



**Manifestations of the
All-Merciful**

Author

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Humble Presentation



I humbly present this short commentary of the daily supplication of the Holy Month of Ramada-n to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) and his infallible progeny (as), who represent the perfect Manifestations of the All-Merciful, and sincerely pray to the All-Merciful Lord to accept the offering.

This humble attempt should be taken as a point of ascent to the meanings of other supplications narrated from the Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny (as). When reciting any supplication, one should never limit oneself to the periphery but should struggle for the center and the spirit. Our initial journey would be 'the journey of thought and concept', but this should lead us to overhaul ourselves and 'comprehend the kernel of prayer.'

May Almighty Alla-h assist all of us before we lose the priceless opportunity of this transient life.

Walhamdu lilla-hi Rabbi'l 'A-lami-n

And All praises belong solely to Alla-h, the Lord of the Universe

Utterly destitute to the All-Affluent
Abu- Muhammad Zaynu'l 'A-bidi-n
Qum al-Muqaddasa
Sha'ba-n al-Mu'azzam 1423

From the heavenly atmosphere of the neighbourhood of Hadrat Fa-tima Ma'su-ma (as), may the Almighty imbue our hearts with intense love for her, and may He Grace us with her intercession-A-mi-n.

Foreword

In the Name of Alla-h, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

All Praise belongs to Alla-h, Lord of the Worlds, and the good outcome belongs to the pious; may Alla-h bless His chosen elite ones, the choicest from among those whom He favors - the manifestation of His kindness to the world, namely Muhammad (s) and his Pure Progeny (as).

In the Qur'a-n, Alla-h (swt) says: "When My servants ask about Me, I am indeed close to them. I listen to the prayer of every supplicant, when he calls on Me."(al-Qur'a-n 2:186)

In this day and age of strife, perplexity and confusion, it is all the more necessary that we 'call' on Alla-h (swt) to protect us from the trials and tribulations of the modern era. The supplications taught to us by the A'immah (as) are indeed the best way to call upon Alla-h (swt). While it is true that ritualistic recitations of supplications taught to us by the A'immah (as) have always been a significant part of our program of worship ('iba-dah), on a daily basis, we hardly ever pause to ponder upon the profound pronouncement we utter by way of the Du'a-.

The Blessed Prophet (s) has said, "Alla-h does not answer the supplication of a heedless heart," and what that thought in mind, the present volume, Manifestations of the All-Merciful, by Shaykh Muhammad Khalfan, is a welcome addition to the corpus of literature on the commentaries of the commonly recited supplications as this work goes beyond the translation and a brief explanation of the words of the Du'a-. This volume is a wonderful exposition of the richness of such supplications.

I recall, vividly, some four years ago, during the blessed month of Ramada-n, receiving by way of e-mail from Shaykh Khalfan, a regular dose of the commentary on the verses of this Du'a-, highly recommended for the month of Ramada-n. Each day I eagerly looked forward to his inspiring e-mail, elaborating the deep meanings contained within each word of this Du'a-. Subsequently, the Tabligh Section of Dar-es-Salaam Jama'at, under the able leadership of Al-Ha-jj Mehboob Somji published the work in book form.

I am so very pleased to be writing this forward for this second edition, which has encapsulated the full commentary of all fifteen verses of the Du'a-.

The author, Shaykh Khalfan, is a scholar residing in Qum, who has a deep and unique insight into matters spiritual and we are blessed to have an opportunity to share this insight through this publication. Works of this nature show us that the profound words of the Du'a-, from the Holy Prophet (s) and his Pure Progeny (as) are timeless and are as relevant today in the 21st century as they were in the seventh century when they were first uttered - perhaps more so today, when our preoccupation in perfecting the material aspects of life has robbed us of the spiritual dimension and has led us to be heedless of the very essence of our existence. Even our mode, manner and places of worship, may have given us the 'means', however not the 'end'.

Thus, this book can be a beacon for us to regain sight of the 'end' - as the author elaborates in his introduction - this is a 'journey of thought and concept' that will lead us to 'comprehend the kernel of prayer', Insha--Alla-h.

May Alla-h (swt) give us ability to supplicate with a heart that is not heedless.

Understanding the Merit of the Supplication

The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

الْقِيَامَةِ يَوْمٍ إِلَى ذُنُوبِهِ غُفِرَتْ الْمَكْتُوبَةِ بَعْدَ رَمَضَانَ شَهْرٍ فِي الدُّعَاءِ بِهَذَا دَعَا مَنْ.

“Whosoever beseeches with this supplication in the Holy month of Ramada-n, after the prescribed prayer, his sins (dhunu-b) shall be forgiven till the Day of Judgment.”[1]

Du'a- is not a mere verbal utterance, but “a state of real want,” which is mostly manifested by the verbal supplication. However, as long as there is no harmony between “the inner state of want” and “the verbal utterance,” the supplication would lack its spirit.

Realizing this, we say that “the state of yearning for the betterment of the human species” is an ‘innate want’ of every human being who enjoys an untainted soul. This is because every human being has been fashioned with the Attributes of Almighty Alla-h. And one such attribute is “mercy” which is all-embracing. Therefore the human being innately wants the betterment of every other human being. The reason why many of us do not experience this quality is because of our separation from the neighbourhood of our All-Loving Creator. Therefore we need to undergo self-purification to expose this quality, which has been veiled by the accumulation of sins and attachment to the world of matter. And when we experience the state of “yearning for the betterment of others” and translate the same in the form of words, our supplication shall carry meaning, and we will benefit from its great merit.

However, those who have not attained this station of proximity should not despair, but recite this prayer regularly with reflection. If such illuminative supplications were intended for perfect human beings only, then the Holy Prophet (s) would not teach it to all and sundry. Therefore, we should always try to recite the supplication with reflection and change. If one were to inculcate the sublime thoughts contained in this prayer, he could really wake up from his deep slumber and change his life.

In this Glorious Month, when the over-flowing Grace of the All-Gracious is continuous, let us humbly ask Almighty Alla-h to enable us to be among those who utter this wonderful supplication as a manifestation of our inner spirits.

Notes:

[1] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 95, pg. 120, ch. 6

Section 1 : O Alla-h, Instil Happiness in the Spirits of the Inhabitants of the Grave

السُّرُورَ الْقُبُورِ أَهْلِ عَلَى أَدْخِلُ اللَّهُمَّ

O Alla-h, Instil Happiness in the Spirits of the Inhabitants of the Grave

Supplication and the Law of Cause & Effect

Du'a- is an excellent means of achieving one's legitimate desires. The universal law of 'cause and effect' itself encourages us to seek help from the Principal Cause - who is Almighty Alla-h. Thus even in circumstances when things can be acquired through natural means, one should not think that one is needless of supplication.

Some, on the other hand, may think that supplication is sufficient and there is no need of achieving our goals through the means that are at our disposal. Clearly, this path also, is that of ignorance, for Almighty Alla-h has established the system of cause and effect and encouraged the human being to employ it for his noble ends. The following word of wisdom from Ima-m al-Sa-di-q (as) emphasizes this:

سَبَبًا شَيْءٌ لِكُلِّ فَجَعَلَنَ بِأَسْبَابِهَا، إِلَّا الْأَشْيَاءَ يُجْرِي أَنْ اللَّهُ أَبَى.

“Alla-h does not permit things to take place except by their causes; thus, He made a cause for every thing.”[2]

Seeking the Cause of Instilling Happiness

Having known the aforesaid, every understanding supplicant, would seek the causes that “instil happiness in spirits of the inhabitants of the grave” apart from praying for the same. Our holy traditions (which indeed are extensions of “light”) have informed us how to make the deceased happy. Following are traditions worthy of contemplation:

1. Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) was asked: ‘Is it possible to recite prayers for the dead?’ He said, ‘Yes,’ and added:

بِالْهَدْيَةِ الْحَيِّ يُفْرَحُ كَمَا وَالْإِسْتِغْفَارَ، لِيَهِيَءَ بِالتَّرْحُمِ لِيُفْرَحُ الْمَيِّتَ إِنَّ.

“Surely, a dead person rejoices when he is pitied and forgiveness is sought for him, just as a living person rejoices upon receiving a gift.”[3]

2. The Holy Prophet (s) once passed by the grave of a person who was buried a day before, and saw his family weeping. Observing this, he said:

كُلُّهَا دُنْيَاكُمْ مِنْ الْقَبْرِ هَذَا صَاحِبِ إِلَى أَحَبُّ تَحْتَفِرُونَ مِمَّا خَفِيفَتَانِ لِرَكْعَتَانِ.

“Indeed, two small units of prayer which you consider insignificant is more lovable to the inhabitant of this grave than your world in its entirety.”[4]

3. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

الْإِسْتِغْفَارُ وَالدُّعَاءُ لِلْأَمْوَاتِ الْهَدَايَا إِنَّ.

“Indeed, the gifts [from the living] for the dead are du‘a-’ (supplication) and istighfa-r (seeking forgiveness of the sins of the dead).”[5]

4. Ima-m ‘Ali- al-Rida- (as) is reported to have said:

الْقَبْرِ لِصَاحِبِ وَ لَهُ اللَّهُ غَفَرَ إِلَّا مَرَّاتٍ سَبْعَ (الْقَدْرِ لَيْلَةٍ فِي أَنْزَلْنَا إِيَّا) عَلَيْهِ فَقَرَأَ مُؤْمِنٍ قَبْرَ زَارَ عَبْدٍ مِنْ مَا.

“Whosoever of God’s servants visits the grave of a believer, and recites seven times “Inna- anzalna-hu fi- laylati’l qadr [...]” Alla-h would forgive him and the inhabitant of the grave.”[6] and [7]

5. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

الْأَمْوَاتِ بِعَدَدِ الْأَجْرِ مِنْ أُعْطِيَ لِلْأَمْوَاتِ أَجْرَهُ وَوَهَبَ مَرَّةً عَشْرَةَ إِحْدَى (أَحَدُ اللَّهِ هُوَ قُلُ) فَقَرَأَ الْمَقَابِرِ عَلَى مَرٍّ مَنْ

“Whosoever passes by the graves and recites Qul Huwalla-hu Ahad 11 times and gifts its reward to the deceased, he is granted a reward proportional to the number of the dead.”[8]

6. Ima-m Ja’far al-Sa-diq (as) is reported[9] to have said:

لِلْمَيِّتِ وَفَعَلَهُ لِلَّذِي أَجْرُهُ وَيُكْتَبُ وَالِدُعَاءِ وَالْبِرُّ وَالصَّدَقَةُ وَالْحَجُّ وَالصَّوْمُ الصَّلَاةُ قَبْرِهِ فِي الْمَيِّتِ عَلَى تَدْخُلُ

“Prayers, Fasting, Hajj, Sadaqa, good deeds and Du’a-’ reach the dead in his grave, and their reward is written for [both] the doer and the deceased.”

7. Ima-m Ja’far al-Sa-diq (as) is reported[10] to have said:

الْمَيِّتِ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَنَفَعَ أَجْرَهُ لَهُ اللَّهُ أضعفَ خَيْرٍ [عَمَلًا] عَمَلِ مَيِّتٍ عَنِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ عَمَلِ مَنْ

“Whosoever among the Muslims does a good act for a dead person, Alla-h rewards him manifold and makes the dead benefit from the same.”

Therefore, as we pray for the deceased to attain happiness in the intermediate realm (barzakh), we should also make efforts to act on the means of their happiness as taught to us and humbly pray to Almighty Alla-h to accept our deeds.

The late A-yatulla-h Shiha-b al-Di-n Mar’ashi- in his last will[11] gave some thought provoking advice to his son. One of them was: “I advise him (my son) to read the Holy Qur’a-n and send its blessings to the souls of those Shi-’ites of the Household of the Holy Prophet (as) who did not leave any offspring.”

Therefore, in this Holy month of grace, let us not forget the inhabitants of the grave, including those whom we are not familiar with. In addition, let us also pray for the well-being of those presumed kuffa-r (disbelievers), who although were apparently known to be disbelievers, had professed the unity of Alla-h and became Muslims prior to the departure of their souls from this world.

In his Chehl Hadith (Forty Traditions), the late A-yatulla-h al-Khumayni- (may Alla-h elevate his

soul) relates something thought provoking from his teacher in 'Irfa-n (Divine gnosis) - A-yatulla-h Sha-ha-ba-di-. He says: Our Shaykh, the accomplished 'a-rif that he was (i.e. A-yatulla-h Sha-ha-ba-di-) - may my soul be his ransom - used to say: "Never call down curses (la'n) on anybody, though he be a ka-fir concerning whom you do not know how he made the transit from this world to the next, and unless an infallible wali- (saint) informs you concerning his condition after death. For it is possible that he may have attained faith before the time of death. Hence let your curse be of a general character.[12]

And in another place[13] he says: Our great master, the accomplished 'a-rif, Sha-ha-ba-di- - ru-hi-fida-h (may my soul be his ransom) - used to say, 'Do not look down on even a ka-fir (non-believer) in your heart. It is possible that the divine light of his inner nature may lead him to faith and your rebuke may lead you towards a wretched life in the Hereafter. Of course, to practice al-amr bi'l-ma'ru-f wa al-nahy 'ani'l-munkar (enjoining right conduct and forbidding bad behavior) is something different from the inner feeling of contempt.' He would even say, 'Never curse the unbelievers about whom it is not known that they will leave the world in the state of unbelief. If they leave the world as rightly-guided servants of God, their spiritual rectitude may prove to be an obstruction in the way of your own spiritual advancement.'

Therefore, as we utter this verse of supplication, let us commit ourselves to performing deeds of virtue for the deceased Muslims, as a practical demonstration of our true desire for the happiness of the deceased.

Notes:

[2] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 2, pg. 90

[3] al-Mahajjatu'l al-Bayda-', v. 8. pg. 292

[4] Tanbi-hu'l Khawa-tir, pg. 453

[5] al-Mahajjatu'l Bayda-', v. 8, pg. 291

[6] Armagha-ne Asma-n, pg. 541

[7] Man La- Yahduruhu'l Faqi-h, v. 1, pg. 181

[8] Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v. 2, pg. 483

[9] Wasa-i'l al-Shi-'a ila- Tahsi-li Masa'il al-Shari-'a, v. 8, pg. 279

[10] Ibid.

[11] Wasiyyatna-me-ye A-yatulla-h al-'Uzma- Mar'ashi-

[12] Chehl Hadi-th, 28th tradition

[13] Chehl Hadi-th, 3rd tradition

Section 2 : O Alla-h, Enrich Every Indigent (Poor One)

فَقَبِيرٍ كُلِّ أَعْنِ اللَّهُمَّ

O Alla-h, Enrich Every Indigent (Poor One)

The Supplicant's All-Embracing Spirit

[Alla-humma aghni kulla...]:

One preposition employed in nearly every verse of this supplication is “kull” which means “every”. The supplicant always tries to seek the betterment of every human being. He assumes a Divine spirit throughout the invocation. Egoism no more exists. He frees himself from the shackles of yearning only for the betterment and comfort of his self. The Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny were of such character. They yearned for the betterment and emancipation of all. In order to understand this exalted spirit better, study the following quotations of the Holy Qur’a-n and traditions:

1. Almighty Alla-h says in the Qur’a-n [Chapter al-A’ra-f- 7:156]:

(شَيْءٍ كُلِّ وَسِعَتْ وَرَحْمَتِي)

“And My Mercy encompasses all things [i.e. every dependent being].”

2. And in [Chapter al-Anbiya’- 21:107] addressing His Noble Messenger, He says:

(لِلْعَالَمِينَ رَحْمَةً إِلَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ وَمَا)

“And we have not sent you but as a mercy for the worlds.”

3. And in [Chapter al-Kahf - 18:6] addressing His Beloved, He says:

(أَسَفًا الْحَدِيثِ بِهَذَا يُؤْمِنُوا لَمْ إِنْ أَتَاهُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ بَاخِعٌ فَلَعْنَتِكَ)

“Then it is near that you will kill yourself in grief, for their outcomes, if they do not believe in this announcement.” [MK. Trans.]

4. The following is a radiant verse for the daily du’a’ of the holy month of Rajab:

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وَرَحْمَةً مِنْهُ تَخَنَّأَ يَعْرِفُهُ لَمْ وَمَنْ يَسْأَلُهُ لَمْ مَنْ يُعْطِي مَنْ يَا

“O One Who always gives [even] to one who does not ask Him and who does not (even) know Him, out of His Kindness and Mercy.”

5. Almighty Alla-h says in [Chapter Ta-ha-- 20:2]:

(لِتَشْقَى الْفُرَانَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْزَلْنَا مَا)

“We did not send the Qur’a-n so that you distress yourself [in the path of propagation by struggling to force the people towards it].”

6. And in [Chapter al-Fa-tir- 35:8] He says:

حَسْرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ نَفْسُكَ تَذُهِبُ فَلَا

“...And therefore do not consume yourself, in grief for them [due to their unbelief]...”

7. And in [Chapter al-Mumtahana- 60:8] He says:

الْمُفْسِدِينَ يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ إِنَّ إِلَيْهِمْ وَنَفْسُهُمْ تَبْرُوهُمْ أَنْ دِيَارِكُمْ مِنْ يُخْرِجُكُمْ وَلَمْ الدِّينِ فِي يُفَاتِلُكُمْ لَمْ الَّذِينَ عَنِ اللَّهُ يَنْهَأَكُمْ لَا

“Alla-h does not forbid you from doing good and acting fairly with those who have not made war against you on account of religion nor driven you out of your homes; surely Alla-h loves those who act equitably.”

8. In a will[14] addressed to his son - Ha-jj Sayyid Ahmad Khumayni- - the late A-yatulla-h Khumayni- says: “...These are the miracles of the Noble Messenger (s)...who, standing at the apex of the peak of human perfection, sees the realities clearly and without any intervening hijab (curtain). At the same time he is present in all the dimensions of humanity and stages of being, and being the highest manifestation of:

وَالْبَاطِنُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْأَخِرُ الْأَوَّلُ هُوَ

“He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden.” [57:3]

wants all human beings to achieve such a perfection. It was painful for him to see that they failed to achieve such a station, and perhaps the verse:

لِنَشْفِي الْقُرْآنَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْزَلْنَا مَا بَطِه

“Ta- ha-: We have not sent down the Qur’a-n to you that you distress yourself.” [20:1-2]

makes an oblique reference to this fact, and perhaps this hadith from him also refers to it:

أُودِيْتُ مَا مِثْلَ نَبِيِّ أُودِيَ مَا

“No Prophet was made to suffer torment like me.”[15]

9. Marhu-m Ami-n al-Islam Tabrasi- in his Majma’ al-Baya-n narrates the following:

فراراً، إلا دعاؤه يزيدهم فلا ونهاراً، ليلاً يدعوهم وكان ... عاماً خمسين إلا سنة ألف قومه ولبث في
: “قومي فإنهم لا يعلمون اهد اللهم

“Prophet Nu-h (as) lived among his people for 950 years...And he would invite them day and night, but it would add nothing in them save repulsion. Sometimes his people would beat him so much that he would fall unconscious, and on regaining consciousness, he would say: “O Alla-h guide my people for they do not know.”[16]

10. Following is the first verse of a beautiful poem attributed to Ima-m ‘Ali- (as)[17]:

When he saw Ibn Muljim he recited the following near ‘Amr bin Ma’dikarb:

قَتْلِي يُرِيدُ وَحَيَاتَهُ أُرِيدُ

I seek his life and he wants me to be killed

11. It is narrated that Prophet ‘Isa- (as) once said[18]:

وَالْفَاجِرِ الْبِرِّ عَلَى تَطَّلِعَ كَالشَّمْسِ كُنْ

“Be like the sun; it shines upon the virtuous and sinful.”

12. Sayyid Radi- al-Di-n ibn Ta-wu-s is one of the great Shi-‘a scholars whose works enjoy a certain veneration in the scholarly circles. In his well-known prayer manual - Iqba-l al-A-‘ma-l, which indeed is a masterpiece of devotional supplications, he narrates the following:

ن يجب كنت في ليلة جلييلة من شهر رمضان، بعد تصنيف هذا الكتاب بزمان، وأنا أدعو في السحر لم ، أو يحسن تقديم الدعاء له ولي و... فورد على خاطري أن الجاحدين لله جل جلاله ولنعمه

والمستخفين بحرمته، والمبذلين لحكمه في عباده وخليقته، ينبغي أن يبدأ بالدعاء لهم بالهداية من ضلالتهم، فإن جنايتهم على الربوبية والحكمة الإلهية والجلالة النبوية أشد من (ة العارفين بالله وبالرسول (صرجناي

“Some time after having written this book, during one of the great nights of the holy month of Ramada-n, when I was praying at sahar time for those of whom it is compulsory or good to present in prayer and also for myself and... then the following thought crossed my mind: it behooves one to first pray for the guidance of those who deny Alla-h and reject His blessings and those who belittle His Sanctity and change His rule [over His servants and creation], because their crime in relation to the lordship of God, Divine wisdom, and prophetic majesty is more grave than the crime of those who know Alla-h (swt) and His Messenger (s)...”

Then, after a few lines he says[19]:

رجوع إليه، ولكل ضال عن الحق فدعوت لكل ضال عن الله بالهداية إليه، ولكل ضال عن الرسول بال، بالاعتراف به والاعتماد عليه. ثم دعوت لأهل التوفيق والتحقيق بالثبوت على توفيقهم... والزيادة في تحقيقهم، ودعوت لنفسي ومن

“So I prayed for all those who have deviated from Alla-h to be guided towards Him, and all those who have deviated from His Messenger to return to him, and all those who have strayed from the truth to admit it and rely on it. Then I prayed for the people of Divine succor (ahl al-tawfi-q) to be established on their path and for the men of realization (ahl al-tahqi-q) to attain greater realization, and [then] I prayed for myself and those...”

Therefore, when reciting the verses of this supplication of the holy month, the supplicant should open his heart for all in unison with the Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny.

Objection

Does the aforesaid mean that we should also pray for the material well-being of every hypocrite and disbeliever, when we know that they are the sources of corruption and mischief in the society? Don't we know about their evil state described in various places in the Qur'a-n? How can we yearn for the material prosperity of such people?

Response

Almighty Alla-h wants both the spiritual as well as the physical betterment of every human being. The purpose of human creation according to the Holy Qur'a-n, as shall be soon discussed, is not only meant for the believers, but for the entire caravan of humanity. The verses cited above clearly indicate how the Prophet (s) suffered agony due to the adamant stance of the disbelievers.

'The agony' was due to the all-embracing spirit that he possessed. He wanted the salvation of every human being.

The supplicant who is submissive to Almighty Alla-h should also like the same to be realized for every human being. However, it would be wrong for him to seek their material prosperity for the sake of material prosperity. When seeking the material prosperity of every human being, one must ask Almighty Alla-h for that material prosperity that would serve as a means for the goal of human existence. One should desire, for example, that every human being receives food and shelter, so that they can worship Almighty Alla-h and attain His proximity.

There are different reasons why some human beings are deprived of basic necessities of life. The fundamental cause of many of the deprivations is the 'deficiency of the receptacle of Grace.' Otherwise the Creator's Grace is abundantly poured down to all. The Holy Qur'a-n so beautifully expounds this truth in chapter ar-Ra'd (13), verse 17:

...يَقْدِرُهَا أُوْدِيَّةً فَسَالَتْ مَاءَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ أَنْزَلِ

"He sent down water from the sky, and the channels flowed, each according to its measure..."

Those who consume foods that would ruin their digestive system, for example, create the gateway of deprivation from food themselves. Those who engage in sin, hamper their sustenance themselves. Both material and spiritual prosperity depend on the receptacle. Otherwise the All-Merciful can never be thought to be stingy or subjective. He is always al-Jawa-d and Open-Handed.

Therefore, clean and pure water descends from the sky, but dirty receptacles always receive dirty water, narrow receptacles always receive less water, perforated receptacles always lose water, etc. This is a universal law that the Qur'a-n so beautifully expounds.

It is noteworthy that the word "Rahi-m" that we always utter when starting Chapter al-Fa-tiha does not literally indicate that His ever-rewarding Mercy and Guidance is only reserved for the believers; rather such Mercy is poured down upon all, but only those receptacles who believed in the truth and have the capacity to accept can absorb the same. For a better understanding of this vital truth those who are interested may look at A-da-b al-Sala-t of the late A-yatulla-h Khumayni-[20]

The Benefits of Prayers in Absence

Another very important trend in the supplication is praying for others in their absence. There are several Qur'a-nic verses and traditions that lay great emphasis on this and enumerate good

reward for the same. Following are examples worthy of consideration:

1. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said[21]:

لِغَائِبِ غَائِبٍ دَعْوَةٌ مِنْ إِجَابَةٍ أَسْرَعُ شَيْءٍ لَيْسَ

“Nothing is accepted as quickly as one’s supplication for another in his absence.”

2. It is reported from Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) that he said[22]:

الرِّزْقَ عَلَيْهِ يَدْرُ وَ الْبَلَاءَ، عَنْهُ يَدْفَعُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ الْمُؤْمِنِ دُعَاءُ

“The du’a-’ of a believer for another believer dispels calamities from him and showers him with abundant sustenance.”

Absolute Need of the Human Being

In the culture of the Holy Qur’a-n every human being, whatever status he may have in this world, is needy. The Holy Qur’a-n [35:15] says:

الْحَمِيدُ الْغَنِيُّ هُوَ وَاللَّهُ اللَّهُ إِلَى الْفُقَرَاءِ أَنْتُمْ النَّاسُ أَيُّهَا يَا

“O human beings, you are needy to Alla-h, and it is Alla-h Who is Affluent, the Praised one.”

This verse is in complete harmony with intellectual proof, which considers every dependent being to depend on a source, Which is Independent and Whose existence is Necessary and Essential. Therefore, all human beings together with their possessions as well as all the other dependent entities, entirely stand and subsist by the cause of Divine Grace. We read on Thursday nights[23]:

الذِّبْرِيَّةَ عَلَى فَضْلِ الدَّائِمِ يَا

“O One Who continuously Bestows Grace on the creation.”

Almighty Alla-h is Rabbu’l ‘A-lami-n. The meaning of ‘Rabb’ should not be equated to the word “Lord” as it is normally translated. Rabb - as mentioned by Tafsi-r al-Mi-za-n - means “al-Ma-lik al-Mudabbir” (The Owner and Manager of affairs), which indicates that Alla-h owns every entity in its entirety and manages it by making it subsist and controlling its affairs each and every moment. Thus we should try to remove the irrational thinking of some people who separate God from creation and say that he is resting. Exalted is He, from such limitations.

