

Tawḥīd and Shirk

Tawḥīd

Tawḥīd means attributing Oneness to Allah the Almighty and describing Him as being One and Unique, with no partner or peer in His Essence and Attributes.

Tawḥīd is the most sensitive and significant issue in the sight of Allah the Almighty. The foundation of Islam is based on this creed. Until and unless we don't have deep cognition of this creed our faith is at stake. We can never achieve the essence of Iman without comprehension of this belief. Without recognizing Him, we will never be able to develop a relationship with him.

We should strive to learn this fundamental concept of Monotheism. We should have our reasons and logic based on the Quran and Hadith to strengthen our belief in the existence of Allah the Almighty. We should develop a personal connection with Allah the exalted. When we will recognize Him in the true sense only then we will be able to follow Him in true letter and spirit. As mentioned in the Quran:

إِنَّمَا يُحَشِّي اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعَلَمُؤْمِنُونَ

Those who truly fear Allah, among His servants, who know Allah. (35:28)

Tawḥīd is the primary and core subject of the Quran. There is a Hadith that mentions that Surah Ikhlas is one-third of the Quran. Surah Ikhlas has been given this status because of the theme mentioned in it. It solely elucidates the concept of Tawḥīd.

1. (*O Esteemed Messenger!*) Proclaim: ‘He is Allah, Who is the One.
2. *Allah is the Transcendent of all, the Protector and Far-Superior to all.*
3. *He has not begotten any, nor is He begotten.*
4. *Nor is there anyone equal to Him.’*

Allah the Almighty is the most Unique and Exalted as He is the creator. Nothing can be brought into His comparison. He is the most Supreme Being in the entire world. He alone is the Sustainer of all the Universes and the whole creation. Everything is dependent on Him but He is independent of everyone. His being is the practical manifestation of absolute Oneness.

Importance of Tawhīd in the Quran

“And We did not send any Messenger before you, but We revealed to him (saying): none has the right to be worshipped but I (Allah), so worship Me (Alone).” [Al-Anbiya:25]

And at another place in the Quran Allah the Almighty mentioned, “And verily, We have sent among every Ummah (nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): “Worship Allah (Alone), and avoid (or keep away from) Taghut.” [An-Nahl:36]

Repeatedly stating the subject of Tawhīd in diverse ways and styles and at different places in the Quran indicates the emphasis and significance of the belief of Tawhīd. Allah the Almighty used the exact statement for other Prophets in the Quran regarding Tawhīd.

“Say (O Mohammad): “But in truth, He (Allah) is the only one God. And truly I am innocent of what you join in worship with Him.” [Al-Anaam:19]

So, till the last messenger, the message of the Oneness of Allah the Almighty was sent to mankind which shows its high importance.

Shirk (Associating partners) with Allah is an Unforgivable Sin

“And indeed, it has been revealed to you (O Mohammad), as it was to those before you: If you join others in worship with Allah the Almighty, (then) surely (all) your deeds will be in vain, and you will certainly be among the losers.” [Az-Zumar:65]

This was said to Prophet Mohammad ﷺ, that even if you do shirk with Allah the Almighty then all of your good deeds will be wasted.

“Verily, Allah the Almighty forgives not that partners should be set up with Him, but He forgives what is less than that to whomever He wills...” [An-Nisa:48]

These references to verses from the Quran show that Shirk is an unforgivable sin. This shows that if someone has committed the sin of shirk and then seeks repentance for it then Allah the Almighty forgives him but if someone dies on the belief of shirk then surely, he will meet the fire in Hell.

Now a question arises, Why Shirk is so unforgivable sin?

Shirk is to associate someone other than Allah the Almighty in those aspects that are unique to Allah the Almighty and His exclusive right. Shirk is to worship created beings like Allah the Almighty is worshipped, to venerate created beings like Allah the Almighty must be venerated, and to assign a portion of His divinity to someone else.

So, on the Day of Judgment Allah, the Almighty will ask that person who did shirk that as you have done this deed for another person or god other than Me then ask the reward of it from that false God.

