



# **The Concept Of Servitude in Islam**

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## Introduction

The concept of servitude to Allah Exalted be He, is the essential cornerstone in forming man's inner being and in planning and organizing his general conduct and activities. This is because Islam takes servitude to Allah as the basis on which a Muslim builds his thoughts, molds the surrounding environment and makes his connections with the world and his Creator; submission to Allah thus becomes a plan for life, a way of behaviour and a method of thinking that distinguishes a Muslim individual and a Muslim society from the ignorant individuals and communities of diverse beliefs, different ideologies and value systems down through the ages.

Therefore, in this study, 'servitude to Allah' is regarded as the basis of the Islamic concepts to be discussed in this series through a correlated, systematic method, taking into consideration the logical progression and natural connection between Islamic ideas and concepts.

This method will make it easier for the reader to follow the chain of Islamic thought in an orderly and systematic manner. In this way it is easier to draw a distinctive and detailed picture of Islamic thought and its content - a picture capable of better presenting a genuine Islamic understanding, providing the Muslim intellectuals and students of Islamic culture with clear Islamic concepts which are now under siege in the current ideological struggle being waged against the very existence of the Muslims and their culture.

The aim of this series of publications is to lead support to the sincere Islamic intellectual and cultural groups, and share the responsibility of protecting Islamic thought against falsification, and loss.

Our aim is also to stress the unity of Islamic thought and to disclose the forgery and illusion of alien and ignorant thought and culture, as a response to Allah's command:

*“And it is not for the believers to go forth all together (to fight). So why should not some people from each group of believers seek knowledge in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware.” Holy Qur'an (9:122)*

*“And say (to them): Act! Allah will see your actions, and (so will) His messenger and the believers....” Holy Qur'an (9:105)*

Finally, we hope it will be of interest to our dear readers and beseech Allah the Almighty to accept our simple work. Surely He undertakes the welfare of the believers.

**AL-BALAGH FOUNDATION**

## Servitude

Prostration, submission and surrender are all definitions of a single truth: servitude to Allah. Servitude, in this sense, is a fact imposed on all of Allah's creation. The entire universe, with its various realms of matter, living beings and other creatures, is directed through its construction and evolution, to be connected to Allah's will, in the form of prostration, submission and surrender, completely and absolutely, to Allah the Exalted.

Through this submission, all creation attains to the best forms of perfection and preordained performance. In this way existence evolves flawlessly and the general cosmic order is preserved. If any part of this universe could deviate from the order of creation and development, it would certainly perish and be destroyed. If the planets changed course from their orbits, or if the earth changed its position, or the sun departed this solar system, all the order of the universe would be subject to annihilation. Thus, all beings, the inanimate objects, plants, animals and human beings, are genetically submissive to the general law and order which govern the world according to Allah's will.

This fact is better described by the Glorious Qur'an through its intriguing artistic illustration of the creation's way of surrender, prostration and connection to their Creator.

This submission is illustrated through diverse verbal images presented in attractive statements, so that we can discern through them the universe as a worshipping entity possessing a genuine submissive reverence, keenly aware of the existence of its Creator and admitting the greatness of its Maker.

The Qur'an refers to this fact concerning the general inclination of the universe towards Allah the Exalted, its ties with Him, its need of Him, and its function according to His will, by way of prostration and surrender as a token of submission and of being humble and obedient. Thus, the whole universe is placed before us on the altar of worship and response to Allah's will and command.

All this is to make us feel in ourselves the meaning of servitude to Allah, and to have the lights of obedience and submission shine in our hearts, so that we may merge in the unity of this universe in its prostration and surrender. This process does not cease as it is the cause of existence, its perfect order and its expression of the goal of its being.

The Glorious Qur'an describes the prostration of the universe and the worlds, by saying:

***“Do not see all the things that Allah has created - casting their shadows to the right and the left, prostrating before Allah in humbleness? To Allah prostrate whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth from among the creatures; and the angels and they do not show arrogance.” Holy Qur'an (16:48-49)***

***“Do they seek other than the religion of Allah, and to Him submits whatever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they shall be returned?” Holy Qur'an (3:83)***

Thus, the Qur'an draws the picture of the creatures' prostrating, brings our attention to their worship, rebukes those who are inattentive, and enjoins

us to ponder the universe and the worlds around us, where we see everything submissive, overwhelmed, insignificant and obedient to Allah's greatness and will. The earth, the heavens, animals, plants, and everything on which the light of existence shines, have no power to rebel, to be proud, to reject Allah's command, nor can they contradict His wisdom and arrangements.

It is as if the Qur'an, addressing us, says:

Why does not man accept the reality of this truth?

