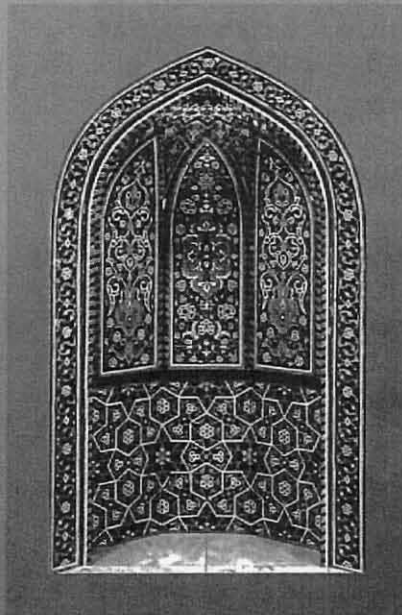


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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the theological and psychological aspects of submission in Islam that distinguish it from concept of submission of different beliefs system. Submission is the cornerstone of any religious belief. To religiously submit is to surrender oneself to one's object of worship. Submission can be the result of fear of real or imagined authority and power or it may be the result of deep gratitude and love. Submission may be an internal subjective state of deep feelings and emotions or it may take the form of visible rites, rituals and offerings. Finally, submission may take different forms or grades. One may totally surrender oneself to the extent of complete abolition of mind and or he may simply treat his object with a mild feeling of holiness and respect. Between these two extremes, there can exist a gradient or hierarchy of submissions and thus we can speak of different forms of submission: some of them extreme or irrational, and others that are acceptable and rationally defensible.

THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF SUBMISSION: TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF TAWHID, UNITY AND DIVERSITY

*Fatimah Abdullah**

Introduction

The spiritual reality which reveals man's nature is held here as the psychology of submission. If man is conceived as being composed of body alone, for example, submission as understood here cannot be fully functional in one's life. Such a materialistic outlook does not conform to the Qur'anic projection of man. If, on the other hand, simply for the sake of a literal spiritualism man's reality is reduced to a simple spirituality, or as the Cartesians held it, to a mere thinking substance, then again the experiential connotation of submission is held in oblivion. Man is at once body and soul; it is this reality that must now be constructed as the nature of man upon which true submission can be based. The elucidation of this shall constitute what is termed here as 'the psychology of submission'.

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The Nature of Submission

Submission, as an attitude, an emotion, or a cognitive experience can be compared with fear or anxiety. Submission to God is an innate human 'instinct' or *fiṭrah*. It is a Divine gift to save man's soul.¹ Thus man is created in such a way that he would submit to God if he follows his *fiṭrah*, otherwise he would find himself submitting to some other 'gods', which may even be his country, his tribe, money or some other worldly 'deity'.

Likewise, fear is created in man to save his life from real dangers such as wild animals, fire and similar lethal things. However, man may respond with great anxiety and fear to things that are not really dangerous such as cockroaches, high places or darkness, thus misappropriating the Divine purpose for which fear was created. This is known as a phobia. It is a sickness of the psyche, if one uses the term 'psyche' in its modern semantic sense. In the same way, one can perceive submission to the Almighty God as the only true and acceptable form of submission.

However, corrupting the *fiṭrah* by surrendering one's self to any other deity is a spiritual disease of the heart.² This is the severest form of injustice to his self as a spiritual living being honoured by God. He would be like a matured adult who panics when he sees a tiny kitten! The best among people are those who do not suffer from any disease of the heart or the psyche. They respond with fear in the most honourable way in which the fear of God becomes their spiritual passage to submission.

As al-Attas states, man is given a unique position in the order of creation; at the same time he is charged with a unique responsibility which can be fulfilled through taqwa.

Hence, man is called to constantly submit to God by carrying out acts of worship (*ibadah*). This is a process of returning oneself to

¹ al-Rum, 30: 30.