In the Bible, it is mentioned that on the Day of Judgment, people will come to Prophet Jesus and ask him O Lord, O Lord, we did charity in Thy name and they will mention their good deeds in Prophet Jesus's name. While Prophet Jesus will say that getaway you evildoers, I even don't know you?

In the Quran, Allah the Almighty has mentioned that on the Day of Judgment when people come to Prophet Jesus, Allah the Almighty will ask Prophet Jesus, “O Īsā, did you tell them to worship you besides Me? Or your mother besides Me?” and Prophet Jesus will say, Allah the Almighty you know what is in my heart, I have never told them to worship me”.

Allah the Almighty has mentioned categorically in the Quran that Īsā and his mother don't have the authority to be your beneficiary. The people who are worshipping them will be in severe trouble on the Final Day.

Our intrinsic nature, Fitrah is inclined towards the Oneness of God and all the design of nature shows the glory and Oneness of a single Designer, hence that made the shirk an unforgivable sin as all the proofs of the Oneness of God are present in. So, one has to go against their nature to shirk.

Repentance before Death

There is a Sahih Hadith, an old man who came to Prophet Muhammad with a stick in his hand as a support for walking, He said to Prophet Mohammad ﷺ what do you say about a person who has committed every sin, big or small, he has not left any of it? Ya Rasulullah ﷺ! I am an old man I have done that all. Prophet Mohammad ﷺ said Have you said Shahdah? He said yes.

Then Prophet Mohammad ﷺ said, From this moment, you do righteous deeds and don't go back to those sins, Allah the Almighty will forgive you and will turn your bad deeds into good deeds.

That person was shocked and said that even my treachery and the way I hurt other people would be forgiven. Prophet Mohammad ﷺ said, yes even those, and then he lifted his stick and went back with slogans of Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar.

The true repentance changes us and our ways of life. This is the significance of real repentance.

Types of Tawhīd

1. Rububiyah (Lordship)
2. Uluhiyyah (Worship)
3. Asmaa Was-Sifaat (Names and Attributes)

1. Rububiyah (Lordship)

- This category is based on the fundamental concept that Allah the Almighty alone caused all things to exist when there was nothing. This is known as creation Ex Nihilo (Latin for **creation out of nothing**) is

the doctrine that matter is not eternal but had to be created by some divine creative act.

- He sustains and maintains creation without any need from it or for it and He is the sole Lord of the universe and its inhabitants without any real challenge to His sovereignty.
- In Arabic, the word used to describe this creator sustainer quality is Rububiyah which is derived from the root "Rabb" (Lord). This is proved by Allah's (SWT) statement in Surah Al-Fatihah, verse one where He says, "[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds [mankind, jinn, and all that exists]".
- According to this category, since God is the only real power in existence, it is He who gave all things the power to move and to change. Everything is dependent on His become and He is the only independent Being.

All these facts hae been explained in Sura al-Naml in a comprehensive way from 60-65 verse.

Well, Who has created the heavens and the earth and poured down water for you from the atmosphere in the sky? Then with that (water), We brought forth fresh and beautiful gardens. It was not possible for you to grow plants in these (gardens). Is there any (other) God besides Allah? In fact, they are the people who are turning away (from the path of truth). Or, Who made the earth a dwelling place and made rivers amid it and made for it huge mountains and put a barrier between the two seas (of salt and sweet waters)? Is there any (other) God besides Allah? But most of these (disbelievers) do not have knowledge. Or, Who grants the supplication of the anxiety-stricken caller when he calls upon Him, and Who removes the trouble and makes you successors and inheritors (of the predecessors) in the earth? Is there any (other) God besides Allah? You people accept advice but little. Or, Who guides you in the darkness of land and sea and sends winds as good news before (the rain of) His mercy? Is there any (other) God besides Allah? Exalted is Allah, High above (the false gods) which they associate with Him. Well, Who originates creation and shall repeat the same (process of creation), and Who grants you sustenance

from the heavens and the earth? Is there any (other) God besides Allah? Say: '(O polytheists,) bring your proof if you are truthful. Say: 'Those who are in the heavens and the earth do not have the knowledge of the unseen (by themselves) except Allah (Who is Self-Knowing), nor do they know when they will be raised up (alive again).'

