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VI. From Ritual To Spiritual

A. Introduction

One of the main distinctions of the present civilization is that knowledge has become accessible to the ordinary people on an unprecedented level. The trend of presenting things in a simplified and lay-man's language, and the mass media had an important role to play in this. The accessibility to knowledge has made the modern man more inquisitive than ever about everything, including his religious rites and rituals. In the great family of mankind, Muslim of the present day has also acquired his share of this extra-inquisitiveness.

The inquisitive nature lures the present day Muslim to rationalize the rites and rituals of Islam. This, indeed, is a good phenomenon because it will increase his awareness about Islamic values, and make him more firm in his religious life. But in his inquisitive journey in Islam, the present day Muslim must broaden his horizon and should not look only for material explanation of the Islamic rites and rituals because many such acts are a gateway to the spiritual world of Islam, a world still foreign to majority of the Muslims. Moreover, he must use the appropriate vehicles to embark on such a journey-the Qur'an and the *sunnah.*

In this part of the book, I intend to study the ritual purity in order to discover its relation to the spiritual purity.

B. The big question

Do the rituals have anything to do with spiritual purification? The answers to such question will reflect the mentality of majority of the Muslims. When asked, “Why was *wudu* and *ghusl* made obligatory?” or “Why are certain things consider *`ayn najis* in Islam?” many people will say that such laws were made so that we may remain clean, and that Islam is a religion of cleanliness. This is the answer you get from both, the simple-minded religious Muslims and also the Muslims with a liberal outlook. Unfortunately, the insistence on this aspect of *taharat* and *najasat* by the former provides ammunition to the liberal view which says that such laws were made to keep the Arabs of the desert clean and are therefore irrelevant

to us.

I do not deny that Islam expects its followers to be physically clean, that it is a religion of cleanliness, and that the rules of *taharat* help in keeping oneself clean. Islam was, indeed, very successful in promoting personal cleanliness not only when compared to the seventh-century Arabia but even when compared to the personal hygiene of the Europeans as late as the nineteenth century.

Will Durant writes, "Cleanliness, in the Middle Ages, was not next to godliness. Early Christianity had denounced the Roman baths as wells of perversion and promiscuity, and its general disapproval of the body had put no premium on hygiene." 1 St. Benedict had said "to those that are well, and especially to the young, bathing shall seldom be permitted." 2 Another writer says, "Mediaeval books of etiquette insist upon the washing of hands, face and teeth every morning, but not upon bathing ...King John took a bath once every three weeks, and his subjects presumably less often." 3 Describing the age of Reformation, Durant says, "Social and individual hygiene hardly kept pace with the advance of medicine.

Personal cleanliness was not a fetish; even the King of England bathed only once a week and sometimes skipped." 4 The same historian, after describing the dressing manners, writes, "How clean were the bodies behind the frills? A sixteenth-century *Introduction pour lesjeunes dames* spoke of women `who had no care to keep themselves clean except in those parts that may be seen, remaining filthy...under their'; and a cynical proverb held that courtesans were the only women who washed more than their face and hands. Perhaps cleanliness increased with immorality, for as women offered more of themselves to view or to many, cleanliness enlarged its area." 558

Wright, in his interesting book *Clean and Decent,* says, "We may boast in many ways of the Elizabethans, but we
find few references to bathing or washing in Shakespeare." 6 Going on to the eighteenth-century, we find that a manual of etiquette advises "wiping the face every morning with a white linen, but warns that it is not so good to wash it in water..." 7 In early nineteenth-century, a doctor remarked that "most men resident in London and many ladies though accustomed to wash their hands and faces daily, neglect washing their bodies from year to year.' 861

In 1812 the Common Council turned down a request from the Lord Mayor of London for a mere shower-bath in the Mansion House "inasmuch as the want thereof has never been complained of", and if he wanted one, he might provide a temporary one at his own expense. 9 At Queen Victoria's accession in 1837 there was no bathroom in Buckingham Palace. 10 And no wonder that during those days "saner opinion recognized that frequent bathing must increase rheumatic fever and lung complaints ...one of the Georgian Royal Dukes remarked that it was sweat, damn it, that kept a man clean." 11 By the end of nineteenth and early twentieth century, the fear of water began to give way, "though it was still thought eccentric to bathe for any but medical reasons." 1265

