

All praise is due to Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful. We praise him, ask for his forgiveness and seek refuge from him from evil deeds. I testify that there is no deity except Allah and I testify that Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is his messenger and servant.

We are still on the discussion of hadith of Jibril peace be upon him - when he came to our prophet (peace be upon him) to teach Muslims about religion. Our Messenger peace and blessings be upon him answered Jibril's questions and divided our religion into three stages: namely Islam, Iman and Ihsan.

The highest of these levels is Ihsan (can be translated as doing good deeds). The second level is Iman and the third level is Islam. Every Muhsin (who does Ihsan) is a Mu'min (believer) and every believer is a Muslim. Not every Mu'min is a Muhsin and not every Muslim is a Mu'min and Muhsin. We also find these differences in some verses. We read in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:14) *The Bedouins say: "We believe." (O Prophet), say to them: "You do not believe; you should rather say: 'We have submitted'"; for belief has not yet entered your hearts. If you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not diminish anything from the reward of any of your deeds. Surely Allah is most forgiving, most compassionate.*

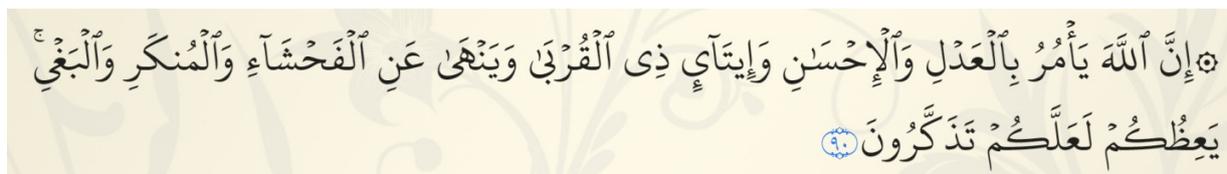
Ihsan means the "beautification", "perfection" or "excellence" (linguistically speaking) to do the good deeds and works in the best possible way in every respect. This perfection is not limited to worldly acts, but also to religious works. Our Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) explained the Ihsan in the following manner: Ihsan is to worship Allah (SWT) like you see him (like imagine yourself that, you are standing before Allah (SWT)) and he always sees you. In other words, Ihsan is the constant awareness, that Allah always sees you and sees in fact each deed performed by a Muslim. It also means that the Muslim is aware of the special qualities and higher attributes of Allah, so that these are always in consciousness and present in thought and action. Because this attitude motivates people to be sincere and God-fearing when performing their religious duties and provides the foundation for doing these duties as if you see Allah Himself. Every Muslim must be aware that Allah is close to him and that man is right in front of HIM (means Allah (SWT)).

This attitude causes fear of God and encourages the glorification of Allah, which has been mentioned by Abu Huraira when the Prophet said: "That you fear Allah as if you see HIM". This attitude means that people put effort into their religious acts so that these religious acts are completed and carried out in the best possible way. However, it remains unreachable for some people to serve God as if one could see Him, and one should therefore at least strive to develop the inner unshakable belief that Allah

knows and sees the hidden and the non-hidden. The servant can feel the closeness of Allah with the eyes of his soul and thus become aware of His presence. That comes close to seeing Allah. As I have already said, the expression Ihsan is not limited to religious deeds, but extends to all deeds and actions that man does for worldly reasons. Imam Muslim in his Sahih narration mentioned: Abu Ya'la Shaddad ibn Aws (r) reports that the Messenger of Allah (s) said: "Allah has prescribed to be benevolent towards everything. So if you kill, kill well, and if you slaughter, slaughter well. And (if you slaughter) sharpen your knife and don't torture the animal to be slaughtered.

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This hadith / this tradition shows the practical side of Ihsan or wellbeing. It shows that Ihsan requires in every deed / action that man does and that it (Ihsan) is not limited to religious actions, as one might think. This meaning of Ihsan is consistent with the many verses that we read in the Quran. We read in Sura An-Nahl No. 16 verse No. 90 the following:



"Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded."

The Quran increases the value of Ihsan so that Ihsan is one of the goals and reasons for the existence of creation. It is the reason why Allah, the Exalted, created life and death and man. We read the following in Sura Al-Mulk No. 67 verse 1 and 2:

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"Blessed is He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent" [67.1]

"[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed - and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving" [67.2]

Because of this, the command of Ihsan is something that effects all actions of a human being. Therefore understanding Ihsan and implementing it is a distinctive characteristic of an Islamic Character. A muslim must strive to achieve Ihsan in all of his actions, such that he carries out his affairs to perfection without any defect. The term of Ihsan is applicable in everything, for example how would Ihsan apply to a simple task such as slaughtering of a sheep. A muslim has to carry it out in order to fulfill tawheed, he has to do it in the name of Allah who created the animal and made it halal for us to consume it, this alone deserves the praise of Allah. Likewise the animal which Allah made halal to consume, is deserving of mercy, therefore the muslim sacrificing it must take care to cut the animal with a sharp knife (to avoid

inflicting pain upon the animal). Likewise Ihsan is also applicable to the highest actions of worship (Ibadat), to beliefs, as well as in being mindful and fearful of Allah. There are many examples from the Salaf (first 3 generations), in their speech, actions and life, where they (understood the) concept of Ihsan.

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Some of the Salaf said that "Be mindful and fearing of Allah according to how much power he has over you and be shy and ashamed (of disobeying) of Allah according to how close he is to you".

The Quran tells us about this closeness of Allah to us, in many places.

We read in Sura Al-Baqara No. 2 verse No. 186

"And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided".

In Surah Al-Mudjjudila No. 58 verse No. 7 we read:

"Have you not considered that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is on the earth? There is no private conversation three but that He is the fourth of them, nor are there five but that He is the sixth of them - and no less than that and no more except that He is with them [in knowledge] wherever they are. Then He will inform them of what they did, on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed Allah is, of all things, Knowing".

In Sura Qaf No. 50 verse No. 16 we read:

"And We have already created man and know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein".

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In hadith, we find many reliable narrations about the closeness of Allah.

In Bukhari and Muslim, it is mentioned; Rasulullah (sa) said that,

"When anyone of you stands in prayer then he is talking privately with Allah (swt)".

Rasulullah(sa) said to the people who raised their voice during Zikr (remembrance) of Allah (swt) that, "O people! Be merciful to yourselves (i.e. don't raise your voice), for you are not calling a deaf or an absent one, but One Who is with you, no doubt He is All-Hearer, ever Near (to all things)". Whoever achieves the state that he is aware of Allah then Allah will also be his companion in all situations.

In hadith, its narrated - "Allah the Almighty said: I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he

makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than it. And if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a cubit, and if he draws near to Me a cubit, I draw near to him a fathom. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed."