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## **PURPOSE OF MAN**

### **By Shaykh Zulfiqar Ahmed**

Created to Worship

Man has been created to worship Allah ﷻ<sup>1</sup>. When he becomes forgetful of this and becomes weak in his worship and connection with Allah ﷻ, he falls from his status and becomes lower than animals.

An Awakening Moment

*Hadrat*<sup>2</sup> Bahlol Dana ﷺ<sup>3</sup> was walking by a waterfront when he saw some children playing, and saw another child sitting by himself lost in thought. *Hadrat* Bahlol ﷺ approached this child and asked him why he was not playing with the others. The child looked at *Hadrat* Bahlol ﷺ and quoted a verse from the Holy Quran:

*Does man think he will be left uncontrolled (without purpose)?*  
(75:36)

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<sup>1</sup> ﷻ literally means “Glorious and Exalted is He” and is mentioned after the Name of Allah ﷻ.

<sup>2</sup> *Hadrat* literally means, “the venerable” and is used as a title of respect before the name of a religious figure.

<sup>3</sup> ﷺ literally means “may the mercy of Allah be upon him” and is mentioned after the name of a deceased religious figure.

*Hadrat* Bahlol رضي الله عنه was astonished to hear something so grave coming from what appeared to be a young child, and said upon reflection, “You seem to be very intelligent, give me some advice.” The child recited some poetic verses:

*O traveler, your time is short.*

*Make preparations before you come, and don't let them fall short.*

*Hadrat* Bahlol رضي الله عنه started crying and said, “You are yet so young. It would be more understandable if you were someone older who was reflecting on his past sins. What is the reason for this lamenting at such a young age?”

The child looked at him and said, “I look at my mother lighting the fire for dinner. She uses small sticks to have the fire catch, and then puts in the larger sticks. I often think that Allah سبحانه too has to light the Fire of Hell, and I fear that He might give the command to have the little children thrown in before the adults. Bahlol, when I think upon this I cry.”

Countless Blessings

Man has been sent to this world for the worship and pleasure of Allah سبحانه. If man does not understand this then he has not understood anything. The Holy Quran says:

*If you count the favors of Allah, never will you be able to number them (14:34)*

Mankind is immersed in the blessings of Allah سبحانه - the air that he breathes; the foods that he eats; the comforts that

he enjoys. The reality should be that we praise Him to the degree that we enjoy His blessings. However, man is such an ingrate that he enjoys Allah's ﷻ blessings but remains in doubt and complaint regarding His Creator.

Man forgets His purpose and is heedless to the fact that he has not been sent here to live forever. People have to realize that some day they have to depart this life for the next, and so they have to prepare.

#### Currency of Paradise

Every country has its particular financial currency. Pakistani *rupees* cannot function in America, where the currency is the *dollar*, and whoever has more dollars will live that much more comfortably. Likewise, the currency of Saudi Arabia is the *riyal*, and whoever has more *riyals* will be that much richer than the one who does not.

The currency of the Hereafter is righteous deeds and no other currency will benefit man after his death. There will be no foreign currency exchange where he can change his money for good deeds like we do here when traveling from country to country. The person who has more of this currency of good deeds will be in that much more comfort than the person who does not. Today we have been given time to amass this currency so that we may be in comfort in the Hereafter. It will be too late in the grave.

Does man ever stop to reflect on the fact that he is getting old? The answer is an emphatic no because man always considers himself young in every circumstance. His youth slips away and man becomes an empty shell but he

does not realize this. He still thinks himself young when the Angel of Death comes for him.

#### Becoming Muslim

This is a limited life, but wealth distracts and blinds man from his purpose. This wealth is chloroform and whoever smells this forgets his purpose. He falls deeper and deeper into the lusts of this world, until he has no realization of the Hereafter. This is why this wealth has been called a curse and the wife and children have been called a curse. Why is this so? It is because of these things that man turns his face from Allah ﷻ and starts towards the road of wrong in an effort to please his wife and children.

