

Worshippers of At-Taghut (الطاغوت The Transgressor)

(Translated)

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The Noble Quran mentions the Taghut (الطاغوت The Transgressor) in several verses, and contrasts it with Iman in, and worship of, Allah (swt). This establishes that people in their worldly life are on one of two paths: either the path of truth, which is the guidance of Allah (swt), or the path of falsehood, which is the misguidance of those who are other than Allah (swt) - whom the Noble Quran called the Taghut - and examples of this contrast are in the following places:

Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُمْ مَن هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكذِبِينَ﴾ **And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, saying, "Worship Allah and avoid Taghut." And among them were those whom Allah guided, and among them were those upon whom misguidance was justified. So, proceed through the land and observe how was the end of the deniers.** [TMQ Surah An-Nahl: 36]. Allah (swt) sent Messengers (as) to the people to command them to worship Allah (swt) and avoid Taghut, and to show them the consequences for those who are guided, and the consequences for those who go astray. After that, the people were either believers who were guided and worshipped Allah (swt), or astray and followed Taghut.

Allah (swt) said, ﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفصامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾ **There is no compulsion in religion. Righteousness has become distinct from transgression. So, whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the firmest bond with no break in it. And Allah is All-Hearing and All-Knowing.** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 256]. The verse clarifies that the path is clear. Righteousness is evident, and so is transgression. Holding fast to the firmest bond, meaning remaining steadfast on the straight path, which is the path of Iman and Islam, is achieved by following righteousness, which is belief in Allah (swt), and avoiding transgression, which is following the Taghut, so that people may be guided by Islam and follow it.

Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَن يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ﴾ **And those who have avoided worshipping Taghut and turned to Allah (swt) in repentance — for them is good tidings. So, give glad tidings to My servants.** [TMQ Surah Az-Zumar: 17]. Avoiding the Taghut is complemented by worshipping Allah (swt) and turning to Him, the Almighty, in repentance.

These are noble verses that contrast Iman in Allah (swt) and following His guidance, with following the Taghut and its misguidance. They are one of the two paths that man must inevitably take in this worldly life; either truth or falsehood, or guidance or misguidance, either to live in the way of Allah (swt) or to live in the way of the Taghut. This is after Allah (swt) has provided him with the means of knowledge and awareness of these two paths, as well as the means of choosing between them.

The word (الطاغوت) "At-Taghut" in Arabic language comes from the root (طغى) "tagha," meaning to transgress or transgression (طغيان tughyan). 'Ulema have differed over its evidencing; some say it refers to Shaytan, others to sorcerers, and still others to soothsayers.

Some 'ulema have combined all these meanings, such as in the Tafsir of At-Tabari, where he states, «والصواب من القول عندي في الطاغوت أنه كل ذي طغيان على الله، فعُبد من دونه؛ إما بقهر منه لمن

«The correct view, in my opinion, regarding Taghut is that it refers to anything of transgression (taghyyan) against Allah (swt) and is worshipped besides Him, either through coercion of the worshipper or through obedience from the worshipper. This object of worship may be a human being, a devil, an idol, a statue, or anything else.»

Ibn Kathir defines Taghut as, «ما يدعو إليه الشيطان من عبادة كل ما يعبد من دون الله» “that to which Shaytan calls, namely, the worship of anything worshipped besides Allah (swt).”

Al-Baghawi explains its meaning as, «كل ما عُبد من دون الله تعالى فهو طاغوت، وقيل: كل ما يطغي الإنسان» “Everything worshipped besides Allah (swt) is Taghut, and it has also been said that anything that leads a person to transgress is Taghut.”

These Quranic interpretations (tafaasir) show that everything that is worshipped besides Allah (swt) is considered false.

