



Why is Dua to 'Other than Allah' forbidden across Ghayb (barrier of unseen)?

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WHY IT IS CRUCIAL TO USE THIS PHRASE WHEN APPROACHING QUR'ĀNIC VERSES ABOUT DU'Ā' AND ISTIGHĀTHA.

The phrase '*across the curtain of Ghayb*' is a common sight and permanent feature in our translations of Qur'ānic verses which establish the impermissibility of *Du'ā'* (Supplication/calling upon) to entities other than and lesser than Allah.

Since this qualifying phrase and caveat is not explicitly mentioned in the original Arabic text of such verses due to its glaring obviousness within the Qur'ānic worldview, and because it is often also not indicated in some translations, people sometimes wonder where we get this phrase from, and exactly how we derive it, and also why are we so insistent in using it with every such verse that forbids supplication to entities other than Allah for *Ḥājāt* (help or needs) whether it be *Du'ā'* or *Istighātha*^[1].

Those unfamiliar with the linguistic and rhetorical aspects of Arabic might even be inclined to think that this is a phrase that we are arbitrarily, artificially and forcefully inserting into our translations of such verses, not realising that our strict stance on *Iftirā'* (inventing and ascribing anything to Allah without evidence) leaves us with no room for any such thing. For if the phrase '*across the curtain of Ghayb*' were not implied in all these verses and understood to be an integral and inalienable part of their import, it would certainly be a form of *Iftirā'* (ascribing a lie to God) to forcefully add it to such verses without any valid justification or clear, undeniable proof.

Common Embedded Omissions in the Qur'ān

The reality is that the phrase '*across the curtain of Ghayb*' is embedded in all the verses of the Qur'ān which forbid calling upon, and supplicating to, entities other and lesser than Allah, just as the phrase '*I begin*' is embedded within the *Basmalah*, even though it is not explicitly mentioned in the Arabic text, and just as the phrase '*at the time of slaughter*' is embedded in all the verses which necessitate the mentioning of Allah's name over animals^[2] in order for them to be permissible for eating from, even though the qualifying phrase (i.e. '**at the time of slaughter**') is not explicitly mentioned in the Arabic text of any of these verses, and just as the phrase '*in marriage*' is embedded in the verse in which it is said '*Forbidden to you (in marriage) are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters...*'^[3], even though it (i.e. the qualifying phrase '**in marriage**') is not explicitly mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, and just as the phrase '*for eating and dietary consumption*' is embedded in the verse which says '*Forbidden over you (for eating and dietary consumption) are the dead animal (that died naturally without slaughter), and blood, and the flesh of the swine,.....*'^[4] even though it is not explicitly mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, and just as the phrase '*to fight*' is embedded in the verse that says '*permission (to fight) is granted to those who are being fought*'^[5] even though it (i.e. the clarificatory phrase '**to fight**') is not explicitly mentioned in the original Arabic text of the verse, and just as the phrase '*the people of*' is embedded in the verse '*And ask (the people of) the village in which we were, and (the people of) the caravan in which we came*'^[6], even though it is not explicitly mentioned in the Arabic text of the original verse, and just as so many other words, phrases, and sometimes even entire sentences, are omitted in various verses of the Qur'ān in keeping with the rhetorical and stylistic features of the Arabic language, and the speech conventions and patterns which were observed by the Pre-Islamic classical Arabs in their communication.

So we come to the central question then: Where do we derive and deduce this qualifying phrase '*across the curtain of Ghayb*' from, and what is the justification for including it in our translations of Qur'ānic verses which talk about *Du'ā* and *Istighātha*?

Response:

Since the first audience of the Qur'ān was primarily composed of native Arabs of 7th century *Hijāz*, the Revealer of its text makes free use of the linguistic, rhetorical and stylistic conventions which were common among native speakers of the language of that time.

One of the unique and salient features of Classical Arabic is its capacity for word compression and terseness. This is so because the Arabs have generally considered pleonasm and verbosity to be a defect in speech, and a fault in style, except when used for special effect or emphasis.

However, to achieve conciseness the Arabs would often omit words, phrases, expressions, and sometimes even entire sentences, provided enough contextual clues existed in the sentence itself or in common sense to enable the discerning reader or listener to infer the omissions from the context of the text or the structure of the speech itself or from common sense. It goes without saying that while inferring such omissions is a relatively simple, logical, and commonsensical process for native speakers of the language, it requires a fair degree of grounding in the science of Arabic rhetoric as well as the faith-based culture of the communities in Makkah and Madinah for the non-native translator to successfully understand what is left unstated.

The Phenomenon of *Ḥadhf* (Omission) in the Qur'ān

The Arabic language in which the Qur'ān was revealed is a highly eloquent, expressive, and rich language whose speakers took pride in the ability and capacity of their language to convey maximum meaning with minimal use of words. This phenomenon is referred to as إيجاز [*Ījāz*] (brevity, conciseness, terseness) in علم البلاغة '*Ilm al-Balāghah* (the science of Rhetoric).

One of the means and mechanisms through which the Arabs would bring about *Ījāz* in their speech and communication was by resorting to a rhetorical device called حذف [*Ḥadhf*] (omission, ellipses). Thus when it was felt that the existence of a certain word or phrase in a particular sentence was so easy to infer due to how obvious it was, it was seen as redundant and omitted altogether.

Examples of Omission and Ellipsis in Spoken English

This phenomenon is not unique to Arabic. People in other world languages also prefer not to use more words to convey something when it can be conveyed with lesser words, as it saves the speaker energy and effort. An example of omission we can give from everyday usage in the English language is:

Son: Dad, If I score over 80 per cent in the upcoming exams, do you promise to buy me a bicycle?

Dad: Deal!

The father's response is doesn't seem to be grammatically correct, *prima facie*. In the response 'Deal' where is the subject and where is the predicate?

But the reality is that this sentence is based on an omission. The father actually means to say 'You have a deal' or 'consider it a deal we have agreed upon', but because this is so obvious to those proficient in English, there is no need to add the extra words as the meaning can be easily understood even if we remove them.

Another common example would be:

Employee: Can I get a raise in my salary from next month?

Boss: Done.

Once again, the word 'done' is a passive verb that doesn't make sense on its own due to the omission of words like ('Consider it') before it. But when viewed in its rightful context, it becomes clear that the boss means to say that the employee can rest assured that his request has been accepted, and that the matter of him being given a raise in his salary as requested by him is a done deal. But because all this is so obvious from the context of the conversation, the boss doesn't need to use too many words to convey all this. He can just say 'done', and it is understood that he has accepted the request.

Thus, we can see that is common practice in world languages to omit words and phrases which are rendered redundant and unnecessary in certain sentences either by contextual clues in those very sentences or due to their very obvious nature.

Examples of Omissions in the Arabic Sentences of the Qur'ān

The phenomenon of إيجاز حذف [*Ījāzu Ḥadhf*] (omission for brevity) is very rife and common in the Qur'ān. Entire books and dissertations have been authored around this, and there is still scope for deeper study and further research.

Here we will endeavour to give examples of Arabic words and phrases in Qur'ānic verses which are often omitted due to their being too obvious or due to the existence of contextual clues within the Qur'ān as well within the understanding and linguistic culture of the Arabs of the time, as well as the community of believers, which made it possible to omit them.

***Ḥadhf* in the Basmalah**

Perhaps the most glaring and 'in your face' example of omission in the Qur'ān is in the *Basmalah*^[7] itself.

If we were to literally translate the *Basmalah* without spelling out the meanings implied by the omitted phrases in it, it would read as:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

Indeed, this is how many of the famous translators of the Qur'ān opt to translate the *Basmalah* as we can see from the following renderings:

“In the Name of the most Merciful God.”^[8]

“In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.”^[9]

“In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.”^[10]

“In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.”^[11]

“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.”^[12]

“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.”^[13]

“In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.”^[14]

“In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.”^[15]

But these literalistic renderings fail to convey the full sense of what the *Basmalah* actually means, and what it signifies for the Muslims. A non-native, non-Muslim who looks at the above translation specimens would struggle to make sense of what this statement actually signifies, because it doesn't even seem like a complete sentence.

To the unlearned and the uninitiated, this phrase would be as confusing and unintelligible as someone randomly saying 'with Zayd'. This phrase, on its own, and when used in isolation, detached from any meaningful context, doesn't convey a full meaning on its own, because it is not known exactly what it

means. What was done 'with Zayd'? Does the speaker mean to say he travelled with Zayd, or does he mean to say he played a game with Zayd, or does he mean to say he returned with Zayd?

In the same way, the *Basmalah* which we have literally translated as '*With the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful*', doesn't quite make it clear what the speaker intends to do with the name of Allah. Does he intend to eat with the name of Allah, or does he intend to worship with the name of Allah, or does he intend to begin his recitation of the Qur'ān with the name of Allah?