2. Uluhiyyah (Worship)

It is also called Ubudiyah. This means having a firm conviction that only Allah is the true and only God worthy of worship. In Arabic, the term ‘ibādah (worship) is associated with obedience, subservience, and submission. It has been defined by some scholars as “complete love accompanied by complete submission”. Thus, worship in all its forms cannot be dedicated to anyone else besides Allah the Almighty. It is important to point out that the concept of worship is all-embracing.

Worship transcends the five pillars of Islam and covers all the good things and deeds that please Allah the Almighty. Therefore, things like supplication, reliance, obedience, subservience, and submission would be covered by this definition. All these things should be done solely for the sake of Allah the Almighty.

Evidence of this type of Tawhīd is in Allah’s (SWT) statement “And I Allah did not create the jinn and men except that they should worship Me (alone)”. [Surah Zariyat: 56]

- ‘Kalima’ as an example of Uluhiyyah
- ilah- one who is worshipped, on account of greatness and power is considered worthy to be worshipped.
- La ilaha illallah –There is no ilah other than one great being known by the name Allah the Almighty.
- It means that in the whole of the universe, there is absolutely no being worthy to be worshipped other than Allah the Almighty.
- That is only to Him our heads should bow in submission and adoration.

Our Prayers, charity, dua, tawaf, sajda, etc. are the acts of worship. If we perform them for anyone else other than Allah the Almighty then it is Shirk.

3. Asmaa Was-Sifaat (Names and Attributes)

This category of Tawhīd has five main aspects:

- Unity of Allah's (SWT) names and attributes to be maintained in the first aspect.
- Allah the Almighty must be referred to according to how He and His Prophet Mohammad ﷺ have described Him instead of explaining His names and attributes by giving them meanings other than their obvious meanings.
- The second aspect of Tawhīd al-Asmaa wasSifaat involves referring to Allah the Almighty as He has referred to Himself without giving Him any new names or attributes.
- In the third aspect of Tawhīd al-Asmaa wasSifaat (الاسماء والصفات) Allah the Almighty is referred to without giving Him the attributes of His creation. For example, it is claimed in the Bible and Torah that Allah the Almighty spent the first six days creating the universe and then slept on the seventh. For this reason, Jews and Christians take either Saturday or Sunday as a day of rest in which work is looked at as a sin.
- The fourth aspect of Tawhīd al-Asmaa wasSifaat requires that man not be given the attributes of Allah the Almighty to His Almighty level. In reality, all the attributes belong to Allah the Almighty in true essence. He has distributed His attributes to the creation for a certain period e.g. a man can be Raheem but not to the level of Allah the Almighty. All the attributes of Allah are incomparable as they are not dependent on anyone but the attributes of the Creator are independent. The attributes of creation have a start and end time but His attributes are free from creation and eternal like Creator. The abilities of creation are limited and confined like them and all the abilities of the Creator are limitless and perpetual.

The Example of Hayy and Qayyum

Hayy and Qayyum are His two Unique attributes. He is the only one who is free from creation. He has not started or ended. He is free from the boundary of time as He is the creator of time. There was a time when there was no time but He existed in that time as well. He is the only one who is eternal, immortal, and perpetual.

- Maintaining the unity of Allah's (SWT) names also means that Allah's (SWT) names in the definite form cannot be given to His creation unless preceded by the prefix 'Abd meaning "slave of" or "servant of".

Types of Shirk

The texts of the Quran and Sunnah indicate that shirk and the ascribing of rivals to Allah the Almighty sometimes puts a person beyond the pale of Islam and sometimes does not. Hence the scholars divided shirk into two types which they call shirk akbar (major shirk) and shirk asghar (minor shirk).

I. Major Shirk

This means ascribing to someone other than Allah the Almighty something that belongs only to Allah the Almighty, such as Lordship (ruboobiyyah), divinity (ulohiyyah), and the divine names and attributes (al-asma' wa'l-sifaat).

