

Spirituality of worship as manifested in the lives of early Muslims - its need and practicability in modern times

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Spirituality is generally considered as mystical experience whereby *Sufis* endeavour to comprehend the reality of Allah Almighty. This knowledge of Allah acquired by spiritual practices is known, in the language of *Sufis*, as *ma'rifah* but this is only restricted meaning of spirituality. The real meaning of spirituality has been well explained by the Prophet ﷺ, peace be upon him, in the well-known "*Hadith Jibril*". In this *hadith*, the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have explained the meaning of "*Iman*", "*Islam*" and "*Ihsan*" in the presence of Gabriel who had come in the guise of a human being and had asked the Prophet ﷺ to explain the above terms. Hearing the answer from the Prophet ﷺ the angel confirmed that the explanation advanced by the Prophet ﷺ was correct. While explaining the term '*Ihsan*', the Prophet ﷺ said that *Ihsan* is to worship Allah as if thou *seest* Him (*kaannaka tarahu*) for if thou *seest* Him not, He nevertheless *seest* thee (*fa innahu yaraka*) ⁽¹⁾. According to this authentic *hadith*, spirituality is nothing more than the inner worship or in other words it is the 'essence' of worship. As explained by the Prophet ﷺ the highest form of worship, termed as "*Ihsan*", is to be absorbed in the remembrance of Allah with such devotion that one could feel the presence of Allah before him but if he cannot reach that level of concentration he must at least have faith that he is being watched by Allah. Short of this feeling his worship will be bereft of spirituality. It is corroborated by the *Qur'anic* verse saying: "Woe to those who pray but are unmindful of their prayer" ⁽²⁾.

It is commonly believed that spirituality of worship can only be achieved by undergoing spiritual training with some *sufi*, called *Pir*, *Shaykh* or *Murshid*, belonging to one or the other *Sufi* orders (*tariqah*). This erroneous belief has discouraged the general members of the Muslim community to strive by themselves for the attainment of spirituality in their worship. No doubt these *sufi* orders and the *sufis* have played a significant role in propagating Islam in different regions of the world like Africa, India and South East Asia in the past but this contribution was made by early devotees of Islam after whom are named the famous *sufi* orders. As regards later *sufis*, especially those advocating anti-Islamic theories of '*hulul*' and the so called *Sufis* of modern times,

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21. Al-I'ilan, p. 173.
22. Al-Kamil, 1:10, al-I'ilan, p. 174.
23. Al-I'ilan, p. 174.
24. Al-Kamil, 1:10, al-I'ilan, p. 174.
25. Al-I'ilan, p. 172.
26. Al-Taratib, 1:187.
27. Al-I'ilan, p. 183.
28. Al-Suyuti, Ta'rikh al-Khulafa, Karachi, 1973, p. 103.
29. Al-I'ilan, p. 172. This was suggested on the ground that after the accomplishment of the Hijra, the first month, in which fighting is prohibited, to come was the month of Rajab.
30. Al-I'ilan, p. 172. This seems to be suggested on the holiness of the month of Ramadan.
31. Al-I'ilan, p. 171.
32. Ibid. The various suggestions regarding the adoption of the first month of the Hijra calendar at this stage seems to be suggestive to that there was no fixed practice about it. Had it been so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had commanded to use the month of Rabi'al-Awwal as the starting month of the Hijra calendar, the matter could not have been discussed afresh. Hence the various views were expressed.
33. Shibli Nau'mani, Sirat al-Nabi, Karachi, 1975, 6:
34. The final pledge of 'Aqba took place in 622 A.D. on the occasion of Hajj.
35. Hadith Marfu' is that kind of hadith isnad of which goes back to the Prophet, though it might be broken somewhere.
36. Al-I'ilan, p. 171.
37. Ibid.
38. Al-Taratib, 1:181.
39. Ibid.
40. On 29 occasions.
41. Sura xxxvi (ya-sin) 38-39.
42. Sura x (yunus), 5.
43. Sura 11 (Baqara) 189.
44. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, Beirut, 1980, 3:458.
45. عليكم بسنتي وسنة خلفاء الراشدين المهديين