There is no trace of the phrase "I begin with" in the original Arabic text. However, this doesn't mean it does not exist in the meaning of the *Basmalah* or that it is wrong to mention it in the translation, for the scholars and authorities of Arabic grammar are agreed that there is an omission and ellipsis in the *Basmalah*, and that that omitted part is '*I begin with*' or '*My beginning is with*', but because this omitted phrase was such a demonstrably obvious thing for the native Arabs, it could be omitted without resulting in any loss of meaning for the native Arabs.^[16]

However, when we translate the *Basmalah* for those not that intimately familiar with the native Arabic and Islamic zeitgeist, we would do well to spell out the omitted phrase and translate it as: '*(I begin)* with the Name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful', or '*(My beginning occurs)* with the Name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful.'^[17]

There are many examples of such sentences and expressions in the Holy Qur'ān, and one has to rely on Qur'ānic hermeneutics to first identify and then convey the meanings of those omissions in the target language.

Does *Ḥadhf* open the door for people to interpolate their views into Qur'ānic Verses?

The existence of omitted phrases which are embedded in various Qur'ānic verses doesn't mean people are free to arbitrarily or whimsically interpolate such words, phrases or sentences anywhere they like, for that would result in semantic chaos, and the exploitation of the Qur'ān to justify pretty much anything.

Fortunately, the rules of omission in Arabic are so mathematical, scientific and precise, that it is not possible to just artificially interpolate phrases or claim omitted words without any proof. Rather, the rules of omission dictate that it is not permissible to omit any word, phrase or sentence unless there is a *Qarīnah* (clue) in the sentence itself or in its surrounding context which leads one towards it.

How do We Know that the Qur'ān only Forbids Du'ā' (Calling) to Other than Allah across the Curtain of Ghayb?

For an act to be Shirk in the worldview of the Qur'ān, it must have no authorisation from Allah (SWT), otherwise, if Allah authorizes something, it may be linguistically Shirk^[18], but it can't be the terminological and sinful variety of Shirk which is forbidden in Islam.

The Qur'ān also makes it clear that the key element of forbidden Shirk is lack of clear *Sulṭān* (authorisation and writ of approval) from Allah:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (7:33)

Say: My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without just cause, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down any Sulṭān (authority, warrant), and that you claim about Allah that which you have no 'Ilm (certain definitive knowledge) of. (07:33)

The *الفيد التعليلي* [*al-Qayd al-Ta 'lilī*] (clarificatory and qualifying clause) i.e. **'that for which He has not sent down any Sulṭān (authority and warrant)'** is essential in understanding both the definition of Shirk according to the Qur'ān and also the rationale and wisdom behind its prohibition. The ultimate goal of *Tawḥīd* (Islamic monotheism) is facilitate submission to Allah (SWT), and to consolidate all authority in His Hands Alone, and that requires that everything we believe in, and do, as Muslims, must be sanctioned by Him. So all those pairings which He sanctions, authorises, and permits may be linguistically and literally Shirk, but Qur'ānically speaking, these are completely separate, distinct and different from the specific terminological Shirk which Allah (SWT) has forbidden and threatened hell fire for, since that exclusively refers to pairings and partnerships which human beings or anyone else invents or imagines, and affirms for Allah (SWT) – without any *Sulṭān* (authority and warrant) from Allah (SWT).

We may illustrate this point further with the help of a useful and illuminating example from the Qur'ān. According to the Qur'ān, even something like absolute and unconditional obedience in the matter of *Dīn* (religion) is an exclusive Divine Right and Prerogative. Therefore, obeying an entity in religious law without *Sulṭān* (authorisation) from Allah is considered to be Shirk (polytheism and the

equivalent of associating partners with God) by Allah (SWT). This is explicitly declared in the following verse from Sūrah al-An‘ām (Chapter 6) where Allah (SWT) Says:

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ وَإِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَهُمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ (121)

And do not eat of that on which Allah's name has not been mentioned (at the time of slaughter), and that is most surely a transgression; and most surely the devils suggest to their allies that they should argue with you (over this matter); and if you obey them, you shall most surely be Mushrikūn (polytheists). (06:121).

Notice how Allah is telling the believers in Makkah that if they so much as 'obey' the agents of *Shayṭān* who come to argue with them about what should be lawful and what should be prohibited for consumption, Allah will label and classify them as *Mushrikīn* just for the crime of listening to them and obeying them.

This shows us that obedience to an entity in matters of religious law – without authorisation from Allah – is also Shirk in the eyes of Allah according to the clear text of the Qur'ān. This is also confirmed by 09:31 of the Qur'ān where Allah (SWT) accuses a faction of the Jews and Christians of the Shirk of taking their *Aḥbār* (legal scholars and jurists) and *Ruhbān* (monks) as *Arbāb* (Divine Lords) besides Allah because they blindly obeyed them in religious law even when they went against the laws of God as revealed in their Scriptures.

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (09:31)

They (i.e. a section of the people of the Book from among the Jews and Christians) have taken their Aḥbār (legal scholars and jurists) and Ruhbān (monks) as Arbāb (Divine Lords) besides Allah, and (also) the Messiah son of Mariam, and they were enjoined that they should worship One God only, there is no God but He; far from His glory be what they set up (with Him). (09:31)

Commenting on this verse, both the Prophet (s) and the Imams from his Ahlul Bayt (as) made it abundantly clear that these Jews and Christians were held guilty of Shirk in the eyes of Allah, because they blindly and unconditionally obeyed them in matters of *Halāl* and *Harām* (i.e. religious law concerning what is lawful and prohibited) even when they went against their Scripture, and gave verdicts opposing it. By doing so, i.e. by giving full, unconditional, and blind obedience to their scholars, even in matters not sanctioned by Allah (SWT), they unwittingly ended up setting these scholars and spiritual guides as rival Lords besides Allah (SWT) without even realising it.

Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (as) (d. 148 AH) even pointed out that these Jews and Christians did not deliberately want to commit Shirk or set up their scholars as rivals or partners with Allah, for he says *'if they had called them to worship them, they would not have obeyed them'*^[19], meaning they had sense enough to know that worship should be exclusively reserved for Allah (SWT), but they conveniently forgot or ignored the fact that worship is not the only thing that is Allah's exclusive Divine Right and Prerogative. The authority to be obeyed in religious law is also His exclusive Divine Right and Prerogative, and to share this right with anyone else, even if it be religious scholars who specialise in interpreting the scripture, to the point that one ends up obeying them even when they go against the clear prescriptions of the Scripture, when Allah has not issued any special sanction for their verdicts, is tantamount to Shirk in the sight of God, and this Shirk is not just linguistic Shirk, but rather Shirk of the terminological, and hence forbidden, variety.

In light of all of this, it becomes very clear that the very act of obedience can be Shirk in the sight of Allah (SWT) in certain circumstances.

However, if here someone asks: don't we obey the Messenger (s) in matters of religious law? And isn't this obedience as absolute, unconditional, and even blind as the obedience to Allah (SWT) is supposed to be.

So is that not Shirk then?

The answer is that it is not the terminological, *Ḥarām*, sinful Shirk which the Qur'ān forbids because obedience of the Messenger (s) is fully sanctioned and authorised by Allah in clear texts of the Qur'ān.
[20]

Allah (SWT) clearly and explicitly declares that obeying the Messenger in what he transmits from Him is as paramount and essential as obedience to Him, and in fact, He equates obedience to the Messenger with obedience to Himself:

(04:80) مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

Whosoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...(04:80).

Given that we have already established from the Qur'ān that an act can only be Shirk of the terminological, forbidden variety if and only IF it lacks sanction and authorisation for it from Allah (SWT), obedience to the Messenger cannot be terminological, forbidden Shirk due to the clear *Sultān*

(writ of approval and authorisation) that exists for it from Allah (SWT) in the form of several clear-cut, explicit Qur'ānic verses which order and mandate obedience to the Messenger.

Allah Himself shows us in the Qur'ān that obedience to entities not authorised by Allah in matters of religious law is Shirk and earns one the label of '*Mushrik*' in the eyes of Allah, but obedience to an entity like the Messenger (Saww) is not Shirk because Allah has ordered it and authorised it.

The crucial difference and dividing line between Shirk and non-Shirk, or between merely linguistic Shirk and terminological, forbidden Shirk, is Sulṭān (authorisation) from Allah or lack thereof.

