

## **A Study in the Philosophy of Islamic Rites**

---

**Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr**

**Translated by Yasin T. Al-Jibouri**

Rites enjoy an important role in Islam. Their injunctions represent an important part of jurisprudence and a worshipping conduct which formulates a noticeable phenomenon in the daily life of the pious.

The system of rites in Islamic jurisprudence represents one of its static facets which cannot be affected by the general trend of life or the circumstances of civil progress in man's life except by a small portion, contrary to other judicial aspects which are flexible and dynamic. The method of application and utilization of these judicial aspects is affected by the circumstances pertaining to civil progress in man's life, such as the system of deals and contracts.

In the sphere of worship, the man of the age of electricity and space prays, fasts, and performs the pilgrimage just as his ancestor from the age of the stone mill used to pray, fast, and perform the pilgrimage .

It is true, however, that in the civil aspect of getting prepared to perform a rite. this person may differ from that: for this travels to his place of pilgrimage in a plane, while that used to travel with a camel caravan. And when this covers his body-while saying his prayers or during other occasions-with clothes manufactured by machines, that covered his body with clothes he hand-sewed. But the general formula of worship, as well as its method and legislation, is the same. The necessity of its application has never suffered any change, nor has its legislating value been affected or shaken by the continuous growth of man's control over nature and his own means of living.

This means that Islamic Sharia (Jurisprudence) has not prescribed prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and other Islamic rites temporarily, or as a juridical formula limited to conditions such Sharia lived in its early epochs of history. Rather, it enjoined these rites on man while he uses atomic energy to mobilize the engine, just as it has enjoined them on man while ploughing his field with a hand plough.

Thus do we derive the deduction that the system of rites deals with the permanent needs in the life of man, for whom they are created, and which remain the same inspite of the continuous progress in man's life-style. This is so because the application of a fixed prescription requires a fixed need. Hence, this question comes up:

Is there really a fixed need in the life of man ever since jurisprudence started its cultivating role, remaining as such until today, so that we may interpret-in the light of its stability-the stability of the formulae whereby jurisprudence has treated and satisfied this same need, so that in the end we can explain the stability of worship in its positive role in man's life?

It may seem, at first look, that to suggest such a fixed need of this sort is not acceptable, that it does not coincide with the reality of man's life when we compare today's man with the man of the future. We certainly find man getting continuously further-in the method, nature of problems, and factors of progress of his own life-from the circumstances of the tribal society, his pagan problems, worries, limited aspirations, and the method of treating and organizing these needs, wherein appeared the concluding jurisprudence. Therefore, how can rites-in their own particular juristic system-perform a real role in this field which is contemporary to man's life-span, inspite of the vast progress in means and methods of living? If rites such as prayers, ablution, ceremonial washing (ghusul), and fasting had been useful during some stage in the life of the bedouin man- taking part in cultivating his behaviour; his practical commitment to clean his body and keep it from excessive eating and drinking- these same goals, by the same token, are achieved by modern man through the very nature of his civilized life and the norms of social living. So, it would seem that these rites are no longer a necessary need as they used to be once upon a time, nor have they retained a role in building man's civilization or solving his sophisticated problems !

But this theory is wrong. The social progress in means and tools- for example, in the plough changing in man's hand to a steam or electric machine-imposes a change in man's relationship to nature and to whatever material forms it takes. Take agriculture, for example, which represents a relationship between the land and the farmer; it develops materially in form and context according to the norm of development described above.

As regarding worship, the latter is not a relationship between man and nature, so that it would be affected by such sort of development or progress. Rather, it is a relationship between man and his Lord. This relationship has a spiritual role which directs man's relationship to his brother man. In both cases. However, we find that humanity historically, lives with a certain number of fixed needs faced equally by the man of the age of oil (i.e., animal oil used for lighting) as well as that of the age of electricity. The system of rites in Islam is the fixed solution for the fixed needs of this sort, and for problems whose nature is not sequential; instead, they are problems which face man during his individual, social and cultural build-up. Such a solution, called "rites," is still alive in its objectives until today, becoming an essential condition for man to overcome his problems and succeed in practicing

his civilized vocations.

In order to clearly know all this, we have to point out some fixed lines of needs and problems in man's life, and the role rites play in satisfying such needs and overcoming such problems.

These lines are as follows:

- 1) the need to be linked to the Absolute
- 2) the need for subjectivity in purpose and self-denial
- 3) the need for inner feeling of responsibility to guarantee execution

The system of rites is a way to organize the practical aspect of the relationship between man and his Lord; therefore, it cannot separate his evaluation from that of this very relationship and of its role in man's life. From here, both of these questions are inter-related:

First: What is the value achieved through the relationship between man and his lord in his civilized march? And is it a fixed value treating a fixed need in this march, or is it a sequential one linked to temporal needs or limited problems, losing its significance at the end of the stage limiting such needs and problems?