² al-Shu'arā', 26: 89; al-Şaffāt 37:84.

its primordial state by virtue of an existential debt owed by creation to the Creator.³ All this means submission as an experiential reality, rather than an empty concept which can be arbitrarily interpreted in one way or another.

Moreover, a person who submits grudgingly will generally hates and will have no respect for the object of his submission. On the other hand, a person who has a great love for the subject of his submission will neither grudgingly submit nor fear his beloved subject. It must thus be a delicately balanced understanding of submission that is meant by Islam. One is expected to experience a genuine love for God, yet one should not fear Him and His Might to the extreme to the extent that one is not able to relate to God. This combination of love and fear is what is known as *khushū'*. This particular experience is considered as expressing one of the highest levels of submission. When a true believer experiences *khushū'*, his love and respect for God is so much intertwined with his fear and appreciation of His greatness that he may tearfully lose control of himself. A person observing him may be quite confused whether; he is expressing fear, depression, anxiety or some other forms of emotional reaction.⁴ He cannot imagine that such a Muslim is in fact, enjoying the happiest occasion of his life in achieving this communion with God.⁵

Though *khushū'* as a concept is quite common and well-known among Muslims, since it is mentioned in the Qur'an and frequently

³ Syed Muhammad Naqib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), 1978, Chapters 1 and 2; hereinafter mentioned as *Islam and Secularism*, p. 68.

⁴ Anger, anxiety, depression and fear are emotional disorder that human beings possesses. However, as for anger and fear, since the characters of human beings differ, the degree of excessiveness also differs from one person to another. See Abū Zayd al-Balkhī, *Maṣāliḥ al-Abdan wa al-Anfus*. ed. Fuat Sezgin, Federal Republic of Western Germany : Ernst Printers, Stuttgart, 1984), 80; hereinafter cited as *Maṣāliḥ* see also Muhammad Abul Qāsim, *The Ethics of al-Ghazali*, New York: Caravan Books, 1978, pp. 118-119 and 163.

⁵ Al-Balkhī, *Maṣāliḥ*, p. 81.

referred to in the prophetic traditions,⁶ it is not found in many other cultures. There is no word for it in the English language. Many Arabic-English dictionaries, such as Hans Wehr, translates *khushū'* as submission,⁷ but as pointed out here, submission is only one aspect of *khushū'*; furthermore, a person cannot experience *khushū'* without fully submitting, but he can experience submission out of fear without reaching the level of *khushū'*.

This unique aspect of Islamic submission, therefore, is a direct result of the Islamic conception of God as depicted in the Qur'an. Unless the Muslim fully believes that God is All-Merciful, All-Forgiving and Loving, he will not experience appreciation and love, and will not be pleased with God. Also if he is not aware of the Omnipotence and Might of God and His sustenance of the whole universe, he will not experience fear and appreciation.⁸

Theology of Submission

Islamically speaking, the rightness and validity of any form of submission depends mainly on the truthfulness or untruthfulness of the faith held by the submitting person or group. And since there can only be one faith representing the Truth, submission to any other god, authority or power besides Allah is false and untruthful, namely unwilling kind of submission which can lead its adherents to indignity, confusion and unhappiness in this world and the Hereafter.⁹ This is so because false submission is sure to end up in distorted metaphysical beliefs, and these beliefs will certainly lead to a disfigured worldview.

⁶ Loc. cit.

⁷ Hans Wehr *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan, London: Macdonald & Evans Ltd., 1974, p. 239; see also J. G. Hava, S. J., *Al-Farāid al-Duriyyah*, Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, p. 168.

⁸ Al-Qushayrī, *Risālat*, p. 399.

⁹ Āli-'Imrān, 3: 85.

Any unbiased research into the way of life of any group which submits to falsity or which refuses to properly submit to the Almighty God will clearly show this negative aspect of wrongful submission. The Holy Qur'an attests to this in clear verses:

“Who gives you sustenance, from the heavens and earth?”