In fact, *Sulṭān* from Allah is ultimately the Divider between what is permissible and impermissible in our Dīn. The same woman who is *Ḥarām* (forbidden) before marriage becomes *Ḥalāl* after the *Nikāḥ*. What changes? Nothing except the fact that before marriage, one doesn't have authorisation from Allah to have a full-fledged or intimate relationship with that woman, but after *Nikāḥ*, which is religiously sanctioned and approved by Allah and His Messenger, such a relationship becomes perfectly *Ḥalāl*. In fact, due to the *Sulṭān* of Allah, intimate relations with one's wife become an act that generates the same *Thawāb* (reward) as *Ṣadaqah* (charity) in the way of Allah (SWT) as indicated in the Ḥadīth^[21].

The same may be said of so many other things. For instance, people in the Prophet's (Saww) time tried to justify *Ribā* (usury) by comparing it with genuine, legitimate trade and commerce, on the understanding that just like trade and commerce involves making profit on the sale of goods and services, *Ribā* is simply a profit-making enterprise that is geared towards making profit from lending. When Allah (SWT) refuted this comparison, He didn't point to any difference between trade and *Ribā* other than that He had forbidden *Ribā*, while He had permitted and authorised trade.

Allah has issued *Sulṭān* for animals slaughtered in the prescribed Islamic way to be deemed lawful for consumption; the very same animal if not slaughtered in the prescribed manner becomes *Ḥarām* (forbidden) for consumption.

In fact, the Qur'ān shows us that *Sulṭān* from Allah is such a powerful thing, such a game-changer, such as divider between heaven and hell, lawful and prohibited, reward and punishment, that the very same act becomes the greatest accomplishment and praiseworthy feat in the eyes of the Almighty if it has *Sulṭān* for it from Him, while the very selfsame act when undertaken in the absence of *Sulṭān* for it from

Him becomes a source of deviation, loss, and damnation as the thought-provoking example we will share from the Qur'ān will demonstrate.

Allah (SWT) Issues a very firm and fierce condemnation of the *Kuffār* (pagan disbelievers) and *Mushrikīn* (polytheists) of the past for their crime of killing their children and offering them up as human sacrifice under the illusion fostered by their priests that this would be pleasing to God. Since Allah (SWT) issued no *Sulṭān* for such sacrifices, Allah's Condemnation is strict and to the point. In *Sūrah al-An'ām* (Chapter 6) of the Qur'ān, Allah (SWT) first describes how this deviant practice arose in:

وَكَذَلِكَ زَيْنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ شُرَكَاءَهُمْ لِيُرُدُّوهُمْ وَلِيَلْبِسُوا عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ (06:137)

Thus, in the eyes of many of the pagans/polytheists, their Shurakā (partners/associates) made alluring (fair seeming) to them the slaughter/killing of their children, in order to lead them to their own destruction, and cause confusion in their religion. If Allah had willed, they would not have done so, hence leave them alone to what they are inventing! (06:137).

A few verses later, Allah (SWT) Issues His Judgement over this practice of theirs by announcing:

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَحَرَّمُوا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ افْتِرَاءً عَلَى اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ (06:140)

*Losers, indeed, are those who foolishly killed their children, without any certain knowledge, and made unlawful that which Allah had provided (for their consumption), (through engaging in) Iftirā' (inventing (lies) against Allah. **They indeed went astray and were not rightly guided!** (06:140).*

Thus the three key judgements that Allah (SWT) Passes against people of the past who practised human sacrifice or child sacrifice is that they were (1) utter losers, (2) Guilty of *Iftirā'* (inventing lies against Allah), (3) deviant & misguided, and (4) bereft & devoid of correct guidance.

However, when the same Qur'ān shows us the awe-inspiring example of the *Khalīl al-Raḥmān* (Intimate Friend of the All-Merciful Lord), Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) attempting to slaughter and sacrifice his son, the great Prophet Ismā'īl (as), after he saw him doing the same in his dream. And yet as soon as he made this attempt, instead of condemning him and holding him in contempt, Allah (SWT) Showered high praise and sent salutations on him as we can see from the following passage:

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ (37:104)

And We called out to him saying: O Ibrāhīm! (37: 104)

قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (37:105)

*You have indeed fulfilled the dream/vision; surely thus do We reward **the Muḥsinīn (doers of good)**.* (37:105)

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ (37:106)

Most surely this is a manifest trial. (37:106)

وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذَبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ (37:107)

And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice. (37:107)

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (37:108)

And We have left this (as a source of blessing and praise) on him among the later generations. (37:108)

سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (37:109)

Salutation/Peace be upon Ibrāhīm! (37:109).

كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (37:110)

*Thus do We reward **the Muḥsinīn (doers of good)**.* (37:110)

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (37:111)

Surely he was one of Our believing servants. (37:111).

وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (37:112)

And We gave him the good news of Ishāq, a prophet from among the righteous. (37:112).

وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَىٰ إِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ (37:113)

And We showered Our blessings on him and on Ishāq; and of their offspring, there is the Muḥsin (the doer of good), and (also) those who are clearly unjust to their own souls. (37:113).

Just ponder over all these words of high Divine praise, approval, and salutation. What did Ibrāhīm (as) do to deserve them? On the face of it, he attempted to do precisely the same act which Allah (SWT) had

strictly forbidden and severely condemned and criticised in 06:137 and 140 which was discussed above.

Then how come Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) received such a high degree of approval, promotion and elevation from Allah (SWT) when he attempted such an act, instead of the scolding, rebuke and reprimand we would logically expect a person who attempts what he attempted to receive?

Look at how Allah (SWT) not only declares Ibrāhīm (as) to be among the *Muḥsinīn* (doers of good) for attempting to sacrifice his son, and not only does he send peace and salutations on him, and not only does he say we have left good praise for him for this among the later generations, but on top of all that, Allah (SWT) Says He rewarded him by giving him good news and glad tidings of another son named Ishāq (as)!

Imagine! He just attempted to slaughter the only son he had at that point in time, who was granted to him after much prayer and supplication, and as soon as he is done with that, Allah (SWT) is so pleased with him, He says: I am giving you glad tidings of another righteous son!

So what is the secret behind this?

An Islamophobe might be tempted to say cite this as a contradiction or double standard in the Qur'ān, but he would be dead wrong.

In the worldview of the Qur'ān, as we have endeavoured to explain, the rightness and wrongness of anything, and reward and punishment, are determined by whether *Sulṭān* (warrant of authorisation) from Allah exists for that action or not. In the cases described in 06:137 and 140, it is obvious that those polytheists had no *Sulṭān* (warrant of authorisation) from Allah (SWT) for what they did, and that is why they are declared as losers, deviant, and devoid of guidance. Whereas when Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) attempted what he attempted, he was acting on clear *Sulṭān* from Allah (SWT) as is clearly evident from the following verse:

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

(37:102)

And when he attained to working with him, he said: O my son! surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then what you see. He said: O my father! do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will find me of the patient ones. (37:102).

The Qur'ān makes it crystal clear that Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) and Prophet Ismā'īl (as) both understood very well that the dream the former had seen was no ordinary dream, but rather a command and instruction from the Almighty. Thus, they were operating on a clear-cut *Sulṭān* (authorisation) from Allah (SWT), and it is ONLY this *Sulṭān* which justified their action and made it praiseworthy in the eyes of Allah (SWT). The same act, if it were attempted, without *Sulṭān* from Allah (SWT), would have invited damnation and perdition upon them as we can see from 06:137 and 140 of the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān further emphasises how both Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl (as) were engaged in an act of absolute, total, and unconditional surrender to Allah (SWT) as they embarked on this difficult sacrifice with the following words:

فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهٗ لِجَبِينِ (37:103)

So when they both submitted (their Will to the Almighty) and he (i.e. Ibrāhīm (as)) threw him (i.e. Ismā'īl (as)) down upon his forehead. (37:103).

Thus, the Qur'ān leaves no doubt about the fact that they were merely submitting to the Will of Allah (SWT) and doing His bidding as they embarked on this unimaginably and incredibly difficult and mind-defying sacrifice, and it is ONLY this that made them justified and worthy of praise in the sight of Allah (SWT).

This is the HEAVEN and HELL difference that exists between an act that is done with the *Sulṭān* of Allah (SWT) and an act that is done without *Sulṭān* of Allah (SWT).

One may also consider the case of Prophet Mūsā's (as) famous encounter with the righteous slave (popularly known as al-Khiḍr) to see a confirmation of this principle. In each of the three instances highlighted in that episode^[22], the righteous slave committed acts that Mūsā (as) found either immoral or unjustifiable. Yet the key justification behind them, in addition to the wisdom that was explained, was the righteous slave's statement:

وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي (18:82)

I did not do this on my own accord! (18:82).

Thus, the morality of the righteous slave's actions stems from the fact that all of them were directly authorised by Allah (SWT), and were not the product of some fallible, limited, human *Ijtihād* (exerting

oneself at reasoning).

