

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ كَمَا هُوَ أَهْلُهُ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى سَيِّدِ الْوَلَدِ أَدَمَ كَمَا يُحِبُّ وَيَرْضَى بِأَنْ يُصَلَّى عَلَيْهِ

Allah Almighty, in Whose Name we begin, The Most Compassionate,
The Most Merciful

All Praise is due to Allah Almighty, Countless Peace and Blessings be upon
His Beloved Messenger – *may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* – his family & his
companions – *may Allah be pleased with them all*

To Feed is also a Great Ibadah

To serve the people, to be of service to them and help them in their times of need, there is no doubt that Shari'ah has placed great emphasis on this. There is one of the greatest forms of Ibadah. How important this is and what is its status is indeed a very long and lengthy chapter and it is not possible to explain all of this in these few pages.

When we look at the Qur'an, the purpose of creating man and Jinn is for the Ibadah of Allah Almighty. This is mentioned in Surah Az Zaariyaat (51), verse 56:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

“And I created the Jinns and men, only for them to worship Me”.

The Mufasssireen have explained that by Ibadah is meant taking care. It does not only mean Salaah or other forms of Ibadah. What is meant by Ibadah is a very wide and diverse meaning and it signifies achieving the Divine Pleasure of Allah Almighty.

Imam Razi - *may Allah be pleased with him* -has stated that, “The summery of Ibadah is only two.

The first it to respect the Divine Command of Allah Almighty and the second to is to be kind to creation. In other words, it implies ‘Huqu qullah’ and ‘Huqu qul ibaad’. In the *Tafseer Kabeer*, it is mentioned that, ‘Question: What Ibadah is that for which man and Jinn has been created? Answer: We will say that it implies respect for the Divine Command of Allah Almighty and to be kind to the creation of Allah Almighty. The reason is that these are such things which no Shari’ah is empty of.”

The vast meaning of Ibadah can also be found in the following verse of the Quran. In Surah Baqarah, verse 177, the Qur’an declares that:

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ
بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ
ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي
الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا
وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَ
أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

“Basic virtue is not just to turn faces to the East and the West, but true righteousness is that one must believe in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets; and out of love for Allah, to give treasured wealth to relatives and to the orphans and the needy and the traveller, and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and to keep the prayer established and to pay the charity; and those who fulfil their

obligations when they make an agreement; and the patient during times of calamity, in hardships and during holy war; it is they who have proved true to their word; it is they who are the pious.”

It is a great tragedy among the Muslims that they only consider Ibadah as being Salaah, fasting, etc. They therefore exclude such things as good manners, inter relationship, and worldly inter actions. But they seem to forget that this is also part of religion. They fail to realise that this also has the same importance as Imaan. The only difference is that Imaan deals with a person individually, while good manners and inter action deals with all creation, with all of society and with the public in general.

There is no doubt that Salaah, fasting, etc. are pillars of Islam and the entire establishment of Islam is based on this but this alone is not only Ibadah. It is merely a form of Ibadah. When we study Salaah, we will come to understand that it is an important act of Fard and there is a set time in which it needs to be performed and completed.

If we read the Salaah in its prescribed time, we will be rewarded and if we fail to do this, we will be committing a sin. However, if the same Salaah is performed at times which are Makruh, then this act of Salaah will be considered as a sin. From this we come to understand that to perform Salaah in its prescribed time is Ibadah and not to perform it in the time when it is Makruh to perform it, is also Ibadah.

Another example is fasting in Ramadan. To leave the fast without any valid reason is considered a great sin. Yet, the same fast if it is kept on the day of Eid, it is considered as Haraam. From this, we understand a very important lesson. The act to keep a fast or not to keep a fast is not actually Ibadah but simply to obey the Divine Command of Almighty Allah, that is considered as Ibadah. If a person follows the Divine Command of Almighty Allah, follows the rules as prescribed in Shari'ah, then his entire life is Ibadah and if not, then his entire life is nothing but disobedience.

If a person keeps reading his Salaah his entire life but only during the time when it is Makruh, will he be rewarded or punished? He will certainly be punished. This proves that Salaah is not Ibadah but the act of obeying the Divine Command of Almighty Allah is Ibadah.

In brief, it proves beyond a shadow of doubt that Salaah, Zakaah, Hajj, etc. are not the only forms of Ibadah. In fact, if every breath and every step is in accordance to the Divine Command of the Almighty Allah, that act is to be considered as Ibadah.

