

Deen Or Dunya?

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to discuss which path a Muslim should take in this life.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, Most Merciful, Most Gracious

Deen or Dunya?

Praise is to Allah who owns all that is in the Heavens and on the Earth. And the best of salutations and Allah's prayers on the one who has been sent to guide us to the best of paths: Muhammad, and on his noble family and great companions; and on whomsoever follows his footsteps till the Day of Reckoning.

Introduction:

Many times, we find individuals working for this worldly life as if they have forgotten that one day they will return to Allah and be brought to account. Then, there are those who seem focused on doing great deeds with the Hereafter in mind, but completely neglect their financial and familial responsibilities.

So, how can one reconcile between this life and the next? Between enjoying the good delights that Allah ﷻ has put on this earth while keeping focused on efforts for al-Jannah?

As always, we need to go back to basics to build on.

Why are we here?:

Every Muslim knows that he is only here in this life temporarily. It is so temporary that Allah ﷻ narrates to us the perception of the human, after he has ended this life:

He said, "And when the Hour arises, the criminals would swear that they didn't remain [in the dunya] for a mere hour." ¹

The seventy or so years will only seem like a mere hour.

In one narration, Jibreel ﷺ asks Nooh ﷺ, "O longest living prophet! How did you find the dunya?"

He replies, "Like a house which has two doors; I entered from one of them, and exited the other."

To allow us to understand this reality, the Prophet ﷺ repeatedly reminded us that we are like travellers in this life.

Ibn Abbas narrates that Umar ibn Al-Khattab ؓ entered onto the Prophet ﷺ; and he was lying on a straw mat which had made its mark on his sides. So he said, "O Messenger of Allah, why don't you have thicker bedding than this?"

He ﷺ said: "What do I want with dunya? And what does dunya want with me? By He who my life in His hands, my example in relation to the dunya, is no more than a rider on a [hot] summer day, who took shade under a tree for a period of time during the day, then rode off and left it." ²

And on one occasion, AbdUllah ibn Umar ؓ said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ took hold off my shoulder, and said, 'O AbdUllah! Be in this life as a stranger or a passer-by.'" ³

Our Purpose:

We know that we are here temporarily; and that we are going to another world. So, what is our aim in this life?

Simple: being saved from the Fire and entering al-Jannah.

"Whoever is pushed away from the Fire; and permitted entry to al-Jannah, has surely succeeded." ⁴

¹ Qur'an: Chapter of the Romans. 30:55.

² Sound: Narrated by Imams Al-Hakim, Ahmed and Ibn Hibban.

³ Sound: Narrated by Imam Al-Bukhaari.

⁴ Qur'an: Chapter of the Family of Imran. 3:185.

Hadith of Mu'ath:

"O Messenger of Allah, inform of actions that will enter me into al-Jannah and distance me from the Fire?"

He replied: "You have inquired about something great, yet it is easy on those who Allah has made it easy for." ⁵

Another Hadith:

The Prophet ﷺ asked a man: "What do you say in Salah?"

He said, "I bear the testimony; then I say: 'O Allah, I ask you al-Jannah and I seek refuge of You from the Fire!' For I cannot do your humming⁶ nor the humming of Mu'ath."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "It is around these words that we hum." ⁷

So, this is our purpose. And if you want to summarise it in one word: **Allah**.

Allah is our aim and He is our focus; and we belong to Allah and to Him we shall return.

So, if we wish to attain Allah; then we have to seek Him wherever and however we can.

So, what is Deen? And what is Dunya?

Deen:

The meaning of Deen extends from the word to be accounted by, or to be reckoned. That's why the Day of Resurrection is also known as: "The Day of Deen".⁸

So, the Deen is one's way by which he lives or is accounted. It is his code of living. It is the laws and rules that govern one's heart, mind, body and soul.

For a Muslim it has to be Islam: "Verily, the Deen with Allah is Islam." ⁹

"And whoever seeks a Deen other than Islam, it would not be accepted from him." ¹⁰

The Deen has set the legislation that would revive the human Fitrah (natural instinct), after deviation from its originality. The Deen was ordained to be used as a source of guidance and light in this life. It brought along a new set of ethics and moral values which, when employed, provided much protection to human dignity, rights and freedoms; on an individual and society level.

In a beautiful chapter of the Qur'an, Allah ﷻ outlines vivid characteristics of that who denies the Deen, portraying him as ill mannered, hard-hearted, and credited for much disorder in his community.

"Have you seen the one who denies Deen? He is one who spurns the orphan. Nor does he urge people to feed the needy and the indigent." ¹¹

⁵ Sound: Hadith narrated by Imams Ahmed, Al-Tirmidhi and others.

⁶ Humming: referring to the voice which is heard, but not understood; and here he is indicating the eloquent words of dua' as uttered by the Prophet ﷺ.

⁷ Sound: Hadith narrated by Imams Abu Dawood and Ahmed.

⁸ Qur'an: Chapter of the Opening. 1:4.

⁹ Qur'an: Chapter of the Family of Imran. 3:19.

¹⁰ Qur'an: Chapter of the Family of Imran. 3:85.

¹¹ Qur'an: Chapter of the Plate. 107:1-3.

What is Dunya?

Some say it is derived from the word meaning “near”; and others from the word meaning: “low”.

What is the nature of Dunya?:

“Decoration”, “Play and amusement”¹²

“Baggage of the deceived”¹³

“Quick”. “Unpredictable”, “Short lived”, “Temporary.”

The Condemnation of Dunya:

There are so many textual references in the Qur’an, the Sunnah and the sayings of the righteous from before which condemn dunya. Of these include:

“Whoever wants the quick life, We will hasten for him, what We want of it, to whom We choose. Then, afterwards, We have appointed for him Hell; he will burn therein disgraced and rejected.”¹⁴

The example of the dunya as in the Chapter of Younes¹⁵ and The Cave¹⁶.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “The one who loves his dunya will harm his Final life. And the one who love his Final life will harm his dunya. So, give preference to that which remains over that which will end.”¹⁷

“The Love of dunya is the cause of every sin.”¹⁸

Isa ؑ said: “Don’t take the dunya as a lord, for it will treat you as slaves.”

What is dunya?:

If dunya is condemned, we need to understand what is it in the dunya that is condemned.

Is it the time that we live in? The day and night? No.

The day and night are signs from Allah.

“And of His signs are the night and the day.”¹⁹

Is it the months that make up the year? No, because they are made by Allah for our service.

“The number of months with Allah is twelve months in the Book of Allah, when He created the Heavens and the Earth. Of them are four sacred.”²⁰

Is it the Sun, which indicates the change of day? No. The Sun is a sign.

Is it the Moon, which indicates the change of month? No. The Moon is a sign.

And they both harnessed for our use. “And He harnessed for you the Sun and the Moon; which are continually present.”²¹

Is it the Earth, the land that we walk on? No. As the Earth is one Allah’s great creations which Allah has made to maintain life and give fruits and resources.

Is it the Money? Is it being financially successful?

Is it starting a family? Getting married and having children?

¹² Qur’an: Chapter of Iron. 57:20.

¹³ Qur’an: Chapter of the Family of Imran. 3:185.

¹⁴ Qur’an: Chapter of the Night Journey. 17:18.

¹⁵ Qur’an: Chapter of the Yunus. 10:24.

¹⁶ Qur’an: Chapter of the Cave. 18:45.

¹⁷ Hadith: narrated by Imams Ahmed and Al-Bazzaar.

¹⁸ Weak Hadith: narrated by Imams Al-Bayhaqi and Ibn Abi Dunya.

¹⁹ Quran: Chapter of Expounded.41:37.

²⁰ Quran: Chapter of Repentance. 9:36.

²¹ Quran: Chapter of Ibraheem. :33.