Say: “It is Allah; and certain it is that either we or you are on right guidance or in manifest error!” [Saba', 34: 24]

“How can those who do evil deeds think that we shall make them as equal with those who believe and do righteous deeds, whether in this life or in the hereafter? Evil is their judgment.” [al-Jathiyah, 45: 21]

Islam is not only uncompromising in demanding proper or true submission to God, but it also prescribes the manner in which the faithful should submit. In fact, submission in Islam is clearly and precisely documented in the Qur'an and practically demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad in a way that leaves no Muslim in any doubt about how to express his submission to God.

Accordingly, Islamic submission has become a very sensitive balance to the righteousness of belief and practices of Muslims throughout the ages of Islam. This is so since it is possible for a person to have belief in God, but have the wrong kind of submission to Him. This kind of unwilling or wrong submission is obviously rejected by God.¹⁰ It is not merely a disbelief but a misbelief. Furthermore, belief in the Unity of God without accepting the Apostleship of the Prophet Muhammad as the last messenger of God is also unacceptable as true Islamic submission. Thus the only religion recognized by God is the one in which total submission to Him alone is understood and practiced according to what He revealed to His last Messenger.¹¹

¹⁰ Āli-'Imrān, 3: 85.

¹¹ Āli-'Imrān, 3:19.

However this true submission can only be built on the cornerstone of knowledge about the nature of God and that of man. This veritable submission is grounded on Islamic metaphysics with Revelation as its ontological ground. The central pillar on which this ontology rests is a strong faith in the unity of God or *tawhid*. This then is the acid test or *furqān* by which the truthfulness and falsity of a religion is determined. *Tawhid* thus clearly differentiates between submission in Islam and other religions whose systems of belief developed from misguided cultural traditions and pagan convictions and not from the *millah* of Prophet Ibrahim as some religions claim.¹²

Submission in Islam is different from submission in other religions. Islamic submission is not simply a concept but more than that, it involves feeling, belief and action.¹³ This should clearly bring the fact that without faith (*Imān*) no man can be a true Muslim. It is indispensably essential- in fact, the very starting point- without which no beginning can be made. The relation of Islam to *Imān* is the same as of a tree to its seed. As a tree cannot sprout forth without its seed, in the same way it is not possible for a man, who has no belief to start with, to become a Muslim. It can be seen that submission experientially includes an integration of cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects. When the term submission is perceived from this point of view, than the meanings as *tadhallul*, that is self abasement and humility with respect to God comes to mind.

The meaning here expresses consciousness, and submissive feeling or affection which reflects its experiential character, so that when submission is viewed from this experiential perspective, acts like *tā'ah*, *khudū'*, and *idh'ān* denoting surrender, compliance, acceptance and obedience, would come to mind.¹⁴ If a person fully

¹² Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, p. 115.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 116.

¹⁴ Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Mukarram Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, Beirut: Dār al Iḥyā' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988, 4: 343.

submits, then his behaviour will show full obedience as well as self-denial and reverence to the right and proper authority he is obeying.

However, an individual may be obedient without necessarily being emotionally submissive, for example, when one is driving his car he would be fully obedient to a traffic police officer, but indeed he will not affectively and emotionally submit to him. So *istislam* combines these three experientially integrated aspects: cognitive, affective or emotional and behavioral.¹⁵

From these important components of submission of a person to submit to God, he must at the same time trust (*taṣḍīq*) God. Inherent in the concept of judgment (*taṣḍīq*) is the sense of recognition which is cognitive, affective, and acknowledgement, which is practical. Thus, these two concepts serve as the fundamental core of the concept of submission as experiential components of the one and same reality. When one submits because one feels indebted, one submits with gratitude and love. And if one is indebted to God with one's very existence then his submission should be of the highest level of gratefulness and appreciation.¹⁶ The deep consciousness of one's debt of existence and feeling of gratefulness does not end on the tongue only but goes deeper into the heart, and is then manifested in his actions.

