

This definition of 'Al-Deen', when applied to other verses, gives a much better understanding of the subject than religion. For instance, in verse (40:26) the Pharaoh, while inciting his people against Moses, said:

"...Inni akhafu unyubadil Deenakum..."- what I fear is lest he should change your 'Deen'.

Prophet Moses was struggling against Pharaoh for the liberation of Bani Israel (7:105). The importance of Bani Israel in the slave-based economy was obvious. They were the backbone. Their liberation meant not only the collapse of the economy but the whole system. So, when Pharaoh said; "lest he should change your 'Deen'" he did not mean the change of religion. Bani Israel were not worshiping Pharaoh. Therefore, their liberation was not a threat to religion. Change of 'Deen' means change of law of the land. Pharaoh was afraid of this change. Moses was threatening his rule and authority. (See also v.7:110, 10:78, 28:19)

In Surah Tauba we come across the resistance offered by the 'Mushrikeen' to the newly formed Islamic State in Medina. Before the advent of Islam the power and economy of Medina was in the hands of 'Mushrikeen'. They considered Islam a great threat to their power and economy. Therefore, they used all tactics to destabilize the Islamic State. In this regard, Quran said:

"Howallazee arsala rasoolahu bil hudda wa Deen-al-Haqq le yuzheraho 'ala Deen-e-Kulleh walo Karehal Mushrikoon" - It is He Who has sent His messenger with Guidance and 'Deen-al-Haqq' to establish its supremacy over all 'Deen' even though the 'Mushrikeen' may detest it. (9:33)

We know that the Jews, the Christians and the Pagans of Arabia faced no threat to their religions from Islam. The Quran enjoins upon Muslims not to force anyone to change religion (2:256). Also, it enjoins on them not to insult the deities of other religions (6:108). On the contrary, Quran accepts the freedom of

religion as a birth right of every individual (76: 3) and give protection to various religion and their places of worship in the Islamic State (22: 40). Therefore, it would be wrong to think that Muslims were there in Medina to change and dominate other religions. They were there to change oppressive laws and to end the exploitation of man by man. The Quran gives a values system, which is friendly to human beings and ensure peace and prosperity. In the above referred verse (9: 33) 'Deen-al-Haqq does not means the religion of truth but it clearly means The System of True Values i.e. The Quranic Values System.

The fact that 'Al-Deen' is a set of absolute values, which are essential for the foundations of a truly progressive and peaceful society, and that its relation with religion (if any) is merely a cultural issue, is more explicitly stated in the following verses.

The Quran opens with the praises of God Who nourishes everything in the universe (1:1). This nourishment of things takes place through a wondrous system, which consists of perfect and immutable laws. The biological development of man is similar to other living creature and takes place under the same laws of nature. However, in some aspects the creation of man is different among the living things (23: 14). The most outstanding difference is that he posses 'Nafs' which is, unlike biological body, indestructible if tended properly (91:7-10). The laws and values governing the development of human 'Nafs' are given in the Quran (4: 49). These laws need implementation through a system in the society because these do not function, spontaneously, like physical laws in the universe. The period, during which this system is in power in the society, the Quran terms it 'Yom-ud-Deen'. The Quran says:

"Wa ma adraka ma Yom-ud-Deen" - And what will explain to thee what the 'yom-ud-Deen' is ? (82: 17)

"Thuma ma adraka ma Yom-ud-Deen" - Again, what will explain thee what 'Yom-ud-Deen' is ? (82: 18)

"Yoma la tamleku nafsun le nafsen shai ah wal amro yomaizen lillah" - It will be the day when no person shall have any power for another; And, the command,

that day will be wholly with God. (82:19)

Accordingly, 'Al-Deen' is something, which is concerned with power and command in the society. It is a system. It is not a religion because religion does not hold power and command in the society. The primary subject of religion is man's spiritual life and morality. It concerns itself with problems of life after death. It does not interfere with the political system or socio-economic system in the society; nor it offers any solution to problems facing man due to wrong systems in this world. On the contrary, the primary objective of 'Al-Deen' is to establish itself firmly in the land and to ensure a systematic provision of socio-economic justice for every individual.(40: 17). It puts an end to exploitation of man by man and make certain that every individual must get full reward of his labor (20: 15). It promote fraternal cooperation in the society as an article of Faith (Eeman) and provide equal opportunity to everyone for the development of his specific abilities and enable him to play a better role in the growth of economy and culture (3:200; 16: 71).