Why does he try to deviate, rebel and be disobedient until he falls into the precipice of misery and wretchedness? Is it not more becoming of him, as a rational being, to merge with the procession of this universe which is continually singing the hymns of praise, and experiencing ecstasy over the delights of glorifying and worshipping? Does not he discern that?

***“All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Allah, and He is Almighty, All-Wise?” Holy Qur'an (57:1)***

## **Man and Servitude**

Servitude, this cosmic truth running through the depths of existence and the universal characteristic personified throughout the whole world, is such that man cannot but find himself either as individual forcibly revolving along its orbit or as a living will, wavering between its two choices. Thus, to the human who has will and can choose, and is liable to reward and punishment according to his responsibility, servitude to Allah is of two kinds:



## 1. GENETIC SERVITUDE

The one who lives with the Qur'anic imagery, discerns with his conscience and feelings, the prostration of the universe, of the worlds, of the creatures and of all things. He understands that man, in his entirety, is a part of this world, and is forced to prostrate and submit. He is forced genetically to worship, with no power to dodge from, or to rebel against Allah's inherent design which pervades the whole of existence.

Man is forced to live, to die, to grow, to give birth, etc. He cannot choose his physical dimensions, nor his parents, nor the race to which he likes to belong, nor the quality of his genes.

Furthermore, he cannot act contrary to the laws of nature, i.e. the laws of physics, chemistry and biology, to which he is subjected, and which organize his existence. The same principle applies to all other creatures and beings that have no will of their own, as none of them is able to create himself. As a consequence of this incapability and need of a Creator, man is but a bondman who is bound by an innate compulsion to submit to Allah's will.

In order to make man comprehend this fact, the Qur'an (incessantly) asserts and confirms man's surrender to the Creator of existence. Allah the Exalted says:

***“And if Allah were to enlarge the provision for His servants they would surely rebel in the earth, but He sends down by measure as He wills. He is informed, a Seer of His bondmen.” Holy Qur'an (42:27)***

***“And on the Day when He will assemble them and that which they worship instead of Allah and will say: Was it you who misled these My servants or did they (themselves) wonder from the way? Holy Qur'an (25:17)***

***“There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes to the Beneficent as a servant.” Holy Qur'an (19:93)***

In these verses the Qur'an asserts that all people are Allah's servants by means of their intrinsic relation to Him, be they believers who obey through their own conscience, will and choice, Allah's commands; or rebellious disbelievers who refrain from complying with Allah's orders.

Man is by innate compulsion moving within the orbit of servitude, because he is Allah's bondman and follower, and is submissive to His will. This is why the Qur'an calls the wrongdoers and the misguided servants', as it similarly calls whatever there is in the heavens and the earth, angels and men, servants', whether believers or disbelievers. This kind of servitude, surrender and submission is termed inherent or genetic servitude', i.e. compulsory and natural submission.

## 2. OPTIONAL SERVITUDE

Man is different from other beings in that he is an intellectual and understanding creature, possessing the will and ability to choose by means of the unique mental power bestowed on him by Allah, and the right given to him to choose his mode of conduct. Through that faculty he can do good or choose the way of evil; go towards Allah and be connected to Him or rebel against His commands and laws and pursue the path of deviation and rebellion.

This type of connection to Allah is quite different from that of genetic connection. There, man is compelled and has no choice whatever, while here, in organizing his connection with Allah, he has free-will, can choose the divine road leading to Allah's consent; that is, choosing the way of servitude to Allah. Likewise, man can choose the way of perversion, which is the way of servitude and submission to other than Allah; as he may worship his ego, or his desires to which he yields; or he may take as gods human tyrants and despots, follow their commands and place himself at their service.

This servitude which is chosen by man, be it servitude to Allah or to other than Allah, is optional, as it is chosen through his own free will. He therefore is responsible for it and will be questioned on Judgment Day. Allah says: ***“And stop them, for they must be questioned.” Holy Qur'an (37:24)***

***“We have made the deeds of every human being to cling to his neck. And on the Day of Resurrection We shall bring out for him which he shall find, wide open. Read your book, you yourself suffice this day as a reckoner against you. Whoever is guided, is truly guided for his benefit and whoever becomes perverse, is only perverse to his own self. And no laden soul bears the burden of another. We never punish until We have sent a messenger.” Holy Qur'an (17:13-15)***

## Servitude As A Must

*“Every one has a direction to which he turns; so vie with each other for good deeds. Wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together. Surely Allah is powerful over everything.” Holy Qur'an (2:148)*

Thus, man must have in his life an object to worship, an entity to which he may submit and direct his will, as everyone of necessity needs a motive for the action and conduct he chooses during his life to which he proceeds. This goal of his is the force that moves him to be active and is the urge behind every act he chooses to do or not to do. Hence, that goal or that principle becomes his object of worship to which he turns, though he may not admit it to himself.