Is it eating good food and wearing nice clothes?

Consuming halal is not forbidden:

“Say: ‘who is it that has prohibited the decoration of Allah? That He has given to His slaves and the good things’.”²²

Islam does not ask for us to live in isolation, to cut ourselves off from society, or to completely deprive ourselves of what Allah ﷻ has made halal (permissible).

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Things that have been made beloved to me: Perfume and Women. And the calmness of my eyes has been made in Salah.”²³

Allah has made certain food better tasting than others, for us to enjoy.

“And We give preference to some of it [food] over others.”²⁴

The Prophet ﷺ used to like some foods more than others, like honey and sweet dishes²⁵; and he used to like courgettes/pumpkin²⁶; as he used to like the shoulder part of the lamb²⁷.

So, liking the different foods is a means to enjoying these foods; and there is nothing wrong with consuming halal and enjoying it

Thus, this isn't part of the condemned dunya.

No to Extravagance:

The problem is in extravagance.

Our religion is not one of extremes – we shouldn't be excessive in our eating, we eat to sustain ourselves; we shouldn't be excessive in our spending, but we are not tight-fisted or miserly.

Allah teaches us moderation: “And do not clench your hand tight to your neck; yet do not extend its extensively.”²⁸

“And do not raise your voice in prayer; nor hide it; and seek a path between the two.”²⁹

When it comes to consuming halal, we have permission to do so; but we must be aware that we are extravagant in our practice.

Allah says, “And eat and drink; yet do not waste in extravagance; for Allah loves not those who are extravagant.”³⁰

No to Arrogance:

The other aspect which one has to be aware in his consumption of halal; and more so in his appearance and clothes is the avoidance of arrogance.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “The one who has an ant's egg weight of arrogance will not enter al-Jannah.”

A man said, “A man loves that his clothes are nice and his sandals are nice?”

He said, “Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Arrogance is rejection of truth and despising people.”³¹

²² Quran: Chapter of The Heights. 7:32.

²³ Sound Hadith: Narrated by Imams Al-Hakim and Al-Tabaraani

²⁴ Quran: Chapter of Thunder. 12:4.

²⁵ Sound Hadith: Narrated by Imams Al-Bukhaari and Muslim

²⁶ Sound Hadith: Narrated by Imam Ahmed.

²⁷ Sound Hadith: Narrated by Imam Ahmed.

²⁸ Quran: Chapter of The Night Journey. 16:29.

²⁹ Quran: Chapter of The Night Journey. 16:110.

³⁰ Quran: Chapter of The Heights. 7:31.

³¹ Sound Hadith: Narrated by Imam Muslim

Starting a family:

Is starting a family, by marrying and having children frowned upon? Not in the slightest.

We can (and should) have families.

Firstly, it is the Sunnah (path) of the messengers. Allah ﷻ said:

“And we sent before you messengers; and We made for them wives and offspring.”³²

The Prophet ﷺ said: “...and I marry women. Whoever abstains from my practice is not of me.”

Secondly, marriage is of the signs of Allah in His Creation.

Thirdly, marriage is encouraged.

“O Youth! Whoever of you has the ability to marry then he should do so. For it is more restricting to the eye and protection for the modesty.”³³

Fourthly, getting married and enjoying the relation one’s has with his spouse is rewardable by Allah.

“And in the intercourse you have, there is [reward of] charity.”³⁴

Fifthly, the fruit of marriage: the children are encouraged.

“When the human dies, then his actions are cut off except from three: a flowing [continuous] charity, knowledge that is benefitted from and a righteous child who prays him.”

“The best a man can consume is from his own earnings. And his child is from his earnings.”³⁵

“And seek what Allah has written for you.”³⁶ (i.e. the offspring).

The main problem is when the process of marriage becomes a distraction from the goal. Then, it becomes questionable.

