



Criterion for Judgement

Rasūlullāh ﷺ has said:

Allāh ﷻ looks not at your faces, nor at your wealth, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds. (Muslim)

The above-mentioned ḥadīth very clearly states the criterion upon which Allāh ﷻ judges people. His judgement is based neither on our physical features, race, nationality, origin, background, nor our material and financial status. Allāh ﷻ makes His judgement on the basis of two factors:

1. The Heart
2. The Actions and Deeds

The question that naturally arises at this point is, what is it that Allāh ﷻ looks for in our hearts and deeds?

As for the heart, it is quite clear that what is required is imān and piety. Piety here will include the adoption of all the desirable qualities such as patience, humility, generosity, sincerity and abstention from all the undesirable ones such as pride, malice and jealousy. As far as the deeds are concerned, those that have been articulated by the Qurʾān and Aḥādīth as creditable shall be treated as such, and those that have been discouraged will be unacceptable to Allāh ﷻ. Thus deeds along with their intentions determine whether a person is good or evil or superior or inferior.

Sincerity & Sunnah – Two Fundamental Requirements

For any deed to gain acceptance in the Court of Allāh ﷻ, there are two fundamental requirements:

1. The intention must be correct and full of sincerity.
2. One should ensure that the action is in conformity with the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ.

The Prophet ﷺ has stated:

Actions depend upon intentions. (Bukhārī, Muslim)

Therefore, the sole objective when performing any deed should be the Pleasure of Allāh ﷻ. No matter how attractive and perfect the exterior of a deed appears, if there is no sincerity, then the act will merit no reward.

Similarly, if a deed was full of sincerity, yet it failed to conform to the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ, it will equally stand rejected and unworthy of any credit.

Once, on the day of ʿĪd, a man decided to perform optional ṣalāh in the open ground where the ʿĪd ṣalāh was to take place. ʿAlī ؓ prevented him from doing so, upon which the man said, ‘O Leader of the Faithful, I know that Allāh does not punish someone for offering ṣalāh.’ ʿAlī ؓ said, ‘I know that Allāh does not reward an act unless Rasūlullāh ﷺ himself did it or encouraged it. Therefore your (intended) ṣalāh is of no avail, and futile actions are forbidden. Thus, it is feared that Allāh may punish you for opposing His Messenger ﷺ.’ (Majālis-al-Abrār)

We should always remember that the way of Rasūlullāh ﷺ is a direct route to acquiring the Love of Allāh ﷻ and His Forgiveness.

Say, (O Muḥammad, to mankind): ‘If you love Allāh, follow me; Allāh will love you and forgive your sins. Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, Merciful.’ (3:31)

Sincerity - Soul of Deeds

Sincerity is the life and soul of deeds, without which a deed in reality has no existence. This is the case even though it may seem that a deed has a physical and visible existence. Needless to say that this visible existence is of no benefit, for it is no more than a lifeless body.

This is just like the life-size picture of a lion or its carcass, which despite its realistic appearance, would not be a cause of fear for even a child of tender age. However, if a live lion or even a lion cub was to enter a room full of people, the terror it would strike in them would be tremendous.

Why is this so? The answer is simple. One has a soul, whilst the other does not. Similarly a seemingly great deed is lifeless or holds no significance whatsoever without the spirit and soul of sincerity.

On the Day of Judgement Allāh ﷻ will not even consider placing any deed performed without sincerity on the Mizān (Scales), for such a deed will bear no weight whatsoever. On the other hand a small, yet sincere, deed will have substantial weight.

It is mentioned in a ḥadīth that a person will be brought to the Court of Allāh ﷻ with heaps

of evil deeds. Such a person will see nothing but destruction before him. Subsequently, the Angels will bring a small piece of paper stating that it bore one good deed of his. The person will wonder as to how such a small deed would salvage him from the impending disaster brought on by the mountains of evil deeds. However, to his astonishment, this small deed will outweigh his evil deeds. On his enquiry, it will be revealed that the seemingly insignificant deed was the Kalimah *Ash-hadu an Lā-ilāha illal-lāhu wa ash-hadu anna Muḥammadan ʿabduhu wa rasūluh*, which he happened to recite with pure sincerity. (Tirmidhī)

Evil Deeds with Good Intentions

One should not misunderstand that good intentions have the potential to transform evil deeds into good ones. An evil deed, regardless of the nature of one's intention, remains evil. The principle that 'actions depend upon intentions' applies only to good deeds.

Overall, deeds can be divided into four categories:

1. Good deeds with good intentions.
2. Good deeds with evil intentions.
3. Evil deeds with good intentions.
4. Evil deeds with evil intentions.

With the exception of the first one, all the other types will be classified as evil and will all contribute towards incurring the displeasure of Allāh ﷻ and lead one to eternal destruction in the hereafter.

A deed, in this context, can be likened to a passport, with the intention being the visa. If the passport is faulty, then the successful outcome of a visa application will yield no benefit whatsoever, i.e. both the visa and the passport need to be sound.

In order to succeed in the domain of religion, one has to acquire the knowledge of dīn so that one is able to distinguish good deeds from evil ones. In order to acquire knowledge one will need to read authentic books and consult reliable ʿUlamā regarding one's day-to-day matters. Success lies in performing as many good deeds as possible, and whilst practising good deeds one has to establish the quality of sincerity. This will be achieved by assessing the condition of the heart before, during and after the performance of each good deed. Only then can one hope that the deed will be accepted in the Court of Allāh ﷻ.

'Lo! Those who believe and do good works, theirs will be Gardens underneath which rivers flow. That is the great success. (85:11)

May Allāh ﷻ grant us the tawfiq to follow His Commands, may He give us all the correct understanding of dīn and may Allāh enshroud us with His Mercy, Forgiveness and blessings. May He grant us the tawfiq to strive in acquiring His Pleasure and rectifying our external and internal selves. Āmīn.

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