Shirk if only Ḥarām and Condemned in Absence of Sulṭān

The Qur'ān makes it a point to emphasise, stress, highlight and underline the fact that what makes Shirk of any kind (i.e. linguistic Shirk) into the Ḥarām (forbidden) and unforgivable crime (i.e. terminological Shirk) that Allah threatens hell for and promises never to forgive on the day of judgement is the lack of Sulṭān (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction) from Allah (SWT).

This principle shouldn't be so difficult for us to understand, especially given how its application is so ubiquitous and all around us. Whenever we accept that an authority exists, we also accept that everything within the domain of that authority must be authorised by that authority. So for instance, if a person wants to build a house or a hospital or a mall in a certain area, they need to have a permit from the local or municipal authority. To drive a simple car or even two-wheeler like a motorcycle or scooter, one needs a driver's license. To teach at a school, college, or university, one needs degrees and certification. To practice law or medicine, a license is needed. Even in the religious world, wherever there are recognised power structures like say the *Marja' iyyah*, one needs an *Ijāzah* (license of authorisation) for everything from issuing Fatwas (jurisprudential verdicts) to collecting *Khumus*.

In the same way, once we – as believers – accept and recognise Allah (SWT) as the Supreme Creator, Sustainer, and Master of the Universe, an inescapable corollary of that is to acknowledge that for everything in the *Dīn* (Religion) He has revealed, permits, license, certification, and authorisation from Him are needed. This authorisation is what the Qur'ān refers to as *Sulṭān*.

Allah (SWT) Does not permit anything to be legislated into His *Dīn* or for it to be made a part of it without express permission and authorisation for Him. In fact, He regards any such attempt to encroach into His Divine Domain as a form of Shirk in itself; He Asks in *Sūrah Shūrā* (Chapter 42) of the Qur'ān:

(42:21) **أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنْ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَفُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ**

Or do they have Shurakā' (partners/associates) who have ordained for them in Dīn (Religion) that which Allah has not authorised? Were it not for the decisive (Divine) decree (to grant respite and postpone

punishments until the day of judgement), decision would have certainly been given between them; surely the wrongdoers have a painful punishment (awaiting them in the hereafter). (42:21).

Thus the lack of *Sulṭān* (warrant of authorisation) is the most essential component of terminological Shirk. In fact, it is what can convert something from simply being linguistic Shirk into terminological Shirk which Allah has forbidden. This is why Allah (SWT) makes it a point to repeatedly highlight the lack of Divinely Revealed *Sulṭān* as a defining component of the forbidden and condemned Shirk.

This can be seen very clearly from numerous verses of the Qur'ān, where Allah (SWT) Highlights how His main issue and problem with the Shirk of those whose Shirk He condemns is their having no *Sulṭān* (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction) for it from Him in the form of a clear Evidence in a Divinely Revealed Book. Observe:

سَنُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ بِمَا أَشْرَكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ وَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الظَّالِمِينَ (03:151)

We will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve, because they set up/associated with Allah that for which He has NOT Sent down/Revealed any Sulṭān (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction), and their abode is the fire, and evil is the abode of the wrongdoers! (03:151).

When condemning and censuring the Shirk of the pagans, Allah (SWT) Declares:

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَنْزَلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَمَا لَيْسَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ نَصِيرٍ (22:71)

And they worship besides Allah that for which He has not sent down/Revealed any Sulṭān (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction), and that of which they have no (certain, clear, definitive) knowledge; and for the wrongdoers, there shall be no helper. (22:71).

In Sūrah al-Rūm (Chapter 30) of the Qur'ān, Allah Confronts the Kuffār and Mushrikīn of Makkah with the following Challenging Question:

أَمْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا فَهُمْ يَنْتَكُمُ بِمَا كَانُوا بِهِ يُشْرِكُونَ (30:35)

*Or, have We sent down/Revealed upon them a **Sulṭān (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction)** so that it speaks of that which they associate with Him? (30:35).*

In His Condemnation of the pagan polytheists of Makkah, Allah (SWT) once again exposes the epistemological foundations of their Shirk, and highlights how these pagans have no solid or concrete *Sulṭān* from Allah to bolster their beliefs and claims, and how when people have no valid *Sulṭān* from Allah, the only thing left for them to go by is *Zann* (unfounded or ill-founded assumptions, unsubstantiated presumptions, guesswork, wishful thinking, speculation, and imagination). Speaking of pagan deities such as *Lāt*, *‘Uzzā*, and *Manāt*, the Almighty Declares:

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمُ الْهُدَى (53:23)

*These are nothing but names which ye have devised,- ye and your fathers,- for which Allah did not Send down/Reveal any **Sulṭān (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction)**. They follow nothing but *Zann* (conjecture, imagination) and what their own souls desire! Now certainly there has already come to them Guidance from their Lord! (53:23).*

We see Prophets of God who are sent to teach *Tawḥīd* (Islamic monotheism) frequently clarifying this crucial fact about Shirk. For instance, Prophet Hūd (as), an early Prophet sent to the people of ‘Ad highlights this fact about their Shirk when chastising them and condemning them for their worship of gods other than Allah:

قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ رِجْسٌ وَغَضَبٌ أَنْجَادِلُونَنِي فِي أَسْمَاءِ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ فَانْتظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنتَظِرِينَ (07:71)

*He (Hūd) said: Indeed there has fallen upon you filth and Wrath from Your Lord; what?! do you argue/dispute with me about (gods who are nothing more than) names which you and your forefathers came up with while Allah Revealed **NO Sulṭān (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction)** for them; wait then, I too with you will be of those who wait. (07:71).*

Similarly, we find that Prophet Ibrāhīm (as), who is undoubtedly one of the most celebrated and leading pioneers of *Tawhīd* (Islamic monotheism) in the Qur'ān, also highlighting this key aspect of Shirk in his debates with the polytheists of his time:

وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (81)

And how can I fear what you have set up (with Him) (of partners and associates), while you do not fear that you have set up/associated with Allah that for which He has NOT Sent down/Revealed any Sulṭān (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction); which of the two parties is, then, has more right to safety and security (in the eyes of Allah and on the day of judgement), if you know? (06:81).

His great grandson, Prophet Yūsuf (as), is seen once again highlighting this crucial aspect of forbidden Shirk in his critique of the polytheism of his time. Addressing his cellmates, he remarks:

مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءَ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (12:40)

You do not worship besides Him but names which you have named, you and your forefathers; Allah has NOT Sent down/Revealed any Sulṭān (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction) for them; judgment is only Allah's; He has commanded that you shall not worship anyone or anything except Him; this is the right religion but most people do not know. (12:40).

From this, we get to see how the most reprehensible aspect of Shirk, and what makes it an abominable, unforgivable, and egregiously atrocious crime in the sight of Allah (SWT) is the fact that it is done without His Sulṭān (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction). Thus, if there does really exist a Sulṭān from Allah (SWT) for any act of pairing or partnering with Him or anyone else, that act can be linguistically Shirk, but it can NEVER be Shirk of the *Iṣṭilāhī* (terminological) variety, i.e. the variety that Allah Has Forbidden, deemed unforgivable, threatened hell for, and repeatedly condemned throughout the entire Qur'ān as well as past Scriptures.

The existence of *Sulṭān* (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction) from Allah in a Divinely Revealed Book recognised by Him, or the lack thereof, is therefore the most crucial determining fact behind whether an act is Shirk in the terminology of Islam and its *Shar'iah* (legal system) or not. *Sulṭān* from Allah, or lack thereof is what defines right and wrong in Islamic theology and morality. It is also the dividing line between *Tawḥīd* (Islamic monotheism) and Shirk (polytheism), as well as between *Ḥalāl* (the lawful) and *Ḥarām* (the prohibited).

This is why Allah (SWT) often demands those whom He considers deviants and astray to produce *Sulṭān* (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction) from Allah in support of their Shirk-based belief or tall claim about Ghayb (the unseen realm) as a means to expose its falsity and falsehood. This is so because in the eyes of Allah, for something to be a truthful claim about Him, there must exist *Sulṭān* from Him confirming its veracity and truthfulness. Otherwise, it is a lie against Him.

We see Allah challenging the *Kuffār* and *Mushrikīn* of Makkah and cornering them on some of their Shirk and deviant claims in the following manner:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ شُرَكَاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أُرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا فَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْهُ بَلْ إِنَّ
يَعِدُّ الظَّالِمُونَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا إِلَّا غُرُورًا (40)

Say: Have you considered your associates whom you call upon besides Allah? Show me what part of the earth they have created, or have they any partnership/share in the heavens; or, have We given them a Book so that they are upon clear evidence from it? Nay, the wrongdoers do not promise each other anything but delusions! (35:40).

