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<u>Home</u> > <u>A Few Words on Knowing Allah</u> > <u>Chapter 1: Allah as Introduced by Islam</u> > Pilgrimage and the Respect Due To Shrines of the Imams and Religious Leaders

Chapter 1: Allah as Introduced by Islam

Islamic call is based on *tawhid* – divine unity and the acknowledgement of Allah, the real God, the Creator of the Universe, the One we must recognize and worship, a God free from all embellishments, superstitions and fancies; devoid of all legends, imaginations and myths; destitute of every contamination and weakness; simple and understandable to everybody. This itself is a great service to man's thought, contemplation and intellect and to the development of the God–seeking nature of man. Moreover, as we shall see later, pure *tawhid* is the basis of the worldview, the social and ethical philosophy of Islam.

Allah, The Universal God

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. (1:2)

Allah, as introduced by Islam, and to Whom all the peoples are called, is «Lord of the Worlds» (1:2); namely, the Lord, Creator, and the Master of the whole creation. He is Allah. Thus, all limits attributed to their gods by followers of various schools, sects and religions disappear. The Jews, for example, have a racial and national god. That is to say, the Jews regarded Jehovah as their own god, and expected that his care and grace be bestowed upon them solely, though Judaism was a religion of tawhid and worship of God. Therefore, other races and nations must look for another god.

Or in ancient Greece, which was the centre of civilization, science, and philosophy, whose scientists and philosophers were universally renowned, there also existed various racial and national gods, though at the head of all these gods, a god of gods has sometimes been conceived. But Allah, the God of Islam, is a universal and eternal God for all nations and inhabitants of the world. He is neither the only heavenly or earthly God, nor is He merely the god of the Semitic nation, Aryans or any other races.

Allah, The Unique

Allah is one, i.e., contrary to all those who believe in polytheism and speak of god of species, that is to say, assign a particular god to a certain act and position: Lord of Fertility, Lord of War, Lord of Desert, Lord of Famine, Lord of Power, etc., Islam introduces one God for all objects and affairs. He is called "Allah." (2:22,2:117,2:165)

Or think of Zoroastrianism which although might have basically been a monotheist religion, its followers have gradually spoken of duality: God and Satan- god of good and god of evil.

Or consider Christianity which assigned a son, Jesus, to God. Its main scientific and philosophical debate was to discuss Jesus' nature to determine whether he himself is God, whether he has detached from Him, whether he is His manifestation, or the same as the providence of God, or still, whether he has been co–substantial with God, or has appeared after Him. This altogether constituted the discussion leading to God, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity in Christianity. (5:75), (4:170)

Or else, consider the pagan Arabs of the pre-Islamic era, who assumed angels to be God's daughters. (37:159)

Glory be to Allah (for freedom) from what they describe (37:159)

Islam says that God is one. He has neither a son, a daughter, a mother, a father, nor a partner or colleague. (112:1–4), (37:159)

who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? (2:255)

Even, there is no intercessor who can act as an intermediary without His Will and Permission.

Allah has no partner, that is to say, no person or object collaborates with Him in His affairs. But Allah Himself may decide to create particular means, agents and causes for certain affairs. He has, for instance, created the sun to give heat and light and for some other uses or food for man to eat and enjoy. But the sun and food are not associates of Allah who help Him in bringing heat and food to man. These are merely certain means created by God to fulfill His commands.

So is the case with intercession: as the sun gives heat and light by Divine will, the Holy Prophet leads people to the right path, good deeds and prosperity in pursuit of His Will. Whenever Allah deems it

advisable, the Prophet seeks His blessing and forgiveness for certain people. He himself forgives no one and causes no confusion in the Divine system of punishment and reward. Nor does he ask for Divine grace on behalf of anyone unless the latter does merit it. Therefore, people have no absolute master and guardian on the earth except from Allah (6:14)

Say: O followers of the Book! come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate aught with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah; but if they turn back, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims. (3:64)

All people are Allah's creatures. They are weak and in need of His blessing. So, those who obstinately claim lordship or those base and mean people who praise and worship earthly, man-made masters and gods and regard them as beings possessing independent wills, are but idolaters who assume partners for Allah.