Second: What is the role played by rites as regarding that relationship and what is the extent of its significance as a practical dedication to the relationship between man and God?

What follows is a summary of the necessary explanation concerning both questions:

## **The Link Between The Absolute Is A Two-Fold Problem**

The observer, scrutinizing the different acts of the stage-story of man in history, may find out that the problems are different and the worries diversified in their given daily formulas. But if we go beyond these formulas, infiltrating into the depth and essence of the problem, we will find one main essential and fixed problem with two edges or contrasting poles wherefrom mankind suffers during his civilized advancement along history. Looking from one angle, the problem is loss and nonentity which is the negative side of the problem. And from another angle, the problem is extreme in entity and belonging. This is expressed by connecting the relative facts to which man belongs to an Absolute, thus expressing the positive side of the same problem. The Concluding Jurisprudence (of Islam) has given the name "atheism" to the first problem, which it expresses very obviously, and the name "idolatry" and Shirk (believing in one or many partners with God) as also an obvious expression of it. The continuous struggle of Islam against atheism and Shirk is, in its civilized reality, a struggle against both sides of the problem in their historical dimensions.

Both angles of the problem meet into one essential point, and that is: deterring man's advancing movement from a continuously good imaginative creativity. The problem of loss means to man that he is a being in continuous loss, not belonging to an Absolute, to Whom he can support himself in his long and hard march, deriving help from His Absolutism and Encompassment, sustenance, and a clear vision of the goal and joining, through that Absolute, his own movement to the universe, to the whole existence, to eternity and perpetuity, defining his own relationship to Him and his position in the inclusive cosmic framework. The movement at loss without the aid of an Absolute is but a random movement like that of a feather in the wind, the phenomena around it affect it while it is unable to affect them. There is no accomplishment or productivity in the great march of man along history without a connection to and promulgation with an Absolute in an objective march.

This same connection, on the other hand, directs the other side of the problem, that of extreme entity, by changing the "relative" to an "absolute," a problem which faces man continuously. Man weaves his loyalty to a case so that such loyalty freezes gradually and gets stripped of its relative circumstances within which he was accurate, and the human mind will derive out of it an "absolute" without an end, without a limit to responding to its demands. In religious terminology, such an "absolute" eventually changes to a "god" worshipped instead of a need that requires fulfillment. When the "relative" changes to an "absolute," to a "god" of this sort, it becomes a factor in encircling man's movement, freezing its capacities to develop and create, paralyzing man from performing his naturally open role in the march:

*Do not worship another "god" beside God else you should become forsaken. (Quran XVII:22)*

This is a true fact applicable to all "gods" mankind made along history, albeit if they were made during the idolatry stage of worship or its succeeding stages. From the stage of tribe to that of science, we find a series of "gods" which mankind treated as an "absolute" and which deterred mankind, who worshipped them, from making any accurate progress.

Indeed, from the tribe to which man submitted his alliance, considering it as an actual need dictated by his particular living circumstances, he went then to the extreme, changing it to an "absolute," without being able to see anything except through them. Hence, they became an obstacle in his way for advancement.

It was to science that modern man deservedly granted alliance, as it paved for him the way to control nature. But he sometimes exaggerated such an alliance, turning it to an absolute alliance, with which he was infatuated, an "absolute" to worship, offering it the rites of obeisance and loyalty, rejecting for its own sake all ideals and facts which can never be measured by meters or seen by microscopes.

Accordingly, every limited and relative thing, if man wove out of it, at a certain stage, an absolute to which he thus relates himself, becomes at a stage of intellectual maturity a shackle on the mind that made it, because of its being limited and relative.

Hence, man's march has to have an Absolute.

And He has to be a real Absolute capable of absorbing the human march, directing it to the right path no matter how much advancement it achieves or how far it extends on its lengthy line, wiping out all "gods" that encircle the march and deter it.

Thus can the problem be solved in both of its poles. Such a remedy is shown by what Divine Jurisprudence has presented man on earth: The Belief in God as the Absolute to Whom limited man can tie his own march without causing him any contradiction along his long path.

Belief in God, then, treats the negative aspect of the problem, refusing loss, atheism and non-entity, for it places man in a position of responsibility: to whose movement and management the whole cosmos is related. Man becomes the vicegerent of God on earth. Vicegerency implies responsibility, and a reward man receives according to his conduct, between God and resurrection, infinitude and eternity, while he moves within such a sphere of responsible and purposeful movement.

