

THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF WORSHIP AS PROPOUNDED BY ISLAM (An analytical study)

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“It is clear that the concept of worship in Islam is a comprehensive concept that includes all the positive activities of the individual. This of course is in agreement with the all inclusive nature of Islam as way of life. It regulates the human life on all levels. The individual, the social, the economic, the political and the spiritual. That is why Islam provides guidance to the smallest details of one’s life on all these levels. Thus following these details is following Islamic instruction in that specific area. It is a very encouraging element when one realizes that all his activities are considered by Allah as acts of worship. This should lead the individual to seek Allah’s pleasure in his actions and always try to do them in the best possible manner whether he is watched by his superiors or he is alone.”

Every religions prescribes its own prayer system, Islam also does. Every religion has its own unique system and it is this uniqueness which is precious. Islam prescribes its prayer system without challenging prayer systems of other religions as it recognizes the uniqueness of prayer systems of other religions. It puts it succinctly as under:

وَلِكُلِّ وِجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّيٰهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمْ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ۔

“And everyone has direction to which he turns (himself), so vie with one another in good works.”¹

Thus it is clear that everyone has ones own way of worshipping and one should not denounce each others way of worship. According to Imam Raghib the word wijhat is more comprehensive. It mean not only direction but also entire Shar`ia. Thus according to Raghib what Qur’an states in the above verse is that each religion has its own Shar`ia which has its own uniqueness.

The importance of worship may be seen in the fact that it has been prescribed by God in all religions prior to Islam. God said in the Qur’an:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ ، فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ فسيروا في الأرض فانظروا كيف كان عاقبة المكذبين۔

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For We assuredly sent amongst every people and apostle, (with the Command), “Serve Allah, and eschew Evil”: of the People were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom error became inevitably (established). So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the Truth).

“The concept of worship in Islam is misunderstood by many people including some Muslims. Worship is commonly taken to mean performing ritualistic acts such as prayers, fasting, charity, etc.”² This limited understanding of worship is only one part of the meaning of worship in Islam. That is why the traditional definition of worship in Islam is a comprehensive definition that includes almost everything in any individual’s activities. The definition goes something like this:

“Worship is an all inclusive term for all that God loves of external and internal sayings and actions of a person.”

In other words, worship is everything one says or does for the pleasure of Allah. This, of course, includes rituals as well as beliefs, social activities, and personal contributions to the welfare of one’s fellow human beings. Islam looks at the individual as a whole. He is required to submit himself completely to Allah, as the Qur’an instructed the Prophet Muhammad to do:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ -

“Say: “Truly, may prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds.”³

The natural result of this submission is that all one’s activities should conform to the instructions of the one to whom the person is submitting. Islam, being a way of life, requires that its followers model their life according to its teachings in every aspect, religious or other wise. This might sound strange to some people who think of religion as a personal relation between the individual and God, have no impact on one’s activities outside rituals. “As a matter of fact Islam does not think much of mere rituals when they are performed mechanically and have no influence on one’s inner life.”⁴ The Qur’an addresses the believers and their neighbors from among the people of the book who were arguing with them about the change of the direction of qibla in the following verse:

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ
وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ
صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ -

“It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards east or West; but it is righteousness – to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messenger’ to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slave; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contacts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah.fearing.”⁵

The deeds in the above verse are the deeds of righteousness and they are only a part of worship. The prophet told us about faith, which is the basis of worship, that it “is made up of sixty and some branches; the highest of which is the belief in the Oneness of Allah, i.e., there is no God but Allah and the lowest in the scale of worship is removing obstacles and dirt from people’s way.” Decent work is considered in Islam a type of worship. The Prophet said:

“Whoever finds himself at the nightfall tired of his work, God will forgive his sins.”