Man's purpose is to establish a connection with Allah ﷻ and to strive to attain His pleasure. Man was created so he would rise - rise high and recognize his Creator. Sadly, man's animalistic desires make him fall to the lowest depths. Man falls into a hole of his own making and can only be called a man of God when he shuns these animal desires and recognizes his Creator.

People think that becoming a Muslim is easy, but in reality it is very hard. Becoming a Muslim by tongue is very easy, but becoming a practicing Muslim is very hard. It makes no difference whether the tongue says that we are Muslim if the eyes and ears and limbs are not Muslim, and by that is meant that they submit to the commandments of Allah ﷻ. Only that person is a Muslim whose eyes, ears, tongue, speech, thought, and private parts are Muslim. A Muslim is a Muslim from head to toe.

People have to reflect upon themselves and determine whether their eyes have become Muslim in the life that they have lived so far. If this is not the case, then what have they gained in this life? The misfortune is that man forgets himself and forgets to evaluate himself.

A man forgets himself and his Creator to such a degree that he will lie, cheat, take false oaths, and still dare to say that Allah ﷻ is Most Forgiving. The Holy Quran says:

*Do men think that they will be left alone on saying “We believe” and that they will not be tested? (29:2)*

Man should pray to Allah ﷻ that he become Muslim.

*We did test those before them, and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false (29:3)*

*By (the Token of) Time (through the ages),  
Verily man is in loss  
Except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy (103:1-3)*

The Messenger ﷺ<sup>4</sup> of Allah said, “Shall I tell you of a people who are in grave loss? They are those who spend their lives chasing the attractions of this world and think that they are in a state of good fortune.”

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<sup>4</sup> ﷺ literally means “may Allah bless him and grant him peace” and is mentioned after the name of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Submission to Allah's ﷻ Will

Wealth is a test for man; if mere wealth were a ticket to Paradise then Qarun<sup>5</sup> would have been assured a residence there. The successful person is the one who acts righteously and advises others upon righteousness also. Today everyone *knows* but we are no longer concerned with *knowing* because today everyone claims they know everything. This is a matter of *accepting* and not *knowing*. We refuse to accept and act upon what is right, and we should pray to Allah ﷻ that we recognize our purpose.

We are only Muslims by mouth whereas our actions are comparable with the Hypocrites of Madinah. One of our pious elders once asked a man in a foreign country, “Why don’t you accept Islam?” To this he replied, “Islam is very good in theory, but show me a country where Islamic Law is being applied and people are living according to its tenets, and I am willing to accept Islam today.”

Bernard Shaw said that Islam is not a religion for the lazy, but for the dynamic who spend their lives to please Allah ﷻ. Our purpose is not to fill our bellies, but to please Allah ﷻ.

Definition of a Muslim

What is a Muslim? The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said, “A Muslim is he from whose hands and tongue other Muslims are safe.” Now let us evaluate ourselves and determine whether our tongues speak and lash out against other

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<sup>5</sup> Qarun was a wealthy minister of Pharaoh and a nemesis of *Hadrat* Musa ﷺ.

people? Do we raise our hands against other people? What sort of Islam are we practicing, and what sort of Muslims are we? These are all pertinent questions for which everyone should search his soul.

A Muslim is a well wisher not only for his fellow man, but also for Allah's ﷻ entire creation. A Muslim's eyes and heart are clean: he fearlessly speaks the truth and his character is flawless.

This flawless character was the only reason that the world was compelled to bow before the camel and sheepherders of Arabia who were the Companions (*Sahabah*) of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah. Caesar of Rome bowed before those same camel herders, who changed the geography and destiny of the world. Where are those people now before whom armies fell and kings bowed? Where is that strength? This is only the strength of faith (*iman*).

Man has forgotten the status that Allah ﷻ has created him for. An eagle is a high-flying bird, but it will never learn to soar high as it was meant to if it is reared like a chicken. Man is a mere handful of clay, but if he realizes his true purpose he can soar higher than the angels. Man has to realize why he has been sent here and why he was created if he is to succeed and progress towards Allah ﷻ. Today we are chasing after this temporary life and do not seek out the company of pious people, and this indicates that we have truly forgotten our purpose.

