

Islam Means Love, Sincerity, Joy and Vitality

Islam is not an understanding that leads people to silence, introversion, fear, distance and withdrawal from the beauties of life. On the contrary, in the morality of Islam, an understanding of life in which love is openly expressed, people speak sincerely with one another and freely share their ideas, and in which joy, friendship, vitality and trust prevail, is essential.

Islam Is Not Silence, Introversion and Dullness; It Is Love, Sincerity and Vitality



In some circles, Islam is understood as sitting in silence, not speaking, keeping away from people and constantly displaying an embarrassed and downcast appearance, and these behaviors are even presented almost as “**signs of piety.**” However, identifying Islam with silence, introversion and dullness is contrary to the spirit of the religion. A Muslim should be lively, joyful, outgoing, pleasant in conversation, full of love and someone who inspires trust in those around her. A Muslim represents the religion not only through her words, but also through her good morals, sincerity, joy, love, friendship and lively demeanor.

This matter is especially important for people who have only recently become acquainted with the religion or who are trying to form an opinion about Islam by observing the lives of Muslims. It is perfectly natural that a person who encounters a cold and gloomy environment in which everyone sits silently, no one speaks to anyone else and people do not even look at one another's faces would not wish to be together with those people again. Instead of revealing the beauty of Islam, such a scene may present the religion to people as if it were burdensome, gloomy and far removed from the joy of life.

Indeed, the same mistaken understanding is repeated in some movies and television series about religious figures. For example, in productions depicting Yunus Emre, there are scenes in which people sit before him constantly embarrassed, timid and silent, and even when asked for their opinions, avoid answering by saying, **"You know best."** Yet if a person asks those with him a question, he wishes to learn their thoughts. Saying **"You know best"** in response to every question is not humility; at times it may become an artificial behavior that eliminates sincere communication. Such a life would be exceedingly difficult and exhausting both for that person and for those living with him.

Yunus Emre's Words About Paradise Should Not Be Misinterpreted

These words attributed to Yunus Emre, one of the prominent folk poets of Turkish Sufi literature:

"That which they call Paradise, Paradise—

A house and a few hours;

Give it to whoever desires it;

It is You I need, only You."

are sometimes interpreted with an exceedingly mistaken understanding. On the basis of these words, it is suggested as though not desiring the blessings God has created in Paradise were a sign of superior servitude. However, Paradise and the blessings of Paradise are a grace and gift from God to His servants. It is not right to disparage the beauties bestowed by God (may God forbid) or to claim that completely renouncing them represents a superior degree of faith.

A believer loves God; at the same time, he also loves the beauties God has created for him because they are blessings from God, and he gives thanks for them. Indeed, Paradise, the

mansions of Paradise, houris, *wildans* (children of Paradise), *ghilmans* (attendants serving the inhabitants of Paradise) and all the beauties in Paradise are manifestations of God. Each one of them is a reflection of God's beauty, artistry, mercy, love and names upon created beings.

One who does not love the gifts God has prepared for His servants has not truly loved God either; and one who does not desire them has not desired God either.

That is because a believer knows that these beauties he will encounter in Paradise are gifts from God; in them, he sees God's artistry, mercy, love, generosity and beauty;

He loves them because God created them and because they reflect God's beauty; he also desires the gifts God has prepared for His servants and gives thanks to God for them.

For that reason, an understanding such as, **"I love God, but I do not desire the Paradise, mansions, houris, *wildans*, *ghilmans* and other beauties God has created for me"** is self-contradictory.

One who loves God also loves the manifestations of God. God's artistry and beauty will be manifested in Paradise in the form of houris, *ghilmans*, *wildans*, mansions, gardens and countless beauties. A believer sees God's beauty in all of these and loves them. Therefore, loving the blessings of Paradise and loving God are not opposed to one another.

On the contrary, one who loves God also loves the beauties He has created; he desires God's gifts, takes pleasure in them and gives thanks to God for them. For that reason, it is not right to present not desiring the blessings of Paradise as a higher spiritual rank or a sign of superior servitude.

Likewise, when great Sufis such as Yunus Emre are described, instead of portraying them as people who are constantly silent and quiet, detached from others, withdrawn from life and unwilling to communicate; their fine qualities that represent the true morality of Islam should be brought to the fore.

When describing Yunus Emre's wise words and profound spiritual aspect, it should also be emphasized that he was a man of heart who was among people, communicated, spoke, thought, conveyed love and wisdom to those around him and took part in life. Such figures should be described not as examples of withdrawing from society, but as examples of remaining within society and spreading good morals, love and wisdom. Therefore, instead of presenting Yunus Emre as a figure who had withdrawn into silence, isolated himself from society and turned away from the blessings God created for His servants and the beauties of life, it would be more accurate to describe him as a man of wisdom who conveyed love, wisdom, sincerity and good morals to people.

