

Tauheed or Shirk

Monotheism or Polytheism?

(Tawheed or Shirk?)

Glossary

Tawheed: Belief in One God, Monotheism.

Shirk: Associating partners with God, Polytheism.

Aalim: Islamic Scholar, (pl: Ulema, spltv: Allama)

Hadeeth: Prophetic Narrations (pl: Ahadeeth).

Salaah: Prayer

Kufr: Disbelief

Kaafir: Disbeliever (pl:Kuffaar)

Aalam-e-Barzakh: Life in the grave, before Resurrection.

Hazrat: Respected personality.

PREFACE

This book is intended to protect Muslims from all misconceptions and misunderstandings prevalent in the Muslim community, regarding the belief in seeking assistance from great prophets and saints.

Allama Syed Ahmed Sa'eed Kaazmi Shah Saheb (Allah's mercy be upon him) was a great scholar and a specialist in the field of Prophetic Traditions (Hadeeth) and Quranic exegesis (Tafseer), to which he made voluminous contributions. He earned the title of "Ghazali-e-Zamaan" or "Ghazali of the Era". In this treatise, he clearly distinguishes between "Shirk" and "Tawheed". He does so in a very simple manner, so that all Muslims are able to understand. This strategy of his is based on the principle of education and the acquisition of knowledge which is compulsory in the life of all Muslims, whether males or females.

The aim of the writer is not one of trivial argument and discussion based on hearsay: rather, it is to make the public aware and to educate them on practices followed by the first generation of Muslims - yet these practices are, unfortunately, mocked by a few "enlightened Modern-day" Muslims.

May Allah assist and guide those Muslims who are instrumental in producing this book and all those involved in the protection of the pristine faith of Islam. Aameen.

Allah - beginning with the name of - the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

THE SINGULARITY (ONE-NESS) OF ALLAH.

The Being (Self / Entity) of Almighty Allah is indeed only One. It is only those who are ignorant and persist in being ignorant need an explanation on how Almighty Allah is "One" and is actually present. Those who are Allah-conscious do not desire an explanation on this subject of Tawheed and Shirk. They in fact accept without questioning. There is a famous proverb in Arabic as follows: Al Ashyaa'u tu'rafa bi azdaadihi - "Objects are indeed understood by its opposites."

For example, peace can be understood and appreciated only by a person who has felt and experienced chaos. A person though who has not felt chaos, cannot appreciate peace. In the same manner, day cannot be understood if a person has not experienced night. Likewise, if a person has not comprehended misguidance how is it possible for him to understand guidance? Using this very principle, we may ask, if a person has not understood "Shirk" or Polytheism, how is it possible for him to appreciate or comprehend "Tawheed" or Monotheism? It is, therefore, only logical that after we have understood Shirk can we then understand Tawheed.

The Almighty Allah has in fact very clearly explained the belief of Shirk and Tawheed, thereby completely eradicating the concept of non-religion. It is very surprising that after explaining the differences in the concept of Tawheed and Shirk so clearly, there are still doubts in the minds of those whose sole duty it is to destroy the concept or fundamentals of unity that is found in Islam.

THE MEANING OF TAWHEED

The meaning of "Tawheed" is to believe that there is no partner to Allah in His "Being" and / or in His "Attributes". In other words, how great is the Being of Allah - we do not believe that there is another being like Him. If any person believes on the contrary, then his belief would constitute Shirk. We should remember that the attributes of Allah, among others, include the act of "listening", "seeing" and possessing knowledge. If an individual believes that another possesses these attributes, he will be guilty of Shirk.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TAWHEED AND SHIRK

After we have understood the meaning of Tawheed, the natural question that arises is: if knowledge which is one of the attributes of Allah is ascribed for another individual, will this really mean that we are guilty of Shirk? We know that "listening" and "seeing" are also among the attributes of Allah. If we prove these very attributes for another individual, will we be guilty of Shirk? In the very same manner, the attribute of "living" is also among the attributes of Allah. If we ascribe this attribute for another individual will we again be guilty of Shirk?