The fact that 'Al-Deen' is not religion and that it is a very wrong and damaging notion of 'Al-Deen' is explicitly explained in the above discourse. We cannot say at this moment (1500-years after the birth of Islam) that who had defined 'Al-Deen' as religion? Also, we cannot blame whether he was a naive friend or a clever enemy of Islam? Nor, it would be of any help in solving the problems, which the Muslim Ummah is suffering due to wrong understanding of 'Al-Deen' today. However, we can argue that the one who had defined 'Al-Deen' as religion; surely he had given a fatal blow to its progressive and forbearing characteristics. He had opened the darkest chapter in the history of 'al-Deen', which was later used by the privileged classes and religious fanatics to gain self-interests against the interest of common man.

It may not be important to know what people had brought this fatal change, but certainly, it is essential to analyze and understand the way how it had been accomplished? Although, to convert a dynamic and pragmatic system (Al-Deen) into dead ritual and dogmas was an impossible task but thanks to the Arabic language they (the clergy) done it, easily.

We know that Arabic is a rich and meaningful language. Its vocabulary is so deep, solid, and comprehensive that it can serve the intellectual needs of all classes in the society and it can meet the linguistic challenges in all stages of development of human knowledge and culture. The root meanings of its words are wide and extensive. These can be used to convey simple thoughts as well as highly developed concepts with utmost clarity. This property is unique to Arabic language and keeps the system dynamic and progressive. The system can review and discard obsolete ideas and worn out practices without problem and replace them with fresh thoughts and ideas. This language was the right choice to descend the final Divine Message for the guidance of mankind.

Unfortunately, the religious scholars did not use this property of Arabic for the benefits of the system. Instead of, benefiting the system, they exploited this property in their own interest and in the interest of privileged classes (the rulers and the rich). It is a well-known fact that the meanings of words and concepts have profound effect on human attitude and behavior. For example, when a child asks for a car you don't go to the cars showroom. You understand the childish language. So, you go straight to a toys shop and get him a beautiful limousine. What they did is that they simply changed the meaning of words and the rest is taken care of by itself. Pick up any translation or interpretation, you will find, even at a sketchy look, that they assigned the simplest meaning to some of the most important terminologies and major concepts in the Quran.

The meanings assigned to the language of Quran by religious scholars were quite childish. It was the language of a great system 'Al-Deen Al-Islam' which was meant to produce a class of noble, brave and magnanimous people – a people who cares more for others than themselves (59: 9). But with the change in meanings the lofty ideals of 'Al-Deen' were reduced to frivolous ritual and beliefs followed by a class of people who are self-centered, intolerant, parochial, and devoid of vision. Indeed, it was a great tragedy not for Muslims alone but for the whole mankind. A few references from the Quran would be enough to understand what the hell they have done?

THE CONCEPT OF RECITATION

God says; "We have sent this Quran in a clear language so that you can use your intellect in its light" (12:2). Also He says; "We have sent among you a messenger to educate you in divine knowledge and wisdom and let your talents grow and develop". (2;151;16:44). Accordingly, it was important for every Muslim to learn Quran and know its values and principles in order to live a successful life. The Quran should have been taught in schools like other subjects in the syllabus. But the religious scholars ignored the clear lesson in these verses and came up with the concept of recitation (Talawat-e-Quran). They thought that learning of the Quran is the job of scholars and as far as masses are concerned, it is a matter of 'Thawab'(Reward in the hereafter) for them. They will get the reward if they read or listen Quran even without understanding it. This deadly concept alienated the Muslims from the Quran. Although, it increased their emotional attachment but they could not develop intellectual relation with the Quran. Thus, the Quran, which was sent to bring out the people from the darkneses of ignorance into the light of knowledge, turned into a religious book for earning 'Thawab'. Being thus alienated from the Quran, Muslims needed something to do in the name of 'Al-Deen'. The clergy found a cure for this and came up with another deadly concept - the concept of 5-pillars.

THE CONCEPT OF 5-PILLARS

The Quran enjoins upon Muslims to follow 'Al-Deen' as a whole from A-Z, whole-heartedly (2:208). Its every command (Amer) is important. When it says; "Don't enter a house without permission" (24:27); it is as much important as when it says; "Don't kill a person except by the law" (6:151). It was an absolutely right thinking and a great vision. God has sent 'Al-Deen' to function as a system covering all aspects of life. While the success of religion depends on how craftily it fascinates people with charms of life in the hereafter, the credibility and truthfulness of a system depends upon the accomplished results and no system produces results unless it is implemented exclusively. People living under a system want their problems to be solved here in this world. But the

religious scholars changed this great vision. They came up with their own thinking - the concept of 5-pillars. They said that there are 5-basic and most important pillars of Islam. These are; "Kalima, Salat, Saum, Zakat, and Hajj". Whosoever follows these with due sincerity he is a good and righteous Muslims.