There are also verses that point to other meanings encompassed by the concept of Al-Taghut; it is not limited to worship and taking false deities, but also includes following and the resulting submission, obedience, and compliance to that which is followed, resorting to its judgment, and showing allegiance to it. Examples of this include:

Allah (swt) says, «اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُمْ مِنَ النُّورِ» **Allah (swt) is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out of darkness into light. However, those who disbelieve - their allies are Taghut. They take them out of light into darkness. Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein.** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 257]. This noble verse refers to the bond between the individual and the thought he believes in. Whoever follows a command and adheres to its path is transformed from one state to another. The path of Iman in Allah (swt) leads those who proceed on it, from the darkness of disbelief (kufr) and misguidance, to the light of guidance. This is while the Taghut mislead their followers, taking them from the light of guidance into the darkness of misery and misguidance. The verse thus points to the meanings of submission and subservience inherent in the concept of Taghut. In addition, it points to the meaning of loyalty (موالاة muwaalah) resulting from Iman and following Allah (swt). Allah (swt) is the ally of the believers, whilst the Taghut are the allies of those who disbelieve in Allah (swt).

Allah (swt) says in another verse, «أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ ءَامَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا نُزِّلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ» **Have you not seen those who claim to have believed in what was revealed to you, O Muhammad, and what was revealed before you? They wish to refer legislation to Taghut, while they were commanded to disbelieve in them; and Shaytan wishes to lead them far astray.** [TMQ Surah An-Nisa' 4:60]. To refer to anything other than the divine Shariah Law revealed in the Noble Quran is to refer to the Taghut. Muslims were commanded to refer to the Shariah Law of Allah (swt) for judgment, and were forbidden from referring to anything else for judgment. Any entity to which judgment is referred that is not based on Shariah Law is considered Taghut.

And Allah (swt) also says, «الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ الطَّاغُوتِ فَقَاتِلُوا» **Those who believe fight in the Path of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of Taghut. So, fight against the allies of Shaytan. Indeed, the plot of Shaytan has ever been weak.** [TMQ Surah An-Nisa' :76]. Here, the noble verse clarifies two categories of people: the believers, the allies of Allah (swt), who fight in His Path, and the disbelievers, the allies of Shaytan, who fight in the cause of the Taghut. This clarifies that the meaning of allegiance (ولاء walaa') and subservience is realized in the concept of the Taghut.

Therefore, Taghut is anything that is worshipped, followed, referred to for judgement, or taken as an ally instead of Allah (swt), because this constitutes transgressing the limits set by

Allah (swt). Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah (swt) have mercy on him, stated that the Taghut is, «هو» «anything by which a person transgresses his limits, whether it be something worshipped, followed, or obeyed.” This is clarified by the verses of the Noble Quran; thus, the matter is not limited to worship, but extends to the other actions mentioned above.

One matter that a Muslim must conform to is that the concept of Taghut refers to that which is worshipped, followed, and referred to for judgement instead of Allah (swt) in two ways:

Firstly:

The very entity that people worship, refer to for judgment, and pledge loyalty to is itself a Taghut. Any entity that people refer to for judgment, and make a source from which they legislate a system for their lives, and for which Allah (swt) has not revealed any authority, is a Taghut in its essence. Examples include: the man-made systems implemented in Muslim countries, legislative councils, international law and its institutions and organizations, and the decisions and agreements issued by them, and other entities to which people refer for enacting laws, adjudication, and legislation; all of these are Taghut in their essence.

Also, amongst the Taghut are the religions that people adopt that were not revealed from heaven, as well as the heavenly religions that were distorted, and also everything that humans have worshipped throughout history besides Allah (swt), such as idols, fire, trees, humans, and all that they have taken as gods. So, everything that humans have deified and worshipped besides Allah (swt), and every religion that does not originate from heaven, is Taghut in itself.