THE DIFFERENCE

No! Dear Muslim brothers and sisters: do not be deceived by those who hope to mislead you. You should remember that indeed Almighty Allah possesses the attribute of "living", yet He has, also through His Mercy, bestowed upon His creation this very quality. The attribute of "living" which we relate to ourselves is not the same attribute of "living" as we relate to Allah. The difference is that His attribute of "living" is non-bestowed, while the attribute of "living" which we possess, is one which we have been bestowed with by Allah. The attribute of "living" which He has bestowed upon us is temporary and non-eternal, while His attribute of "living" is eternal and non-bestowed.

If this principle is applied to all qualities and attributes, then the question of Shirk will never arise. It is simple, yet, as we have mentioned earlier, those Muslims whose sole aim is to deprive Islam of its unity, peace and harmony, intentionally make it difficult so that the simple-minded Muslims become confused and misguided.

HAS THE ALMIGHTY ALLAH GIVEN MAN POWER AND AUTHORITY?

The answer to this is quite simple. If man has not been given power and authority, then what indeed is the difference between him and a stone? We know that Almighty Allah possesses power and authority. We also know that He has created these attributes within man. You may well ask: if both possess power and authority, then what is the difference? The answer to this is quite simple. If one applies the above principle, there is no doubt that Almighty Allah possesses power and authority, yet, although possessing these attributes, He is not subservient to anyone, neither have these

attributes been given to Him by anyone. His slave, man, on the other hand, possesses these attributes of power and authority, yet, he is still subservient to Almighty Allah, and these attributes are not his, rather they have been bestowed upon him by Almighty Allah.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ALMIGHTY ALLAH AND HIS SLAVE

This very same principle as explained above can be applied to the question of "knowledge", "seeing", "listening", and other attributes. Almighty Allah possesses these attributes and so does the slave. No one has given these qualities to Allah, whilst the slave, on the other hand, has been given these attributes by Almighty Allah. This is, in fact, one of the clear differences between Almighty Allah and His slave.

We understand that if an attribute which is conferred to any slave has been bestowed upon the slave by Almighty Allah, then this belief cannot be labeled as Shirk. For example, if we relate the quality of "hearing" to a slave, we must therefore believe that this attribute of "hearing" has been bestowed upon the slave by the Grace of Allah - then this belief cannot be termed Shirk.

At this point an important question arises. Applying the above principle, we ask, why is it that we condemn the idol worshippers who also believe that their idols have been given these amazing powers by Allah? Are they not using the very same principle, which we are applying?

The answer to this question is quite clear and simple. When the idolaters believed that their idols were a creation of Allah, they also should have believed that the slave is undoubtedly in bondage to the Creator. Without the Creator, the creation cannot come into being. They also should have believed and accepted that, as in life or in death, the slave is in need of the Creator. But, they refused to believe and accept this principle, that is, Allah's Authority.

They began to believe that although their idols were a creation, Almighty Allah had given the idols "Divinity" and total "God-head". They believed that after creating their idols, there was now no need for submission or duty towards Almighty Allah (Allah forbid!) because their idols could do whatever they wished, even if Almighty Allah had not commanded them to do a certain thing. The idolaters could not understand this very simple principle: that the creation can never be totally independent of Almighty Allah.

DIVINITY CANNOT BE GIVEN

Indeed, Almighty Allah, through His Mercy, may bestow upon His slave whatever powers He wishes, yet He would not bestow "divinity", which is permanent and independent - the attributes given to His slave are not permanent or even independent. The idolaters believed that because of the tremendous worship performed by the idols, "Laat" and "Manaat", Almighty Allah set them free to do as they pleased. Based on this belief, the idolaters believed that their idols have been given Divinity and God-head. Any person who believes that Almighty Allah has given any slave "God-head" and "Divinity", has committed Shirk. There is no doubt in this. This is another difference between the Muslim and the idol worshipper. The Muslim believes that the servant of Allah will always remain a servant and can never become one possessing God-head and Divinity.