This brief survey of cleanliness and bathing in Europe shows that Islam was successful in promoting

personal hygiene when compared not just to the Middle Ages but even to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Will Durant writes, “One of the results of the Crusades was the introduction into Europe of public steam bath in the Moslem style.” 13 Describing the Ottoman civilization, the same historian writes, “Personal cleanliness was common. In Constantinople and other large cities of the Ottoman Empire the public baths were built of marble and attractively decorated. Some Christian saints had prided themselves on avoiding water; the Moslem was required to make his ablutions before entering the mosque or saying his prayers; in Islam cleanliness was really next to godliness.” 1467

But to emphasize exclusively the physical aspect of the rules of *taharat* is tantamount to ignore the multi-facet nature of the Islamic rituals. The physical cleanliness is not the main reason underlying the ritual ablutions. If Islam had prescribed *wudu* and *ghusl* for physical cleanliness only, then why is it still necessary for a person who has just got out of the shower to do *wudu* before saying the Islamic prayer? If the ritual ablutions are just for physical cleanliness, then why the *Tayammum*? *Tayammum* is a substitute for *wudu* and *ghusl* when water is unavailable; but it is performed on “dirt” or earth-and this in no way leads to physical cleanliness! These questions are enough to disqualify the exclusive nature of this point of view.

C. The correct perspective

So what is the comprehensive rationale of the ritual ablutions like wudu and ghusl? By studying the two verses of the Qur'an related to the ritual ablutions, I have come to the conclusion that there are two planes of purification: physical and spiritual. Although wudu and ghusl are related to physical purification but there is a more sublime reason underlying these two ritual ablutions-they serve as a reminder to and gateway of spiritual purification.

In suratu 'l-Baqarah, after talking about *ghusl hayz*, the Qur'an says,

“Surety Allah loves those who often turn to Him, and He also loves those who cleanse them-selves.” (***2:222***)

In another verse, after explaining the rules of *wudu* and *ghusl*, the Qur' an says,

“Allah does not desire to make any impediment for you; but He desires to cleanse you, and that He may complete His blessings upon you; haply you may be grateful.” (***5:6***)

We find two different themes in both these verses: First: Allah loves those who cleanse themselves, and that He desires to cleanse us. Second: He wants to complete His blessings upon us, and that He loves those who often turn towards Him. The first theme is related to the physical cleanliness, while the second theme is related to the spiritual purity.

The verses of the first theme are very clear, they refer to cleanliness. But what do the verses of the second theme mean? What is the meaning of “often turning to Allah”? Turning to Allah implies that the

person had turned away from Allah. What does this mean? These are the questions which I will discuss below.

In Islamic value system, the human soul is like a light bulb. If the bulb is protected from dust and dirt, it will enlighten the area; but if dust and dirt is allowed to accumulate on the bulb, then it will not be able to illuminate the area as much as before. Similarly, the human soul has to be protected from spiritual `dirt' and uncleanliness; otherwise it will not be able to guide the person as rightly as before.

Allah, the Creator of mankind, describes the masterpiece of His creation in the following way:

***"By the sun and its morning brightness! By the moon when it follows the sun! By the day when it illuminates* (*everything*)*! By the night when it enshrouds the day! By the heaven and He who built it! By the earth and He who extended it! And by the soul and He who perfected it! Then He inspired it to understand what is good and what is evil. Prosperous is he who purifies it, and failed is he who seduces it."* (*91:1-10*)**

After swearing by the most majestic signs of His creation, Allah says that the pure human soul has the ability to understand what is right and what is wrong provided it is purified and uncorrupted. This verse makes it clear that the human soul, just like his body, is capable of becoming spiritually impure and unclean. Imam 'Ali (as) has said, `The human soul is a precious jewel; whoever protects its, enhances its (effectiveness), and whoever degrades its, decreases its (effectiveness)." 1568

The impurities that can corrupt a human soul are collectively known as "sins". Accumulation of sins can indeed render the human soul ineffective and, in Qur'anic expression, `seize the heart'. Allah says,

***"Whatever* (*sins*) *they have committed has seized their heart."* (*83:14*)**

By committing sins, not only is the soul of a Muslim seized but he also spiritually turns away from Allah. Sins create a distance between God and man.

