

ISLAMISATION P.G. UNICORE Topic #3**“ISLAMISATION OF THE SELF”**

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the foundation of the process of Islamisation of Human Knowledge (IOHK), the topic of Islamisation of the Self (IOS) is highly important as it deals with the human agency, which is responsible for constructing, deconstructing, developing, producing or disseminating human knowledge. It is important to note that the human being is defined and understood differently in different cultures and civilisations and the human self is subject to a variety of influences – positive or negative – as well as the dominant paradigms within the culture which are bound to affect the process of knowledge production (Cf. Thomas Kuhn (2012) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*). Islam has its own conception and definition of the human being.

2. ISLAMIC ANTHROPOLOGY & TELEOLOGY**2.1. The Conception and Definition of Human Being**

The conception and definition of human being (*al-Insān*) from the perspective of Islam has to be based on what can be called as the anthropology of the Qur'an, i.e. the way the Qur'an describes the origin, the creation of human beings by the Allah SWT, and the true nature of human beings beginning with the creation of Adam (a.s.) and Eve (r.a.) and their original dwelling place in the blessed Garden. As for the purpose of human existence, Qur'anic teleology defines the *telos* of *al-Insān* in very clear terms which makes *al-Insān* essentially different from the Darwinian, naturalist, positivist, utilitarian, agnostic or atheistic conceptions of *Homo sapiens* to be found in secular anthropological or teleological narratives. From the axiology of the Qur'an we know that it is Divine Revelation, rather than human reason, which is the final authority to determine what is ethical and unethical, or absolutely right or absolutely wrong with regard to human conduct. While the eschatology of the Qur'an makes it incumbent upon Muslims to believe in the End of Times, death, the world of *al-Barzakh*, that is the period

between death and resurrection, punishment in the grave and the Day of Judgement, with the rewards of Paradise and the torments of Hellfire.

2.2. The Spirit (*Rūḥ*)

The Qur'an mentions that after Allah SWT formed the physical body of the human being, He breathed into it a Spirit (*Rūḥ*) of His creation, thus making the human being an essentially Spiritual-Moral being with a physical form complete with the five senses (Q. *al-Hijr* 15: 29). The Qur'anic anthropology emphasizes the spiritual-moral nature of *Insān* when it narrates the great spiritual event known as the Primordial Covenant thus:

And recall (O Prophet) when your Lord brought forth descendants from the loins of the sons of Adam, and made them witnesses against their own selves asking them: 'Am I not your Lord?' They said: 'Yes, we do testify.' We did so lest you claim on the Day of Resurrection: 'We were unaware of this.' (Q. *al-A'rāf* 8: 172)

To understand the meaning of the Primordial Covenant we need to read some of the commentary given by Abu'l A`la Mawdudi as follows:

This event, according to several traditions, took place at the time of the creation of Adam. Apart from the prostration of the angels before Adam and the proclamation that man would be God's vicegerent on earth, all the future progenies of Adam were gathered, and were endowed with both existence and consciousness in order to bear witness to God's lordship. The best interpretation of this event is found in a statement by 'Ubayy b. Ka'b, who has probably given the substance of what he had heard from the Prophet (peace be on him):

God gathered all human beings, divided them into different groups, granted them human form and the faculty of speech, made them enter into a covenant, and then making them witnesses against themselves He asked them: 'Am I not your Lord?' They replied: 'Assuredly you are Our Lord.' Then God told them: 'I call upon the sky and the earth and your own progenitor, Adam, to be witness against you lest you should say on the Day of Judgement that you were ignorant of this. Know well that no one other than Me deserves to be worshipped and no one other than Me is your Lord. So do not ascribe any partner to Me. I shall send to you My Messengers who will remind you of this covenant which you made with Me. I shall send down to you My Books.' In reply all said: 'We witness that You are Our Lord and our Deity. We have no lord or deity other than You.' (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 5, p. 135 - Ed.).

