

Part 3: At-Tawhid

26) At-Tawhid of Islam

It will be seen from above-mentioned discussion how Islam, for the first time in history of religions, explained “*at-tawhid*” (Oneness of God) in such a way that there was no misunderstanding afterwards. The Jews believed in one God, but theirs was not the universal but tribal god. And even then, they had fallen in the pitfall of giving `Uzayr the title of `son of God.’

It is the direct result of the teaching of Islam that Jews left calling a man `son of God’. Christians are trying to re-interpret the dogma of Trinity; Hindus were compelled to rediscover that Vedas teach Unity of God and that idolworship was wrong.

The surah of at-Tawhid is one of the shortest chapters of the Holy Qur’an. It establishes the pure belief in the Oneness of God, rejecting all types of 'shirk' in these words:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

“Say: He is Allah, The One and Only:

Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;

He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten;

And there is none like unto Him.” (Chapter Al-Ikhlāas, n. 112)

The first sentence of the Islamic kalimah, that is, “There is no god except Allah” leads a Muslim throughout his life not only in religious matters but in social behaviour also. “There is no god” shows a Muslim that nothing in the universe is superior to Him. It is observed in Qur’an that “He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth.” So a Muslim knows that nothing in this world is to be worshipped. Neither stone nor trees, neither animals nor human beings; neither the Sun, the Moon nor the Stars can be worshipped, because everything is created and created for his benefit.

When a Muslim thus has rejected every falsehood and every idea of nature-worship, idol-worship and human-worship, he is ready to believe in the positive truth of the Unity of God. Believing in a Supreme being gives an aim to our life and provides a purpose for our actions. Had a man been left with the wrong impression that there was no God at all, his life would have been aimless, and an aimless life is dangerous. So it is added that there is no god “except Allah”. This sentence has a negative as well as a positive aspect. Both are instrumental in creating the belief that every man is equal to every other person. When nobody is superior, nobody is inferior. Thus, the belief in the Unity of God promotes the sense of brotherhood and equality and equity which is another feature of Islam.

27) Attributes of Allah

Now time has come to explain in short what is our belief concerning God. In preceding chapters almost all the aspects of our belief have been explained. It should be apparent by now that there are many attributes which are a must for God, while there are others which are beneath His dignity and cannot be found in Him. Therefore, in our faith, the attributes of Allah have been grouped as ‘positive’ and ‘negative’.

as-Sifaat ath-thubutiyyah

The positive attributes which are befitting Allah are called as-Sifat ath-thubutiyyah. They are many in number, but only eight of them are usually mentioned. They are:

1. al-Qadim: It means that Allah is Eternal, that is, He has neither beginning nor end. Nothing except Allah is eternal.

2. al-Qadir: It means that Allah is Omnipotent, that is, He has power over everything and every affair.
3. al-Alim: It means that Allah is Omniscient, that is, He knows everything. Even our unspoken intentions and desires are not hidden from Him.
4. al-Hayy: It means that Allah was always alive and will remain alive for ever. 5. al-Murid: It means that Allah has His own will and discretion in all affairs. He does not do anything under compulsion.
6. al-Mudrik: It means that He is All-perceiving, as as-Sami' (All-hearing), al-Basir (All-seeing). Allah sees and hears everything without any need of eyes or ears.
7. al-Mutakallim: It means that Allah is the Master of the word, that is, He can create speech in anything, as He did in a tree for Prophet Musa (Moses – p.b.u.h.) and in the “Curtain of Light” for our Holy Prophet (p. b. u. h. a. h. p.).
8. as-Sadiq: It means that Allah is true in his words and promises.

It is impossible to fix any limit to His attributes. This list is not exhaustive but it is essential to understand the Glory of Allah. These attributes are not acquired but are inherent in the conception of Divinity.

as-Sifat as-salbiyyah

The Negative Attributes which cannot be found in Allah because they are below His dignity are called “as-Sifat as-salbiyyah”. They are many, but like “as-Sifat ath-thubutiyyah” only eight are listed here. They are:

1. ash-Sharik: The word “ash-sharik” means a colleague or partner. Allah has neither a colleague nor a partner in His Divinity.
2. al-Murakkab: This word means “Compound” or “Mixed”. Allah is neither made, nor composed, of any material. He cannot be divided even in imagination.
3. al-Makan: It means “Place”. Allah is not in a place because He has no body and He is everywhere because His power and knowledge is manifestly apparent everywhere.
4. al-Hulul: It means “Entering”. Nothing enters into Allah nor does He enter into anything or anybody. Therefore, the belief of Incarnation in any form is abhorrent to the conception of Divinity.
5. Mahal al-hawadith: This means “Subject to Changes”. Allah cannot change.
6. al-Mar'i: It means “Visible”. Allah is not visible. He has not been seen, is not seen and will never be seen.
7. Ihtiyaj: It means “Dependence” or “Need”. Allah is not deficient in any virtue, so he does not need

anything. He is All-perfect.