It Is Wrong to Portray the Prophet Muhammad (saas) as Someone Who Was Always Serious, Silent and Never Smiled

A similar approach is also seen in some accounts concerning the Prophet Muhammad (saas). It is a grave error to push the joy, human warmth and sincere communication of our Prophet (saas) with those around him into the background and portray him as if he were always serious, solemn, distant and unsmiling.

The following account related from Hazrat Aisha (ra) is sometimes presented as the basis for this understanding:

"I never saw the Messenger of God (saas) laugh so heartily that his uvula could be seen; he would only smile."

— 'Ā'ishah (ra), Sahih al-Bukhari 6092; also narrated in Sahih Muslim 899c.

However, it is not right to interpret this and similar accounts to mean, **"Our Prophet's teeth were not visible when he smiled"** or **"He never smiled."** Over time, these statements have been interpreted by some people almost as though our Prophet (saas) never laughed, had fun or felt joyful. Yet there is nothing contrary to the religion in a person laughing, feeling joyful, spending pleasant time with his friends, conversing and taking pleasure in the beauties of life. It is a grave error to portray our Prophet (saas) as someone joyless, silent, introverted and distant from people.

That is because our Prophet (saas) was lively, outgoing, smiling, pleasant in conversation, witty and talkative, established warm and sincere relations with people, and inspired love, joy and trust in those around him. Indeed, there are numerous examples in other authentic accounts that reveal this aspect of our Prophet (saas):

“I have never seen anyone who smiled more than the Messenger of God (saas).”

— ‘Abdullah ibn al-Harith (ra), Jami‘ at-Tirmidhi 3641

"Jarir ibn Abdullah (ra) relates: ‘The Messenger of God (saas) never prevented me from seeing him after I embraced Islam, and whenever he saw me, he would smile at me.’”

— Sahih al-Bukhari 6089–6090; Sahih Muslim 2475a–b

“When the Companions said, ‘O Messenger of God, you joke with us,’ he replied, ‘Indeed, I say nothing but the truth.’”

— Abu Hurayrah (ra), Jami‘ at-Tirmidhi 1990

“Anas ibn Malik relates that the Messenger of God (saas) would mingle with people and interact warmly with them. He would even speak playfully with his young brother, Abu ‘Umayr, asking him about his little bird: ‘O Abu ‘Umayr, what happened to the Nughair?’”

— Sahih al-Bukhari 6129

Therefore, our Prophet (saas) was;

A smiling person who was pleasant in conversation, mingled with people, established warm and sincere relations, showed love to people, joked with his Companions, took an interest in children, displayed love and closeness toward those around him, set an example for everyone with his superior morality and lived within society. Indeed, he himself clearly emphasized the importance of good morals by saying, “***The best among you are those who have the best manners and character.***” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Al-Adab, 38, Hadith No: 6029; also al-Bukhari, Al-Manaqib, 23, Hadith No: 3559.)

Portraying him (we hold the Prophet [saas] beyond that) as someone who was constantly sullen and silent also leads to Islam being misrepresented and some people turning away from the religion. Therefore, the dignified, noble and imposing appearance of our Prophet (saas) should never be used as grounds for depicting him as someone who was constantly serious, silent, unsmiling and distant from people.

That is because, in the exemplary morality of our Prophet (saas), there was always dignity together with a smiling face, nobility together with sincerity, and good morals together with joy and human warmth.



The Love and Good Morals at the Heart of Islam Should Be Brought to the Fore

A similar wrong approach that we encounter in how the Prophet Muhammad (saas) is introduced is also seen in the way Islam is explained. In some traditionalist explanations, while the fundamental values of Islam, such as good morality, love, compassion, sincerity, and approaching people with kindness, are not sufficiently explained and emphasized; various formal details that do not have a clear place as a religious obligation in the Qur'an, but are based more on traditions and narrations, may be explained almost as if they were the most important elements of the religion. For example, while details such as the use of the *miswak* (a traditional natural tooth-cleaning stick) the form of the beard and clothing, the manner of eating and drinking, and similar details are dwelt upon at length; values such as love of God, good morality, love, compassion, sincerity, friendship, brotherhood, joy, art, aesthetics, cleanliness, and approaching people with kindness may remain in the background.



Of course, mentioning such practices is not in itself wrong. What is wrong is placing formal details that have not been established as fundamentals of the religion in the Qur'an at the center of the religion and pushing the love and good morals at the heart of Islam into the background.

Islam does not consist solely of certain details concerning outward appearance and daily practices. The main qualities through which a Muslim should set an example are his love, good morals, compassion, sincerity, joy and fine conduct toward people.

