

Comprehensive Definition of Tawheed

(Oneness of Allah ﷻ)

In accordance with Quran and Sunnah.

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ
وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say: “ He is Allah the only and only; Allah is the self-sufficient (*Independent of all, while all are dependent on Him*); He begets not, nor is He begotten (*he has no child, nor he is a child to any one*); And there is none comparable to Him.

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْعَامِ ۖ فَاَلْهَكُمُ إِلَٰهُ
وَاحِدٌ فَلَهُ أَسْلِمُوا وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ

“-----Your Lord is One Lord (Allah); so, submit yourselves to Him alone...”
[Qur’an, 22: 34]

Tawheed is the ideology of Islam with the all-embracing concept of the Unequivocal Sovereignty of the Creator of this universe Whose Dominion overspreads the heavens and the earth. The Oneness of His Lordship, His Divinity, and His Attributes are all concentrated in His Absoluteness. The name of that Supreme in Arabic is Allah, which means One and the Only worthy of worship. This proper noun has neither a plural nor does it have any gender connotation attached to it. Like Himself, His name ‘Allah’ too has its own uniqueness. Thus, the notion of the indivisible divinity of Allah SWT or Tawheed is the entry-door to Islam. This is a running theme in the Qur’an that accounts for one-third of the contents of the Holy Scripture.

The entirety of Islamic teaching rests on this very principle of Tawheed. When the Prophet Muhammad SAW sent his companion Mu’adh to Yemen, he advised him: “You are going to a nation from the people of the Scripture, so let the first thing to which you will invite them to *be the Tawheed of Allah. If they learn that,*

tell them that Allah has enjoined on them five prayers to be offered in one day and one night. If they pray, tell them that Allah has enjoined on them Zakat of their properties and it is to be taken from the rich among them and given to the poor. If they agree to that, then take from them Zakat but avoid the best property of the people.”[Bukhari] In a corroborating narration, he provided a description of Islam: **“Islam is built on five pillars: The belief that Allah is One, establishing regular prayer, paying zakat, fasting, and Hajj.”** [Muslim]

The purpose of Islam is to guide people to shape their lives in accordance with Allah’s command. The acceptance of the concept of Tawheed, however, will be consequential in achieving that goal only with the understanding of its auxiliaries. The subtext of Tawheed essential for modifying behavior is the conviction in the afterlife and the Day of Judgment:

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ
الْعَرْشِ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِ ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ
أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ حَقًّا إِنَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ بِالْقِسْطِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ
وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ

“.....Your Lord created the heavens and the earth..., then established Himself on the Throne (of His Dominion), governing all affairs of the universe...Such is your Lord...To Him is your return. This is Allah’s promise that will certainly come true...He brings about the creation of all and He will repeat it so that He may justly rewards those who believe and do righteous deeds; and that those who disbelieve may...suffer a painful chastisement...for their denying the truth.” [Q, 10: 3 – 4]

Thus, Tawheed is an aggregate concept of Allah’s Sovereignty conjoined with the afterlife and accountability by Him.

Man needs knowledge to meaningfully organize his life on earth. Allah SWT has provided him with the means, such as eyes, ears, brain, and speech, to acquire that knowledge:

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

“...Allah it is Who created you, and gave you the faculties of hearing and sight and brain to think and understand...” [Q, 67: 23]

But these means have their limitations. Essential knowledge beyond these means is provided in two other ways: (a) Through Messengers whose mission is to guide people how to perform in this life and prepare for the next:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ إِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي فَمَنْ اتَّقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

“...If Messengers come to you ...who rehearse to you My signs, then those who shun disobedience and mend their ways shall have nothing to fear...” [Q, 7: 35]; and, (b) by instilling certain instincts in human nature and inspiring each individual’s conscience:

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا
فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا

“And by the soul and by Him Who perfectly proportioned it; and inspired it with (consciousness of) its evil and its piety.” [Q, 91: 7- 8].

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

Then We guided him to the Right way: Now it is his choice either to be grateful or to be a disbeliever. [Q76/3}

وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ

Then We showed him the two High ways (The righteous way and the evil way). [Q90/10].

Man has been inherently endowed with a moral consciousness. He instinctively differentiates between right and wrong, and good and evil. Even the most rabid unjust pleads for justice when he falls victim to injustice.