*These goals and motives may be different according to man's conscience and choice. He may choose either to worship Allah or his desire. Allah the Exalted says: “Have you seen him who chooses for his god his own lust? Would you then be guardian over Him?” Holy Qur'an (25:43)*

Or he may take a tyrant from among the human beings for a god.

However, if his motive to action is Allah the Exalted, then his servitude will be to Allah only; if his motive be other than Allah, then his surrender will be to that other than Allah, that which is dominating his thought, feelings and deeds.

Accordingly, man's chosen path of submission can be of two kinds:

## 1. PURE SERVITUDE TO ALLAH

This is a servitude purely and entirely dedicated to Allah in all of man's acts so that his recognition of Allah is the cause of his acts, and the goal of his deeds, seeking no consent but Allah's, and motivated only by the love for Allah, whether in prayer, fasting, thinking or in intention, feelings and social connections. This is made manifest in his morals, politics, economy, judgment, love, hatred, consent, indignation . . . etc., as well as in his relations with the universe, nature and the world around him. Actually, a believer starts from a fundamental principle, a basic mental foundation, which says: man and the whole universe are His alone; so he has to keep to the line of obedience and to merge in it, in fulfillment of absolute dedication to Him and in pure submission, clear of every trace of impurity that may effect its sincerity, i.e. hypocrisy, dissembling, flattery, . . . etc.

The Qur'an illustrates the spirit of servitude to Allah by saying:

***“I have turned my face towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, as an upright, and lam not of the polytheists.” Holy Qur'an (6:79)***

On this basis there came the sayings of the Prophet (s.a.w.) explaining the idea of being pure and sincere in thought and action, and calling to a unified direction towards Allah the Exalted.

It is said that a bedouin came to the Prophet (s.a.w.) and asked him: Who does good or gives alms and likes to be praised and rewarded for that? The Prophet did not answer him and kept silent, until a glorious verse was revealed as a complete answer, clarifying the way of salvation, and gratitude to Allah alone:

***“Say: surely lam only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that God is One God. And whoever yearns for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous deeds, and let him associate none with his Lord in serving Him.” Holy Qur'an (18:110)***

Thus, the answer of the Qur'an came rejecting polytheism and clarifying the direction between the love of praise and love of getting nearer to Allah the Exalted. The believer is commanded to release himself from this polytheism, the sharing of oneself with worshipping Allah or from combining one's desires to have both the reward from Allah as well as the praise of people. Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

“Blessed be the one who turns in his worship and invocation directly to Allah, and who did not engage his heart with what his eyes see, and who did not forget to remember Allah through what his ears hear, and who did not bring sorrow to his breast because of what the others have.”<sup>1</sup>

Such is the call of Islam. It stresses that man should maintain human, coherent conduct, with a unified direction and goal, founded on the idea of the Oneness of Allah, with pure sincerity to Him alone. All of this is done for the sake of freeing man from worshipping the self and defying the ego.

In order that personal desires and selfish whims do not become the cause of actions contrary to Allah's will and that human conduct does not center round these grave and selfish motives, which destroy man through diseases of his morality such as egoism, hypocrisy, two-facedness, lust, indulgence in pleasures, etc.

Moreover, by sincere obedience Islam wants to express a universal truth, the truth of the real relation between Allah and man. This religion wants to liberate man from being the servant of the I' , and from obeying human despots; a position result of purely serving Allah alone.

This inference helps us to discover the meaning of servitude to Allah, and to comprehend its truth which is: To join the line of Divine Will and to have one's will coincide with Allah's.'

Without this pure sincerity one's submission would only be a worship associated with other than Allah, as described by the Qur'an. This kind of obedience is the most dangerous ailment that may afflict the thought, morals and conduct of a Muslim believer - it is the ailment of duality of the split personality and the loss of its unity and primal originality.

When such a misfortune befalls man, he would worship Allah with insincere motives, as these motives would conflict with and sap conviction from his worship of Allah.

Thus, the hypocrite who likes to be applauded for his doing good; saying his prayers or going on pilgrimage to Mecca, he is actually worshipping himself, and turning to glorify himself, while apparently he seems to be turning to Allah; that is, he worships both himself and Allah as partners simultaneously.

