

Aspects of Servitude

Where is servitude and submission realized? Many people think that worship is a term confined only to certain rituals, such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage (Hajj), invocation, and the like, which are performed by man, separate from everyday transactions and the social environment. This narrow concept of veneration is alien to the concept stressed by the Qur'an, which says that worship can be realized in every action, thought or feeling, experienced by man and intended to bring him nearer to his Lord.

Since worship is the practical form symbolizing submission, it cannot be realized unless man makes his deeds i.e. praying; fasting; jihad (struggle for the sake of Allah); governing; selling; trading; dealing with people; defending the truth; fighting against corruption and injustice; contemplating the world; acquiring knowledge and making use of it; exploiting and reclaiming the land,.. etc. - all conform with Allah's laws and commands, aimed solely at getting nearer to Him and obtaining His approval.

The Qur'an, consequently, addressing the Prophet (s), calls upon him to be wholehearted in his worship so that sincerity may be reinforced in his surrender. It stresses that worship, which is an expression of servitude, can only be in accordance with the guidance of the Qur'an, adhering to its way and making life conform with its laws of organization. "We have sent down the Book to you (Muhammad) with truth; so, worship Allah, making religion pure for Him (alone). Holy Qur'an (39:2)

It follows that the more the concept of obedience expands, the more the concept of worship expands, too, so as to include man's care for life, body, physical needs, health, welfare, care for animals and for all aspects of culture, civilization and even land reclamation. This is because all these cares on the part of man are signs of his submission to Allah's will, and enacting His ordinances, which hold that all the creatures - man, animals and plants - exist solely through His compassion. Thus, treating Allah's creatures according to His will is a form of worship, an expression of servitude and proceeding towards Him.

On the same grounds, the Qur'an censures and reprimands those who spread destruction and ruin on the earth, circulate mischief and corruption, and try to efface prosperity and civilization from life. It says: "When he prevails, he strives to do corruption on the earth, to destroy the crop and the progeny; and Allah loves not corruption" Holy Qur'an (2:205) By way of making more explicit the meaning of servitude and how it takes in all man's individual and social activities in general, without its being confined to certain rites and practices, we state hereunder the areas where servitude is expressed through man's worship of Allah the Exalted:

1- RATIONAL SUBMISSION

By this we mean that rational submission which is based on a convictional understanding, conscious of Allah's greatness and might. This attitude should be the result of the certitude of conviction: Contemplating Allah's creation and greatness, and convincing oneself mentally and explicitly, are the major ideological basis of submission to servitude, and upon which shall be constructed all levels of the mental and social behaviour characterising man.

The Qur'an draws attention to Abraham's observations and his submission, so that the addressee may be inspired by the context of the rational submission that expresses the concept of servitude to Allah, in order that the mind does not take the repulsive attitude of obstinacy or pride. "And thus We did show Abraham the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those having certainty." Holy Qur'an (6:75)

The Qur'an presents a model of the thinking man who uses his intellect and conscience to ascertain the truth and discover its dimensions: "Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord, You have not created this in vain. Glory be to You; save us from the punishment of the fire." Holy Qur'an (3:191)

These are examples given by the Glorious Qur'an so that we may recognize the hidden connections between logical submission to the greatness of Allah and the smallness of the mind on one hand, and feeling to urge to worship on the other hand. It is a natural progression then, that man reaches the conclusion that everything in this universe had been created with the loftiest of divine knowledge and wisdom, unmatched by human beings, and that man is but a small creature before its greatness. His test is to strip off the apparel of arrogance and pride, and bow down to the greatness of Allah, proclaiming submission and servitude to the Great Creator. [22] The Qur'an reprimanded those who became the vehicle of cultural arrogance and were deceived by empty intellectual pride: "And their messengers brought them clear proofs (of Allah's Sovereignty) they exulted in the knowledge they (themselves) possessed. And that which they used to mock befell them. " Holy Qur'an (40:83)

2. TRUSTING ALLAH AND CONFIDING IN HIM

The second trait expressing true submission to Allah is trusting Him, confiding in Him, depending on Him, seeking help and assistance from Him and depending on no one else. Imam Ja'far AI-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "Faith has four cornerstones: trusting Allah, accepting His decision, submitting to His command and confiding in Him".