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1. Al-Kalkashandi, Subh al-A' Asha Ciaro, 6:24; al-Khattani, M. Abd al-haiy, al-Taratib al-Idariya (=al - Taratib), Beirut, 1:181; Amir 'Ali, the Sprit of Islam, London, 1961, P. 46, Short History of Sarasane, London, 1953, P. 10.
2. Al-Taratib, 1: 181.
3. Al-Sakhawi, Muhammad b. 'Abd-al-Rahman, al-I'lan bi al-Taubikh.
(- al- I'lan) Tr. S.M. Yusuf, Lahore, 1976, P. 176; Shorter E.I., e.v. Hidjra, South Asian Publishers, Karachi, 1981, p. 139.
4. Ibid.
5. Diyarbakri, Husain b. Muhammad, Ta'rikh al-Khamis, Cairo, 1:38.
ان قرض رمضان كان بعد ما موقت القبلة في شعبان بشهر على ثمانية عشر شهرا سرية عبدالله بن انيس
See also al-Maghazi, by al-Waqidi, e.v.
6. For details see al-Kamil fi al-Ta'rikh (=al-Kamil) Beirut, 1385/1965. 1:11-12.7 Ka'b b. Lunaif is the ancestor of Banu Hashim-Lowaiy-Murra-Kilab-Qusaaiy—Abd Manaf-Hashim-Abd al-Muttalib—Abd-Allah-Muhammad.
7. Al-Kamil, 1:11. The incidence is said to have taken place in the year of the birth of Prophet (570 or 571).
8. The Days of al-Fijar (Transgression) so called because they fell in the holy months during which fighting is prohibited, This was fought between the Qurashit and their allies Kinana on one side and the Hawazin on the other, when the Prophet was a youth, about A.D. 580-590. T.P. Huges, Dictionary of Islam, Lahore, p. 128.
9. Al-I ilan, P. 171.
10. See above 5.
11. Al-Kamil, 1:10, al-I'lan, p. 171
12. Al-K amil, 1:10 Umar on receiving Abu Musa's letter called a meeting Al- I'lan, p. 171
13. Al- Kamil, 1:11; al-I'lan, p. 171
14. Al-I'lan, p. 172
15. Al-I'lan, p.173 al-Kamil, 1:10.
16. For daitails see Shibli Naumani, al-Faruq, Karachi, 1958; Shorter E-I, e.v. Hidjra, South Asian publisher, Karachi, 1981, P. 139.
17. Shibli Nau mani al- Farup, p. 458.
18. So called after one of the persian kings, d. 272 A.D., al mu'jam al-wasit. ed: by Dr.Ibrahim Anis et el, 2nd ed: 2:983
19. Al-Kamil, 1:10, al-I'lan, p. 173.
20. Al-Kamil, 1:10, al-I'lan, p. 173. Alexander's time means 332 B.C.

the new moons are signs to mark fixed periods of time (in the affairs of) man and for pilgrimage. As such the decision of the Qur'an that the moon along with serving as the basis for time elements in general, determine the time for Hajj as well, attaches religious significance to the use of the Hijra calendar based on the lunar system.

The west adheres to its hereditary traditions and clings to its characteristics even though he it of trivial and insignificant nature. But our's case has become somewhat different and lamentable. We abandon certain aspects of obligation, which in some cases might be of basic importance. Not only that we do behave so, but the tragedy is that we adopt other's characteristics in place of what we already have, on the pretext that we are culturally advanced and that there is no harm in adopting other' characteristics if it apparently seems to be more convenient than ours. This tendency on our part is lamentable.

Adoption of the Christian Calendar in place of the Hijra calendar by us, the Muslims, is too manifest of which there is no gain say. Is it so that it has not affected us in any way? Many of us will cut a sorry figure when asked to name the current month of the Hijra calendar, what to speak of the date of the month. But they will name the month and even dates of the Christian calendar as a ready reckoner.

As mentioned, throughout the Muslim-world the Hijra calendar was used, which the colonial ruler substituted by the Christian calendar. During the colonial rule, use of the Christian calendar by us, is somewhat understandable. But now when the colonial rule has ended, our clinging to the use of Christian Calendar is surprising enough. Rather it portrays a gloomy picture of us in the sense that we use Christian calendar only for its so called occurrences, but we use it even where its use could have easily been avoided, rather the very nature of the works demands so. An analysis of the situation indicates that it seems to be the result of a pre-planned scheme of the orientalist, who mention our history with reference to the Christian calendar, as much as they can. This method is of expletive nature, because it leads us away from our cultural environment. How far the orientalist have successful in their scheme needs no proof in presence of Muslim scholars who followed the orientalist's footsteps in this respect, without knowing its consequences.