Major Shirk may sometimes take the form of beliefs:

- Such as the belief that there is someone else who creates, gives life and death, reigns, or controls the affairs of the universe along with Allah the Almighty.
- Or the belief that there is someone else who must be obeyed absolutely besides Allah the Almighty, so they follow him in regard as permissible or forbidden whatever he wants, even if that goes against the religion of the Messengers.
- Or they may associate others with Allah the Almighty in love and veneration, by loving a created being as they love Allah the Almighty. This is the kind of shirk that Allah the Almighty does not forgive.

- Or the belief that some know the Unseen as well as Allah the Almighty. It is also shirk to believe that there is someone who bestows mercy in a manner that is befitting only for Allah the Almighty, so he shows mercy as Allah the Almighty does and forgives sins and overlooks the bad deeds of his worshippers.

Particularly in this era, we should have to be very careful regarding the false creeds associated with the shrines in our region. This is prohibited to ask anything in any sense from the shrines. This is against the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The scholars of every sect have refuted this misguidance strictly. Muslims are only bound to follow the direct text of the Quran and Hadith. There is no need to be involved in ambiguous and uncertain literature.

II. Minor Shirk

This includes everything that may lead to a major shirk, or which is described in the scripts as being a shirk but does not reach the extent of being a major shirk.

This is usually of two types:

1- Being emotionally attached to some means which have no basis and for which Allah the Almighty has not given permission, such as hanging up “hands”, turquoise beads, amulets, etc. because they offer protection or that they ward off the evil eye. But Allah the Almighty has not made them the means of such protection, either according to Shariah or according to the laws of the universe.

2- Venerating some people or things in a way that does not go so far as ascribing lordship to them, such as swearing by something other than Allah the Almighty, or saying, “Were it not for Allah and So and so,” etc.

3- As the Holy Prophet Muhammad has clearly stated:

“What I fear most about you is the Minor Shirk. The Companions of the Prophet asked him, "What is minor shirk, ya Rasullah?" He said, 'Ar-riyal-Showing off' Allah will say on the Day of Judgment when He pays the people for their deeds: Go to those for whom you have done

Riyadh in the world and see if you would find the reward with them.”
(Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal:22527)

It means that people are more afraid of society. They are afraid of people but not of Allah. All their deeds are man-centered not God-centered. Allah the Almighty has mentioned this trait of human beings in the following words.

يَخْشُونَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً

they feared men as they fear Allah or with [even] greater fear. (al-Nisa:77)

Concept of Ownership

In regards to Tawhid Muslims should understand this dogma clearly that everything we have belongs to Allah the Almighty. We are just the caretakers or custodians of all the valuables for a certain period. Ownership in reality belongs to alone Allah the Almighty. That is why suicide has been declared forbidden because even though this life is not ours it belongs to Allah. We were created at the decided time and will die in the same manner decided by Allah the Almighty. Parents, children, money, every relation and entirety we have belongs to Allah alone.

The example mentioned below will help to understand the above-mentioned concept. The most esteemed people after the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ are his Companions. After the conquest of Mecca when Muslims were maximum in number, under the supervision of the Holy Prophet Muhammad they fought the battle of Hunain. They have suffered a lot in this battle just because of one mistake. They have associated the triumph of all previous battles with their effort. Allah the Almighty condemned this sentence in the following words:

“Indeed Allah has given you believer’s victory on many battlefields, even at the Battle of Hunain when you took pride in your great numbers, but they proved of no advantage to you. The earth, despite its vastness, seemed to close in on you, and then you turned back in retreat.” (al-Tawba:25)

It is narrated in Bukhari and Muslim that only 80 Companions were left with the Holy Prophet out of thousands. Afterward, Muslims won this battle only because of the Holy Prophet. We have to be very careful regarding every claim we have concerning our associations. Allah the Almighty is the only owner of everything in both worlds. May Allah help us to contemplate the creed of Monotheism in true essence. Ameen.