you (Muslims) does that, then indeed he has gone (far) astray from the Straight Path.” Q. 60:1 Moreover, “O you who believe! Take not as Auliya (supporters and helpers) your fathers and your brothers if they prefer disbelief to Belief. And whoever of you does so, then he is one of the Zalimun (wrong-doers).” Q. 9:23 And truly, “They wish that you reject Faith, as they have rejected Faith, and thus that you all become equal (like one another). So take not Auliya (supporters and helpers) from them...” Q. 4:89-90 (Also see Q. 68:8-15, Q. 7:180 and Q. 58:22)

Notwithstanding this, the faithful are, mostly on humanitarian grounds, enjoined to eat the food (Halaal) of Christians and Jews, to marry their chaste women, to transact lawful business with them, and so forth.

Likewise, adherents of the True Faith of Islam are obliged to respect the rights of their neighbours, including privacy, association, life, and speech. The Prophet (pbuh) categorises: “A neighbour, who is a non-believer has one right. A Muslim neighbour has two rights. A Muslim who moreover is a relative has three.”

To add force to this sense of good neighbourliness, we have to make reference to the following Statement of The Prophet (pbuh): “Abu Huraira (RA) relates that the Prophet (pbuh) said, ‘By Allah, he is not a believer; by Allah, he is not a believer; by Allah, he is not a believer.’ He was asked, ‘Who is he, O Messenger of Allah?’ He answered, ‘He whose neighbour is not safe from his evils.’ ”

Indeed, obeying our neighbours in things that are lawful and relating to them in a manner suitable for a nice person is a mark of good neighbourliness, the absence of which results in a breakdown in social cohesion.

5.2. A SENSE OF “WHAT TO OBEY AND RELATE TO?”

This moral sense is the understanding that obedience to Allah in social, economic, religious, educational, and political activities, as well as in relating to those who are involved in them be within the bounds of the Shari’ah, with Allah-consciousness as the Guiding Principle.

This sense of restricted involvement denotes knowing the meaning of what it takes to be a righteous trader, manufacturer or producer, consumer, spectator, audience, sports person, tailor, driver, politician, lawyer, banker, accountant, transporter, teacher, student, landlord or landlady, and the like.

The righteous trader, manufacturer, producer, or consumer always confronts their thoughts and decisions with Guidance by producing, selling, buying, or consuming what is “halaal” (the lawful), but not “haram” (the unlawful) like dogs, pigs or pork; movies or pornographic materials; profane and seemingly religious songs; bags, books, garments, or mats with pictures and statues of human beings and animals, the Cross, etc. on them; rasta, jointed hair or dreadlocks; alcohol, cocaine, wee, or cigarette; and so forth.

At the same time, in interacting with their business partners, customers, or workers, they relate to or associate themselves with those who are decent and honest, but not the morally dishonest and indecent including females who expose their breasts, navels, buttocks, or thighs. They don’t really please their superiors, subordinates, or counterparts in such religiously unacceptable behaviour. In fact, it is against the Dictates of the Shari’ah for the righteous to give pleasure to their customers or workers in such deviant behaviour as exchanging handshakes or hugs with people of the opposite sex.

Similarly, the righteous politician, banker, accountant, lawyer, teacher, or student usually aims at achieving the highest standard of integrity by being Allah-conscious in all their endeavours, but not of corruption, injustice, dishonesty, bribery, et cetera.

And the righteous spectator, audience, or sports person is often alive to their religious obligations and prohibitions by watching or listening to or participating in social, recreational activities, or by visiting centres that are “halaal,” but not “haraam”---including cinema, beer gardens or bars or spots, nude or almost nude sports, nude beaches or dance, sexy but deceitful dance or music or movies, and irreligious or seemingly religious songs.

It is therefore necessary that the righteous safeguard their Religion and dignity by either giving up or avoiding all religiously unacceptable human endeavours, not forgetting the doubtful.

5.3. A SENSE OF “WHY OBEY ALLAH AND RELATE TO OTHERS?”

This is a sense of purpose, the graspable reason behind obeying Allah in Moral Values and indeed in relating to other people as well; and that is to manifest our Faith in Him by pleasing Him in Righteous Deeds such as love, bashfulness, caution, patience, visit, courtesy, respect, justice, commerce, and marriage, expecting some rewards from Him and Him Alone.