DEEDS PERFORMED BY THE SLAVE THROUGH THE PERMISSION OF ALLAH CAN NEVER BE TERMED SHIRK

The Almighty Allah states in the Holy Quran: "Who is he that can intercede with Him, except by His command?" (Surah Baqarah: Verse 255)

From this Quranic injunction, an important fact is becoming apparent to us. Almighty Allah is quite clearly stating to us that not everyone will be given permission to intercede except those to whom He has given permission. It is also a warning to the idol worshippers, in that they should not believe and hold high esteem of their idols considering that their idols have never been given permission to intercede for their worshippers. This clearly proves that their idols are totally useless.

The beloved slaves of Allah, on the other hand, have been given permission to intercede. The first to intercede will be the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him) as proven by many authentic sources. After him, other prophets, martyrs (Shuhada), saints, etc. Another important fact we must always bear in mind is that if the belief is that anyone can perform miracles without the permission of Allah, then this belief would be considered Shirk, whereas if a duty has been allocated, as will be discussed shortly, then this cannot be considered Shirk.

The Holy Quran is evidence of Prophet 'Isa (peace be upon him) explaining to his nation some of his amazing miracles. This serves as a reminder to all, of the power and authority bestowed by Allah upon His beloved servants. He states: "I heal him who was born blind and the leper and I revive the dead by Allah's command." (Surah Ale Imraan: Verse 49)

We know that to perform amazing duties as explained by Prophet 'Isa (peace be upon him) is indeed the by the Grace of Almighty Allah, yet this great prophet is actually stating that he can perform them. Is he guilty (Allah forbid!) of committing Shirk? No, for he has clearly proven by one verse the difference between Shirk and Tawheed.

When he has said, "these duties are performed through the permission of Allah", immediately, the issue of Shirk is dismissed and the entire concept becomes one of Tawheed. Keeping this in mind, when Muslims state that great prophets and saints can perform miracles and do so with the permission of Allah, how can any sensible person call this action Shirk? This belief is purely Tawheed.

If one questions this and states that a Muslim cannot perform these amazing duties (of miracles and interceding) then he is contradicting numerous Quranic verses and Ahadeeth wherein amazing qualities and attributes of the special servants of Allah are explained.

THE REASON FOR THE CREATION OF MAN

Every creation of Almighty Allah has been created for some specific reason and purpose, for example the sun, the trees, water, the wind. Explaining the purpose for the creation of man, Almighty Allah states: "And I have created Jinns and Men, only for them to worship Me." (Surah Ad Dhaariyat: Verse 56)

Worship can only be performed if there is recognition. In other words, mankind and jinn have been created to recognize Almighty Allah. The question that arises is, what is the outcome of this recognition? It means that the more we recognize Allah, the more we worship Him.

From the above discussion we come to realize that mankind has been created to recognize Allah, and by doing so we become closer. In other words, closeness to Allah is the pinnacle of glory in the life of mankind.

By understanding this, we must examine its implication its results and its meaning in the light of Islamic Law.

There is a Hadeeth-e-Qudsi found in the Saheeh Bukhari explaining this: The Holy Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him) has explained that Almighty Allah has stated: "Anyone who has enmity with My Wali (Friend) –so I declare war against such. Among those acts through which My slave achieves My closeness, the most beloved are the Fard (Compulsory) acts. My slave also achieves My closeness through the Nafil (optional - additional) deeds, till I make him My beloved. When he becomes My beloved, I become his ears through which he listens, his eyes through which

he sees, his hands by which he holds, his feet by which he walks. When he pleads to Me for anything I definitely bestow it on him. When he seeks refuge in Me from any evil, then I definitely save him from it."