In *Sūrah al-Aḥqāf* (Chapter 46), the Divine Challenge and Demand is further repeated for emphasis:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أُرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ إِنِّي بِلِقَائِكُمْ فِي الْحَقِّ بِكَتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا أَوْ أَثَارَةٍ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِن كُنْتُمْ
صَادِقِينَ (46)

Say (O Messenger): Have you considered what you call upon besides Allah? Show me what they have created of the earth, or have they a Shirk (partnership with God) in the heavens? Bring me a Book from before this or a fragment of

certain, definitive knowledge (in support of your belief/claim), if you are truthful. (46:04).

When challenging the claim of the pagan polytheists of Makkah that angels are female, Allah (SWT) once again demands from them *Sulṭān* (Divine License/Permit/Warrant of authorisation) for this tall claim; He asks:

أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ فَهُمْ بِهِ مُسْتَمْسِكُونَ (21)

Or have We given them a Book from before (claiming this) so that they are holding fast to it? (43:21).

This serves to show us that clear evidence in Divinely revealed Books is the *Sulṭān* one needs to have if one is going to make any tall claim about Ghayb or claim anything about Allah (SWT). In the absence of such a *Sulṭān*, if one ends up associating anything or anyone with God in any way, shape or form, it is Shirk in the eyes of Allah and in the worldview of the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān also makes it very clear that fake, forged, fabricated or *Zann*-based claims that Allah has issued *Sulṭān* for something (when He has actually done no such thing) are equal to NO *Sulṭān* in the eyes of Allah (SWT), and those promoting such claims are guilty of *Iftirā'* (ascribing invented lies to Allah) are destined for a very terrible and severe punishment in the hereafter even if they may receive some temporary enjoyment in the life of this world. Of course, any partnership, pairing, or association between Allah and anything else that is established on the basis of a fake, fabricated, forged, invented or non-existent *Sulṭān* from Allah is Shirk of the terminological and therefore forbidden variety.

قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ عِنْدَكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ بِهَذَا أَنْتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (10:68)

قُلْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكُذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ (10:69)

مَتَاعٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ نُذِيقُهُمُ الْعَذَابَ الشَّدِيدَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ (10:70)

They say: Allah has taken a son (to Himself)! Glory be to Him: He is the Self-sufficient: His is what is in the heavens and what is in the earth; you have no Sulṭān (license, permit, warrant of authorisation and sanction) for this; do you say against Allah what you do not have 'Ilm (certain, definitive, clear knowledge) for?

Say: Those who invent a lie against Allah will never prosper (or be successful).

(Theirs is only a) little enjoyment in this world, and then, to Us will be their return, then shall We make them taste very harsh punishment for their blasphemies/heresies. (10:68-70).

How did the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (As) Demolish the Claim of those who claimed Divine *Sulṭān* for their exaggerated claims about Imams?

Because the Ghulāt and Ḥadīth fabricators knew merely making exaggerated claims about the Imams (as) and establishing partnerships for them with God from their pockets would not cut it, they sought to claim *Sulṭān* (Divine authorisation) for their deviant and mendacious claims about Allah by alleging that Allah had indeed given supernatural and extraordinary powers, tasks, and assignments to the Imams (as) such that they could run some of the affairs of this universe by Allah's permission, authorisation and delegation. They called this the doctrine of *Tafwīd* (Divine Delegation of some Divine Powers, Functions and Offices to the Ahlul Bayt).

When the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (as) were informed of this deviant and Shirk (polytheism)-entailing doctrine, they did not mince words in issuing fierce, fiery and unreservedly vehement condemnations of it. They declared the claimants of this doctrine and its promoters liars, invoked *La 'nah*^[23] (malediction) upon them, declared them deviants, and invoked the verses of the Qur'ān which Allah (SWT) had revealed against the *Kuffār and Mushrikīn* (pagan disbelievers and polytheists of Makkah) against them – making it clear that these verses were eminently applicable to them.

وَرُوِيَ عَنْ زُرَّارَةَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِلصَّادِقِ - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ -: إِنَّ رَجُلًا مِنْ وُلْدِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ سَبْيٍ يَقُولُ بِالتَّفْوِيضِ، قَالَ - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ -: «وَمَا التَّفْوِيضُ؟» قُلْتُ: يَقُولُ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَلَقَ مُحَمَّدًا صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَعَلِيًّا - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ - ثُمَّ قَوَّضَ الْأَمْرَ إِلَيْهِمَا، فَخَلَقَا، وَرَزَقَا، وَأَخْيَبَا، وَأَمَاتَا.

فَقَالَ: «كَذَبَ عَدُوُّ اللَّهِ، إِذَا رَجَعْتَ إِلَيْهِ فَافْرَأْ عَلَيْهِ الْآيَةَ الَّتِي فِي سُورَةِ الرَّعْدِ ((أَمْ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ خَلَقُوا كَخَلْقِهِ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ)). فَانصَرَفْتُ إِلَى الرَّجُلِ فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ بِمَا قَالَ الصَّادِقُ - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ - فَكَأَنَّمَا أَلْقَمْتُهُ حَجْرًا، أَوْ قَالَ: فَكَأَنَّمَا حَرَسَ

It is narrated from Zurārah that he said: 'I said to Al-Sādiq (peace be upon him): Indeed, a man from among the descendants of 'Abdullāh bin Ṣaba' claims Tafwīd (doctrine of Divine Delegation). He (peace be upon him) said: 'And what is Tafwīd?' I said: 'He claims that Allāh, the Almighty, created Muḥammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) and 'Alī (peace be upon him), then delegated the affair of the universe to them, so they created, provided sustenance, gave life, and caused death (by virtue of this Divine Delegation).

The Imam (peace be upon him) said: ‘The enemy of Allāh has lied! When you return to him, recite to him the verse in Sūrah Al-Ra‘d: ‘Do they have Shurakā’ (partners they have set up with God) who have created creation like His, so that what is created became confusingly similar to them? Say: Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Supreme.’ (Qur’ān: 13:16).

Zurārah says: So I returned to the man (i.e. the claimant of Tafwīd) and informed him of what Al-Sādiq (as) had said, so it was as if I had placed a stone in his mouth (i.e. confounded/silenced him completely), or he (Zūrarah) said: he became mute and speechless!^[24]

Notice how the Imam (as) applies 13:16 of the Qur’ān (which was a verse Allah (SWT) revealed against the pagan polytheists of Makkah by the consensus of the *Mufasssirīn* (Qur’ān exegetes)) upon these extremist Shī‘a despite the fact that they were not claiming Imams (as) are gods or that they should be worshipped, rather they were simply claiming that Allah (SWT) has given powers to create, sustain, give life and death – WITH Allah’s Permission and by virtue of His Delegating these tasks to them.

Similarly, when Imam Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī bin Mūsā al-Riḍā (as) (d. 203 AH) was asked about the doctrine of *Tafwīd* (Divine Delegation of Powers to Create and Sustain to the Ahlul Bayt (as)), he responded with a very firm and categorical denial, and proceeded to quote another Qur’ānic verse revealed against the *Kuffār and Mushrikīn* (pagan disbelievers and polytheists of Makkah) in refutation of this claim:

عن ياسر الخادم قال: قلت للرضا عليه السلام: ما تقول في التفويض؟ فقال: إن الله تبارك وتعالى فَوَضَّ إِلَى نَبِيِّهِ (ص) أَمْرَ دِينِهِ فَقَالَ: ((مَا أَتَاكُمْ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا)). فَأَمَّا الخلق والرزق فلا. ثم قال عليه السلام: إن الله عز وجل يقول: ((اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ))، وهو يقول: ((اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ مِنْ ذَلِكَمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ)).

Yāsir al-Khādim (the servant of the 8th Imam) said: I asked Imam al- Riḍā (As): what do you say about Tafwīd (Divine Delegation of Powers to Create, Sustain, and run the affairs of the universe) to the Ahlul Bayt (as)?

So the Imam (as) replied: Allah (SWT) Did delegate the task promulgating the Dīn (religion) to His Prophet (s), so He said: “Whatever the Messenger gives you, you should take it, and whatever he asks you to stay away from, then stay away from it” (Qur’ān: 59:07).

But as far as the tasks of al-Khalq (creation) and al-Rizq (sustaining the creations) are concerned, then NO (i.e. He did not delegate anything in this domain to His Prophet (s) or any of his progeny).

Then the Imam (as) said: Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted, Says: “Allah is the Creator of everything” (Qur’ān: 13:16; 39:62), and He Says: “Allah is the One Who created you, then gave you sustenance, then He causes you to die,

then brings you to life. Is there any of your Shurakā' (i.e. those whom you set up as partners or associates with Him) who does any of this? Glory be to Him, and exalted is He above what they associate (with Him)."