Belief in God also treats the positive aspects of the problem-that of the extreme in entity, forcing restrictions on man and curbing his swift march-according to this manner:

First This aspect of the problem is created by changing the limited and relative to an "absolute" through intellectual exertion and by stripping the relative of its circumstances and limitations. As for the Absolute provided by the belief in God, this has never been the fabrication of a stage of the human intellect, so that it may become, during the new stage of intellectual maturity, limited to the mind that made it. Nor has it ever been the offspring of a limited need of an individual or a group, so that its becoming absolute may place it as a weapon in the hand of the individual or group in order to guarantee its illegal interests. For God, the Praised, the Sublime, is an Absolute without limits, one whose fixed Attributes absorb all the supreme ideals of man, His vicegerent on earth, of comprehension and knowledge, ability and strength, justice and wealth. This means that the path leading to Him is without a limit; hence, moving towards Him requires the continuity and relative movement and a relative acceleration of the limited (man) towards the Absolute (God) without a stop.

*O thou man! Verily thou art ever toiling on towards thy Lord- painfully toiling, but thou shalt meet Him ... (Quran, LXXXIV:6)*

He grants this movement His own supreme ideals derived from comprehension, knowledge, ability and justice, as well as other qualities of that Absolute, towards Whom the march is directed. The march towards the Absolute is all knowledge, all potential, all justice and all wealth. In other words, the human march is a continuously successive struggle against all sorts of ignorance, incapacity, oppression and poverty.

As long as these are the very goals of the march related to this Absolute, they are, then, not merely a dedication to God, but also a continuous struggle for the sake of man, for his dignity, for achieving such supreme ideals for him:

*And if any strive (with might and main), they do so for their souls: for God is free of all needs from all creation. (Quran. XXIX:6)*

*He, then, that receives guidance benefits his own soul: but he that strays injures his own soul. Nor art thou set over them to dispose of their affairs. (Quran, XXXIX:41)*

On the contrary, whimsical absolutes and false gods cannot absorb the march with all its aspirations, for these manufactured absolutes are the children of an incapable man's brain, or the need of the poor man, or the oppression of the oppressor; therefore they are jointly are linked to ignorance, incapacity and oppression. They can never bless man's continuous struggle against them.

Second: Being linked to God Almighty as the Absolute Who absorbs all of the aspirations of the human march means at the same time rejecting all of those whimsical absolutes which used to cause excessive entity. It also means waging a continuous war and an endless struggle against all sorts of idolatry and artificial worship. Thus, man will be emancipated from the mirage of these false absolutes which stood as an obstacle in his path towards God, falsifying his goal and encircling his march:

*But the Unbelievers, their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing: but he finds God (ever) with him. (Quran, XXIV:38)*

*Are many lords differing among themselves better, or the One God, Supreme and Irresistible? If not Him, ye worship nothing but names which ye have named, ye and your fathers, for which God hath sent down no authority. (Quran, XII: 39-40)*

*Such is God your Lord: to Him belongs all Dominion. And those whom ye invoke besides Him have not the least power. (Quran, XXXV:13)*

If we consider the main slogan God put forward in this respect: "There is no god but Allah," we will find out that it links the human march to the True Absolute with the rejection of

every artificial absolute. The history of the march, in its living actuality, came across the ages to emphasize the organic link between this rejection and that strong and aware tie to God Almighty. For as far as he goes away from the True God, man sinks in the labyrinth of different gods and lords. Both rejection and the positive link to "There is no god but Allah" are but two faces for one fact: the fact which is indispensable to the human march along its lengthy path. It is but the Truth which is worthy of saving the march from loss, helping it exploit all its creative energies, emancipating it from each and every false and obstructing absolute.

## Rites Are Practical Expressions

Just as man was born carrying in him all potentials of the experience on life's stage, plus all seeds of its success, such as awareness, activity and conditioning, so was he born tied by nature to the Absolute. This is so because his relationship with the Absolute is one of the requirements of his own success whereby he overcomes the problems facing his civilized march, as we have already seen, and there is no experience more sustaining and inclusive, more meaningful, than this of Faith in man's life. It has been a phenomenon attached to man since time immemorial. During all stages of history, such a social and continuous attachment proves-through experience-that escaping towards the Absolute, aspiring towards Him from beyond borders lived by man, is a genuine inclination of man no matter how diversified the shapes of such inclination are, how different its methods and degrees of awareness.

But Faith, as an instinct, is not enough to guarantee bringing to reality an attachment to the Absolute in its correct form, for that is linked to the Truth through the method of satisfying such an instinct. The correct behaviour in satisfying it in a manner parallel to all other instincts and inclinations, being in harmony with it, is the only guarantee of the ultimate benefit of man. Also, the behaviour according to or against an instinct is the one that fosters the instinct, deepens, eliminates or suffocates it. So do the seeds of mercy and compassion die within man's self through the continuous and practical sympathizing with the miserable, the wronged, and the poor.