Allah, The Ever-Living

Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Everliving, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; (2:255)

Allah is a living being not like those creatures who are identified with motion, growth, breathing, procreation, nutrition... Allah is the reality of existence. Allah's Being is the same as His Omnipotence and Omni sovereignty.

Allah, The Eternal And Immortal

He is the First and the Last and the Ascendant (overall) and the Knower of hidden things, and He is Cognizant of all things. (57:3)

Allah, who is the essence of life and origin of existence, is immortal, that is to say, He has always

existed and will continue to exist.

We must know that Allah is eternal. It means that there exists neither a past, a present nor a future for Him. We usually live for a short time, say a period of sixty, seventy years or a bit longer. We live on the earth, surrounded by atmosphere, which rotates permanently and sees the sunrise and sunset alternatively. We are beings who grow up gradually. Thus, we are in a state of motion and subject to the time element. But Allah is free from time. He is Himself the creator of time, motions and rotations. For Allah, time is meaningless: that is, past, future, eternity or present do not exist for him.

Allah, The Sovereign

Allah has absolute sovereignty and jurisdiction over the whole of creation. (2:255)

He is superior to everything and is not subject or confined to worldly creatures. He is timeless, influenced by nothing and needless of others' favors and grace. He is the Sublime.

Allah, The Omnipotent

surely Allah has power over all things. (2:20)

Allah is Omnipotent, i.e. He possesses absolute power which is beyond all knowledge and imagination.

How much can He do? When can He do? Can He do?

Such questions cannot be applied to the providence of Allah. His domain is fathomless, so much so that He is capable of creating whatever He wishes, and of bringing about any sort of change regardless of time and place. Therefore, His sovereignty is limitless, going beyond human understanding. In other words, Allah is thoroughly unrestricted. This is a topic which calls for a great philosophical debate.

We are beings who possess but a tiny portion of the whole existence. But Allah's existence is limitless, not in the sense that His existence can be conceived to extend between two ends. He does not have a physical embodiment. He embraces the whole existence (This is a subject we shall deal with later.)

Allah, The Omniscient

And with Him are the keys of the unseen treasures -- none knows them but He(6:59)

Allah is Omniscient. Past and future, open and hidden are known to Him. He is even aware of the thoughts and intentions of each being.

Unlike a human being whose knowledge is restricted and who can only focus its attention on certain things at one time, Allah is All-knowing and is aware of the whole universe at all times. He ignores nothing. He acquires knowledge from no source, and He has complete understanding of everything before its creation. He, who is the Creator, has created the world together with its rules and laws.

Allah, The All-Hearing, The All-Seeing

Allah is All-hearing and All-seeing. (58:1)

He hears and sees, not through certain organs– ears, eyes, nerves, etc. as does a human being. He has ultimate knowledge over the nature of any phenomenon, object or thing.

Allah, The Self-Subsisting

Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Everliving, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; (2:255)

Allah is self– subsisting, by whom all subsist. He is self–sufficient, whom all need. None gives Him aid and blessing. He is complete and perfect. Waiting, amendment, shortage, evolution, etc. are meaningless to Allah. He is perfect, boundless, and absolutely free from want; whose grace and blessing, all, in whatever condition or position, need; and all exist in pursuit of His will.

Allah, The Almighty And Compassionate

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. (1:1)

Jehovah the god as introduced in the Old Testament, is a harsh and almighty God; a majestic compeller who treats merely in accordance with his justice and forgives not the least negligence and disobedience within what he has already laid down. He is so important and so serious that man dares not communicate freely with him. Firmness, terror, and power remind one of Jehovah.

On the contrary, Jesus, the god of Christianity, is an intimate, friendly and hearty god who descends from the sky, co-habits with man, becomes his father and finally takes the embodiment of a human being.