Can a person rescue his soul from the seizing of the sins? Can a sinner spiritually get closer to God? Yes, indeed, a sinful person can spiritually return to Allah. Returning to Allah means repenting and asking forgiveness for your sins. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) has explained this phenomenon as follows: "Each believer has a bright soul. When he commits a sin, a dark dot appears on his bright soul. If he repents, the dark dot will disappear. But if he persists in his sins, the darkness will increase until it covers the entire soul-then the person would never return towards goodness." 1669

You can now easily understand that just as our bodies can become impure by the physical *najasat*, our souls become impure by sins. To rid our bodies of the physical *najasat*, we use water; similarly, to rid our souls of the spiritual impurities, we use *tawbah. Tawbah literally* means "to turn," but it is used in Islamic terminology for "repentance". In other words, by doing *tawbah* a sinner "turns towards Allah in repentance"..

And now it should be clear to you why I take the verse

2:222 (*"**Surely Allah loves those who often turn to Him***")

as a reminder for the spiritual purification. Sins make the human soul impure and takes him away from *God.*
Tawbah purifies the human soul and brings him closer to God.

In short, the human soul is corruptible; it is corrupted by sins; the corrupted soul can be purified by *tawbah. By* reminding us that He loves those who do *tawbah* in the verse of ritual ablution, Allah is trying to draw our attention to the spiritual purification. In the following section of this chapter, I will attempt to explain some of the main elements of spiritual impurity, the way they corrupt the soul and the method of purifying the soul from such spiritual impurities. All this will be done by connecting the ritual purification to the spiritual plane. I humbly pray to Allah, *subhanahu wa ta `ala,* to help me in this very pleasant but at the same time difficult task.

D. Connecting the ritual to the spiritual

1. Disbelief – Kufr

One of the *najasat* is a *kafir,* an unbeliever. It is needless to say that a ka.fir is considered *najis* not because of his physical state, rather because of his spiritual state *kufr,* disbelief. By declaring the *kafir* as *najis*, Islam wants to draw our attention to a terminal spiritual disease known as *kufr*.

What is *kufr? Kufr* literally means a cover. In Islamic terminology, it is mostly used for a person who dis-believes in God; and so *"kafir"* means an unbeliever. By using the word *"kafir"* for an unbeliever, Islam is implying that the unbeliever is a person who covers or hides the truth. What can be more true than God, the Creator?! It also means that a *kafir* is a person whose soul has been completely covered by darkness.

Kufr –the rejection of God– is such a strong spiritual disease that it affects the entire body of the *kafir* and renders it *najis*. Even if a *kafir* washes himself thoroughly hundred times and dresses up in very clean clothes, still he will be considered ritually *najis*. Nothing can cure this spiritual disease, nothing can purify the soul of a *kafir* except Islam. And therefore, you see that the shari`ah counts "Islam" as one of the mutahhirat.

Can a spiritual phenomenon really have any effect on our physical body? In the spiritual realm of the Islamic world-view it does. To make my point more clear, I will give another example of a similar spiritual phenomenon but of a positive kind. You have read in the first chapter of this book that blood and corpse of a human being are considered *najis* by the *skari`ah. This is* a universal rule. But there is one exception to this rule: The *shari`ah* says that the blood and body of a martyr is not *najis*. Martyrdom is a convincing proof of the person's readiness to sacrifice everything for Allah.

Martyrdom is a good deed of the highest quality, and it affects the entire body of the martyr. And therefore, Islam says that the dead body and even the blood of a martyr is tahir and pure. Not only the body and blood, but even the earth of a martyr's grave and the grave itself are affected and acquire sacredness! It for this reason that we have been taught to pay tribute to the martyrs of Karbala by saying: "May my parents be your ransom! You became pure and the earth in which you were buried has also become pure." 17 And that is the reason why the Shi'ah fiqh recommends that we do sajdah on the *turbah,* the tablet made from the earth of Karbala.

In short, just as a good deed of highest quality like martyrdom affects the body, the blood and even the grave of the martyr and makes them pure and sacred, similarly the worst type of deed like *kufr* affects the entire body of the *kafir* and makes it *najis*.