From this point, Faith in God, the deep feeling of aspiring towards the unknown and the attachment to the Absolute have all to have some direction which determines the manner of satisfying such feeling and the way to deepen it, fixing it in a way compatible with all other genuine feelings of man.

Without a direction, such feeling may have a setback and may be afflicted with various sorts of deviation, just like what happened to the strayed religious feeling during most epochs of history.

Without a deepened conduct, such feeling may become minimized, and the attachment to the Absolute ceases to be an active reality in man's life capable of exploiting good energies.

The religion which laid the slogan of "There is not god but Allah," promulgating with it both rejection and affirmation, is the Director.

Rites are factors which perform the role of deepening such feeling, for they are but a practical expression and an expression of the religious instinct; through it this instinct grows and gets deepened in man's life.

We notice, too, that in accurate rites-being a practical expression of the link to the Absolute-both affirmation and rejection promulgate. They are, thus, a continuous confirmation from man to his link with God Almighty and the rejection of any other "absolute" of those false ones. When one starts his prayers by declaring that "God is Great" (Allaho Akbar), he confirms this rejection. And when he declares that God's Prophet is also His Servant-Slave and Messenger, he confirms this rejection. And when he abstains from enjoying the pleasures of life, abstaining from enjoying even the necessities of life for the sake of God (as in the case of fasting), defying the temptations and their effects, he, too, confirms this rejection.

These rituals have succeeded in the practical sphere of brining up generations of believers, at the hands of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his succeeding pious leaders, those whose prayers embodied within their own selves the rejection of all evil powers and their subjection, and the "absolutes" of Kisra and Caesar got minimized before their march as did all "absolutes" of man's whims.

In this light do we come to know that worship is a fixed necessity in man's life and civilized march, for there can be no march without an "absolute" to whom it is linked, deriving from him its ideals. And there is no "absolute" that can absorb the march along its lengthy path except the True Absolute (God), the Glorified. Besides Him, artificial "absolutes" definitely form, in one way or another, an absolute which curbs the march's growth. Attachment to the True Absolute, then, is a fixed need. And there can be no attachment to the True Absolute without a practical expression of this attachment, confirming it and continuously fixing it. Such a practical expression is none but worship. Therefore, worship is a fixed need.

## **Subjectivity Of Purpose And Self-Denial**

In each stage of the human civilization, and in each period of man's life, people face numerous interests whose achievement requires a quantitative action to some degree. No matter how diversified the qualities of these interests are or the manner of brining them to life from one age to another is, they can still be divided into two sorts of interests:

**One:** interests whose materialistic gains and outcomes go to the individual himself, on whose work and endeavour depends the achievement of that interest;



Two: interests whose gain go to those other than the direct worker or group he belongs to. In this second kind are included all sorts of labour which aim at an even bigger goal than the existence of the worker himself, for every big goal cannot be usually achieved except through the collective efforts and endeavours of a long period of time.

The first sort of interests guarantees the inner motive of the individual: its availability and effort to secure it, for as long as the worker is the one who reaps the fruits of the interest and directly enjoys it, it is natural to find in him the effort to secure it and the work for its sake.

As for the second kind of interests, here the motive to secure these interests is not sufficient, for the interests here are not only the active worker's; and often his share of labour and hardship is greater than that of his share of the huge interest. From here, man needs an upbringing of subjectivity of purpose and self-denial in motive, i.e., that he must work for the sake of others, the group. In other words, he has to work for a purpose greater than his own existence and personal materialistic interest. Such an upbringing is necessary for the man of the electricity and atom age as it equally is for the man who used to fight with the sword and travel on camel-back. They both confront the worries of construction and of the great aims and situations which demand self-denial and working for the sake of others, sowing the seeds whose fruits may not be seen by the person who sowed them. It is necessary, then, to raise every individual to perform a portion of this labour and effort not merely for his own self and his personal materialistic interests, so that he will be capable of contributing with self-denial, of aiming at a purely "objective" goal.

Rites perform a large role in this upbringing. These, as we have already seen, are acts of man performed for the sake of achieving the pleasure of Almighty God. Therefore, they are invalid if the worshipper performs them just for his own personal interest. They are improper if the purpose behind them is a personal glory, public applause, or a dedication for his own ego, within his circle and environment. In fact, they even become unlawful acts deserving the punishment of the worshipper himself! All this is for the sake of the worshipper who tries, through his worship, an objective purpose, with all what this implies of truthfulness, sincerity and he will totally dedicate his worship to Almighty God alone.