“O you who believe, let not your children and your wealth distract from the remembrance of Allah. And whoever does that that surely they will be losers.”³⁷

The three persons:

Three persons came to the Prophet’s home ﷺ and asked about how he ﷺ worships Allah ﷻ. When they got the answer, they thought since he is a Prophet, Allah Ta’ala has forgiven him, and that they are just ordinary people and need to step beyond what the Prophet ﷺ said – they wanted to fast without breaking it, pray all night without sleeping, and refrain from marriage for their whole lives.

The Prophet ﷺ explained, however, that what they described was not his path. The Prophet ﷺ is the best of examples and the best of us, yet he fasted but also broke his fast, he prayed night prayer but also slept, and he did marry; we should stick to his Sunnah, the Straight Path.³⁸

³² Quran: Chapter of The Thunder. 13:38.

³³ Sound Hadith: Narrated by Imams Al-Bukhaari and Muslim

³⁴ Sound Hadith: Narrated by Imam Muslim

³⁵ Sound Hadith: Narrated by Imam Ahmed

³⁶ Quran: Chapter of The Cow. 2:187.

³⁷ Quran: Chapter of The Hypocrites. 63:9.

³⁸ Sound Hadith: Narrated by Imams Al-Bukhaari and Muslim

Trading and Business:

Allah describes wealth as the means for keeping life upright. ³⁹

Financial gain is not frowned upon in Islam. In fact, prosperity is encouraged.

“What a great thing: good wealth with a good slave [person].” ⁴⁰

This saying of the Prophet ﷺ comes during an important context.

Amr ibn Al-Aas said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent for me, saying, ‘Bring your clothes and weapons and come to me.’ So, I came to him whilst he was performing wudu. He raised his sight to me, then lowered it. He said, ‘I want to send you [as leader] over an army. Allah will return you safely and He will give you spoils; and I will cut out a good share of wealth for you.’

I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, I didn’t become a Muslim for the sake of money; but I entered Islam out of eagerness for Islam; and that I would be with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.’

He said, ‘O Amr! What a great thing: good wealth with a good slave [person].’”

An invitation to seek the bounty / provisions of Allah:

Allah ﷻ says in the Qur’an: “Disperse through the land and seek the bounty of Allah” ⁴¹

He also says, “Allah has permitted trade.” ⁴²

It is permissible and encouraged to practice trade.

The extensive reminding in Qur’an and Hadith to spend of one’s wealth indicates there is great deeds in the one who has wealth and spends it for Allah and His path.

Also the hadith of the poor who came to the Prophet ﷺ, demonstrates that wealth is a gift from Allah whom He specifies to whom He wills.

- The Case of Uthman ibn Affan ؓ
- The Case of Abdul Rahman ibn Awf ؓ
- Al-Zubair and his son AbdUllah ؓ
- The case of the companions ؓ, as narrated by Abu Hurairah ؓ

The above cases all were examples of affluent companions who used their money to support the Prophet ﷺ and Islam. And he ﷺ didn’t disapprove, rather he encouraged it.

The problem with collecting money is that it is a trial. For most humans, the owning of money can be a distraction from Allah, the remembrance of Allah and Salah.

We should not turn our back on it when prayer or Jum’uah comes.

“O you who believe, when the call to prayer is made on the Jumu’ah, then walk eagerly to the remembrance of Allah; and abandon trade.” ⁴³

Aishah – may Allah be pleased with her – was asked, “How was the Prophet ﷺ in his home?”

She replied, “He was at the service of his family, but when he heard the Adhan, he would leave.” ⁴⁴

And in another narration, “The Prophet ﷺ would be speaking to us and we would be speaking to him. Yet, if the Salah became present, it was as if he didn’t know us and we didn’t know him.” ⁴⁵

³⁹ Quran: Chapter of the Women.4:5.

⁴⁰ Sound: Hadith narrated by Imam Ahmed.

⁴¹ Qur’an: Chapter of The Jumu’ah. 62:10.

⁴² Quran: Chapter of The Cow. 2:275.