God caused all human beings whom He intended to create until the Last Day to come into existence. He endowed upon them life, consciousness and the faculty of speech, and brought home to them that there is no god or lord besides Him, and that Islam alone is the right way to serve Him. (*Towards Understanding the Qur'an* (2106, tr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari)

The Qur'an explains in another verse that man's natural disposition or constitution called *Fitrah* is none other than his innate spiritual nature referred to in the verse on Primordial

Covenant. It is a universal unchanging nature of the human constitution as indicated by the following verse:

(O Prophet and his followers), set you your face single-mindedly to the true Faith [al-Dīn] and adhere to the true nature [Fiṭrah] on which Allah has created human beings. There is no altering of the mould fashioned by Allah. That is the True, Right Religion, although most people do not know (Q. al-Rūm 30: 30).

In a famous hadith reported by Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

“Every child is born in this natural disposition (*al-Fiṭrah*); it is only his parents that later turn him into a ‘Jew’, a ‘Christian’ or a ‘Magian’.”

In a *hadith* which has been reported by Imam Ahmad it has been related that one day the Prophet (peace be upon him) said during an address:

“My Lord says: I had created all My servants on true faith; then the satans came and led them astray from their faith, and made unlawful what I had made lawful for them, and commanded them to associate with Me those for whom I have sent down no authority.”

The *Fiṭrah* as man’s instinctive and natural disposition towards the recognition of and submission to God is the innate spiritual nature that was addressed in the Primordial Covenant, and it is Allah’s intention that human beings remain steadfast on the true and original nature created by God. The positive interpretation of *Fiṭrah* as explained by Yasien Mohamad is that humans are born in a state of *Iman* and *Islam* and innately predisposed to know Allah SWT and to do right, but it also has the potential for evil, which is an external agent of misguidance. In spite of the innate natural goodness of the *Fiṭrah* and the Spirit (*Rūh*) or Soul of man, human beings need Prophethood (*Nubuwwah*) and Divine Revelation (*Wahy*) to complement the innate goodness in man and to guide him to the proper spiritual-moral development and perfection (Yasien Mohamed (1998). *Human Nature in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Hayathi, 71).

In Quranic anthropology Adam (a.s.) is both the physical and spiritual ancestor of humankind. It is due to his special nature -- being endowed with the divinely originated Spirit, the sinless God-inclined *Fiṭrah*, the knowledgeable *‘Aql* (intellect) and a limited free-will to do whatever he wishes in carrying out his prophetic and vicegerency roles – that angels were commanded by Allah SWT to bow to him. From the story of Adam (a.s.) as narrated in the Qur’an – a narration that is different from the one in the Old Testament – **we know the primary reasons for Allah’s creation of human beings, namely the *raison d’etre* of *‘Ubūdiyyah* (to know, to worship and to serve Allah SWT) and *Khilāfah* (vicegerency).** It is important that the concept of *Khilāfah* is not viewed as disconnected from the concept of *‘Ubūdiyyah* as they

are two sides of the same coin. Unfortunately, in many contemporary intellectual Muslim discourses, the function of human beings as the obedient and sincere Vicegerents of Allah SWT is normally detached and not organically connected to the permanent status of human beings as Allah's servants.

This is one reason for the contemporary loss or hollowness of meaning in the popular or politicised usage of the terminology of *Khilāfah*. In view of the severe crises of global development, environmental degeneration and moral decadence, the concept could serve as the strongest pillar of true sustainability of the planet Earth if only human beings were to understand and internalise the deep spiritual-moral meanings of *Khilāfah*. As it is, Muslim communities across the world only give lip-service to the Qur'anic concept. It should be emphasised that the vicegerent is one who exercises the authority delegated to him by his Master. Whatever authority he possesses is not inherently his own, but is derived from the Master. He is obliged, therefore, to carry out the will of his Master, not of his own. However, the modern man since the period of "Enlightenment", has forgotten that that he is not the real owner of earthly resources and began to act as if he was an independent all-powerful master of the earth. Guided by his God-defiant reason, he has led the development of the earth to the contemporary destruction and moral decadence that we see today.

