

MAATALIB-AL-JURQAAN

SURAH 1 VERSE 4 (a)

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ

The first part of next Ayat or Verse of Surah Fateha is **إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ**, meaning that the slave M'umin, having understood the concepts of Hamdiyat, Rububiyat, Rahmanyat, Raheemyat and Maliki'at has to cry out instinctively **إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ**. In this **نَعْبُدُ** is the complete theme of **الدين**, *Deen*. The normal and usual translation of **إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ**¹ is “you alone do we worship (as in ritual prayer).” To change the meaning of **عبادت** to worship or ritualism is to change **الدين** to madhab. In every religion the “ibadat of Allah is ritual worship, but in Islam it is **عبادت** is as follows.

عبادت

The root of this word is **ع ب د** and the meaning of the root is “slave” or “one who is consistently following a command or instruction” and in the Qur'an the word is used to denote a servant of Allah and/or one who obeys the command of Allah without any hesitation. In Surah 26, **الشعرا** this fact is illustrated when Musa AS goes to Pharoah and asks the latter to let his people, the Bani Isra'el, to accompany him out of Egypt. In reply the Pharoah stated that he has favoured Musa AS and is this the repayment that is made by Musa AS. According to Surah 26 Verse 22 Musa AS replied thus:

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ عَبَّدتَّ
بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿٢٢﴾

“Is the favour granted to me the enslavement and restricted placement on my people, the Bani Isra'el.” This response of Musa AS gives a clear meaning of the word **عَبَّدتَّ**. In Surah 47 Verse 23 it is explained that when Musa AS and Haroon AS invited the chieftains of Pharoah to believe in Allah; the reply was:

فَقَالُوا أَأَتُومِن لِّبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا
أَوْ مَا لَنَا خِمْيُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

“So they said, shall we believe in two persons who are humans like us and their people are slaves to us?” Here again the meaning of the word **خِمْيُونَ** is shown very clearly as “slaves”. Therefore, in the Qur'anic context **ع ب د** and its derivatives mean the servant of Allah and those who unquestioningly follow the command of Allah. In Surah 26 Verse 18 it is clearly stated that “Allah does not allow anyone to be a partner in His Commands”: **وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا**. And in Verse 110: **وَلَا يُشْرِكُ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا** “And do not join anyone in the service of the Sustainer”.

In Surah 12 Verse 40 Yusuf AS tells the companions in prison, **لِنُحْكَمِ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ** “Sovereignty only belongs to Allah”; and also: **أَمَرَ آلَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ** “He has commanded that none should follow the dictates or command of others”. Here, too, the obeying of the command of Allah is referred to as

¹ As an explanation the pronoun **إِيَّاكَ**, iyyaka, means You and only You or You alone, but when it precedes a verb it gives emphasis. It is a nominal suffix to express accusative and is second person masculine singular personal pronoun

تَعْبُدُونَ and after that it is stated: ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ; “and this is the established Deen”. These explanations forcefully establish the concept that the **عبادات**, ‘Ibadat, of Allah is to follow His commands and laws. This is **الدِّين** and it should be remembered, from previous discussions that the *Deen* means “law of Allah”

It is interesting to note that *t’abeedun* refers to the camel or horse that is trained and used to pull the plough in a straight line; meaning that these wild animals are subjected to training that puts their power and faculties only to fulfil the requirements of the trainer. Allah has granted man many faculties and powers and if man uses these according to his whims and fancies then it only results in corruption and falseties; but if used in the confinements of the laws of the Qur’an then the result would be the enhancement of the personality and the international advancement of the *Ummah*.

Let’s look at Surah Nur 24, Verse 55

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ

“(The question arises as to what one would gain by obeying these Laws? Allah has promised people who have faith in the truthfulness of the Divine Laws and who do the righteous deeds, that He will establish their authority on this earth ~ 33:27;” and that they must **يَعْبُدُونَنِي** “only serve Me”. It is stated thus:

27 And He made you heirs to their land and their dwellings and their property, and (to) a land which you have not yet trodden. And Allāh is ever Possessor of power over all things.^a

وَأَوْصَلَكُمْ أَرْضَهُمْ وَأَيَّارَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ وَأَرْضًا لَمْ تَطَّعُوهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا

And also in Surah 22 Verse 41:

الَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

“Those who (qualification of a M’umin) when, through the bounties of Allah, are bestowed upon them the authority to rule and they do come into power, (they will not do any injustice and oppression but) they will establish *Salat* (so that everyone in society follows the system of Divine Laws). They will provide means of development (*Zakah*) to each and everyone and enforce Laws which are in conformity with the Divine Code (the *Qur’an*); and forbid people from doing anything that is contrary to it. In other words, in every case they will first look for the guidance given by Allah’s Law; and then after discussion and consultation decide their affairs according to the Divine Law”.

For the establishment of the Qur’anic law it is imperative that **إِيَّاكَ تَعْبُدُ** is established; as the mere worship can also be performed under the rule of the *Kuffar*; or circular state.

The Qur’an was revealed in the Arabic Qureshi language and at the time of revelation there was no sign of *Deen* anywhere in the civilised world; everywhere one looked there was only *Madhab* and

thus there was no following of the Laws of Allah or being His servant. In this way the followers of *Madhab* and the *Mushrikeen* of Arabia understood 'Ibadat as ritualism. In the Qur'an, wherever reference of 'Ibadat is used for the *Mushrikeen* and followers of *Madhab* in Arabia, at the time of *Wahi* it would mean ritualism but when reference is to *Deen* and *M'umin* then it would mean service of and following the command of Allah, the manifestation of **إِيَّاكَ تَعْبُدُ**. This in reality is true freedom; when one is free from all shackles and forces and is in the slavery of Allah. As Muhammad Iqbal, the philosopher has said:

“The one *sajdah* that you do not regard as important; Gives man release from a thousand *Sajdah*”.

And the Quran states in Surah 51 Verse 56:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ⑤

“Remember the fact that the very objective of the creation of human beings, whether civilized urbanites or uncivilized nomads of the desert, would be fulfilled if they develop their potential abilities by following the Divine Laws (and then devote themselves to establishing the universal social order for nurturing all mankind)”.

This gives the proper understanding of, **لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ**. “There is no sovereign except Him (Allah)”. There is no one who has the right to be followed except Allah². It must be understood that the full concept of **إِيَّاكَ تَعْبُدُ** is not to increase the power or realisation of Allah in any human mind but it is for the nourishment and development of the human self. And this is invariably linked to

وَأِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

² Even a Nabi cannot be one to deny the concept that 'Ibadat (service) is only for Allah:

مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِي مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَكَانَ كُونُوا رِبِّئِينَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ ⑥

The fundamental principle of *Deen* is that no human being – even though *Allah* may have given him a Code of Laws or the power to enforce it or even *Nubuwwat* – has the right to say to the others: “You should obey me rather than *Allah*,” what he should say is: “You should be amongst those who belong to *Allah* by following His Book which you study and teach to others.” He should also not tell the others to worship *Malaika* or their *Anbia*. A *Momin* will never do so. Do you think that after he has himself believed he would bid others to resort to *Kufr*?