Constantly Remaining Silent and Not Expressing Oneself Are Not Signs of Piety

In the behavior of some Muslims, the understanding that **“Speech is silver, silence is golden”** has almost become a fundamental principle of life. On the basis of this understanding, they may regard remaining silent, speaking little and keeping themselves in the background as though these were signs of superior morality and piety. Of course, not speaking unnecessarily, avoiding hurtful words and knowing when to remain silent are features of good morality. However, constantly remaining silent in every environment, not expressing one's thoughts, not showing one's love and not communicating with people are not commendable forms of behavior.

In gatherings where Muslims are together, love, sincerity, liveliness, joy, trust, and pleasant conversation should prevail. People should ask about one another's well-being, learn one another's opinions, talk with one another, laugh, show their love for one another, enjoy

themselves, and spend pleasant time together. One of the aspects of Muslim society that should set an example for people should also be this warm and sincere social life.

Concern About the Future Should Not Distance a Muslim From the Love and Vitality of Today

For a believer, what is real is the destiny God creates at that moment. A person cannot know for certain where he will be ten years from now, whether he will be alive and healthy, or whether the material and spiritual means he possesses will continue. Therefore, taking reasonable precautions for the future is one thing, while calculating the years that have not yet been lived and shaping today's relationships accordingly is something else.



Some people may behave cautiously toward Muslims today on the assumption that circumstances will change in the future; they may make calculations regarding years ahead with thoughts such as, **“If our paths separate in the future and these people are no longer with me,” “If circumstances change in the future”** or **“If my interests are harmed in the future,”** and because of possibilities that have not yet occurred, they may adopt an attitude toward their friends and keep them at a distance today.

This mistaken **“approach towards the future”** fuels the conception of a silent, distant and cautious Muslim who does not show his love, which was criticized at the beginning of this article. That is because when a person constantly calculates the years ahead, he cannot approach the

other person sincerely; he cannot freely show his love or experience friendship, and he constantly tries to protect himself and keep his relationships under control. Thus, the vitality, warmth and sincerity that should exist among Muslims give way to distance and dullness.

Yet since a sincere Muslim facing him does not make such calculations, he may not even understand the reason for this behavior. He may be unable to understand why he is treated coldly, why love is not openly shown or why there is a constant state of caution. However, relations between Muslims should be founded not on fear of the future, caution, calculations of self-interest and possibilities, but on love, trust, loyalty and sincerity for God's approval. A believer shows his love to the person he loves today; he speaks and converses with him, laughs and spends pleasant time with him today. That is because the only real time he possesses is the present moment God causes him to experience.

A Muslim desires to be together with the other Muslims he loves not only in the life of this world but also, by God's leave, in Paradise for all eternity. When such a powerful understanding of love exists, it is not right to limit today's love, keep people at a distance and constantly behave cautiously by calculating years that have not yet occurred.

Of course, a person may make plans for the future by considering his education, work, family or responsibilities. However, he knows that all these plans are subject to God's will. Behaving presumptuously toward people on the assumption that he will certainly be alive ten years from now, possess the same strength and means, and that today's circumstances will continue as he desires is incompatible with a believer's understanding of putting his trust in God.



Instead of developing a relationship with his friend based on caution, calculation and self-interest, a person should love him for God's approval, show loyalty and experience this love with an understanding of eternal friendship. One Muslim's view of another Muslim should be based on the understanding, **"By God's leave, I love you for God's sake, and I desire to be together with you in Paradise for all eternity."**

While such a great and eternal understanding of love is possible, it is not right to curtail today's love, experience friendship in a measured manner or remain constantly cautious and distant toward people by calculating ten years ahead, which have not yet occurred.

It is unbecoming of a Muslim to base human relationships on possibilities, fears and worldly interests by taking the temporary conditions of this world as the basis. Man has no control over destiny. God creates the future. When God wills, He can change all of a person's plans in an instant and clearly show him that life, health, means and the future are not under his own control.

Therefore, the natural consequence of an understanding of destiny and trust in God is not to remain silent and wait in a corner; on the contrary, it should be to make the finest use of the moment God has created. A Muslim should beautify the environment he is in, show his love, speak with people, share his ideas, laugh, be joyful and bring life to those around him.

Therefore, the aspect of Islam that should be taught to people is not silence, gloom, timidity and withdrawal from life, but a strong Muslim character that trusts in God, loves people, is joyful, sincere, courageous, talkative and social, and gives thanks for the beauties of life.

Conclusion

The natural consequence of an understanding of destiny and trust in God is not to remain silent and wait in a corner, but to make the finest use of the moment God has created. A Muslim should beautify the environment he is in, show his love, speak with people, share his ideas, laugh, be joyful and bring life to those around him. The aspect of Islam that should be taught to people is not silence, gloom, timidity and withdrawal from life, but a strong Muslim character that trusts in God, loves people, is joyful, sincere, courageous, talkative and social, and gives thanks for the beauties of life.

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