Seeking knowledge is one of the highest types of worship. The Prophet told his companions that “seeking knowledge is a (religious) duty on every Muslim.” In another saying he said: “Seeking knowledge for one hour is better than praying for seventy years.” Social courtesy and cooperation are part of worship when done of r the sake of Allah as the Prophet told us: “Receiving your friend with a smile is a type of charity, helping a person to load his animal is a charity and putting some water in your neighbor’s bucket is a charity.” It is worth nothing that even performing one’s duties is considered a sort of worship. The Prophet told us that whatever one spends for his family is a type of charity; he will be rewarded for it if he acquires it through legal means. Kindness to members of one’s family is an act of worship as when one puts a piece of food in his spouse’ mouth. Not only this but even the cats we enjoy doing very much, when they are performed according to the instructions of the Prophet, are considered as acts of worship. The prophet told his companions that they will

be reward even for having sexual intercourse with their wives. The companions were astonished and asked: “How are we going to be rewarded for doing something we enjoy very much?” The Prophet asked them: “Suppose you satisfy your desires illegally; don’t you think that you will be punished for that?” They replied, “Yes.” “So,” he said, “by satisfying it legally with your wives you are rewarded for it.” This means they are acts of worship. Thus Islam does not consider sex a dirty and sinful only when it is satisfied outside marital life.

It is clear, from the previous discussion that the concept of worship in Islam is a comprehensive concept that includes all the positive activities of the individual. this of course is in agreement with the all inclusive nature of Islam as way of life. It regulates human life on all levels: individual, social, economic, political and spiritual. That is why Islam provides guidance to the smallest details of one’s life on all these levels. Thus following these details is following Islamic instruction in that specific area. It is a very encouraging element when one realizes that all his activities are considered by God as acts of worship. This should lead the individual to seek Allah’s pleasure in his actions and always try to do them in the best possible manner whether he is watched by his superiors or he is alone. There is always the permanent supervisor, who knows everything, namely, Allah.

Worship in Islam has so many facets that it is difficult to describe them all in words. “The most general meaning of worship in Islam is inclusive of everything which is pleasing to God, whether they deal with issues of belief, or deeds of the body.”⁶ It may include everything a person perceives, thinks, intends, feels, says and does. It also refers to everything that God requires, external, internal or interactive. This includes rituals as well as beliefs, work, social activities, and personal behavior, as human being is a whole, such that every part affects every other.

Worship may be classified into two types:

- 1) Specific Beliefs, feeling and visible acts of devotion paid in homage to God which he has commanded.
- 2) All other acts of goodness generally encouraged in the life of a Muslim.

This facet of worship entails that one fulfill certain deeds which God has commanded in His religion, whether they deal with the inner self or the outer body, and whether they be obligatory or voluntary. This facet of worship is not

only limited to following His commandments, however, but it is also inclusive of leaving those things which He has forbidden. “Worship in this sense, may be defined as anything believed, felt, or done as an act of obedience to God. In this respect, worship may also be called servitude, as it is in essence living one’s life in complete servitude to God, doing what he commands, and avoiding what he forbids, as a slave lives within the will of his master.”⁷ In essence all creations are slaves to God, whether they like it or not, for they are all subject to the laws He has placed within His creation:

إِن كُفُّوا مِنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتَى الرَّحْمَنُ عَبْدًا -

“Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to (Allah) Most Gracious as a servant.”⁸

But worship differs from servitude in that it must be coupled with love, awe and reverence. No act of obedience is regarded as worship unless it is coupled these feelings; one must love the action and love, hold in awe and have reverence for the one the action is being performed. For this reason, in discussing this topic, it must be emphasized that worship is a right with is solely for God. Islam adheres to the strictest form of monotheism and does not tolerate that any act of worship be directed towards other than God. It is God alone who demands our obedience, and it is God alone who deserves our love. “Any veneration of other deities besides God, whether they are demigods, prophets, angles, saints or martyrs, or their relics, statues or pictures, is considered as a breach in this monotheism, and a person is rendered out of the fold of Islam if committed.”⁹ Even though one may justify that they venerate saints due to their service to God, or their relics as a remembrance of them, Islam does not differentiate between direct and indirect, or subordinate and superior worship. All worship and acts of veneration, homage and obedience must be offered for God alone.