But Allah, the God of Islam, possesses both characteristics. He is Almighty and Compeller, while at the same time, Compassionate and Merciful. He is the Mighty, Protector and Vengeful. He is Kind and Compassionate. On the one hand. His domain of sovereignty and governance extend between two extremes of the world: on the other hand. He is closer to all creatures than they themselves are to each other. All creatures can communicate and attain proximity to Him, solicit His favor and worship Him without an intermediary. To have a clear conception of the God of Islam, i.e. Allah, one must combine endless affection and kindness with constant power.

Acts of Allah

Allah created the world along with all that exists in it. He brought them into existence and He maintains them. In fact, everything exists in pursuit of His Will and no phenomenon, change or transformation takes place but through His Will.

Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth! (6:101)

Creation consists of two stages. The first one consists in initiating creation that is bringing into existence. Allah *«initiated the whole creation most initially. »* (6:101)

The second step in creation is the change and transformation that phenomena of the world undergo, the same as a human embryo which at first is created from the male and female cells and then grows with its nourishment from the human blood. The blood, too, is composed of elements which are actually existent in nature.

According to the Quran, Allah is the Creator of the whole universe, and the sole initiator of change and

transformation, from the most trivial to the most important phenomenon in nature. Darkness and light, the pouring rain, the grain which splits beneath the ground, the blowing wind, the ripening fruit, the seeding in gardens and farms, the rotating planets, the shining sun, the glowing moon, the flowing flood, the blowing typhoon, earthquakes and thunders, the germinating plant, the withering leaves in autumn, even the very act of the falling leaf from a tree, the bees' attempts at gathering nectar, all in all are accomplished through the providence of Allah.

Allah created the stars, mountains, oceans, lands, animals, plants, flowers, fruits, human beings, birds, pastures, jungles, forests, underground waters, lakes, rivers and on the whole, whatever exists in Nature. (6:95–105), (13:2–4), (13:13–19), (6: 13), (6: 14), (16:2–17).

Examples of these can be found repeatedly throughout the Quran, enabling us to conclude that:

I. Islam negates all gods and intermediaries whom various nations used to assume for different things and affairs. Almost all ancient religions of Iran. India, Greece, Rome and pre-Islamic Arabs admitted the existence of numerous gods and goddesses whose numbers often exceeded scores or even hundreds. Islam negates all these gods and goddesses and attributes the realization of all things and actions to Allah, the unique God, the Omnipotent, and the Omniscient.

2. Contrary to those people who believe that Allah has resigned the governance of the world and assume that He created the universe, put it in motion and then gave it up, as the Jews who according to the Ouran have said:

«The hand of Allah is tied up, » (5:64)

Islam preaches that Allah is the absolute sovereign of the world,

«All those who are in the heavens and the earth ask of Him; every moment He is in a state (of glory) » (55:29)

and nothing is done but through His Will His grace, blessing and favor are permanent. Should Allah decide not to govern the functions of the world, the whole existence will come to an end.

Knowing Allah And Science

It is worth noting that the reality of natural phenomena, laws, causes and effects, is not contrary to

attributing the execution of all acts to Allah, for the Author, Creator and Preserver of these laws, causes and effects is Allah. In other words, neither the very existence of laws of Nature in coming into existence and transformation of natural phenomena oppose the belief in the existence of Allah, nor belief in His existence should induce us to maintain the idea of disorder and anarchy in the world.

Certain people who claim to be theists but have no scientific knowledge suppose that as it is Allah who, for instance, sends down rain, and that when He does so, a hole must therefore appear in the sky without any reason and calculation, through which rain will pour from a reservoir upheld there. If they are told that oceanic water vaporizes when warmed by sunshine, that the wind displaces the condensed vapor, and wherever the temperature is low, the vapor is transformed into drops of water and rain, and if the temperature is still lower, the drops take the shape of snow and hail, they may ask: So what part does Allah play in this process? They argue that this argumentation is contrary to the Supreme Power and Providence.