Because of these natural instincts, a newborn suckles mother's breast for survival right after birth, just as a baby fish is born swimming. When a loved one is terminally sick, relatives continue their hope for a turnaround with the One higher up inspired in the soul. As a ferocious storm rocks the boat and the death stares in the face, all fake affiliations abruptly come to an end and the person looks up towards the One he intuitively believes can still save his life:

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ

“When they embark the ships, they call upon Allah, consecrating their faith to Him. But when He rescues them and brings them to shore, they suddenly begin to associate others with Allah...” [Q, 29: 65]

The concept of One Deity is in the psyche of every human soul. Often it is subdued by forces, such as the influence of the environment, social pressures for conformity, personal ambitions, and obsession with worldly possessions that deviate people from the ordained path. The mission of all Messengers has been to realign human behavior with human rationality:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ

“All that they had been commanded was that they serve Allah, with utter sincerity, devoting themselves exclusively to Him, and that they establish Prayer and pay Zakat. That is the right Faith.” [Q, 98: 5]

True faith consists of wholly turning to Allah and shunning any associations with Him.

All humans have been created with that true innate nature that prompts them to believe that the One True Deity is the Creator, the Lord, and the only object of worship and obedience:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“Turn your face single-mindedly to the true Faith and adhere to the true nature on which Allah has created human beings...” [Q, 30: 30]

This truth has been elucidated in several traditions of the prophet SAW. In one of them, he said: *“There is no child but is born on his true nature [FITRA], and then*

his parents either make him into a Christian or a Jew or a Magian... [Bukhari, Muslim]

In the other he said: *“My Lord says: I created all of My servants as hanif (worshippers of the One True Allah). Then devils came to them and led them astray from their True Faith...”* [Muslim/Ahmad]

Recognition of One Sovereign is fundamentally so pivotal for any person to streamline his life that it could not have been left to external sources. It is not rocket science. Nothing is expected beyond human capacity on a sliding scale such that a normal person can meet the threshold. A human being is an intelligent agent and has a curious mind. He is urged to seek the Truth by mindfully observing the functioning of the universe around him and reflecting on it. Soon the reality will begin to dawn. He will not only recognize the Creator of this universe but will also find himself at the very center of it:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي
الْأَلْبَابِ

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for men of understanding. Those who remember Allah...and reflect in the creation of the heavens and the earth, (Saying): Our Lord! You have not created this in vain. Glory to You! Save us, then, from the punishment of the Fire.” [Q, 3: 190-1]

Critical observations will lead one to the undeniable Truth and deduce that, since everything else has a purpose, he too must have one to be explored, pursued, and accounted for.

In fact, there is no need for going too far in search. Just reflect on the universe at display within yourself. It indicates that this life is for a term with a specific purpose, and the day of reckoning is inevitable:

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكَافِرُونَ

“Do they not reflect on themselves? Allah created the heavens and the earth ... and for an appointed term. Yet many people deny that they will meet their Lord.” [Q, 30: 8]

One can also draw a fascinating inference by observing objects across the universe. Nothing stays in the same state. The status quo of everything is continuously changing. Each unit is moving from one stage to the other – changing in its formation, growth, and aging. Change is a sign of life and progress. It also means that anything that goes through a change will eventually end. What has an end must have a beginning – suggesting a condition of impermanence to conclude: *Nothing is worthy of being a deity*. Everything depends on some external source for its own existence. That external source is the Creator with no beginning and no end, the Eternal.

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

He is the First (nothing is before Him) and the Last (nothing is after Him), the Most High (above Whom there is nothing) and the Intimate (nothing is nearer than Him), and He has the knowledge of all the things [Q57/3]

Prophet Ibrahim used the same logic when he rejected one object after another people had come to worship and finally declared:

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“...I have turned my face in exclusive devotion to the One Who originated the heavens and the earth...” [Q, 6: 79]

As he uncovered the Truth about this universe and it’s Creator, it was brilliant of him that he did not call that Supreme by name. Instead, he referred to Him by His attribute. He made an indisputable declaration that whoever has created this universe, He is the Absolute and I am turning my face toward Him, rejecting all the others.

Man is creative, explores ways, and looks for cover to shun his responsibilities. The attitude is the same toward the innermost ideals, faith, and the obvious. Over time people deviated from their original creed and drifted away in different directions. This divergence was not the result of any discovery justifying a realignment of their allegiance. They did it selfishly for convenience, material temptations, social and cultural pressures, and illicit internal resistance against

conforming to the prescribed code. Indulgence in worldly allurements diminished the role of their faith in shaping a life of piety and pride. In defiance of their own intellect and conscience, they postulated various conjectures, philosophies, and speculative notions defusing the Divinity of One Creator just to satisfy their impulses. The religious hierarchy and establishments too played a major role in adapting to the tune of their uninformed devotees and even concealing the testimony in their own financial interests:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ
وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

“...Many of the rabbis (Jewish) and monks (Christian) scholars wrongfully devour people’s wealth and hinder them from the way of Allah...” [Q, 9: 34]

As a result, some became polytheists, other idol-worshippers, Magians, atheists, or agnostics. Whatever the philosophy, they all contradict one another, and each is self-contradictory. All denominations, monotheism included, can be summarized in three categories relative to their perspective about god: No god, or only one there is, or many of them. This leads to only three possibilities: *Zero, one, or one plus* (0, 1, 1+). These possibilities are mutually exclusive (only one can be true) and collectively exhaustive (no other possibility exists outside this domain). Thus, if either two of the three can be reasoned as false, the third one must be true by deduction.