Some individuals state that only after achieving this status does the slave refrain from all bad deeds. This thought is a flagrant misinterpretation of the Hadeeth for any person possessing a little common sense will tell you that after refraining from all bad deeds, does the slave achieve this status. In other words, after he has adopted piety and abstinence, does he stand any chance of being a beloved.

In the following verse, Almighty Allah explains how we can achieve His closeness. He states: "Proclaim, (O dear Prophet Mohammed – blessings and peace be upon him), "O mankind! If you love Allah, follow me - Allah will love you and forgive you your sins " (Surah Ale Imraan: Verse 31)

In other words, only after we have adopted piety & abstinence and in followed the Holy Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him), will we stand any chance of becoming a beloved. The slave first refrains from bad deeds and actions. He then performs the Fard and Nafil acts continuously. Then only does he become a beloved. It is not possible for him to continue performing evil deeds and still feel he can become the beloved servant of Allah.

Imam Fakhrudeen Raazi (May Allah be pleased with him) in his "Tafseer Kabeer", explains the above Hadeeth: "In the same manner, if the slave continuously adopts good deeds, then he indeed reaches that stage of which Almighty Allah states that He becomes the slave's eyes and ears. When the magnificent Noor (Light) of Allah becomes the eye of the slave, then the slave perceives things near and distant. When this Light becomes the hand of the slave, then he, the slave, is then able to dispense with things easy and difficult, near and far."

We also come to realize from this explanation that the beloved slaves of Allah have been given the power to help and assist. Once we have proven this, how can we call it Shirk if we implore them for assistance? It can never be Shirk, for although the slave and the Creator can help and assist, remember that the Creator possesses this attribute without it being given to Him by anyone. The slave, on the other hand, possesses these attributes after it has been given to him by Almighty Allah, and we still believe that the slave is the servant of Allah and is still subservient to Him. This is the belief of all Muslims.

When we have understood and accepted this, the difference between Tawheed and Shirk becomes quite clear, yet, unfortunately, there are certain individuals who state that they believe in Allah, yet

consider asking His beloved slaves for assistance as Shirk. If this indeed be their faith, then what, we ask of you, is disbelief (Kufr)?

It also seems to be the habit of these "believers" to relate verses meant for the disbelievers (Kuffaar) and apply them upon Muslims - perhaps they are merely following the habit of their forefathers. It is recorded in Saheeh Bukhari, that Hazrat Abdullah Ibn Omar (May Allah be pleased with them) used to despise the Khaariji sect the most. Why? Let us see. He considered them the worst of creation. He used to say that "these people have made it a practice of theirs, that whatever verse has been revealed against the idol worshippers, they relate these verses towards the Muslims."

IMPORTANT QUESTION

Some individual has asked this question, and we feel that it should be answered. The question is this: we accept that the beloved slave of Allah possesses all these magnificent attributes. We accept that he can assist and help. Yet, are not all these attributes only prevalent in him when he is in this world, for when he dies, will not his body become a heap of sand and rubble? When it does become a heap of sand, will not all the attributes found in him finish immediately?

ANSWER

This doubt, in fact, has only been created, for we have merely considered man to be a combination of flesh and bones. This reasoning is indeed incorrect, for the essence of man is not flesh and bones, rather it is the soul. The soul, unlike the flesh and bones, never dies. If we accept that his soul will die, then how will he experience the punishment and reward within the grave? Describing the condition within the grave, the Holy Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him) has stated that the grave is sometimes a "Garden of Paradise" and sometimes a "Pit of Hell".

We, therefore, logically ask: for whom is the grave a hell-pit or a garden of Paradise? It is, without doubt, for the soul which is still alive. The soul always has a connection with the body even if the body has decayed. For example, a ray of the sun, though it may shine on a heap of sand, on a tree or on the roof of a house, it still has a relationship with the sun.