They should be answered that according to the Quran, everything is subject to law and order:

«The Sun and the Moon are made punctual. »(55:5)

«And the heaven. He raised it high, and He established the balance. » (55:7)

Allah could create the human being all at once, but He ordained the creation of the baby through certain processes and particular means. He established rules and orders for every phenomenon, regardless of its size and volume. These rules and orders mean exactly laws and causes of Nature.

By discovering the laws and mysteries of Nature, man will become more knowledgeable about the essence and transformation of natural phenomena, and by applying his gained knowledge, while profiting from natural gifts, he can improve his living conditions.

However, the same as the recognition of laws and mysteries of nature cannot harm the stability of theology, so also, the reality of natural laws and mysteries cannot be the sole means of recognizing Allah. But a universe, well organized and systematic, can help us in knowing Allah, The Sage and the Mighty.

Every phenomenon m the world is the result of certain agents and causes already existent in Nature, but the embodiment all phenomena is in accordance to Allah's Will. He brings forth birth, He causes to die, He provides us with daily bread and He sends the rain, because it is He who has established the causes and agents of these happenings. The world together with all laws and principles are originated and created by Allah.

What Cannot Be Attributed To Allah (Negative Attributes)

So far we have pointed out the qualities that could be attributed to Allah, such as power, eternity etc., which constitute the very essence of Allah. Recognizing the positive qualities of Allah, we arrive automatically at those qualities which cannot be attributed to Him. Those qualities should be clearly pointed out through a critical study, because we are material and thus bonded beings, and we generally like to adapt the Creator of the universe to the domain of our own perception.

We like, for instance, to imagine Him as an incarnate, material and temporal being, whereas it is evident that assigning such qualities to Allah will imply that He is imperfect and needful, qualities which cannot be attributed to Him. We shall discuss the subject in the following paragraphs.

Allah, a Non-Material Being

A material being consist of something which somehow accords with feeling and experience. It occupies space such as the sun, the tree, air, light etc. Allah is not material because matter, regardless of its size, is limited and finite. Even the greatest galaxy is not infinite and one may imagine a galaxy greater than it, But Allah is limitless. He is the absolute Perfection and He is infinite. Had He not been so, He would have been imperfect and needful.

Matter is also compound: namely it is composed of certain particles, elements and atoms which can be decomposed. A compound always depends on the existence of elements which constitute it and such a compound is also the very necessity of its nature, and every element is needless of and independent from the other elements. There is no such dependence, necessity or negligence for Allah because He is the Omnipresent, the Omniscient and the Absolute Sovereign.

Another characteristic of matter is its versatility. All material beings including animals, plants, the sun and mountains are constantly in a state of transformation: Animals and plants undergo some periods of growth, depreciation, withering and eventually die; constant and great combustions and explosions cause the sun to lose its weight; mountains affected by physical and meteorological agents such as sunshine, flood, earthquake, etc. undergo certain changes and transformations.

No change and transformation can be attributed to the essence of Allah, because He has no deficiency which needs growth, nor is He affected by the passage of time and occurrences in Nature to become weak and decrepit. In a word, Allah is by no means under the influence of His creation, otherwise He would be affected and subjected to something other than Himself, and this does not conform to the absolute needlessness of Allah. We therefore come to the conclusion that: since Allah is not a material being, He does not possess a physical being. He will never take the embodiment of a human being or

any other creature neither on earth, nor in the hereafter. Thus it is impossible to see Him.

Allah has no place and station on the earth or in heaven. He has chosen no location for Himself. Thus, supposing a particular place for Allah, who is immaterial, would be wrong. Therefore, what we read in the existing versions of the Old Testament about this goes contrary to the truth. The following is extracted from the Bible:

"After ascending to heaven, Christ dwelt on the right side of the Lord."

"The Lord was in heaven and He was annoyed with the sins of His children on the Earth. So He descended in the appearance of the Holy Ghost and dwelt in the womb of Mary. Whereupon He was incarnated and born as Jesus Christ to save his people from sins and to appoint Himself as a God for human beings."