The concept and purpose of worship in Islam is unparalleled to any other religion in existence. It combines the mundane with the spiritual, the individual with eh society, and the internal soul with the external body. Worship has a unique role in Islam, and through worship, a person is regarded as a rue Muslim who accords his entire life to the Will of God. God is not in need of our worship. Worship has been legislated in Islam and all other previous religions for the benefit of humanity, both in the individual and societal sense. Worship is essential for the maintenance of spirituality in the life of Muslims and its growth. Formal worship trains the individual to love his Creator and to develop constant awareness of God. God says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ -

“O ye people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness;”¹⁰

God also said to Moses:

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي -

“Verily, I am Allah. There is not God but I: So serve thou Me (only) and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise.”¹¹

Acts of worship serve as a means through which one remembers God and maintains a relationship with Him. Muslims perform prayer a minimum of five times daily in order to maintain this relationship. When a one supplicates, implores, praises God, recites verses from His revelation, which has been called “The Reminder”, along with other forms of worship throughout the day, they will gain the sense that the Power and Knowledge of God is present with them at all times, leading them to this sense of God-consciousness.

Worship also creates a strong sense within a Muslim to remove the evil within himself and in the community and environment and to establish the word of God throughout the world. God says:

اتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ -

“Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee, and establish regular Prayer: for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt. And Allah knows the (deeds that ye do).”¹²

Again, when a person spends his day performing specific acts of worship, they are constantly reminded of the purpose of life and their final end, and this in turn helps them to accord their lives to the Will of God, doing what He is pleased with and avoiding what He dislikes.

One can clearly see the impact worship has on a collective level. Society is merely a conglomeration of individuals, and when individuals are spiritually and morally upright, the society itself will also be upright. Ideally, the society will be one which feels that God is ever-watching over them; one to which beneficent acts of kindness will be an inseparable adjective, and sine and vice will be confined and limited.

Although it may seem to some that worship and obedience to God is similar to imprisonment and slavery, the worship of God and servitude to Him actually liberates humans from all types of subjugation. A person breaks free from the chains of society, peers, and family, and liberates him to please His One True Lord. This is true freedom that brings about security and contentment. Servitude to God is ultimate source of freedom. Worship provides the believers with many benefits that contribute to both their spiritual and worldly well-being. Some of the most significant of these benefits are as follows: the human body needs material resources for its existence, like food, drink, and a means of reproduction. As for the soul, its needs cannot be fulfilled except through nearness to Allah by means of faith and obedience, which can only be achieved through worship. Allah must be worshipped in times of hardship and times of prosperity. Allah says: “We truly know how your heart is distressed by what they say. So celebrate the praise of your Lord and be of those who prostrate themselves and worship your Lord until the sure hour (of death).”

Allah says: “When the help of Allah and the victory comes and you see the people entering into the religion of Allah in crowds, then glorify the praises of your Lord and seek His forgiveness. Verily He is Most Forgiving.”

Worship liberates the human being from subjugation to anything besides Allah and prevents a person from surrendering his or her will to false gods. This is true freedom that brings about security and contentment. Submission to Allah is a real source of strength. Allah says:

“If anyone seeks might, then all might is with Allah.” Allah says, quoting Moses (peace be upon him): “O my people, this worldly life is but a provision, while the Hereafter is the eternal abode.” The worldly life is a time of trial. The substance of this trial is the worship of Allah in fulfillment of His commandments Allah says: “(It is Allah) who created death and life to try you as to who is best in deeds.”

We find that worship, in its most comprehensive meaning, embodies every possible means of individual and social reform. This is because every individual and collective endeavor can enter into the domain of worship. Islam has prescribed certain obligations on the societal level as opposed to the individual level. This takes societal needs into consideration. Allah says: Allah has promised those among you who believe and do righteous deeds that he will give them authority in the Earth as He has done for those who came before and that He will establish their religion that He wants to replace their fear with security. They may worship Me and not associate partners with Me.