God's Path is purely one of the service of all humanity. Each act performed for the sake of God is but an act for the sake of God's servants, for God is totally sufficient, independent of His servants. Since the True Absolute God is above any limit, specification, not related to any group or biased to any particular direction, His Path, then, practically equates that of ALL mankind's. To work for God, and for God alone, is to work for people, for the good of all the people. It is a psychological and spiritual training that never ceases to function.

Whenever the jurisdic path of God is mentioned, it can be taken to mean exactly all mankind's path. Islam has made God's Path one of the avenues to spend Zakat, meaning thereby: to spend for all humanity's good and benefit. It also urged to fight for the Cause of

God in defense of all the weak among humans, calling it Jihad, i.e., "fighting for the Path of God;"

*Those who believe (in God) fight in the cause of God, and those who reject Faith fight in the cause of Evil: so fight ye against the friends of Satan: feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan.*  
(Quran, IV: 76)

Besides, if we come to know that worship demands different types of endeavour, as it sometimes imposes on man only some physical exertion, as in prayer; and sometimes psychological, as in fasting; and other times financial, as in Zakat; and yet a fourth one an exertion on the level of self-sacrifice or danger, as in Jihad. If we come to know all this, we will be able to figure the depth and capacity of the spiritual and psychological training practiced by man through different rites for the objective purpose, for giving and contributing, for working for a higher goal in all different fields of human endeavour.

On this basis can you find the vast difference between a person who grew up on making endeavours to please God, brought up to labour without waiting for a compensation on the working grounds. and that who grew up always measuring a work according to the extent he can achieve of his own personal interest, basing it on the gain he gets from it, not comprehending-out of this measuring and estimating-except the language of figures and market prices. A person like this one can be none other than a merchant in his own social practices, regardless of their field or type.

Considering upbringing on the objective purpose. Islam has always tied the value of a work to its own impulses, separating them from its results. The value of an act in Islam is not in what results and gains it brings forth to the worker or to all people; rather it is the motives behind it, their purity, objectivity and self-denial. For example, the person who reaches the discovery of a medicine for a dangerous disease, thereby saving the lives of millions of patients. God does not evaluate his discovery according to the size of its results and the number of those patients it saves from death; rather He estimates it according to the feelings and desires which formulate within the discoverer the motive to make an effort to make that discovery. If he did not make his effort except to get a privilege that enables him to sell it and gain millions of dollars. This deed of his is not considered by God to be equal except to any other purely commercial deed, for the egoistic logic of the self-centered motives, just as they push him to discover a medicine for a chronic disease, may as well push him in the same degree to discover means of destruction if he finds a market that buys them. A deed is considered commendable and virtuous if the motives behind it go beyond the ego: if it is for the sake of God and the servants of God. According to the degrees of self denial and the participation of God's servant in its making, a deed is elevated and highly evaluated.

## **The Inner Feeling of Responsibility**

If we observe humanity in any of its historical periods, we will find it following a particular system of its life, a specific manner in distributing rights and responsibilities among people, and that according to the amount it acquires of securities for its members to cling to this system and to its implementation, it will be closer to stability and the achievement of the general goals expected from that system.

This fact is equally true concerning the future, as well as the past, for it is an established fact of man's civilized march along its lengthy range.

Among the securities is that which is objective, such as penalties enforced by the group to punish the individual who transgresses beyond his limits. And among them is that which is inner, i.e., man's inner feeling of responsibility towards his social obligations, towards whatever obligations the group demands of him, determining, spontaneously, his own rights.

In order to be an actual fact in man's life, the inner feeling of responsibility needs the belief in a supervision from whose knowledge not an atom's weight in earth or sky escapes and to a practical application through which such a feeling grows, and according to which the feeling of such an inclusive supervision lays roots.

The supervision, for whose knowledge not even an atom's weight escapes, is created in man's life as a result of his link with the True Absolute, the all-Knowing, the Omnipotent, the One Whose knowledge encompasses everything. This link with His self saves man the need for such a supervision, thus enabling the creation of an inner feeling of responsibility.

The practical application, through which this inner feeling of responsibility grows, materializes through practicing rites. For worship is the duty imposed by the Unseen, and by this we mean that checking it externally is impossible. Any external measures to enforce it can never be successful, for it stands through the self's own purpose and the spiritual attachment to work for God; this is a matter which can not be included in the calculation of a subjective supervision from the outside, nor can any legal measure guarantee that either. Rather, the only capable supervision in this respect is the one resulting from the attachment to the Absolute, the Unseen, the One from Whose knowledge nothing escapes. The only possible assurity on this level is the inner feeling of responsibility. This means that the person who practices worship is performing a duty which differs from any other social obligation or project when he borrows and pays back, or when he contracts and adheres to the conditions. When he borrows money from others and he returns it to the debtor, he performs a duty which lies within the range of social supervision's monitoring; hence, his estimation of the predictment of social reaction dictates to him the decision to do so.