This non-Quranic distinction in the Quranic commandments had a great psychological impact on the Muslims' mind. They started, unconsciously, paying more attention to these 5-pillars than rest of the Quran. They performed them as an obligation to earn 'Thawab' for salvation in the hereafter without having, even a slightest idea that these pillars are part of a great system. Due to this change in the attitude of Muslims, there occurred a polarization in the society. Those who performed the 5-pillars with regularity they came to be known as 'Deendar' (religious) and those who performed them occasionally they came to be known as 'Duniyadar' (secular). The rulers and the rich used this polarization for their own benefit. They took over the control of secular affairs and managed them according to their own desires and interests. The religious affairs left to be managed by the 'Mullahs' according to their own desires and interests. Both of them threw away the Quran behind their backs. This polarization still exists in the present day societies. 'Al-Deen' has ceased to function as system. It got to be practiced everywhere as religion.

There was no justification for short-listing the 5-pillar and laying un-wanted emphasis on recitation (reading and listening the Quran without comprehension). These concepts were absolutely against the clear teachings of the Quran as well as against the spirit of 'Al-Deen Al-Islam'. The scholars of Bani Israel did same mistake with the Book of God and earned His Wrath. They shredded the Book into pieces; showing little and concealing most of its contents (6:91). God warned the Muslims not to repeat this mistake again in the following verses;

"And say, I am indeed he that warns openly and without ambiguity. (Of just such wrath) As We sent down on those who divided (the scripture into arbitrary parts). (So also on such) As have made Quran into shreds (as they please). Therefore, by the Lord, We

will, of surety, call them to account. For all their deeds". (15:89-93)

While the concept of recitation alienated the masses from the Quran the concept of 5-pillars alienated them from 'Al-Deen' as a system. These two concepts have gradually transformed 'Al-Deen' into a religion. The concept of 'Al-Deen' went first, out of sight and then out of mind. The domain of the Quran which during the time of the prophet (pbuh) and the righteous caliphs extended to the whole life got divided between the rulers and the priests. Henceforth, the rulers developed their own insight and ways of ruling the Muslims masses while the clergy developed their own terminology and methods of practicing 'Al-Deen'.

TERMINOLOGY OF THE QURAN CHANGED

The bifurcation of 'Al-Deen' into state affairs and religious affairs necessitated a new meaning to the Quran. The language of the Quran does not support religion because it is the language of a system based on reason (4: 174; 7: 52) whereas all religions are based on ignorance and deception. The religious scholars used the same foundations for converting 'Al-Deen' into a religion. Reading and listening the Quran without comprehension, as discussed above, have sent down the masses deep into the sea of ignorance and concentrating on 5-pillars out of whole corpus of the Quranic injunctions have put them into a great deception. 'Al-Deen' became synonymous with religion. The terminology of the Quran is given new meanings to meet the requirements of religion. We will deliberate some of these as follow;

MEANING OF THE CREED CHANGED

The creed of a system is very important because it describes the whole philosophy of the system in a nutshell. People keep it on the tip of the tongue and remain conscious of their obligations within the system. The success of the system depends on how better the people understand their creed and how faithfully they follow it. A slight change in the meaning of the creed causes a radical change in masses' behavior and outlook. The creed of 'Al-Deen' is "La illaha illallah".

The Arabic word 'illah' is very meaningful. Its root meanings imply power, command, respect and obedience. It is used in the Quran in various contexts. In verse (71:23) it refers to pagans' deities. In verse (25:43) it refers to human desires. And, in verse (26:29) it refers to the rule of Pharaoh. Although, these look different contexts but the root meaning of 'illah' is implied to all in various shades. Whether these are deities or human desires or human beings themselves, when they act as an 'illah', they rule hearts and minds of people and win their allegiance.

The creed 'la illaha illallah' is the basis of 'Al-Deen'. Its correct understanding is very important because it determines the status of 'Al-Deen' in the society. If it is understood; "There is no god worthy of worship but God alone" then 'Al-Deen' fell down to a level as low as of a religion. Firstly, the concept of worship is related to religion alone. And secondly, comparing gods with God is similar to comparing a religion with a religion. On the contrary, if it is understood; "There is no ruler worthy of obedience and respect but God alone" then 'al-Deen' ascend to the level of a powerful system because now the objective is not worship but obedience of law and the comparison is not between God and deities but the rulers.

The religious scholars (for reasons best known to them) took the concept of worship and put all their efforts to inculcate the masses that 'La illah illallah' means; "None is worthy of worship except God". They condemned the worship of deities as 'shirk'. Consequently, the masses developed strong hatred for idol worship. They smashed them wherever they found them and focused all their attention to the worship of God alone. The concept of God's rule vanished from their mind. They did not mind who rules them but they never tolerated idols. They blasted them even if these are found in the desolate mountains of Bamiyan (Afghanistan).

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