(Qur'ān: 30:40).^[25]

Imam al-Riḍā (as) further channeled his renunciation, repudiation, condemnation, and disassociation from all those who made exaggerated claims about the Ahlul Bayt (as), claiming that Allah (SWT) had authorised them to perform Divine Functions, in the form of a supplication he is believed to have made a regular practice to supplicate to Allah (SWT) with. The advantage of using this style was that the clever argument of *Taqiyyah*^[26] which the Ghulāt used to deploy to overrule, overturn, and cancel all the denials and disassociations of the Imams (as) with regard to their deviant claims could not apply here, as it would be inconceivable that the Imam (as) would observe *Taqiyyah* with Allah (SWT) and deliberately lie to Him, in supplication.

وَكَانَ الرَّضَا - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ - يَقُولُ فِي دُعَائِهِ : «اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَبْرَأُ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْحَوْلِ وَالْقُوَّةِ، فَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِكَ

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَبْرَأُ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ ادَّعَوْا لَنَا مَا لَيْسَ لَنَا بِحَقِّ

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَبْرَأُ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا فِيْنَا مَا لَمْ نَقُلْهُ فِي أَنْفُسِنَا

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ الْخَلْقُ وَمِنْكَ الْأَمْرُ، وَإِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ خَالِقُنَا وَخَالِقُ آبَائِنَا الْأُولَى وَأَبَائِنَا الْآخِرِينَ

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَلِيْقُ الرُّبُوبِيَّةَ إِلَّا بِكَ، وَلَا تَصْلُحُ الْإِلَهِيَّةُ إِلَّا لَكَ، فَالْعَنِ النَّصَارَى الَّذِينَ صَعَّرُوا عَظْمَتَكَ، وَالْعَنِ الْمُضَاهِينَ لِقَوْلِهِمْ مِنْ بَرِيَّتِكَ

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا عَبِيدُكَ وَأَبْنَاءُ عِبِيدِكَ، لَا نَمْلِكُ لِأَنْفُسِنَا ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا وَلَا مَوْتًا وَلَا حَيَاةً وَلَا نُشُورًا

اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ زَعَمَ أَنَّ أَرْبَابَ فَتَحُنْ إِلَيْكَ مِنْهُ بَرَاءً، وَمَنْ زَعَمَ أَنَّ إِلَيْنَا الْخَلْقَ وَعَلَيْنَا الرِّزْقَ فَتَحُنْ إِلَيْكَ مِنْهُ بَرَاءً كِبْرَاءَةَ عِيسَى - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ - مِنَ النَّصَارَى

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا لَمْ نَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى مَا يَزُغُمُونَ، فَلَا تُوْأَخِذْنَا بِمَا يَقُولُونَ وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا مَا يَزُغُمُونَ

((رَبِّ لَا تَنْزِرْ عَلَيَّ الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دِيَارًا. إِنَّكَ إِنْ تَذَرَهُمْ يُضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا إِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا))

Imam al-Riḍā (as) used to say in his *Du 'ā'* (Supplication) to Allah (SWT):

O Allah, I declare my innocence before you, and disassociate from/renounce the attribution of Divine Power and Strength from myself; for there is no power or strength except with You.

O Allah, O Allah, I declare my innocence before you, and disassociate from/renounce the claims of those who have made (exaggerated) claims about us which are not true.

O Allah, I declare my innocence before you, and disassociate from/renounce the statements of those who have claimed about us that which we have not claimed for ourselves.

O Allah, to You belongs Creation and Authority/Command, and it is You alone whom we worship, and from You alone we seek help (across the curtain of Ghayb).

O Allah, You are Our Creator, and the Creator of our ancestors who came before us, the early and the latter.

O Allah, Rubūbiyyah (Sustainership of the universe) befits no one except You, and Divinity is only appropriate for You. So Send your La 'nah (wrath) on the Christians who belittled Your greatness, and Send your La 'nah (wrath) on all those whose beliefs and claims resemble their exaggerated beliefs and claims from among your creation.

O Allah, we are Your slaves, and the offspring of Your slaves. We do not control for ourselves ANY harm nor benefit, nor do we have any control over death or life, or resurrection.

O Allah, whoever claims that we are Arbāb (pl. of Rabb, i.e. sustainers), then we declare our innocence and disassociate ourselves from such claimants, in the same manner as 'Īsā, the son of Maryam (as), will declare his innocence, and disassociate himself, from the exaggerated beliefs and claims of the Christians regarding him.

O Allah, we have not called/invited them to what they claim (about us), so do not take us to task or punish us for what they say, and forgive us for what they attribute to us (of heresy and blasphemy).

O Lord, do not leave on the earth any dwelling of the disbelievers. Indeed, if You leave them, they will lead Your servants astray and produce nothing but wicked disbelievers. (Qur'ān: 71:26-27).^[27]

Thus, in light of this, it becomes crystal clear that the Imams from the Ahlul Bayt (as) left their followers with no valid grounds or excuses to claim any such supernatural Divine powers for them by denying them so firmly and so robustly. It is also clear that the Imams (as) considered such claims to be entailing Shirk.

Why is linguistic Du 'ā' (i.e. regular calling on this side of the curtain of Ghayb) to Ghayr Allah not Shirk?

By linguistic *Du 'ā'*, we mean the general meaning of the word *Du 'ā'* in the Arabic language, as opposed to the specific and special meaning it has in the Shari'ah. Linguistically, *Du 'ā'* can refer to any call a person makes to a fellow human being or to even to an animal on this side of the curtain of Ghayb. When we call each other in our daily lives, this is not a religious *Du 'ā'*, but rather a mundane, regular calling of one another through natural means, without any violation of the curtain of Ghayb.

The Qur'an also shows us that merely calling upon someone (*Du 'ā'*) on this side of the curtain of Ghayb is NOT Shirk. See for yourself Allah's order:

(08:24) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

O you who believe! Answer (the call of) Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life; and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be gathered. (08:24).

Here 'Du 'ā' is being used in the general linguistic sense of a regular calling of people on this side of the curtain of Ghayb, not in the terminological sense of calling upon someone across the curtain of Ghayb, because the Prophet (Saww) only used to call upon those people who were physically accessible to him and who were alive in his lifetime on this side of the curtain of Ghayb, since the Qur'an makes it clear he doesn't have the ability to make those in the graves listen to his voice^[28].

Another example which proves the permissibility of linguistic *Du 'ā'* to Ghayr Allah on this side of the curtain of Ghayb and shows it to be Prophetic Sunnah actually is Allah's command:

(24:63) لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا

'Do not treat the Du 'ā' (call/summons) of the Messenger like the Du 'ā' (call/summons) which you issue to each other....' (24:63)

In this verse also, we see 'Du 'ā' is being used in the general linguistic sense of a regular calling of someone on this side of the curtain of Ghayb, not in the terminological sense of calling upon someone across the curtain of Ghayb, because the Prophet (Saww) only used to call those of his companions who were alive and physically accessible to him on this side of the curtain of Ghayb for various affairs of state, and not those who had left this world and gone back to their Creator.

We can easily glean and deduce the following facts from the aforementioned verse, i.e. 24:63:

1. The Prophet (s) used to call and summon his companions for various matters (through natural means of course, and obviously on this side of the curtain of Ghayb). The Qur'ān doesn't condemn this or label this Shirk. Instead, it validates this practice, and orders the companions to always make sure they respond to the call of the Messenger (Saww) and prioritise it over all other calls.
2. The companions used to call each other on this side of the curtain of Ghayb, but they would not always prioritise responding to each other's' calls immediately. This is why the Qur'ān is instructing them not to treat the Prophet's calls like how they treat their own calls to one another.
3. *Du 'ā'*, in the Qur'ān, particularly when it is not across Ghayb, doesn't mean worship, or else the Prophet's *Du 'ā'* (call) to the companions, and the companions' calls to each other, mentioned in 24:63 would be worship of other than Allah, and therefore Shirk.

We have plenty of more examples from the Qur'ān to establish the permissibility and validity of linguistic, regular, natural calling of one's fellow human beings for help or for support or for any other need.

In *Sūrah Āle 'Imrān* (Chapter 3) of the Qur'ān, Allah (SWT) presents before us the scene from the battle of Uḥud when the tables were turned, and the Kuffār struck back, and many of the companions of the Prophet (Saww) began to flee and desert him:

إِذْ تُصْعِدُونَ وَلَا تَلْوُونَ عَلَى أَحَدٍ وَالرَّسُولُ يَدْعُوكُمْ فِي أُخْرَاكُمْ فَأَتَابَكُمْ عَمَّا بَعِمَ لَكَيْلًا تَحَزَنُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا مَا أَصَابَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

(03:153)

Behold! When you were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side glance at any one, and the Messenger was calling you back in the rear. There did Allah give you one distress after another by way of requital, to teach you not to grieve for (the booty) that had escaped you and for (the ill) that had befallen you. For Allah is well aware of all that ye do. (03:153).