Any persistence in the matter of using the Christian calendar in place of the Hijra calendar which has been one of the Islamic characteristics from the beginning, would tell a lot for us, the sooner we revert to the use of the Hijra calendar, the better for us. It is therefore of utmost necessity to revive the use of the Hijra calendar, regularised by the companion the Prophet ﷺ, upholding the sprit of the Hadith: it is binding upon you to obey me any my rightly guided successors' ⁽⁴⁶⁾

sun, and the moon, in some places these two words have been mentioned together, while in some places uncombined. Along with describing their position among the created things, the Qur'an mentions its usefulness for the mankind. Among these undoubtedly is what man has evolved from them two systems for recognising time elements in terms of days, months, and years to be known as solar and lunar systems.

If we take into consideration the various related verses of the Qur'an from this point of view, we find the following three verses:

والشمس تجري بمسطقر لها ذلك تقدير العظيم ﴿﴾ والقمر قدرنا منازل حتى عاد كالعرجون القديم ﴿﴾

(And the sun runs his course for a period determined for him: That is the decree for (Him) the Exalted in might the All Knowing. And the moon, we have measured for the Mensions (to Traverse) till she returns like the old (and withered) lower part of a date-stalk).⁴²

هو الذى جعل الشمس ضياء والقمر نورا وقدره منازل لتعلموا عدد السنين والحساب ﴿﴾

(It is He who made the sun to be shining glory. And the moon to be a light (of beauty) and measured out stages for her, that ye might know the number of years and the count (of time).⁴³

ويستلونك عن الاهلة قل هي مواقيت للناس الحج

(They ask thee concerning the new moons. Say: they are but signs to make fixed periods of time in (the affairs of man and for pilgrimage).⁴⁴

It may be pointed out that in the first two verses where the sun and the moon have been mentioned together, it is the moon for which qualifying words **قدره منازل** in the first verse and (**قدره منازل**) in the second verse respectively have been used. By **تقدير منازل** is meant the various stages through which the moon passes i.e. its being lean and of little light in the beginning, then its increase both in body and light, and finally its coming gradually to its former position. Further; after the qualifying words **قدره منازل** relating to the moon in the second verse, we find the sentence **لتعلموا عدد السنين والحساب** that you might know the number of years and the count (of time). This shows that subjecting the moon to under go through various stages is for the purpose of counting number of years and time. Explaining this verse, Ibn Kathir says "that by the sun are recognised days and by the varied conditions of the moon are determined months and years."⁴⁵ These two verses, as a matter of fact, indicate that the moon is more important than sun for the determination of time elements.

Now let us take the third verse, the translation of which is that

2. It is the month in which Hajjis (pilgrims) return from Hajj (pilgrimage).
3. The month of Muharram had been in use by the Arabs as the first month of their Calendar.
4. Muharram is one of the four months in which war is prohibited.
5. Among the days of the month of Muharram a day is such a holy one in which Man's repentance (توبه) is accepted.
6. There is a hadith Marfu³⁶ reported by al-Dailami in his book al-Firdous relating to the beginning of the Hijra calendar from the month of Muharram.³⁷

In continuation thereof, al-Sakhawi quotes Ibn Hadjar's comments who says that among the reasons advanced in favour for the month of Muharram to be counted as the first month of the Hijra calendar, the reason mentioned at one above seems to be more weighty than the others.³⁸

The above discussions clarify two points:

1. That it was 'Umar the first, who got decided the matter relating to the adoption of the month of the month of Muharram as the starting month of the Hijra calendar:
2. That he was not the first who introduced the Hijra calendar as is generally understood by the sentence اول من ارخ بالهجرة النبوية 'Umar is the first who used Tarikh with the Hijra of the Prophet).³⁹

The misunderstanding created by the above sentence would have dispelled had it been read in context with al-Sakhawi's statements who following the discussion decidedly says فيكون عمر متبعاً لا مبتكراً⁴⁰ 'Umar is the follower of a practice and not an originator).

After this historical decision, the use of the Hijra calendar dating from the month of Muharram, instead of Rabi'al-Awwal, was adopted throughout the Muslim world, and regarded as an Islamic characteristics as that of writing, بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم in the beginning of all correspondence, including personal one.

It needs no proof that from the very beginning man felt the necessity of regulating his activities. For remembering so many event upto serving its purpose, enabling him to correlate the past with the present and to come over the difficulties or to enjoy the occurrences of natural phenomena on regular or irregular basis would have guided man to formulate certain guidelines, for which the sun, by its appearance and disappearance at regular intervals or the moon with its horizontal conditions, served the purpose of evolution of time factors.

However, without entering into its details, our concern is to examine the Qur'an, which has also referred to both the sun and the moon.