The man of letters who acquires knowledge for fame; the reformer who wages a campaign against corruption in order to become a guide and leader; the rich man who is charitable in order to have his name known among the people, and those who devotedly engage themselves in the love of this world, in collecting wealth, monopolizing interests, gratifying their lust in forbidden pleasure, neglecting to remember Allah, deviating from His love and worship, turning away from Him; all of these and their like cannot be regarded as have sincerely worshipped Him, as they have worshipped themselves, defied their own persons, and desired other than Allah.

Similar are those who claim that they believe in Allah and worship Him in their prayers, fasting and pilgrimage, but they disobey His commands concerning other deeds, in order to obtain the consent of other than Allah, for fear of mortals. They become wrongdoers and oppress people, neglect the right and keep silent in the face of corruption, as if they have not heard the call of the Qur'an, and they do not want to be among those whom it praised by saying: ***“And bind yourself with those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening desiring His favor.” Holy Qur'an (18:28)***

***“As for that abode of the Hereafter, We assign it to those who seek not oppression In the earth, nor yet corruption. The (good) sequel is for the god fearing.” Holy Qur'an (28:83)***

But they put themselves among those of whom the Qur'an says: ***“They have taken their rabbis and their monks as lords beside Allah.” Holy Qur'an (9:31)***

## 2. SERVITUDE TO OTHER THAN ALLAH

Man, through successive ages, has been subjected to the ailment of ignorance both in his thought and soul, which means rejecting servitude to Allah and turning to other beings, natural and human forces, self-deification and indulgence in unrestrained personal desires and pleasures.

This is true in respect to the idolaters, the infidels who do not believe in God, and the pagans who worship animals or natural phenomena, etc. They all take themselves as gods, and regard their desires and whims as their lords through which they worship and follow their self-centered inclinations.

The Qur'an distinctively describes those groups by saying:

***“Have you seen him who chooses for his god his own lust? Would you then be guardian over him?” Holy Qur'an (25:43)***

This is the inevitable direction they take, having turned away from the divine direction, and as such, they no longer have a clear program; no explicit law and no proper human conduct, as they can only follow the urges of their lust, pleasures and desires. They fabricate laws and regulations, and philosophize on life, man's goals and his beliefs according to their own desires, and their limited and shortsighted understanding.

All this is because of man's ignorance and his being too proud to worship Allah, taking himself as a god on the earth, after rejecting the Supreme Deity and servitude to Him. This is the beginning of tragedy and misery, causing for mankind much suffering, injustice, despotism, tyranny and bitter struggle among diverse interests, desires and selfishness.

These tendencies of ignorance in the soul and thought have registered grave consequences on society and behaviour. Humanity has thus been invaded by waves of oppression, poverty, ignorance, suppression and arbitrariness, as a minority of the elite usurped rule and domination, and indulged in the pleasures and the delights of life in which they believe. Meanwhile, the greater majority of people were left suffering this unjust servitude imposed by false human defication.

## **Why Servitude To Allah**

One question revolves in the mind of everyone contemplating the universe and life, and in the thought of every sane person scrutinizing the meanings of servitude and submission in order to give the correct answers to:

Why should Allah be worshipped alone?

Why should man's will melt and merge with Allah's will?

Why should man's thinking, emotions, conduct and other inclinations conform to the Divine Will, free of disobedience or deviation? Man would soon find the answers in the Qur'an, together with a number of preliminary facts proving that servitude to Allah alone is a truth which is a natural result in this world, dictated by the essence of the relation between man and his Creator.

We may list the basic facts which lead to the inevitable belief that worshipping Allah alone is a truth, as explained by the Qur'an, which makes a connection between every cause and its effect, through many of its verses. It stresses this reality through the following:

## 1. CREATION IS ALLAH'S

The Qur'an speaks of the creation, innovation and the genetic being of man, and connects these to servitude and submission to Allah, as two correlated and inseparable truths. Allah the Exalted says:

*“O mankind! Worship your Lord Who created you and those before you, so that you may be god fearing: Who assigned to you the earth for a couch, and the heaven for a dome; and sent down out of heaven water, wherewith He brought forth fruits for your sustenance; so, set up not compeers rivals to Allah while you know.” Holy Qur'an (2:21-22)*

*“That is Allah, your Lord, there is no god but Him, the Creator of everything, therefore worship Him. And He is the Guardian over every thing .” Holy Qur'an (8:102)*

Here the Qur'an regards servitude to Allah as a result naturally born of the fact that everything belongs to Allah, considering servitude to Him to be an existing truth in man's life, traversing the realm of the equation between creation and relation to Allah the Exalted.



