

Attributes of righteousness and piety defined in Islam

The Quran verse / Ayah mentioned below contains great wisdom, encompassing foundations for correct beliefs and is meant to raise the awareness about not to sometimes get lost in the mechanics of various Ibadah. In this verse, Allah first commanded the believers to face Bayt Al-Maqdis (in Jerusalem), and then to face the Kaaba in Makkah during their prayers. This change was difficult for some of the People of the Book, and even for some Muslims. Then Allah sent the revelation which clarified the wisdom behind this command. Allah says in the Quran:

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ
وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ
وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَأَبْنَسَبِيلِ
وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ
وَأَتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤَفَّقِينَ بَعْدَ إِذَا
عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ
الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

سورة البقرة

It is not Al-Birr (piety, righteousness, and each and every act of obedience to Allah, etc.) that you turn your faces towards east and (or) west (in prayers); but Al-Birr is (the quality of) the one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, the Prophets and gives his wealth, in spite of love for it, to the kinsfolk, to the orphans, and to Al-Masakin (the poor), and to the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and to set slaves free, performs As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), and gives the Zakat, and who fulfill their covenant when they make it, and who are As-Sabirin (the patient ones, etc.) in extreme poverty and ailment (disease) and at the time of fighting (during the battles). Such are the people of the truth and they are AlMuttaqoon (pious).Q 2/177

This is what we learn from the above verse:

- Obedience to Allah, adhering to His commands, facing wherever He commands facing, and implementing whatever He legislates, is the objective. This is **Birr**, **Taqwa and complete faith**.
- Facing the east or the west does not necessitate righteousness or obedience, unless it is legislated by Allah.
- Virtues highlighted here are right **Faith**, believing in Allah, that He is the only God worthy of worship, and believing in the angels the emissaries between Allah and His Messengers.
- **Steadfastness in prayer**, spending in **charity**, (for the sake of Allah and not for worldly gains like praise and popularity), **fulfillment of contracts**, and **patience** in adverse circumstances.
- The `Books' are the Divinely revealed Books from Allah to the Prophets, which were followed by the most honorable Book (the Quran). The Quran and its commands supersede all previous books as it mentions all types of righteousness, and the way to happiness in this life and the Hereafter. The Quran abrogates all previous books and testifies to all of Allah's Prophets, from the first to the final prophet, Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon them all.
- It is recorded in the Sahihayn that Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet said: The best charity is when you give it away while still healthy and thrifty, hoping to get rich and fearing poverty.) Allah also says in the Quran:

لَنْ نَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّىٰ نُنفِقُوا مِمَّا نَحِبُّونَ
وَمَا نُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٢﴾
سورة آل عمران

“By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give (freely) of that which you love; and whatever you give, Allah knows it well.”

Quran (Surah Aal-e-Imran, Verse 92)

- The kinsfolk (one's relatives) have more rights than anyone else to one's charity. (Sadaqah (i. e., charity) given to the poor is a charity, while the Sadaqah given to the relatives is both Sadaqah and Silah (nurturing relations), for they are the most deserving of you and your kindness and charity).
- Performing As-Salah (Iqamat-As-Salah)) means those who pray on time and give the prayer its due right; the bowing, prostration, and the necessary attention and humbleness required by Allah. Allah says about
- Those who acquire the qualities mentioned in the Ayah will have embraced all aspects of Islam and implemented all types of righteousness.
- Such are the people of the truth. This means that whoever acquires these qualities are truthful in their faith. This is because they have achieved faith in the heart and realized it in deed and upon the tongue. So they are the truthful, (and they are Al-Muttaqun (the pious)) because they avoided the prohibitions and performed the acts of obedience.