The Qur'an has mentioned in various places⁴¹ the words the

by 'Umar the following suggestions were given: -

1. The first view was that Hurmuzan,¹⁹ used by the Persians, (who specify years after their king's ascending the throne) be treated as a model and on the same pattern we could also base our history.²⁰
2. The second view was that we should follow the Romans who mention their history from Alexander's time.²¹
3. The third view was that we should start counting the year from the Prophet's year of birth.²²
4. The fourth view was that it should be from the year in which the Prophet ﷺ proclaimed Prophethood.²³
5. The fifth view was that it should be from the date of Prophet's death.²⁴
6. The sixth view was that it should start from the Hijra of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina.²⁵

The first and the second views were rejected; reasons for their being rejected are not far to seek. In order to arrive at a conclusion, the remaining four views were discussed, and after great deliberation the view mentioned at No.6 that the Hijra of the Prophet ﷺ be adopted for the purpose. And it was unanimously agreed upon.²⁶

The third and the fourth views were rejected on the ground that there were differences in their actual happenings.²⁷ The fifth view i.e. the year of Prophet's death should be adopted was also rejected on account of its having an aspect of grief.²⁸

After resolving the matter through the consensus that the Hijra should be used for the purpose of reckoning years, yet another issue had to be resolved and that was with regard to the starting month of the Hijra calendar. Should it be the month of Rabi'al-Awwal because of its being the month in which the Hijra of the Prophet ﷺ accomplished²⁹ or should it be another month. 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Awf is reported to have suggested that the first month of Hijra calendar should be the month of Rajab, because it is one of the four Haram months (i.e. the months in which war is prohibited).³⁰ Some suggested that the month of Ramadan, be adopted for the purpose.³¹ 'Uthman and ali' are reported to have suggested that the first month of the Hijra calendar should be the month of Muharram³² and this view was agreed upon,³³ though neither the Hijra of the Prophet started nor ended in the month of Muharram.³⁴

For the agreement on the adoption of the month of Muharram as the first month of the Hijra calendar instead of the month of Rabi'al-Awwal, many reasons have been advanced, which have been summarised by al-Sakhawi.

1. The pledge of 'Aqaba³⁵ was finalised in the month of Zu al-Hijja, after which Allah's command for the Prophet's Hijra was received and Muharram was the first month to come after Allah's command.

history of Islam. Soon after its occurrence it occupied the mind of the Muslims, who attached greatest importance to it. There was no better way to remember its importance than to count it as the starting point for recounting their later history.

As the final stage of the Hijra was accomplished by the arrival of the Prophet ﷺ at Medina in the month of Rabi' al Awwal, the Muslims, it is said, therefore started to use the month of Rabi' al Awwal as the first month of Hijra Calendar, as has been shown above.¹¹

This method seems to be in vogue till the Khilafat of 'Umar the first, who is reported to have regularised it fully with the change that the month of Muharram was adopted as the first month of the Hijra calendar. — instead of Rabi' al Awwal said to have so far been used as the first month of the Hijra calendar.

For 'Umar's paying attention to the regularisation of the Hijra calendar and adopting the month of Muharram in place of Rabi' al Awwal as the first month, various factors are said to be responsible. They are: -

1. Ibn Kathir, on the authority of al-Waqidi, says that in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal of this year (16th year) a document was presented to 'Umar relating to the payment of a debt. The document indicated that the payment would be made in the month of Sha'ban. 'Umar, then, asked as to which Sha'ban was meant, Sha'ban of the current, past or the coming year.¹²
2. Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, the governor of Kufa, wrote to 'Umar that you send so many letters to us, but none indicates dates.¹³
3. It was ya'la'b. Umayya who first of all used dates, when he was in Yeman, wherefrom he wrote a letter to 'Umar and mentioned the date in it. On receiving a letter with date from Ya'la b. Umayya, 'Umar greatly appreciated it.¹⁴
4. Once a person from Yeman came to 'Umar and mentioned that he had seen there a thing which the people of Yeman called Ta'rikh and it is counted from such and such year and such month. 'Umar appreciated it and asked the man to do likewise.¹⁵
5. 'Umar once called a meeting of the high-ranking companions and mentioned that wealth was pouring in abundance and there was no fixed time for its distribution. You have been called upon to advise me the method with regard to remembering the date correctly.¹⁶

Without going into details of the above mentioned fact and specially the views expressed in regard to that 'Umar got the matter resolved in the 16th, 17th, 18th Hijra,¹⁷ or in 21 Hijra,¹⁸ it may be said safely that the conditions prevailing then demanded to resolve the matter by finding a full-proof solution for the conduct of day to day affairs that were on increase not only in number but in complexity as well.

It is said that in the meeting of the high-ranking companions called