Faith is a necessary precondition for pleasing Allah, leading to acceptance of deeds. But more importantly, we need sincerity to bridge the gap between Faith and its Deeds (Worship and Religious Moral Values).

Truly, we can't please the Almighty without Faith, and we can't have Faith unless we possess a refined heart, devoid of envy, pride, hypocrisy, and other forms of disbelief including “Shirk”---Soothsaying, Demonic Protection, Ancestral or neo-Ancestral Sacrifice, Communion of Spirits, etc.

This is a clear indication that intending to please the Creator is dependent on our acceptance of Him as the Lord of Creation, as the Only One to be worshipped, and indeed as the Only One Whose Names be invoked.

The following Statements of Allah have truly given us useful awareness about some benefits, rewards, or advantages of complete, permanent obedience to the Divine Will: “And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger (pbuh), fears Allah and keeps his duty (to Him), such are the successful...If you obey him, you shall be on the right guidance...” Q. 24:52-54 (other relevant citations: Q. 4:59, 64, 65 and 69)

5.4. A SENSE OF “WHERE TO OBEY ALLAH AND RELATE TO OTHERS?”

This is a sense of location, the understanding that Islam is a universal Religion. Accordingly, it places great importance on Moral Universalism, the Universal Morality, which rises above non-Islamic culture and personal impulse. For example, the practice of exchanging handshakes or hugs between Muslim males and females who are not couples is completely deviant, regardless of whether those involved are residing in Saudi Arabia or not.

Similarly, rich Muslims in every country are enjoined to fulfill their religious obligation of giving charity to the poor and the needy among them, strictly adhering to the collective Islamic Principle of Righteousness, simultaneously refuting the secular ideal, individualism or self-reliance, with the need to belong always in mind.

It is important to note that even though moral relativism, the evil mind’s creation, has a bearing on the life-styles of a cross section of Muslims, such a libertarian value has no place in Islam. In fact, its application is just limited to western secularised societies and in most, if not all, multi-faith nations.

As with the system, nations whose constitutions are partly, if not wholly, founded on secular principles, have gradually taken the structure of civilised life to pieces by imposing their unfair laws and rules on Believers, the undoubted victims of arbitrariness of the framers of Globalisation, the alleged world Constitution.

Constitutional guarantees, including the freedom of speech and of press, which have been enjoying the protection of some constitutional provisions or amendments, are serious obstacles to our intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and material well-being. For example, pornographic materials and sexually offensive movies or music, especially “truckloads” of them by the road-side, have proliferated in recent years. Such protected obscenity, borne out of disenchantment with Religion, the far-fetched secular ambition of a culturally homogenised world, is a canker eating away at the heart of society.

What an arbitrary cultural diffusion!

It is therefore not surprising that the inconsiderate driver; restaurant, bar, news-stand, market, lavatory (very rare but true—a public lavatory with a TV set on a stand and loud speakers fixed in the ceiling), TV and FM/Radio, internet café, or recording studio operator; public cassettes/music seller or producer; daily public preacher; marriage, funeral or party organiser, etc. have always infringed on other people’s rights by producing deafening and disrespectful music or ambient noise, indecent exposure (e.g. page-three-girl), and so on. What a system!

In spite of this, we need to be self-disciplined, instead of wholly blaming the system in instances that are avoidable. For example, we cannot attack the system when we ourselves buy, sell, or even tune to profane movies or music, can we?

We really hope for a return to sanity in Islam so that we can take delight in living in a just

and civilised society. Ideally, every gathering of Muslims must reflect Islamic protocol, devoid of any secular arrangement or value, be it popular or otherwise. Conformity to the set standards of Guidance in respect of decency and sensible behaviour should be expected at all times, irrespective of the circumstances.

It is worth noting that the two terms “liberalism” and “moderation” are antonymous. Liberalism in its strict sense connotes freethinking, the intellectual freedom. Moderation, on the other hand, refers to the middle course between any two extremes in Worship and Moral Values, or more exactly, avoidance of excesses in such Deeds of Faith, which should be neither too little nor too much, or negligent nor superfluous, in relation to time, convenience, or capability. For example, one is said to be moderate when one strikes the right balance between Monasticism and Materialism or between miserliness and extravagance or between negligence of or rushing through Prayer and praying more than is needed.