Therefore if, the soul owner “in the real sense of the word” is Alla-h, every human being is poor and indigent.

A Step Towards Eradication of Poverty

On reciting the verse under discussion, the supplicant always imagines, that he or she is praying for all those who are outwardly needy and have no source of stable livelihood. This is also a correct translation of the verse. However, in view of the introduction presented above, we must understand that the dimensions of poverty are not limited to what we normally imagine.

When we pray to Alla-h to enrich the poor, we should also have taken a practical step to enrich others to the extent permitted by our limitations. This, as explained previously, is what is required of us.

If we carefully ponder over the verse under discussion, we will realize that the supplicant does not merely seek ‘the temporal satisfaction’ of the needy. Many of us temporarily satisfy the needy in the holy month of Ramada-n by purchasing some household necessities, such as food stuffs and clothes, etc.

and are pleased for having done something that Almighty Alla-h desires. Obviously such acts are highly recommended and carry a lot of benefit, but are different from what we are trying to seek from our All-loving Creator in this particular verse: we are not merely after the temporal satisfaction of the poor; we are praying to Alla-h to assist the needy with a permanent source of income. “O Alla-h, aghni- (enrich) kulla faqi-r (every poor person).

Having realized this subtle point, the supplicant should think of how to play an active role in making the poor affluent. Several examples of how this may be achieved may come to mind. However, each depends on the supplicant’s limitation: one who is extremely rich, may think of supporting the poor to start small businesses of their own and enrich them thereby; one who owns a small-scale business and is need of employees, would employ the poor and thereby help them up to a certain extent. One may also be an employee of someone himself, but due to his acquaintance with other wealthy men, would try to intercede on the poor’s behalf and get them jobs.

The readers will realize the variety of the options in this noble venture. The significant point here is that every one should take “a step” and participate.

Historical Examples

The life history of our Holy Prophet (s) and the infallible Ima-ms (as) are a practical translation of

this verse of the du‘a-.’ Many examples can be cited, but due to the brevity of this work, we shall only mention a few:

1. Historians have narrated how Ima-m Hasan al-Mujtaba- (as) in all his greatness and magnanimity would help the needy with large amounts of money in one go. It is also narrated of him that thrice during his lifetime the Ima-m (as) spent half of his wealth on the needy. [Ta-ri-kh al-Khulafa- - Suyu-ti-]

2. Farazdaq is a well-known character to the lovers of the Ahlu‘l Bayt (as). When the Ummayyad governer of the time – Hisha-m bin ‘Abdul Ma-lik tried to belittle Ima-m Zaynu‘l ‘A-bidi-n (as) by asking about his identity, Farazdaq recited a beautiful couplet about the exalted character of the Ima-m (as). This made Hisha-m very angry and he terminated the continuous help that he used to give Farazdaq and he imprisoned him as well. Ima-m (as) sent a good amount of money to him in prison, but Farazdaq did not accept it at first.

Then the Ima-m (as) insisted and he finally accepted. Later with the prayer of the Ima-m (as), when he was released, he informed the Ima-m (as) of how he was regularly paid by Hisha-m and that his name was afterwards deleted from Hisham’s payroll. Ima-m (as) thereupon gifted Farazdaq an amount of money that would suffice him for 40 years. Farazdaq’s life too extended for another 40 years. [al-Mana-qib]

3. In his Mana-qib, Ibn Shahr A-shu-b narrates that Ima-m Zaynu‘l ‘A-bidi-n (as) took the responsibility to cater for 100 needy families. [al-Mana-qib]

Therefore, we should try, through our sadaqa-t, to ‘eradicate’ poverty. One of the best methods of doing so is to gather even very small amounts of support from those who would like to eradicate poverty and use the same for this sublime purpose.

Enriching the Motive of Our Action

There is another significant issue, which must be inculcated in this holy month of grace. When we ask Almighty Alla-h to ‘enrich all the poor’, we should do so because “we ourselves desire it”. That is, our untainted disposition yearns for it. At times someone does something and gets happy thereby due to the reward that awaits him. However, sometimes the act in itself is enjoyable for the person. Sala-t, for example, to those who are not humble before God is burdensome and difficult. The Holy Qur’a-n [2:45] says:

الْخَاشِعِينَ عَلَىٰ إِلَّا لَكَبِيرَةً وَإِنَّهَا وَالصَّلَاةَ بِالصَّبْرِ وَاسْتَعِينُوا

“And take recourse in patience and prayer, and that is indeed hard except for the humble.”

But one who has cleaned his heart and loves to whisper to the Only Beloved says:

بِالصَّلَاةِ فَأَرْحِنَا بِإِلَّهِ يَا قُمْ

“Stand O Bila-l, and make us happy with prayer.”[24]

And says:

الصَّلَاةِ فِي عَيْنِي قُرَّةٌ

“The delight of my eye (qurratu’ayni-) is in prayer.”[25]

There is a vast difference between those who tire themselves in anticipation of Divine reward and those who tire themselves because they highly enjoy praying to the only Beloved.

Therefore, let us struggle to become “extinct in the spirit of Alla-h,” and practically try to enrich the poor because we naturally enjoy the same; and because it is “our need” and “our concern”. Let us remove the specks of “anticipation” of reward.

Readers however should not be led to believe that those who expect reward are sinners. No; rather they enjoy a lower stage, but are good doers and must be encouraged as well. All of us start from this lower step and by Divine succor ascend slowly and gradually. We may easily claim to have ascended to the higher level, but between ‘contention’ and ‘reality’ there can be utter remoteness.

Notes:

[14] Jelweha-ye Rahma-ni-, Translated by Al-Tawhi-d Journal, v. XI, Nos. 3&4 pg. 68

[15] Kanzu’l ‘Umma-l, v. 11, tradition no. 32161

[16] Tafsi-r Majma’ al-Baya-n, v. 4, pg. 866

[17] Minasha’r al-Mansu-b ila ‘l Ima-m al-Wasiyy ‘Ali- bin Abi- Ta-lib, pg. 64

[18] Iqba-l al-A-‘ma-l, v. 1, pg. 385

[19] Iqba-l al-A-‘ma-l, v. 1, pg. 384

[20] Tafsi-r Surat al-Hamd, pg. 23

[21] Mi-za-n al-Hikma, v. 2, pg. 887, tr. 5730

[22] Ibid.

[23] Misba-h al-Kaf’ami-, section 46, pg. 647

[24] Mi-za-n al-Hikma, new ed., v. 1, pg. 62

[25] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 82, pg. 193

Section 3 : O Alla-h, Satisfy Every Hungry Person

جَانِعِ كُلَّ أَشْبَعِ اللَّهُمَّ

O Alla-h, Satisfy Every Hungry Person.

Experiencing Hunger

One of the philosophies behind fasting in the holy month of Ramada-n is to experience hunger and thereby understand the situation of those who are hungry and cannot afford to feed themselves properly. The following tradition quoted by Mawla- Fayd Ka-sha-ni- from Man La-Yahduruhu'l Faqi-h, speaks of the same: in an authentic narration, Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as), whilst explaining the philosophy of fasting, says:

الجَانِعِ وَيَرْحَمَ الضَّعِيفِ عَلَى لَيْرِقٍ وَالْأَلَمِ، عَالِجُو نَيْلِ الْغَنِيِّ يُذِيقَ وَأَنْ خَلَقَهُ، بَيْنَ يُسْوِي أَنْ وَجَلَّ عَزَّ اللَّهُ أَرَادَ

“Alla-h, the Exalted and Glorious, desired to maintain equality between His creatures and make the rich person experience hunger and pain so that he may have pity on the weak and mercy on the hungry one.”[26]

Causes of Hunger

Hunger is a widespread problem in today’s world and has several causes, which may be classified into two kinds: self-related and external. The source of the self-related causes is the sufferer himself, whereas external causes stem from the society and other natural phenomena. To discuss both these kinds of causes is beyond the scope of this limited commentary.

It is important however to study the limitations of these causes so that we may be able to attempt to avoid or eradicate them altogether. The verse under discussion, as can be observed clearly, is also closely related to poverty.

We had earlier mentioned the fact that every dependent thing stands by Alla-h’s permission. Hence, if Alla-h (swt) does not want one to encounter disasters or be affected by them nothing would happen to him. This universal law, as pointed out earlier, is not only presented by

revelation, but also established by reason.

Ensuring Sustenance

Having realized this important truth, let us now look at the following verses of the Holy Qur'a-n:

1. Chapter al-A-'ra-f - 7:96:

(...وَالْأَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ بَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ لَفَتَحْنَا وَاتَّقُوا آمَنُوا الْفَرَى أَهْلَ أَنْ وَلَوْ)

“And if the people of the towns were to believe and observe piety, surely we would have opened to them the blessings of the heaven and the earth...”

2. Chapter al-Tala-q - 65:2-3:

يَحْتَسِبُ لَا حَيْثُ مِنْ وَيَرْزُقُهُ. مَخْرَجًا لَهُ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ يَتَّقِ وَمَنْ

“And whosoever is God-wary (observes piety) He would make for him a way out [from difficulties] and Bestow on him sustenance from whence he expects not...”

3. Chapter Nu-h - 71:10-12:

أَنْهَارًا لَكُمْ وَيَجْعَلُ جَنَّاتٍ لَكُمْ وَيَجْعَلُ وَيَبِينُ بِأَمْوَالٍ مُدْرِكُمْ وَيُؤْتِي. مَذْرَأًا عَلَيْكُمْ السَّمَاءِ يُرْسِلِ. غَفَارًا كَانَ إِنَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ اسْتَغْفِرُوا فَقُلْتُ

“Then I said: seek forgiveness from your Lord, [for] indeed He is the Most-forgiving; He would send down abundance of rain upon you; and aid you with wealth and sons; and make for you gardens and make for you rivers.”

These verses inform the human being about the best path of ensuring sustenance and avoiding the calamity of hunger. If the culture of taqwa- and istighfa-r (in its various manifestations and dimensions] were to prevail, hunger would no more be a predicament save in cases of Divine trial.

...وَالْجُوعِ الْخَوْفِ مِنْ بَشِيءٍ وَلَنْبَلُوكُمْ

“And We would certainly try You with somewhat of fear and hunger...”[27]

We also have many traditions that guide the hungry and the destitute, as well those who would like to disseminate the culture of independence, about the ways of achieving sustenance.

Following are some examples:

Increasing Sustenance

1. Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said[28]:

الرِّزْقُ فِي بَرِّ الْبِرِّ إِنَّ.

“Indeed, virtuousness increases sustenance.”

2. Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said[29]:

الرِّزْقُ فِي بَرِّ الْخُلُقِ حُسْنُ.

“Good behaviour (akhla-q) increases sustenance.”

3. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said[30]:

الرِّزْقُ فِي عَلْنِكَ يُوسَعُ الطَّهَارَةَ، عَلَى دَمٍ.

“Always be in the state of taha-ra (purity) and your sustenance shall be increased.”

Therefore, the duty of those who sincerely utter this verse of the supplication, besides actively supporting others, should be to educate them to realize the direct causes of hunger.

The esteemed author of Mir'a-tu'l Kama-l, the late A-yatulla-h al-Shaykh Ma-maqa-ni- has filled six pages full of reasons that cause poverty and hamper one's sustenance. References have also come in the gloss of a later edition of this three-volume opus of devotions. Those interested can look at pages 569-583. Here, however, we would like to suffice ourselves with mentioning only a few of them:

Causes that Hamper Sustenance

Expression of greed, sleeping between maghrib and 'isha- prayers', sleeping between fajr and sunrise, severing relationship with near relatives, sleeping naked for long durations, cursing one's children, eating in the state of lying down, abandoning prayers for one's parents, backbiting, israf (over eating, extravagance, etc.), seeking the faults of people, eating while walking, urination and sexual intercourse while facing qibla, urinating on water, laughing excessively especially near graves and gatherings of the learned, not lending money to one who is need, expression of poverty to one who possesses wealth, and excessive sleep.

A-yatulla-h Ma-mqa-ni- mentions about 175 causes in his manual.

Therefore, it is essential for us to propagate the culture of taqwa- in those poor societies, which can absorb the teachings of Alla-h (swt). Taqwa- in every dimension of life enables one to experience happiness in this world as well as the Hereafter.

A Deeper Consideration: Another Extension of Food

Food in Qur'a-nic terminology does not always refer to material food. Rather, there are clear references made by the Ima-ms of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as) who are the most authoritative commentators of the Qur'a-n, that ta'a-m (food) in the language of the Qur'a-n, sometimes refers to knowledge. It refers to the food of the soul, and not only that of the body. The following verse is an example:

In chapter 'Abasa [80:24], Almighty Alla-h says:

طَعَامِهِ إِلَى الْإِنْسَانِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ

“Then let man look at his food.”

About this holy verse, the Shi-'ite commentator Sayyid Ha-shim Bahra-ni- in his Tafsir al-Burha-n quotes a tradition narrated in al-Ka-fi [v.1, p.39, tr.8] from Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) as follows:

Zayd al-Shahha-m asks Ima-m (as) what “man’s food”[31] stands for in the verse above. The Ima-m (as) responds saying:

...يَأْخُذُهُ عَمَّنْ يَأْخُذُهُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَهُ

“The knowledge that he acquires; from whom does he acquire it?”[32]

Therefore, if hunger means lack of knowledge many of us are indeed hungry. A scholar who has spent years in acquiring knowledge would also pray to Alla-h to bestow on him more and more, for there is no limit to the acquisition of knowledge. The Holy Prophet (s) himself used to seek more knowledge by the following supplication that Almighty Alla-h taught him in the Holy Qur'a-n [20:114]:

عَلِّمْنَا زِدْنِي رَبِّ وَقُلْ

“And say: O my Lord increase me in knowledge.”

And saying:

مَعْرِفَتِكَ حَقَّ عَرَفْنَاكَ مَا

“We have not known your reality completely.”

The solution to this hunger too is taqwa-. The following two verses clearly prove this contention:

1. Chapter al-Baqara-: 2:282:

اللَّهُ يُعَلِّمُكُمُ وَاللَّهُ وَآتَقُوا

“And adopt taqwa-, and Alla-h will teach you.”

2. Chapter al-Anfa-l: 8:29:

فُرْقَانًا لَكُمْ يُجْعَلُ اللَّهُ تَقْوَا إِنِّ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ أَيُّهَا يَا

“O believers, if you be God-wary (observe piety) Alla-h shall enable you to distinguish the truth from the falsehood.”

Hunger from A Mystical Dimension:

The late mystic-scholar as well as teacher of A-yatulla-h Khumayni-, A-yatulla-h Maliki- Tabri-zi- in his well-known manual of devotions “al-Mura-qiba-t” explains the ample benefits of hunger for the spiritual traveler by mentioning some of the following traditions:

1. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

سُبْحَانَهُ اللَّهُ فِي وَتَفَكَّرًا جُوعًا أَطَوْلَكُمْ الْقِيَامَةِ، يَوْمَ مَنَزَلَهُ اللَّهُ عِنْدَ أَفْضَلِكُمْ

“The best of you in terms of rank near Alla-h on the day of Judgment is the one among you who experiences hunger and engages in contemplation about Alla-h, the exalted, for the longest period.”[33]

2. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have told Usa-ma:

وَتَفَرَّحُ النَّبِيِّينَ، مَعَ وَتَحُلُّ الْمَنَازِلِ، أَشْرَفَ بِذَلِكَ تُدْرِكُ فَإِنَّكَ فَافْعَلْ، ظَمَانٌ وَكَبِدِكَ، جَائِعٌ وَبَطْنِكَ الْمَوْتِ مَلَكٌ يَأْتِيكَ أَنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ إِنَّ
الْجَبَّارُ عَلَيْكَ يُصَلِّي وَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ، رُوحِكَ بِفُدُومِ

“If it is possible for you to encounter the angel of death while you are hungry and thirsty, then do so, for by that you would experience the noblest of stations and reside in the company of the Prophets, and the angels would rejoice in the arrival of your spirit, and God would send His Blessings on you.”[34]

3. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

وَجَلَّ عَزَّ اللَّهُ تَرَى قُلُوبُكُمْ لِعَلَّ أَجْسَادَكُمْ، وَأَعْرَوْا أَكْبَادَكُمْ أَجِيعُوا

“Keep your stomachs hungry and afflict your bodies; perhaps [by doing so] your hearts would see Alla-h, the Exalted and Glorious.”[35]

4. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

فِكْرَتُهُ عَظُمَتْ بِطَنَّهُ أَجَاعَ مَنْ

“Whosoever keeps his stomach hungry would attain sublimity of thought.”[36]

5. The Holy Prophet (s) during his mi’ra-j (his ascent to the proximity of God) asks Almighty Alla-h:

الجوع؟ ميراث ما: رَبِّ يَا

“O Lord what does hunger inherit?”

Almighty Alla-h says:

...الْقَلْبِ وَحِفْظُ الْحِكْمَةِ

“It inherits wisdom and the protection of the heart...”[37]

Therefore, “hunger” has a fundamental role to play in elevating the human being spiritually. However that should not be taken to mean that ‘hunger’ is recommended for all and sundry, including those who cannot withstand it and may fall sick or die. If we look at the book of Islamic laws[38] at our disposal, we would find that one of the etiquettes of consuming food is to take two meals a day: one meal in the earlier part of the day and the other in the earlier part of the night. The gap between these two meals should not be filled with any other kind of food. Many of us do have the potential to have such a diet, but the forces of desire never allow us to practice it. There are people however, who need more intake of food, and such a diet is out of question for them. Obviously, that does not mean that they are not religious or pious. It is by the intake of food that they can practice their devotions and perform deeds of virtue and live their lives according to the dictates of Divine law.

There comes a time in the life of one who has purified his soul and attained the proximity of Alla-h, when he has the ability to withstand hunger not only for short periods but also for unusual intervals. This contention may sound absurd in the language of science and experiment, but the experts of Islamic esotericism believe that as the spirit of man strengthens, such phenomena are feasible. Avicenna (Ibn Si-na-), the great Shi-'ite philosopher, who is also known as Sayyid al-'Uqala-' (the doyen of intellectuals) in his monumental "Isha-ra-t wa al-Tanbi-ha-t" says:

المشهوره الطبیعة مذاهب من ذلك واعتبر بالتصديق، فاسج معتاده، غير مدة له المرزوء القوت عن أمسك عارفاً أن َبَلَعَكَ إِذَا

"If you come to know that a Gnostic ('a-rif) has refrained for an unusual interval from consuming the little food he has, graciously assent and consider this among the well-known principles of nature." [39]

Therefore, hunger for those who are not deprived of sustenance and are able to withstand it is highly recommended due to the reasons mentioned above.

Notes:

[26] al-Mahajjat al-Bayda-', v. 2, pg. 124

[27] Holy Qur'a-n, 2:155

[28] Mi-za-n al-Hikmah, v. 2

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] This interpretation is very apt and accurate, for the reality of the human being is his spirit. Necessarily then, his food would be uniform with his spirit. And this food can be nothing but knowledge.

[32] al-Burha-n Fi- Tafsi-ri'l Qur'a-n, pg. 214

[33] al-Mura-qiba-t, pg. 154 - New ed.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid, pg. 156

[37] Sirru'l Isra-', v. 1, pg. 13

[38] Tawdi-hu'l Masa-'il of A-yatulla-h al-'Uzma- Sayyid 'Ali- Si-sta-ni-, pg. 495

[39] al-Isha-ra-t wa ' l-Tanbi-ha-t, v. 4, pg. 111

Section 4 : O Alla-h, Clothe Every Unclothed One

عُرْيَانِ كُلِّ أَحْسُ اللَّهُمَّ

O Alla-h, Clothe Every Unclothed One

The Aim of Human Creation

One of the great calamities of human life is the lack of insight about the purpose of human creation. So long as man has not come to know ‘the goal of life’ he shall always have to face difficulties. This universal law applies to the affluent too. Ask every wealthy person whether his money always keeps him happy, and his answer would be in the negative. The Holy Qur’a-n as well the Ahlu’l Bayt (as) have informed us that the aim behind human creation is to attain Alla-h’s proximity and nearness. And the path that leads one to realize this aspiration is none other than ‘iba-dah (obedience and worship). The following verse explains it:

In chapter 51, verse 56, Almighty Alla-h says:

لِيَعْبُدُونِ إِلَّا وَالْإِنْسَ الْجِنَّ خَلَقْتُ وَمَا

“And I have not created the jinn and men except that they should worship Me.”

Here, the aim is indicated as Alla-h’s Worship. But is it the ‘final aim of creation?’ To answer this we should look at chapter 15, verse 99 of the Qur’a-n, which says:

الْيَقِينُ بِأَتَيْكَ حَتَّى حَذَرَكَ وَاعْبُدْ

“And worship your Lord until conviction comes to you.”

Therefore, it is ma’rifatulla-h that is the end. And the closer one gets to his Lord the better his knowledge of his Creator.

Beautiful allusions are made in the following verses too about the ultimate goal of the human being:

1. Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) in his famous supplication of Kumayl cries:

العَارِفِينَ أَمَالَ غَايَةَ يَا

“O the Ultimate Hope of the Gnostics.”

2. And in the prayer of ‘Arafah, Sayyid al-Shuhada- (as) cries:

إِلَيْكَ أَصِلَ حَتَّى بِرَحْمَتِكَ أُطَلَّبُنِي: إِلَهِي

“O Alla-h, Seek me by Your Mercy until I reach You.”

It is Alla-h’s worship that raises the human being so high that he may witness God- of course in his own limitations as explained by some traditions of the Ahlu’l Bayt (as).

Having known this, we should realize that since the human being resides in the world of matter and possesses a structure that is submissive to the laws of matter, he is in need of different necessities that may enable him to subsist and achieve his goal in life. Examples of such basic necessities, which we may also term as ‘the means of life’, are food, drink, clothing, a place of shelter, etc.

The Means and the Goal

Many who have not realized the purpose of human life busy themselves with the means and forget the goal. When they look at the luster of the various kinds of material products of the so-called developed countries, they brand that as ‘human progress’ and even try to doubt the authenticity of Islam. Advancement in science and technology is not something abhorred by Islam at all.

Rather it is encouraged. However it still comes under the umbrella of ‘the means of the end’ and thus one should not mistake it as ‘the yardstick of human progress.’ One should rather question oneself whether ‘the material product’ really serves to be ‘means’ on the path towards Alla-h or not. Both the VCR and the Internet, for example, are helpful means of communication, but if they hamper the human being from traversing the path of eternal happiness, what use do they have in serving as ‘a means’ for the goal? The proponents of advancement always present two kinds of products:

1. Those of variable nature
2. Those of invariable nature

Commodities of the first category allow the human being to reason and work on the path towards perfection both before and after purchase. For example, when buying a television set, one may or may not decide to employ the same in watching only those programs that would enrich his mind

and spirit. In the case of the second category, however, 'this choice' is out of question 'after purchase.' For example, if a person were to purchase an indecent film due to his base inclinations.

Later if he were to decide to employ the same for a good purpose, he would not be able to do so. He cannot change the film to enrich his mind. All he can do is to erase the film and dub something that would enrich his spirit. Similar is the case with material items that directly concern human development and subsistence such as food, drink and clothing. Many kinds of food and clothing are forbidden in Islam and can thus not be branded as 'the means' for the human goal.

Therefore it is highly significant to know the difference between 'the goal' and the 'means.' Many of us unfortunately have molded our lives to struggle only for the abundance of the means and have forgotten the goal. We would understand this reality when entering our graves. The Qur'a-n [102: 1-2] says:

الْمَقَابِرَ زُرْتُمْ حَتَّىٰ. التَّكَاثُرُ أَلْهَاكُمْ

"Competing for abundance has engaged you until you come to the graves."

The Purpose Behind Clothing

'Clothing' is one of the very basic necessities of human life and indeed a blessing of Alla-h (swt) to the human being. Realizing the purpose behind clothing would open several doors of understanding and enable us to do our duty while requesting the All-merciful Lord to clothe all the naked.

Following are verses of Qur'a-n and supplications worthy of contemplation:

1. [Chapter al-A-'ra-f -7:26]:

...خَيْرٌ ذَلِكَ التَّقْوَىٰ وَرِبَاشًا سَوَاتِكُمْ يُؤَارِي لِبَاسًا عَلَيْنَا قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا قَدْ أَدَمَ بَنِي يَآ

"O children of Adam, surely we have sent down for you clothing that covers your shame and an attire that causes beauty; and the attire of piety; that is better..."

2. Ima-m Mu-sa- bin Ja'far al-Ka-zim (as) is reported[40] to have said that whenever a person would like to put on a new dress he should wipe his hand over it and say:

النَّاسِ فِيهِ وَأَتَجَمَّلُ تِي عَوَرَ بِهِ أُوَارِي مَا كَسَانِي الَّذِي لِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ

"Praise belongs to Alla-h who clothed me with what I cover my shame and beautify myself among

the people.”

Studying the abovementioned quotations we come to realize that two important reasons behind clothing are:

1. To conceal one’s private parts
2. To beautify oneself

The Inner Attire

Having spoken about this great blessing, Almighty Alla-h transports the reader to a very important truth, which if neglected would cause extreme regret. He reminds the human being that he is not just composed of the material body to need ‘the material attire’ only. Rather ‘the inner attire’ is of fundamental significance. In the words of Qur’a-n: dha-lika khayr (that is the better!) ‘Alla-mah Taba-taba-’i- in his al-Miza-n has a beautiful explanation about this. In order to indicate the gravity of the situation of ‘the pain’ that the human being experiences when his shameful deeds are displayed, he says:

...أَشَدُّ الْبَاطِنِيَّةِ السُّوءَاتِ ظُهُورًا إِنَّ إِلَّا...

“...except that the pain experienced with the appearance of the inner blemishes is more intense...”

Other verses of the Holy Qur’a-n clearly explain the calamity of this situation. Look at the verses below:

1. Chapter al-Ta-riq: - 86:9:

السَّرَّانِرُ تُبْلَى يَوْمَ

“The day when the secrets shall be made manifest.”