The story of the creation of Adam (a.s.) and the origin of the human species are related seven times in the Qur'an, as different emphases of the Divine message are intended in each story. Taken together the story of Adam (a.s.) contains many lessons about Allah SWT as the Creator of mankind and Sustainer of all that exists, about human beings, angels and Satan, and about the nature of life on earth. **The story establishes, first of all that, Allah SWT is Creator, Master and Sustainer of mankind and that He is the source of knowledge and guidance without which human beings would go astray.** It is He Who taught Adam (a.s.) knowledge of all things that he needs to know in order to carry out his functions as Allah's vicegerent.

And He taught Adam all the names (of everything), then He showed them to the angels and said, 'Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful'. They (angels) said: 'Glory be to You, we have no knowledge except what you have taught us. Verily, it is You, the All-Knower, the All-Wise'. He said: 'O Adam! Inform them of their names,' and when he had informed them of their names, He said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the Ghaib (unseen) in the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing?' (Q. al-Baqarah 2:31-33).

The rejection of Divine revelation (*wahy*) as the highest and absolute source of knowledge by modern man and civilisation as **the primary cause** of major crises in contemporary civilisation illustrates the importance of this Qur'anic lesson. **Not only did Allah SWT provide the knowledge to human beings; He complements it with His guidance (*hudā*):**

We said: "Get you down from here, all of you, and guidance shall come to you from Me: then, whoever will follow My guidance need have no fear, nor shall they grieve." (Q: *al-Baqarah* 2: 38)

The assurance of sending His guidance to mankind is an indication of His Compassionate and Merciful attributes for it is only by following His Guidance and His Plan, human beings would be able to return to Him in His Paradise, with a sound heart (*qalb salīm*) on the Day of Judgment as Allah SWT had intended for them.

The story of Adam (a.s.) shows, secondly, that human beings -- despite being equipped with *Fiṭrah*, Divine knowledge and guidance -- are **susceptible to deception, delusion or temptation originating from external evil forces**. It was the deception and guile of Satan that led Adam (a.s.) and his wife to go against the order of Allah SWT not to approach the prohibited tree. However, true and sincere repentance (*taubah naṣūḥā*) on the part of human beings brings forth the attribute of forgiveness and forbearance from Allah SWT. Adam's sin was forgiven by Allah SWT and other human beings who are all born in *Fiṭrah* do not inherit the so-called "original sin" as part of the fundamental Christian dogma.

From the story of Adam (a.s.) human beings are being told that mankind's worst enemy is Satan who has vowed to do everything possible to undermine the faith of believers in Allah SWT and distance human beings from the path to Allah SWT. Satan does not want anything good for man particularly Allah's mercy and forgiveness, as he rid himself of them, so he promised to misguide humans too. This is something Muslims must remember going through their daily lives so as to not fall victim to the evil ploys of Satan. His fatal mistake was **intellectual arrogance (*takabbur*)** which prevented him from bowing down to Adam (a.s.) when ordered to do so by Allah SWT. Thus **intellectual arrogance has become one of the main reasons for the modern man's rebellion against God and Divine revelation**.

With regard to human existence on earth, the story of Adam (a.s.) tells human beings that **human existence on earth is temporal, not eternal**. The Qur'an says:

But Satan caused both of them to deflect from obeying Our command by tempting them to the tree and brought them out of the state they were in, and We said: "Get down all of you; henceforth, each of you is an enemy of the other, and on earth you shall have your abode and your livelihood for an appointed time." (Q. al-Baqarah 2: 36)

Life on earth is, therefore, intended by Allah SWT to be a brief period of Divine trials (*ibtilā'*, *balā'*) as a preparation for the eternal life in the Hereafter. The believers then are required to plan for the attaining the state of true success (*al-falāḥ*) in the Hereafter (*al-Ākhirah*), otherwise Satan as their permanent enemy and their base desires (*ahwā'*) would lead them to true failure and suffering (*al-khusrān*) in this world and in the Next World. This consciousness of life in the Hereafter with *al-falāḥ* or *al-khusrān* is completely absent in modern contemporary civilisation which is based on secular humanism, agnosticism or atheism