## 2. SOVEREIGNTY IS ALLAH'S

The second truth which translates into the inevitability of worshipping Allah is the fact that man, like everything else in this universe, belongs to Allah. Man is owned by his Creator and he owns nothing of himself, nor of this world, though he makes use of himself, of the universe, of the earth, of property, of wealth, and of every like means, by way of the authority of Allah the Exalted. So, he has to submit to His will and organize his life accordingly, whereupon he will be Allah's servant. The Qur'an refers to this when it addresses man, saying that whatever is in his possession in this life is Allah's, and not his. Man is destined to leave everything behind for others to use. He will be absented from life and taken away empty-handed.

Allah, the Exalted says:

***“And indeed you have come to us alone, as We created you the first time, and you have left what We conferred on you behind your backs;...”***  
***Holy Qur'an (6:94)***

At another juncture the Qur'an connects Allah's sovereignty over everything with servitude to Him alone, and states that the one in whose hands are creation, death and life, is the only One Who should be worshipped. Servitude is but absolute submission and complete surrender to the worshipped. It is not becoming of servant wholly owned to surrender to other than his owner.

***“Say (O Muhammad): O mankind! I am the messenger of Allah to you all. To Him belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and causes to die. So, believe in Allah and His messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in Allah and in His words. And follow him so that you may be guided.”*** Holy Qur'an (7:158)

### 3. POWER BELONGS TO ALLAH

The third truth that requires service to be for Allah alone, is that He is the Almighty and that it is His will which is operative. No individual has the ability to resist His sovereignty and will. It follows that man can but submit to the will of his Creator, carry out His commands and surrender to His judgment:

***“He is the Omnipotent over His servants, and He is All-wise, All-Cognizant.” Holy Qur'an (6:18)***

***“O my fellow prisoners, are sundry lords better or God, the One, the Omnipotent. What you worship, apart from Him, are nothing but mere names that you and your fathers named, for which God has not sent down any authority. Surely the rule is only for God. He ordains that you worship none but Him. This is the upright religion, but most people know not.” Holy Qur'an (12:39-40)***

***“Say (to them, O Muhammad) I am only a warner, and there is no god but Him, the One, the Almighty.” Holy Qur'an (38:65)***

However, this surrender to Allah's mighty will is founded on belief in to His Justice, Wisdom and Mercy. It does not resemble the surrender shown by a weak man to an unjust despot. There is a difference in the inner feelings in the two cases: In one instance he submits to a wrong and unjust will, imposed on him by oppression and force, making him accept the situation reluctantly. Had he the power to rebel against it and set himself free from the bondage, he would have done it, since he does not believe in the justness of such forced and unjust submission.

The other instance is that in which man submits to an overwhelming power willingly, because of his belief that the connection, between this weak existence and the existence of that divine supreme power, is a just one. This relationship truth expresses the reality of two beings, his and his Creator's.

There is no injustice in this mutual connection, as it is based on justice, love and mercy: ***“Therefore ask forgiveness of your Lord and then turn to Him. Surely my Lord is Merciful, Loving.” Holy Qur'an (11:90)***

***“Surely Allah wrongs not so much the weight of an atom; and if there it be a good deed, He will multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward.” Holy Qur'an (4:40)***

#### 4. COMMAND BELONGS TO ALLAH

The fourth truth which causes man to become Allah's servants is the fact that he exercises no control over any part of this world, nor can he determine any of its events, or handle the incidents that may befall him, such as death, life and other happenings. He has no choice but to accept unquestioningly and without objection. Thus his submission to such events is an innately compelled submission to Allah's command and will:

***“No soul is to die save by Allah's leave and at an appointed term. Whoever desires the reward of this world, We will give him of it; and whoever desires the reward of the Hereafter, We will give him of it; We will reward the thankful.” Holy Qur'an (3:145)***

***“No calamity befalls save by Allah's leave. And whoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart. And Allah is Omniscient of everything.” Holy Qur'an (64:10)***

Naturally then, man has but to submit to Allah all his affairs, to handle them as He wishes, consenting to the fate and destiny prescribed by Allah:

***“...They said: Have we any part in the matter? Say (O Muhammad): The matter belongs to Allah entirely...” Holy Qur'an (3:154)***

***“...His is the creation and the command. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of the worlds! .” Holy Qur'an (7:54)***

***Consequently, a believer would say: “...I confide my matter to Allah. Allah is seer of (His) servants.” Holy Qur'an (40:44)***

Obviously then, handling “the cause of events is beyond the ken of man's ability. Organizing the universe, life, events and in fact all phenomena, are done according to Allah's will. Thus the reality of man's surrender to Allah the Exalted is made clear. In this connection, man embodies the truth of consent, submission and servitude to Allah's volition and wisdom. He is unable to act or influence events independently, except by Allah's permission.