This consciousness has to be internalized into his self, such that he lives it continuously throughout his life; and at every moment of his life it automatically becomes the single motive for his actions. Further, it demands one's striving hard towards self-improvement which is no less than the actualization of his latent power and capacity to become a perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*).¹⁷

¹⁵ F. Abdullah, "An Analysis of the Concept of Islam Based on Al-Attas Approach," unpublished Ph. D. thesis, ISTAC, 1998, p. 8.

¹⁶ Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 1978, p. 120.

¹⁷ Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Ma'ārij al-Quds fī Madārij Ma'arifat Al-Nafs*, Beirut: Dār al-Afaq al-Jadīdah, 1978, p. 14. hereinafter cited as *al-Ma'ārij*.

The highest ethical achievement in Islam is man's readiness to offer all of himself, by sacrificing his own freedom, to become His Hand on earth; and the result is that "God becomes his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he grips, and his leg with which he walks..." (*Miṣqat al-Masābih*) This is the highest pleasure true slaves of God always long for.¹⁸

a. *Submission as Fiṭrah*

When one talks about religious experience one may get the impression that it is the result of environmental and learned experiences. Though learning and experience play a major role in the development of submissive behaviour, spiritually it has deep roots in the very nature of being human. That is because according to the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet, God has already made a covenant with man in the primordial world of soul. "Am I not your Lord?" God asked the congregated souls of all human beings and they all chorused: "yes indeed, You are our Lord".¹⁹ God then warned them not to be influenced by evil environments which may cause them to forget this oath and succumb to ingratitude and disbelief.²⁰

Moreover, the divine Revelation states that the wisdom and the rationale for the individual as well as collective testimony of the human souls is to leave them in no doubt about the Covenant they have taken upon themselves and to defeat them on any arguments that may raise in the day of judgment. God has not only ingrained this Covenant in the hearts of man in the form of *fiṭrah*, but, He has also sent His Messengers to admonish people and show them the right path of submission.

Thus, the Qur'an states that after the individual and collective testimony of human souls God warns them not to say, in the day of

¹⁸ Ibid, p.15.

¹⁹ al-A'raf, 7: 172.

²⁰ al-Furqān, 25: 43; al-A'rāf, 7: 176; al-Kahf, 18: 28; al-Qaṣa, 28: 50.

judgment, that they were unconscious about their oath or that they were influenced into disbelief by their parents and their community.²¹

The Qur'an indicates that:

“(Of this We remind you) lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, “Truly, we are unaware of this”, or lest you say, “Truly it was our forefathers in times gone by who began to ascribe divinity to other beings besides God, and we were only their offspring. Will You then destroy us for the doing of those inventors of falsehoods?”²²

Islam is also called *dīn al-ḥiṭrah* because its law and its teachings accord with the normal and natural inclination of human *ḥiṭrah* to acknowledge and thus, to submit to the Creator. From this point of view the term *islam* and *ḥiṭrah* are synonymous.²³ *Ḥiṭrah* is in fact, a pattern according to which God has created all things. It is God's manner of creating, *sunnat Allah*, and everything fits into its pattern created for it and set in its proper place. It is the Law of God as al-Attas has elaborated, “submission to it brings harmony, for it means realization of what is inherent in one's true nature; opposition to it brings discord, for it means realization of what is extraneous to one's true nature.”²⁴

Ḥiṭrah is perceived as the creation of Allah (*khalq Allah*) and *al-Dīn al-Qayyim* (the ever-true, incorruptible religion) with which God originally endowed every human soul, with man's inspired cognition of the One God and his inspired ability to discern between the true and the false. This inspired and given ability to know the One God and His existence, and to discern between right and wrong, is the

²¹ 'Ali b. Abi al-'Izz Al-Dimashqī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqidah al-Ṭahāwīyyah*, Beirut: Muasasat al-Risālah, 1987, p. 312. It is important to note that the souls have the power to obey and to disobey to the Divine command. Social environment has only inclination to corrupt the human *ḥiṭrah*.