3. THE CONCEPT OF THE SELF

As the descendants of Adam (a.s.) human beings require the infallible knowledge, wisdom and guidance of *Wahy* and *Nubuwwah* in order to carry out the purpose of (*Ubūdiyyah*) and fulfil the function of being Allah's *Khalīfah* on earth. This sacred function is to be fulfilled by all human beings be they Muslims or non-Muslims. As a spiritual-moral being man is equipped for carrying out the above duties by his Creator with a physical body that possesses several spiritual constituents two of remain permanently pure and incorruptible, namely the *Rūḥ* and *Fiṭrah*, but the three other constituents, namely the *Nafs* (Soul, Self) *Qalb* (Spiritual Heart) and *ʿAql* (Intellect and Reason) are mutable and subject to change for the better or for worse. A full Islamic understanding of the complex nature of the human spiritual constituents and their inter-relationships can be read from al-Ghazali's *Book of Knowledge* and *Wonders of the Heart*, but an excellent Islamic model of the human soul has been developed recently by Dr. Abdullah Rothman, an expert in Islamic psychology. (Abdullah Rothman, "An Islamic model of the soul", <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm&ogbl#inbox?projector=1>. Accessed June 1, 2020).

It is important to know that the fluctuating human soul (*Nafs*) is described by the Qur'an as having the capability to be in basically one of three stages or states: 1) *al-Nafs al-Ammārah bi's-Sū'* [the soul that incites and commands the human personality to that which is bad/evil/reprehensible, to be rebellious]; 2) *al-Nafs al-Lawwāmah* [the blaming soul that reminds, cautions or warns the human personality to refrain or repent from bad/evil deeds]; 3) *al-Nafs al-Muṭma'innah* [the soul at peace, having achieved inner tranquillity, success in

subduing or controlling the lower self and desires or Satanic impulses, and focussing towards the good pleasure of Allah S.W.T.]. Man's inner self or personality has to struggle against what Imam al-Ghazali calls *al-Muhlikāt* or spiritually destructive elements, qualities, thought, ideas, emotions, behaviour, character traits;] in order to acquire, internalise and practice several spiritual-ethical virtues called *al-Munjiyāt* or values and virtues which will save the human personality from spiritual corruption, degradation and ultimate destruction. The *Qalb*, which is the spiritual centre of the human being and where the intellectual faculty, the *`Aql*, is located, has the potential to turn in either of two directions of *al-Munjiyat* or *al-Muhlikat* if it is influenced by the lower impulses of the *nafs* and become further misaligned with *fitrah* due to the influences of the *Dunya* and *Shaytan*. It can also acquire the positive characteristics of the *Munjiyat* with the remembrance of Allah and the *Akhirah*, resulting in alignment with the soul's state of *Fitrah*. (Abdullah Rothman., Coyle(2018).<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0651-1>. Accessed June 10, 2020.)

The *Qalb* as the Allah-gifted spiritual entity (al-Imām al-Ghazālī calls it “*laṭīfah rabbāniyyah rūḥāniyyah*”- a subtle spiritual entity of Divine origin) is of immense worldly and other-worldly value which we Muslims and fellow human beings need always to preserve, protect and purify from all kinds of corrupting elements, and remove all the “stains”, “veils” or “rusts” from our sins, our bad deeds and bad influence of the lower self (*al-Hawā*) and the *al-nafs al-ammārah bi's-sū'* that incites to disobedience against religious norms and rules, immoral acts and evil deeds.

It is to be noted that the *Qalb* -- despite being prone either to spiritual diseases or to the highest states of spiritual purity and perfection -- is the only spiritual organ Allah SWT created in man which has several functions and faculties, including the spiritual, the emotional/affective, the intuitive, the meditative, the imaginative, the rational/intellectual or the cognitive. We should note that the cognitive/intellection/reasoning faculty is an integral part of the *Qalb*, not an independent or separate entity from the *Qalb*. Knowing this unique nature of the *Qalb* would help Muslim educators, leaders and parents to give proper attention to the holistic growth, development and elevation of the *Qalb*. Other things about the *Qalb* that should be known are the following:

(i). That Allah SWT does not use the word *`Aql* as a noun.