⁴³ Qur’an: Chapter of Jumu’ah. 62:9.

⁴⁴ Sahih: Narrated by Imam Al-Bukhaari

⁴⁵ Daef: Narrated in some books, but without a chain.

Ibraheem ibn Maymoon (إبراهيم بن ميمون) was a hadith narrator. He used to work as a gold and silversmith striking the metals with his hammer. If he lifted his hammer to strike the gold or silver, then heard the Adhan, he would put his hammer aside; and not even make that strike.

In fact, it would be ill of a person to be occupied with a worldly affair, and not be bothered to stop it to answer the call to Salah.

This goes for those who are occupied with useful activities. As for those who are doing nothing, comes the advice of Sufyan ibn Uyaynaah (سفيان بن عيينة) who said, “Don’t be an example of a bad slave [of Allah], who only comes when called. (Rather) Come to the Salah before the Adhan is called.”

Warning of trading in the Next life for this one:

One of the issues that we are warned of; and which can become the problem in our lives is when we give preference to this life over the Next. The issue is when we work to achieve things in this life on the account of the Next.

This is the problem.

Allah admonished a group from the Children of Israel: “Such are those who sold the Final Life with the life of dunya.”

Also, in one of the most beloved chapters⁴⁶ to the Prophet ﷺ, Allah says: “Rather, you give preference to the life of dunya. And the Final life is better and eternal.”⁴⁷

Concluding: it is fine to be financially successful and earn loads of money, as long as:

- It doesn’t become the aim in itself
- It doesn’t distract you from Allah
- You use your wealth for the REAL aim (as aforementioned)
- You are conscious of the diseases related to money (greed, stinginess, envy...)

Who owns the Dunya?:

Surely, the One who owns the dunya is the One who can give it and prevent it.

Dua’a of the Prophet ﷺ: “O Allah! There is none who can prevent what You give. And there is none who can give what You have prevented.”⁴⁸

If you want the dunya, then you have to turn to Allah. Asking Allah for dunya is part of dua’; and Allah loves to hear the voices of His creation calling him.

“He who wants the reward of the Dunya, We will give him of it. And he who wants the reward of the Final Life, We will give him of it.”⁴⁹

The story of Salim ibn AbdUllah ibn Umar:

Salim ibn AbdUllah was doing tawaaf (circumbulation) in the Sacred House. Hisham ibn Abdul Malik noticed him and approached him, thinking he would show generosity to Salim.

As he came to him, he asked him, “Do you need anything? Do you require anything?”

Salim was upset with this question, and replied: “Do you have no shame, asking me if I need anything in the House of Allah? Where only Allah is asked!”

Hisham backed off; and waited for Salim to exit the Sacred House.

⁴⁶ Weak: Hadith narrated by Imam Ahmed.

⁴⁷ Qur’an: Chapter of The Most High. 87:16-17.

⁴⁸ Sound: Narrated by Imams Al-Bukhaari and Muslim.

⁴⁹ Qur’an: The Chapter of the Family of Imran. 3:145.

On doing so, he approached him again to make his offer: “Do you need anything? Do you have any requirement?”

Salim replied questioning: “Are you referring to the requirements of this life or the Next?”

Hisham, surprised at this question, answered: “But, of this life!”

So Salim replies, “By Allah! I didn’t ask the dunya from the One who owns it; so why should I ask it from the one who doesn’t own anything of it!”

The dua’a of the Prophet ﷺ:

In the sunnah, we find that one of the most commonly said du’as that the Prophet ﷺ taught us is: “Our lord give us the good in this life and the good in the hereafter”.⁵⁰

This dua’a is taught in the Quran; and amazingly mentioned during the verses of Hajj. When one goes on Hajj, one does so as a pure spiritual exercise. Yet, Allah teaches us to ask for goodness in dunya as well as the Final Life.

More than this; this dua’ was the one which the Prophet used to say during the passing by the Yemeni corner and the Black Stone, in circumambulation (tawaaf)⁵¹.