The term used in the Arabic of this verse to refer to the Prophet's earnest calls to his companions to come back and fight back the onslaught of the Kuffār is *Du 'ā'*. But this is once again the linguistic *Du 'ā'*, the regular calling of the type we witness in our everyday life. The companions he was calling out to for support were at a short distance away; not the other side of the curtain of Ghayb. This kind of calling of physically alive and accessible entities, therefore, only comes under linguistic and natural, regular, everyday calling, and is not *Du 'ā'* of the terminological variety which is done across Ghayb to Allah (SWT), and which is exclusively reserved for Him, and deemed an act of worship by Him in 40:60 of the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān also uses the term *Du 'ā'* to refer to Prophetic act and practice of calling people towards guidance, but once again this is different from the terminological variety of *Du 'ā'* which is seen as worship and therefore Shirk by Allah, because it does not involve any violation of the curtain of Ghayb, since the people whom the Prophet (Saww) called towards guidance were physically alive at the time, and accessible to him such that they could hear his voice.

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ أَخَذَ مِيثَاقَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (57:13)

*And what reason have you that you should not believe in Allah when **the Messenger calls on you** that you may believe in your Lord, and indeed He has made a covenant with you if you are believers. (57:13).*

Another example of this is:

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَقَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ (03:193)

*Our Lord! surely **we have heard a preacher calling to the faith**, saying: Believe in your Lord, so we did believe; Our Lord! forgive us therefore our faults, and cover our evil deeds and make us die with the righteous. (03:193).*

Here again the Qur'ān is referring to the Prophet's calling people towards the faith, but this was a call that was made to those who were physically accessible to him and alive, and there was no violation of the curtain of Ghayb. If it is said that this call is also applicable to us, the answer is that is only so because people in our time have transmitted to us. The Prophet (s) has not directly addressed us with anything from across Ghayb, rather his teachings have been brought to us by intermediaries who are physically accessible to us, so there is no violation of the curtain of Ghayb involved in this.

The Qur'ān shows us that not only is linguistic *Du 'ā'* to one another permissible, but so is linguistic *Istighātha*, i.e. crying out for help to someone who is on this side of the curtain of Ghayb, and is both physically alive and accessible to us. Proof of this can be found in the Qur'ān's description of the cry for help which was made by Prophet Mūsā's (as) tribesman:

وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَى حِينٍ غَفْلَةٍ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ هَذَا مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَاسْتَعَاثَ الَّذِي مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَوَكَرَهُ مُوسَى فَقَضَى عَلَيْهِ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُضِلٌّ مُبِينٌ (28:15)

*And he (i.e. Mūsā) entered the city at a time when its people were not watching; and he found there two men fighting,- one of his own party, and the other, of his enemies. Now **the man of his own party cried out for help***

(Istighātha) to him against his foe, and Moses struck him with his fist, so he killed him. He (Mūsā) said: “This is a work of Shaiṭān: for he is an enemy that manifestly misleads!”(28:15).

The Qur’ān clearly shows the tribesman of Mūsā (as) pleading to him for help, and in fact crying out to him for succor whilst in a state of distress, and the Qur’ān uses the term *Istighātha* here to indicate that, yet the Qur’ān issues no condemnation and shows no disapproval of this type of *Istighātha* because it does not involve any violation of the curtain of Ghayb. This is just a case of regular seeking of help from people who are physically alive and accessible to oneself on this side of the curtain of Ghayb, and this kind of *Istighātha* is not perceived as an act of worship by Allah (SWT), because no unique or exclusive Divine attributes have to be bestowed upon any entity on this side of the curtain of Ghayb in order to justify calling upon it, and this is why there is no scope for deeming it to be Shirk. However, when entities across the curtain of Ghayb are invoked, those doing so either have to fall into *Shirk Fī al-Ṣifāt* (establishing partnership with Allah by sharing His exclusive Divine Attributes with other entities) or they have to fall into *Iftirā’* (invention of a false claim against Allah) by claiming that Allah (SWT) has specially empowered these entities to hear, listen to, and respond favourably to their calls, despite there being no *Sulṭān* (warrant or writ of authorisation) from Allah in support of such a tall and extraordinary claim about Him. However, no such problematic maneuver is necessary to justify calling upon any entity that’s physically alive in this world, and therefore accessible to us via natural means.

Therefore, *Du ‘ā’* (calling) on this side of the curtain of Ghayb to each other through natural means is neither worship nor Shirk. Rather, it is perfectly permissible. In fact, it is Sunnah even as per the Qur’ān, and the Prophet’s companions practised it freely among themselves just as we do so today.

Thus, when the Qur’ān prohibits *Du ‘ā’* (calling/supplicating) to entities other than Allah, it **CANNOT** mean the regular, natural calling that the Prophet (Saww), his companions, and all of us humans engage in – with each other – on a regular basis and as part of our daily lives on this side of the curtain of Ghayb, because the permissibility of this is affirmed by both the Qur’ān and Sunnah. Thus to claim that the Qur’ān is forbidding calling upon entities other than Allah in the absolute sense (on both this side of the curtain of Ghayb and beyond) would be tantamount to claiming that the Qur’ān contradicts itself. Because, on the one hand, it doesn’t forbid the Prophet (Saww) from calling his companions, nor does it forbid the companions from calling each other, through natural means on this side of the curtain of Ghayb, but on the other hand, if we say that the verses which forbid calling upon other than Allah are not exclusively restricted to calling entities across Ghayb, then that would mean calling each other on this side of the curtain of Ghayb would also be forbidden Shirk, and both the Messenger

(Saww) and companions would be guilty of this Shirk, God Forbid, and we all know that the Qur'ān doesn't hold them guilty of any such thing.

It therefore stands to reason that the prohibition of *Du 'ā'* (calling) can ONLY be exclusively referring to the act of calling upon entities across the curtain of Ghayb, since we can rule out the possibility of it referring to entities on this side of the curtain of Ghayb with absolute Qur'ān-based certainty, and this is the reason why the phrase '*across the curtain of Ghayb*' is understood as being intrinsically embedded in every verse of the Qur'ān which forbids *Du 'ā'* (supplication) to entities other than Allah (SWT) and refers to it as Shirk, even if it is omitted due to how obvious it is in light of all the numerous verses which showcase the permissibility and validity of calling upon entities on this side of the curtain of Ghayb.

Footnotes

1. The difference between *Du 'ā'* and *Istighātha* in the language of the Arabs is that *Du 'ā'* can be used to refer to any call that is made regardless of what state it is made in, whereas *Istighātha* is a term reserved in Arabic for cries and calls of help that are made in a state of dire distress. So *Istighātha* is essentially a distress call, and as such, it is a form of *Du 'ā'*, as it comes under the general umbrella of a call, and thus the *Aḥkām* (rulings) of *Du 'ā'* apply to it, namely that *Istighātha*, like *Du 'ā'*, is permissible between human beings on this side of the curtain of *Ghayb*, but impermissible and Shirk when done to *Ghaybī* (unseen) entities other than Allah (SWT) on the other side of the curtain of *Ghayb*.



2. The Qur'ān: 02:173; 05:03; 06:118, 119, 121, 145; 16:115.



3. The Qur'ān: 04:23.



4. The Qur'ān: 05:03.



5. The Qur'ān: 22:39.



6. The Qur'ān: 12:82.



7. '*Basmalah*' refers to the Arabic phrase '*Bismillāhi al-Raḥmāni al-Raḥīm*' with which chapters in the Qur'ān usually begin, with the exception of Sūrah al-Tawbah (Chapter 9).



8. George Sale, *The Koran*.



9. J.M. Rodwell, *The Koran*.



10. Arberry, A J, *The Koran Interpreted*.



11. Yusufali, Abdullah, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary*.



12. Pickthall, Muhammad Marmaduke, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*.



13. Shakir, M. H., *Holy Qur'an*.



14. Mir Ahmad Ali, S.V., *Holy Qur'an with English Translation and Commentary*.



15. Hilali, Muhammad Taqui al-Din and Khan, Muhammad Muhsin, *The Noble Quran*.



16. See: Al-Suyūṭī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin Abī Bakr. *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. Al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah li-l-Kutub, Cairo, 1st ed., 1394 AH/1974 CE., vol. 3, pp. 196-197. (<https://shamela.ws/book/11728/960#p5> – <https://shamela.ws/book/11728/961#p1>).