²² al-A'raf, 172-173.

²³ Yasin Mohamed, *Fitra The Islamic concept of Human Nature*, London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 1996.18.

²⁴ Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 56-57.

endowment of God distinct from the human faculty of reason and intellect. ²⁵This innate knowledge of God is the natural constitution with which the child is created in his mother's womb whereby he is able to acknowledge and accept the religion of truth.

The concept of *fiṭrah* affirms that man has an originally good nature. If he follows this good nature of Islam or submission to God, then indeed he has fulfilled his oath and followed his innate spiritual goodness. If, on the other hand, he chooses to disbelieve, then he would have gone against his innate spiritual predisposition or that he has covered and concealed the light of *fiṭrah* with the evil deeds of *kufr*.

The *fiṭrah* accords very well with the empirical aspects of life as well as with freedom, and divine justice. It is related to the idea of God and to moral behavior in the sense that man's spiritual or mental nature is structured in a way which makes it necessary for its well-being that man believes in God and be moral. In fact, one of the meanings of *fiṭrah* as *dīn* refers to the realization of the covenant by man. Submission in this sense will accordingly lead to the freedom of man, since freedom means to act as his true nature demands.

The man who submits to God in this way is living out the *dīn*.²⁶ It is normal for man to fulfill the purpose for his creation and existence, for man's obligation to serve God comes as a natural inclination on man's part. When this noble trust (*amānah*) is carried out it raises man to the dignity of vicegerent of God in the universe.²⁷ Failure to exercise the *fiṭrah*, on the other hand, reduces man to the lowest of the low (*Al-A'raf*, 179). This divergence from the *deen al-fiṭrah* is the natural result of man as individual as well as socio-moral agent in the forgetfulness not realizing his freedom in the real sense.

²⁵ Ghulam Haider Asi, "The Qur'ān and other Religious Traditions" in: *Hamdard Islamicus*, Karachi: Hamdard Foundation, Summer 1986, ix, no.2, p. 69; hereinafter abbreviated as *Dīn*.

²⁶ Al-Attas, *Prolegomena*, 105.

²⁷ *khalifah Allah, Al-Baqarah*, 2: 30.

However, the Merciful Transcendent God does not leave man alone by himself, rather He provides the *shari'ah* as a reminder as well as guiding light to the essential faith in Him. The message which God sends to man through His Prophets provide man with such guidance by building on the potentialities of his good nature.²⁸

It is possible for man to cut himself away from this original nature, as expressed by the Qur'anic term *fiṭrah* because through the elements of intellect and freedom of choice, they can decide and choose to conduct themselves in a wrong or unlawful manner. Although man is not born evil because he is endowed with innate *fiṭrah*, he is vulnerable to evil stimuli external sources of misguidance.²⁹

This phenomena is explained by al-Ghazzali in the nature of the heart (*qalb*) that comes from the word *qallaba* which means to turn something around or change its rotary movement. The *qalb* or heart is so named because of the ease of its continuous changeability. The *hadith* states that the heart of the believer (*mu'min*) is held between two fingers of God *al-Rahmān*; He turns it around as He wishes.³⁰

b. Submission as Amānah

Man since his preexistence has recognized God as his Lord, the creator.³¹ This recognition entails duties he must fulfill, such as obeying to His commands and prohibitions. Al-Attas argues that man is also composed of forgetfulness, which makes him forget the covenant and its consequences, and this forgetfulness is the source of all the blameworthy traits in his personality.³² God says:

²⁸ G. H. Asi, *Dīn*, 72.

²⁹ Al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā'* see chapter on *fiṭrah*.

³⁰ Loc. cit.

³¹ al-A'rāf, 172.

³² al-Ahzāb, 33: 72.

“We did indeed offer the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: But man undertook it. He was indeed unjust and foolish.”