Let’s not forget that liberal fondness is borne out of secular broad-mindedness, the willingness to accept other people’s behaviour and beliefs, particularly sexual behaviour, without any reference to Divine Standards, whereas moderate devotion is a product of religious open-mindedness, the willingness to listen to other people and think about new ideas, suggestions, and opinions which are based on Guidance or sound reasoning.

So in all honesty, if we truly assemble for the sake of Allah, then our sitting arrangement, the dress code, etc. ought to be in line with the system of the Shari’a. Well, under normal circumstance, no Rastafarian nor male wearing earring(s) nor other persons wearing clothing with pictures of humans and animals on them, if we actually aim at seeking Allah’s Pleasure, should be allowed to chair any Islamic function, to lead Prayer, or be encouraged to participate in such events. And of course, non-Muslim invited guests who wear mini-skirts as well as those who expose their breasts should not be part of such gathering, not forgetting those who exchange handshakes and hugs with people of the opposite sex. We really don’t have to subjugate ourselves to secular humanism, the preference of personal whim over Religious Values.

It should be understood that obedience to Allah in attending marriage ceremonies must not be simultaneous with disobedience to Him in producing obscene music or the so-called religious songs in which Allah’s Names or Statements constitute the lyrics, as a way of entertaining people by moving them to dance, if we indeed want to please Him. The Merciful Himself has set the organisers of such ceremonies right on the fact that they have always done so without any reference to His Book: “Verily, this (the Qur-an) is the Word that separates (the truth from falsehood, and commands strict laws for mankind to cut the roots of evil). And it is not a thing for amusement.” Q. 86:13-14

Thus displeasing Allah in obeying Him sounds ironical because it is the wrong result, non-acceptance, which is attainable.

Quite frankly, I must say, we Muslims are within our rights to resort to the ultimate sanctions of the Shari’a against serious violations, especially in our places of Worship or meetings, if

not outside them, since the Constitution allows freedom of religion or association and, in every religion or association, there are norms that control behaviour and are recognised by the same Constitution and therefore legally binding on followers on account of their membership, just like students in a class room.

In view of this, Muslim authorities such as “imams” (e.g. leaders of congregational Prayers) have every right to ask deviants such as Rastafarians, males wearing earrings, and others wearing the Cross or garments with pictures of humans and animals on them, not forgetting those with greasy, filthy clothing, to leave the Mosque, no matter the circumstances.

This sense of strictness will, without a shadow of a doubt, go a long way to help us safeguard our Religion and dignity. I think we need to uphold and defend the Dictates of the Glorious Qur-an and the civilised Tradition of The Prophet (pbuh), needn't we?

Needless to say, because our national Constitution is founded on secular principles, enforcing the death penalty (hanging) for murder, cutting of hand(s) for stealing, stoning to death for adultery, and lashing (100 lashes) for premarital sex are presumably considered outside the jurisdiction of the Muslim Authorities.

But it stands to reason that, since we are a multi-faith, not secular, society, our Constitution must reflect Religious Values, at least on moral grounds, for both the Bible and the Qur-an have not condoned Immorality.

It is therefore ironical for some people to say that they trust in God, yet they do not allow their free-will to be limited by Religious Principles, the Divine Law. Indeed, if they belong to a Religion but are governed by secular, libertarian principles, then they truly fall between two stools, obviously failing to fit into either of the two sides of the social spectrum.

What a mixed-up state of affairs or contradiction in terms!

The most important thing to remember is that, even if we are living in a liberal society where individuals are given enough rope to hang themselves, adopting liberal life-style means straying from the Path of Guidance. Therefore, sticking to such fixed theoretical possibilities as Immanuel Kant's Theory of Categorical Imperative (on morality), as opposed to Plato's advocacy of moral universalism, is absolutely deviant.

But remember, the “Shariah” is flexible subject to necessity, the inevitable condition, which dictates exceptions, let's bear it in mind.

I think we need to always demonstrate the courage of our conviction, needn't we?

5.5. A SENSE OF “WHEN TO OBEY ALLAH AND RELATE TO OTHERS?”

“By time, verily man is in loss. Except those who believe and do righteous good deeds...” Q. 103:1-3

Has one wasted one's time labouring hard in visiting "occult malams" or soothsayers; in communicating and colluding with them via the telephone or mobile phone; in spreading mischief about, in slandering, in persecuting, in backbiting, in being envious of, or in being maliciously gossipy of others; in watching a pile of movies; in listening to profane music; in reading romantic books; in discussing people instead of ideas; in being arrogant by refusing to submit to the Divine Command after the conviction of its truth or by looking down on others; in taking delight in engaging in illegal sex; in being hypocritical by pretending to obey Allah in Deeds of Righteousness while at the same time doing the real thing---obeying the Devil by embarrassing others, by betraying their trust, or by deceiving them; and so forth?