There is some nuance to this, however, as Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH) points out. The *Ahl al-Bayān* (experts in speech patterns of Arabic) maintain that the formula of the omitted part is not fixed, but rather flexibly amendable to the situation and circumstances of the one reciting the *Basmalah*, so that for the one who recites it before eating, the meaning would be '*I eat with the name of Allah*', and for the one who says it before reciting the Qur'ān, for instance, it would be '*I recite with the Name of Allah....*'. However, the *Nuḥāt* (scholars of Arabic grammar) maintain that the omitted part is fixed, and its formula is a noun according to the Baṣran grammarians, viz. ابتدائي كائن '*My beginning is happening*', and a verb according to the grammarians of Kūfa, viz. أبدأ '*I begin*' or أتلو '*I recite*'.

For this, see: Al-Anjarī, Abu al-'Abbās Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin al-Mahdī Ibn 'Ajībah al-Ḥasanī al-Fāsī. *Al-Baḥr Al-Madīd fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*. Ed. Aḥmad 'Abdullāh Al-Qarashī Raslān. Published by Dr. Ḥasan 'Abbās Zakīyy, Cairo, 1st ed., 1419 AH., vol. 1, p. 53. (<https://shamela.ws/book/10273/48#p2>).



17. See Al-Ṭabarsī, Amīn al-Islām Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl bin al-Ḥasan. *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Ed. Committee of Scholars and Experts. Mu'assasat Al-'Ālamī, Beirut, 2nd ed., 1425 AH/2005 CE., vol. 1, p. 52.



18. It is very crucial for students of Islamic knowledge to know the difference between المعنى اللغوي (general linguistic or lexicographical meaning of a word in the Arabic language) and المعنى الاصطلاحي (specific terminological meaning of the word which is meant when the term is used in the Qur'ān or in an Islamic context). The way the terminologies of Islam came about is that Allah (SWT) took words that have general meanings in the Arabic language which was spoken among the Arabs of the time and attached very specific meanings to them which the Qur'ān and the Prophet (Saww) helped establish and demonstrate. A good example is the word *Kufr* which has a general linguistic meaning of 'to hide, to conceal', and it was in view of this literal root meaning that the Arabs referred to a farmer, or tiller of soil, as a *Kāfir* (pl. *Kuffār*), because of how he hides the seed in the soil at the time of plantation. This literal linguistic usage even appears in the Qur'ān in *Sūrah al-Ḥadīd* (Chapter 57) where Allah (SWT) Declares:

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا وَفِي الْأَجْرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْعُرُورِ (20)

You should all know that the life of this world is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children, like the example of the rain whose [resulting] plant growth delighted the Kuffār (tillers/sowers); then it gets dried up and withers; then you see it turn yellow; then it becomes debris and crumbles away. But in the Hereafter is a Penalty severe (for the devotees of wrong). And Forgiveness from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure (for the devotees of Allah). And what is the life of this world, but goods and chattels of deception? (57:20).

However Allah (SWT) took the terms *Kufr*, *Kāfir*, *Kuffār*, and imbued them with a very specific terminological meaning that is usually the intended one when these terms are used in the Qur'ān and even in the Ḥadīth in the context of referring to disbelief and deliberate rejection of the truth of God's revelations even after it has become clear and manifest to a person. Thus, *Kufr* came to mean willful rejection of the Revelations of God, and the terms *Kāfir* and *Kuffār* in the terminological sense only refer to the disbelievers, and not farmers or peasants.

The same holds true for the word *Shirk* which is a word whose general, linguistic meaning is simply to associate someone or something with someone or something else or to establish any kind of equivalence or partnership between them. To this very day, even in MSA (Modern Standard Arabic) and in modern Arab countries, including Islamic ones, one will see the use of the term *Shurakā'* (partners) on their shops and places of business to indicate the main owner as well as his business partners. See for instance the websites of these two companies and how they are named:

<http://www.alsayedgroup.com/ar/Default.aspx> & <https://albarakatilaw.com/>. But Allah then took this general linguistic term and used it in the Qur'ān to refer to the act of setting up any kind of partnership,

association or equivalence between Him and any other entity without *Sulṭān* (authorisation) from Him.

Similarly, the general linguistic meaning of the word صلاة (*Ṣalāh*) in the Arabic language means 'to turn', but that general meaning is never intended when this word is used in a religious or jurisprudential context. When Islam came, it took many regular, ordinary words from the Arabic language and converted them into special terminologies for very specific religious beliefs, concepts, practices and rituals. So the word صلاة (*Ṣalāh*) was converted into a terminology used to refer specifically to the special act/ritual of worship which begins with *Takbīr* and ends at *Taslīm*. Therefore, when we refer to the linguistic or general meaning of a word or term, that just means its literal meaning in the language. But when we refer to its terminological meaning, we are referring to its specific meaning in the Sharī'ah.

There is a difference between the linguistic meaning of Shirk and terminological (*Iṣṭilāḥī*) meaning of Shirk. Linguistically, any act of pairing or placing two things together or establishing a partnership between them is Shirk. So even the verse that says أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول 'Obey Allah and Obey the Messenger' is implying a linguistic kind of pairing and partnership between Allah and His Messenger in the matter of obedience, because Allah is ordering obedience towards the Messenger just as He is ordering it for Himself, so He is placing the Messenger in the same category as Himself in this particular matter, and demanding the same thing for him which He is demanding for Himself. So linguistically, this may come under the literal meaning of Shirk. But this is different from the forbidden variety of Shirk, and what is meant by it when it is used terminologically in a religious context, because the pairing between Allah and His Messenger in the matter of obedience is a Divinely sanctioned pairing and partnership, and it is limited to the sphere of obedience in matters of religion.

Terminological (*Iṣṭilāḥī*) Shirk which is forbidden by Allah in the Qur'ān is when an exclusive Divine Prerogative, power, office, attribute or privilege is given to an entity other than Allah (SWT) or a pairing or partnership is established between Him and any other entity without there being any *Sulṭān* (Divinely sanctioned warrant, authorisation) from Allah (SWT) in support of it as is clear from 07:33 of the Qur'ān.



19. Al-Kulaynī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad bin Ya'qūb. Al Kāfī. Ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī. Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah (Maktabah al-Ṣadūq), Tehran, 2nd ed., 1381 AH., vol. 1, p. 53. [Bāb al-Taqlīd; Narration # 1]. (<https://lib.eshia.ir/11005/1/53>). To access English translation: <https://thaqalayn.net/hadith/1/2/18/1>. Authentication: Authenticated by: Al-Bahbūdī, 'Allāmah Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Kāfī. Al-Dār al-Islāmiyyah, Beirut, 1st ed., 1401 AH/1981 CE., vol. 1, p. 7. [Narration # 23/1].



20. See: Qur'ān: 02:132; 04:59, 80; 05:92; 08:01, 46; 24:54; 47:33; 58:13; 64:12.



21. See: <https://dorar.net/hadith/sharh/69041>; <https://sunnah.com/muslim:1006>.



22. See: Qur'ān: 18:71, 74, 77.



23. A prayer, invocation, and supplication to Allah (SWT) to distance someone from His Mercy and subject to His Wrath and Punishment.



24. Al-Ṣadūq, Shaykh Abū Ja'far Muḥammad bin 'Alī bin al-Ḥusain bin Mūsā Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī. *I'tiqādāt al-Imāmiyyah*. Ed. 'Iṣām 'Abd al-Sayyid. Al-Mu'tamar Al-'Ālamī li Alfiyyati Al-Shaykh Al-Mufid, Qum, 1st ed., 1413 AH/1993 CE., p. 100. (<https://lib.eshia.ir/71470/1/100>).



25. Al-Ṣadūq, Shaykh Abū Ja'far Muḥammad bin 'Alī bin al-Ḥusain Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī. *Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*. Manshūrāt al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, Qum, 1st ed., 1378., vol. 1, p. 219. [Narration # 3]. (<https://lib.eshia.ir/14032/1/219>).



26. *Taqiyyah* means dissimulation or expressing beliefs or claims contrary to what one knows to be the truth due to fear for life, limb or one's welfare and safety. When the Imams (as) rejected claims of the Ghulāt (extremist exaggerators), they (i.e. the Ghulāt) argued the Imams (as) were lying and acting out of *Taqiyyah*, meaning that they feared if they stated the truth, the authorities would kill them or harm them, and hence they were exercising *Taqiyyah* to protect themselves from harm.



27. Al-Ṣadūq, Shaykh Abū Ja'far Muḥammad bin 'Alī bin al-Ḥusain bin Mūsā Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī. *I'tiqādāt al-Imāmiyyah*. Ed. 'Iṣām 'Abd al-Sayyid. Al-Mu'tamar Al-'Ālamī li Alfiyyati Al-Shaykh Al-Mufid, Qum, 1st ed., 1413 AH/1993 CE., pp. 99-100. (<https://lib.eshia.ir/71470/1/99> - <https://lib.eshia.ir/71470/1/100>).



28. See: Qur'ān: 35:22.

