
An introduction to Tawheed

Definition of Tawheed

Tawheed is to single out Allah for all types of worship, meaning that we worship Allah alone, and do not worship anything along with Him. We do not worship any Prophet, or pious person, rather we single out Allah alone with worship. Another definition of tawheed is: **Singling out Allah, with all that is exclusive to Him.** We'll explain the definition with an example. Knowledge of the unseen (ilm-ul-ghaib) is exclusive to Allah, as He says: **"Say, None in the heavens and the earth know the Unseen except Allah"** [27:65]. Only Allah possesses ilm-ul-ghaib. So to claim that a certain holy man, or saint has ilm-ul-ghaib, contradicts tawheed. This is because one has given a quality that is exclusive to Allah, to other than Allah.

Definition of Shirk

Shirk is to make a partner along with Allah. Allah says: **"Do not make a partner along with Allah"** [2:22]. The essence of shirk is giving Allah's rights to other than Allah. Shirk can occur in many ways, for example: by worshipping other than Allah, by claiming that fortune and misfortune are from created beings, by believing that the souls of the deceased can affect the affairs of this world, or by giving exclusive qualities of Allah to the creation.

Tawheed is the very purpose for which we have been created

Allah says: **"And I created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship me."** [Qur'an 51:56]. Allah, the Most Wise did not create us in vain; we have been created for a very noble purpose – to worship Allah. So what is worship?

Worship is a state which combines love, submission, and fear of Allah. Whenever a person feels in his heart the love of Allah, combined with humbleness, humility, submission and fear of rejection, and these feelings have been perfected, then he is a true worshipper of Allah. Whoever worships Allah alone, then he is upon tawheed, he has fulfilled his purpose of creation, and will be rewarded with Paradise.

Tawheed is the reason why Allah sent Prophets

Allah says: **"And verily, We have sent among every community a Messenger [proclaiming]: "Worship Allah [Alone] and avoid the false gods"** [16:36]. Every Messenger had the same call – to invite mankind away from the worship of creation, and to the worship of Allah alone.

Tawheed is the very first command in the Qur'ān.

Allah says: **Oh Mankind, worship your Lord.** [2:21]

Tawheed is the first thing that the Prophets and their followers called to.

The Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa sallam) sent Mu'ad ibn Jabal to Yemen, instructing him: *"let the first thing you call them to do be that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah"*. [Bukhari]. If someone wants to give dawah, they must begin by calling to tawheed.

Things are known by their opposites.

We cannot truly understand any concept until we study its opposite. If you want to understand the importance of tawheed, you have to understand shirk. Hudhayfah ibn Yamman said: *"The people used to ask the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) about the good, and I used to ask the Messenger of Allah about the evil out of fear that I might fall into it."*

So we learn about shirk in order to avoid it, just like the doctor who spends his whole life studying diseases, in order to protect the people from it. Only when you know shirk and you understand its dangers, can you avoid it. Allah says: **“And this is how we clarify the signs, so that the path of the sinners becomes clear”**. [6: 55]

The Dangers of Shirk

1) Shirk is the Greatest Sin:

“Verily Allah does not forgive that Shirk be made with Him, but He forgives whatever is below that to whomever He wishes.” [4:48] Hence whoever dies upon shirk, will never be forgiven by Allah.

2) Jannah is haraam for the one commits Shirk:

“Verily whosoever associates partners with Allah, then indeed Allah has made Paradise unlawful for him, and his station is the Fire” [5:72]. And the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: *“Whoever died while supplicating another deity besides Allah, will enter the Fire.”* [Bukhari]

3) All of one’s deeds are nullified because of shirk:

“And if they associate others with Allah, whatever they have done is nullified.” [6:88]. Thus a person could pray tahajjud every night, fast every other day, spend all of his wealth in charity, and perform Hajj every year – but all of these deeds will be destroyed if he commits shirk. Allah says: *“And We shall turn to whatever deeds they did, and We shall make such deeds as scattered floating particles of dust.”* (25: 23).

4) Shirk is the greatest injustice:

Allah says: **“Verily Shirk is a great dhulm (injustice)”** [31:13]. Think of all the crimes a person could commit; murder, rape, even genocide – the crime of shirk outweighs all of these crimes.

5) Many of the Muslims will fall into shirk:

Allah said: **“And most of them do not believe in Allah except they commit shirk”** [12:106]. And the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: *“The Hour will not be established until tribes from my Ummah attach themselves to the polytheists, and until tribes from my Ummah worship idols”* [Abu Daawood]. In most of the Muslim countries shirk is so prevalent that the people consider it to be part of the religion!

6) The du’a of Ibrahim

“And remember when Ibrahim said: “O my Lord! Make this city (Makkah) one of peace and security, and keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols” [13:35]. Prophet Ibraheem (alaihis salaam) made this supplication to protect him and his family from worshipping idols. So if Ibraheem (alaihis salaam) did not feel safe from shirk, then what about us!

Examples of Shirk

1. To Belief That Allah Is Everywhere

To believe that Allah is everywhere in His Essence, or that everything is Allah and Allah is everything, is shirk. Once people accept this belief, then it is easy for them to accept a claim that God dwells in some of us more than others. This belief originated from the Hindu belief that Brahman is everywhere. In fact Allah is above the seven heavens, separate from His creation as He says: **“Ar-Rahmaan has ascended the Throne”** [20:5]..

2. To Call Upon other than Allah

Allah said: **“Then do not call anyone besides Allah”** [72: 18]. And the Prophet (sa) said: *“If you ask in prayer then ask only Allah, and if you seek help, seek it only from Allah.”* [Tirmidhee]

3. To believe in fortune tellers

Only Allah has knowledge of the unseen. If a person believes in a fortune-teller, then he has given Allah’s attribute of ‘alimul ghayb (Knower of the Unseen) to the fortune-teller. Such a person has disbelieved in what the Prophet (sa) has come with. He (sa): *“Whosoever approaches a fortuneteller and believes what he says, has disbelieved in what has been revealed to Muhammad.”* [Abu Dawood] Fortune tellers are not restricted to those who read your stars, or gaze into a crystal ball. Many of the so called Muslim holy men, by claiming to know the unseen, are by default, fortune tellers.

4. To wear a taweez

The belief that a taweez brings good fortune and prevents evil contradicts the Islamic belief that Allah Alone has the power to benefit and harm, and it is He alone Who can bring good and prevent evil.

It was the practice of the pagan Arab to wear locket, bracelets, beads and shells as charms. Allah's Messenger rejected all such practices. He (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: "*Whoever wears an amulet has committed Shirk*" [Musnad Ahmad]. This hadith is general and hence applies to all taweez, includes ones that contain Qur'anic verses.