***“Yet you will not, unless Allah wills for Allah is Omniscient, All-wise.” Holy Qur'an (76:30)***

In the glorious hadith (saying, tradition), from Imam Ali bin Musa Al-Ridha (a.s.) it is said that Allah the Almighty had said: “O son of A dam, on the basis of My will you can will whatever you like for yourself, and on the basis of the authority delegated by Me to you, you can perform your duties as divinely (ordained for) you. It is on the basis of My favor to you that you have become capable of disobeying Me.

I have bestowed upon you the ability to hear, to see and to be strong. Hence, whatever good you received, you receive it from Allah. And whatever evil befalls you is because of your own self. As to your good deeds, I am closer than you yourself are. And to your evil deeds you yourself are closer than I am. This is why I am not accountable for what I do. It is they (mankind) who are accountable.”

The fact that Allah has sovereignty that is, His absolute management of the creation and the universe, by way of deciding their fate, destiny and consequent of events, is a natural product of the fact that all power and possession are Allah's. The powerful Owner is the One Who manages and

arranges things and happenings, according to His own forceful, creative will, capable of enacting the good and carrying it throughout.

Thus, man sees himself a being tied to the orbit of an orderly, cosmic servitude and surrender to Allah, leading him to his intentional and freely chosen submission.

## 5. LORDSHIP BELONGS TO ALLAH

The fifth truth that makes man serve Allah is the fact that Allah is the Lord, the Benefactor and the patron of man. It is He Who bestowed upon man his means of living and whatever he may need in this life, and favored him with His care, kindness and compassion, from when he was but semen in his mother's womb, until the Last moment of his life. Logically then it is this Beneficent Lord Who deserves thanksgiving and worship. There is no bestower, nor a giver in the world other than Allah the Exalted.

In this respect the call of the Qur'an came as a reminder to man, awakening him from his sloth and carelessness: ***“Say: O people of the Book!’ Come to a word common between us and you, that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate none with Him, and we take not one another for Lords, a part from Allah.’ And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims.” Holy Qur'an (3:64)***

***“I shall withdraw from you and that to which you pray beside Allah, and I shall pray to my Lord. It may be that, in prayer to my Lord, I shall not be unblest.” Holy Qur'an (19:48)***

***“Nay, but Allah must you serve, and be among the thankful!” Holy Qur'an (39:66)***

In this way the Qur'an confirms the inseparable connection between thanksgiving and servitude, and the bestowing of gifts and grace. It regards admitting Allah's munificence, and offering gratitude through worshipping Him, as a universal duty expected for His acts of provision. It also regards denying the bounties and the gifts of Allah as infidelity and rebellion against the principle of servitude to Allah the Exalted.

***“They know the favor of Allah and then deny it. Most of them are the unbelievers.” Holy Qur'an (16:83)***

***“So eat of the lawful and good (thing) that Allah has provided you, and thank for the bounty of Allah if it is Him you worship.” Holy Qur'an (16:114)***

Clearly then, the aforementioned truths: Creation, Sovereignty, Omnipotence, Command and Lordship, are Allah's. These attributes all coalesce to draw for us the picture of the relation between man and his Creator. They explain the shape of that relation, so as to assert the motives of man's submission to Allah alone, and his surrender to His will, intentionally, willingly and consciously, by way of contemplating on this relationship established between man and his Creator. In this way man can comprehend the difference between man and his Creator, and the difference between genetic and voluntary servitude, from which he may infer that: Since it is Allah Who is the Creator, the Owner, the Omnipotent, the Dominant, the Lord, the Beneficent, the Benevolent, the Patron, then, we must worship Him alone, and be sincere in our servitude to Him only.

## **The Psychological Motives For Worship**

The concept of servitude and submission to Allah the Exalted in man's soul is founded on a psychological bases, which enlivens the idea of servitude and grants it vitality and a spiritual and conscious force that urges man to cling to Allah and be connected to Him.

These psychological roots and the resultant deep inner feelings, are:

## 1. LOVE AND EAGERNESS

When love of Allah occupies man's mind and heart, and when it interacts with his feelings and emotions, filling his soul and conscience, it becomes devotion, a way of life, which affects the entirety of his behaviour. Its spirit is reflected in all his activities and emotions. Thus, his servitude to Allah is ingrained in his soul on the basis of love and pure eagerness for his God, in Whom he discerns every · loveable attribute; nay, more; he sees in Him the infinite perfection and the ultimate goal.

Consequently, this love and eagerness towards Allah continually urges him - in the direction of his Lord, and restlessly pushes him to do whatever may bring him nearer to Him, and to try whatever may attract His approval.