Similarly, beliefs, ideas, and concepts people adopt about their lives that are not derived from divine revelation or that contradict Islam are considered Taghut because an individual's life is governed and regulated by them. Allah (swt) has commanded humankind to adhere to His commands, Shariah rulings, in their lives, and He has not left humanity without a connection to its Creator in this world. Instead, humans are bound to obey Allah (swt) in their beliefs, and the concepts they adopt about their lives. Indeed, even their desires must be in accordance with what the Prophet of the Ummah (saw) brought. On the authority of Abdullah ibn Amr, may Allah (swt) be pleased with them both, he said: The Messenger of Allah (swt) said, «لا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونَ هَوَاهُ تَبَعًا لِمَا جِئْتُ بِهِ» **“None of you truly believes until his desires are in accordance with all that I have brought.”** (Narrated by al-Bayhaqi)

For a long time, Muslims have been assaulted by ideas of disbelief, falsehood, and misguidance, which have prevailed and dominated their lives, especially capitalist ideas such as secularism, democracy, utilitarianism, individualism, the principle that the ends justify the means, freedoms, and others. Capitalism, as an ideology, is the Taghut of this age; it has misled the world and plunged it into utter darkness, layer upon layer.

False beliefs and thoughts are themselves considered a Taghut (طاغوت Transgressor), because the Taghuts among humankind, who hold these ideas and concepts, become transgressors because of them. These beliefs and concepts are what lead and drive them to this evil. A person transgresses either through a false thought that has taken root within them, or through a corrupt desire that has possessed them. Therefore, a person who exceeds the bounds, in transgression, is a Taghut, and their false thought is, likewise, a Taghut.

Some intellectuals distinguish between the idols and the Taghut, as they are mentioned together in the the Words of Allah (swt) Who said, «أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَأَلْفَعُوا وَهُمْ يَخْلَعُونَ عَلَىٰ آلِهِمْ مِنَ الْوَعْدِ وَأَنزَلْنَاهُمْ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْقُرْآنَ لَكِن لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ إِلَّا نَجْوَىٰ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ» **“Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Scripture, who believe in idols and Taghut and say to those who disbelieve, ‘These are better guided than the believers as to the way’?”** [TMQ Surah An-Nisa’ 51]. They consider the idols to be mostly corrupt in thought and belief, and the Taghut to be mostly the individual who transgresses, oppressive, and exceeds the limit in

transgression. However, since the word “Taghut” is more comprehensive and general than “jibt (جبت idols)” as some mufasiroon (Quranic interpreters) have said, then “jibt (idols)” also falls under it. Therefore, it is correct to consider false beliefs and thoughts as Taghut.

In conclusion: Any entity of worship besides Allah (swt), any entity that legislates for people and establishes a system for their lives that is not based on divine revelation, and any concepts that influence people’s behavior that are not derived from or based upon the Islamic ‘Aqedah (creed) — all of these are inherently Taghut.

Secondly:

Also considered the Taghut are those individuals who exceed their bounds in transgression against others, such as those who rule by other than all that Allah (swt) has revealed, who coerce people into following other than the guidance of Allah (swt) and worshipping other than Him, or those who mislead people into following them in their worship and beliefs, willingly and ignorantly. Also included are any ruling authority who oppresses people, wages war against them in their Deen, prevents them from implementing the Shariah Law of Allah (swt) and seeking judgment from Him, and anyone who forbids the veneration of the rites of Allah (swt). All of these, and those similar to them, are Taghut in and of themselves.

The term Taghut in this context is not limited to rulers alone, but includes anyone who wields influence over people due to position, power, prestige, or fame, and who exploits this influence to fight against the Deen of Allah (swt) and prevent its implementation on earth, or to corrupt people, distort their Deen, and lead them astray; such a person is a Taghut. And whoever aids and supports these tyrants is one of them. The transgressing and despotic ruler does not carry out his transgression solely through his own person, but through a system of government, institutions, and henchmen who collectively constitute the instrument of his oppression and brutality. Therefore, whoever aids the Tughaa (transgressing tyrants) and acts as their instrument of brutal oppression is one of them.

In the famous story, *«أنه لما سُجن الإمام أحمد بن حنبل، جاء السجناء إليه، فقال له: يا أبا عبد الله، الحديث الذي رُوِيَ في الظلمة وأعوانهم صحيح؟ قال الإمام أحمد: نعم. قال السجناء: فأنا من أعوان الظلمة؟ فقال الإمام أحمد: فأعوان الظلمة من يأخذ شعرهم، ويغسل ثوبهم، ويصلح طعامهم، ويبيع ويشترى منهم. أما أنت فمن الظلمة أنفسهم»* When Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal was imprisoned, the jailer came to him and said to him: O Abu Abdullah, is the hadith that was narrated about the oppressors and their helpers authentic? Imam Ahmad said: Yes. The jailer said: So, am I one of the helpers of the oppressors? Imam Ahmad said: The helpers of the oppressors are those who cut their hair, wash their clothes, prepare their food, and buy and sell from them. As for you, you are one of the oppressors themselves.”