However, God has also equipped him with the necessary powers and faculties to help him lead his life in accordance with his natural tendency, to correct the deviation he makes because of his forgetfulness.³³

Besides inborn guidance, God has also sent His Messengers and Books, as external guidance to mankind. The message which God has sent to man through His Prophets provides man with such guidance by building on the potentialities of his good nature. His nature, according to the Qur'an, requires that he believes in God, be grateful to Him and love Him.³⁴

Through revelation he knows more about God and the more he knows about Him, the more he will love Him and be grateful to Him. Through revelation he also learns how to express this gratitude i.e. how to worship Him.³⁵ Worshipping Him, besides being an expression of gratitude is also a means, the best means, of keeping fitrah alive, of protecting it and of cultivating it:

It (*'ibādah*) protects against indecency, *fahsha'*, and dishonour, *munkar* and it makes one mindful of God, which is more important.³⁶

And in another verse³⁷ God states that:

“Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it! Due to our ignorance, we may deal with ourselves or with our fellow human beings in ways that are not

³³ Yasin Mohamed, *Fitra The Islamic concept of Human Nature*, p. 26.

³⁴ al-Rum, 30: 30.

³⁵ Jaafar Sheikh Idris. “*Human Nature and Human Values*”, 43; unpublished manuscript which is cited henceforth as “Human Nature”.

³⁶ al-‘Ankabūt, 29: 45.

³⁷ al-Shams, 91: 9-10.

harmonious with the mental state required by our nature and in conformity with the worship of our Creator.³⁸ Man thus guided, is meant to be *khalifatullah*, the vicegerent of God on earth."³⁹

This task imposed upon man is called by the Qur'an 'trust' or *amānah*, a heavy burden laid on him as a responsibility that only humans volunteered to take upon. This trust which is accepted by man has its consequences, which is responsibility on man's part to submit all of himself to God.

According to al-Attas, then, man had already been given the full freedom to choose and that he has chosen to bear the responsibility. So it is neither rational nor wise to raise another issue of freedom of choice for man on this earth. The real issue is whether he is going to submit and fulfill the debt he had promised to pay or to take an attitude of ingratitude and failure to fulfill his promises.⁴⁰

Being religious in Islam is related to debt of existence or the sense of indebtedness. In the context of an individual believer, the state of being indebted means that man is indebted to God for giving him the Mercy of existence and because he himself is the very substance of the debt and everything is God's possession, it can be paid back only by 'returning' his self to the Owner⁴¹ 'Returning his self' means giving himself up in service to his Lord, offering himself as His instrument, and thus becoming the Hand of God on earth.

As a consequence, he must obey all His Commands; that is to live out the dictates of His Law, and it is only this service that can be said to belong to him, and can be used to pay the debt.⁴² It is this fact

³⁸ Ibid, p. 30.

³⁹ al-Baqarah, 2: 30.

⁴⁰ Al-Attas, *The Concept of Religion*, p. 12.

⁴¹ al-Tāriq, 86:11.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 2-9.

that provides the experiential basis in man to the exclusive concept of submission as understood in the truly Islamic sense.

Moreover, these two concepts, namely *amānah* as His vicegerent on earth and debt of existence, have important implications. One of them is that in living in this world, man is not completely in a position of choosing something, or of asserting any rights which he thought as his, in relation to his God.

Hence, prior to anything, including the idea of freedom, in the sense of availability of choice he has been faced by the weighty responsibility, due to his duties as a vicegerent, and the debt to God he must repay.⁴³ Therefore, in this framework, there is undoubtedly no question of freedom to be raised in the above sense; before God man is not free.

