

Categories and Aspects of Shirk

Shah Ismail Shaheed

From 'Taqwiyaat ul-Eemaan' (Strengthening of the Faith)

It is necessary to gain knowledge about the characteristics which Allaah has peculiarised for Himself so that none of them be attributed to any other else. Such things are countless. We, on our part, shall be mentioning some of those things and prove them in the background of Qur'aan and Hadith so that the people may understand the other pertinent things also with their help.

Shirk in knowledge:

The first thing is that Allaah is present everywhere by His Knowledge which means that His Knowledge encompasses everything. This is why He has a complete cognizance of everything, every time, whether a thing happens to be far or near, hidden or apparent, up in the heavens or inside the earth, on the tops of the mountains or at the bottom of an ocean. This magnificence belongs to none but Allaah. If a person calls upon someone (by invoking his name) other than Allaah, while doing his everyday routine chores, so that the one called upon may help him obviate his distress, or attacks an enemy by invoking his name, or keeps pronouncing his name on the beads of a rosary, or makes a vow in his name or conjures up his picture in his imagination by nursing a faith that whenever he invokes his name, or think of him vividly in his mind or contemplate on his grave, he gains cognizance of him; none of his affairs is hidden from him, and whatever circumstances he goes through, namely, sickness and good health, abundance and distress, life and death, sadness and happiness etc., are all known to him; any word which his mouth utters is heard by him and he knows about his thoughts and imaginations. All the above things and acts prove the presence of the elements of Shirk. This is called a Shirk in knowledge which means one is trying to prove that someone other than Allaah possesses a similar kind of knowledge which is only the prerogative of Allaah.

By nursing this kind of faith, a man undoubtedly turns into a Mushrik (polytheist) whether he nurses such a faith in regard to an honorable human being or any of the exalted angels, or whether such a knowledge which is attributed to him, happens to be a personal one or granted by Allaah. Whatever the situation may be, this is an absolutely polytheistic faith.

Shirk in disposing:

Disposing the matters of the universe with intention, exercising authority, killing at will and resuscitating, awarding abundance and giving distress, giving healthiness and sickness, giving victory and defeat, succeeding and preceding, fulfillment of one's desires, obviating calamities, providing help in distress situations and whenever one stands in need of it, are all attributed to Allaah and none but Him Alone. None but Allaah can have this magnificence. A human being or an angel, despite acquiring great ranks, may never have these characteristics. A person who seeks to prove that an entity other than Allaah may have an authority of this nature, makes vows to this entity or makes an animal sacrifice for the purpose of fulfillment of his wishes, and invokes it's name in distress so that it can obviate his troubles, such a person is called 'Mushrik' and this kind of act is called 'Shirk in authority' or disposing. It means that cherishing a belief that any entity other than Allaah may have this authority, whether as the one granted by Allaah or as one of it's personal traits, is a polytheistic faith anyway.

Shirk in worship:

Allaah has particularized all acts of worship for Him Alone which are defined as Ibadat like prostrating, bowing, standing with folded hands, giving charity in the Name of Allaah, fasting in His Name and undertaking long journeys to visit His Sacred House by putting on such a clothing that the people may distinguish them as the visitors of His Sanctified House, invoking Allaah's Name on the way, avoiding indecent talk and hunting, circumambulating His House with an utmost caution, making prostrations in its direction, carrying the animals of sacrifice towards it, making vows there, putting a covering on Ka'bah, making supplications while standing on the threshold of Ka'bah, asking for the virtuosity in the religious as well as worldly matters, kissing of the Black-Stone, touching the walls of Ka'bah by one's mouth and chest, making supplications by getting hold of the fringes of its covering, illuminating its surroundings, taking up residence there as one of its servants, sweeping and cleaning it, offer drinking water to the pilgrims, providing water for Wudu (ablution) and bathing, partaking of Zamzam water by considering it as a sanctified act, getting oneself drenched with it, drinking it to one's heart content, distributing it among themselves, carrying it to be presented to one's relatives, venerating the forest surrounding it, to refrain from hunting there, not to cut trees there, not to pull out grass from there, not to graze animals there: these are acts which Allaah has prescribed for Muslims to be observed as His worship.