Where are the people who used to cry in front of Allah ﷻ all night? Where are the people whose beds were never slept in and who used to pray *Fajr* with the previous night's ablution? It seems that they were some other people with

whom we have now lost touch. They were Allah's ﷺ worshippers in every condition whether they were rulers or beggars.

*Hadrat Umar ibn al-Khattab* ﷺ<sup>6</sup>

The Muslims have a superb example in Hadrat Umar ibn al-Khattab ﷺ. It is written that Hadrat Umar ﷺ was making his nightly rounds through the streets of Madinah when he heard voices coming from a nearby house. He drew nearer and heard a mother saying to her daughter, "People will come to collect the milk in the morning. We don't have a lot - add some water so we can get a good price." The daughter refused, to which the mother said, "It is not such a big thing, Umar isn't watching." The daughter replied, "Mother, if Umar isn't watching, then Umar's Creator is watching."

Hadrat Umar ﷺ returned home impressed with the young lady's faith. Upon awaking the next morning he sent a message to that house that he wanted the girl of that house as his daughter-in-law. These were times when people were evaluated on the basis of their sincerity and character, not on how many education degrees they had or how many houses they owned.

On another occasion, Hadrat Umar ﷺ was traveling and came upon a shepherd herding sheep in what appeared to be a barren wasteland, with no settlement in sight. He asked whether the sheep belonged to the shepherd, who replied that he had a master. Hadrat Umar ﷺ offered him food but

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<sup>6</sup> ﷺ literally means "may Allah be pleased with him" and is mentioned after the name of a Companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.



the shepherd said that he was fasting; Hadrat Umar رضي الله عنه was amazed that he was fasting in such heat and decided to test him.

Hadrat Umar رضي الله عنه offered to pay for a sheep that they could sacrifice and eat, but the shepherd said that he must first ask permission from his master. Hadrat Umar رضي الله عنه said, “Your master is not here, neither is he watching.” The shepherd then replied, “My master may not be here, but Allah سبحانه is everywhere.” Hadrat Umar رضي الله عنه was amazed at this man’s sincerity and steadfastness. We should reflect on where such people are today and how we can become like them.

#### Other Examples of Sincerity

Our traditions speak of a cruel king who used to kidnap beautiful young women to use and abuse as he wished. Once he was sitting with a very beautiful and naturally terrified young woman as night fell. He told her to close all the windows and doors, and she grudgingly walked to comply, terrified and contemplating what would happen. He grew angry when she delayed and raised his voice, asking why she was taking so long. The young woman replied, “Your Majesty, I have closed all the windows and doors, but one door is not closing.” The king jumped up, “What door is that?” The woman continued, “Your Majesty, the doors through which creation can look are closed, but no one can close the door through which the Creator looks.”

These bold words touched and awakened the king’s heart and he immediately fell in prostration, begging forgiveness

for his previous life. We today also must realize that our Creator is watching our every move.

*Hadrat* Salahuddin Ayubi رحمته اللہ علیہ was the commander of the Muslim forces in Palestine during the First Crusade, when all the Christian forces were massing against the Muslims. He learnt that a large force had just left Europe intent on destroying the Muslims, and so he spent the whole night in the mosque crying to Allah ﷻ.

He exited the mosque after *Fajr* and saw an elderly man coming out at the same time. He was dressed in white and looked angelic. *Hadrat* Salahuddin Ayubi رحمته اللہ علیہ approached him and asked him to pray for the Muslim forces. The elderly man looked at him and said, “Do not worry Salahuddin, your night’s tears have drowned the Christian convoy!”

An anecdote from the time of Muslim rule serves to teach us what a believer is. This was a time when people knew that a Muslim’s tongue speaks truth. A Muslim hunter’s arrow accidentally struck and killed a Christian child, whose father hence entered a plea to the local judge. The judge was a Muslim and rendered a verdict of death by hanging. Upon request, the judge granted the accused respite for three days so he could settle his affairs. People of course found it hard to believe that this man would live up to his word and return in three days.