In brief, this concerns your right which you owe to Allah Almighty and that which you owe to creation. As far as rights which you owe to creation, the list is long. It includes rights to parents, rights to yourself, rights to your teachers, rights to relatives, rights to colleagues, rights to neighbours, and rights to animals. The reason that this is so important is because these are the creatures of Allah Almighty.

In a Hadith Shareef, the Holy Prophet - *may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* - has stated that, "All creation is part of Allah's (family, in this sense it would mean Allah's creation). The closest and the most liked with Allah is that person who is good towards Allah's creation". (Mishkaat Shareef)

In fact, the Almighty Allah is much more Merciful to His creation than a mother towards her child. Therefore, He has immense love for those who care for His creatures. Those who consider the problems of others as their problems and try to be of service to others as much as possible.

For example, say if you have a person working for you and he is very obedient and does whatever you tell him. However, this same person speaks ill of your children and mentions other bad things about them. In spite of him serving you well, you will still not think very good about him. In fact, when it comes to displaying real mercy, you will ignore him or you will find some reason to remove him from your employment.

This is the same with the Almighty Allah. To keep fast, to read Salaah, etc. are all actions which you have to do. You are not doing a favour to Allah Almighty. It is like a duty when you work for someone. If the same person shows even more dedication that starts to do even more than what is expected of him, obviously, this person becomes entitled for either an increase in his salary or a promotion.

This is the reason that you do not become a beloved servant of Allah Almighty by only fulfilling the acts of Fard as much as you get serving creation. This, therefore, proves

that Muslims have a great responsibility towards creation and if you continue to only make Ibadah and ignore this duty, you are genuinely wasting your time.

Another important point to be remembered is that Almighty Allah is Divinely Independent. He does not need our service to Him in the form of Ibadah. After all, there are millions of Angels who have been making His Ibadah since time immemorial. And they continue to be busy in his Ibadah.

We will present a Hadith Shareef in regard to serving mankind and the importance of this act. This Hadith Shareef is narrated by Hadrat Sayyiduna Abu Hurayrah - *may Allah be pleased with him*. It is also a Hadith-e-Qudsi.

The Holy Prophet - *may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* - has stated that, "On the Day of Judgement, Almighty Allah will ask a person, "O ibn Adam! I was ill, but you did not visit Me."

The person will be surprised and would wonder how Almighty Allah can become ill. The Almighty Allah will then declare, "Do you not remember that one of my servants near you became ill and you did not visit him and if you had gone to visit him, you would have found Me with him. (In other words, serving him was serving Me).

In the same manner, Almighty Allah will ask, "O ibn Adam! I had asked you for food, but you did not feed Me." The person will inquire as to how Almighty Allah has a need like this. The Almighty Allah will declare, "Do you not remember that a certain servant of Mine was hungry and yet you refused to feed him. If you had fed him, you would have found Me with him." (Mishkaat Shareef)

As for the act of feeding this is indeed a very important task with the true Awliyah. It can be gleamed from the following words of Hadrat Ghous Paak - *may Allah be pleased with him*. This is mentioned in the treatise, "Shuz Raatus Zehb". The King of the Awliyah has stated that, "I studied all forms of actions and I have not found a better act (for the creation of Allah) than feeding them. Even if the entire world comes into my possession, I will spend it in feeding the poor."

There is no doubt that this idea where people only speak about the Ibadah of the Awliyah and about their miracles and give the impression that they did nothing but only perform Ibadah and perform miracles is certainly a great lie. One needs to understand their service to creation, one needs to remember what they did for mankind if one needs to gleam into their true state.

In a reference from “Mashaa’ikh Chist”, it is mentioned that, “The Path to Allah passes through the path of creation. A person who wishes that he loves Almighty Allah should also learn to love the creation of Allah.” This is the path that the true Sufis adopted on the Path to Almighty Allah. Their entire life was spent serving creation. When they saw the difficulties of another person or another creature, they themselves felt the pain. When they thought of others who were hungry, their food stopped going down their throat.

When we look at the Malfuz Shareef of some of these Awliyah, we will see that they spent their entire life serving creation and mankind.

Hadrat Sayyiduna Nizaamudeen Awliyah - *may Allah be pleased with him* - mentions, “In my dream I was given a book in which it was written that as much possible one should endeavour to give peace to the hearts of others. The reason is that the heart of a true believer is the place of Divine Secrets.”