The advent of Islam brought about great reforms in the domain of worship. Islam came at a time when there were many forms of worship in the world. Some of these were remnants of the previous divinely revealed scriptures. Others were completely man-made. Even those acts of worship that were of divine origin had been corrupted, altered, and removed from their proper contexts. Worship, according to Islam, is a means for the purification of man's soul and his practical life. The basis of "Ibadah (worship) is the fact that human beings are creatures and thus bond-servants of Allah, their Creator and their Lord, to whom they are destined to return. Thus Man's turning towards Allah, in intimate communion, reverence, and in the spirit of devotion and humble submission, is termed Ibadah. Worship is an indispensable part of all religions, including the idolatrous ones. It is motivated, however, in each religion by different objective, assumes different forms and it's performed under a different set of rules. In some religions worship is a means to develop in man the attitude of asceticism and isolation from life. In these religions, it seeks to develop a mentality which anathematizes the enjoyment of the pleasures of this world. Then, there are other religions which consecrate certain places for the sake of worship and prohibit its performance at any other place. There are also religions which are of the view that worship can be performed only under the leadership of a particular class of people – the ordained priests. People may, therefore, perform worship under the leadership of priests and only at the places consecrated for it. Thus, the nature as well as the forms of worship differs from one religion to the other.

As for Islam, its conception of worship is related to this fundamental view that the true foundation of good life are soundness of belief and thinking, purity of soul, and righteousness of action. Through belief in the unity of Allah, who is invested with all the attributes of perfection, Islam seeks to purge human intellect of the filth of idolatry and superstitious fancies. In fact, polytheism and idolatry which are opposed by Islam degrade man to a level which is incompatible with his dignity. Islam fights against idolatry and polytheism in whichever forms and to whatever extent they might be found. In this concern to eradicate idolatry Islam takes notice even of the imperceptible forms of idolatry. It takes notice even to those beliefs and practices which do not appear to their adherents as tainted with idolatry. One of the manifestations of this concern is that Islam does not permit the performance of ritual prayer (salat) in front of a tomb, nor does it permit man to swear in the name of anyone except Allah. All this is owing to the uncompromising hostility of Islam to idolatry. When Caliph 'Omar saw that people had begun to sanctify the tree beneath which the Companions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) had pledged to lay down their lives in the way of Allah on the occasion of Hudaibiya, he

feared that its sanctification might corrupt the beliefs of the people. He therefore, had it cut down.

Later during the 12th century AH (18th Century) the great reformer Sheikh Muhammad Ben Abdul Wahhab, in Najd, central Arabia, with the support of Al-Saud Amirs rejected all forms of heresy which was prevalent in the Muslim world at the time. He called for pure and absolute monotheism. He rejected all innovations in religion and opposed such things as building domes or mosques over graves, the celebrations of birthday of Awliya (Saints) and other Sufi commemorations. He encouraged people to do good deeds and insisted that they fulfill their religious obligations. By destroying everything which might blur the distinction between the creature and the creator, Islam brought man out of the darkness of the superstition and ignorance to the full daylight of realities.

Coming back to 'worship' in Islam, it serves as a means to purge man's soul and his practical life of sin and wickedness. It has been so regulated to suffice for the purpose of this purification, provided it is performed in earnest and if sufficient care is taken to preserve its true spirit.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

The characteristic features of worship as propounded by Islam may be stated as the following:

1. Freedom from Intermediaries:

First of all, Islam has liberated "worship" from the bondage of intermediaries between man and his Creator. Islam seeks to create a direct link between man and his Lord, thus rendering the intercession of intermediaries unnecessary.

Religious scholars in Islam, it may be pointed out, are neither intermediaries between man and Allah nor are they considered to be entitled to accept or reject acts of worship on behalf of Allah. Instead, they are equal to ordinary human beings in the sight of Allah. Rather, they have been burdened with the additional duty of imparting knowledge to those who lack knowledge. They will be deemed guilty if they hold it back from the seekers after knowledge. In other words, the Islamic Shar'ia does not impose the domination of religious scholars on the rest of the people. The function of these scholars is

merely to guide people in the right direction. This is amply borne out by what Allah said to the Holy Prophet.

فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ -

“Therefore do thou give admonition, for thou art one to admonish.”¹³

لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ -

“Thou art not one to manage (men’s) affairs.”¹⁴

The prophet (peace be on him) also addressed the following words to his own daughter Fathimah, which show that all human beings stand on a footing of complete equality before Allah.