Why is *kufr* such an evil phenomenon? By rejecting the faith in God, a *kafir* loses his own true identity. After rejecting God, this world becomes the beginning and the end of a *kafir*'s life; with no faith in the hereafter, he just works for this world. At this stage, if religious values loose their influence, the *kafir* thinks of maximizing the benefits of this world even at the expense of other human beings. And he starts to believe only in his animal instincts and ignores his human aspect. When a person reaches this stage, he starts judging his own actions by those of the animals. For example, the law of the animal world known as "the struggle for existence" and "the survival of the fittest" becomes the foundation of the human world. Many anthropologists and scientists study animal behavior and then not just explain but justify the pervert human behavior. It is for such people that Allah says,

"They have minds but they do not understand with them,' they have eyes but they do not see with them; they have ears but they do not hear with them--they are like cattle, nay, rather they are more astray; they are the heedless ones." (***7:179***)

Similarly, *shirk is* also considered a terminal spiritual disease. *Shirk* (polytheism) means that a person ascribes partners to God. This partners) could be a human being, an animal or a thing. In a way, a *mushrik* (polytheist) is worst than a *kafir* because the latter just rejects the concept of God while the former elevates the created beings to the level of God. A man cannot further degrade himself than by bowing to a fellow human being or an animal or a statue made by his own hands. Allah says,

"Verily Allah does not forgive the sin of shirk but He forgives anything other than that." (**4:48**)

By declaring the *kafir*s and the mushrikin as *najis*, Islam wants to draw our attention to the importance and value of faith (*iman*). It is an indirect way of saying that in Allah's view, bodily appearance and cleanliness is not more valuable than the faith which is in the heart of a believer. And it also tells us that if Islam is so strict about ritual cleanliness, then how strict it would be about spiritual purification.

2. Arrogance – Takabbur

Another most destructive spiritual disease or `*najasat*' is arrogance, known in Arabic as *takabbur.* It is a

mental state of a person who thinks very highly himself and looks down upon others. An arrogant person shows his pride by humiliating others. In Islamic value system, arrogance has been condemned very strongly. But what has this to do with *najasat* and *taharat*?

When I looked at the list of the *najasat*, two seemingly unrelated things caught my attention. `Semen and human corpse.' And I started to think why has the Islamic *shari'ah* considered semen and human corpse among the ritually *najis* things. Semen after all holds the seed of a human being–the master–piece of Allah's creation. So why should it be declared as *najis*? Why must a person purify himself after discharge of semen? Why should a Muslim be considered *najis* after his death? Why must we purify ourselves if we touched the dead Muslim before he is given the ritual bath?

Some people might be tempted to look for scientific reasons for the *najasat* of semen and corpse. I do not deny such possibilities, but my thoughts led me to the conclusion that in declaring semen and corpse as *najis*, Islam is not passing a judgment on their physical aspect, instead it is trying to drive home a very important moral message about arrogance.

Let me explain myself by asking the following question: Is there any relationship between `semen' and `corpse'? Yes, semen is the beginning of human life and corpse is the end of it. In other words, a man starts his life as a sperm and ends his life as a corpse.

When a person looks at this relationship and realizes that Islam has considered his beginning and his end as *najis*, he must think twice before being arrogant! If he remembers the ritual worth of his beginning and end, he will never be infected by the spiritual disease of arrogance, no matter how rich or how powerful he becomes. To me, semen and a Muslim's corpse has been considered *najis* just to remind us of our reality and to remind us that arrogance is not our right. And in arriving at this conclusion, I was inspired by the saying of Imam `Ali bin Abi Talib (as) which says, "I am surprised at man: his beginning is a sperm and his end is a corpse, and between his beginning and his end he is just a earner of waste–and still he is arrogant!" 1871

Arrogance is the prerogative of God. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that Allah has said, "Arrogance is My robe and glory is My dress; therefore, whoever tries to take any of these two from me, I will put him in hell." Allah says in the Qur'an,

"Do not walk on the earth arrogantly, certainly you will never be able to tear the earth open, nor compete with the mountains in height." (***17:39***)

He also says,

"**Do *not turn your cheek away from the people in arrogance, and do not walk on the earth arrogantly; God does not love any arrogant and boastful person. Be modest in your walk, and lower your voice; surely the most hideous of voices is that of the ass."*** (**31:18–19**)

Arrogance can move its victim to many sins and crimes. Here I will just mention two events from the Qur'an about arrogance and its result.