The ritual duty, towards the Unknown, is one whose inner implication none knows except God, the Praised, the Omnipotent, for it is the result of the inner feeling of responsibility.

Through religious practices, such an inner feeling grows, and man gets used to behaving according to it. Through the medium of such feeling can we find the good citizen. It is not sufficient for good citizenship that a person is anxious to perform the legal rights of others only because of his apprehension of the social reaction towards him should he be reluctant to do so. Rather, good citizenship is achieved by the man who does not relax his own inner feeling of responsibility.

In Islam, we notice that it is often recommended to perform optional rites secretly, rather than publicly. There are even rites which are secretive by nature such as fasting, for it is an inner curb which cannot be checked externally. There are rites for which a secretive environment is chosen, avoiding the public stage, such as the nightly Nafl optional prayers whose performance requires after midnight time. All this is for the sake of deepening the aspect of worshipping the Unseen, linking it more and more to the inner feeling of responsibility. Thus, this feeling gets deepened through the practice of rites, and man gets used to behaving on its basis, forming a strong guarantee for the good individual's discharge of his duties and obligations.

## **General Outlook At Rites:**

If we cast a general look at the rites we have observed in this book, comparing them with each other, we can then derive some general outlooks at these rites. Here are some of these general outlooks. The Unseen In Explaining Rites

We came to know previously the important role worship plays in man's life and that it expresses a fixed need in his civilized march.

From another aspect: if we scrutinize and analyze the particulars, in the light of advanced science, to be acquainted with the pieces of wisdom and secrets which Islamic jurisprudence expresses in this regard and which modern science has been able to discover.

This wonderful agreement between the outcomes of modern science and many particulars of Islamic jurisprudence, and whatever rules and regulations it decided, expresses a dazzling support for the position of this jurisprudence, deeply emphasizing its being God-inspired.

In spite of all this, however, we quite often face unseen points in worship, i.e., a group of details whose secret cannot be comprehended by the person practicing worship, nor can he interpret them materialistically; for why must sunset prayer be three prostrations while the noon-time prayer more than that? And why should each rekaa include bowing down once instead of twice, two prostrations instead of one? Other questions of this sort can also be put forth.

We call such as aspect of worship which cannot be interpreted, "unseen." We find this

aspect, in one manner or another, in most rites brought forth by the Islamic jurisprudence. From here, we can consider obscurity in the meaning we have already mentioned as a general phenomenon in rites and one of their common characteristics .

This obscurity is linked to the rites and to their imposed role jointly, for the role of rites, as we have already come to know, is to emphasize the attachment to the Absolute and deepen that practically. The bigger the element of submission and yielding in a worship is, the stronger its effect in deepening the link between the worshipper and his Lord. If the deed practiced by the worshipper is understood at all its dimensions, clear in its wisdom and benefit in all details, the element of submission and yielding gets minimized, and it will be dominated by motives of interest and benefit, no more a worship of God as much as it is a deed of benefit practiced by the worshipper so that he might derive advantage out of it, benefiting of its results.

Just as the spirit of obedience and attachment in the soldier grows, getting deepened through military training, by giving him orders and requiring him to perform them with obedience and without discussion, so does the feeling of the worshipping person grow and get deepened in its attachment to his Lord through requiring him to practice these rites in their unseen aspects with submission and yielding. For submission and yielding require the assumption of the existence of an unseen aspect and the attempt not to question this unseen aspect of worship. Demanding its interpretation and limitation of interest means stripping worship of its reality-as a practical expression of submission and obedience- and measuring it by measurements of benefit and interest like any other deed.

We notice that this obscurity is almost ineffective in rites representing a great general interest, one that conflicts with the personal interest of the worshipper, as is the case with Jihad which represents a great general interest which contrasts the desire of the person performing it to preserve his life and blood, and also in the case of Zakat which represents a great interest which contrasts the strong desire of the person paying it to preserve his wealth and property. The issue of Jihad is very well understood by the person performing it, and the issue of Zakat is generally understood by the person who pays it; neither Jihad nor Zakat thus loses any element of submission and obedience (to God), for the difficulty of sacrificing life and property is what makes man's acceptance of a worship-for which he sacrifices both life and property-is indeed a great deal of submission and obedience. Add to this the fact that Jihad and Zakat and similar rites are not meant to be merely aspects of upbringing just for the individual, but also for the achievement of social benefits secured thereby. Accordingly, we observe that obscurity is highlighted more and more in rites dominated by the educating aspect of the individual, such as prayer and fasting.