2. Chapter A-li ‘Imra-n - 3:30:

...بَعِيدًا أَمَدًا وَبَيْنَهُ بَيْنَهَا أَنْ لَوْ تَوَدُّ سُوءٍ مِنْ عَمِلَتْ وَمَا مُحْضَرًا خَيْرٍ مِنْ عَمِلَتْ مَا نَفْسٍ كُلُّ تَجِدُ يَوْمَ

“On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil, it shall wish that between it and that evil was a long distance...”

3. Chapter A-li ‘Imra-n, 3:192:

أَخْرَيْتَهُ فَفَدَّ النَّارَ تُدْخِلُ مَنْ إِنَّكَ رَبَّنَا

“O Lord, surely whomsoever you place in the Fire, you have indeed disgraced him...”

Therefore when uttering this verse of the supplication we should try to think whether we are among those who are spiritually unclothed or not. If we are, then we should seek Divine help to establish taqwa- within ourselves so that we do not face that ignominy which is so intense to bear.

The other fundamental use of clothing is to look presentable and beautiful. The inclination to be beautiful is inherent in every human being and there are ample indications in our holy traditions that encourage one to look beautiful and presentable within the limits of the Shari-'a. In keeping with the brevity of this commentary, we will avoid mentioning them.

However, we must understand that in the same manner as “taqwa-” and piety is a source of protection from sin and ignominy, it also is a source of embellishment. This is because it embellishes the inner form of the human being with excellent character and makes him the beloved of Alla-h. How remote is the ‘beloved of the apparently beautiful’ from the beloved of the spiritually beautiful: razaqanalla-hu jami-'an [May Alla-h enable all of us to achieve the same]

A Word of Prayer

O Alla-h, as we humbly ask you to clothe both the physically as well as the spiritually naked ones, and seek your support to help those who have no proper clothes in their physical lives, and enable us to clothe our inner selves with the attire of taqwa-, so that we may acquire the worth to clothe others as well.

Notes:

[40] Hilyatu'l Muttaqi-n, ch. 9

Section 5 : O Alla-h, Facilitate the Payment of Every Indebted One

مَدِينِ كُلِّ دَيْنٍ أَقْضِ اللَّهُمَّ

O Alla-h, Facilitate the Payment of Every Indebted One

The Comprehensive Meaning of 'dayn'

Many might imagine that 'dayn' (debt) is the same as 'qard' (loan). In the terminology of Islamic jurisprudence, however, the word dayn has a broader connotation than the word 'qard.' Dayn also covers qard in its conceptual umbrella. A-yatulla-h Maka-rim Shi-ra-zi- in his Tafsir-e Namune alludes to this subtlety and says that qard is only applied when one is obliged to return the equivalent of the thing taken; for example, if he takes money as a loan, he would have to return the same amount of money; and if he takes a certain kind of food, he would be obliged to return the same. However, 'dayn' has a broader framework, for it includes any kind of transaction such as 'settlement of claim' (sulh), leasing (ija-ra), buying and selling, and the like.[41]

Debt Sometimes Hampers One From Spiritual Progress

Debt at times becomes a very great impediment on the path towards God. The reason for this is that it preoccupies one's mind and heart, and that is a decisive factor in impeding progress. Look at the following traditions:

1. Ima-m Zaynu'l 'A-bidi-n (as) in his beautiful supplication[42] for relief from debt informs his followers of the difficult situation that a debtor normally experiences. Look at the following:

O God,

bless Muhammad and his Household

and release me from a debt

which makes me lose face,

confuses my mind,

disrupts my thinking,

and prolongs my occupation with attending to it!

I seek refuge in You, my Lord,

from worry and thought about debt,

from the distraction and sleeplessness of debt;

so bless Muhammad and his Household

and give me refuge from it!

I seek sanctuary in You, my Lord, from

debt's abasement in life

and its ill effects after death...

2. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said[43]:

بِالنَّهَارِ وَذُلٌّ بِاللَّيْلِ، هُمْ بِإِنْفَعِ! وَالذَّيْنَ إِلَيْكُمْ

“Beware of debt, for surely it causes grief during the night and humiliation during the day.”

Another obvious case that can hamper the indebted one from spiritual development is when he is indifferent to repaying his debt: following are traditions worthy of contemplation:

1. Ima-m Ja'far al-Sa-diq (as) is reported[44] to have said:

يَالْعَادُّ اللَّصُّ فَذَلِكَ يُؤَدِّبُهُ، لِأَنَّ نِيَّتَهُ وَفِي مَالٍ مِنْهُ فَاسْتَفْرَضَ رَجُلًا أَتَى رَجُلًا أَيُّمَا

“Whosoever comes to a person and takes some money as a loan from him while he has the intention of not paying him back is a common thief.”

2. Ima-m Ja'far al-Sa-diq (as) is reported[45] to have said:

السَّارِقِ بِمَنْزِلَةِ كَانَهُ، فَضَاءَ يَنْوِي فَلَمْ دَيْنًا اسْتَدَانَ مَنْ

“Whosoever takes a loan and has no intention to pay it back, is the same as a thief.”

In the above traditions such people are termed as thieves. Essentially then, the very notion of 'spiritual progress' is far-fetched for them.

Those who are regularly habituated in taking loans from here and there should also realize the dangerous consequences that await them. Traditions of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as) have alluded to some

such dangers as follows:

1. Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said[46]:

مُخْلِفاً وَالْمُنْجِرَ كَادِباً، الصَّادِقَ تُصَيِّرُ الدَّيْنَ كَثْرَةً.

“Excess of debt turns the truthful one into a liar and one who fulfills [his promises] to become unfaithful.”

2. Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as) is reported[47] to have said:

الْحَقُّ لَهُ الَّذِي يَعْفُو أَوْ صَاحِبُهُ، يَقْضِي أَوْ آدَاؤُهُ، إِلَّا لَهُ كَفَّارَةٌ لَا الدَّيْنَ، إِلَّا اللَّهُ سَبِيلَ فِي الْقَتْلِ يُكْفِّرُهُ ذَنْبِ كُلِّ.

“Martyrdom in Alla-h’s way expiates every sin, save debt, for it has no compensation save its repayment, or payment by the inheritor (sa-hibuhu) or forgiveness from the creditor...”

3. Ima-m Ja'far al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said[48]:

الْعُمُرَ زِيَادَةَ الدَّيْنِ خَفَّةً فِي فَإِنَّ الدَّيْنَ، خَفُّوا.

“Lessen your debts, for surely in the reduction of your debts is the increment of life.”

When Should One Take a Loan?

These above traditions should not be mistaken to mean that one has no right to take any loan whatsoever. Rather, in times of difficulty believers are allowed to take loans within the framework of Islamic laws. The Infallible progeny of the Holy Prophet (s) also took loans during their lifetime. But that which is very important is to understand properly the correct circumstance of taking a loan. A substantial number of people take loans to live a life of leisure or extravagance. So long as the believer has not learnt to observe an Islamic discipline, he would always have to live a life of hardship. Ima-m Zaynu'l 'A-bidi-n (as) teaches his followers in supplication 30 of the Sahi-fah al-Sajja-diyah to adopt some sublime traits in order to avoid debt and be freed from the same. Look at the following:

O God,
bless Muhammad and his Household
prevent me from extravagance and excess,
put me on the course of generous spending and moderation,
teach me excellent distribution,
hold me back through Your gentleness from squandering,

allow me to attain my provisions through lawful means,
direct my spending toward the gateways of devotion,
and take away from me any possession
which will bring forth pride in me,
lead to insolence,
or drag me in its heels to rebellion!
O God,
make me love the companionship of the poor
and help me be their companion with excellent patience!
Whenever you take away from me
the goods of this perishing world,
store them for me in Your abiding treasuries!
Make this world's broken pieces
which You have conferred upon me and its goods
which You have quickly granted to me
a way to reach Your neighborhood,
a link to Your nearness,
and a means to Your Garden!
Verily You are Possessor of bounty abounding,
and You are the Munificent, the Generous.

So beautifully has the Ima-m informed his followers about the causes of their wretched state of debt. Every point in the above supplication is a gateway of understanding. [Readers are requested to reflect on each of the verses above to decipher the causes].

The wealthy believers, on the other hand, are highly encouraged to give loans to their needy brothers and sisters and assist them in times of hardship. In fact some holy traditions clearly tell us that the reward one gets by giving qard exceeds the reward a person gets by giving sadaqah, although in the case of the latter no return is anticipated, whereas in the case of the former the lender does expect return. Following are traditions worthy of reflection:

1. Ima-m Ja'far al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said[49]:

...عَشْرَةَ بِئَمَانِيَّةِ الْوَاجِدِ وَالْقَرْضُ بِالْعَشْرَةِ، الصَّدَقَةُ إِنَّ: الْجَنَّةَ بَابٍ عَلَى مَكْتُوبٍ

“The following has been written on the door of Paradise: Surely sadaqah equals ten times [reward], and one loan equals to eighteen times [reward]...”

2. Ima-m Ja'far al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said[50]:

يُؤَدِّيهِ حَتَّى الْمَلَائِكَةِ مِنْ صَلَاةٍ فِي هُوَ وَكَانَ زَكَاةً، فِي مَالِهِ كَانَ مَيْسُورَةً بِهِ يَنْظُرُ قَرْضًا مُؤَمِّناً أَقْرَضَ مَنْ

“Whosoever gives a loan to a mu’min, expecting his ease thereby, his wealth would increase and the angels would invoke blessings on him until he is paid.”

Shaykh Baha’-i- and the Du’a-’ of Relief From Debt

In his well-known masterpiece of commentary of 40 traditions (al-Arba’u-na Hadi-than), Shaykh Baha’-i- relates an interesting incident that he had experienced after quoting the following tradition:

The esteemed Shaykh al-Sadu-q Muhammad bin Ba-baway al-Qummi- has narrated with his chain of narrators from Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as) who narrated the same from his fathers (as), who narrated from Ami-ru’l Mu’mini-n (as) who said:

I complained to the Prophet (s) about a loan that I had on my shoulders, and he (s) said:

O ‘Ali- say:

سَوَالِكَ عَمَّنْ وَيَفْضُلِكَ حَرَامِكَ، عَنُ بِحَالِكَ أَغْنِي أَلَّهُمَّ

“O Alla-h: Make me needless of that which you have made unlawful through that which you have made lawful, and [make me needless] of other than you by Your Favor.”

Thereafter Shaykh Baha’-i- narrates: “During some years of my life I was so much in debt, that the amount I had to pay exceeded 1500 mithqa-ls of gold and the lenders were highly persistent in getting their money back. So difficult had the situation become that it diverted me from many of my occupations, and I had no solution in repaying them. So I adhered to reciting the above supplication, and would repeat it after every Morning Prayer, and at times would also recite the same after other prayers. Consequently, Alla-h, the Exalted, made it easy for me to pay the loans off quickly in a very short time through unknown sources.”[51]

Obligations

This verse of the noble supplication creates different obligations for different people:

1. Those who have the ability to relieve others from any of the kinds of debt should attempt to do so. A generous moneylender, having realized the faithfulness and inability of the debtor, may forgive him (partly or entirely) and thereby practically and faithfully translate this verse of the supplication.

2. Those who have the capacity of relieving themselves from debt in any of the situations in which they have been trapped, should try hard to do so, otherwise it would be an unfaithful cry on their part. How greedy would it be for one who has ample money to give but waits for help and prays for external support!

3. Muslim societies who have a united system can solve this grave problem of debt in its different manifestations very quickly by the collection of even very small contributions from individuals.

An In-depth Consideration

The supplications that the Infallible Ima-ms (as) have taught us are very rich in content, but they require 'a broad vision' to be appreciated. In many places we have stressed, albeit indirectly, the importance of the inner content of every verse. Here too, we think it is important to mention the same:

One of the significant laws that prevail the world of language is that words are coined for the spirit of their meanings. This is contrary to what some conjecture when saying that words are coined for their 'material extensions (masa-di-q)' and not 'the spirit of their meanings.' They mean to say for example, the word 'balance' only refers to the conventional balance that we are aware of. Clearly, this is not correct, for the examples of balance are not be limited to those instruments of balance that measure material entities. The Holy Qur'a-n is also known as mi-za-n (balance). The personality of Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is another extension of balance, for the believers are judged and weighed according to his spirit. Most of the learned scholars believe that words are coined for the spirit of their meanings and not necessarily their material extensions. For further research on this subtle subject, one may refer to the introduction of al-Mi-za-n of 'Alla-mah Taba-taba-'i- and the first chapter of the treatise of 'Encounter with God' by A-yatulla-h Maliki- Tabri-zi- - the well-known Shi-'ite saint.

A-yatulla-h Maliki- Tabri-zi- says: "...Besides, according to what has been researched, words have been coined for the spirit of their meanings and the particulars of the meanings have nothing to do with the ['spirit of' the] meaning; for example the word mi-za-n (balance) has been coined for a thing by means of which other things are measured, but the particularity of having two sides of the scale or the rest of the particularities of a conventional scale has nothing to do with the meaning [for which the word was actually coined]. Thus using the word 'balance' to denote the different types and kinds of balances that have been invented, would signify 'correct usage' and employing a word to denote the meaning for which it was coined.

Therefore, the meaning for which the word mi-za-n was coined is 'a measuring instrument' regardless of any specifics, neither of the 'instrument' nor 'the object measured.' Nowadays the

instruments that measure the heat and temperature of the body and air as well as those that measure the blood temperature, the speed of vehicles, and a variety of other measuring instruments which number perhaps in hundreds or even thousands, all are the meanings of the word 'mi-za-n', and employing the word mi-za-n for them would be the correct usage. Likewise is the case with other general words such as path (sira-t), light (nu-r), reward (thawa-b), punishment ('iqa-b), etc.”[52]

Realizing this, we should try to look at the 'spirit' of the meaning of 'dayn' so that we can decipher the variety of its examples and try to emancipate ourselves from them accordingly.

According to Mu'jam Maqa-'i-s al-Lugha, a comprehensive dictionary of Arabic words, the root word of dayn (d-y-n) means 'submission' (inqiya-d) and 'surrender.' All the derivatives of the word (da-l-ye-nu-n) reveal a kind of 'submission' and 'slavery.' Debt in one way enslaves the debtor and binds him or her until he or she relieves himself or herself from the same. The following sayings of Ima-m 'Ali- (as) are worthy of reflection:

1. Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said[53]:

عِنُقُ وَالْقَضَاءُ رِقٌّ، الدَّيْنُ.

“Debt is slavery and payment is freedom.”

2. Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said[54]:

الرَّقَّيْنِ أَحَدُ الدَّيْنِ.

“Debt is one of the two kinds of slavery.”

3. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said[55]:

دَيْنٌ عَلَيْهِ كَانَ مَا مُعَلَّقَةً الْمُؤْمِنِ نَفْسُ تَزَالُ لَا

“The spirit of a believer remains suspended as long as he has a debt on him.”

When we take a loan, we are in fact enslaved until we free ourselves by repaying it. Likewise is the case with regard to all the extensions of debt.

Those acts which Almighty Alla-h expects from every human being are likewise examples of 'dayn'; therefore, the human being should try to perform them so that they have nothing on their shoulders. In the following radiant tradition, Sala-t is considered to be an extension of dayn:

Ima-m Ja'far al-Sa-diq (as) narrates[56] Hadrat Luqma-n as saying:

دَيْنٌ فَإِنَّهَا وَاسْتَرْحُ، صَلَّى لِشَيْءٍ تُوَخَّرُهَا لَأَقِ الصَّلَاةَ وَقْتُ جَاءَ إِذَا

“When the time of prayer comes, do not delay the prayer for something else; pray and take rest, for verily it is a debt (dayn).”

Notes:

[41] A-sta-ne Qudse Radawi-, Sharho Tafsi-re Lugha-te Qur'a-n, Bar Asa-se Tafsi-re Namu-ne, pg. 70

[42] Sahi-fat al-Sajja-diyya, Supg. no. 30

[43] Mi-za-n al-Hikma, v. 2, pg. 958

[44] Wasa-i'l al-Shi-'a ila- Tahsi-li Masa-'il al-Shari-'a, v. 18, pg. 329

[45] Ibid, v. 18, pg. 328

[46] Ghuraru'l Hikam Wa Duraru'l Kalim, pg. 368

[47] Wasa-i'l al-Shi-'a ila- Tahsi-li Masa-'il al-Shari-'a, v. 18, pg. 324

[48] Miza-n al-Hikma, v. 2, pg. 958

[49] Mir'a-tu'l Kama-l, pg. 146

[50] Wasa-i'l al-Shi-'a ila- Tahsi-li Masa-'il al-Shari-'a, v. 18, pg. 330

[51] al-Arba'u-na Hadi-than, pg. 243

[52] Risa-leye Liqa-'ulla-h

[53] Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim, pg. 368

[54] Ibid.

[55] Wasa-i'l al-Shi-'a ila- Tahsi-li Masa-'il al-Shari-'a, v. 18, pg. 317

[56] Wasa-i'l al-Shi-'a ila- Tahsi-li Masa-'il al-Shari-'a

Section 6 : O Alla-h, Relieve Every Deeply Anguished One

مَكْرُوبٍ كُلِّ عَن فَرَجِ اللَّهِ

O Alla-h, Relieve Every Deeply Anguished One

Meaning of 'Makru-b'

Makru-b is an object noun whose origin is the verbal noun 'karb' meaning 'deep anguish.' 'Allamah Tabataba'i- in his al-Mi-za-n quotes Ra-ghib Isfaha-ni-, the famous lexicographer of Qur'anic words, as saying[57]:

الشَّدِيدُ الْعَمُّ الْكَرْبُ.

"Karb means deep anguish."

The word Karbala-', for example, is a composition of 'intense grief' (karb) and 'trial' (bala-')

Therefore, in short, 'makru-b' is one who suffers deep sorrow and anguish.

The Source of Anguish

In this verse we are humbly asking Alla-h (swt) to lift the state of deep anguish from all 'the deeply anguished and sorrowful.' And whosoever seeks the relief of the anguished also seeks the elimination of the causes that create anguish. We should, however, realize that the sources of anguish vary with different people and different circumstances. Those who enjoy the proximity of Alla-h, despite having no grief for loss of the world and its pleasures:

يَحْزَنُونَ هُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ خَوْفٌ لَا اللَّهُ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنَّ الْأَ

"Surely, the friends of Alla-h neither fear nor grieve." [Holy Qur'a-n, 10:62]

experience deep anguish for the disbelievers due to the consequences they would have to face in future:

حَسْرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ نَفْسُكَ تَذُهِبُ فَلَا

"...And therefore do not consume yourself for them due to grief [of their unbelief]..." [Holy Qur'a-n, 35:8]

A-yatulla-h Khumayni- in his well-known Forty Traditions (Chehl Hadith) says: "...whoever perceives the greatness and glory of the Lord to a greater extent and knows the sacred station of God Almighty more than others, suffers more and is tormented to a greater extent by the sins of the creatures and their offences against the Lord's sanctity. Also, one who has a greater love and compassion for the creatures of God is tormented to a greater extent by their crooked and wretched condition and ways. And, of course, the Seal of the Prophets (s) was more perfect in all these stations and higher than all the prophets and the awliya-' (those near to God) in respect of

his degree of excellence and perfection. Hence, his torment and suffering was greater than that of any one of them...”

Sometimes the source of grief is different. For example, with regard to Prophet Ayyu-b (as) we say the following[58] in one of the supplications of the Holy month of Ramada-n:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْهِ أَيُّوبَ عَنِ الْعِظَامِ الْكُرْبِ كَاشِفَ يَا السَّلَامُ عَلَيْهِ لِدَاوُودَ الْحَدِيدِ مُلَيْنَ يَا

“O Softner of Iron for Da-wu-d, upon whom be peace. O Reliever of great sorrows from Ayyu-b, upon whom be peace.”

This indicates that Prophet Ayyu-b had suffered major calamities during his lifetime. Perhaps the following tradition explains this better:

‘Ali- ibn Ibra-hi-m, in a long tradition, narrates on the authority of Abu- Basi-r that Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) said: “...Then his [Prophet Ayyu-b (as)’s] whole body, except his intellect and his eyes, was subjected to the disease. Then Iblis blew upon it and it became a single wound extending from his head to feet. He (Job) remained for a period in that condition, praising and thanking God, until his body became infested with worms. Whenever a worm fell off his body, he would put it back, saying to it, “Return to your place, from where God created you.” And it began to stench until his townsfolk expelled him from his town and his food came from the garbage thrown outside the town.”[59]

With regard to Prophet Nu-h (as) also, ‘intense grief’ has been mentioned. Look at the following verse:

الْعَظِيمِ الْكُرْبِ مِنْ أَهْلِهِمْ فَتَجَبَّاهُ لَهُ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا قَبْلُ مِنْ نَادَى إِذْ وَنُوْحًا

“And Nu-h, when he cried aforetime, so We answered him, and delivered him and his followers from the great anguish.” [Holy Qur’a-n, 21:76]

Exegetes of the Qur’a-n have different interpretations for the source of this grief. Some like Tabarsi- in his Majma’ al-Baya-n surmise that it refers to the disturbance of his people, whereas Mawla- Ka-sha-ni- says that it may refer to both that and to the great flood.

Some sources of grief, however, spring from weakness of faith and a deep attachment to the world: because a person does not have the luxuries of life that others seem to enjoy, you may find him suffering grief. Those who commit suicide due to intense grief and sorrow do so due to lack of patience or even an ‘aim’ in life. Hence, every makru-b is not the same.

The supplicant therefore should bear in mind the different causes of sorrow and anguish and sincerely pray to Alla-h to eliminate them accordingly. For example, with regard to one who is distressed due to lack of the additional pleasures of the world, one must pray that he is emancipated from the love of the world. The person who is in a state of utter poverty should pray that his needs are covered so that he may engage in his daily affairs and devotion with peace of mind; the one who suffers a cancerous ailment should yearn for his relief from it, so that he may live in peace and derive the utmost benefit of doing good in life and thereby build his Hereafter.

Remembering the Anguished of Today

To keep abreast with the contemporary history of the world may seem to be insignificant for some: what can I do, for example, if others are dying of starvation in Afghanistan? I have no means to attend to them and thus it makes no difference whether I know about their awful state or not.

Clearly, such thinking stems from a narrow outlook. The human being enjoys a disposition that yearns for the salvation of every other human being. Therefore indifference is an alien concept to his nature. 'Not being able to help the oppressed' does not necessitate indifference on our part.

Firstly, our natural conscience would like to know the situation of those of our brethren who are suffering throughout the world.

Secondly, if we are materially unable, Almighty Alla-h has opened the door of prayer for us. Through prayers for the destitute, things can really change.

Thirdly, there are so many things that we can do together to crush the power of the world arrogance, but we do not realize the same. Our businessmen who import goods from countries like Israel and buy them at relatively low costs, can stop such transactions, so that they may not indirectly take part in killing the innocent Palestinians.

Many of us indirectly promote the commodities that the world arrogance produces. If we were to boycott such products, these groups would never be as materially prosperous as they are. Today, if the Arab leaders were to wake up and stop bowing in front of the world arrogance, a great transformation can take place.

Individual Responsibility

But what is my duty as an individual when I recite this verse of the radiant supplication? Most of us enjoy a certain limit of power and can play an effective role accordingly. Therefore let us measure the power that we have at our disposal, and practically take steps to relieve those

anguished and distressed people that we can support. For we are not obliged to do what is beyond our capacity. The Holy Qur'a-n [al-Baqara - 2:286] says:

وَسَعَهَا إِلَّا نَفْسًا اللَّهُ يُكَلِّفُ لَا

“Alla-h does not oblige a soul save to the extent of its capacity...”

Thus if I can support a particular family and remove it from the state of sorrow, I should do so. If I am the president of a certain society, and can remove the sorrow of those who are disturbed by the ‘disorganization of the social setup’ I should do so by organization. The list goes on. The extensions are identified according to the power every supplicant has. Otherwise, uttering this radiant verse of the supplication would mean nothing but the mere movement one’s tongue, or the expression of one’s hypocrisy; may Alla-h save us from such ignominy!

Instilling Happiness in the Hearts of Believers

Removing anguish from the heart of a believer and instilling happiness in him is one of the significant subjects that our books of tradition have extensively covered. Following are traditions worthy of reflection:

1. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported[60] to have said:

اللَّهُ سَرَّ فَقَدْ سَرَّنِي وَمَنْ سَرَّنِي، فَقَدْ مُؤْمِنًا سَرَّ مَنْ

“Whoever makes a believer happy has indeed made me happy; and whosoever has made me happy has indeed made Alla-h happy.”

2. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported[61] to have said:

الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَتَامَى حَفَرٌ مَنْ إِلَّا يَدْخُلُهَا لَا الْفَرْحِ، دَارٌ لَهَا يُقَالُ دَارُ الْجَنَّةِ فِي إِنْ

“Surely, there is a place in Paradise called ‘the House of Joy’; none would enter therein save one who made the believers among the orphans happy.”

Recommended States of Anguish

Some states of anguish are highly recommended. They can be gateways toward prosperity and peace. True repentance and regret is one such state:

Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is reported[62] to have said:

ذُنْبِهِ عَلَى وَحْزُنُهُ رَبِّهِ، بِطَاعَةِ الْمُؤْمِنِ سُورُ

“The happiness of a believer is in his obedience and his grief is due to his sin.”

In fact, repentance is a fundamental condition from among the six conditions of istighfa-r enumerated by Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) in Nahju’l Bala-gha. Ima-m (as) says:

...مَضَى مَا عَلَى النَّدَمِ أَوْلَهَا...

“The first [condition of istighfa-r] is regret about the past [misdeeds].”

The Holy Qur’a-n [3:135] says:

...اللَّهُ إِلَّا الذُّنُوبَ يَغْفِرُ وَمَنْ لِدُنُوبِهِمْ فَاستَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ ذَكَرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ ظَلَمُوا أَوْ فَاحِشَةً فَعَلُوا إِذَا وَالَّذِينَ

“And those when they commit an indecency or oppress themselves, remember Alla-h and seek forgiveness of their sins; and who can forgive a sin save Alla-h?”

In his Tafsi-r al-Sa-fi-, Mawla- Fayd Ka-sha-ni- in the exegesis of this verse narrates[63] the following incident:

[Observing brevity here we would not mention all the details of the incident, but try to mention the salient points only.]