Another Saint has mentioned that nothing will be more valuable on the Day of Judgement then having given peace to the heart of another person. (Sayr Al Awliyah)

In the “Malfuz” of Shah Sulayman Tunsawi - *may Allah be pleased with him* - it is written that, “In the Darbaar or court of Shaikh Nizaamudeen - *may Allah be pleased with him* - there were ten doors. At each door, there was a clerk who sat at that door. Whichever needy person came, he used to record the need of that person”. (Naafi’u Al Salikeen). At the bottom of this recording was also the seal of the great Saint. When this paper was then given to any rich and powerful person, these people considered it a great source of blessing to help the needy person. The doors of the Khanqah was always open. (Taarikh Mashaa’ikh Chist)

One day, the great saint, Hadrat Nizaamudeen Awliyah - *may Allah be pleased with him* - mentioned, "There are two types of obedience. They are necessary and something continuous. The necessary form of obedience is that which is only beneficial to the person performing it. These are acts such as Salaah, fasting, Hajj, Dhikr, etc. The continuous form of obedience are those types of obedience which are also beneficial to others. These would include such acts as being merciful to others, fulfilling the rights of others. There is immense and untold reward in this." (Fawaa'id Al Fawaad)

The entire life of the great Saint is filled with example of continuous obedience. It is mentioned that once after attending the invite of a close friend namely Khawaja Azeezudeen - *may Allah be pleased with him* – and Hadrat Sayyiduna Baba Fareed - *may Allah be pleased with him* - visited Hadrat Sayyiduna Nizaamudeen Awliyah - *may Allah be pleased with him*.

The great Shaikh then asked him where he had gone to. He replied, "I had gone to a certain invite and at that place, people were saying that indeed Shaikh Nizaamudeen is someone who is very generous internally and it seems like he had not sadness or concern."

Hadrat Sayyiduna Nizaamudeen Awliyah - *may Allah be pleased with him* - replied, "The amount of sadness which I have in my heart, very few people have such sadness and grief. The reason is that the creation of Allah Almighty comes in front of me and reveal to me their sadness and grief. All of these things are a great burden on my soul. Certainly, that is a strange heart which remains unaffected in spite of hearing about the troubles of another Muslim." (Khay Al Majaalis)

Only that person can understand the troubles and problems of others who has the power to carry these troubles and sadness. When a person's stomach is full, how will he actually understand the hunger of another person? When a person is surrounded by pomp and luxury, what will he understand about the needs of those who are poor and destitute?

When we look at the blessed life of Hadrat Sayyiduna Nizaamudeen Awliyah - *may Allah be pleased with him* - we will see that his words were not mere words. His message to others were not mere verbal messages. His entire being was a complete reflection of what he was saying and acting upon.

One day, there were so many people that attended his court that there was no more place left under the shade. Some people began to sit under the open sun. When he saw this, the great Saint became visibly disturbed. He then said to the people, "Please sit as close as possible so that others can also sit under the shade because when they sit directly under the sun, I feel the heat." (Fawaa'idul Fawaad)

Hadrat Sayyiduna Nizaamudeen Awliyah - *may Allah be pleased with him* - used to mostly keep fast and on very rare occasions he used to eat anything in Sehri. A person named Khawaja Abdur Raheem was given the duty of making sure that the great Saint was given something during the Sehri. He one day mentioned to the great Saint. "Hadrat, you seem to eat very little during Sehri if you do not eat something during Sehri, certainly you will begin to feel very weak and your physical power will also disappear."

When the great Saint heard these words, he began to weep and then declared, "There are many poor and destitute people who are sitting in one corner of the Masjid and on the side of shops and who are extremely hungry. How can I therefore eat this food?" Whatever was brought was then taken away. (Sayr Al Awliyah)

There is no doubt that these Awliyah treated the act of feeding people as a very important act indeed. They made sure that everyone attending their court was first fed. Hadrat Sayyiduna Nizaamudeen Awliyah - *may Allah be pleased with him* - has stated that, "The greatness of a true Derwish is to feed".

On another occasion he has stated, "This is part of the culture of our family. Whenever someone came for a Taweez or to make Du'a at the blessed feet of Hadrat Sayyiduna Baba Fareed - *may Allah be pleased with him* - he used to force them to first eat. (In other words, his blessed kitchen always had food ready for visitors)."

This was also the behaviour of Hadrat Sayyiduna Nizaamudeen Awliyah - *may Allah be pleased with him*. In many of his gatherings, he used to mention the words of the Hadith Shareef which is, "Whoever visits a person who is alive and did not eat (or taste) anything there, then it is as if he has visited a dead person." (Fawaa'idul Fawaad)