Now, if a person makes, bow or prostration before the grave of a Prophet, saint, ghost, apparition, jinn, fairy or any of the real or fake graves or a specified place inside a tomb, or a certain sign or house, or , Eucharist and coffin; observes fast in their names; stands in front of them with folded hands; makes offerings to them or hoisting a flag in their name or walking backwards (with a reverse motion of feet); kisses a grave or undertakes along journey to visit graves and other places; lights earthen lamps there or makes arrangements for illuminating them; or Puts coverings on their walls or offers a sheet as a covering on the grave, manually fanning the air by hand (by using a Morchhal, a fanning contrivance); erects a tent there; kisses it's threshold; offers supplications there with folded hands; asks for the fulfillment of wishes there; serves the shrine by becoming its servant and venerates the forest around it: anyone doing any of the above acts commits a clear and manifest Shirk.

In brief, all the above acts and the alike, are called Shirk in worship." It implies paying one's respect to an entity other than Allaah in a manner which is prescribed for Allaah Alone either by believing that this particular entity is personally entitled to such a veneration or by believing that Allaah becomes pleased if any of these entities are held in high esteem or with the blessing of their veneration, troubles are warded off and done away with. Whatever may be the case, such faith is purely polytheistic in its nature.

Shirk in one's daily routine chores:

Allaah the Exalted has taught His slaves the norms of respect to the effect that they should remember Allaah while performing their everyday worldly chores and pay Him their tributes for the enhancement of their Faith and to secure Allaah's blessing in day-to-day assignments. These norms include:

- (1) making vows to Allaah and calling upon Him Alone whenever a catastrophe befalls his slave;
- (2) invoking His Name for His blessing whenever commencing an assignment;
- (3) slaughtering animals to express one's gratitude to Allaah in the case of having been

blessed with a child;

(4) giving one's children such names as Abdullah, Abdur-Rahman, Ilahi Bakhsh, Allaah Diya, Amatullah, Allaah Di etc.;

(5) taking out a small portion of the crop produce and giving it away in the Name of Allaah;

(6) apportioning some of the fruits to His name out of the total produce;

(7) specifying some of the animals and allocating them for the purpose of sacrifice in the Name of Allaah;

(8) treating the animals which are carried to the House of Allaah with due respect by neither riding them nor mounting any load on them;

(9) observing Divine Instructions in the manners concerning food and dress;

(10) restricting oneself to the use of permissible things only and avoiding the ones that are not allowed;

(11) considering that all the different conditions and situations which one comes across in this world, like expensive and inexpensive rates and prices, health and sickness, victory and defeat, succeeding and preceding, sadness and happiness, are all commanded by Allaah;

(12) pronouncing a standard formula of Insha'Allaah while making an intention to perform an assignment;

(13) pronouncing the Name of Allaah the Exalted One in such a manner that His Greatness is conspicuously highlighted and one's slavery is clearly exhibited, by using such words like, our Rubb, our Master, our Creator or Ma'btid (the object of our worship) etc.;

(14) in case a need arises on a certain occasion to administer an oath at all, undertaking an oath only in the Name of Allaah.

These and the other similar things have been singled out by Allaah as His own and personal prerogative for the sake of His veneration and magnificence. Anybody showing such kind of respect to an entity other than Allaah, commits Shirk; as for example: making a vow to it with the intention of facilitating a difficult assignment; giving one's children names like Abdun- Nabi, Imam Bakhsh, Peer Bakhsh etc.; apportioning part of the produce of one's farm or orchard to its name; separating part of the fruits and keeping them aside (in the name of a deity) immediately after they are picked up from trees and then only putting the rest to one's use; dedicating some animals from among the whole herd to a deity and then treating those animals with respect by not removing them from the fodder and water and not to strike them with stick or stone; observing customs and traditions in terms of dress and food to the effect that a specified group of people should not eat such and such food and should not wear such and such dress; attributing the virtues and evils of the world to them by making such statements that as long as that particular person has been cursed by that particular deity, he has gone mad or that certain person has turned into a handicapped person due to the fact that he was driven away by that deity or by saying that as long as that person was blessed by a certain saint, he is now on a flood tide of success; or that famine was wrought by that star or by observing that this assignment was not accomplished as long as the same was commenced at a certain time and on a certain date or by observing that if Allaah and His Prophet will it, one would be coming; or by saying that it will happen if one's

religious mentor wishes it to take place or using such adjectives like, the Sustainer, Independent, Lord of lords, the Master of the universe or the King of kings etc.; the undertaking of an oath in the name of the Prophet or the Qur'aan or 'Alee (may Allaah be pleased with him) or an Imam, or a religious mentor or their graves or one's own self etc.

All the above practices generate Shirk which is called a 'Shirk in day-to-day chores', which implies paying one's respect to an entity other than Allaah exactly in the same manner as the one prescribed for Allaah.