

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

Home > What A Muslim Should Know and Believe > Fourteen Categories of People

Fourteen Categories of People

Shaykh Ja'far Shushtari has divided the people into fourteen categories, according to their knowledge and belief (or lack of knowledge and belief) of Usul al-deen.

First: A person who, before attaining majority, knows the five Usul al-deen with their rational proofs, and sincerely believes in them. Without any doubt such a person is Muslim and mu'min in his own rights as soon as he/she becomes baligh. (It makes no difference whether he/she can explain those proofs in his own words or not.)

Second: A person who, before attaining majority, sincerely believes in Usul al-deen, because he/she has been so taught by his/her parents or by another trusted person, and then he/she continues on the same belief after becoming baligh. According to stronger theological reasons, there is no harm in it. If he continues on the same belief without ever doubting its truth, he shall be treated as a mu'min in this world and the hereafter, God willing.

Third: A man acquires true knowledge of Usul al-deen and firmly believes in them. Yet sometimes adverse thoughts or satanic whisperings come into his mind which he does not like at all – in fact he feels a repulsion towards such thoughts or ideas. There is no defect or deficiency in such a man's faith and belief; the fact that he is pained because of such thoughts is in itself a proof that his faith is strong. The Holy Prophet and Imams – Peace be on them all – have suggested a remedy for it: Whenever he is troubled by such thoughts he should say:

(There is no god except Allah; we believe in Allah and His Messenger; and there is no power or strength except with Allah.)

Fourth: A person, on attaining majority, began looking into Usul al-deen, and after a few days became sure of its truth, either by rational proofs or because some trusted person convinced him/her about it. There is no doubt that after acquiring certainty, such a person is mu'min. The difficulty arises about the period he /she was engaged in the said research. If he/she dies in that period, he/she shall not be punished in the hereafter. And if, before attaining majority, he was treated as a Muslim – because of taba'iyat – others will continue to treat him as Muslim. But it is difficult to adjudge him a Muslim in reality

in that period.

Fifth: If a person has not acquired a sincere belief in Usul al-deen before attaining majority, – even by teaching of parents or others – and is oblivious of religion and its beliefs on attaining majority, he/she will not be treated as a Muslim; and it is difficult to say that he/she is tahir.

It is the responsibility of parents or guardian to teach him/her necessary matters of faith and then guide him to recite Kalimah, in order that he/she should become Muslim and tahir.

Sixth: A person who knows and believes in all Usul al-deen, but is unable to explain them in his words – like many people in far-off rural areas who cannot describe why God is one, or many people in urban areas who cannot enumerate the positive and negative attributes of Allah – but if you ask them, whether God is Omnipotent, they would say 'Yes'; or whether God can be seen, they would say, No. Such people are mu'min, and this much knowledge and belief is enough.

Seventh: We know that a man recites Kalima and says that he believes in oneness of God and Messengership of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). But we do not know whether he really believes so. We shall treat such a person as Muslim; we are not obligated to search inside his heart; and we may say about him: 'O Allah! We do not know about him except good, i.e. we know that he is a Muslim:

But what is his own responsibility about himself? He should ascertain whether his belief is sincere. Ifnot, then he is required to correct his belief and acquire sincere faith.

Eighth: A man recites Kalimah; but he realizes that he has doubts about tawhid, nubuwwat of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) or qiyamat. If he expresses his doubt before the people, he shall be treated as Kafir and najis.

If such a man does not disclose his doubt in words, but his action and behavior show that he has doubt about existence or oneness of God, prophet hood of Muhammad (s.a.w.a) or the day of judgement, then – according to stronger proofs – it is unlawful for a Muslim woman to marry him. And it is ahwat to treat him as najis, and not to eat an animal slaughtered by him.

Ninth: A man does not have firm belief in existence and oneness of God or in prophet hood of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) or qiyamat; he has only strong inclination towards these things. The question arises what is his own duty in this respect, and what are other Muslims to do about him.

As for himself: If he may acquire firm belief of the above matters, and still neglects to do so, then the rule about him is the same as for the doubter (Seventh category), and he will not be saved on the day of judgement.

But if he cannot be more certain of these matters even after trying his utmost, then he will not be punished on the day of judgement, but he will not be treated as a Muslim in this world.

And it is ahwat not to marry him to a Muslim woman, or eat an animal slaughtered by him; he should be treated as najis.

Tenth: A child of a Muslim, before attaining majority and before acquiring true belief, became insane, then he will continue to be treated as a Muslim. The same is the law for a child of a non–Muslim who acquired true belief even before attaining majority and then became insane; as well as for a baligh person who had true belief and then became insane. All three types of people shall be treated as Muslims.

If a child of a Muslim attained majority and became insane before acquiring correct belief, then he will not be treated as Muslim or tahir (unless he had professed to be a Muslim and hidden his lack of belief from others). The same rule applies to a child who, on becoming baligh, began looking for true belief but became insane before acquiring correct belief.

Eleventh: Mustad'afin among non-Muslims and non-Shi'as. The word, Mustad'afin literally means "weak ones': In theological terminology it refers to those people whose belief is not strong, i.e, those whose belief is not based on knowledge and conviction. They are of two types: Those who are oblivious, and the simpletons.

Oblivious are those who have never thought that they should took into or amend their beliefs nor has anyone ever drawn their attention to it.