8. as-Sifat az-zaidah: This means “Added Qualification”. The attributes of Allah are not separate from His Being. When we say God is Omnipotent and Merciful, we do not mean that His power and Mercy are something different from His Person. We see that a child is born without any power, and then he acquires strength day by day. It is so because power is not his person.

God is not like this. He is Power Himself; Mercy Himself; Knowledge Himself; Justice Himself; Virtue Himself; Truth Himself and so on.

It will thus be seen that according to Islam Allah is the name of God as perceived in the light of the above Positive and Negative Attributes. In other words, Allah is the Creator of the universe, Self-existent, the source of all perfection and free from all defects.

28) Names of Allah

The proper name which Islam uses for God is “Allah”. “Allah” means “One who deserves to be loved” and “Into Whom everyone seeks refuge.” This word, grammatically speaking, is unique. It has no plural and no feminine. So this name itself reflects light upon the fact that Allah is one and only one; He has neither any partner nor any equal. This name cannot properly be translated by the word “God” because God can be transformed in ‘gods’ and ‘goddess’.

Two more frequently used names are *ar-Rahman* and *ar-Rahim*.

ar-Rahman signifies that Allah is Merciful and that His Mercy encompasses each and everything in the universe without any distinction on account of faith or belief. He makes, creates and sustains everything and every man whether he be a Muslim or kafir (unbeliever). ar-Rahim signifies that the Mercy of Allah on the Day of Judgement will surround the true believers only, and that unbelievers and hypocrites will be left out.

It is apparent that both of these names signify a distinct aspect of God's Mercy. His Mercy in this world, as signified by ‘ar-Rahman’ is general; and the one in the life-hereafter, as signified by ‘ar-Rahim’ is special.

It will be of interest to note that the word ‘ar-Rahman’ cannot be used except for Allah, while ‘ar-Rahim’ can be used for others also. That is why it has been told by Imam that “ar-Rahman is a reserved name which denotes unreserved Mercy, and ar-Rahim is an unreserved name which denotes Reserved Mercy.”

29) Al-Asmau'l-Husna (The Beautiful Names of Allah)

Here is a list of 99 names used for Allah in Islam, together with their meanings:

No. NAMES OF ALLAH MEANING

1. Allah Proper Name of the One and Only God
2. ar-Rahman The Merciful
3. ar-Rahim The Compassionate
4. al-Malik The Ruler
5. al-Quddus The Holy
6. as-Salam The Safety
7. al-Mu'min The Trusted
8. al-Muhaymin The Protector
9. al-'Aziz The Powerful
10. al-Jabbar The Most Powerful
11. al-Mutakabbir The Magnificent
12. al-Khalik The Creator
13. al-Bari The Creator (from nothing)
14. al-Musawwir The Designer
15. al-Ghaffar The Forgiver
16. al-Qahhar The Almighty, The Subduer
17. al-Wahhab The Giver
18. ar-Razzaq The Provider; The Sustainer
19. al-Fattah The Opener
20. al-Alim The Omniscient; The All-Knowing
21. al-Qabid The Gatherer

22. al-Basit The Expander
23. al-Khafid The Humbler
24. ar-Rafi The Raiser
25. al-Mudhill The Subduer
26. al-Mu'izz The Exalter
27. as-Sami The All-Hearing
28. al-Basir The All-Seeing
29. al-Hakam The Arbitrator
30. al- 'Adl The Justice; The Just
31. al-Latif The Kind
32. al-Khabir The All-Knowing
33. al-Halim The Clement
34. al- 'Azzim The Great
35. al-Ghafur The Forgiver
36. ash-Shakur The Thankful
37. al- 'Ali The High
38. al-Kabir The Great
39. al-Hafiz The Protector
40. al-Muqit The Nourisher
41. al-Hasib The Reckoner
42. al-Jalil The Honorable
43. al-Karim The Generous
44. ar-Raqib The Guard
45. al-Mujib The One Who answers (the prayers)