2. Not Confined to Specific Places:

Secondly, Islam has not only liberated man’s Ibadah from the bondage of intermediaries; it has also liberated it from confinement to specific places. Islam regards every place whether it is one’s dwelling place, the back of an animal, the board of a vessel on the surface of the sea, or a mosque specifically built for worship – as pure enough for the performance of worship. Wherever a man might be, he can turn towards his Lord and offer his prayers to Him. The Holy Prophet and expressed this idea beautifully:

‘The (Whole of the) earth has been rendered for me a mosque; pure and clean’.

3. All – Embracing View.

Thirdly, Islam has also considerably widened the scope of worship. In Islam, worship is not confined to specified prayers and Litanies which are to be performed on particular occasions. Rather, Islam considers every virtuous action which has been sincerely performed and with the view to carry out the commandments of Allah and in order to seek His pleasure, an act of worship for which man will be rewarded. The fact is that even eating, drinking, sleeping and enjoyment of innocent recreation, even those worldly actions which satisfy man’s physical needs and even yield sensuous pleasures, become acts of worship provided they are performed with true religious motives. Yes, even those acts become acts of worship if the intention underlying them is to comply with the Will of Allah: that is, if one tries to satisfy one’s needs within legitimate means so as to keep oneself in check against indulging in things

which are prohibited. It is also an act of worship to try to strengthen one's body by providing it with its due of nourishment and sleep; by making it undertake exertion as well as giving it rest and recreation so as to enable it to shoulder the responsibilities which have been placed on man by Allah. In fact, if one does all that with the above mentioned intention, one's action would be in harmony with the following saying of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him): 'A believer who is possessed of strength is better and dearer to Allah than a believer who is weak'. In short, it is simply by purification of motives that the actions which are part of worldly life become acts of devotion and worship.

Thus, it is possible that a man should advance spiritually even while he is fully enjoying the pleasures of worldly life. The reason is that during all this enjoyment his heart will be in communion with Allah by virtue of the purity of his intentions, and owing to his having yoked himself completely to the service of Allah. It will enable him to remain perpetually in the state of submission, obedience and devotion to Allah – even during his working pursuits – and this is the very essence of worship.

For Islam, unlike other religions, does not anathematize gratification of man's instinctive bodily appetites.

Islam does not even consider abstention from the satisfaction of these desires to be in any way an act of greater piety and virtue than satisfying them. Islam wants man to enjoy the pleasures and good things of life provided he does not transgress the limits of legitimacy or the rights of others, nor trample upon moral excellence, nor injure the larger interests of society.

There is profound wisdom and an important reason for this extension of the scope of worship. The reason is that Islam wants man's heart to remain in perpetual contact with his Lord. Islam also wants that man should observe ceaseless vigilance over his desires so that his life may become a source of his welfare in the life to come as the Qur'an says:

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنَ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ۔

the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief.”¹⁵

Now, when a person know that even his enjoyments and pleasures can become acts of worship merely by virtue of purity of intention and motive, it becomes easy for him to render obedience to Allah continually and to direct all his attention in seeking divine pleasure. For he knows well that this devotion to Allah does not necessarily mean abandonment of worldly life, misery and wretchedness.

What does good intention lead to? it will prevent man from forgetting Allah because of excessive self-indulgence. The Holy Prophet said that (even) when a person affectionately puts a piece of food in the mouth of his wife in order to strengthen bonds of matrimonial love, he is rewarded for it. This is understandable for he is trying to fulfill the purpose of living together with love and affection , the purpose which, as the Qur'an says is the *raison d'être* of family life.

“And among His Signs in this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect.”¹⁶

INTENTIONS AND MOTIVES

It is because of this basis that Muslim jurists and scholars have proclaimed that good intention changes acts of habit (*adah*) into acts of worship (*Ibadah*). Good intention creates a world of difference in human life. It is owing to the absence of purity of intention that there are people who eat and drink and satisfy their animal desires and while so doing they simply live on the same plane as the animals do. The reason for this is that their actions are actuated by no other motive than the gratification of animal desires. On the contrary there are also people who are, apparently, similar to the aforementioned people in so far as they also satisfy their desires and enjoy the pleasure of life. Nevertheless, thanks to the noble intention which motivates their actions, even their physical self-fulfillment becomes an act of worship for which they merit reward. The reason is that the motive behind all their actions is to live in compliance with the Will of Allah. Their sublimity of motive becomes manifest in their conduct in day-to-day life in so far as it reflects the fact that they distinguish between good and evil.