Allah SWT does not use the word *`Aql* (intellect, intelligence, reason) as a noun in the Qur'an, although it exists in the Arabic language. Rather The All-Knowing, The All-Wise Creator-

Sustainer uses the verbs “*ya`qilūn*” (they understand, comprehend or they reason), “*na`qilu*” (we understand, we use our reason) and “*yafqahūn*” (they understand, comprehend) as actions and functions of the *qalb*. The following verse needs to be studied:

- A) *Have they not travelled through the earth, and have hearts [qulūb] by which they could reason/gain wisdom or understanding [ya`qilūn], and ears by which they could hear? For indeed, it is not their eyes that have become blind but it is the hearts [qulūb] that are in their breasts that have become blind!* (Q. *al-Ḥajj* 22: 46)

The explanation given by Abdullah Yusuf Ali on the Qur’anic meaning of *qalb* is most enlightening:

The word for "heart" [*qalb*] in Arabic speech imports both the seat of intelligent faculties and understanding as well as the seat of affections and emotions. Those who reject Allah's Message may have their physical eyes and ears, but their hearts are blind and deaf. If their faculties of understanding were active, would they not see the Signs of Allah's Providence and Allah's Wrath in nature around them and in the cities and ruins if they travel intelligently? (Abdullah Yusuf Ali 1999: 964)

- B) *And certainly many are the invisible beings and humans We have made for hell who have hearts [qulūb] with which they understand not [lā yafqahūna bihā] (or fail to grasp the truth), and eyes with which they fail to see [la yubṣirūna bihā], and ears with which they fail to hear [la yasma`ūna bihā]. They are like cattle - no, they are [even] more misguided: it is they, they who are the [truly] heedless [of warnings]!* (Q. *al-A`raf* 7: 179).

On the above verse, Abdullah Yusuf Ali says that “Though they have apparently all the faculties of reason and perception, they have so deadened them that those faculties do not work, and they go headlong into Hell. They are, as it were, made for Hell.” (Abdullah Yusuf Ali 1999: 459)

As a consequence of human beings’ intellectual arrogance, stubbornness and persistent rejection of the Truths that Divine Scriptures have revealed, their hearts became impervious to Divine Guidance and deserved to be “sealed” as Allah S.W.T. says: “their hearts were stamped so they do not understand/comprehend” (Q. *al-Taubah* 9: 87; Q. *al-Munāfiqūn* 63: 3) and “Allah stamped their hearts so they do not know (have knowledge)” (Q. *Taubah* 9: 93).

- (ii). **That all the cognitive, the affective, the intuitive and the imaginative are done by faculties of the same *Qalb***

All the cognitive, intellective and reasoning functions as well as the affective, the intuitive and the imaginative are done by faculties of the same *Qalb*, not by a separate entity called *`Aql*. That being the case, our discourses or programmes of self, organisational or leadership transformation which presumes a proper understanding of the Islamic conception of the *Qalb*

within the human personality – a conception that is different from the Western, atheistic, agnostic, and secular humanistic conceptions – ought to take note of this fact so that we shall not continue to follow, uncritically, the secular Western perception of the dualism and dichotomy of heart/soul and mind/intellect, of an inherent conflict between reason and revelation, or between the heart and the mind. In the Islamic holistic and integrated understanding of the *Qalb*, the process of cleaning, purifying, polishing, protecting and nurturing it is so important and urgent because in doing so we are also strengthening, refining and sharpening the spiritual and *īmānī* qualities of the *ʿAql* in the *Qalb*.

(iii). That nature of the intellect and reason is *īmān*-rooted.

The rational and cognitive intelligence constitutes an organic and integral part of the *Qalb* is crucial for educated people to readily accept the Islamic notion of *īmān*-rooted nature of the intellect and reason known as *ʿAql* in Arabic. This embeddedness of natural spiritual inclination to the Divine Creator-Sustainer, in the uncorrupted pristine nature of human reason having innate faith in Him is like the *Fiṭrah* and the *Rūḥ*. It was designed and created by none other than the All-Knowing, All-Wise Creator HIMSELF. That is why in Islam and throughout the Islamic knowledge-triumphant civilisation there is no conflict between Intellect and Revelation, and intellect is always given the role of verifying or validating the truths and supremacy of divinely revealed knowledge. It is also the reason why Divine Revelation only takes care of providing fundamental knowledge and truths of *Tauḥīd*; of the realities of *ʿĀlam al-Ghaib* (the realm of Transcendence, and other forms of realities beyond the ken of human reason); the certainty of future realities of *Dār al-Ākhirah* and how to prepare for it in this temporal world; divine perennial wisdom; general guidelines for the life of true believers as contrasted with the ways of falsehood, *kufr*, and Satanic deceptions; fundamental principles of human, societal and civilisational development; immutable Laws; moral spiritual lessons with Prophetic precedents towards achieving spiritual-ethical excellence of *Taqwā* (God-fearing consciousness, *Iḥsān* (spiritual-moral excellence and beauty) and *ḤubbuʿLlāh* (love of Allah SWT) – all of which are beyond the ken of human reason.