Conclusion:

We learn to make use of opportunities in this life.

Like time: Ramadan, ten days of Hajj, last third of night, after morning and after asr, etc.

Like place: masjid, makkah, madinah, travel

Like occasions: raining, illness, fasting, etc.

These opportunities are to give us bigger return

So the dunya is literally a “lifelong” opportunity: Make use of it!

Do your best in the dunya⁵² ; Allah will give you the dunya.⁵³

And the best way to make use of the opportunities is by letting the Deen guide you.

Learn the Deen and let it guide you. The Deen will make you aware of “What is life?” and the “Meaning of Success”. The Deen will show you who are the enemies (Shaytaan, desires, distractions, Soul (nafs), timewasters and criminals). The Deen will open your eyes to the real opportunities, and how to achieve your goal.

Purifying the heart:

The essence of correction is the heart.

“On a Day when neither wealth nor sons would benefit. Except for the one who comes to Allah with a healthy heart.”⁵⁴

Your heart is your navigation system, which continually needs updating with the remembrance of Allah.

The tongue and limbs will follow, and should harvest good.

“Are we going to be forsaken for what we speak?”

“Woe to you, O Muath! And what would cause people to be dragged on their faces in the Fire, other than the harvest of their tongues!”⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Sound: Narrated by Imams Al-Bukhaari and Muslim.

⁵¹ Hadith: Narrated by Imam Abu Dawood.

⁵² Qur’an: The Chapter of the Bee. 15:30.

⁵³ Qur’an: The Chapter of the Bee. 15:41.

⁵⁴ Qur’an: The Chapter of the Poets. 26:88-89.

⁵⁵ Sound: Narrated by Imams Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Nasa’iee.

The Problem is in the balance:

“Those who don’t anticipate our meeting; and are content with the life of the dunya...”⁵⁶

The key is to always have the hereafter on top of our mind and list of priorities.

The right path to follow therefore is to fully engage into worldly economic life in the manner prescribed by Allah ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ both at societal and individual level.

Deen is for this life, it is to be applied during this life, and its result of its application is to be reaped in the hereafter.

Allah ﷻ says in the Qur’an:

“Say (O Muhammad): "I have been commanded to worship Allah, making my Deen sincerely to Him, and commanded to be the first of those who submit in Islam.”⁵⁷

Some saying regarding the Dunya and Final Life:

‘Qarun’s people said to him: “Do not exult. Indeed, Allah does not like the exultant. But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters”.’⁵⁸

Jabir narrates the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Jibreel ﷺ said to me: ‘O Muhammad, Live as you want, but know that you shall die. Love who you want, yet you shall leave them. Do what you want, for you shall meet it.’”⁵⁹

There is a narration attributed to the companions ﷺ: “Work for your worldly life as you were going to live forever. And work for the life to come as if you were going to die tomorrow.”

“Asceticism is not that you should not own anything, but that nothing should own you.” [Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib]

“Improve your secret and private life, and Allah will improve your public and social life. Make matters well between you and Allah, and Allah will make matters well between you and people. Work for the Hereafter and Allah will be enough for you in your worldly concerns.” [Imam Sufyaan AthThawri]

“This dunya is like a shadow, run after it and you will never be able to catch it, turn your back against it and it has no choice but to follow you” [Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim]

“Our connection with Allah ﷻ is a fuel and a light for our dunya activities.”

Final Wise words:

As in the words of Omer El-Hamdoon: “Make the dunya your mule: that you ride and control to get to your destination. Be careful, if you don’t control the mule, it will kick you in the teeth.” (You don’t need to be a dentist to know that really hurts!)

⁵⁶ Qur’an: Chapter Yunus 9:7.

⁵⁷ Qur’an: Chapter the Groups of 39:11-12.

⁵⁸ Qur’an: Chapter the Stories. 28:76-77.

⁵⁹ Hadith: Narrated by Al-Baihaqi and Tayaalisi.