Once during the time of the Holy Prophet (s) a youth called Bahlu-l came in the presence of the Holy Prophet (s) while intensely weeping. The Holy Prophet (s) asked him why he was weeping, and he said that he had committed very great sins, such that if Alla-h (swt) were to punish him for only some of them, he would enter the Hell Fire. Then the Holy Prophet (s) asks him some questions and the youth answers the Prophet (s). At one point the conversation reaches a climax and the Holy Prophet (s) asks the youth: ‘Is there anyone save The Very Great who would forgive the very great sin? The youth says: ‘No, I swear by Alla-h.’ Then the Holy Prophet (s) asks him to inform him one of his sins. The youth then narrates his story as follows:

I used to dig graves for seven years; I would remove the dead, and disrobe them. Once it so happened that a lady from the Ansa-r died. After she was carried to her grave and buried, her family left the place; then the night came to pass. I neared her grave, dug it, and removed her out; thereafter I unshrouded her and left her naked near the grave; and started to leave. Suddenly, Satan came in my mind and began attracting me to her. By this, I returned back and lacking self-control committed the vile deed with her. Then I took off leaving her in that state.

Suddenly I heard a voice from behind which said: O youth, woe be upon you from the Judge of the Day of Judgment, the day when He shall make me and you stand in the naked state that you left me among the dead, and took me out from my grave and removed my shroud from me and left me to stand in the state of impurity... So woe be upon you. Narrating this, the youth said: Therefore I do not think that I shall ever smell the scent of Paradise.

Hearing all this the Prophet (s) said: Be away from me O sinner; I am afraid I would burn by your Fire; how near are you from the Fire! The youth then left the noble presence of the Holy Prophet (s) and went to Medina where he took some provisions and left for one of its mountains; there he tied his hands onto his neck and started supplicating and seeking forgiveness and weeping and repenting. He did this for forty days and nights. It is said that the animals around him also wept for him.

When forty days and nights were over, he raised his hands towards the sky and cried: 'O Alla-h, what have you done about my wish? If you have accepted my supplication and forgiven my fault then inform the Holy Prophet (s) through revelation about the same; and if not, then quickly send down a fire that would burn me, or a punishment in this world that would vanquish me, and emancipate me from humiliation of the Day of Resurrection. Upon this, Almighty Alla-h sends the abovementioned verse [3:135].

After the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet (s) goes to the place where the youth was weeping in forgiveness. [The sad scenario makes one really weep. We have omitted it here to observe brevity]. The Holy Prophet (s) nears the youth and tells him: "I give you glad tidings [from Alla-h] you are a freed slave of Alla-h from the fire.

Notes:

[57] al-Mi-za-n, v. 7, pg. 134

[58] Iqba-l al-A'ma-l, v. 1, pg. 364

[59] Narrated by A-yatulla-h Khumayni- in his 40 traditions

[60] Mi-za-n al-Hikma, v. 2., pg. 1291, 8465

[61] Ibid., v. 2., pg. 1291, tr. 8460

[62] Ibid., v. 2, pg. 1291, tr. 8455

Section 7 : O Alla-h, Return Every Stranger

عَرِيبٍ كُلِّ رُدَّ اللَّهُمَّ

O Alla-h, Return Every Stranger.

Meaning of 'Ghari-b'

Due to an acquaintance with different cultures and languages some of us conjecture that the word 'ghari-b' means 'poor.' In the Urdu language, however, this word when used in the absolute sense denotes the poverty of a person. But when it is particularized like 'ghari-bu'l watan' the meaning changes.

In the Arabic, which appears also to be the source language of the word, 'ghari-b' means 'a remote entity.' Its origin is the word 'ghurba' which means 'remoteness.' Any thing therefore which is ghari-b is far.

In his Commentary of Sahi-fat al-Sajja-diyah[64], Sayyid 'Ali- Kha-n al-Husayni-, says:

وَالنَّوَى الْبُعْدُ: بِالضَّمِّ الْعُرْبِيَّةُ.

“Ghurbah (with the vowel damma over ghayn) denotes remoteness and distance.”

Hence ghari-b is anything that is far [in relation to something else].

In the Arabic language, unknown words are also known as ghari-b.

The pain of being a stranger can be well appreciated by only those who have experienced, or are experiencing the state of being far from their hometowns. Whosoever travels abroad, has hope of returning back to his hometown safe and sound. Obviously, he would not like to separate himself from his near ones or abandon his material assets of life. Those who have left their hometowns and encountered calamities on their way or were stranded in a foreign country can understand how agonizing it is to be far from home.

The recent decades of contemporary history are full of examples that break the heart of every concerned listener: the Zionists, as has been their trend in the ancient past, continue harassing different parts of the weak nations of the world through terrorism and banishment, and thereby drive out scores of innocent men, women and children from their hometowns so that they should bear the painful torture of surviving in refugee camps.

Such innocent victims are really in need of our support. As mentioned earlier, we must try to study the areas where we can play an effective role to support them in any way. If donations are collected by reliable aid organizations, we should try to contribute as much as we can. If we can help a refugee who lives in poverty in our countries, we should strive to support him, so that he may adapt to the new situation he has been forced into. If we are unable to do all this, we should never forget to pray for them and seek their relief from the All-Powerful Creator.

Therefore, when we pray to Alla-h to return all those who are far away from their hometowns and cannot return due to some difficulties, we should not forget the manifestations of such people in contemporary history; we are duty bound to remember all those who suffer the predicament of banishment such as the Palestinians, the Afghanis, etc.

Extensions of Ghurba

It is possible for one to be a foreigner somewhere, but enjoy a very luxurious life. Consequently one may or may not experience the agony of separation. Those to whom Alla-h has bestowed affluence do not necessarily experience the agony of separation. The means of communication are easily at their disposal and they have no sense of grief, for whenever they choose to return back they do not face any problems. The following holy tradition alludes to this reality:

Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported[65] to have said:

وَطِنُ الْغُرْبَةِ فِي الْغِنَى.

“The affluent one is at home in a foreign place.”

Poverty, on the contrary, transforms one into a stranger:

Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported[66] to have said:

غُرْبَةُ الْوَطَنِ فِي الْفَقْرِ.

“Poverty in one’s town is remoteness.:

Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported[67] to have said:

بُلْدَتِهِ فِي غَرِيبِ الْمَقَلِّ.

“The dispossessed is a stranger in his hometown.”

Perhaps this is one reason why in the Urdu language the word ghari-b is used to denote poverty.

Other extensions of ghurba are as follows:

1. Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

حَبِيبٌ لَهُ لَيْسَ مِنَ الْغَرِيبِ.

“A stranger is one who does not have a friend.”

3. Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

أَعْرَبَتْهُ بَيْنَ مُهَانَ بُلْدَتِهِ، فِي غَرِيبِ الْأَحْمَقِ.

“A silly person is a stranger in his hometown, and degenerate among his friends.”

The Relative Aspect of the word 'Gharib'

The abovementioned tradition indicates that whosoever is silly is ghari-b (a stranger). However, this should not be taken in the absolute sense. The word ghari-b is relative. One who is silly despite being ghari-b (far) in the company of the learned, is at home in the company of his fellows. Similar is the case with the learned, for they are strangers in the company of the fools, but at home in the company of the learned: Another such instance is when a majority of the population are ignorant. Here again the learned are strangers:

Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

الْجُهَّالُ لِكثْرَةِ غُرَبَاءِ الْعُلَمَاءِ.

“The learned are strangers due to the great number of the ignorant.”

Sometimes, however, the learned can be strangers in the company of the learned themselves. One who is specialized in chemistry, for example, and has no acquaintance with Eastern

philosophy is an alien in the company of the Muslim metaphysicians and vice versa.

Furthermore, it is also possible for one to be a stranger and a resident at the same time. For example, a scholar may be far from his hometown, and thus a stranger, but close to the learned class, and hence a resident. Sometimes, a scholar, despite being in his hometown, which is inhabited by the learned class of his own field, is still called a stranger in terms of being far from the proximity of Alla-h (swt).

Ahlu'l Bayt (as): Positive Extensions of Ghari-b

Most of the Muslims were oblivious to the future consequences of the decision made about the caliphate after the Prophet's (s) demise. The question of caliphate was not a matter of enjoyment of power for some decades, but the question of safeguarding the true version of Islam and the guardianship of the bearers of the final religion and their future generations. The extreme grief (karb) of Hadrat Fa-tima (as) indeed portrays, how far apart were the masses from her broad vision. She thought of the future, whereas others were heedless of the destruction of Islam, and were concerned with usurping material power.

Her spirit wished well for the entire humanity, whereas others only thought of their own schemes. She together with her radiant family and very few trustworthy followers, was ghari-b, since she was remote from those who were disobedient to God and those who could not foresee the calamities that would befall the Muslim nation. Whenever one tries to reflect upon this extension of ghurbah, the heart becomes constricted and the tongue stops and tears roll down the cheeks. The following statement[68] of Fa-tima (as) sums it all up:

Ummu Salama asks Hadrat Fa-tima (as): "O daughter of the Messenger of Alla-h (s), how did you approach your morning?"

And Fa-tima (as) replies:

الْوَصِيِّ وَظَلَمِ النَّبِيِّ فَقَدِ وَكَرْبِ كَمَدِ بَيْنَ أَصْبَحْتُ

"I encountered morning in great grief and sorrow of the loss of the Prophet (s) and the oppression of his successor..."

After this fundamental blow on the Muslim Ummah, the Ahlu'l Bayt (as) and their true followers always remained ghari-b among a great number of the Muslim Ummah.

The Ghurba of Every Human Being of Tainted Disposition

O Alla-h [the Name of the Essence that possesses all the Perfect Divine Attributes], return all the ghuraba' (distanced) [who are spiritually far, which means that they do not enjoy the Divine Attributes].

Ha-fiz, the great mystic-poet says[69]:

Man az daya-re habi-bam na az bila-de ghari-b Muhaymina- be rafi-qa-ne khud rasa-n ba-zam

I belong to the beloved's town, not to the land of strangers;
O Lord, join me again to your friends!

Masters on the path towards human perfection believe that the human being is a traveler in this world. He has a path to traverse, which is 'the religion' or in Qur'a-nic terms 'sira-t al-mustaqi-m' and a 'destination', which is Almighty Alla-h Himself. Referring to this Alla-h (swt) says:

1. The Human Being is a Traveler: Holy Qur'a-n, 84:6

فَمَلَأْتِيهِ كُدًّا بَكَرَ إِلَىٰ كَادِحِ الْإِنْسَانِ أَيُّهَا يَا

"O human being you are always striving unto Your Lord laboriously and you shall meet Him."

2. The Path: Holy Qur'a-n, 1:6

الْمُسْتَقِيمِ الصِّرَاطِ إِيَّاهُ

"Guide us on the Straight Path."

3. The Destination, Holy Qur'a-n, 35:18

الْمَصِيرُ إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ

"To Alla-h is the endless journey."

Religion, if practiced properly, can elevate the human being so high that he can also transcend the angels in perfection. Interested men and women may ask what dhikr or act to perform if one would like to begin the spiritual journey to Alla-h. The stereotype that 'the tari-qa' (the spiritual path) is other than the 'Shari-ah' (the apparent Islamic law) is a great impediment inculcated by the Satan. It is by reading and understanding the Qur'a-n and the Sunnah correctly and following the Tawdi-hu'l Masa-il (the Book of Islamic Laws) that one can attain the heights of perfection. Many of us tend to conjecture that an 'a-rif (a mystic) is one who must isolate himself all the time

and practice some specific dhikr and wait for spiritual revelations (muka-shafa-t). Our Shi-‘a scholars do not agree with this misconception. They believe that both the Shari-‘ah and the Tariqah enjoy a unity. And it is by practicing the apparent Islamic law and observing both its inner as well as its outer etiquette that a human being can attain Alla-h’s nearness and transcend the angels.

The human being’s ascent to God should not be mistaken with the physical journey. His journey is beyond the confines of time and space. He is in fact coloring himself with Divine Attributes and thus nearing The Gracious Presence. Our holy Ima-ms (as) who had reached the peaks of perfection were manifestations of Divine Attributes. Look at the following tradition:

Ima-m Ja’far al-Sa-diq (as) is reported[70] to have said:

الْحُسْنَى الْأَسْمَاءُ نَحْنُ.

“We are the Most Beautiful Names [of Alla-h].”

Hence, in order to return back to our hometown, which is Alla-h’s proximity, we must try to adopt the correct path set by Almighty Alla-h: The Holy Qur’a-n [35:18] says:

الْمَصِيرُ اللَّهُ وَإِلَىٰ لِنَفْسِهِ يَتَزَكَّىٰ فَإِنَّمَا تَزَكَّىٰ وَمَنْ

“And whosoever purifies himself, purifies himself only for his own soul’s good. To Alla-h is the homecoming (destination).”

Thus the path is ‘self-purification’, which is not different from following the Islamic Laws.

However, we must realize that the journey is not as easy as it may seem at first. For one to cover the different stations of the journey, a qualified master of gnosis is essential, since the path is full of obstacles and the accursed Satan is always on the watch. He always tries to impede the way of one who has made a firm resolution to adopt the spiritual path.

This, however, should not dishearten those who are far from places where such masters exist, for there are instances, which indicate that one can attain such exalted destinations without a direct relationship with such masters. [The fundamental role of the Ahlu’l Bayt (as) however always remains. We shall explain this in our later discussions - Insha- Alla-h.] The late A-yatulla-h Muhammad Husayn Tehra-ni- reports a thought-provoking incident in his Anwa-r-e-Malaku-t[71] as follows:

Respect for Mother Turns one into a Friend of Alla-h

[A-yatulla-h Tehra-ni- narrates that once in Tehran he had gone to the Islamiyya bookshop situated on Buzarjumhari- Street to purchase books. He was a friend of one of the partners of the organization, Ha-j Sayyid Muhammad Kita-bchi-, who was responsible for the store of the bookshop. He went to the bookshop to meet him and purchase some books as well. It was in the morning and approximately four hours remained to midday. A man had also come to the store to purchase books. Having purchased the books that he required, he started to leave, when suddenly he began saying: My beloved Alla-h, my physician Alla-h, my helper, my helper, my soul, my soul.

The A-yatulla-h narrates:] On looking at him, I saw that his face had turned red and he was sweating; he was plunged in happiness and ecstasy beyond limit. Addressing him, I said: ‘Dear Sir! Dear Dervish, do not eat all alone; this is not the custom of etiquette’; He took a turn around himself and began chanting some poems of Ba-ba- Ta-hir ‘Urya-n [a well-known mystic buried in Hamada-n]. Thereafter he kept silent and wept a lot. Then he became happy and laughed. I said: ‘Ahsant! [Thereafter a conversation followed. During the conversation, A-yatulla-h Muhammad Husayn Tehrani asks the saint to inform him how he could attain such an exalted station, and the saint narrates his anecdote as follows:]

I had an old mother who was sick and disabled. She was bed-ridden for many years. I alone was at her service, and would attend to her needs: I would cook food for her, bring water to her for ablution, and was at her service for her different needs. However, she was very ill-mannered and would sometimes abuse me, but I would bear that and respond to her with a smile. Due to this very attitude of hers I did not get married, although my age exceeded forty years.

This was because maintaining a family with the kind of character that my mother had was impossible for me. I knew that if I would marry, either she would cause our separation, or I would be forced to leave her. Abandoning my mother, however, was not acceptable to my conscience. Hence, I observed patience in remaining a bachelor, and resigned myself to the situation. Sometimes, due to great patience in front of her ill manners, I would experience a spark of light in my heart, a state of happiness and joy. However this would only be temporary. This situation continued until one cold winter night.

I had placed my bed near hers so that she would not be alone and would not need to raise her voice to call me for her necessities. On that night I had filled a jug with water, and placed it near my bedside all the time, so that if my mother required some water I would immediately give it to her. In the middle of that night she asked for water. I stood up immediately and filled a small vessel with water and gave it to her saying: ‘Take, dear mother.’ She, being in the state of drowsiness did not realize that I attended to her request immediately; she thought that I had brought her the water late.

Upon this, she abused me in odd, abusive language and hit me on my head with the vessel of water. I immediately filled the vessel with water once again and addressing her said: 'Dear mother, take, and forgive me; I am sorry! Saying this, I was overcome, and didn't know what happened next. In short, I attained my aspiration: those sparks had tuned into a world of light resembling the radiant sun; and my beloved, my friend, my helper, and my doctor, spoke to me. Thereafter this state never stopped. And it is years now that this state has remained...

Dear readers, there is vast difference between the servant whispering to His Beloved and the Beloved whispering to His servant. Never conjecture that such an incident is farfetched for it was just another practical translation of Ima-m 'Ali-'s (as) statement in Nahju'l Bala-gha[72] as follows:

عُفُولُهُمْ دَاتٍ فِي وَكَلْمَهُمْ فِكْرُهُمْ، فِي نَاجَاهُمْ عِبَادُ الْفَرَاتِ، أَرْمَانَ وَفِي الْبُرْهَةِ، بَعْدَ الْبُرْهَةِ فِي آوَاهُ عَزَّتْ لِلَّهِ بَرَحَتْ وَمَا

"In all the periods and times when there were no prophets, there have been persons to whom Alla-h, precious are His bounties, whispered in their hearts and spoke in the essence of their intellects."

As long as the opportunity remains, our 'ardent aspiration' should be to attain this particular gracious abode before we leave the world and cannot do anything. There is a very thought-provoking incident narrated in Rawdat al-Ka-fi- by Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as):[73]

The Prayer of A Broad Minded Old-Woman

إِلَى (ص) ۞ مُحَمَّدًا اللَّهُ بَعَثَ أَنْ فَلَمَّا فَأَكْرَمَهُ الْإِسْلَامُ قَبْلَ بِالطَّائِفِ رَجُلٍ عَلَى نَزَلَ كَانَ (ص) اللَّهُ رَسُولَ إِنْ قَالَ (ع) جَعْفَرِ أَبِي عَنْ وَهُوَ طَالِبِ، أَبِي يَتِيمِ اللَّهِ، عَبْدُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ وَهُ: لَهُ قَالُوا لا. قَالَ النَّاسُ؟ إِلَى وَجَلَّ عَزَّ اللَّهُ أَرْسَلَهُ الَّذِي مَنْ أَنْدَرِي: لِلرَّجُلِ قَبِيلِ النَّاسِ، يَا أَتَعْرِفُ: لَهُ قَالَ ثُمَّ وَأَسَلَمَ، عَلَيْهِ فَسَلَّمَ (ص) ۞ اللَّهُ رَسُولِ عَلَى الرَّجُلِ فَقَدِمَ: قَالَ فَأَكْرَمْتَهُ وَكَذَا كَذَا يَوْمَ بِالطَّائِفِ بِكَ نَزَلَ كَانَ الَّذِي ۞ اللَّهُ رَسُولُ لَهُ فَقَالَ. فَأَكْرَمْتِكَ وَكَذَا كَذَا يَوْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فِي بِالطَّائِفِ بِهِ نَزَلْتَ الَّذِي الْمُنْزَلِ رَبُّ أَنَا: قَالَ أَنْتَ؟ وَمَنْ قَالَ اللَّهُ: رَسُولَ عَلَى كَانَ مَا: لِأَصْحَابِهِ قَالَ ثُمَّ سَأَلَ يَمَا (ص) ۞ اللَّهُ رَسُولُ لَهُ فَأَمَرَ. بِرُغَاتِهَا شَاةٍ مَائَتِي أَسَأَلُكَ: فَقَالَ. حَاجَتَكَ سَلِّ بِكَ، مَرْحَبًا: (ص) ذِكْرُهُ عَزَّ اللَّهُ إِنْ: فَقَالَ لِمُوسَى؟ إِسْرَائِيلَ بَنِي عَجُوزُ سَأَلْتُ وَمَا: فَقَالُوا؟ (ع) لِمُوسَى إِسْرَائِيلَ بَنِي عَجُوزِ سُؤَالَ يَسْأَلُنِي أَنْ الرَّجُلِ هَذَا (ع) يُوسُفَ قَبْرِ عَنْ مُوسَى فَسَأَلَ بِالسَّامِ، الْمُقَدَّسَةِ الْأَرْضِ إِلَى مِنْهَا تَخْرُجُ أَنْ قَبْلَ مِصْرَ مِنْ يُوسُفَ عِظَامَ أَحْمَلُ أَنْ مُوسَى إِلَى أَوْحَى: فَقَالَ؟ (ع) يُوسُفَ قَبْرِ مَوْضِعَ تَعْلَمِينَ: قَالَ جَاءَتْهُ فَلَمَّا إِلَيْهَا، (ع) مُوسَى فَأَرْسَلَ بِفُلَانَةَ قَبْرَهُ يَعْرِفُ أَحَدًا كَانَ إِنْ: فَقَالَ شَيْخٌ فَجَاءَهُ، وَجَلَّ عَزَّ اللَّهُ فَأَوْحَى. عَلَيْكَ بِحُكْمِي إِلَّا لَا،: فَقَالَتْ. الْجَنَّةُ فَلَاكَ: قَالَ. بِحُكْمِي إِلَّا عَلَيْهِ أَدُلُّكَ لَا: فَقَالَتْ. سَأَلْتُ مَا وَلَكَ عَلَيْهِ فِدَائِي: قَالَ. نَعَمْ دَرَجَتِكَ فِي عِلْمِكَ أَكُونَ أَنْ حُكْمِي فَإِنَّ: فَقَالَتْ. حُكْمِكَ فَلَاكَ: (ع) مُوسَى لَهَا فَقَالَ. حُكْمَهَا لَهَا تَجْعَلُ أَنْ عَلَيْكَ يَكْبُرُ لَا: (ع) مُوسَى إِلَى إِسْرَائِيلَ؟ بَنِي عَجُوزُ سَأَلْتُ مَا سَأَلْتَنِي لَوْ هَذَا عَلَى كَانَ مَا: (ص) ۞ اللَّهُ رَسُولُ فَقَالَ. الْجَنَّةُ فِي الْقِيَامَةِ يَوْمَ فِيهَا تُكُونُ النَّبِي

"Before the advent of Islam, once when the Holy Prophet (s) happen to visit Ta-'if, someone generously hosted him. Later when the Prophet (s) was appointed as a Messenger of Alla-h, the said person was asked: 'Do you know whom did Alla-h appoint as his Messenger to the people?' 'No.' he replied. They said: 'It is Muhammad bin 'Abdilla-h, the orphan of Abi- Ta-lib, who, on such and such a day had been your guest in Ta-'if and you graciously hosted him. Hearing this, the

person comes in the presence of the Prophet (s), greets him, embraces Islam, and then says: 'O Messenger of Alla-h, do you recognize me?' The Prophet (s) says: 'And who are you?' The man then says: 'I am the owner of the house in which you had put up in Ta-'if during the age of ignorance (before the advent of Islam) on such and such a day and I hosted you. The Holy Prophet (s) said: 'You are welcome; ask what you want.' The man said: 'I want 200 sheep together with their shepherds. The Holy Prophet (as) ordered that he be given what he wanted. Then addressing his companions he wished that the man would seek that which the old lady of Bani- Isra-'i-l asked from Prophet Mu-sa- (as).

The companions asked: 'And what did the old lady of Bani- Isra-'i-l seek from Mu-sa-?' The Prophet (as) said: 'surely Alla-h revealed to Prophet Mu-sa- (as) to carry the bones of Prophet Yu-suf (as) before he left Egypt for the holy land in Sha-m. Thereupon Prophet Mu-sa- (as) asked about the whereabouts of the grave of Prophet Yu-suf (as), and an old man approached him and said: If at all any one happens to know the whereabouts of the grave, it is such and such old woman. Prophet Mu-sa- (as) asked her to be brought to him and when she came in his presence, he asked: 'Do you know the place of the grave of Prophet Yu-suf (as)?' She said: 'Yes.' The Prophet said: 'Therefore guide me towards the grave and I you will get whatever you ask.' She said: 'I shall not guide you towards it except you agree to what I want in return.' The Prophet (as) said: 'You shall get Paradise.' She said: 'No, except what I want.' Thereupon Almighty Alla-h revealed to Prophet Mu-sa- (as) that agreeing to her request should not seem insurmountable to him. Therefore Prophet Mu-sa- (as) said: 'Alright, you would have what you want.' Thereupon she said: 'I would like to be with you in the same station that you would have in Paradise on the Day of Judgment.' Narrating this the Holy Prophet (s) said: 'why didn't this man seek that which the old woman of Bani- Isra-'i-l sought?'

This anecdote serves as a very important lesson for us. Ponder over the aspiration of the old woman. The lady is given Paradise but she rejects it. She aspires beyond that. She yearns for the same station that Prophet Mu-sa- (as) would enjoy in the Hereafter, which is none other than Alla-h's proximity or Jannat al-liqa-' (The Paradise of meeting Alla-h). Following are verses of Qur'a-n that allude to this exalted station:

1. Holy Qur'a-n: 89:27-30

جَنَّتِي وَأَدْخُلِي .عِبَادِي فِي فَادْخُلِي .مَرْضِيَّةً رَاضِيَةً رَبِّكَ إِلَىٰ ارْجِعِي .الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ النَّفْسُ أَيْئَهَا يَا

"O soul at peace, Return to your Lord, while you are pleased with Him, and He is pleased with you, then enter the company of My obedient servants, And ENTER MY PARADISE."

2. Holy Qur'a-n 54:54-55

مُقْتَدِرٍ مَلِيكَ دَعْدُ صِدْقٍ مَقْعَدٍ فِي. وَنَهْرٍ جَنَّاتٍ فِي الْمُتَّقِينَ إِنَّ

“Surely the God-wary (pious) are in gardens and rivers. In the seat of truth with the Most Powerful King.”

Clearly the aspiration of the old lady of Bani- Isra-’i-l draws all of us to ‘understand our real innate need’ and pray accordingly. Let us not waste the opportunity of the nights of qadr at our disposal. Our aspiration should be the forgiveness of sins and Alla-h’s proximity. Yes, seeking ‘long life’, ‘a lot of sustenance’ etc. as ‘the means to enable us attain Alla-h’s proximity is also highly recommended. Our supplications are full of expressions of such needs. But the material needs must always be sought as a means for the ‘Great Return’ to God. Otherwise the same worldly benefits can widen the gap. Let us take a lesson from Bi-bi- A-siya, Fir’awn’s wife, who despite enjoying all the worldly pleasures, did not surrender to Fir’awn and faced painful torture from him. Almighty Alla-h mentions her supplication as follows:

الْجَنَّةِ فِي بَيْتًا عِنْدَكَ لِي ابْنَ رَبِّ

“O my Lord, build for me NEAR YOU a house in paradise.”