As for the details on how best to develop – in the context of dynamic and constantly changing socio-cultural and socio-politico-economic environments -- the nitty gritty of material, technological, institutional developments, etc., they are left to (the pristine divinely-inclined) intellect, logical thinking, collective or individual *ijtihād*: independent reasoning based on the Qurʿan and the Sunnah to solve problems or provide good answers or good

solutions to new issues, new problems or emerging/anticipated problems not addressed by Divine Revelation or Prophetic wisdom.

3.1. The *Ulu'l-Albāb*

Human beings who possess the pure and unadulterated intellect which provides the right solutions to the problems and needs of mankind, and which is in perfect harmony with Divine Revelation and Wisdom – unlike the secularised or absolutized reason of modern civilisation – are described positively in the anthropology of the Qur'an as *Ulu'l-Albāb* (literally “people who possess sound intellects” (*ashāb al-`uqūl al-salīmah*, the expression used by several classical Qur'an exegetes. The sound *īmān*-based reasoning faculty of this type of intellects leads the *Ulu'l-Albāb* to explore the Signs of Allah S.W.T in the heavens and the Earth and in the human selves in order to harness the Allah-given resources for the purpose of developing and flourishing (*istikhlāf, `imārah*) sound and virtuous human civilisational progress on Allah's planet Earth. Thus, their scientific and technological explorations, investigations, research and usufruct of the Allah-given (not Nature-given) bounties are forever imbued with the spirit of *tawāḍu`* (humility) and *shukr* (gratitude) to the Benevolent Sustainer. Their scientific and technological activities are a form of *dhikru'LLāh* (remembrance of the Benevolent Sustainer). They have in their hearts the fear (*al-khauf* and *al-khashyah*) that any wrong doings or transgressions on their part would lead them to the ignominy (*khizy*), eternal suffering and punishment (*adhāb*) in Hell. (Q. *Āl-`Imrān* 3: 190-194, and 15 other verses containing the words *Ulu'l-albāb*).

4. DISEASES OF THE SPIRITUAL HEART

It is important to note that Allah SWT mentions in several verses of the Qur'an that human hearts are susceptible to “*amrāḍ*” (spiritual diseases), or moral ailments (see Q. *al-Baqarah* 2: 10; *al-Ma'idah* 5: 52; *al-Anfal* 8: 49; *al-Muddaththir* 74: 31) and similar verses which have been analysed in many Sufi works. The heart as a dynamic spiritual core of human personality can therefore be “healthy” (Q. *al-Shu'arā'* 26: 88-89); be “tested” (Q. *al-Hujurat* 49: 3); be “blind” (Q. *al-Hajj* 22: 46); be “hard”, (*al-Hajj* 22: 53); be “locked” or “full of rust” (Q. *al-Mutaffifin* 83: 14; *al-Baqarah* 2: 7); “follow the whispers” of Satan (Q. *al-An'am* 6: 113) or be “without understanding” (*al-Anfal* 8: 24). The worst state of the heart is when it is “dead”. Among the diseases of the heart, the worst are *Kufr* (disbelief), *Shirk* (polytheism), *Nifāq* (hypocrisy) as they are diseases affecting the purity of faith or *`aqidah* in Islam.