By enjoying such a love, and living in this state of eagerness, man feels as if he were imbibing the most delicious pleasures of life, at the highest stages of bliss, which takes him still nearer to the proximity of his Creator, with utmost love and longing. The ways of expressing worship practiced by man through praying, fasting, fighting for the sake of Allah, invocation, etc. cannot have their full meaning penetrate in the human soul, without its first feeling a pure love and longing for Allah.

This is why the believer carries in his soul and mind the message of servitude to Allah (religion), speaks about it, is proud of it, and sacrifices for it all his wealth, comfort, himself and his kinsmen; because all these cannot be compared with the love for his Lord.

This is very expressively, though briefly, described in the Qur'an:

***“O you who believe! Should any among you turns back from his religion, Allah will soon raise a people whom He loves and who love Him...” Holy Qur'an (5:54)***

***“And those who believe, their love of Allah be more intensely...” Holy Qur'an (2:165)***

In the invocation of the great Prophet (s.a.w.), we find a genuine expression of the fountains of divine love and longing. He says: “O God, grant me to love You, to love who loves You, and love the one who brings me nearer to loving You. Let Your love be more dear to me than a drink of cold water.”<sup>2</sup>

Here is Hussain bin Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), the grandson of Prophet (s.a.w.) who dips from the fountain of divine love, and illustrating its sweet taste, proclaims the drinker would not like to turn to any other than it: “It was You Who wiped away the others from the hearts of Your lovers, so as to love no one save You and to take refuge with no one but You.”<sup>3</sup> Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq (a.s.) referred to the relation between the lover and Allah, and its impression on his conduct and feelings, saying: “The lover is the most sincere, the truest speaker and the strictest keeper of his promise, to Allah.”<sup>4</sup> But when this glowing flame dies away in man's soul, and when this flowing fountain dries up, man feels the dessication of life, the accumulation of darkness in his being, the misery of his living. He wanders at random in his worship, ambling aimlessly in the world of the astray, far from Allah. If he, in this case, practices religious rites, such as saying his prayers, fasting and other good deeds, they will be void of real meaning and they spiritual contents that raise man to high degrees of human progress and perfection.





## 2. FEAR AND HOPE

The other psychological drive which strengthens the feelings of submission in man, is the attitude of being small and trivial before Allah's greatness. He sees that he has no right to rebel and disobey. This inner feeling; the notion of nothingness before Allah's greatness, merges with emotions of fear and awe in the soul of the believer, causing him to submit, surrender, and adhere to his Lord, lest his love might be lost, and wrath and torment be sent down upon him.

Fear of losing the love and severing connection with Allah has its positive effects on the soul of the believer, his hope, his continual expectation, and despairing not of Allah's mercy. It also has tangible results in enhancing the role of fear in controlling the balance of the human soul and directing its movement towards Allah.

Thus, in this way, the feelings of the believer grow continually under the shadow of hope and expectation of divine kindness, free from the despair which closes in the face of man the doors of hope, preventing him from reforming himself and changing his attitudes.

The dual drives fear and hope have strong psychological effects and are a powerful moving force which stamps their mark on man's behaviour, pushing him towards good, or dragging him towards evil.

This is because fear and hope form in the depths of the human soul, the two expressions of a balanced equation which dictate the sum total of human motives and conduct.

Imam Muhammed Al-Baqir (a.s.) explained the effect of these two drives on the believer's soul, and the psychological relation between them. He said:

“There is no believing servant without having in his heart two lights: the light of fear and the light of hope; if he weighed the one, it would not seem to be heavier than the other. Allah had joined them when He described those whom He praised, saying: (They)cry to their Lord in fear and hope..”<sup>5</sup>

Imam Al-Sadiq (a.s.) elaborated on this concept and illuminated it by saying:

“Fear is the watcher over the heart, and hope is the intercessor for the soul. Whoever knows Allah, fears Him, and to Him he places his hope, as these are the two wings of faith by which the righteous servant ascends to Allah.”<sup>6</sup>

From this brief presentation of the psychological motivation inherently compelling man to true servitude, we understand that love, longing, fear and hope are the psychic drives interacting in the depths of the soul and urging man to be connected with Allah, and to try through all available means including conduct, thought, emotions and activity, to obtain Allah's pleasure, and win His reward for purely and sincerely worshipping Him.

## Aspects Of Servitude

Where is 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.a.w.), 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 characterizing 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.

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 Al-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

“Faith has four cornerstones: trusting Allah, accepting His decision, submitting to His command and confiding in Him”.<sup>7</sup>

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.

## **The Role of Servitude in Man's Life**

Hopefully, we have gathered some understanding of what servitude means and what are its effects and reflection on the self and human society as a whole.