That is why the experiential concept of submission includes within itself the realization that man is a 'slave' of God, 'abd. Therefore, what a slave has to do in relation to his Master is to obey; opposing the master does not and cannot mean 'freedom', but rebellion and injustice. The Qur'anic word for the act of service appropriate for man as His slave is *'ibādah*, which refers to all conscious and willing acts of service for the sake of his Master alone and approved by Him.⁴⁴

The Nature of Man

The psychological states, such as happiness and *tawakkul*, cannot be meaningfully understood, unless the nature of man is clearly exposed first. The Qur'anic context suggests that man composed of two substances, which are the soul and the body.⁴⁵ The self represents the corner-stone of human consciousness, determination

⁴³ Ibid., 5-10.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 6-7.

⁴⁵ al-Ḥijr, 15: 26-29; al-Mu'minūn, 23: 12-14.

and motivation, responsibility and spiritual guidance.⁴⁶

In fact, the seat of knowledge in man is the spiritual substance variously referred to in the Qur'ān as the heart (*qalb*), the intellect (*'aql*) the soul (*nafs*) and the spirit (*rūh*). This spiritual substance has some knowledge of the reality before it assumes its responsibility.

In spite of the various terms used for this spiritual substance in the Qur'an, al-Ghazzali does not perceive them as separate spiritual entities, instead he conceives them as aspects of the same spiritual reality which is associated with earth or mud in human creation. When one uses this spiritual gift in intellectual activity and seeing the evil of sin and the goodness of obedience, it will be called *'aql*, but if it obeys the human lust (*shahawāt*) it becomes at once *al-nafs al-ammārah*; if it repents and having knowledge about itself, it becomes *al-nafs al-lawwāmah*; and if this spiritual reality elevates itself in submission, then it is *al-nafs al-muṭmainnah*.

Thus, al-Ghazzali uses different spiritual terminology of the Qur'an to describe different functions and states of the same spiritual reality.⁴⁷ In this psychology, when these four terms are used in relation to man, each conveys two meanings; the one referring to the body and the other to the soul.

Al-Ghazzali, propounds this psychology in a unique manner as far as modern Muslim thought is concerned, on the Qur'anic outlook. He thus argues that the self has a dual nature, i. e., the soul and the body. It is described as animal soul (*al-nafs al-ḥayawāniyyah*) on the one hand, and as rational soul (*al-nafs al-nātiqah*) on the other. The soul attached to the body is of a nobler and higher nature than the body, since it is of divine and incorporeal origin, while the body is corporeal.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ al-Imrān, 3: 81; al-A'rāf, 7: 172.

⁴⁷ Al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā'*, 3: 4-5

⁴⁸ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1958, p. 6; hereinafter mentioned as *Tahdhīb*.

From the body originates the blameworthy qualities in man; and the qualities of animal soul which, in spite of their being beneficial to man in some respects, are in conflict with the rational soul. The attachment of blameworthiness to the animal soul should not be confused with the idea of the denigration of the human body which is against Islamic teachings.⁴⁹

The rational soul, not only derives knowledge from the senses, but also from its own essence, i.e. reason (*'aql*), which is more accurate than that of the senses, for the soul is itself capable of rectifying many of the errors of the senses prior to arriving at any sound judgment.⁵⁰

Thus, the rational soul induces ethical behavior in man which involves the recognition of the vices and virtues; as such it must also be considered as the seat of true submission. Man is both soul and body, man's soul has a dual aspect; the higher, rational soul, and the lower, the animal or carnal soul. Without the animal soul, man ceases to exist, because it is this soul that fulfills the demands of his body for his survival in this world, but it is in its nature that the animal soul will never be satisfied.

So the rational soul must be the king in this kingdom and exert its power over the animal soul. The animal soul must be rendered submissive to the rational soul. This continuous 'battle' between the rational and the animal soul is what life is all about, and he who succeeds in bridling his animal soul is he who has been freed. It is within this framework of psychology that true submission can also be understood and thus becomes meaningful.

⁴⁹ Al-Attas, *The Meaning and Experience of Happiness in Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993, p. 4; hereinafter cited as *Happiness*.

⁵⁰ Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb*, pp. 6-9.