If "Yes," then one has forgotten Allah by persistently committing sins. Impliedly, one has forgotten oneself by not allowing Allah to have control over one. And so, because one is stubborn, by time, one is said to have suffered gross losses in terms rewards in one's daily religious dealings, wandering blindly.

If "No," then one is certainly on Guidance, firmly sticking to Guided Faith, True Worship, and Religious Moral Values. So by time, one has not strayed from the set standards of Piety and Righteousness because "Except those who believe and do righteous good deeds..." (Q 103:1-3)

By time, the faithful have not taken leave of their senses in that they have always shown unquestioning obedience to Allah by completely and without doubt accepting Guidance and then going by it, not necessarily disputing, delaying, or postponing it. Being conscious of their Lord, they have enthusiastically received the Dictates of the Shari'a and acted accordingly. It is proclaimed: "The Messenger (Muhammad---pbuh) believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in Allah...and they say, 'We hear and we obey...'" Q 2:285

Again, by time, Believers have not been in loss because they have not persisted in committing evil. Instead, they have instantly but decisively repented of their wrong-doings. Through timely and sincere repentance, they have in fact availed themselves of the Divine Mercy.

They have always felt a pang of remorse for having committed those sins. For such, their course, the Right Path, will certainly not diverge from their intended Destination, Paradise.

And indeed, by time, a Muslim who is a Believer is not off course due to the fact that they carry out deeds of righteousness without any hesitation, postponement, or delay. For instance, they do not turn away the orphan under the alleged reason that they do not have money, while in actual fact they have it in abundance. Rather, they hurriedly but cautiously fulfill their religious obligation by helping them according to their means.

Nonetheless, by the self-same time, the stubborn among Hypocrites in Faith are doomed to Hell because their door of repentance is closed to them for disbelieving after believing and then increasing in disbelief. The Qur-an specifically supports: "Verily, those who believe, then disbelieve, then believe (again), and (again) disbelieve, and go on increasing in

disbelief, Allah will not forgive them, nor guide them to the (Right) Path. Give the hypocrites the tidings that there is for them a painful torment.” Q 4:137-138

It is heartening to note that those who have not believed before, whose hearts have not been sealed by Allah, and those who have disbelieved after having believed but have not yet transgressed the Divine Bounds have their door of repentance opened. For them, their timely, sincere repentance is an essential precondition for attaining the Divine Mercy.

The following Verses, which were revealed as a result of Wahshi’s (Hamza’s killer during the Battle of Uhud) despairing of Allah’s Mercy, have indeed corroborated: Say, “O Ibadī (My slaves) who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: verily, Allah forgives all sins. Truly He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And turn in repentance and in obedience with true Faith...” Q 39:53-54

The above distinct explanations have truly revealed the importance of time in relation to acceptance of Guidance, to repentance of sins, and to carrying out Deeds of Righteousness. Indeed, by time, the Believer has taken advantage of Allah’s Favour, Guidance. What a sense of Allah-consciousness!

5.6. A SENSE OF “HOW TO OBEY ALLAH AND RELATE TO OTHERS?”

This sense of righteousness is the acceptance of a particular way by which the Believer can obey their Lord in Morality and establish friendly relationships with fellow Believers in particular and others, especially those at the other end of the religious spectrum, in general.

In all honesty, the Believer is obliged to live in obedience to Allah by acting in accordance with the set standards of behaviour in Islam. By constantly aiming at knowing the meaning of Religious Moral Values such as love, justice, modesty, compassion, patience, gentleness, decency, and bashfulness, as well as by going by them, they obviously stand a chance of living up to their goal of attaining impressively high moral standards.

In effect, they can sensibly relate to other people (including non-Muslims) in a manner befitting their respectability, if not their Piety, comfortably connecting to them on the basis of Faith, of blood relation, or of humanity.