The proponents of the godless (zero) theory tend to explain the creation of the universe as an accident. Nothing could be more insulting to the human intellect than this obtuse view. The Human mind is unable to conceive an accident that does not bear the hallmarks of an accident. This one does not. An accident is the result of the failure of a pre-existing system. It is an effect, and not a cause. An accident cannot be predicted, it is investigated after it has occurred what caused the system to fail. Thus, an accident is evidence itself of pre-existence, not its absence. No intelligent man on earth can accept this absurdity. This universe, with so much repetitiveness, patterns, diversity, regularity, predictability, sustainability, and order, is a self-evidenced display of its Creator’s superbly executed Master plan. Thus, godlessness (zero) is not a possibility.

The idea of one plus (1+) gods is even more insane. The multiplicity assumption is again contrary to human rationality, critical observations, and scientific facts. Unless rejected outright, the functioning of this universe and many of its physical phenomena cannot be comprehended or explained. Even a man of the meanest

intellect can grasp this profound argument against the conjecture of several gods. There is no socioeconomic unit or organization with a decision-making component, from an ordinary household to the highest office in the land that could function smoothly if it had multiple heads. How much more so it would be true for the universe.

The entire universe, right from the deep layers of the earth to the farthest planets, is subject to a mammoth law. This order of the universe cannot endure even for a moment unless there is a perfect balance, coherence, and coordination, tying its infinite objects and innumerable forces into a unified system. And all this is inconceivable unless there is a set of immutable laws that compels these objects to work together in perfect unison. If the universe were under the hegemony of several independent sovereigns, it would be impossible for a unified set of regulations to prevail in it; and the universe would have gone to ruins:

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ

“Had there been any gods in the heavens and the earth besides Allah, the order of both the heavens and the earth would have gone to ruin...” [Q, 21: 22]

Hence, the multiplicity (1+) assumption too must be rejected.

The very existence of an orderly system implies that it has no more than one sovereign who controls everything. The wide range of laws that regulate the universe indicates that sovereignty, rather than being diffused, is concentrated in the One Supreme. The epicenter of this description is that Allah is the Creator of the universe, and Sovereignty belongs to Him alone. As Allah is the Lord of all creations, no one else possesses any power nor shares in His Lordship. Ironically, there is always a band of astute people willing to trade the truth with falsehood:

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ

“Most of them only follow conjectures, and surely conjecture can be no substitute for truth.” [Q, 10: 36]

Tawheed is a running theme in the Qur’an and accounts for one-third of its contextual contents. However, it has been described most comprehensively at three places with a focus on three distinct aspects of Allah’s Oneness:

(a) His Existence:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ
وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say: “ He is Allah the only and only; Allah is the self-sufficient (*Independent of all, while all are dependent on Him*); He begets not, nor is He begotten (*he has no child, nor he is a child to any one*); And there is none comparable to Him.[Q112/1-5]

(b) His Ruling Authority over the universe:

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah! There is no god except He, the Living, the Everlasting. Neither slumber overtakes Him, nor sleep. To Him belongs everything in the heavens and everything on earth. Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His permission? He knows what is before them, and what is behind them; and they cannot grasp any of His knowledge, except as He wills. His Throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation does not burden Him. He is the Most High, the Great. Q2-255

(c) His Attributes:

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيِّمُ الْعَزِيزُ
الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

He is Allah. There is no god but He, the Knower of secrets and declarations. He is the Compassionate, the Merciful.

He is Allah; besides Whom there is no god; the Sovereign, the Holy, the Peace-Giver, the Faith-Giver, the Overseer, the Almighty, the Omnipotent, the Overwhelming. Glory be to Allah, beyond what they associate.

He is Allah; the Creator, the Maker, the Designer. His are the Most Beautiful Names. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. He is the Majestic, the Wise.[Q59/22-24]

A grasp of this multi factorial concept of Tawheed, as the Qur'an presents, constructs a capturing composite of an all-Mighty, all-Wise, Unique, and Eternal, Who is in absolute command of His Kingdom overspreading the heavens and the earth, in a conscientious mind. This penetrating conceptualization of Tawheed is the foundation of Islam and the thrust of the Qur'an for the unification of mankind around their nucleus and rise to their exalted status in the Kingdom granted by its Lord:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۚ فَإِنَّهُمْ آلَاءُ اللَّهِ
وَإِحْدٌ فَلَهُ أَسْلَمُوا وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ

“-----Your Lord is One Lord (Allah); so, submit yourselves to Him alone...”
[Qur'an, 22: 34]