Thus do we derive the conclusion that the unseen in worship is strongly linked to its educating role in attaching the individual to his Lord, deepening his relationship with his Lord.

When we observe the different Islamic rites, we find in them an element of inclusion of all different aspects of life. Rites have never been limited to specific norms of rituals, nor have they been restricted to only needs which embody the manner of glorifying God, the Praised, the High, like bowing, prostrating, praying and invoking; rather, they have been extended to include all sectors of human activity. Jihad, for example, is a rite. It is a social activity. Zakat is a rite. It, too, is a social activity, a financial one. Fasting is a rite. It is a nutritious system. Both ablution and Ghusul (ceremonial washing) are norms of worship. They are two ways of cleaning the body. This inclusion of worship expresses a general trend of Islamic upbringing aiming at linking man, in all his deeds and activities, with Almighty God, converting each useful deed to worship, no matter what field or type. In order to find a fixed basis for this trend, fixed rites were distributed to the different fields of human activity, preparing man to train himself on pouring the spirit of worship over all his good activities, and the spirit of the mosque over all places of his works: in the field, the factory, the shop or the office, as long as his deed is a good one, for the sake of God, the Glorified, the High.

In this respect, Islamic jurisprudence differs from two other religious trends, one: a trend to separate worship from life; and the other: a trend to limit life to a narrow frame of worship as do monks and mystics.

As for the first trend, it separates worship from life, leaving worship to be conducted at places made especially for it. It requires man to be present in these places in order to pay God His dues and worship Him, so much so that when he gets out of them to different fields of life, he bids worship farewell, giving himself up to the affairs of his life until he goes back again to those holy places.

From here came Islamic jurisprudence to distribute the rites on the different fields of life, urging the practice of ritual rites in each good deed. It explains to man that the difference between the mosque, which is God's house, and man's home is not in the quality of building or slogan; rather, the mosque has deserved to be God's house because it is the yard whereupon man practices a deed that goes beyond his ego and wherefrom he aims at a bigger goal than that dictated by the logic of limited materialistic interests, and that this yard ought to extend to include all life's stages. Each yard, whereupon man does a deed that goes beyond his self, aiming thereby to achieve the pleasure of God and all people, does, indeed, carry the mosque's spirit.

As for the second trend, which restricts life in a narrow frame of worship, it tried to confine man to the mosque instead of extending the meaning of the mosque to include all the yards which witness a good deed of man.

This trend believes that man lives an inner conflict between his soul and body, and that he cannot accomplish one of these two duality of worship and different activities of life paralyze worship and obstruct its constructive upbringing role to develop man's motives and

make the objective, enabling him to go beyond his ego and narrow personal interests in various scopes of his deeds. God, the Glorified and Praised, never insisted on being worshipped for the sake of His own Person, since He is independent of His worshippers, so that He would be satisfied with a worship of this sort, nor did He ever put Himself as the goal and objective of the human march, so that man may bow his head down to Him within the scope of his worship, and that is it! Rather, He meant such worship to build the good person who is capable of going beyond his ego, participating in a bigger role in the march. The exemplary achievement of this cannot be reached except when the spirit of worship gradually extends to other activities of life, for its extension-as we have already seen-means an extension of objectivity of purpose and the inner feeling of responsible behaviour, ability to go beyond the self to be in harmony with man within this inclusive cosmic frame, with eternity, immortality that both encompass him.

Except at the cost of the other. Therefore, in order for him to spiritually grow and be elevated, he has to deprive his body from the good things, shrinking his presence on life's stage battling continuously against his desires and aspirations in different fields of life, until he finally achieves victory over all of them through long abstention and deprivation and the practice of certain rituals.

Islamic jurisprudence rejects this trend, too, because it wants rites for the sake of life. Life cannot be confiscated for the sake of rites. At the same time, it tries hard to ensure that a good man pours the spirit of worship over all of his behaviour and activity. This must not be taken to imply that he has to stop his different activities in life and confine himself between the altar's walls; rather. it means that he converts all his activities to rituals.

The mosque is but a base wherefrom a good man sets to conduct his daily behaviour, but it is not limited to that behaviour alone. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) has said to Abu Tharr al-Ghifari: "If you are able to eat and drink for the sake of none save God, then do so!"