Those who are familiar with the story of Adam in the Qur'an know that the first creature to disobey Allah's command was Shaytan. And the motive of Shaytan's disobedience was arrogance. The Qur'an describes it as follows:

We created you, then We shaped you and then We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam!" so they bowed themselves except Iblis (***the Shaytan***)***, he was not among those who had bowed themselves. Allah said*** (***to the Shaytan***)***, "What prevented you from bowing yourself when I commanded you?" Iblis said, "I am better than him; You have created me of fire, while You have created him of clay." So Allah said, "Then you get down from this*** (***heavenly station***)***, it is not for you to be arrogant here. Get out! You are among the humiliated ones."*** (**7:11–3**)

In another chapter, the Qur'an says,

"All the angels bowed themselves to Adam except Iblis (***the Shaytan***) ***who refused and was arrogant, and thus he became one of the unbelievers. "***(***2:34***)

So according to the Qur'an, arrogance had so much blinded the Shaytan that he forgot that his own so-called greatness of being created from fire was given to him by the same God who was now commanding him to bow to Adam.

Another example from the Qur'an is of an arrogant human being, Fir'awn. The Qur'an describes his arrogance as follows:

Have you received the story of Musa? When his Lord called to him in the holy valley, Tuwa: "Go to Fir'awn; he has exceeded the limits. And say to him, `Have you the intention to purify yourself so that I should guide you to your Lord, then you shall fear Him?"' (***So Musa went to Fir'awn and***) ***showed him the great sign, but Fir'awn disbelieved and rebelled, then he turned away hastily. Then Fir'awn gathered an assembly of men and proclaimed that "I am your Most High Lord." Therefore, God seized him with punishment.*** (***79:16***)

In these verses, one can see that Allah considers Fir'awn to be spiritually impure and that is why Prophet Musa is told to ask him whether he is prepared to purify himself or not. And then Allah describes how Fir'awn arrogantly claimed that `I am your Most High Lord.' These verses are quite clear in stating that Fir'awn was suffering from a spiritual impurity known as arrogance. Fir'awn was some much overcome with arrogance that when his own magicians declared their faith in the God of Musa and Harun, he said,

"You have believed in Him before I gave you the permission?!" (***79:24***)

Look, what arrogance can do to a man!

But if a person always remembers that his beginning is a sperm and his end is a corpse, and that both these have been considered as *najis* by the *shari'ah*, then he will never be infected by the spiritual impurity of arrogance. Such a person will not only remember his humility in front of his Lord but will also refrain from humiliating other human beings, no matter how `low' they may be from material point of view.

Besides remembering the *najasat* of semen and corpse, other ways which can help a person in fighting arrogance are the following: always being first in greeting others, attending the congregational prayers and going for the pilgrimage. Congregational prayers and the pilgrimage are intensive training programs to make one realize that he or she is nothing but a servant of Allah like thousands and millions of His other servants who belong to different races, speak diverse languages and are not necessarily in the same income bracket!

3. Respecting others' rights

Human beings have been created with various instincts. Most can be broadly classified under `desire' and `anger,' also known as lower or animal instincts. These feelings have not been created for nothing, they are not to be suppressed. It is the `anger' that prompts us to evade danger and defend ourselves, and it is `desire' that prompts us to look for food. However, these instincts must be brought under control of our reason or spirit which is also known as higher or human instinct. For example, if one's desire is not restrained by reason, it will change into greed and then that person would have no regard what-soever for the feelings or rights of other human beings.

Imam 'Ali (as) said, "Allah has given to angels the power of reason but not the (instincts of) desire and anger; and He has given to animals the two instincts without the power of reasoning; but He has honored the human being by giving the power of reason as well as the instincts of desire and anger. If his anger and desire become subservient to the command of his reason, then he will become better than the angels because he reached that stage [of spiritual perfection] in spite of odds which the angels never face." (By "odds" means the desire and anger.)

But in order to control his `animal' desire and keep it within the restrain of reason, man needs to build his spiritual power. Education by itself is not enough. Man needs to be constantly reminded about respecting the rights of fellow human beings. And it is in this constant reminding that Islam has been most successful than any other system of life. Islam has used the daily rituals to reinforce some of the mast important social and ethical principals in the minds of its followers.

This constant reminder has been done by the following rules of ritual purity: (1) Washroom: It must be *mubah*–that is, you must be the owner of the washroom or you must have the permission of the owner, otherwise it is forbidden for you to fulfill your natural needs in that place. (2) Water and place for *wudu*: it must be mubah. (3) Water and place for *ghusl*: it must be mubah. (4) Earth for *Tayammum*: it must be mubah and even the place where the earth is must also be mubah. Similar laws can be found in the

rules for the ritual daily prayers about the dress in which you pray, the place where you pray, etc.