So we judge from this that the essence of man is the soul, it is this which enables him to assist us in times of need and anxiety.

Another query that seems to confuse people is: how is it that we cannot see the punishment or reward experienced by the body or the soul? The answer to this is simple. The happenings of the grave are being experienced within the Aalam-e-Barzakh - a world in itself - which means, "The

Screened World." A logical explanation of this would be that if a person complains about a headache and although the pain he is experiencing is an absolute reality, we cannot perceive it or even comprehend it simply because the pain is screened from our eyes. Similarly, punishment and reward is experienced within the grave.

Another example would be of a person dreaming. Although he is seeing himself burning, we cannot see him burning or receiving a gift, for the simple reason is that his life in that context is screened from our eyes.

THE SQUEEZING OF THE GRAVE

It is reported in the Ahadeeth that when the person is placed within the grave, the grave squeezes him, whether he is a Muslim or a non-Muslim. The earth could be described as "the mother", for man has been created from sand. Therefore, it stands to reason that all will return to her. Some of her children who have adopted piety and abstinence, they will be welcomed and agreeably received. Those, on the other hand, who have adopted disgraceful behavior & evil ways, she will receive them, not to welcome but rather to punish them. This example clearly describes how a Muslim and a non-Muslim will be treated in the grave. It will welcome the Muslim as a mother caressing her child, while she will squeeze the disbeliever till his ribs appear on opposite sides. This illustrates that the soul never dies and that the reward or punishment within the grave is a reality.

Let us return to the discussion describing the magnificent attributes possessed by the beloved slaves of Allah. Having proven that his soul and body still possess these attributes, it means he can still assist us, traverse miles on end, listen and see things far and near. When he can still do these things with the permission of Allah, then how can any sane person term it as being as Shirk if we ask them to assist us?

In Tirmidhi Shareef, Hazrat Abdullah Ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with them) narrates that Sahabi (Companion) once pitched his tent on a plot of ground without realizing that he was doing so over a grave. After a while, he realized that his tent was over a grave for he could hear the recital of Surah Mulk. He related the entire episode to the Holy Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him), who replied that the recital of Surah Mulk indeed assists the person within the grave and protects him from pain and punishment.

From this episode, we see that the beloved servants of Allah are still alive within their graves, or else the Holy Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him) would have merely disregarded the entire incident. But he did not do so. Rather, he commented on the excellences of the Surah Mulk, which means that he also accepted that the beloved servants of Allah are still alive within their graves.

Let us relate another incident from the period of the companions. It is recorded that in the period of Hazrat Mu'awwiya (May Allah be pleased with him) that a canal was dug between Mecca and Medina. Incidentally, the canal passed through that plot of land where the Shuhada (martyrs) of Uhud lay buried. A person while digging accidentally cut the foot of a Shaheed with a spade. As a result of this, blood began to flow from the blessed foot. We learn from this incident that aside from their souls, even the bodies of these great and beloved servants of Allah are alive. This incident is narrated in "Jazbul Quloob" by Shaikh Muhaddith Dehelvi (May Allah be pleased with him) and "Sharah-us Sudoor" by Imam Jalaludeen Suyuti (May Allah be pleased with him).

Let us now quote another example from the period of the Taabe'in (followers of the Companions). Imam Abu Na'eem (May Allah be pleased with him) in his book, "Hilyatul Awliya", narrates from Hazrat Sa'eed (May Allah be pleased with him). The great saint states, "By Allah, Hameed Taweel (May Allah be pleased with him) and I were burying Hazrat Thaabit Nibhaani (May Allah be pleased with him). As we were setting the final rocks, one rock accidentally fell into the grave. As I peeped into the grave, I saw that Hazrat Thaabit Nibhaani (May Allah be pleased with him) was about to perform the Salaah (Prayer) and he was imploring Allah in the following manner, 'O Allah, You have given certain of Your creation the permission to perform their Salaah within the grave, give me also the same permission'. It was indeed beyond the Mercy of Allah to refuse him."