Or further still:

"(Walking in the Garden of Eden, Eve took of the fruit from the forbidden tree) thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband (Adam) with her; and he did eat; and the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked... And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, 'Where art thou?' and he said, 'I heard thy voice, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself. And He said, who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

And the Lord God said:

«Behold, the man has become as one of us to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever» Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. »

«The Lord wrestled with Jacob till dawn. »

«And the Lord appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mam-re: and He sat in the tent door in the heat of the day... and Abraham fetched Him a little water to wash His feet, and he hastened to have some lamb meat roasted for his Lord. »

Such statements are but aberrations because Allah is not a physical being. He is not visible, He has no abode and finally He is not needful.

Although Allah has no abode, He is Omnipresent. This does not mean that His embodiment is so large as to occupy the whole world from east to west. Allah is immaterial, but His Will, Presence and Knowledge manifest themselves everywhere. Unfortunately, some Islamic sects believe that Allah will

appear on the Day of Resurrection. But the Holy Quran declares:

«Vision comprehends Him not, and He comprehends (all) vision. »(6: 103)

Also, when the children of Israel asked Moses to see God, he was addressed:

«O Moses thou shalt never see thy Lord. »

Imam Ali (as) said:

«Our eyes are unable to see Allah, but our thought and heart may attain Him through the light of faith. »

Moreover, from the standpoint of reason and wisdom, Allah is invisible, because we conclude that He is immaterial and He has no embodiment.

Although when praying, we raise our hands towards the sky, it does not imply that Allah resides in the sky, or that He is seated on His throne. In this way, we are to represent the state of a needful being, or it is because we know the upper world as pure and free from earthly corruption and pollution. We do our prayers in mosques or other holy places not because Allah dwells in such places but for the very reason that mosques and the Kaaba are built in the name of Allah and they are sacred.

Allah Is Not Needful

Our prayers, bows, ablutions, alms and sacrifices render no service to Allah in the way the pre– Islamic Arabs and the idolater of ancient Rome and Greece supposed they would help God by offering sacrifices and receive, in return, His blessing. All these are but our duties towards Allah, so that we may pay homage to and worship Him and also render service to other human beings.

Anger And Kindness

The anger of Allah cannot be taken in the sense that He becomes nervous or agitated by the acts of His creatures: or else, as is the case with human beings, that the blood stirs in His veins or that He is taken by fits. Nor does His kindness resemble that of a mother towards her baby or that of a benevolent man towards a bereaved and miserable one.

Mothers normally feel pity at the cry of their little ones and they usually have mercy on them. They are also amused by the laughter's and childish feats of their children whereupon they feel more affection towards them. But Allah becomes neither impressed nor sorrowful, nor happy or joyful by the external world, i.e. anything outside His Existence. Actually, none of these psychical states that go with sorrow,

ecstasy, anger, pity, etc. can affect Allah. Had this not been so, He would be impressionable, submissive and emotive, which do not accord with His absolute Perfection and Sovereignty.

Divine mercy consists of those donations which Allah offers His creatures, or favors and blessings which He bestows upon them. Divine anger consists of the calamity and torment to which a creature might be subjected because of his conduct. Negligence, remorse, jealousy, deceits, etc. are attributes which do not agree with Allah's nature.

However the Bible does relate such unjust attributes to God as the quotation below clearly reveals:

«And God saw that the wickedness and corruption of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord for having created man on the earth, and it grieved Him at his heart. And the Lord said: «I do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die. » (Old Testament. 6:5)

Or as was previously related in the story concerning the heaven of Adam we read: «And the Lord God said, behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. »

But the holy presence of Allah is free from such attribution. Islam teaches us that sorrow, regret, repentance, ignorance and jealousy etc. do not accord with the absolute perfection of Allah who is Infinite. If Moses heard the voice of God that is not to say that God spoke to Him as we normally do by means of the vocal system, i.e. the vocal cords, larynx, tongue and mouth, because Allah is not a material being. He creates all voices. Moreover, the way in which Moses hears, is of a particular conception, pertaining to the domain of revelation. In the same way, if the Eminent Prophet of Islam ascended to the sky (Me'raj) whereupon he made communication with Allah, we are not to suppose that the Prophet approached the threshold of the residence of Allah and heard His voice as we, human beings, hear people's voices. This too, is a question of special approach and communication.