The most important thing to remember is that it takes a sound, refined mind and a sincere heart to attain Righteousness. So obviously, the need to cleanse the mind of such impediments to a clear sense of right and wrong as smoking and drinking is urgent. In fact, understanding the dangers inherent in such deviant behaviour is absolutely necessary.

Let’s not forget that the mind is sometimes muddled by evil thoughts or being manipulated by the devils’ evil suggestions or promptings. So certainly, we need to seriously think, understand, and then meet our expectations with Guidance or real evidence, instead of always acting on the dictates of our intellect. We, unlike victims of nightmare who always

act on whatever the experience in their sleep, should strive to contrast negative thoughts with positive ones so that we can behave sensibly.

Simultaneously, we must strive to cure the heart of its chronic diseases including envy, pride, and hypocrisy, as these are strongly opposed to Faith. Of course, aroused envy and love, hypocrisy and sincerity, or pride and humility can never ever reside in the same heart at the same time. Whereas the positives are compatible with Faith, the negatives are not.

The combined effort of a refined mind and a genuine heart by which the Believer is guided by Faith, clear conscience, and a sense of morality is what it takes to obey Allah and to relate to others as well.

No doubt, such a combination truly provides intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and material nourishment for the spiritual soul. What a purified soul!

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the need to make significant shifts in orientation from being a disbeliever or Hypocrite in Faith to being a weak Believer and from being a weak Believer to being a True Believer is exceedingly important.

Instead of moving towards the peripheral regions, we should determinedly orientate ourselves more towards the core so that we can think and behave in ways that are compatible with Piety and Righteousness.

No doubt, any gradual but irreversible change in goal from living outside the bounds of the Divine Law to living on its edges, from living on its edges to living within its broad confines, and from living within its broad confines to living within its narrow confines is a progressive move towards the core, the True Believer's safety net.

GLOSSARY

Abhorrent: hateful, disliked
 Against your better judgment: if something is against your better judgment, you think it is wiser not to do it
 Alive to: if you are alive to something, you are thinking about it or aware of it
 At the bottom of the heap: poor and unsuccessful, having the lowest position in society
 Availed themselves of: used it to their advantage or benefit
 Bare bones: basics, rudiments
 Barefaced: shameless
 Covetous: envious
 Communion of Spirits: spiritual union with the devils/jinn
 Conjuring tricks: a trick in which something is made to appear by magic
 Coptic exorcism: the act of forcing out an evil spirit from a person or place by magic
 Demonic protection: spiritual, evil shield
 Disenchantment: disappointment, dissatisfaction
 Demoniactal: uncontrolled
 Decorum: controlled behaviour
 Doomed: condemned
 Err on the side of caution: be careful
 Emotionalism: uncontrolled behavior
 Fallacies: misleading notions
 Frame of reference: a set of ideas or facts accepted by a person which explains their behaviour, opinions or decisions
 Farfetched: improbable
 Figments of (their) imagination: things which seem real but they are not
 Genius: mastermind; leader
 Gorgeously: attractively, beautifully
 Interplay: interaction, effect
 Insinuating: crafty
 Inconsiderate: thoughtless, careless
 Jaundiced: unenthusiastic, lukewarm
 Look to: hope someone will act in the way mentioned
 Live up to: achieve
 Locked in: unable to advance from
 Liberalism: freethinking
 Look up to: admire and respect
 Monasticism: unreasonable abstinence
 Materialism: acquisitiveness, hoarding
 Obscene: sexually offensive

Pang: sudden sharp feeling, esp. of painful emotion
Plead ignorance: say that (you) do not know anything at all about
Profane: irreligious, blasphemous
Promiscuity: sexual habit involving a lot of different partners
Salvage: rescue, intercession
Spiritual healing: treatment by the aid of the devils/jinn, not by Faith
Take a very jaundiced view of: think in a negative way about
Taken leave of their senses: lost their good judgment
Take a long, hard look at: consider whether (you) are doing the correct thing with
Truism: commonplace, usual
Tentatively: uncertainly
Time-honoured: long-established
Time-worn: unoriginal
Theoretical possibilities: ideas or things which could, but are unlikely to, happen or be true according to known facts
Turn over a new leaf: start a new and better way of behaving
Unquenchable: greedy
Unquestioning: complete and without doubt, absolute
Underpin: strengthen, buttress
Voice of reason: wise advice
Wake-up call: an experience or event that shocks (you) and makes (you) realize that (you) must do something to change a situation
Wake-up to: be aware of

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