Thus, worship serves life. Its upbringing and religious success is determined by its extension, in meaning and spirit. to all fields of life. **Worship And The Senses**

Man's perception is not merely by his senses, nor is it merely an intellectual and non-material reasoning. It is a mixture of reasoning plus material and non-material feeling. When worship is required to perform its function in a way with which man interacts perfectly, and whereby it harmonizes with his character, worship is composed of a mind and senses; worship then must contain a sensitive aspect and a non-material intellect, so that worship will be compatible with the worshipper's personality, and the worshipper, while performing his worship, lives his attachment to the Absolute with all his existence.

From here, the intention, as well as the psychological contention of worship, always

represents its intellectual and non-material aspect, for it links the worshipper to the True Absolute, the Praised, the High. There are other aspects of worship which represent its material aspect:

The qibla towards whose direction each worshipper must direct his face while praying;

The Haram, visited by both those who perform the pilgrimage and those who do the Umrah, around which they both perform tawaf;

The Safa and Marwah, between which he runs; Jamratul Aqabah, at which he casts stones;

The Mosque, which is a place especially made for adoration wherein the worshipper practices his worship.

All these are things related to the senses and tied to worship: there is no prayer without a qibla, nor tawaf without a Haram, and so on, for the sake of satisfying the part related to the senses in the worshipper and giving it its right and share of worship.

This is the midway direction in organizing worship and coining it according to man's instincts as well as his particular intellectual and sensual makeup.

Two other directions face him: one of them goes to the extreme in bringing man to his senses, if the expression is accurate at all, treating him as if he had been a non-material intellect, opposing all sensual expressions of his in worship's sphere. As long as the True Absolute, the Praised One, has no limited place or time, nor can He be represented by a statute; then His worship has to stand on such a premise, and in the manner which enables the comparative thinking of man to address the Absolute Truth.

Such a trend of thinking is not approved by Islamic jurisprudence, for in spite of its concern about the intellectual aspects brought forth by the Hadith: "An hour's contemplation is better than a year's adoration." it also believes that pious worship, no matter how deep, cannot totally fill man's self or occupy his leisure, nor can it attach him to the Absolute Truth in all his existence, for man has never been purely an intellect.

From this realistic and objective starting point rites in Islam have been based on both intellectual and sensuous bases. The person performing his prayers is practicing by his intention an intellectual adoration, denying his Lord any limits, measurements. Or the like. For when he starts his prayer with Allah o Akbar (God is Great). while taking at the same time the holy Kaaba as a divine slogan towards which he directs his feelings and movements. he lives worship by both intellect and feeling, logic and emotion non-materialistically as well as intellectually.



The other trend goes to the extreme in the part related to the senses, changing the slogan to an identity, and the hint to reality, causing the worship of the symbol to substitute what the symbol really stands for, and the direction towards him instead of the reality it points to; thus, the worshipping person sinks, in one way or another, in shirk and paganism.

Such a trend totally annihilates the spirit of worship and it stops its function as a tool linking man and his civilized march to the True Absolute, converting it to a tool for linking him to false absolutes, to symbols which changed-through false intellectual stripping of the matter-to an absolute. Thus, false worship becomes a veil between man and his Lord, instead of a link between both of them.

Islam has rejected such a trend because Islam convicted paganism in all its forms, smashing its idols and putting an end to all false gods, refusing to take any limited object as a symbol for the True Absolute, God, the Glorified, or as a personification of Him. But it deeply distinguished between the meaning of the idol which it crushed and that of the Qibla it brought, whose meaning conveys nothing more than a particular geographic spot to have been divinely favoured through linking it to prayers for the sake of satisfying the worshipper's aspect related to the senses. Paganism is really nothing but a deviated attempt to satisfy such an aspect, and Islamic jurisprudence has been able to correct it, providing a straight path in harmonizing between the worship of God, as being dealing with the Absolute Who has neither limit nor personification, and the need of man who is composed of feeling and intellect to worship God by both of his feeling and intellect!

## **Conclusion The Social Aspect of Worship**

Essentially, worship represents the relationship between man and his Lord. It provides this relationship with elements of survival and stability. But this has been formulated in the Islamic jurisprudence in a way which often made it an instrument for the relationship between man and his brother man, and this is what we call the social aspect of worship.

Some rituals force, by their nature, segregation and the establishment of social relations among those who practice that ritual. For example, Jihad requires those worshippers fighting for God to establish among themselves such relations as would naturally happen among the corps of a fighting army.

There are other rituals which do not necessarily enforce congregating, but in spite of this, they are linked, in one way or another, to congregation in order to bring forth a mixture between man's relation with his Lord and his own relation with his brethren men.

Among prayers' rituals is the congregation wherein the individual's prayer becomes a group's worship, strengthening the ties among the group, deepening the spiritual links among them through their unity in practicing the rituals.

The tenet of pilgrimage has definite timings and places, and each participant in it has to practice it within those timings and places, hence, such participation evolves as a great social activity.