On the contrary, those whose lives are shorn of good intentions are liable to be overwhelmed by their lusts and are likely to slide into a life of sin and moral decadence. On the contrary, the purity of intention and high thinking are likely, with regards to people of the second category, to stand in the way of their

slipping into degradation. And thanks to the positive attitude of Islam towards life, all this is ensured without depriving man of a wholesome enjoyment of life. The real life of this difference lies in the fact that while the one is always mindful of Allah and remembers Him, the other is altogether negligent. It is this that makes the former a pious, worshipful being, and the latter a heedless, self-indulgent animal. It is for the people of this kind that the Holy Qur`an has said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَتَمَتَّعُونَ وَيَأْكُلُونَ
كَمَا تَأْكُلُ الْأَنْعَامُ وَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَهُمْ۔

“Verily Allah will admit those who believe and do righteous deeds, to Gardens beneath which rivers flow; while those who reject Allah will enjoy (this world) and eat as cattle eat; and the Fire will be their abode.”¹⁷

Then, what a great loss indeed do people suffer by not rectifying their orientation of life and purifying their intentions. For it is this alone which transforms even their pursuits of pleasure and enjoyment into acts of worship what a tragedy that people spoil the prospects of their eternal life although they could have been attained so easily, without necessarily losing their share in this world. This is the Islamic philosophy of worship. Without saying ‘no’ to any of his legitimate physical needs and desires, Islam seeks to elevate man to a place which benefits his dignity and status. “the real purpose of Islam in declaring that ‘Ibadah embraces the total life of man is to make religious faith play a practical and effective role in reforming human life, in developing in man an attitude of dignified patience and fortitude in the face of hardships and difficulties and in creating in him the urge to strive for the prevalence of good and extirpation of evil.”¹⁸

In short, all our activities are ‘Ibadah if they are in accordance with the law of Allah and our ultimate objective is to seek the pleasure of Allah. Thus, whenever we do good or avoid evil for fear of Allah, in whatever sphere of life and field of activity, you are discharging your Islamic obligations. This is the true significance of ‘Ibadah, that is, total submission to the pleasure of Allah, the molding into patterns of Islam one’s entire life, leaving out not even the most insignificant part, or intention.

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- ¹ Qur'an Chapter 2, Verse 148.
 - ² Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, The concept of Worship in Islam (General Administration of Culture and Publication 2002) 23.
 - ³ Qur'an Chapter 6, Verse 162
 - ⁴ Malcolm Clark , Islam for Dummies (Wiley Publishing 2003)39
 - ⁵ Qur'an Chapter 2, Verse 177.
 - ⁶ Rita Faelli Islam : History, Beliefs, Worships and celebrations (Blake Education 2006) 24
 - ⁷ Marvin Holland inner Dimensions of Islamic Worship (Islamic Foundation 1983) 134
 - ⁸ Qur'an Chapter 19, Verse 93.
 - ⁹ Edward Geoffery Parrinder Worship in World's religions (Littlefield Adams 1976) 185
 - ¹⁰ Qur'an Chapter 2 Verse 21.
 - ¹¹ Qur'an Chapter 20 Verse 14
 - ¹² Qur'an Chapter 29, Verse 45
 - ¹³ Qur'an Chapter 88 Verse 21.
 - ¹⁴ Qur'an Chapter 88 Verse 22
 - ¹⁵ Qur'an Chapter 28, Verse 77.
 - ¹⁶ Qur'an Chapter 20, Verse 31
 - ¹⁷ Qur'an Chapter 47, Verse 12
 - ¹⁸ Muhammad Abdul Munnim Jamaal Worship in Islam (university of Michigan Press 1977)

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