Fatigue, age and sleep do not overcome Allah. In the Holy Quran, we read:

«Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him » (2:255)

and·

«His Throne includes the heavens and the earth and He is never weary of preserving them.»(2:255)

Such qualifications apply to material beings as well as those creatures who suffer from weakness, failure and insufficiency, but Allah is neither feeble nor incompetent.

Allah is not like a human being for whom we can conceive a son, daughter, consort, mother or father. When we say that Allah is not a living and material being as we are, these sorts of family bonds, too, do not accord with Him. We, therefore, conclude that the Christian belief in attributing a son, Jesus, to God, the Jews who maintain a similar idea about Ezra, the pre– Islamic Arabs who regarded angels as daughters of God, those who supposed that God had taken a Jinn as His wife and any similar belief are entirely false and to be abolished. As we read in the Holy Quran:

«He is Allah, the One. Allah, the Eternally Besought of all. He begets not, nor is begotten. And there is none compared unto Him. » (112:1-4)

The Monotheistic Worship

In the previous discussion, we concluded that Allah is one and no other thing such as the sun, the moon, the stars, various types of idols, animals, human beings ... could have had a hand in originating and creating the world. Admitting the oneness of Allah, and recognizing no associate for Him, we must follow the Holy Quran which announces:

«So pray not unto anyone along with Allah. » (72: 18) and:

«And there are some among men who take/or themselves objects of worship besides Allah», (2: 165)

and:

«Or choose they intercessors other than Allah? Say: What even though they have power over nothing and have no intelligence? » (39:43)

and we must not

«Choose protecting friends beside Him (say): We worship them only that they may bring us near unto Allah. »(39:3)

And we must adore neither the Satan nor any diabolic and rebellious (against Him) ruler:

"and do not follow the footsteps of the Shaitan" (6: 142)

and

«Thee (alone) we worship; thee (alone) we ask for help» (1:5)

This subject includes the study of the following:

- 1. Worship
- 2. Admiration
- 3. Obedience

Worship and devotion consist of those acts in which we prostrate ourselves before Allah; we for instance, genuflect and prostrate wherein we utter words which testify our complete submission and absolute resignation before His Divine power and perfection; at the same time, they attract our attention towards the Originator and induce us to guard against carnal desires and temptations.

There is a variety of customs and traditions, sometimes associated with a host of superstitions in all religions in the course of which people display their submission. In Islam, the symbol of worship is the performance of daily prayers (*Salat*), which manifests complete prostration and absolute servitude of men before the Sublime (Allah).

Although praise and prostration before anything other than Allah may sometimes be intended not as

worship, such acts are, in fact, considered as atheistic (*shirk*). To kneel down before certain people, to express servitude towards them, to admit complete submission and resignation and to dismiss one's will and freedom mean but atheism.

Muslims prostrate themselves only before Allah and they recognize Allah as their own master and sovereign. They regard all others as feeble creatures because they need the grace and blessings of God, and they are subject to the Decrees and Will of the Sovereign. Muslims regard even the greatest universal personality, i.e., the Eminent Prophet of Islam as a creature and servant of Allah. Actually, they repeat this verity several times in their daily prayers (*Tashahod*), and on many occasions, the Holy Quran too, introduces Muhammad (S) as a «servant» to Allah.

When for example Muhammad is appointed by Allah as the guide and leader of mankind, Allah addresses him in this manner:

«Blessed is He who sent down the Furqan upon His servant that he may be a warner to the nations» (25: 1)

«Glory be to Him who made His servant to go on a night from the Sacred Mosque to the remote mosque of which We have blessed the Precincts, so that We may show to him some of Our signs;» (17: 1)

These were revealed in order to prevent the people from regarding Muhammad as a god due to his high dignity.

Worship is usually accompanied with adoration, and in our daily prayers, we adore, thank, praise and honor Allah.