46. al-Wasi The Enricher
47. al-Hakim The Wise
48. al-Wadud The Affectionate
49. al-Majeed The Glorious
50. al-Majid The Honorable
51. al-Ba'ith The Resurrector
52. ash-Shahid The Witness
53. al-Haqq The Truth
54. al-Wakil The Trustee
55. al-Qawi The Powerful
56. al-Matin The Strong
57. al-Wali The Guardian
58. al-Hamid The Praiseworthy
59. al-Muhsi The Reckoner
60. al-Mubdi The Beginner; The Creator
61. al-Mu'id The Returner; The Resurrector
62. al-Muhyi The Bestower of Life
63. al-Mumit The Bringer of Death
64. al-Hayy The Living
65. al-Qayyum The Self-existing
66. al-Wahid The One
67. al-Ahad The Only; The Unique
68. as-Samad The Perfect; The Eternal
69. al-Qadir The Omnipotent

70. al-Muqtadir The All-Powerful
71. al-Muqaddim The Advancer
72. al-Mu 'akhir The Keeper Behind
73. al-Awwal The First
74. al-Akhir The Last
75. az-Zahir The Apparent
76. al-Batin The Hidden
77. al-Mawla The Master
78. al-Muta 'ali The Most High
79. al-Barr The Beneficent
80. al-Tawwab The Forgiver
81. al-Muntaqim The Avenger
82. al- 'Afuww The Forgiver
83. ar-Ra'uf The Compassionate
84. Malik'ul Mulk The Sovereign of the Kingdom (Universe)
85. Dhu'l-Jalal The Owner of Glory wa'l-Ikram and Honor
86. al-Muqsit The Just
87. al-Jami The One Who brings together; The Comprehensive
88. al-Ghaniyy The Rich; The Self-Sufficient
89. al-Mughni The Bestower of Richness
90. al-Mani The Prohibitor
91. ad-Darr The Bringer of Adversity
92. an-Nafi' The Beneficial
93. an-Nur The Light

94. al-Hadi The Guide

95. al-Badi The Maker(with previous example)

96. al-Baqi The Everlasting

97. al-Warith The Inheritor

98. ar-Rashid The Guide

99. as-Sabur The Patient

30) Attributes of Person and Action

Question: One of the names of Allah is al-Khaliq that is, Creator. As Allah was Creator from ever, does it not follow that the created things, that is, the universe is from ever?

Answer: Allah was not creating from ever. If you study carefully you will find that the attributes of God, as mentioned in the above chapter, may easily be divided into two groups:- First, there are those attributes which can never be separated from the conception of divinity. For example, we say that God is al Qddir (Omnipotent) al-Alim (Omniscient) and al-Hayy (Everliving). These are such attributes which can never be separated from the conception of God, because there never was a time when God was not Omnipotent, Omniscient or Living. He was al-Qadir, al- Alim and al-Hayy for ever, and will remain al-Qadir, al- Alim and al-Hayy for ever.

Such attributes refer to the person of Allah, and are, therefore, called *as-Sifatu'dhatiyyah* (Attributes of Person of Allah).

Second, there are the attributes which describe the actions of Allah. For example, we say that Allah is al-Khaliq (Creator), ar-Razzaq (Sustainer) etc. These are the Attributes which describe the actions of Allah, and are, therefore, called *as-Sifatu'l fi'liyyah* (Attributes of Actions of Allah).

These actions were not from ever, and therefore these attributes were not used for Allah, from ever. You know that Allah is al Murid. He acts according to His own plan and His own Will. He is not like fire which burns without any intention or will of its own. Nor is He like the sun which goes on giving light and warmth without intention and will of its own.

Allah works according to His own plan. He created when He wished, and not before that. It does not mean that God had no power to create. The power to create was there for ever; because the 'Power' is not separate from His person. But the appearance of that power, and bringing it into effect, was not from ever. In short, Allah had power to create from ever, but He did not create from ever. And when He created, He was called al-Khaliq; but not before that.

Likewise, when he sustained, He was called ar-Razzaq; when He forgave, He was called al-Ghaffar; when He avenged, He was called al-Qahhar; when He gave life, He was called al-Muhyi; when He gave death, He was called al-Mumit.

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