A-yatulla-h al-‘Uzma- and the Apple of our eyes, Shaykh Jawa-di- A-mu-li- (may Almighty Alla-h prolong his exalted shadow), the contemporary commentator of Qur’a-n and indeed a true successor of his teacher ‘Alla-mah Taba-taba-’i- in the field of tafsir says[74]:

This woman asks for Paradise near God, whereas others only seek Paradise... However, this lady asks for God first, and then asks for a house near God. She does not say: Rabbibni li- baytan fi’l Janna (‘O Lord, build for me a house in Paradise’, nor does she say: Rabbibni li- baytan ‘indaka fi’l Janna (‘O Lord, build for me A HOUSE near You in Paradise.’ Rather she says: Rabbibni li- ‘indaka baytan fi’l Janna (‘O Lord, build for me NEAR YOU a house in Paradise). First she mentions ‘the proximity of Alla-h’ and then she speaks about Paradise. That is, if it is a matter of al-Ja-r Thummadda-r (First the neighbor, then the house), this lady says: Alla-h, thumma al-Janna (First Alla-h, and then Paradise). Certainly the Paradise that is ‘indalla-h (near Alla-h) is greatly different from the Paradise ‘underneath which rivers flow...

‘Alla-mah Taba-taba-’i-[75] says:

...اللَّهُ مِنَ الْقُرْبِ دَارَ الْجَنَّةِ كَوْنًا الْجَنَّةِ، وَفِي اللَّهِ عِنْدَ لَهَا الْمَبْنِيِّ الْبَيْتِ كَوْنًا بَيْنَ الْجَمْعِ

“Seeking a house to be built near Alla-h and in Paradise at the same time is due to the fact that Paradise is the abode of Nearness to God.”

True Believers are Ghari-b!

There are various narrations that clearly state that a believer is a stranger.’ For example:

1. Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as) is reported[76] to have said:

لِلْغُرَبَاءِ طُوبَىٰ وَ غَرِيبِ الْمُؤْمِنِ

“A believer is a stranger; and blessed be the strangers!”

2. Ka-mil at-Tamma-r[77] says:

(مَرَّاتٍ ثَلَاثٍ) غَرِيبٌ وَالْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، مِنْ قَلِيلٍ إِلَّا (ثَلَاثًا) بِهِمْ كُلُّهُمْ النَّاسُ: يَقُولُ (ع) جَعْفَرُ أَبِي سَمْعَةَ

“I heard Abu- Ja’far [Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir] (as), saying thrice: ‘The people are all beasts save a few of the believers;’ and thrice, ‘a believer is a stranger (ghari-b).”

‘Alla-mah Majli-si- in his magnum opus ‘The Oceans of Lights’ comments on this tradition as follows:

بيان: كلهم بهائم أي شبيهه بها في عدم العقل، وإدراك الحق، وغلبة
لأنه غريب المؤمن ...
: “سَيِّئًا أَضَلُّ هُمْ بَلْ كَالْأَنْعَامِ إِلَّا هُمْ إِنَّ”
... عن أهله ووطنه بعد الذي كالغريب الناس بين فهو إليه، فيسكن مثله يجد قلما

“Exposition: ‘All are beast’” means that they resemble them in not using their intellect and not comprehending the truth and in their selfish desires dominating their intellectual faculties, as the Most High says: ‘They are like animals; rather, they are more astray’... A believer is a stranger because he rarely finds his parallel so that he may seek repose in him; hence he is among the people like a stranger, who is far from his family and hometown...”[78]

Thus, following can be reasons why a believer is “ghari-b”:

1. A believer naturally aspires for the company of his All-Loving Creator and struggles to reach this exalted destination. As long as he has not reached the destination he always finds himself a stranger. Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

الْأَشْقِيَاءَ مَوْطِنُهَا وَ الْغُرَبَاءَ دَارُ الدُّنْيَا

“The world is a place of remoteness and a residence for the wretched.”

And the following is reported[79] in another tradition:

الإِيمَانُ مِنَ الْوَطَنِ حُبُّ

“Love for one’s hometown is a sign of faith.”

2. In the company of the non-believers, believers are strangers. This is because while they live in a world of belief, the love of God and concern for the salvation of humanity, the non-believers do not perceive the realities and attach themselves to the world of matter and its benefits.

Why was Ima-m ‘Ali- al-Rida- (as) known as Ima-m al-Ghari-b

Sometimes when addressing our 8th Holy Ima-m (as) we say:

الْغُرَبَاءَ غَرِيبَ يَا عَلِيَّكَ أَسْلَامٌ

“Peace be on you, O Stranger of the Strangers.”

The teacher of A-yatulla-h Muhammad Husayn Tehra-ni- in the discipline of gnosis- Sayyid Hashim Hadda-d, was once asked the reason why Ima-m al-Rida- (as) was known as Ima-m al-Ghari-b. He responded in some details. Two reasons[80] one can mention about this are:

1. The Ima-m enjoyed the station of wila-yah, which was so exalted, and close to Divine proximity, but far from other human beings. Necessarily, the majority of the people were not acquainted with the attributes of wila-ya and the characteristics of a wali- [who is a manifestation of Divine Attributes]. Thus Ima-m was ghari-b in their company.

2. Ma’mu-n al-Rashi-d forced the Ima-m (as) to Marv and the Ima-m (as) had to leave his hometown, his family and the neighborhood of the Holy Prophet’s (s) tomb. Thus he was ghari-b. In addition calling him to Marv was a kind of captivity, exile and imprisonment, for despite granting him power and a princely station, he deprived him from all his functions: he was neither allowed to give legal rulings nor to offer Friday and ‘l-d Prayers.

In another ziya-rah[81] we also call Ima-m al-Husayn (as) as Ghari-b al-ghuraba-. And in a tradition narrated in al-Mashhadi-’s al-Maza-r al-Kabi-r, Ima-m Ja’far al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have asked the following about a group of people:

...الْغَرِيبِ قَبْرِ زِيَارَةَ مِنْ يَمْنَعُهُمْ فَمَا

“And what stops them from visiting the grave of al-Ghari-b? [he means Ima-m al-Husayn

(as)].”[82]

The Hometown of the Ghari-b

Sayyid ‘Ali- Kha-n Husayni-, in his Riya-d al-Sa-lik-i-n, quotes the following:

جبرئيل ويطلبه يجده، فلا النار في مالك ويطلبه يجده، فلا الجنة في رضوان يطلبه الذي: فقال الغريب؟ من: الشاشي جعفر أبو سنل
قلوبهم: يا أبا جعفر! فأين تفتّرت وقد المجلس أهل له فقال: يجده فلا الأرض في إبليس ويطلبه يجده، فلا السماوات في
لغريب؟ فقال: في مقعد صدق عند مليك مقتدر يكون هذا

Abu- Ja’far al-Sha-shi- was asked: “Who is a stranger (ghari-b)?” He said: “He is one whom the Ridwa-n seeks in Paradise, but does not find, one whom the Ma-lik seeks in Hell Fire, but does not find, one whom Gabriel seeks in the heavens but does not find, one whom Ibli-s seeks in the earth, but does not find.” So the people of the gathering asked him with broken hearts: “O Aba- Ja’far, where then is this stranger?” He said: “In the seat of truth with the Most Powerful King (54:55)”

The Great Sign Complains of Ghurbah in the Supplication of Kumayl

The infallibility of Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is an established fact and hence we would not like to engage in explaining the details of the same. We also know his famous saying:[83]

يَقِينًا اِنْ دَدْتُ مَا الْغِطَاءُ كُشِفَ لَوْ

“If the veil was unveiled nothing would be added to my certitude.”

Why then should he show his fear of separation from the Beloved? What kind of separation is this? What kind of unbearable ghurba is this? A-yatulla-h Khumayni-, in his forty traditions when enumerating the levels of patience of the gnostics says:

Another level is that of sabr ‘an Alla-h (sabr from God) which pertains to the stations of lovers of God and piners for Him, of those blessed with epiphany (ahl al-shuhu-d wa al-‘aya-n) at the time of returning to their own world, the world of plurality and sobriety (after intoxication with God). This is the hardest and the most difficult of the stations, and to it has referred the Master of the Wayfarers, the Commander of the Faithful, and the Leader of the Perfect (i.e. ‘Ali- ibn Abi- Ta-lib (as) in the noble Du‘a-’ Kumayl:

فِرَافِكَ؟ عَلَى أَصْبِرُ فَكَيْفَ عَذَابِكَ، عَلَى صَبْرَتُ رَبِّي وَمَوْلَايَ وَسَيِّدِي إِلَهِي يَا فَهْنِي

“O my God, my Master and my Lord! Even if I were able to endure Your chastisement, how shall I

bear Your separation?!”

Perhaps the following dictum of Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) also explains the reality of the matter:

مَجْهَدٌ نَّارٍ مِنْ أَحْرُ الْفُرْقَةِ نَارٌ.

“The fire of separation is hotter than Hellfire.”[84]

غَرِيبٌ كُلُّ رَدٍّ أَلَّهُمْ.

Hence, when we seek the return of all the strangers we must pray to Alla-h to:

1. Return all those who have been driven out of their homes and suffer the pain of separation
2. Return all the sinful folk back to the proximity of Alla-h, which in reality is: (1) Perfecting the human being in terms of Divine Attributes like knowledge, patience, etc., and (2) Lessening the gap between the high-ranking strangers like the A’immah (as) and the low-ranking ones like the sinful, and thus removing the ghurba of the Ima-ms from the rest too. [This point is worthy of reflection]. Otherwise, in another sense, the Ima-ms (as) being close to Almighty Alla-h, were never ghari-b (strangers). This is because they were never far from their spiritual hometown. There is a beautiful report narrated by al-Zamakhshari in his Rabi-‘ al-Abra-r worthy of reflection. He reports:

عَلَيْهِ فَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ مَعَ مَنْ يُوسُفُ لَهُمْ فَقَالَ خَيْرًا الْغَرِيبِ بِهِذَا اسْتَوْصُوا: قَانِلْ لَهُمْ الْفَوَاشِئُري، الْجُبِّ مِنْ (ع) يُوسُفُ أُخْرِجْ لَمَّا غُرْبَةً.

“When Yu-suf (as) was taken out of the well, and bought, a person said to them: ‘Take care of this stranger (ghari-b). [Hearing this,] Yu-suf (as) said to them: whosoever is with Almighty Alla-h, is not a stranger.”[85]

Notes:

[64] Riya-d al-Sa-lik-i-n, v. 1, pg. 473

[65] Tasni-fu Ghurari’l Hikam, pg. 369

[66] Mu’jamu Alfa-zi Ghurari’l Hikam, pg. 810

[67] Ibid.

- [68] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 43, pg. 156, tr. 5
- [69] Di-wa-ne Khwa-jah Ha-fiz Shi-ra-zi-, ed. Pezhman, pg. 150, ghazal 334
- [70] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 25, pg. 4, tr. 7
- [71] Anwa-re Malaku-t, v. 1 pp. 141-145
- [72] Nahju'l Bala-gha, Sermon 222 (220-variation)
- [73] Rawdat al-Ka-fi-, v. 8, pp. 110-111
- [74] Zan dar a-ineye Jama-lo Jala-l, pp. 156-157
- [75] Al-Mi-za-n, v. 19, pg. 344
- [76] Mustadrak Safi-nat al-Biha-r, v. 7, pg. 550
- [77] Al-Ka-fi-, v. 2, pg. 242
- [78] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 64, pg. 160
- [79] Safi-nat al-Biha-r, v. 8, pg. 525
- [80] Al-Tawhid Quarterly Journal, v. XIII, no. 4, pp. 72-85
- [81] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 98, ch. 18, pg. 230
- [82] al-Maza-r al-Kabi-r, pg. 333
- [83] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 40, pg. 153, tr. 5
- [84] Mi-ra-th-e-Hadi-the Shi-'e, v. 8, pg. 217
- [85] Rabi-' al-Abra-r wa Nusu-s al-Akhba-r, v. 3, pg. 5

Section 8 : O Alla-h, Free Every Captive

أَسِيرٌ كُلُّ فُكِّكَ اللَّهُمَّ

O Alla-h, Free Every Captive

Meaning of Asi-r

The word Asi-r originates from al-asr, which means: بِالْقَيْدِ الشَّدُّ...

“Fastening with a bond...”

Ra-ghib, the famous lexicographer, in his Qur’a-nic dictionary al-Mufrada-t[86] says:

One who was tied by fetters was known to be asi-r; thereafter, the word was intended for every entity that is seized and bound, even if it was not fettered by anything... for example:

نِعْمَتِكَ أَسِيرٌ أَنَا

“I am bound to your favor.”

From the abovementioned definition, the comprehensiveness of the concept of the word ‘asi-r’ becomes clear. The traditions of the Holy Prophet (s) and his immaculate progeny also reveal this truth. Following are some examples:

a. Ima-m Abu’l Hasan al-Tha-lith[87] (‘Ali- al-Naqi- (as)) is reported to have said:

لِسَانِهِ أَسِيرٌ وَالْجَاهِلُ

The ignorant one is a captive of his tongue.

b. In a supplication[88] from Yu-sha’ bin Nu-n (as) we find the following expression:

الْخَطَايَا أَسِيرٌ وَأَنَا الْعَطَايَا، مَلِكٌ أَنْتَ: إِلَهِي

“O God, You are the Sovereign of bestowals while I am a captive of my faults.”

c. In one Ziya-rah of Arba’i-n[89] (40th of Ima-m al-Husayn (as)) said to be taught by Ima-m al-Sa-

diq (as), we address Ima-m al-Husayn (as) as follows:

الْكُرْبَاتِ ِ أَسِيرٍ عَلَى السَّلَامِ.

“Peace be upon the captive of deep sorrows.”

d. In his well known epistle[90] to Ma-lik al-Ashtar, Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) says:

...الدُّنْيَا بِهِ وَتُطَلَّبُ بِالْهَوَى، فِيهِ يُعْمَلُ الْأَشْرَارُ؛ أَيْدِي فِي أَسِيرٍ أَمْ كَانَ قَدْ الدَّيْنَ هَذَا فَإِنَّ...

“...for surely this Religion was a captive in the hands of the evil folk, for under its pretext they would follow their base inclinations and seek worldly gains...”

e. In Nahju’l Bala-gha[91], while explaining the characteristics of the angels, Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

...إِيمَانٍ أُسْرَاءَ فَهَمُّ...

“...for they are captives of faith...”

The word ‘asi-r’ likewise has a relative connotation: whereas a group of people may be captives of their vain inclinations but suffer no physical imprisonment, while another group may enjoy utter spiritual freedom, but be in the state of physical captivity.

The Apparent Extension of Asi-r

Certainly, this verse is one of the most painful verses of the supplication. Many innocent human beings throughout the world today suffer imprisonment. While a group among them are victims of oppression and breach of man-made law, there is a class whose very innocence has brought them behind bars.

Being behind bars is only one part of the story. The oppression and torture that these innocent captives have to bear is terrible and inexpressible. Such kind of treatment stems from the kind of cruelty possessed by the wardens of the different prisons, who receive the power of discretion from their masters, who in turn possess authority through their respective governments. The following statement from Amnesty International[92] speaks of this reality:

Torture does not happen in a vacuum. The social and political context, and the supply of tools and techniques for inflicting pain rely on a failure of political will. If the governments of the world had the political will to stop torture they could do so.

In order to appreciate the gravity of the matter, one can refer to the relevant texts available on prison torture in the Internet from human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch [hrw.org] and the like. Due to the brevity of this commentary, however, we would only mention a few examples of the situation prevailing on the prisons of the world:

Prisoners Suffering Torture

1. MEN, WOMEN & CHILDREN: "... but torture continues and is not confined to military dictatorships or authoritarian regimes; torture is inflicted in democratic states too. It is also clear that victims of torture are criminal suspects as well as political prisoners, the disadvantaged as well as the dissident, people targeted because of their identity as well as their beliefs. They are women as well as men, children as well as adults." [93]
2. WOMEN: "Amnesty International (AI) has documented countless cases of women being tortured in custody. In its coverage of armed conflicts, it has reported the systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war." [94]
3. CHILDREN: "The fact that children could suffer torture at all should come as a terrible shock. Their dependency and vulnerability should render them immune from the atrocities adults inflict on one another. Their very innocence should put them beyond reach. Yet violence against children is endemic: children are tortured by the police or security forces... [95]

Methods of Torture

The survey showed that beating is by far the most common method of torture and ill-treatment by state agents today, reported in over 150 countries. People are beaten with fists, sticks, gun-butts, makeshift whips, iron pipes, baseball bats, electric flex. Victims suffer bruises, internal bleeding, broken bones, lost teeth, ruptured organs and some die.

Rape and sexual abuse of prisoners is also widespread. Other common methods of torture and ill-treatment include electric shocks (reported in more than 40 countries), suspension of the body (more than 40 countries), beating on the soles of the feet (more than 30 countries), suffocation (more than 30 countries), mock execution or death threat (more than 50 countries) and prolonged solitary confinement (more than 50 countries).

Other methods include submersion in water, stubbing of cigarettes on the body, being tied to the back of a car and being dragged behind it, sleep deprivation and sensory deprivation...

The most common forms of judicial corporal punishment include amputation and flogging. Some

forms such as amputation and branding are deliberately designed to permanently mutilate the human body. However, all of these punishments can cause a range of long-term or permanent injuries.[96]

The attitude of Islamic law, however, whose source is the Creator of human being himself, is greatly different. Browsing through the history of Islamic leadership from the time of the Holy Prophet (s) until now, we come to understand the verity of this contention. Following are examples:

1. The first war that the Muslims valiantly fought was Badr. Overwhelming the disbelievers, the Muslims apprehended many nonbelievers and took them as captives. However, the Prophet (s) considered the 'captives' as human beings and believed that they too had certain rights. No one was allowed to maltreat them. Instead ways of letting them free were suggested to them. Accordingly many were set free with a ransom fee. History tells us that[97]:

أَمْوَالِهِمْ قَدْرَ عَلَىٰ بِهِمْ يُعَادِي وَكَانَ

“And the Prophet (s) took a ransom fee from them according to their financial state.”

Some of the captives had no wealth, but knew the art of writing. The Prophet (s) would tell each of them to teach ten men from Medina as a ransom.

2. It is reported[98] that after Ibn Muljim struck the fatal blow on Ima-m 'Ali- (as), the Ima-m addressing his two sons (as), said:

إِسَارَهُ وَأَحْسِنُوا وَاسْفُؤهُ وَأَطْعِمُوهُ الْأَسِيرَ هَذَا إِحْسِنُوا

“Imprison this captive, and give him food and drink, and deal with him in a good way in his captivity.”

And in another tradition[99] he says the following about Ibn Muljim:

الْمُعْتَدِينَ يُحِبُّ لَا اللَّهُ إِنَّ تَعْتَدُوا وَلَا قَتَلْتِي، فَاقْتُلُوهُ مِثِّي، وَإِنْ عَفَوْتُ أَوْ قَتَلْتُ بَعِيْتُ، فَإِنْ مَتَّوَاهُ وَأَكْرَمُوا نُزْلَهُ، فَأَحْسِنُوا أَسِيرِي؛ إِنَّهُ

“Indeed he is a captive; therefore give him good food and a nice place; then if I were to remain alive I would either kill him or forgive him; and if I die, then kill him the way he struck me [with one blow] and do not transgress the limits, for verily Alla-h does not love those who transgress the limits.” [2:190]

This practical encounter of Ima-m 'Ali- (as) in those sensitive moments exemplifies the outlook of

the teachings of Islam. Grudge and revenge does not remain in the heart of 'Ali- (as), for every element of his body is the instrument of Alla-h (swt).

3. If one were to study carefully the rights of prisoners according to Islam, he would realize how far apart man made law is from Divine law. Shaykh Najm al-Di-n Tabasi- in his Mawa-rid al-Sijn [Occasions of Prison] enumerates some of the rights of prisoners as follows:[100]

“...believing prisoners can attend Friday and 'I-d Prayers under surveillance, and then return immediately to their cells, prisoners may meet with their near ones and are free to receive food and clothing from them too, prisoners should be imprisoned in a healthy environment and allowed to go out under surveillance during a particular time, one who is ill should not be imprisoned, the support that the prisoner gives to his family, must be drawn from the public treasury (baytu'l ma-l) of the Muslims, etc...”

The above however should not lead one to believe that prisoners should be left without interrogation or motivation to repent. The prisoner is dealt according to the crime that he or she has committed. Political prisoners are also dealt with in a different way. However, the prisoner is not treated like an animal or tortured or raped or even psychologically threatened or intimidated. These are against the dictates of the Islamic Shari-'ah. Rather, they are dealt with as human beings and no one is allowed to transgress the limits laid by Almighty Alla-h. Hence, should we hear or observe inhuman behavior from the prison wardens of a so-called Islamic state, we must not be led to think that that is what Islam believes. There is a vast difference between the criteria being 'Islam' and the criteria being 'the deed of a non-practising Muslim ruler.

Look at the following traditions carefully:

Ima-m Ja'far al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said:

الْمُسْلِمِينَ مَالِ بَيْتِ مَنْ السَّجْنِ ۖ فِي خُلْدٍ مَنْ يُطْعَمُ كَانَ (ع) عَلِيًّا إِنَّ

“Surely, 'Ali- (as) would feed the captive who served life imprisonment from the treasury of the Muslims.”

Ima-m 'Ali- (as)[101] is reported to have said:

الْعَدِ مَنْ قَتَلْتَهُ وَإِنْ وَاجِبٌ، حَقُّ إِلَيْهِ وَالْإِحْسَانُ الْأَسِيرِ إِطْعَامٌ

“Feeding the captive and doing good to him, is a compulsory right, even if you were to kill him [in accordance with the penal laws of Islam] the following day.”

Hawa- al-Nafs: One of the Most Destructive Kinds of Captivity

1. The Holy Qur'a-n [Su-rat al-Qasas 28:50] says:

اللَّهُ مِنْ هُدًى بَغَيْرِ هَوَاهُ اتَّبَعَ مِمَّنْ أَضَلَّ وَمَنْ

“...and who is more stray than he who follows his low desires without any guidance from Alla-h?”

2. Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported[102] to have said:

أَمِيرِ هَوَىٰ عِنْدَ أَسِيرِ عَقْلِ مِنْكُمْ

“How great a number are there intellects under the captivity of dominant inclinations!”

3. Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported[103] to have said:

الْأَمَلِ وَطُولِ الْهَوَىٰ اتَّبَاعُ: إِنِّتَانِ عَلَيْنِكُمْ أَخَافُ مَا أَخَوْفَ إِنَّ

“Surely there are two things that I fear most from you: following your vain inclinations and having forlorn hopes.”

One of the most destructive extensions of captivity is the captivity of the soul by base inclinations. In the language of the Qur'a-n, it is called “al-hawa-”. It is a great hurdle on our way to God. Nearly every world problem today stems from this very element of destruction. Rather, the entire history of creation is replete with examples that show how destructive this kind of captivity has been: due to this very captivity, Satan did not prostrate before Adam although he was commanded to do so, Cain was led to kill Abel despite the latter being his own brother, Noah's (as) son left his father although the latter was a prophet of Alla-h (swt), and the list goes on.

Study the causes of the different wars and conflicts of the past and present and you would realize that the root cause is this very kind of captivity. When a president suffers such captivity, he kills many innocent civilians; when a minister of finance is shackled by such captivity, he embezzles millions of dollars; when an irreligious and aimless human being suffers such captivity, he engages in different kinds of evils. In short, whosoever enjoys more power affects mischief accordingly.

Freedom from such captivity, however, is in our hands. Almighty Alla-h has given us the keys to the door of the prison and advised us to leave, but the attraction of the amenities of the prison, it seems, has kept us from moving.

Hawa- al-Nafs Lowers One to the Example of a Dog!

The Holy Qur'a-n [chapter 7, verse no. 175-176] says:

وَاتَّبَعَ الْأَرْضِ إِلَى أَخْدٍ وَلَكِنَّهُ بِهَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ شَيْئًا وَلَوْ .الْعَاوِينَ مِنْ فَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَاتَّبَعَهُ مِنْهَا فَاسْلَخَ ابْتِئَايَ آتَيْنَاهُ الَّذِي نَبَأَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاتَّلُ
يُلْهَثُ تَتْرُكُهُ أَوْ يُلْهَثُ عَلَيْهِ تَحْمِلُ إِنَّ الْكَلْبِ كَمَثَلِ فَمَثَلُهُ هَوَاهُ

“Relate to them the story of the man to whom We sent Our Signs, but he passed them by: so Satan followed him up, and he went astray. If it had been Our Will, We should have elevated him with Our Signs; but he inclined to the earth, and followed his own vain desires. His similitude is that of a dog: if you attack him, he lolls out his tongue, or if you leave him alone, he (still) lolls out his tongue.”

This verse, according to a tradition quoted by ‘Alla-mah Taba-taba-’i- in his al-Miza-n and narrated by Tafsi-r al-Burha-n, talks about Bal’am bin Ba’u-ra-. He was a man who lived during the time of Prophet Musa (as) and enjoyed a high spiritual state, for according to a tradition reported from Ima-m al-Rida- (as) he knew the ism al-a’zam (the Great Name of Alla-h). Later, due to his base inclinations, he became a supporter of Fir’awn and became spiritually ignoble. Ima-m al-Rida- (as) is reported to have said[104]: “Surely Bal’am bin Ba’u-ra- was given the Great Name of God and whenever he would pray with the same, his supplication would be accepted.

Then he inclined towards Fir’awn. Once when Fir’awn was after Prophet Mu-sa- (as) and his followers, he met Bal’am and said: ‘Pray to Alla-h to throw Mu-sa- (as) and his followers into our trap.’ Subsequently, he climbed his donkey to set out for searching Mu-sa- (as) and his companions. The donkey, however, did not move. So he began hitting it. Thereafter Alla-h (the Invincible and Exalted) enabled it to speak and [addressing Bal’am] it said: Woe unto you! For what are you hitting me? Do you want me to accompany you so that you pray against Prophet Mu-sa- (as), the Prophet of Alla-h and the believing nation? Bal’am [paid no attention] and continued hitting the donkey until he killed the animal. Thereupon Bal’am forgot the great Name of God.”