If a Muslim abides by these simple rules of daily routine, he will be forced to make sure that his house, water, land, clothes, etc. is mubah (lawful). This will not only reinforce the importance of respecting the rights of other people, but will also affect the way a person makes his living and the way he deals with others in business. He will have to make sure that his income is not from unlawful sources, otherwise the use of the washroom, his *wudu*, *ghusl* and daily prayers in his own house will not be correct.

The Imams have always tried to teach us about the importance of respecting the rights of others. Imam Zaynu 'l–`Abidin (as) said, "By He who has sent Muhammad as a prophet of truth! Even if the killer of my father, Husayn bin 'Ali, entrusts me with the sword with which he killed my father, I will surely return it back to him." In another hadith, he says, "Allah will forgive for the believers every sin and cleanse them of it in the hereafter except two sins: not observing taqiyyah where it should be observed and violating the rights of your brethren in faith."

It is indeed unfortunate that in spite of such training programs in Islam, Muslims in many countries show no sensitivity or respect for the rights of their brethren in faith. The reason why some Muslims do not gain the spiritual and moral benefit from the rituals is because they do not connect such rituals to the spiritual and moral values. For them, these are just rituals and nothing else. It is necessary for the Muslims to connect the rituals of Islam to its spiritual, moral and social principals, and only then will they be able to present themselves as the ideal community in the present world. The system is already there, the Muslims just need to understand it properly and utilize it more effectively.

4. Thinking positively about others

Islam is not a religion in which only the relationship between God and man is important, rather it is a religion which also gives great importance to relationships between human beings themselves. In Islam, you cannot please God by fulfilling His rights and ignoring those of other human beings.

The importance of respecting the rights of other human beings has been very clearly presented in the Qur'an by combining salat with *zakat*. In almost 80 verses, Allah has talked about "establishing the prayers and paying the *zakat*." Salat is the symbol of Allah's rights upon man and *zakat* is the symbol of man's rights upon each other. One without the other is an incomplete implementation of Islam, it will not guarantee the salvation of man in the hereafter.

When we talk about the rights of other people, we mostly emphasize over their material and physical rights. Respecting others' rights is mostly taken by us to mean that we should refrain from physically harming others or from violating their property rights. It is rarely understood that not only should we restrain ourselves from physically harming other or violating their material rights, rather we should also restrain our minds from distrusting others without any reasonable cause. Islam teaches us to always think positively about others.

When a person starts thinking positively about others, he will automatically be saved from the immoral consequences of distrusting other. By these consequences, I mean `spying into characters of other people' and `back- biting'. Positive thinking should be our attitude towards all human beings, but more so towards Muslims. After all, Muslims are considered by Allah as brothers and sisters of each other. And as brothers, they should trust and be positive about one another. The Qur'an says:

"Verily the believers are nothing but brothers (***to each other***) ***...0 you who believe! Avoid most of the suspicious*** (***thoughts about other Muslims***)***; for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin. And do not spy*** (***on each other***)***. Nor should some of you backbite others. Does any one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Surely you abhor it. So fear*** (***the punishment of***) ***Allah. Surely Allah is Most-Forgiving and Merciful."*** (***49: 10-12***)

Suspicion leads to spying and spying in turn leads to backbiting. Avoidance of suspicion helps in refraining from spying on others and thus backbiting. Not only will such a person be saved from immoral consequences of distrusting others, rather he will have more time for self-criticism which is the first step of spiritual purification.

There is an interesting conversation recorded by `Allamah at-Tabrasi between Imam Zaynu '1-`Abidin (as) and Muhammad bin Muslim az-Zuhri. It seems that az-Zuhri was not getting along well with people. He came to the Imam and complained about his circumstances. In the latter part of their conversation, the Imam gave a very useful advice which deserves to be remembered by each and every Muslim. The Imam said, "And if the Satan, may the curse of Allah be upon him, makes you think that you have a superiority over any one of the followers of the *qiblah,* then think about that person: If he is elder than you, then say `He has been ahead of me in faith and good deeds, therefore he is better than me.' If he is younger than you, then say, `I have been ahead of him in disobedience and sins, therefore he is better than me.' And if he is of your age, then say, `I am certain about my own sins but in doubt about his sins, so why should I prefer doubt over certainty.' 19 Read this hadith again and think about it. See if you can follow this advice which, indeed, deserves to be written in golden letters!