N.B.: Hazrat Thaabit bin Aslam Nibhaani Basri (May Allah be pleased with him) was a Taabei'i. He has narrated Ahadeeth from Hazrat Anas (May Allah be pleased with him) and various other Companions. Shu'ba states that he used to complete the recitation of the Holy Quran in one day and night. He also used to fast during the day. Abu Bakr Al Muzni states that he had not seen a more pious person than Thaabit bin Aslam (May Allah be pleased with him). ("Kashfun Noor", Imam Abdul Gani Naablisi, pg. 9)

Imam Baihaqi (May Allah be pleased with him) narrates from Qazi Nishapuri Ebrahim (May Allah be pleased with him) who states that, "A pious woman passed away. Among those present for her funeral prayers was a shroud thief, who attended only with the intention of noticing where she was being buried. As darkness set in, he dug the grave and was about to steal the shroud when the pious lady exclaimed, "By Allah, how strange it is that a dweller of Paradise is stealing the shroud of another dweller of Paradise!" She explained that whosoever took part in her funeral, Allah would forgive them, and that the shroud thief had taken part in the funeral prayers. The thief immediately covered the grave and repented with a sincere heart."

Indeed this is the greatness of the beloved servants of Allah that one goes to them as a thief and returns as a saint himself.

It is reported in the Hadeeth-e-Qudsi that Almighty Allah has stated:

"When My slave becomes My beloved, then his words and attributes become the mirror of My words and attributes. Whatever he pleads for, I bestow it upon him. If he seeks refuge in Me, I protect him."

As we have seen, all these gifts are still found in the beloved servants of Allah even after they have departed from this world. It is solely due to this that the believing Muslims visit the graves of the saints for they are indeed people who have been promised the mercy and assistance of Allah. We derive from these proofs, that if an individual goes to the tomb of a great saint and implores to him in this manner, "O beloved servant of Allah, you are indeed the beloved slave of Allah. Please ask the Almighty on my behalf," how, we ask of you, can this be termed Shirk, when Almighty Allah Himself has promised them all these gifts?

After considering these facts, if any person feels that he cannot achieve any help and assistance by visiting a tomb of a great saint, then he has not in any way insulted the saint, rather he has doubted the promise of Allah whereas Allah has promised his slaves His assistance.

Till now, we have proved that help and assistance that can be rendered by the beloved slaves of Allah in this world and in the Aalam-e-Barzakh, the question is: will they be able to assist us in the Hereafter?

The Holy Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him) has already given this answer. He has stated: "The Ulema, the Hufaa, and the Shuhada of my followers will indeed intercede on the Day of Judgment. Even the infant whose parents are Muslims will intercede." If, as some misled individuals say, that it is Shirk to ask the creation for assistance, then how will these above mentioned beloved slaves help us on the Day of Judgment? This again is proof that it is not Shirk to ask them in this world either!

The events that will take place on the Day of Judgment are clear to all. We know that mankind will go to each prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be upon them all) seeking assistance, and when finally they reach the Holy Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him), he will say, "I am for it (that is, I am that person who will intercede for you)."

He will then go into prostration and praise Almighty Allah, after which Almighty Allah will say, "O Muhammad! Raise your head. Speak you shall be listened to. Ask, it shall be granted to you. Intercede, your intercession will be accepted."

The Holy Prophet (Allah's blessings and peace be upon him) will then intercede. After him, the great prophets and saints will also intercede. If it is Shirk to ask the beloved servants of Allah for assistance, how will it be permissible on the Day of Judgment? We suggest to those who consider this action as Shirk to voice their opinion on the Day of Judgment - perhaps they will be amply "rewarded" for their folly.

May Almighty Allah bestow upon people the strong faith to correctly differentiate between Shirk and Tawheed. Aameen!