This verse is a lesson for all those learned folk who have attained a degree of piety. If one is not steadfast in his war against his base soul, there is a risk of him falling into a state of degradation and spiritual destruction. We seek refuge in the All-Merciful Lord from every kind of ignominy that separates us from His Neighborhood.

Verse no. 176 considers the example of Bal’am as the example of a dog:

يَتَفَكَّرُونَ لَعَلَّهُمْ الْقَصَصَ فَأَقْصَصَ بِآيَاتِنَا كَذَّبُوا الَّذِينَ الْقَوْمَ مَثَلُ ذَلِكَ يُلْهَثُ تَتْرُكُهُ أَوْ يُلْهَثُ عَلَيْهِ تَحْمِلُ إِنَّ الْكَلْبِ كَمَثَلِ فَمَثَلُهُ

“So his parable is as the parable of a dog; if you attack him, he lolls out his tongue; and if you

leave him alone he lolls out his tongue; this is a parable of those who reject our signs; therefore relate the narrative so that they may reflect.”

Preference of External Imprisonment Over Internal Imprisonment

The Qur’a-n [12:33] quotes Prophet Yu-suf’s (as) prayer:

إِلَيْهِ يَدْعُونِي مِمَّا إِلَيَّ أَحَبُّ السَّجْنُ رَبِّ قَالَ

“O My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that unto which they invite me...”

The story of Prophet Yu-suf (as) in the Holy Qur’a-n is a lesson for every human being who aspires to live a life of freedom and prosperity. After Zulaykha provoked Yu-suf (as) but was met with failure, she tried to accuse him of seducing her. Her accusation was proven to be false by a witness. The news of this event spread in the town and Zulaykha was accused of trying to provoke Yu-suf who was ‘the embodiment of chastity.’ In order to extinguish the fire of the situation, she invited those women who accused her and giving each a citrus fruit and a knife, told them to cut the fruit when Yu-suf passed by. Instead of cutting the fruit they wounded their hands. They were captivated by the physical beauty of Yu-suf (as).

The Holy Qur’a-n says:

1. The news spread and the women began talking:

مُبِينٍ ضَلَالٍ فِي لَنَرَاهَا إِنَّا حُبًّا شَعَفَهَا قَدْ سِئِنْفُ عَنْ قَتَاهَا تُرَاوِدُ الْعَرِيزِ امْرَأَتُ الْمَدِينَةِ فِي نِسْوَةٍ وَقَالَ

“Certain women that were in the city said, ‘The Governor’s wife seeks to seduce her slave from his (pure) self; surely he has affected her deeply with love; verily we see her in manifest error.’” [Sura Yu-suf - 12:30]

Whereas at the onset the women reckon Zulaykha to be in manifest error, they themselves invite Yu-suf (as) to have a relationship with them later.

2. Zulaykha invites the women:

وَقَطَعْنَ أَكْبِرَنَّهُ رَأَيْنَهُ فَلَمَّا عَلِيَهُنَّ اأْرُجُ وَقَالَتْ سِكِّيْنَا مِنْهُنَّ وَاجِدَةَ كُلِّ وَآتَتْ مُتَّكَأ لِهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ تَأْرُسًا بِمَكْرِهِنَّ سَمِعَتْ فَلَمَّا كَرِيْمٌ مَلِكٌ إِلَّا هَذَا إِنْ بَشْرًا هَذَا مَا لِلَّهِ حَاشَ وَفَلَنْ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ

“When she heard of their scheming talk, she sent for them, and prepared for them a repast and gave each of them a knife and said [to Yu-suf]: ‘Come out unto them.’ And when they saw him

they extolled him; and [in their amazement] cut their hands saying: Ha-sha- lillLa-h! (Far from Alla-h is every imperfection!) This is no mortal; this is none but a noble angel.” [Su-rat Yu-suf - 12:31]

3. Zulaykha admits that they were right, and threatens Yu-suf with Imprisonment:

الصَّاعِرِينَ مَنْ وَلَيَكُونُوا لَيْسَجَنًّا أَمْرُهُ مَا يَفْعَلُ لَمْ وَلَيْنُ فَاسْتَعَصَمَ نَفْسِهِ عَن رَاوَدَتْهُ وَلَقَدْ فِيهِ يَأْمُنْتَنِي الَّذِي فَذُلِكُنَّ قَالَتْ

“She said: This is he about whom you blamed me; and indeed I sought to seduce him from his [pure] self, but he did firmly abstain himself guiltless; and now if he does not do what I command him, he shall certainly be imprisoned, and he shall certainly be of those brought low!” [Su-rat Yu-suf - 12:32]

Despite accusing Yu-suf (as) at the onset of trying to seduce her, she clearly admits that she was the one who tried to provoke him. Furthermore, she says that he would either have to surrender to her desire or fall in prison [and thus also be branded as the one in fault]

4. The women would like to have relationship with Yu-suf (as)

الْجَاهِلِينَ مِنْ وَأَكُنَّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَصْبُ كَيْدُهُنَّ عَنِّي تَصْرِفُ وَإِلَّا إِلَيْهِ يَدْعُونَنِي مِمَّا إِلَيَّ أَحَبُّ السَّجُنُ رَبِّ قَالَ

“He said, ‘O My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that unto which they invite me (yad‘u-nani-ilayhi); and if you do not avert from me their conspiracy I would be inclined to them and become of the ignorant ones.’” [Su-rat Yu-suf - 12:33]

In a lengthy tradition narrated[105] by Abu- Hamza- al-Thuma-li-, Ima-m Zayn al-‘Abidi-n (as) is reported to have said that after leaving the gathering that Zulaykha had organized, each one of the women sent a message to Yusuf secretly [in the absence of Zulaykha-] and asked him that they would like to meet him. But Prophet Yu-suf (as) refused, and prayed to Alla-h:

الْجَاهِلِينَ مِنْ وَأَكُنَّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَصْبُ كَيْدُهُنَّ عَنِّي تَصْرِفُ وَإِلَّا

“If You do not ward off their scheme, I would be inclined to them and be of the ignorant ones.”

According to the commentators of the Qur’a-n, the word yad‘u-nani- ilayhi (“they call me to”) which is in the imperfect tense (muda-ri’) indicates that they were persistently inviting Yu-suf (as) towards themselves. However, Prophet Yu-suf (as) cried:

الْجَاهِلِينَ مِنْ وَأَكُنَّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَصْبُ كَيْدُهُنَّ عَنِّي تَصْرِفُ وَإِلَّا إِلَيْهِ يَدْعُونَنِي مِمَّا إِلَيَّ أَحَبُّ السَّجُنُ رَبِّ قَالَ

“O My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that unto which they invite me; and if you do not avert from me their conspiracy I would be inclined to them and be of the ignorant ones.” [Su-rat Yu-suf-

12:33]

This verse clearly shows that Prophet Yu-suf (as) had the sexual desire, and was aware of the danger he was entrapped in. He therefore beseeched Almighty Alla-h to protect him from what they conspired. He preferred to be imprisoned and accepted humiliation [of being attributed falsely to be at fault] but did not dare to disobey his Lord. And the All-merciful Lord responded:

الْعَلِيمُ السَّمِيعُ هُوَ إِنَّهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ عَنْهُ فَصَرَفَ رَبُّهُ لَهُ فَاسْتَجَابَ

“And his Lord accepted his prayer and warded off their conspiracy; surely he is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.”

These are situations when the true nature of a believer is revealed. Prophet Yu-suf (as) prefers to be a captive of the external forces then to be entrapped by the licentious forces within, which ruin the human being and his entire future. The prison here is a sanctuary and salvation. It is a place of shelter for this spirit, which is burning with the love of Alla-h (swt). He is ready to suffer the travails and hardships of imprisonment and humiliation but cannot withstand the torture of disobeying the only Beloved, who reared him to be what he was. And how can it ever be conceivable for one whose heart brims with the love of Alla-h to even think of blemishing his hands with sin?

A Subtle Allusion

‘Alla-mah Taba-taba-’i- in his Al-Mi-za-n says something worthy of reflection: when Zulaykha tightly closed the doors of her room (ghallaqat al-abwa-b), and relying on the apparent power that she had, said: ‘hayta lak’ (Come [to me]!), Yu-suf (as) was immersed in the love of Alla-h and forgot every apparent means of refuge, including himself; hence when seeking refuge in Almighty Alla-h, he never said “Inni- a ‘u-dhu” (Surely I seek refuge) but said: ‘ma ‘a-dhalla-h!’ [Nb: Although both a ‘u-dhu billa-hi and ma ‘a-dhalla-h show that Yu-suf seeks Refuge in Alla-h, but in the case of the latter (i.e. ma ‘a-dhalla-h) the supplicant forgets all the apparent means of refuge, including himself].

‘Alla-mah Taba-taba-’i-[106] says:

...اللَّهُ مَعَادَ: قَالَ وَإِنَّمَا مَعْنَاهُ، يُؤَدِّي مَا أَوْ بِاللَّهِ مِنْكَ أَعُوذُ إِنِّي: يَقُولُ قَلَمٌ...

...he [prophet Yusuf (as)] did not say: ‘Indeed I seek refuge with Alla-h from you...’ or a statement similar to that; rather he only said: ‘ma ‘a-dhalla-h’ (hence not making any mention of “I” or “You” or any other means)...

Then 'Alla-mah continues saying:

...مِنْكَ بِالرَّحْمَنِ أَعُوذُ إِنِّي يَا سَوْ بَشَرًا لَهَا تَمَثَّلَ لَمَّا لِلرُّوحِ مَرِيْمَ قَوْلٍ وَبَيَّنَّ هَذَا قَوْلِهِ بَيْنَ الْفَرْقِ مِنْ وَكَمْ...

“...and what a great a difference between this statement of his and Maryam’s statement to the Holy Spirit when he appeared to her in the form of a man: ‘surely I take refuge in the All-merciful from you...’ [19:18]

The Captive of Alla-h on Earth!

‘Alla-mah Majlisi- in his magnum opus ‘The Oceans of Lights’ narrates[107] a tradition in which the Prophet (s) is asked to explain the status of Ima-m ‘Ali- (as), whereupon the Prophet (s) speaks about his merits at great length. At one point he says:

عَرْشِيهِ وَحَمَلَةٌ مَلَائِكَتُهُ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَبَاهَى الْأَرْضِ، فِي اللَّهِ أَسْبَرُ سُمِّيَ عَلِيًّا أَحَبَّ وَمَنْ أَلَا

“Indeed whosoever loves ‘Ali- is called the captive of Alla-h on the earth and Alla-h is proud of him near His angels and the Bearers of His throne.”

Here two points must be understood:

1. What does ‘love for ‘Ali- (as)’ mean in this tradition?
2. What does it mean to be Alla-h’s captive on earth?

What makes us love ‘Ali- (as)? Is it his blessed physical appearance? Is it the place where he lived? Is it the people whom he met? Is it the tribe which he belonged to? Or is it his excellent characteristics, which manifest true Islam or in the words of the gnostics ‘manifest the Divine Attributes’? Clearly it is the knowledge of ‘Ali-’s manifestation of Divine Attributes that ignites sparks of love in our hearts. We would like to enjoy his company; rather, if we look at the depth of the matter, ‘we would like to be another ‘Ali-.’ Love itself draws one to seek unity with the beloved.

The believers, therefore, who experience love for Ima-m ‘Ali- (as), in reality seek ‘his Attributes.’ And ‘the attributes of ‘Ali- (as)’ are the attributes of the Prophet (s); and the attributes of the Prophet (s) are manifestations of the Attributes of Alla-h (swt). Look at the following traditions carefully:

The Holy Prophet (s) is reported[108] to have said:

اللَّهُ أَحَبُّ فَقَدْ أَحَبَّنِي وَمَنْ أَحَبَّنِي، فَقَدْ عَلِيًّا أَحَبَّ مَنْ

“Whosoever loves ‘Ali- loves me; and whosoever loves me loves Alla-h.”

What use is that love which has no tangible effect? In a tradition, Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as) addressing Ja-bir Ju’fi-, says[109]:

حُبُّنَا يَنْفَعُهُ لَمْ اللَّهُ عَصَى وَمَنْ وَلِينَا، فَهُوَ وَأَحَبُّنَا اللَّهُ أَطَاعَ مَنْ: جَابِرُ يَا...

“...O Ja-bir! He who obeys Alla-h and loves us is our friend; and whosoever disobeys Him, our love would not benefit him.”

Imagine that you are fond of particular attire, which would surely make you look presentable and handsome and beautiful. If there is no hurdle in your way or there is a hurdle, but can be removed easily, wouldn’t you try to purchase the dress? Certainly you would. Likewise, if ‘one really is fond of acquiring the attributes of Ima-m ‘Ali- (as)’ and has the means at his disposal and can vanquish the hurdle of ‘his selfish desires’ wouldn’t he struggle for the same?

Nevertheless, there are degrees of love, which remain in the level of the heart and have little effect in the minds and the hearts. Such people, due to maintaining their ‘innate disposition’ (fitra) up to a certain extent, would be cleansed in the Hell Fire before residing in heaven. Some traditions do allude to this reality.

But when we equate a lover of ‘Ali- (as) with a captive of Alla-h (swt) whom Almighty Alla-h is proud of, it is wrong to think that love here merely stands for emotional attachment. Can the possession of ‘emotional attachment’ be the same as ‘complete obedience to Alla-h’? Certainly not. Therefore love in the tradition under discussion is of a greater degree. The Holy Qur’a-n [2:165] alludes to this as follows:

...بِاللَّهِ حُبًّا أَشَدُّ أَمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ

“And those who believe have more intense love for Alla-h.”

A Free Man in Karbala-’

The timeless event of Karbala-’ reveals a beautiful example of one who freed himself from the shackles of his vain inclinations and consequently represented an embodiment of his name. He was called Hurr (the free one). At the onset he was among the commanders of Yazid. However, upon realization of the worth of the truth, he repented and joined the ranks of Ima-m al-Husayn (as). Having fought very bravely in the ranks of the Ima-m (as) against the Kuffa-r, he attained the exalted station of martyrdom. In his last moments, as Ima-m al-Husayn (as) was wiping blood from

his radiant face, he said:

وَالْآخِرَةَ الدُّنْيَا فِي حُرٍّ وَأَنْتَ أُمَّكَ، سَمَّيْتِكَ كَمَا حُرٌّ أَنْتَ.

“You are Hurr (a free man) as your mother named you; and you are free in this world as well as the Hereafter.”

The well-known Shi-‘a historian, Ba-qir Shari-f al-Qarashi-, in his Haya-t al-Ima-m al-Husayn (as) after quoting the above, remarks:

...هُوَ أَهْ عَقْلُهُ غَلَبَ جَيْمًا حُرًّا أَلْحُرُّ كَانَ لَقَدْ

“Surely Hurr was ‘a free man’ when his intellect won over his vain inclination (hawa-hu).”[110]

A Deliberation on the Solution

1. When we pray to Almighty Alla-h to release all the captives, we do not pray for the release of every kind of captive, whether he or she be a captive of Alla-h or a captive of Satan. Rather, we pray for all those captives whose captivity impedes them from physical and spiritual prosperity. However, deliverance from spiritual captivity, as we mentioned above, is in the hands of the captive himself. If he wakes up from his slumber and changes his wrong attitudes, he would free himself. And one who is successful in doing so can struggle to spread the culture of how to free others from the shackles of spiritual imprisonment, and consequently translate this radiant verse of the supplication into action.

2. Both physical and spiritual captivity sometimes are genuine and the fault of the prisoner himself. For example: if one were to intentionally steal or prefer one’s mundane desires to Divine law. Hence, the supplicant should also try to humbly seek the eradication of the causes that lead to such imprisonment. In reality, both kinds of imprisonment in their genuine state stem from ittiba-‘ al-hawa- (following one’s base inclinations]. Therefore, we must pray that the culture of taqwa- penetrates into our societies so that ‘genuine’ imprisonment no more prevails.

3. Many cases of imprisonment in the contemporary era are manifestations of oppression by ungodly governments. Such acts of oppression can sometimes be thwarted by a united uprising by the masses. If the masses continue such protests, it would obviously frighten the government and there would be chances for the release of the innocent captives.

4. A substantial number of so-called Muslim states can hamper the mass killings of the blood thirsty superpowers, for one of the most significant sources of energy are in their hands: oil, or ‘black gold.’ The case of Palestine also can be solved very easily by them. But it is their base

interests that hamper them from using their intellects, and in the process make them earn eternal ignominy.

Notes:

[86] al-Mufrada-t, pg. 76, new ed.

[87] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 78, pg. 368, tr. 3

[88] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 94, pg. 93, tr. 8

[89] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 101, pg. 331, tr. 2

[90] Nahj al-Bala-gha, Letter 53

[91] Nahj al-Bala-gha, Sermon 91

[92] <http://www.stoptorture.org>, A branch of Amnesty International

[93] Ibid.

[94] A branch of Amnesty International – www.stoptorture.org/report/index.htm

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Haya-t al-Nabi- wa Si-ratuhu, v. 2, pg. 60

[98] Mawsu-'at al-Ima-m 'Ali- bin Abi- Ta-lib, v. 7, pg. 250, tr. 2949

[99] Ibid., v. 7, pg. 250, tr. 2950

[100] Mawa-rid al-Sijn, pg. 493 onwards

[101] Mi-za-n al-Hikma, v. 1, pg. 76

[102] Mu'jamu Ghurartil Hikam, pg. 34

- [103]Nahjul Bala-gha, sermon no. 28
- [104] Al-Burha-n Fi- Tafsi-ri'l Qur'a-n, v. 3, pp. 246-247
- [105] Tafsir al-Miza-n, v. 11, pp. 164-165
- [106] al-Mi-za-n, v. 11, pp. 120-123
- [107] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 27, pg. 115, tr.89
- [108] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 5, pg. 69, tr.1
- [109] Miza-n al-Hikma, v. 1, pg. 519, tr. 3211
- [110] Haya-t al-Ima-m al-Husayn A, v. 3, pg. 222

Section 9 : O Alla-h, Reform Every Uneven Affair of the Muslims

الْمُسْلِمِينَ أُمُورٍ مِنْ فَاسِدٍ كُلِّ أَصْلِحِ اللَّهُمَّ

O Alla-h, Reform Every Uneven Affair of the Muslims

The Meaning

أَصْلِحِ (Aslih):

This imperative verb is normally translated as 'Reform!' and 'Rectify!' It originates from the word al-sala-h, which means 'equilibrium' and 'balance.' And 'sala-h' is the opposite of the word 'fasa-d', which according to Ra-ghib al-Isfaha-ni- means:

الإِعْتِدَالِ عَنِ الشَّيْءِ وَجُحُورُ.

"The deviation of an entity from its equilibrium." [111]

Consequently, the word aslih literally means 'Restore [such and such a thing or affair] to [its]

equilibrium!'

And the word فَاسِدٍ "fa-sid" means 'something out of its equilibrium.'

الْمُسْلِمِينَ أُمُورُ

Umu-ru'l Muslimi-n means "Affairs of Muslims."

Thus we are asking Almighty Alla-h to restore all those affairs of the Muslims, which have lost their equilibrium and become distorted. Such affairs may pertain to individual or social life, and may concern all the members of the Muslim ummah or a certain group in particular.

As explained earlier [in the previous discussions of the supplication], whenever one prays for something, he or she must also seek its respective solution. The same law applies here too. Seeking reform in any matter should be preceded by knowledge and effort to facilitate the reform. As we pray for equilibrium in the affairs of the Muslims, we should try to:

- (1) Identify those Muslim affairs which are in the state of disequilibrium,
- (2) Acquire knowledge about the correct and most efficient ways to rectify the state of affairs, and
- (3) Prepare ourselves to effect equilibrium to these respective affairs.

Self-reform is the Beginning

Before embarking on any kind of reform, the aspirant of reform should have the competency to effect it. Mere 'aspiration' to see reform does not qualify one to effect the same. And the most fundamental condition of qualifying to reform others is 'self-reform.' In other words, one must ensure that he or she enjoys the state of equilibrium in order to be able to effect it elsewhere. Otherwise, it would mean that disequilibrium can effect equilibrium, the absurdity of which is quite clear. Metaphysicians express this reality as follows:

يُعْطِيهِ لَأَ الشَّيْءِ فَاقِدُ

“One who does not possess a thing cannot confer the same.”[112]

The chaos created by so-called reformers of the past is due to this very reason. They set out to confer equilibrium to the nation, but instead increased its state of disequilibrium. The reason behind this was that they themselves did not enjoy inner stability. They had sullied their souls with selfish desires and their reform movement was nothing but another manifestation of their selfish interests. They forgot that the transience of their life would not be the end of the story. Rather, their 'so-called reform' would be left as a destructive heritage for future generations to inherit. An apt manifestation of such a reform movement is 'the Renaissance', which instead of bringing life to the nations, created a foundation for the destruction of the future generations. The spiritual crisis in the Western world partly reflects this contention.

The Holy Qur'a-n says:

(يَشْعُرُونَ لَا وَلَكِنَّ الْمُفْسِدُونَ هُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَلَا مُصْلِحُونَ نَحْنُ إِنَّمَا قَالُوا الْأَرْضِ فِي تَفْسِدُوا لَا لَهُمْ قِيلَ إِذَا)

“And when it said to them, do not create disequilibrium (mischief) in the earth, they say verily we are reformers. Mind, they themselves are mischief mongers, but they are not aware.”[113]

This is a very dangerous state, for the hypocrites believe that they really are reformers [after engaging in repetitive ills and losing their power of identifying the elements of equilibrium and disequilibrium]. This reflects their compound ignorance. They imagine that they are reformers and have conviction about the matter whereas in reality, they are mischief mongers.

The following are verses from the Holy Qur'a-n and traditions that underline the essential requisite of self-reform before one ever tries to embark upon reforming others:

1. Almighty Alla-h says in chapter 10, verse 35:

(يُهْدِي أَنْ لَا يُهْدِي لَا أَمَّنْ يُنَّبِعَ أَنْ أَحَقُّ الْحَقِّ إِلَى يَهْدِي أَقَمَنْ)

“...Is He then Who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go aright unless he is guided?”

Readers should not limit ‘guidance’ just to conceptual knowledge that one acquires after having been taught what is right and wrong. Rather ‘guidance’ is a change of the previous state of deviation. When one follows the religion properly and rectifies his previous state, then only can he be known to be guided.

2. Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

غَيْرِهِ إِصْلَاحٌ وَيَتَعَاطَى يُصْلِحُهَا فَلَا فَسَاداً عِشْيَ أَشَدُّ وَنَفْسُهُ النَّاسِ لِإِصْلَاحٍ يَتَصَدَّى لِمَنْ عَجِبْتُ .

“I am surprised at one who takes charge of reforming the people while his soul is in greater need

of reform, and he does not reform it but undertakes to reform others.”[114]

3. Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

الْعَيْبِ أَكْبَرُ فَاسِدٌ وَأَنْتَ غَيْرُكَ صَالِحٌ تَعَاظِيكَ فَإِنَّ بِنَفْسِكَ، فَأَبْدَأُ النَّاسَ لِإِصْلَاحِ هَمَّتْكَ سَمَتْ إِنَّ

“If your aspiration rises to reform the people, then start with your self, because your mission to reform other than yourself while you are corrupt is the greatest of deficiencies.”[115]

4. Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

غَيْرُهُ يُصْلِحُ لَمْ يُنْفَسِدْ يُصْلِحُ لَمْ مَنْ

“Whosoever does not reform himself would not reform others.”[116]

The Reality of Self-Reform

Having understood the fundamental requisite of self-reform, let us now try to understand its reality. What is ‘isla-h al-nafs’ (self-reform) in its real sense? As understood earlier, the word ‘isla-h’ stands for ‘effecting equilibrium [in an entity].’ Therefore ‘Isla-h al-nafs’ would mean ‘effecting equilibrium in the soul.’ And when does a soul enjoy its equilibrium?

To respond to this query we must understand the basic faculties of our souls. The soul of the human being possesses the following three main faculties:

1- The Reality of the Intellect (al-quwwat al-'aqliyyah)

2- The Faculty of Desire (al-quwwat al-shahwiyyah)

3- The Faculty of Anger (al-quwwat al-ghadabiyyah)

If the faculty of intellect does not deviate towards the directions of excess (ifra-t) or negligence (tafri-t) and the faculties of desire and anger are subservient to the faculty of the intellect, the soul would enjoy its equilibrium. And this, according to some ethicists is the state of 'ada-lah (equilibrium). The esteemed mystic Mulla- Ha-di Sabzawa-ri- in his excellent commentary of Du'a- Jawshan al-Kabi-r, called Sharh al-Asma-' says:

يُسَمَّى وَالتَّفْرِيطِ الْإِفْرَاطِ جَانِبِي إِلَى مِنْهُ الدَّرَاكَةُ الْقُوَّةُ فَانْجَرَأَفُ غَضَبِيَّةٌ، وَقُوَّةٌ شَهْوِيَّةٌ، وَقُوَّةٌ دَرَاكَةٌ، قُوَّةٌ: قِيَمُ ثَلَاثِ سَانٍ لِلْإِذْنِ
وَاعْتِدَالُهَا (خُمُودًا) وَ (شَرَّهَا) يُسَمَّى وَالتَّفْرِيطِ الْإِفْرَاطِ طَرَفِي إِلَى وَيَّةِ الشَّهْوَةِ الْقُوَّةُ وَانْجَرَأَفُ، (حِكْمَةً) وَاعْتِدَالُهَا (بِلَاهَةً) وَ (جُرْبُزَةً)
الْمُسَمَّى هُوَ الْإِعْتِدَالُ وَهَذَا شَجَاعَةٌ وَاعْتِدَالُهَا (جُبْنًا) وَ (تَهَوُّرًا) يُسَمَّى وَالتَّفْرِيطِ الْإِفْرَاطِ حَدِّي إِلَى الْعَضَبِيَّةِ الْقُوَّةُ وَانْجَرَأَفُ، (عِفَّةً)
...الشَّعْرُ مِنْ أَدَقِّ وَ السَّيْفِ مِنْ أَحَدُهُ هُوَ الَّذِي الْمُسْتَقِيمِ الصِّرَاطُ وَ هُوَ (بِالْعَدَالَةِ)

“Surely the human being has three faculties [of the soul]:

- * The faculty of comprehension (sometimes known as faculty of intellection)
- * The faculty of appetite
- * The faculty of anger (also translated as the irascible faculty)

The deviation of the faculty of comprehension towards the two directions of excess and negligence are called jurbuzah (deception) and bala-hah (silliness) respectively, and its state of equilibrium is known as al-hikmah (wisdom);

The deviation of the faculty of appetite towards the two directions of excess and negligence is called sharah (gluttony) and khumu-d (stillness) respectively, while its state of equilibrium is known as al-'iffah (temperance/chastity);

The the deviation of the faculty of anger towards the directions of excess and negligence is known as tahawwur (recklessness) and jubnah (cowardice) respectively, whereas its state of equilibrium is called al-shuja-'a (courage/bravery).