Below them come the many diseases which our great classical theologians and ethicists include pride, arrogance, ostentation, envy, jealousy, rancour, self-admiration, love of the temporal world, love of wealth, craving for reputation, delusions, etc. Al-Ghazali describes these diseases as among the *Muhlikāt* (spiritually and morally destructive elements) which must be overcome by acquiring the *Munjiyāt* spiritual and moral virtues. The aim of the true believer is to return to Allah SWT with a *Qalb Salīm* (sound heart) (Q. *al-Shu`arā`* 26: 89). In order to assist the believers to attain the coveted *Qalb Salīm* condition, Allah SWT has made it obligatory for human beings to purify the heart as stated in Q. *al-Shams* 91: 9-10:

Truly successful is he/she who purifies it; And truly a failure is he/she who corrupts it.

So, if the human being fails to guard his/her soul from the corrupting influences of this-worldly gains and sensual pleasures, and neglects the guidance of the Qur'an and the examples of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and his illustrious Companions, its possessor would become corrupt, prone to selfish desires and become enslaved to material comforts and sinful objectives of worldly life.

One of the potent remedies provided by the Qur'an for the ailments of the spiritual heart is *Dhikru`Llāh* (remembrance of Allah SWT) as stated in the following verse:

...For without doubt in the remembrance (i.e. in the invocation and recitation of the name) of Allah do hearts find comfort. (Q. *al-Ra`d* 13: 28)

Then the Qur'an explains that on the Day of Resurrection, the human being who is going to gain most on that Day is the servant who returns to His Master with a heart disposed and at peace with Him, purified and sound, i.e. freed from all the corrupting elements, serious diseases and maladies that tend to afflict human beings with weak faith in Allah (S.W.T.) and in the verities of the Hereafter. (Q. *al-Fajr* 89: 27-30). The true believer learns from the Qur'an that he or she has to emulate the one "who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord and forbids the soul (*nafs*) from low desires (*hawā`*)" (Q. *al-Nāzi`āt* 79:40-41). The believers have been forewarned by Allah SWT that the most serious inward disease that can afflict them in this worldly life is not the physical blindness of the eyes but spiritual "blindness of the hearts" as affirmed by the Qur'an:

So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts (Q. *al-Ḥajj* 22: 46).

The Prophet (s.a.w.) foretells that two major diseases of the Muslim heart will be the reason why the Muslim nation or community will easily become a victim of alien domination, control or oppression in later times. The Prophet prophesies:

Nations (or foreign peoples) are about to call each other and set upon you, just as diners set upon food." It was said: "Will it be because of our small number that day?" He said: "Rather, on that day you will be many, but you will be like foam, like the foam on the river. And Allah will remove the fear of you from the hearts of your enemies and will throw wahn (weakness) into your hearts." Someone said: "O Messenger of Allah! What is wahn?" He said: "Love of the world and the hatred for death." (Hadith related by Abu Daud and Ahmad)

5. TAZKIYAT AL-NAFS

Tazkiyah originally means “growth” (*al-namā*’), “blessing” (*al-barakah*) and “increase of goodness” (*ziyādah al-khair*). It may be defined as follows: “A necessary and fundamental process of cleansing-purifying and nurturing -- all at the same time -- to attain the desirable objectives in human society and human lives.” Islam requires that the human society be cleansed and purified of *Jāhiliyyah* and un-Islamic elements in order to be Islamised, so that the original *fiṭrah* (the original spiritual nature) of human beings and the Islamic qualities would grow and develop to become virtuous individuals, virtuous societies and virtuous civilisations.

The word *nafs* refers to the self and soul of a human being which is the incorporeal essence of a living being. It is also used to refer to the nature of a person or personality. The *nafs* is a dynamic entity created by Allah SWT which is capable of being corrupt or being elevated and purified. The word *nafs* used in the phrase *tazkiyat al-nafs* usually refers verse 7 in *Surah al-Shams* (91) of the Qur’an:

“...*wa nafs wa mā sawwāhā, fa alhamahā fujūrahā wa taqwāhā, qad aflaha man zakkāhā, wa qad khāba man dassāhā,*” (*Consider the human self, and how it is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be; And how it is imbued with its moral failings as well as with its profound consciousness of Allah; Truly successful is he purifies it; And truly lost is he who corrupts it.* (Q. *al-Shams* 91: 7-10))

