

A Good Person is the One Who Obeys Allah (swt) And Strives to Desire What Pleases Him

It is said by some, "I feel like I am a good person. I do what feels right. I put myself in the shoes of others. I avoid that which makes them feel bad. Isn't that enough? Why do I have to adhere to Islamic laws in my life?"

From the Shariah perspective, worship of our Lord, Allah (swt), is not about what we feel and want, it is about what Allah (swt) asks us to do. Allah (swt) cautions us that we may think we are doing good, but are not. Allah (swt) said, ﴿قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ﴾ **Say, O Muhammad, "Shall we believers inform you of the greatest losers as to their deeds? * They are those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work."** [Surah Al-Kahf 18:103-104]. The Noble Ayah is general. It refers to everyone who worships Allah (swt) in a way that is not acceptable. We may feel that we are right. However, if our deeds are not in accordance to what Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw) decided, we are losers. To enter Jannah, we must act according to what Allah (swt) has chosen for us, and not what we have chosen for ourselves. So, as Muslims we do not accept the Western secular view that morals and behavior are to be determined by human beings, to do as they like.

Let's consider that feelings can be misleading. Allah (swt) warned us not to follow our desires (أهواء) in case such following takes us away from the Truth. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَأَنِ احْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ﴾ **"And judge, O Muhammad, between them by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their inclinations."** [Surah Al-Maaida 5:49]. Allah (swt) described those who follow worldly desires, as those who follow a false god, establishing that it contradicts guidance. Allah (swt) said, ﴿أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَفَلَهُ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾ **"Have you seen he who has taken as his god his own desire, and Allah has sent him astray due to knowledge and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put over his vision a veil? So who will guide him after Allah? Then will you not be reminded?"** [Surah Al-Jaathiyah 45:23]. So, let us not be the one who abides by our desires. We must not see that which we are inclined towards is good, whilst that which we dislike or find difficult is wrong. Instead, we account ourselves according to the commands and prohibitions of Islam.

Let us remember that Revelation must govern our feelings and actions. The Messenger of Allah (saw) warned of the one who follows desires. He said that they have only a vain hope of the mercy of Allah (swt). It was narrated from Abu Ya'la Shaddad bin Aws that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «الْكَيْسُ مَنْ دَانَ نَفْسَهُ وَعَمِلَ لِمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ وَالْعَاجِزُ مَنْ أَتْبَعَ نَفْسَهُ هَوَاهَا ثُمَّ تَمَنَّى عَلَى اللَّهِ» **"The wise one is the one who takes account of oneself and strives for that which is after death. And the weak one is the one who follows their own desires then indulges in wishful thinking about**

Allah.” [Ibn Majah]. So, the wise one is the one who accounts oneself, according to the standard of Islam, in order to succeed in the Next Life.

Moreover, as we grow in the knowledge and practice of Islam, our feelings change. Initially, we may not like to pray or wear Hijab. However, with knowledge and practice, our feelings do change. Knowledge and practice strengthen us. So the human being moves on from being one who follows desires. The Muslims are those who follow the commands of Allah (swt), even if they feel having discomfort in doing so. The Believers (mu’minoona) are those who obey with pleasure. Allah (swt) said, ﴿فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا﴾ **“But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, O Muhammad, judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in willing submission.”** [Surah An-Nisaa 4:65]. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, لَا «يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونَ هَوَاهُ تَبَعًا لِمَا جِئْتُ بِهِ» **“None of you truly believes until his desires are subservient to that which I have brought.”** [Imam an-Nawawi].

So from a Shariah perspective, a good person is the one who obeys Allah (swt) and strives to desire what pleases Him.

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