And this state of al-i'tida-l (equilibrium of the aforementioned three faculties) is called al-'ada-lah (justice) and it is the straight path (sira-t al-mustaqi-m) which is sharper than the sword and thinner than hair... "[117]

In order to have a better picture of what Mulla- is trying to say, let us look at what Mulla- Fayd Kasha-ni- has to say in his al-Mahajjat al-Bayda-':

في والباطل الحقّ وبين الأقوال في والكذب الصدق بين الفرق ذلك لها يسهل بحيث تصير أن في صلاحها و فحسنها العلم قوة أما... وهي الحسنّة الأخلاق رأس والحكمة الحكمة تُنمّر منها حصل القوة هذه تحصلت فإذا الأفعال في والقيح الجميل وبين الإعقادات على أو انبساطها انقباضها يقتصر أن في فحسنها الغضب قوة وإما (كثيرًا خيرًا أو تي فقد الحكمة يؤت ومن (فيها تعالى الله قال النبي العدل قوة وأما الدين، و العقل إشارة أعني الحكمة إشارة تحت تكون أن في صلاحها حسننها الشهوة وكذلك الحكمة، تقتضيه ما حدّ ... والشرع العقل إشارة حتدّ والشهوة الغضب قوة صبط في فهي

“The rational faculty is sound and good when it is easily able to discriminate, that is, to distinguish honesty from lies in speech, truth from falsehood in questions of belief, and beauty from ugliness in actions. When this faculty is sound it bears fruit in the form of wisdom, which is the chief of the good traits of character, and regarding which God has said, And whosoever is granted wisdom has truly been granted abundant good. Regarding the faculty of anger, this is sound when its movements lie within the bounds required by wisdom. Likewise, the faculty of desire is sound and good when it is under the command of the religion and the intellect. As for the faculty to effect a

just equilibrium, it is this which sets desire and anger under the command of the intellect and the religion..."[118]

Ethicians also quote a tradition that refers to the aforementioned reality:

Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

الْغَضَبِ، فِي وَقْوَامِهَا الْقُوَّةُ وَالثَّلَاثُ الشَّهْوَةُ، فِي وَقْوَامِهَا الْعِفَّةُ وَالثَّانِي الْفِكْرَةَ، فِي وَقْوَامِهَا مَهْ أَلْحِكْمَةُ أَحَدُهَا: أَجْنَاسٍ أَرْبَعَةٌ أَلْفَضَائِلُ
النَّفْسِ قِيَّى إِعْتَدَالٍ فِي وَقْوَامِهَا الْعَدْلُ وَالرَّابِعُ

"Virtues are four kinds: The first is wisdom (al-hikmah) which is sustained by intellection (al-fikrah), the second is the temperance (al-'iffah) which is sustained by desires (al-shahwah), the third is power (al-quwwah) which is sustained by anger (al-ghadab), and the fourth is justice ('adalah) which is sustained by the equilibrium of the faculties of the soul."[119]

The equilibrium of the soul can be achieved by following the Holy Qur'a-n and the Sunnah, which cover Islamic Ideology, Islamic ethics, Islamic law, etc. We must remember however, that equilibrium has different levels. And in order to find one's way to the higher levels one needs a qualified guide for proper direction, since there is always the danger of stumbling and falling. However, as mentioned earlier, it is possible for a very few to traverse the journey without the direct guidance of a specific master.

The Grand A-yatulla-h Jawa-di- A-muli- says:

"Abda-l technically stands for those wayfarers on the path of God who are not trained by a specific master. They are also called "mufrid" or "mufrad" This is because they traverse the path by themselves. Despite this being difficult it can be traversed, and although the human being progresses farther under the tutelage of a master and supervisor, one can still traverse the path by himself."[120]

He also narrates:

“When a saint was asked how many are the ‘abda-l’? He responded by saying, ‘Arba’u-na nafsan’ (40 souls). He was asked: Why did you say ‘forty souls’ instead of ‘forty men’? He responded: ‘Firstly: not all of these great personalities are men; rather, we also have women among them’; and secondly: whosoever attains the station of the abda-l is ‘a human being [in the true sense of the word]’, and being human is not restricted to men.”[121]

Seeking the support and intercession of the Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny who enjoy proximity to God and who always stand unparalleled, can enable one to soar very high. In fact some great saints have said things worthy of reflection:

1. The late saint A-yatulla-h Sayyid Ha-shim al-Mu-sawi- reports A-yatulla-h al-’Uzma- Sayyid ‘Ali- Qa-di- al-Taba-taba-’i-, the spiritual mentor of ‘Alla-mah al-Taba-taba-’i- to have said:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْهِ الشُّهُدَاءِ سَيِّدِ طَرِيقِ بَدُونِ التَّوْحِيدِ مَقَامِ إِلَى إِنْسَانٍ يَصِلُ أَنْ مُحَالٌ أَنَّهُ: سِيرَهُ قُدَّسَ الْقَاضِي الْمَرْحُومِ أُسْتَاذِي لِي قَالَ

“My teacher, Marhu-m Qa-di- (may his spirit be sanctified) said to me that it is impossible for a human being to attain the station of tawhi-d [proximity to God] without the path of Sayyid al-Shuhada-.”[122]

2. A-yatulla-h Muhammad Husayn Tehra-ni- in his ‘spirit Immaterial’ narrates that Sayyid ‘Ali- Qa-di- Taba-taba-’i- said:

خلفاي به حق بدون ولايت امامان شيعه و اسمه عز احديت ذات عرفان و الله الي صحيح سير و توحيد مقام به وصول از علي بن ابي طالب (ع) و فرزندانش از بتول عذراء محال است

“It is impossible to attain the station of Divine unity and traverse correctly towards God and attain the knowledge of the His Unique Essence (Invincible is His Name), without the guardianship of the Shi-’ah Ima-ms (upon whom be peace) and the true Caliphs starting from ‘Ali- bin Abi- Ta-lib and his progeny through the Batu-l-e-’Adhra-’ (Hadrat Fa-tima (as)).”[123]

3. ‘Alla-mah Taba-taba-’i-, the author of al-Mi-za-n, is reported to have said:

“That Hadrat [i.e. Ima-m Husayn (as)] has great attention towards the wayfarers of the path of God in removing the veil and impediments on the path of God.”[124]

4. A-yatulla-h Qa-di- Taba-taba-'i-, the spiritual mentor of 'Alla-mah Taba-taba-'i- is reported to have said:

“If I have attained any station, it is by two things: (1) The Noble Qur'a-n, and (2) Ziya-rah of Sayyid al-Shuhada-' [Doyen of the Martyrs].”[125]

5. Sayyid 'A-dil al-'Alawi-, quotes his late mentor, the pious Shi'ite Marja', A-yatulla-h al-'Uzma-Shaha-b al-Di-n al-Najafi- al-Mar'ashi- as having advised him as follows:

الثَّانِي. اَلْهَمَّ وَيُرِيْلُ الْقَلْبَ يُرِيْدُ قَابَهُ وَوَضُوْءِ طَهَارَةٍ عَلٰى دُوْمَا كُنْ :اَلْاَوَّلُ :اَعْمَالٍ بِثَلَاثَةِ فَعَلَيْكَ الْعِلْمِيَّةَ حَيَاتِكَ فِي التَّوْفِيْقِ اَرَدْتَ اِذَا مِنْ كُنْتُ :قَالَ ثُمَّ .اَلْمُشَارَكَةَ مِنْ نَحْوِ بَايِّ السَّلَامِ عَلَيْهِ الْحُسَيْنِ قَضِيَّةٍ فِي شَارِكِ :الثَّلَاثُ .بِاَقْدَامٍ وَلَوْ رَأَيْتَهَا جَنَازَةً اَيَّ الْجَنَائِزِ سَمِعُ .اَلْحُسَيْنِيَّةَ وَالْمَاتِمِ الْمَجَالِسِ فِي النَّاسِ عَلٰى الشَّيْ اُوْرَعُ اَنْذَاكَ وَكُنْتُ الْمَعْرُوْفِيْنَ ، زَةَ الْحَوْ مُدْرَسِي

“If you would like divine succor (tawfi-q) in your intellectual and practical life, you should practice the following three acts:

- (1) Always be in the state of purity and wudu-', for that illumines the heart and removes anguish.
- (2) Escort the dead body, whoever it may be [among the Muslims], even for a few steps.
- (3) Participate in the matter of Husayn (as) [i.e. any ceremony that concerns his exalted personality]

Then he said to me: I was one of the well-known professors of the Islamic Seminary; and during that period I would distribute tea to the people who attended ceremonies for mourning Ima-m Husayn (as).”[126]

Scholars of ethics and gnosis have produced thought provoking works about the path to self-reform. However, the limited scope of this commentary does not allow the author to delve into all the details of this path. Nevertheless, God willing, we shall try to cover some of the significant

rudimentary stations of wayfaring very soon.

In short, one must reflect on the following tradition: both the Shi-'ah as well as Sunni- narrators of tradition quote that the Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

بَيْتِي أَهْلٌ وَعَثْرَتِي اللَّهُ كِتَابٌ: بَعْدِي تَضِلُّوا لَنْ بِهِمَا تَمَسَّكْتُمْ إِنْ مَا التَّقَلَّيْنِ كُمْفِي تَارِكٌ إِنِّي

“...I leave behind you the two weighty things; if you hold fast unto them you will never go astray after me: The Book of Alla-h and my Progeny...”[127]

This, in short, is the path to self-reform. But it is not as easy as it seems. Try to reflect on “holding fast” and its true extensions and you will come to understand what self-reform entails.

Waking Up: The First Stage of Self-Reform

Scholars of 'irfa-n (gnosis) introduce 'yaqzah' (wakefulness) as the first step on the path toward self-reform. So long as the human being is attached to the material world, and oblivious of the purpose of his creation, he is fast asleep. He needs to be woken up in order to begin the journey to Almighty Alla-h. Alla-h (swt) addressing His Noble Messenger in chapter Saba, verse 46 says:

وَفَرَادَى مَنَّتِي لِلَّهِ تَقَوْمُوا أَنْ بَوَاجِدَةٍ أَعْظَمَكُمْ إِنَّمَا قُلْ

“Say [O Prophet of Alla-h] I exhort you only to one word: rise for Alla-h, in pairs and alone...”

Khwa-jah 'Abdulla-h Ansa-ri-, in his monumental work of practical gnosis, Mana-zil as-Sa-'iri-n (the Dwellings of the Wayfarers), which is a text studied by many of the wayfarers on the path of God, after quoting the above verse says:

النَّبِيُّ نُورٌ لِرُؤْيَاةِ بِالحَيَاةِ الْعَبْدُ قَلْبٌ يَسْتَنْبِرُ مَا أَوْلَ وَهِيَ. الْفَتْرَةَ وَرَطَّةٍ عَنِ وَالنُّهُوضُ الْعَفْلَةَ، سِنَةَ مِنَ الْبِقَطَّةِ هِيَ لِلَّهِ الْقَوْمَةُ

“To rise for Alla-h [as indicated in the verse] means to wake up from the sleep of heedlessness (ghaflah) and rise up from the entanglement of lassitude; and that is the first illumination of the heart of the servant with [true] life due to perceiving the light of awakening (tanbi-h).”[128]

When the human being wakes up from the slumber of his heedlessness, his imaginative life subsides and his true life begins. His entire past, which was filled with 'mundane aspirations' collapses, and he starts experiencing a life, which would benefit him eternally. So important is this step, the experts of practical gnosis (al-'irfa-n al-'amali-) believe that yaqzah is: "the first step of wayfaring towards Alla-h, and in fact, the foundation of the journey to God." [129]

The late A-yatulla-h Khumayni-, who was also known as an authority in gnosis ('irfa-n), at one time advised the seminarians in Najaf as follows:

"How long do you wish to remain in the sleep of negligence, steeped in corruption? Fear God! Beware of the consequence of your deeds! Wake up from the sleep of negligence! You have not yet awakened. You have not yet taken the first step. The first step of wayfaring is yaqzah (awakening), but you are still asleep. Your eyes may be open, but your hearts are asleep..." [130]

And in his well-known ethical manual Chehel Hadith (Forty Traditions) he says:

اول منزل « » خواهد. زاد و راحله انسان خصال خود
انسان .

"...The first stage of humanness (insa-niyyat) is yaqzah. It signifies the awakening from the slumber of negligence and the intoxication of physical nature, and the realization that man is a traveler, and like any other traveler, he needs some provisions for this journey. His morality and character are his provisions for this journey..." [131]

اند. و از برای این منزل، چنانچه شیخ عظیم الشان شاه آب

"...Remember that the first step towards humanness is that of awareness and awakening (yaqzah), as mentioned by the leading mystics (masha-yikh) concerning the stages of wayfaring. There are ten stages in this step, as elaborated by the great Shaykh Sha-ha-badi-, which we are not in a

position to enumerate here...”[132]

Now, how and when is yaqzah achieved? How does the human being wake up from his long slumber? And what is the source of this spark of wakefulness?

The Holy Qur’a-n and the teachings of the Sunnah inform us that the source of this noble spark is Almighty Alla-h. It is He who wakes the slumbering human being and enables him to start this significant journey of eternal salvation:

1. Almighty Alla-h says in chapter 4, verse 79:

اللَّهُ فَمِنْ حَسَنَةٍ مِّنْ أَصَابِكَ مَا

“Whatever good befalls you is from Alla-h.”

2. And in chapter chapter 16, verse 53 He says:

اللَّهُ فَمِنْ نِعْمَةٍ مِّنْ بِكُمْ مَا وَ

“Whatever blessing you have is from Alla-h...”

3. In the morning supplication of “al-Saba-h”, Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) cries:

الطَّرِيقُ؟ وَاصْبِحْ فِي إِيَّتِكَ يَا السَّالِكُ فَمَنْ التَّوْفِيقُ، بِحُسْنِ مِنْكَ الرَّحْمَةِ تَبَدَّدْتَنِي لَمْ أَنْ إِلَهِي

“O God, if Mercy from You does not begin with fair success for me, then who can take me to You upon the evident path?”[133]

4. Ima-m Zayn al-'A-bidi-n (as) in his supplication of praise says:

...مَحَبَّتِي سَبِيلِي فِي وَبَعَثَهُمْ إِرَادَتِهِ طَرِيقَ يَوْمِ سَأَلَكَ ثُمَّ...

“Then He made them walk on the path of His desire, and sent them out on the way of His love.”

5. Sulayma-n bin Kha-lid narrates that Ima-m Ja'far al-Sa-diq (as) [once] said to him:

أَبَدًا يَصْلُحُ فَلَا قَلْبِهِ مَسَامِعَ حَتَّمْ ذَلِكَ غَيْرَ بِهِ أَرَادَ وَإِذَا قَلْبِهِ مَسَامِعَ فَتَحَ عَبْدًا يَهْدِي أَنْ أَرَادَ إِذَا اللَّهُ وَإِنَّ عَمَّ مَسَامِعَ قَلْبًا لَكَ إِنَّ سُلَيْمَانَ يَا
(أَفْقَالَهَا قُلُوبٍ عَلَى أَمْ) : وَجَلَّ عَزَّ اللَّهُ قَوْلُ وَهُوَ

“O Sulayma-n, surely you have a heart and the sense of hearing, and certainly when Alla-h wants to guide a servant, He opens the ears of his heart; but when He wants other than that for him, He closes the ears of his heart, as a result of which he can never attain the state of his equilibrium; and to this does the following speech of God allude: ‘(Or are there locks upon their hearts?)’”
[47:24][134]

In fact, the entire Qur'a-n has been sent down in order to awaken the human being. Almighty Alla-h teaches His servants to reflect and ponder over the verses of the Qur'a-n so that they can attain the state of wakefulness. Look at the following verses:

1. In Su-rat Sa-d (38), verse 29, He says:

الْأَلْبَابِ أُولُوا وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ آيَاتِهِ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا مُبَارَكٌ إِلَيْكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ كِتَابٌ

“[It is] a blessed Book that We have sent down to you, so that they may contemplate its verses, and that those who possess intellect may take admonition.”

2. And in chapter 14, verse 1, He says:

الْحَمِيدِ الْعَزِيزِ صِرَاطٍ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ بِإِذْنِ الثُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ مِنَ النَّاسِ لِنُخْرِجَ كَالْإِنْدِ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ كِتَابٌ .الر

“Alif, La-m, Ra-; This is a Book We sent down unto you so that you bring mankind out of darkness into light by their Lord’s permission, to the path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable.”

3. And in chapter 47, verse 24, He says:

(أَفْقَالَهَا قُلُوبٍ عَلَى أُمَّ الْقُرْآنِ يَتَذَبَّرُونَ أَفَلَا)

“Do they not then ponder over the Qur’a-n or are there locks upon their hearts?”

The reason, we are told, why many are still asleep, is their unpreparedness for receiving the Divine spark. Due to their continual sinning, they have erected barriers in their hearts, and thus are not receptive and cannot wake up from their slumber of heedlessness. So long as they have not ‘locked their hearts ‘ as explained in the previous tradition and [not] lost their discerning spirit and ‘innate nature’ [like those hypocrites and disbelievers referred to in verses 7 & 18 of Su-rat al-Baqarah] they still have the opportunity to change, and they should not despair. Rather, while trying to prepare themselves to attain this fundamental state by pondering over the verses of the

Holy Qur'a-n, they should be steadfast in refraining from sin and should obey the laws of Almighty Alla-h and perpetually pray for the state of wakefulness.

Ima-m Husayn (as) in his well-known supplication of 'Arafah cries:

إِلَيْكَ أَقْبَلَ حَتَّى بِمَنَّاكَ وَاجْتَدُبْنِي إِلَيْكَ، أَصِلْ حَتَّى بِرَحْمَتِكَ أَطْلُبْنِي إِلَهِي

“O God, Seek me by Your Mercy until I reach You and attract me by Your Favor until I draw towards You.”[135]

Additionally, the aspirants of wakefulness should refrain from those makru-ha-t [abominable deeds] that blur the heart and the intellect from comprehension and should engage themselves in activities that quicken the process of the soul's enlightenment. The following traditions are worthy of reflection:

1. Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

الْعِبَادَةُ أَفْضَلُ وَهُوَ، الْقَلْبُ يُنِيرُ فَإِنَّهُ الذِّكْرُ، اسْتَدِيمُوا

“Be constant in the remembrance of God (dhikr), for that enlightens the heart, and it is the best worship.”[136]

Readers should note that 'dhikr' must always accompany attention, otherwise it would not have its desired effect. Remembrance of Alla-h can be attained by strengthening one's belief in His Omnipresence. When the supplicant is always mindful that there is someone Infinitely Supreme who witnesses each and every act and thought of his, he would refrain from sin.

2. Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said:

بِالِاسْتِغْفَارِ فَاجْلُوهَا النُّحَاسَ، كَصَدَأِ صَدَأِ الْقُلُوبِ إِنَّ

“Surely there is corrosion for the hearts like the corrosion of copper; therefore burnish them by seeking God’s forgiveness.”[137]

3. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

الْقَلْبِ الْقَاسِيِ اللَّهِ مِنَ النَّاسِ أْبَعَدَ وَإِنَّ الْقُلُوبَ، تُقْسِي اللَّهُ ذِكْرَ بَعْضِ الْكَلَامِ كَثْرَةً فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ، ذِكْرَ بَعْضِ الْكَلَامِ تُكْثِرُوا لَا

“Do not talk much about that which concerns other than the remembrance of Alla-h, for that hardens the heart; and surely the most remote from Alla-h among the people is the one who possesses a hard heart.”[138]

4. Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

الدَّنْبِ مُعَاوَدَةٍ مِنْ وَيَعْصِمُ الْقَلْبَ يُبِيرُ اللَّهُ حَشْيَةَ مِنَ الْبُكَاءِ

“Weeping out of the fear of Alla-h, enlightens the heart and prevents [one] from repeating sin.”[139]

[We should understand that ‘khashyah’ which is translated as fear should not be taken to merely mean ‘the conventional fear’ that we know of. ‘Khashyah’, according to Ra-ghib al-Isfaha-ni-, is:

تَعْظِيمِ بِسُوءِهِ خَوْفٌ

‘fear mixed with veneration.’[140]

And this can only be achieved after knowing God. At the onset our duty is to know God and His Beautiful Attributes even in the conceptual and intellectual level. For every heart, which accepts the truth, this can be a catalyst for achieving the higher levels of ma’rifah, and consequently, the higher levels of khashyah as well. Therefore, it is incumbent to introduce and inculcate in oneself the basic knowledge of the roots of religion, especially tawhi-d, so that one can naturally experience the fear of Alla-h with veneration for His Exalted Essence.

5. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

الْمَاءُ عَلَيْهِ كَثُرَ إِذَا كَالزُّرُوعَ تَمَوَّتُ الْقُلُوبُ فَإِنَّ الشَّرَابَ، الطَّعَامَ بكَثْرَةَ الْقُلُوبِ تُمَيِّنُوا لَا

“Do not deaden your hearts by a lot of food and drink for surely the hearts die like plantations if a lot of water is put on them.”[141]

6. Ima-m Ja’far al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said:

...وَالْبُكَاءِ التَّفَكُّرِ فِي فَوْجَدْتُهُ الْقَلْبِ نُورَ طَلَبْتُ...

“...I sought for the light of the heart and found it in reflection and weeping [for those things that one should weep for such as regret of sin, etc.]...”[142]

7. Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as) is reported to have advised Ja-bir al-Ju’fi- as follows:

الْخَوْفِ بِصِدْقِ النَّفْطِ شِدَّةِ اسْتَجَابِ

“Attract extreme wakefulness by true fear.”

And true fear of God can only be achieved when one has knowledge of Alla-h and His Sublime Attributes. And the beginning of ‘knowledge’ is conceptual knowledge: knowledge by the intellect. Then comes presential knowledge (al-‘ilm al-huduri-), when the spirit reaches its height.

8. The Holy Prophet (s) in a lengthy tradition says:

...وَجْهَهُ وَيَبِيضُ قَلْبُهُ، وَنَوَّرَ وَنَكَّرَ، نُكْرِمُهُ هَوْلَ عَنْهُ وَجَلَّ عَزَّ اللَّهُ وَدَفَعَ بِرَفْقٍ، إِلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ مَلَكُ اللَّهِ بَعَثَ عَلِيًّا أَحَبَّ وَمَنْ ...

“And whosoever loves ‘Ali-, Alla-h (swt) would send the Angel of death to him in a friendly manner and remove from him the fear of Munkir and Naki-r and enlighten his heart and whiten his face...”[143]

As pointed out much earlier, it is important to understand what kind of ‘hubb’ of ‘Ali- is spoken about in this radiant tradition. Obviously it is not an evanescent emotional pull. For a better understanding of this, look at the following tradition:

إِبْرَاهِيمَ قَوْلَ سَمِعْتَ أَمَا وَاللَّهِ، مِنَّا: قَالَ مِنْكُمْ؟ إِذَاكَ جُعِلْتُ: قُلْتُ. الْبَيْتِ أَهْلٍ مِنَّا فَهُوَ أَحَبُّنَا مَنْ: قَالَ (ع) جَعَفَرُ أَبِي عَنْ عُبَيْدَةَ أَبِي عَنْ (ع)؟ مَنِّي فَإِنَّهُ تَبِعَنِي فَمَنْ (ع):

“Abu- ‘Ubaydah is reported to have said that Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as) said: “Whosoever loves us then he is from us the Ahlu’l Bayt (as).” Abu- ‘Ubaydah said: “May I be made your

ransom; “from you [the Ahl al- Bayt (as)]?” Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as) responds: “[yes] from us, I swear by Alla-h; have you not heard the statement of Prophet Ibra-hi-m (as): (Then whosoever follows me, then verily he is from me.)” [Su-rat Ibra-him, v. 36]

This tradition is narrative of a love that is concordant with following the Ahlu’l Bayt (as). Were we to ponder a little more, we would come to understand true love is the unity of the lover with the beloved. The veracity of one’s claim of the love of Ahlu’l Bayt (as) becomes apparent when one reflects their attributes in one’s own personality. Readers are requested to ponder over this point carefully.

Fudayl Wakes Up!

History informs us of people who, at a sensitive moment of their lives, woke up from their deep slumber, and underwent a transformation that became the foundation of their eternal salvation. One such person was Fudayl bin ‘Ayya-d.

In the beginning Fudayl was well-known as a caravan robber. He would stop different caravans in the middle of their journeys and would steal from them whatever he desired. However, it is said that he would not transgress the limits by hurting anyone or leaving them with no provisions to reach their destination... Once he got in love with a certain woman, and headed for her house. While climbing the wall of her house, he happened to hear the following verse of Qur’a-n from someone who was reciting the Qur’a-n in the neighborhood:

...اللَّهُ لِيَذْكَرَ قُلُوبُهُمْ تَخْشَعُ أَنْ آمَنُوا لِلَّذِينَ يَأْنِ الْأَمِّ

“Has the time not yet come for the believers that their hearts turn humble for the remembrance of Alla-h...?”[144]

On listening to this verse, he underwent a transformation and cried:

Ya- Rabbi- qad a-na

O Lord, the time indeed has come!