To show the importance of this moral principal, the *shari'ah* has counted *ghaybatu 'l-Muslim* (the disap-pearance of a Muslim) as one of the mutahhirat. You should consider as tahir the body or clothe of a person who became *najis* in your presence just because he disappeared from your sight long enough for him to purify himself or his dress. Just imagine how positive the *shari'ah* wants you to be! This is not a cage of thinking positive because you know nothing negative about the person, rather it is a case where you know for sure that the person or his dress had become *najis*; still you are expected to think positively about that person.

5. Sincerity in intention

In our own evaluation, we judge a person by his deeds. This is so because we, as human beings, cannot know the motives of the doer. But does Allah judge the people in the same way? No, on the day of

judgment, Allah will not judge by looking at the deed; He will judge by looking at the motives. In Islamic value system, motive is as important as the deed itself. Rather according to the Prophet, “Verily, the deeds are (evaluated according to) the motives.” 2073

Islam teaches its followers to do good deeds for the sake of pleasing Allah. Describing our purpose of life, Allah says,

“I have not created …the human being except so that they may worship (Me).” (51:56)

Obviously this verse does not mean that our purpose of creation is to do nothing but perform ritual prayers. No, not at all. It actually means that a Muslim's whole life should be an act of worship, that is, it should be lived by obeying Allah. The best expression of this concept can be found in the words. of a Prophet quoted in the Qur'an:

“Verily my *prayers, my ritual actions,* (*in short*) *my life and* my *death are all for Allah, the Lord of the universe*.” (6:162)

“A Muslim will never fall into the pitfall of polytheism (shirk), he will never do anything with the motive of pleasing another god; but there are some impurities of thoughts which are called `hidden polytheism' against which he must vigilantly guard himself. For example, when a person worships Allah, but at the same time likes the people to know that he is worshipping God, then he is committing the sin of `hidden polytheism.' Such a deed is not done with pure intention, it is polluted by the hidden polytheism, because the worshipper's intention is riot pure, he wants to please two master with one act of worship: God and `the people'.

“Not only the ritual prayers, but all our actions should be based upon the love of God. For example, while helping our less fortunate brethren, we must remember that we are passing on the property of God to the dependents of God. It should be done without any shade of worldly motives. A help given with a worldly motive is a body without a soul. A charity done with a desire to enhance one's social standing destroys the fiber of that charity.” 21 Allah says,

“O you who believe! Do not nullify your charity by reproach and injury (to the recipient), like the person who spends his wealth to show it to the people…” (2:264)

There is a famous anecdote of Bahlul. Once he saw that a big mosque was being built. He went to the mosque site and asked the main contributor, “Why are you building this mosque?” The donor, “Bahlul! Isn't it obvious that a mosque is built for sake of pleasing Allah? Why else would one built a mosque?” Bahlul went away. He found a big concrete block and wrote `Masjid Bahlul' over it. At night time, he fixed this concrete block over the main gate of the mosque. Next morning, he found the donor very upset. The donor got hold of Bahlul and said, “How dare you put your name over the mosque which is being built with my money and contribution?! “Bahlul, “If you really are building this mosque for pleasing Allah, then you should not be upset at all because even if the people are misled by what has been written on the

concrete block, surely Allah is not going to be misled. He will know that you built the mosque. So why are you angry?"

Doing a good deed with a pure intention is just the first step, to keep that deed as a credit in your account with God is more difficult. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) says, "To preserve the good deed (in your scroll of deeds) is more difficult than doing it." When asked to explain what he meant, the Imam gave an example: "When a person helps his relative and gives money for the sake of Allah who has no partner, it is recorded that he did so secretly (for the sake of Allah); but if he mentions his good deed (to someone), then it will be re-classified in the deeds which he did openly. And if he mentions it again, then it will be classified as a deed done for showing off to the people."

One way which the shari`ah has adopted to draw our attention to this most important teaching of Islam is by making it part of the rituals which we have to do on a daily basis. I am referring to the rules about niyyat in *wudu*, *ghusl*, *Tayammum*, prayers, etc. These rules, as far as I can understand, are not just for their own sake rather they serve as a constant reminder that our motives should be pure in doing good deeds. Remember, Allah does not look at the deed, He looks at the motive and intention of the doer.