Thus, the concept of Taghut manifests in two aspects: firstly, in the false and corrupt matter itself that people follow, such as idols worshipped besides Allah (swt), false beliefs, man-made systems, and the like; and secondly, in the person who transgresses, oppresses and subjugates people to this falsehood. Allah (swt) has commanded us to avoid all forms of transgression and has forbidden us from following them.

Those who follow the path of Taghut fall into two categories: the Taghut himself, who oppresses and despotically establishes falsehood on earth, thus leading many astray; and the followers who subsist on this falsehood and Taghut, accepting it as their way of life. Therefore, it has been said that a Taghut is anyone who exceeds all bounds in transgression.

Exceeding the limit in transgression is when a person’s transgression extends to other people. Whoever transgresses within himself by accepting falsehood and misguidance and follows the path of the Taghut is a follower of him. Whoever transgresses with his transgression against others by calling them to falsehood - whether by misleading and deceiving them, thus leading them astray, or by forcing and compelling them to it - is a Taghut because he has exceeded the limit in his transgression (طغيان tughyan).

Herein lies the danger of the matter for the Muslim; for how many a Muslim affirms the Tawhid (Oneness) of Allah (swt) and worships Him, and exerts himself in drawing near to

Him, the Exalted, through acts of worship, both obligatory and recommended, but he is negligent in other dimensions of his Deen. So he walks in the path of the Taghut and raises some of his banner; such as seeing the legitimacy of resorting to man-made systems, or international law and international organizations, or claiming that Muslims are not ready to implement the Shariah Law of Allah (swt), or that the Shariah Law of Allah (swt) is not suitable to rule between people, or supporting a ruler who does not implement the Shariah Law and is allied with the disbelievers, and justifying this for him with justifications that do not please Allah (swt), or seeing the legitimacy of freedoms, or taking benefit as a measure for his actions, instead of the Halal and Haram, or adopting ideas that contradict his 'Aqeedah (creed) and Deen such as nationalism and patriotism, and many other cases; so he is following the Taghut whether he knows it or not.

It is a Shariah obligation upon the Muslim to understand that his entire life must be spent in obedience to Allah (swt) and in His Path. He must follow the commands of his Creator and avoid His prohibitions, and he must beware of following those who lead him astray, whether they be people or false ideologies, for all of that is misguidance.

Misguidance is the path of Taghut, just as guidance is the path of Iman. The crux of the matter is not whether a particular person is called a Taghut or not, but instead: on what path does the Muslim proceed in his life? Is his obedience to Allah (swt), or to falsehood and its adherents who have transgressed and oppressed? Allah (swt) says, **﴿وَأِنْ تَطَعْتَ أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾** **“And if you obey most of those on earth, they will lead you astray from the path of Allah. They follow nothing but conjecture, and they do nothing but guess.”** [TMQ Surah Al-An'aam: 116]

The believer lives his life for the sake of Allah (swt), and in accordance with what was revealed to His Messenger (saw). He does not accept deviating from this path and seeks the Help of Allah (swt) to guide him to the straight path and grant him steadfastness upon it. The believer avoids all forms of Taghut and takes a stance against them that pleases Allah (swt). He declares his enmity towards Taghut, and calls for their removal and the establishment of the Deen of Allah (swt), so that the earth may once again be blessed with the light of guidance and the darkness of misguidance may be dispelled, **﴿فَذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ فَمَاذَا بَعَدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا﴾** **“That is Allah (swt), your Lord, the Truth. So, what is there after the Truth except misguidance? So how are you turned away?”** [TMQ Surah Yunus: 32].