Muhammad Asad explains the term *nafs* in the above verse as follows:

The term *nafs* which has a very wide range of meanings...denotes here the human self or personality as a whole: that is, a being composed of a physical body and that inexplicable life-essence loosely described as “soul”. (Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an*, 2011: 1141)

In Islamic religious literature the term *tazkiyat al-nafs* is associated with *taṭhīr al-qalb* (purification of the spiritual heart), and *tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (refinement of character). The supreme necessity and importance of *tazkiyah* is indicated by it being as part of the four primary

responsibilities of Allah's Messengers, namely to convey and recite (*tilāwah*) the verses of Divine revelation to human beings, to purify (*tazkiyah*) human beings of all unislamic elements, to teach (*ta'līm*) human beings the Book of Allah SWT and to teach (*ta'līm*) human beings Divine Wisdom (*al-Hikmah*) (Q *al-Baqarah* 2: 151, 129, *Al 'Imrān* 3: 164, *al-Jumu'ah* 62: 2).

Therefore, *tazkiyah* as a general principal of human and societal purification or reform (*iṣlāh*) is one the most important objectives of the Qur'an and of Islam, but the spiritual purification of the self-soul-heart is the most fundamental religious obligation of the individual (*fard `ain*) of the individual, to get rid of what Allah SWT calls the diseases of the spiritual heart (*qalb*), such as *kufir*, *shirk*, *takabbur*, *riyā'*, *ṭam'*, *ḥasd*, *ḥiqd*, *`ujb*, *ḥubb al-māl*, *ḥubb al-jāh*, *ghurūr*, etc.

It is part of the process of *tazkiyat al-nafs* of the conscientious believer to be spiritually and morally vigilant by internalizing the spiritual virtues of *Muḥāsabah* and *Murāqabah*. *Muḥāsabah* or self-introspection implies that one is constantly having the inner consciousness of being ultimately evaluated and assessed by Allah SWT on the Day of Judgement. With this attitude he/she will be extra careful lest anything he/she does would lead to punishment after being evaluated and assessed by Lord of the Day of Judgement.

Being freed of the disease of love of the world and fear of death, the believer will be spiritually and morally vigilant lest he/she would fall into the traps of Satan, sin or injustice. *Murāqabah* strengthens the virtue of *Muḥāsabah* because it instils the inner consciousness that one is always in the sight of Allah SWT, that one is never away from His surveillance. *Murāqabah* with regard to obedience of Allah SWT implies fulfilling all the commandments of Allah SWT with sincerity and devotion only to Allah SWT. *Murāqabah* with regard to acts of disobedience means aversion to anything that can lead to sinful acts, accompanied by acts of repentance for past misdeeds. *Murāqabah* with regard to permissible acts implies the observance of all the *adāb* or etiquette in maintaining proper relationship with Allah SWT, while *Murāqabah* with regard to any mishaps or calamities requires the adoption of the attitude of accepting what Allah SWT has destined and seeking His assistance with the spirit of patience and perseverance.

Since the spiritual heart also occupies a central position in the worldview of many world religions or religious philosophies, and the worldview of the Qur'an underscores the necessity of every believer to carry out the personal responsibility of (a) cleaning or purifying the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and (b) the key role to be played by the hearts of the believers (*qulūb al-*

mu'minīn) in the construction of virtuous societies and civilisations driven by the Prophetic mission of *Raḥmatan li'l-`Ālamīn*, it is important that Muslims have a good understanding of the “hearts of the Believers” (“*qulūb al-mu'minīn*” as mentioned in the Qur'an) as opposed to the hearts of the hard-core materialists, the self-deluded hypocrites, the arrogant disbelievers, the defiant atheists, or the unrepentant sinners. The hearts of the believers are hearts which get illuminated by the light (*nūr*) of Divine guidance, wisdom and intuition. Informed and nurtured by the knowledge and wisdom of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, these hearts inspire, motivate, strengthen and spur the believers to greater heights of spiritual-ethical development and progress, against the tide and forces of disbelief, polytheism, corruption, anarchy, depravity, immorality, falsehood, nihilism, atheism, individualism, racism and secularism in the world today.

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