However, this man returned in the allotted time and said, “I have settled all my affairs and have come back to pay for my crime.” The child’s father was amazed and said, “Seeing this I accept Islam and forgive him of my child’s blood.” This was a time when Muslims were true.

One day during his rule (*khilafat*), Hadrat Umar رضي الله عنه thought that he should make his nightly rounds in the newly developing suburbs instead of the city like he usually used to do. It was very dark at night and he heard a rider approaching.

“Who goes there?” he asked in a loud voice. The rider answered, “I am a woman and I have an emergency.” Hadrat Umar رضي الله عنه was surprised because it was too late for anyone to be out, so he asked, “Why have you come out alone so late?” The woman answered, “Commander of the Faithful, I have an emergency which compelled me to come out.” Hadrat Umar رضي الله عنه asked in amazement, “How did you know you were speaking to the Commander of the Faithful?” The woman replied, “I knew that it could only be the Commander of the Faithful who would dare to ask me another question after I said that I was a woman. Any other would have continued walking on his way without another word.”

This is just one example of how the honor of ladies was respected. Today the honor of women sitting in their homes is not safe because we are only Muslims of the tongue, whereas they were Muslims of their word.

#### Examples for Eternity

Muslims are just in their dealings with others, and hence measure and weigh correctly because they fear Allah سبحانه. We see an excellent example of this in *Hadrat* Imam Abu Hanifa رضي الله عنه, who used to own a clothing store. One day he returned home earlier than usual and someone asked, “Abu Hanifa, you usually come later than this, why are you

coming early today?” *Hadrat* Abu Hanifa ؒ answered, “Today there was a thick cloud cover and so people would not have been able to tell the difference between different qualities of cloth. I closed early so that my customers are not defrauded by this.”

Islam has given us perfect guidance in the Holy Quran and shining examples in the lives of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah and his *Sahabah*. At one time during his *khilafat* *Hadrat* Umar ؓ was seated working on a budget when he heard a knock. *Hadrat* Ali ؓ entered and said that he had something to discuss. *Hadrat* Umar ؓ asked, “Is it personal or does it have to do with matters of state?” *Hadrat* Ali ؓ answered that it was a personal matter, and so *Hadrat* Umar ؓ closed his books and blew out the lamp, turning his full attention to his guest.

*Hadrat* Ali ؓ asked, “Why have you blown out the lamp?” *Hadrat* Umar ؓ answered, “I cannot justify letting the oil of the people burn while we have a personal discussion.”

This above example is enough to illustrate the degree of fear and respect within these people. Living on this Earth they were able to please Allah ﷻ and set examples for generations of mankind to come.

Complete Submission

Allah ﷻ says that He subjugates creation in front of one who subjugates himself to Allah ﷻ, and nowhere is this more applicable than in the lives of the *Sahabah* of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah.

Hadrat Umar رضي الله عنه was once in council with his advisors when an earthquake shook the city of Madinah. He looked in amazement at the ground and stamped his foot down hard upon it. He said sternly, “Why are you shaking? Has Umar not established just rule upon you?” The ground instantly stopped shaking because Allah ﷻ had commanded creation to be obedient to Hadrat Umar رضي الله عنه.

In Egypt the Nile River would occasionally flood its banks and would recede only when a young virgin girl was thrown in as a human sacrifice according to age old pagan custom. Hadrat Umar رضي الله عنه learnt of this and wrote a note, which he instructed the Muslim governor of the region to throw into the river. The note read; “River Nile, if you flow by the Will of Allah ﷻ, then Allah’s ﷻ *Khalifah* commands you to start flowing. If you flow by your own will, then we have no need of your flowing.” The river receded and started flowing immediately and has not stopped to this date.

We as a people should reflect on why the earth, the wind, animals, and all humanity obeyed these people. They used to bow to the Will of Allah ﷻ and were so attached to His Book that people and nations bowed to Islam wherever these people turned. From this Book and the excellent teachings of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah they learnt impeccable character that we need to bring into our lives today. Their purpose was but to please Allah ﷻ and prepare for the Hereafter, and we need to reflect and learn from their excellent examples if we are to please our Lord.