Simpletons are those who are neither insane, nor do they have knowledge, nor is it possible for them to acquire knowledgeable belief.

Non-Muslim Mustad'afin, like the Eskimos of Canada and Pygmies of Zaire. The law about them is as follows: They will be treated as Ka.fir in this world; but it is against the divine justice to punish them in the hereafter; of course, they cannot enter the Paradise; they may be placed in A'raf (the boundary between the Paradise and the Hell); or they will be given a test on the day of judgement and then sent to the Paradise or Hell, depending on the outcome of that test.

Non-Shi'a Mustad'afin: In the hereafter their condition will be similar to the above-mentioned Non-Muslim Mustad'afin. But in this world, they will be treated as general Muslims.

Twelfth: Shi'a Mustad'afin: In this category are included those who believe in tawhid and nubuwwat, and accept that 'Ali (a.s.) was the first Imam; but they do not know the names and sequence of the Imams, or do not know what Imamat is – provided they are oblivious or simpleton and have not intentionally neglected acquiring this knowledge.

No doubt such people are tahir because they believe in tawhid, nubuwwat and qiyamat; also they will not be punished in the hereafter – may be they would be sent to Paradise too. But the question arises whether in this life they are allowed to enjoy all the rights of a true believer. For example, it is ahwat not

to give them from kaffarah and radd al-mazalim; also they should not be given zakah from the shares of poor or miskin – although they could be given from the share of "the way of Allah" if a religious benefit depends on it. Possibly they could be given from fitrah too.

Thirteenth: The above–mentioned category dealt with those Shi'a Mustadafin who were either oblivious or simpleton. Now we come to a person who has accepted Shi'a faith, is not oblivious or simpleton and yet neglects acquiring necessary knowledge of the twelve Imam, does not know their names, sequence or their necessary details.

As mentioned in the twelfth category, such a person is tahir, because he believes in Allah, Muhammad and the day of judgement. But it is very difficult to say that he would be saved in the hereafter – – especially so if he has no knowledge of the Imam of our times, or does not believe in his life and ghaybat (occultation) or in the fact that he is the Hujjat (Proof) of Allah over His creatures. The same is the case if he carelessly neglects to acquire this knowledge and belief.

Fourteenth: Apostates: These are the people who accepted true faith and then renounced it. They are called Murtadd, and their position is the worst of all; the rules about them are harder than general Kuffar. Some details about murtadd have been given in the chapter 4 above. Some other important matters are appended below.

- (A)Conditions of apostasy: Five conditions must be fulfilled before a person could be declared a murtadd:
- 1) & 2) He must be baligh and sane;
- 3) He must be knowing what he is speaking. If a word of kufr (disbelief) slips out of his tongue without his having any intention to do so, it would not be held against him.
- 4) He should be knowing that it is a word of kufr and then uses it in that same meaning. If he speaks a word of kufr, without knowing its meaning, or uses it in some other lawful meaning, then it would not be held against him. If he knew that it was a word of kufr and used it in the same meaning, he would become murtadd and najis, even if he was not aware of the consequences of his utterance.
- 5) He should utter word of kufr by his own free will. If he was forced to say such words and he did so to save his life (i.e. in taqiyyah), then it would not be held against him.
- (B) Apostacy may occur through heart, tongue and/or action:

Apostasy through heart: If someone disbelieves after believing, or harbours doubt after being sure.

Apostasy through tongue: When he denies the existence or oneness of Allah, or refutes God's justice or knowledge etc., or tries to show that God's actions are aimless or against wisdom, or rejects any of the Zaruriyat al-deen like prayer, fast, zakah, hajj, or disparages religion, giyamat, Qur'an or hadith.

Note: Some people say in du'a, "May Imam Husayn prolong your life': or "May Hazrat 'Abbas increase your sustenance' or "May Ali (a.s.) give you children"; or "May a certain shahid (martyr) protect you from troubles': The question arises whether it is correct.

Reply: If his real intention is to say that "May you get those benefits by the barakat or wasilah of those sacred personalities': or "May they intercede with Allah on your behalf so that He gives you children, increase your sustenance or prolong your life': then it is very good. But if he means to say that those personalities are, God forbid, sustainers or creators, then the matter will be really difficult.

Apostasy through action: When someone, say, throws the Qur'an down (with intention to insult it), or with that intention tears it down, or kicks at it or throws it into a dirty place. The same is the rule if he insults the books of du'a, or hadith, or the names of Allah.

There are three things which, without any difference of opinion, make a person kafir:

Denial of anyone of the Zaruriyat al-Deen. Its examples have been given chapter 5 above.

Objecting to any command of Allah. It was this offence because of which Shaytan became kafir; otherwise he believed in one God, Qiyamat and almost all divine commands; but he objected to one order given by Allah and became kafir and accursed. The objection was: Why did you order me to do sajdah before Adam while I am superior to him?

To treat any divine order with disdain even if it is sunnah law. For example it is sunnat that moustache should be trimmed; now if someone disdainfully says: What nonsense is this? Or, what it has got to do with shari'ah? He will become kafir.

Note: Shaykh Ja'far Shushtari has not mentioned Munafiqin in this list. But in my view it should be included as the Fifteenth category. The details have been mentioned in ch. 4.

Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/what-muslim-should-know-and-believe-sayyid-saeed-akhtar-rizvi/fourteen-c ategories-people#comment-0