States of Submission

When they speak of true Islamic submission many lay Muslims, and even some scholars, immediately think of the suffering of the *mu'min* in this world in order to be rewarded in the Hereafter. Few of them appreciate the great rewards which submission to God Bestows upon the believer in this world (*dunyā*). Living in this world is beset with unlimited suffering and problems which plague man from his cradle to his grave, irrespective of whether he is a Muslim or an atheist. "Verily We have created man into toil and struggle"- these are the translated words of God Himself in *Surah al-Balad* (90: 4).

The faithful servant of God who fully submits to Him and trusts his Divine Mercy and Wisdom in running his human affairs is the only person in this world who really experiences the gratifying taste of submission.⁵¹

When encountering these states of submission, the Muslim may not only accept and tolerate the most difficult problems of life, but he may at times even develop a pleasant and spiritually enjoyable experience in facing them. A true Muslim will not indolently avoid facing difficult life events on the mistaken assumption of trust in God by 'leaving his problems to Him without endeavoring himself to solve them when he can.'

As stated, this would be a form of *tawakkul* which the Prophet has strongly condemned. One should first struggle to look for solutions, and if he cannot, as is the case with many unavoidable events in life such as the death of beloved relatives or affliction with incurable diseases, then one should consciously seek to experience a suitable state of submission which not only helps him to overcome his agony, but also secures for him the pleasure of his Loving God and His rewards in the Hereafter.⁵²

⁵¹ Yunus, 10: 84; ali-Imrān, 3: 59, 173.

⁵² Al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā*, vol. 4, p.147.

The fruits of submission are not only to be reaped in the Hereafter but in this world as well. This is so because true submission necessitates the realization of spiritual experiences such as reliance on God (*tawakkul*), *ṣabr* (*patience*), gratitude (*shukr*), *mahabbah* (love) of God. Consequently, from this experiential basis of submission the believers attain tranquility of their souls in this life before the Hereafter.

There are two extreme states of the soul that make us realize our actual predicament: one is the negative state of existence, which follows from misrepresentation of submission in the human soul; and the other is a positive state of the soul which results from the experiencing of submission in the pure Islamic sense.

The former is termed in the ethical philosophy as 'misery' or 'unhappiness', or *shaqāwah*; and the latter is called 'happiness', or *sa'ādah*.⁵³

Happiness does not refer to the animal soul or any physical element of man, nor does it refer to a state of the mind. On the contrary it refers to the spiritual state in the province of the heart which involves certainty (*yaqīn*) of the ultimate truth and performing of action in conformity with that certainty. True submission necessitates the realization of experiential basis of submission such as *tawakkul*, *ṣabr*, *shukr*, *mahabbah* of God.⁵⁴

As a consequence, from this experiential basis of submission, the believers attain tranquility of their soul in this life and Hereafter. This has been reflected by the conception of happiness, which is the ultimate aim, and purpose of human life.

Conclusion

It is important to note that submission in Islam is different from submission in other religions. Islamic submission is not simply a concept but more than that, it involves feeling, belief and action.

⁵³ Al-Attas, *Happiness*, p. 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.6.

The concept of submission is perhaps common to all religions, just as belief or faith is the core of all religions, but we maintain that not all religions enact real submission.

The *Qur'ān* makes clear that not any kind of submission can be accepted as true submission. The true submission and acceptable religion to God is the religion which emanates from the true conception of the unity of God. True submission to God therefore, includes the manner and the form of submission to God, as exemplified and perfected by the last Prophet (p.b.u.h).

Thus, the affirmation and verification of *tawhīd* lies in the manner and in the form of submission that is prescribed by the teaching of Islam. The central pillar on which this ontology rests is a strong faith in the unity of God or (*tawhīd*). This then is the acid test or *furqān* by which the truthfulness and falsity of a religion is determined.

Tawhīd thus clearly differentiates between submission in Islam and other religions whose systems of belief developed from misguided cultural traditions and pagan convictions and not from the *millah* of Prophet Ibrahim as some religions claim.