This concept of trust is an inevitable result of a conscious faith which attributes the existence of the world, the unfolding of events and destiny to Allah the Exalted as the Creator, the Owner and the Able, whatever there is of causes, events and changes in the universe are subject to Allah's Will: "And whoever puts his trust in Allah, He will suffice him..." Holy Qur'an (65:3) "And to Him the whole matter will be returned. Therefore worship Him and put your trust in Him..." Holy Qur'an (11:123) Another quality expressive of surrender to Allah is to entrust Him with one's affairs: "...I confide my cause to Allah. Allah is Seer of (His) servants." Holy Qur'an (40:44) The signs of obedience that are apparent in the conduct of those who trust Allah and confide in Him are not those

of dependence, laziness, negligence of one's performance of responsibilities and duties vis-a-vis the natural causes and rules extant in this world. On the contrary, a

Muslim's belief in the role of natural causes effecting events and consequent results, emphasizes the concept of servitude and submission of his inner being, through the explicit subjection of all events and objects to the divine law. This holy writ controls all existence in a way confirming the idea of complete surrender and creation's inability to reject and rebel. This convinces man of the generality of the truth-the truth of servitude- and of the fact that his own existence falls under its control. As a consequence, he reacts towards events, their causes and effects, in the shade of this universal submission, initiated by the Qur'an contexts and inspiration: "Have they not observed all things that Allah has created, how their shadows incline to the right and to the left, prostrating before Allah In all humbleness? And to Allah prostrate whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth from among the creatures and the angels; and the do not display arrogance."Holy Qur'an (16:48-49)

3-SERVITUDE IS TO ALLAH

Surrender to Allah the Exalted is also observed in the individual's practice of canon rituals which man performs purely for Allah, free from hypocrisy, with genuine sincerity, such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, invocation etc. These are the most sublime aspects of expressing servitude, provided that man should feel' the meaning of bondage to Allah, of turning to Allah, and of sincerely wanting to perform these ritual practices for Him.

Servitude is augmented by having each of man's daily acts practiced in conformity with Allah's will. When a judge presides with justice among people; when a merchant refrains from cheating, usury and creating a monopoly; when a worker does his job properly, seeking only lawful earnings; when a leader sacrifices for the sake of the right and the reformative; when a soldier fights for the sake of Allah; when parents raise righteous children; when one gives up the prohibited, such as drinking alcohol, killing people, doing wrong, etc, and turns to being kind to the poor, to help those in want, to condemn bad deeds, to reform a deviated soul,.. etc., when all people do so, or take such attitudes. According to Allah's commands and laws, they are actually worshipping Him in the most explicit and agreeable ways. "And (know) that this is My path, a straight one; follow it and follow not (other) paths, lest they will scatter you from His path; this He has enjoined you with that you may be god fearing." Holy Qur'an (6:153)

Adherence to the path of Allah and keeping to His ways and laws in life are the commandments through which He orders us to adhere to His laws, regulations and teachings, and not to deviate from them by following the laws, systems, principles and ideas coined by man for the sake of looking after his own selfish interests. Those interests deviate mankind from worshipping Allah alone, and consequently, turn them to worship those people along with Allah. This represents a retreat from the line of pure servitude to Allah alone Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) interpreting Allah's sayings: "They have taken their rabbis and their monks as lords beside Allah;..." Holy Qur'an (9:31) He said:"By Allah, they did not ask the people to worship them, as if they had asked them to do so, they would not have agreed to, but they had permitted the forbidden, and forbidden the permitted, and thereby

the people unknowingly worshipped them."

4- SERVITUDE IS IMPLEMENTED

By complete surrender to what Allah has fated and destined, and by being content with what Allah may bring upon His servants, believing that Allah does nothing unless there is goodness for man in it, as Allah is just, never unjust; and is wise, never arbitrary, and is compassionate, not cruel. The Qur'an explains the concept of fate and destiny: "Nothing will afflict us but what Allah had prescribed for us; He is our Master; and the believers should put all their trust in Allah." Holy Qur'an (9:51) "No calamity befalls in the earth or in yourselves but that it is in a Book before We created it. That is surely easy for Allah." Holy Qur'an (57:21) It is clear from these two verses that accepting fate and destiny is connected to the belief that Allah is the Lord, and human beings are His servants who are but advised to believe that His command and will most certainly carry the day.

In conclusion we realize that, in Islam, the embodiment of servitude and its expression is not confined to a number of rites and acts, such as fasting, praying, pilgrimage, etc. It actually covers every thought, activity, behavioral pattern and every human relation with one's Lord, self, family, society and environment. This surrender is conditional in that, the motive should be following the command of Allah, responding to His will, and hoping for His proximity. This is what is meant by Allah's saying: "O! you who believe! Bow down and prostrate yourselves, and worship your Lord." Holy Qur'an (22:77)

In order that man may comprehend the meaning of servitude and understand its effects and dimensions in his life and so that he may feel its existence in his environment, merge in its line and be in conformity with its concepts, man has to process free measure qualities:

- 1- Knowledge of Allah: that is, he has to know the path of the religion taking him to servitude, helping him to achieve it and keeping to its clear line in life.
- 2- Purity of soul: The soul must be purified from the sediments of different kinds of polytheism.
- 3- Being sincere to Allah in intention and action.

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