"Verily Allah accepts (the good deeds) only from the pious people." **(*5:27*)**

6. The Du'as during Wudu

I would like to end this chapter with a brief explanation on the *du'as* mentioned in section `D' of Chapter Two. If a person memorizes these *du'as* and their meanings and recites them every time he or she does *wudu*, I am sure it will have a profound effect on his or her spirituality. These *du'as* in ritual ablution open one more window towards the spiritual world of Islam.

The *du'a* at the beginning of *wudu* is a statement about the purity of intention. The second *du'a* is a reminder that the ritual ablution is a means to the purification of the soul.

The third *du'a* is telling us to be careful in how we use our tongue and also reminds us of the questioning of the day of judgment. The fourth *du'a* is a constant reminder of the destination for which we have been created. The fifth *du'a* informs us that man can be honored or disgraced on the day of judgment and so we should work hard to be honored and not disgraced. The sixth and seventh du`as are reminding us that if we want the scroll of our deeds in our right hands, then we must be careful in our actions in this world. The eighth *du'a* teaches us not to rely on ourselves only rather to ask Allah's help also. And, finally, the ninth *du'a* is a reminder of the conditions of the day of judgment.

Glossary

Wajib: obligatory, necessary, incumbent. An act which must be performed. A person will be rewarded for performing it and punished for neglecting it, e.g., the daily prayers.

Ihtiyat Wajib: precautionary obligatory. Its significance is the same as that of wajib with the difference that wherever a mujtahid says that "it is precautionarily obligatory," his followers have the option of leaving his taqlid (following) in this particular problem and following the fatwa of the second best mujtahid provided the second mujtahid has a different opinion.

Haram: forbidden, prohibited. It is necessary to abstain from the acts which are harm. If someone performs a harm act, he will be punished either by the Islamic court or in the hereafter or both. For example, stealing, eating pork.

Sunnat or **Mustahab:** recommended, desire-able, better. It refers to the acts which are recommended but not wajib. If one neglects them, he will not be punished; however, if one performs them, he will be rewarded. For example, washing the hands before *wudu*.

Makruh: reprehensible, disliked, and discouraged. It is used for the acts which are disliked but not harm. If someone does a makruh act, he will not be punished for it; however, if he refrains from it, then he will be rewarded. For example, eating before *ghusl janabat*.

Ja'iz, Halal, Mubah: permitted, allowed, lawful, legal. The acts or things which are permitted and lawful. There is no reward for performing it nor any punishment for neglecting it. Mubah is exclusively used for lawful things, not for permitted actions. An example, drinking tea.

Mujtahid: a religious scholar who is an expert of Islamic laws, the *shari'ah*. Usually, it is used for the high ranking mujtahids whose decrees are followed by the people.

Marja: The high ranking mujtahid is who is followed by the people. Literally, it means the point of reference. The high ranking mujtahids are called marja` because they are the point of reference for the people in the shari`ah matters.

Shari`ah** or **Shari`at: Literally means, the way. In Islamic terminology, it means the laws of Islam.

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1. Durant, The Story of Civilization, vol. 4, p, 835.
2. Wright, Clean and Decent, p. 24.
3. Ibid, p. 39.
4. Durant, Ibid, vol. 6, p. 244.
5. Ibid, p. 768.
6. Wright, Ibid, p. ?5.
7. Wright, Ibid, p. 138.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid, p. 139.
11. Ibid, p. 138-9.
12. Ibid, p. 158.
13. Durant, Ibid, vol. 4, p. 835.
14. Durant, Ibid, vol. 4, p. 712-3.
15. al-Amudi, Ghuraru 'l-hikam, p. 226
16. al-Majlisi, Biharu 'l-Anwar, vol. 73, p. 361.
17. See "Ziyarat warithah" by Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (as) in Mafatihu 'l-Jinan of Shaykh 'Abbas al-Qummi.
18. as-Saduq, `Ilalu 'sh-Shariya`, p. 101.
19. at-Tabarsi, al-Ihtijaj, vol. 2, p. 52
20. Wasa'il, vol. 1, p. 33-5.
21. With minor changes from S.S.A. Rizvi's Inner Voice, p. 69.

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