We should know that servitude is the origin of emancipation and freedom from every restraint, human bondage, desires and egoism. Servitude to Allah affects complete freedom, and makes man feel the fullness of his humanity. Man, in this case, is inclined towards perfection and goodness, and feels he should keep aloof from committing evil, because he is turning towards Allah, the Origin of good and perfection.

By way of explaining this, we may constraint on the practical effects of servitude to Allah on man's life in the following:

## **1. PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT**

The concept of surrender is not a mere theoretical and abstract one accepted by thought and responded to by reason, without having any consequent psychological and moral effects. Such results act to purify the individual's conscience, change his inner content, and develop his internal moral faculties.

When man discovers the compelling truth of his life—the truth of servitude to Allah and of being connected to the Perfect Originator—he moves towards it, urged by fear and hope and is tied to it by feelings of love and longing. Thus, he would build all his projections, feelings, emotions and the details of his behaviour on these psychological foundations.

Having comprehended this major truth and its significance for himself and his world, man takes hold of the true Origin, as his Lord Whom he loves and longs for, whom he regards to be the final goal and to Whom he surrenders with reverence, glorification and undivided love. All these inclinations result in a drive for perfection and constructive ideals and performing their role in man's inmost psyche; as well as giving the skeleton of human conduct its unique form and structure.

Other psychic results of man's submission to the One are the absence of a split personality and any traces of dualism, freedom from uneasiness, doubt and uncertainty as an aftereffect on his unity of choice and direction.

This is because a believer, sincere in his servitude, travels in a unified psychic direction, and lives with an inner coherence free from conflicts and anxieties. In this way, high humane horizons permeate his being; in his depths grow purposeful and lofty directions; his heart fills with the love of good, and his behaviour embodies righteousness. He lives in perpetual struggle and continual longing to go towards the attributes of his Lord and the attributes of His existence, such as justice, mercy, generosity, modesty, truthfulness, forgiveness, etc. These characteristics and human qualities sublimate inside the believer, while the resultant surrender casts its positive shade on the devotee's soul and conscience.



## **2. SOCIAL EFFECT**

Servitude has important social and ethical effects which are reflected in the life of the human society, effecting the entire gamut of social relations. The impulse of surrender to Allah saves man from being submissive to tyrants and despots. It emancipates him from whims, from the domination of the love for wealth, hoarding and treasuring it. This divine worldview also keeps man from misusing others and treating them unjustly and exploitatively for the sake of a transient deity.

The attitude of submission to Allah frees man from the clashes and tensions he suffers from, as a result of the struggle for superiority and arbitrarily controlling peoples' means of livelihood.

Surrender to Allah induces man to feel equity and equality among people, since all of them are the same in their being: servants of Allah, the One.

The community which sincerely worships Allah, sees no goal in the world but Him, and its heart is filled with nothing but servitude to Him. Such people start destroying the various idols: the idols of wealth, desire, position, domination, arrogance, etc., so that they may be free as they were created, and as their sublime Creator willed them to be.

### 3. CIVIL EFFECT

*“And to Thamud (We sent) their brother Salih. He said: O my people! worship Allah, you have no god but Him. It is He Who has brought you up out of the earth and has caused to settle in it. So ask forgiveness of Him and repent to Him. Surely my Lord is Nigh, Responsive.” Holy Qur'an (11:61)*

This generous verse explicitly declares that the role of man on this earth is to control and reform it, to fill it with life, vitality, construction, civilization, . . . etc. When man embodies his civic duties, covering the fields of science, invention, agriculture, industry and construction, he is, in fact, performing his principal task: controlling and reforming the land, fulfilling his duty and correctly worshipping on this earth.

A believer comprehends this truth and embraces it so as to enact one of the facets of surrender to Allah on this earth by spreading life, activity and construction.

In the conclusion of our study of the concept of servitude we realize that servitude to Allah is:

The way towards psychological and behavioral perfection in life.

The path towards integration and harmony with the rhythm of this universe in its awe-inspiring creation and unity. The guidance towards social reformation and prosperity.

The light leading towards happiness and a perfect social life, while its result is to gain Allah's pleasure and His paradise.

We implore Allah the Almighty to make us all successful in order to follow the way of servitude to the Almighty Himself; surely He is the Guardian and the Helper.

*Praise be to Allah, the lord of the words.*

## Endnotes

- 1- Jami Al-Sa'adat, Vol.2, P.400.
- 2-JamiAl-Sa'adat, Vol.3, P.150.
- 3-ibid. P.152.
- 4- bid, p. 154.
- 5- Jami Al-Saadat, Vol. 1 P.253.
- 6- bid, P.254.
- 7- Tuhaf Al-UqooI, P.382.

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