We know Him to be free from any defect and impurity and we adore Him in many ways through praising, honoring, sanctifying and admitting His transcendence.

...Glory be to Him, and supremely exalted is He above what they set up (with Him). (10:18)

...yea, magnify Him for His greatness and glory!" (17:111)

And glorify Him morning and evening. (33:42)

Absolute adoration, too, is performed only for Allah; (1:2) it means that we should not give unlimited praise or adoration to a person or an object because the perfection and the degree of goodness of anything other than Allah is limited, and it is only the infinite essence of Allah that is inconceivably good, and perfect.

Eulogizing a human being will result in flattery and it habituates us to lie and exaggerate in all domains. It also fosters obstinate and haughty people to a state wherein they cannot feel and recognize their imperfections and causes them not to cut their coat according to their cloth. Too much praise may give rise to pseudo- powers (against Allah) whose evil is usually calamitous to society. Therefore, in Islam, unlimited praise and adoration are meant only for Allah.

Servitude and the very state of spiritual servitude to Allah will result in obedience; that is when we regard ourselves as servants of Allah and worship Him alone, we will automatically obey His orders. Indisputable and sheer obedience, too, must be exclusively for Allah. In other words, anything other than Allah, be it an object, an animal or a human being may be obeyed but in certain circumstances and under limited conditions. Even the Prophet of Islam did not command independently and his commands originated from Divine Revelation:

Nor does he [Muhammad] speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed (53:3-4)

He himself could not change whatever was revealed to him nor could he issue orders without His permission:

«[O Muhammad] Say "it is not for me to change it of my own accord. I only follow that which is inspired in me. Lo! If I disobey my Lord I fear the retribution of an awful Day. » (10: 15)

Thus obedience to anything other than Allah is limited to certain laws and regulations and no one should expect mechanical obedience and blind submission from others.

We, therefore, conclude that parallel to the oneness of Allah, Islam commands us to obey, adore, and worship Allah, and regard all creatures as His servants.

Pilgrimage and the Respect Due To Shrines of the Imams and Religious Leaders

Certain Islamic sects as the "Wahabites" suppose that, in accordance to monotheism, one must totally disregard everything but Allah. So, to them, pilgrimage to the shrines and graves of the Imams, constructing domes and temples on their tombs, imploring for help, making vows and praying in the sanctuary (Haram) of the Imams are shirk.

We, of course, admit that the Shi'ites often exaggerate in performing such acts. Some people, for example, attach more importance to pilgrimage to the shrine of an Imam than to the Hajj ceremony of Mecca. They insist more on weeping and supplicating than performing their obligatory prayers, welcome the ceremonies of religious festivals and mourning's more than the community prayers in the mosques, spend more money on decorating, the Shrines of the Imams than on the mosques and the propagating of religion. In eulogizing the Imams, they often exaggerate to the point that they attribute characteristics that are exclusive to Allah to them. This subject needs more profound study.

It is evident that respect is different from worship. We must respect our father, mother and teacher. We should also respect our religious leaders for their virtue, righteousness and their service to religion and society.

The Quran repeatedly stipulates the superiority of the *mujahids* (combatants in the cause of religion), scholars, believers and the greatness of piety. Actually, it is not fair to equate all people and ignore the struggles, sacrifices, donations, and humane merits of certain people. This is why we keep the Haram of our religious leaders clean and magnificent.

Pilgrimage, too, is nothing but a respectful visit, through which we acquaint ourselves with the moral merits and aims of our Imams, follow their deeds and commands, edify ourselves to avoid being immoral. Praying in the Harams of the Imams simply means supplicating Allah because we admit that only Allah is influential in the world. If we sometimes implore to our religious leaders, it does not imply that they are independently capable of curing, feeding, or solving our difficulties. They, regardless of their position, are servants of Allah and possess no will and power save from His Providence.

Thus, we always prostrate ourselves before Allah, eulogize him infinitely, se k help from Him and plead with Him for security. We also respect our religious leaders and the honest and virtuous servants of Allah.

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