Thereafter he left the place and returned back and adopted a path of detachment from the world and self-reform. It is also said that he had a son called 'Ali- who was higher than him in rank in terms of detachment, worship and self-reform; however, he did not live for long. One day while he was standing near the spring of Zamzam in Masjid al-Hara-m he heard the following verses of Qur'a-n from someone nearby:

النَّارُ وَجُوهُهُمْ وَتَغْشَى قَطْرَانٍ مِنْ سَرَابِيلُهُمْ. الْأَصْفَادِ فِي مَقْرَنَيْنِ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمُجْرِمِينَ وَتَرَى

“And you will see the guilty on that day linked together in chains. Their shirts made of pitch and the fire covering their faces.”[145]

On hearing this verse, he fell down and died.[146]

Such changes do not happen for all. One must prepare himself or herself in order to be overtaken by the Divine Grip. Despite Fudayl's evil attitude, he must have had qualities that enabled him to be receptive and wake up from his slumber. We should not imagine that wakefulness is reserved for a certain class, and others are deprived of the same. The following universal law sums it up:

...اِكْتَسَبَتْ مَا عَلَيْهَا وَ كَسَبَتْ مَا لَهَا...

“...For it (i.e. the soul) is what it has earned, and against it is what it has earned....”[147]

Therefore one should struggle to refine his heart and prepare it for the first spark to ignite.

The Ahlu'l Bayt (as) - Intermediaries of Alla-h's Grace

Seeking the support of the Holy Prophet (s) and his sinless progeny (upon whom be peace) can also be very helpful in igniting the spark of wakefulness. Rather, as we pointed out earlier, 'it is impossible for one to attain the heights of perfection without their support.' This is because the Ahlu'l Bayt (as) are the intermediaries of Alla-h's Grace. Every thing that anyone possesses originates from Almighty Alla-h, but passes through them. This should in no way make us think that they bestow grace independently, for every unit of the world of contingent existence entirely subsists by Alla-h, including the noble beings of the Prophets (as) and Ima-ms (as).

Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

لَنَا صَنَائِعُ بَعْدُ وَالنَّاسُ رَبَّنَا، صَنَائِعُ إِنَّا

“We are the handicrafts of our Lord and the people then are our handicrafts.”[148]

Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said:

تَعَالَى اللَّهُ وَبَيْنَ بَيْنِكُمْ السَّبَبُ نَحْنُ

“We are the intermediary between you and Alla-h.”[149]

Look at the following verses of the famous Ziya-rah of Ja-mi'ah for a better understanding of the significant role played by the Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny (as):

بِكُمْ بَدَأَ اللَّهُ أَرَادَ مَنْ

“Whosoever seeks Alla-h begins through you.”

بِكُمْ تَوَجَّهَ قَصْدَهُ وَمَنْ

And whosoever intends Him pays attention to Him by means of you.[150]

Therefore the light of wakefulness originates from Alla-h but passes through the station of wilayah (which the Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny occupy by Alla-h's permission).

Past history has manifested this fact in different places. An example of such light of wakefulness can be seen in the personality of Zuhayr bin Qayn, who is counted as one of the highly esteemed supporters of Sayyid al-Shuhada' (as) in the plains of Karbala'. At the onset he was among those who disliked confronting the Ima-m (as). Later however he is said to have woken up by the Ima-m's (as) special attention.

The Spark Ignited by Ima-m al-Husayn (as) in Zuhayr!

The companions of Zuhayr narrate:

During the very days when Ima-m Husayn (as) left Makkah for Ku-fah, we were also leaving Makkah with Zuhayr. Due to the path being the same between the stopovers on our way, we would reach the gathering of the Ima-m (as) but try to remain aloof from them and disliked to move with the Ima-m (as) and his group. And Zuhayr was the same. Whenever the caravan of the Ima-m (as) moved, we would remain behind so that we should not be together; then we would continue our way; and wherever the Ima-m (as) stopped, we would move and continue. This trend continued until we reached a stopover when the Ima-m (as) together with his companions camped on one side, and we too had no option but to camp on the other side.

While we were seated eating our meals, a messenger from the Ima-m's camp came to us, and after expressing his salutations addressing Zuhayr, said: 'Ima-m (as) is calling you.' Witnessing this we were so overtaken that we dropped the morsels of food from our hands and were left in amazement. The wife of Zuhayr, who also was with him, said to him: Subha-nalla-h! The son of the Messenger of Alla-h is calling you and you are thinking whether to go or not?! Rise and go and see what he has to say. Zuhayr stood up and in the state of astonishment went to the presence of the Ima-m (as) and entered the personal tent of the Ima-m (as). It did not take long before we saw Zuhayr coming out of the Ima-m's tent, while his face was radiant and he was in the state of complete happiness and joy. When he reached us, he said: Remove my tent and place it near the tent of the Ima-m (as). And he said to his wife 'I have resolved to be in the company of the Ima-m (as) and sacrifice my soul for him. Then he left her in the company of one of his relatives so that he may take her to her family.[151]

Ethicians believe that the sudden transformation in Zuhayr needed the special attention of Ima-m Husayn (as), who was also an intermediary of grace.

Dear readers this light of wakefulness can take a person so high that he can rank among those

who had the privilege of being a noble companion of Ima-m Husayn(as). If we carefully read the Ziya-rah of the martyrs of Karbala-' we come to realize how exalted was Zuhayr and his likes:

...أَجْبَاءَهُ وَ اللهُ أَوْلِيَاءَ يَا عَلِيُّكُمْ السَّلَامُ

“Peace be on you O friends of Alla-h and His lovers...”

اللهِ دِينِ أَنْصَارَ يَا عَلِيُّكُمْ السَّلَامُ

“Peace be on you O helpers of the religion of Alla-h.”

اللهِ رَسُولِ أَنْصَارَ يَا عَلِيُّكُمْ السَّلَامُ

“Peace be on you O helpers of the Messenger of Alla-h.”

المُؤْمِنِينَ أَمِيرِ أَنْصَارَ يَا عَلِيُّكُمْ السَّلَامُ

“Peace be on you O helpers of the Commander of the faithful.”

العَالَمِينَ نِسَاءِ سَيِّدَةِ فَاطِمَةَ أَنْصَارَ يَا عَلِيُّكُمْ السَّلَامُ

“Peace be on you O helpers of Fa-timah, the Mistress of the Women of the Universe.”

النَّاصِحِ الزَّكِيِّ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحَسَنِ مُحَمَّدِ أَبِي أَنْصَارَ يَا عَلِيُّكُمْ السَّلَامُ

“Peace be on you O helpers of Abi- Muhammad al-Hasan bin ‘Ali-...”[152]

And is it possible for one to be a helper of someone whom he has not met or seen? Why do we say that these companions were the helpers of the Holy Prophet (s), Ima-m ‘Ali- (as), Hadrat Fa-tima (as) and Ima-m al-Hasan (as) while they accompanied and supported Ima-m Husayn (as)? This is because they are the helpers of religion (ansa-ra di-nilla-h). Therefore they help all those who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of di-n. Hence they live before their time. They live with A-dam (as), they live with Nu-h (as), they live with Ibra-hi-m (as); they live with Mu-sa- (as), they live with ‘I-sa- (as), they live with all the Prophets of Alla-h (swt). This is because they sacrificed their lives to revive the teachings of religion and woke the slumbering folk. Such people live in the past, present, and future. They are beyond time and place. Small wonder it is that we are taught to address them saying:

مَعَكُمْ فَأَنْتُمْ مَعَكُمْ كُنْتُ قِيَالِيَتِي

“I wish I would have been in your company so that I may have succeeded with you.”[153]

After one has woken up from his deep slumber and attained the light of yaqzah, there are particular effects that he would experience. Such effects are outlined and expounded in books of practical gnosis. Observing brevity here we would not like to cover their details. Instead, let us briefly look at the second fundamental stage of self-reform:

The second stage of self-reform is al-tawbah (return to Alla-h).

The Reality of Tawbah

Tawbah (which literally means “to return”) is a state of the return of God’s servant to his Lord. Wakefulness makes one realize the extent of injustice one had done to himself all his life. This reality does not give him any rest, and he struggles to clear himself of sin. It is not as simple as it seems, but the wakeful wayfarer, is always resolute in cleansing himself of the dirt by which he blemished his heart all his life.

Ethicians believe that before the servant returns to his Lord, Almighty Alla-h returns to His servant with His Mercy. It is small wonder that one of the beautiful names of Almighty Alla-h is al-Tawwab [The One Who often turns in Mercy]. This reality is manifested in the following verse of the Qur’a-n:

تَمَّ إِلَيْهِ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مِنْ مَلْجَأٍ لَا أَنْ وَظَنُّوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَصَاقَتْ رَحُبَّتْ بِمَا الْأَرْضُ عَلَيْهِمْ صَاقَتْ إِذْ حَتَّى خَلْفُوا الَّذِينَ الثَّلَاثَةِ وَعَلَى الرَّحِيمِ النَّوَابُ هُوَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ لِيَتُوبُوا عَلَيْهِمْ تَابَ

“And to the three who were left behind, until, when the earth became strait for them, for all its breadth, and their souls became strait for them, and they thought that there was no shelter from God except in Him, then He turned towards them [Mercifully] [ta-ba ‘alayhim], that they may turn [liyatubu-]; surely Only Alla-h is Oft-returning [with mercy] [al-Tawwab] and is All-Compassionate.”[154]

This verse refers to three Muslims who refused to participate in the battle of Tabuk due to their laziness. Then after the battle, when the Holy Prophet (s) and the Muslims returned to Madi-nah, the three went to the Prophet (s) and expressed their apology, but the Prophet (s) did not speak to them, and the Muslims likewise, following the Prophet (s), did not speak to them, and left them alone. The children too stayed away from them and their own wives were not responsive to them. In this way, they were left so much alone, that the town of Madi-nah was a constriction for them, and they left for the mountains and open grounds. The situation had become such that both time and place was a source of constriction for them. And finally they knew that besides Alla-h, there was no point of hope. This is when Almighty Alla-h turned to them in Mercy, as a result of which

they started repenting and doing tawbah. Then Almighty Alla-h again returned to them in His Mercy by forgiving them.

The aforementioned verse therefore informs us that the first tawba (return in mercy)[155] is from Alla-h. This then enables the servant to turn to Him and repent. Then he needs another tawba (return) from Almighty Alla-h so that his sins are forgiven. Therefore the tawbah of the servant is sandwiched by two returns of Almighty Alla-h. The verse also indicates that Alla-h's return to his servants was continuous, until they repented and returned to their Lord. The letter "waw" at the beginning of the verse "wa 'ala- al-thala-thah" is a conjunction, which indicates a continuation of the previous verse which talks about the return of Alla-h in Mercy to His Prophet (s), the Emigrants and the Ansa-r. Thus, apart from Alla-h returning in Mercy to the Holy Prophet (s), the emigrants, and the helpers, He also returned in Mercy to the three men (wa 'ala- al-thala-thah "...and the three men") who did not participate in the battle of Tabu-k. Then Alla-h (swt) once again turns to the three men in Mercy: "thumma ta-ba-" (thereafter He turned in Mercy). Therefore there is a clear mention of two consecutive tawbas (returns) before the phrase "liyatu-bu-" (so that they may repent and turn to Alla-h): one through the conjunction and the other by the phrase "thumma ta-ba". This subtle aspect needs a little attention to understand.

If tawbah is taken in its universal sense, it is the second and the last station before Meeting Almighty Alla-h. This is because the process of traversing the different stages of practical gnosis is in fact covering the degrees of returning to God. Every return from Almighty Alla-h makes the wayfarer return, until he attains the proximity of Almighty Alla-h. The following verse is worthy of contemplation:

تُفْلِحُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ أَيُّهَا جَمِيعًا اللَّهُ إِلَيَّ وَتُؤْبُوا

"...And turn to Alla-h all of you, O believers, so that you may attain salvation." [156]

Ponder over the phrase, 'tu-bu- ilalla-h [return to Alla-h].' Firstly, all believers are enjoined to return to Alla-h. This means that tawbah (in all its various levels) is the path to Almighty Alla-h. Secondly, since Almighty Alla-h is the end of the journey, the journey is necessarily endless, for one can never reach the Absolute and Infinite Perfection which is Alla-h. In other words, however far one travels on this journey, he still only possesses finite perfection. Consequently, the imperative verb tu-bu- [return] also includes the great saints who already enjoy the last stage of wayfaring - but still need wayfaring, for the journey never ends. Experts say that after a certain limit of perfection has been attained the journey is no more vertical, but horizontal. In the words of the people of gnosis - after sayr ila- Alla-h (journey to Alla-h) ends, sayr fi- Alla-h begins and never ends. Because the journey is towards Infinite Perfection. In simple terms the journey from the finite to the Infinite is infinite. Fa tu-bu- ilalla-h!!! Therefore return to Alla-h, O believers.

Although tawbah in its initial stages signifies returning from denial and sin to approval and obedience and from heedlessness and forgetfulness to remembrance and seeking God, later there would be nothing like sin or heedlessness. Rather the return would be from 'other than God' to God 'and from' shirk in its very minute level 'to'tawhid in its highest levels', and from the 'self' to the 'Only beloved.' Usta-d Muhammad Shuja-'i- in his monumental ethical masterpiece alludes to this reality.[157]

Conditions of Tawbah

Have we ever thought about the conditions of true tawbah? Many of us may conjecture that perhaps the factors of 'regret' and expression of 'sorrow' to God can suffice for tawbah. The reality of the matter, however, is quite different. Tawbah is not just a transient emotional experience but 'a transformation of one's state.' It is the process of clearing one's heart and soaring to the higher planes of existence. It begins as follows:

مَعَانِ سِنَّةٍ عَلَى وَاقِعِ اسْمِهِ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيِّنَ، دَرَجَةُ الْإِسْتِغْفَارِ الْإِسْتِغْفَارُ؟ مَا أَتَدْرِي أَمْكَ تُكَلِّمُكَ: (اللَّهُ تَعَفُّرُ اسْمِهِ) بِحَضْرَتِهِ قَالَ لِقَائِهِ (ع) وَقَالَ لَيْسَ أَمْلَسَ اللَّهُ تَلْفَى حَتَّى حُقُوقَهُمُ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ إِلَى تُؤَدِّي أَنْ وَالثَّالِثُ. أَبَدًا إِلَيْهِ الْعُودِ تَرِكَ عَلَى الْعَزْمِ وَالثَّانِي. مَضَى مَا عَلَى النَّدَمِ أَوْلَهَا فَتُدْبِيهِ السُّحْتِ عَلَى نَبْتِ لَذِي | اللَّحْمِ إِلَى تَعْمَدَ أَنْ وَالْخَامِسُ. حَقَّهَا فَتُؤَدِّي صَبَّعَتْهَا عَلَيْكَ فَرِيضَةَ كُلِّ إِلَى تَعْمَدَ أَنْ وَالرَّابِعُ. تَبِعَهُ عَلَيْكَ ذَلِكَ فَعِنْدَ الْمَعْصِيَةِ حَلَاوَةَ أَذَقْتَهُ كَمَا الطَّاعَةِ أَلَمَ الْجِسْمِ تَدْبِقَ أَنْ وَالسَّادِسُ. جَدِيدَ لَحْمٍ بَيْنَهُمَا وَيَنْشَأُ بِالْعَظْمِ الْجِلْدَ تُلْصِقَ حَتَّى بِالْأَخْرَانِ (اللَّهُ غَفْرُ اسْمِهِ): تَقُولُ

“Once in the presence of Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) a person said: Astaghfirulla-h (I seek forgiveness from Alla-h). Hearing this, the Ima-m (as) said to him: Thakalatka ummuka; atadri- ma’l istighfa-r (May your mother weep after you; do you know what is ‘seeking forgiveness’?) Then he continued as follows: Istighfa-r is a station of the exalted ones (‘illiyi-n); and it is a name, which stands for six things:

1. First is to regret for what one has done [of sin]
2. Second, to resolve never to return to what one has done [of sin]
3. To return to the creatures their rights so that you meet Alla-h while you have nothing on your shoulders.
4. To intend to perform every compulsory act that you had wasted and paying its due right
5. To melt the flesh that has been grown out of unlawful means with sorrows [and hardships] until the skin touches the bone and new flesh grows [out of lawful sustenance] between them.
6. To make the body taste the pain of obedience the way you made it taste the sweetness of sin

That is when you say: Astaghfirulla-h (I seek Alla-h's forgiveness.)"[158]

Therefore, in order for one to successfully achieve this level of tawbah, which would purify the heart and make it ready for the higher stations of spiritual wayfaring, one must struggle to meet the abovementioned conditions.

Entirely His Grace

It should be noted however that when one is in the state of tawbah, no kind of self esteem should ever deceive him. He should never think that it is his tawbah that would transport him to the house of the Only Beloved. Rather it is entirely Alla-h's Grace and Mercy that enables him to undertake this great journey. Indeed tawbah is necessary, and in fact a succor (tawfi-q) of Almighty Alla-h Himself, but that should never deceive the repentant. He should always hopeful of its acceptance and understand the fact that it is not his struggle that would reap any benefit, but Alla-h's Grace and Mercy. This is a monotheistic vision of the reality. Ima-m al-Sajja-d (as) teaches us the same in supplication no. 16 of his radiant work al-Sahi-fat al-Sajja-diyah as follows:

صَلْبِي، لَعَيْنُكَ حَتَّى لَكَ وَرَكَعْتُ قَدَمَايَ، تَنَسَّسَرَّ حَتَّى لَكَ وَقُفْتُ صَوْتِي، يَنْقَطِعُ حَتَّى وَانْتَحَبْتُ عَيْنِي، أَشْفَارُ تَسْفُطُ حَتَّى إِلَيْكَ بَكَيْتُ لَوْ
حَتَّى ذَلِكَ جَلَالِي فِي وَدُكْرَتِكَ دَهْرِي، أَخِرَ الرَّمَادِ مَاءَ وَشَرِبْتُ عُمْرِي، طُولَ الْأَرْضِ ثُرَابَ وَأَكَلْتُ حَذَقَتَايَ، تَتَفَقَّأُ حَتَّى لَكَ وَسَجَدْتُ
لِي تَغْفِرُ كُنْتُ وَإِنْ سَيِّئَاتِي مِنْ وَاحِدَةٍ سَيِّئَةٍ مَحَوِ بِذَلِكَ اسْتَوْجِبْتُ مَا مِنْكَ، اسْتَحْيَاءَ السَّمَاءِ أَفَاقَ إِلَى طَرْفِي ارْفَعْ لَمْ تُمْ لِسَانِي، يَكَلِّ
جَزَائِي كَانَ إِذْ بِاسْتِجَابِ، لَهُ أَهْلُ الْأَذْوَالِ بِاسْتِحْقَاقِي، لِي وَاجِبٌ غَيْرُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنَّ عَفْوِكَ، اسْتَحِقُّ جِئْنَ عَنِّي وَتَعْفُو مَغْفِرَتِكَ، اسْتَوْجِبُ جِئْنَ
...لِي ظَالِمٌ غَيْرُ فَأَنْتَ تُعَذِّبُنِي فَإِنَّ النَّارَ، عَصَيْتُكَ مَا أَوْلَ فِي مِنْكَ

My God,

were I to weep to You until my eyelids drop off,

wail until my voice wears out,

stand before You until my feet swell up,

bow to You until my backbone is thrown out of joint,

prostrate to You until my eyeballs fall out,

eat the dirt of the earth for my whole life,

drink the water of ashes till the end of my days,

mention You through all of that until my tongue fails,
and not lift my glance to the sky's horizons in shame before You,
yet would I not merit through all of that
the erasing of a single one of my evil deeds!
Though You forgive me when I merit Your forgiveness
and pardonest me when I deserve Your pardon,
yet I have no title to that through what I deserve,
nor am I worthy of it through merit,
since my repayment from You
from the first that I disobeyed You
is the Fire!
So if You punishe me,
You do me no wrong.[159]

Due to the brevity of this commentary we would suffice with these fundamental stations of the path towards Almighty Alla-h over here. Those interested in understanding the intricacies of each and every station of wayfaring may refer to texts such as the Mana-zil al-Sa-'iri-n of Khwa-jah 'Abdulla-h Ansa-ri- and other relevant texts of practical gnosis.

Having known the basics of self-reform, which is the beginning of every kind of reform, let us now look at how one can effect reform in others. It is incumbent, however, for us to first understand the characteristics of a true reformer.

Characteristics of a True Reformer

The Holy Qur'a-n [chapter 7, verse no. 170] says:

بَيْنَ الْمُصْلِحِ أَجْرَ نُضِيعُ لِأَنَّ الصَّلَاةَ وَأَقَامُوا بِالْكِتَابِ يُمَسْكُونَ وَالَّذِينَ

“And those who (1) hold fast by the book and (2) keep up prayer; verily We waste not the recompense of the reformers.”

The above verse informs us that a reformer must:

1) Hold steadfast onto the book

The great Shi-‘ah exegete, Shaykh Tabrasi- in his Majma‘ al-Baya-n says:

بِهِ إِعْتَصَمَ أَيُّ: وَاجِدٍ بِمَعْنَى بِالشَّيْءِ ءِ اسْتَمْسَكَ وَتَمَسَكَ وَمَسَكَ أَمْسَكَ.

“The verbs amsaka and tamassaka and istamsaka bi al-shay‘ all have the same meaning, which is ‘to adhere to something.’”[160]

And in his al-Mufrada-t, an authoritative dictionary of Qur‘a-nic words, Ra-ghib al-Isfaha-ni- says:

وَحِفْظُهُ بِهِ التَّلَقُّنُ: الشَّيْءِ ءِ إِمْسَاكُ.

“‘Imsa-k al-shay‘ (to adhere to something) means to cling to it and protect it.’”[161]

Therefore, to adhere to the Book in this verse would mean: To hold fast to it and protect it.

Obviously, such adherence and protection should not be imagined to mean safeguarding the physical Qur‘a-n from being torn, mishandled or misplaced [all of which are also important]. Holding fast to the Qur‘a-n and protecting it means to follow its teachings and revive them in the different dimensions of human life. The Holy Qur‘a-n is a book of instructions for both individual as well as social reform. It teaches us how to refine our spirits and beautify it with the Attributes of Almighty Alla-h; it outlines the skills and conditions necessary to revive a society; one, therefore, who holds fast to it and protects its teachings would obviously qualify to be a reformer. And protection of its teachings substantially concerns the practical plane. It is not a matter of being learned and able to expound the sublime teachings of the Qur‘a-n. It is a matter of action and qualification.

2) Establish Prayer:

‘Alla-mah Tabataba-i- in his monumental al-Mi-za-n says:

مَقَامِهِ إِلَى وَالْخُضُوعُ اللَّهُ ذِكْرُ بِهَا يُحْفَظُ الدِّينَ مِنْ رُكْنًا وَكَوْنَهَا لِشَرَفِهَا الدِّينِ أَجْزَاءِ سَائِرِ بَيْنَ مِنَ بِالذِّكْرِ الصَّلَاةِ إِقَامَةً وَتَخْصِيصًا

الدِّينِيَّةُ الشَّرَائِعُ هَيْكَلٌ فِي الْحَيَّةِ الرُّوحِ بِمَنْزِلَةِ هُوَ الَّذِي

“And the particular mention of establishing prayer from among the parts of religion is due to its sacred position and that it is the pillar of religion, which protects and ensures the remembrance of Alla-h, and humility to His exalted station, the latter being the living spirit in the body of religious creeds.”[162]

One who establishes prayer is different from one who only prays. The expression that the Holy Qur’a-n employs in this verse as well as other verses is not ‘yusallu-na’ (those who pray) but ‘aqa-mussala-ta’ (those who establish prayer), which calls for responsibility. One who establishes prayer, observes all the perfect etiquette of prayer and ensures that others pray as well. Such a person is not satisfied in observing prayer alone; his selfless spirit would like to see others benefiting from this means of ascension to God. In order to be able to reform an individual or community, one should have the ability to establish prayer. The fundamental significance of prayer can well be appreciated by looking at the following traditions:

1. Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

لِصَلَاتِكَ تَتَّبِعُ عَمَلِكَ مِنْ عِشْيِ كُلِّ أَنْ وَاعْلَمْ

“And know that every thing that you do is according to your prayer.”[163]

2. Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as) is reported to have said:

سِوَاهَا مَا قُبِلَ قُبِلَتْ إِنْ

“If it [i.e. Sala-t] is accepted the other actions would be accepted.”[164]

3. Ima-m al-Rida- (as) is reported to have said:

...سِوَاهَا مَا رُدَّتْ رُدَّتْ وَإِنْ سِوَاهَا، مَا لَهُ صَحَّتْ الصَّلَاةُ لَهُ صَحَّتْ فَإِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ، عَلَيْهِ الْعَبْدُ يُحَاسِبُ مَا وَأَوَّلُ...

“...The first thing that a servant would be accounted for is prayers; if his prayers are in order, then all else would be correct, and if it is rejected then all else would be rejected...”[165]

Understanding this link between the spirit of prayer and the spirit of action calls for one to revive his prayer so that his acts would carry meaning and value. The reason why many people end in committing al-shirk al-khafi- (hidden polytheism) is their ignorance of what they recite in prayer. One who infuses the spirit of utter monotheism in his prayer, his acts would bear the color of monotheism.

Social Reform

Reforming a society and conferring to it its equilibrium is to revive the teachings of Islam and the Qur'a-n in the society. The phrase 'Surely we do not waste the recompense of the reformers' of the aforementioned verse (7:170) clearly alludes to the fact that "reviving the teachings of the Qur'a-n" (yumassiku-na bi'l kita-bi) is the reality of effecting equilibrium (isla-h). In order for a society to enjoy its state of equilibrium, it must be governed by laws that ensure its stability and purpose. And the only person who can formulate such laws is Almighty Alla-h who knows every subtle aspect of the human being and his salvation. The Holy Qur'a-n says:

الْخَبِيرُ اللَّطِيفُ وَهُوَ خَلَقَ مَنْ يَعْلَمُ إِلَّا

"Would He who has created not know? And He is the All-Attentive, the All-Aware." [166]

And when one is successful in reforming society, the individuals that form the society would easily be able to attain perfection.

In his al-Mi-za-n, the late 'Alla-mah Taba-taba-'i- says:

بِهِ أَحَاطَ فَاسِدٌ مُجْتَمِعٌ فِي فَرْدٍ يَفْلَحُ أَنْ أَصْعَبُ وَمَا فِيهِ، هُوَ يَعِيشُ الَّذِي الْاجْتِمَاعِي الطَّرْفِ صَلاَحِ عَلَى مَبْنِيَّةِ الشَّخْصِ سَعَادَ لَكِنْ...
الدِّيْنِيَّةِ وَالْتَعَالِيمِ الدَّسَاتِيْرَ جَعَلَ فِي الْبَالِغِ الْجُهْدَ وَبَدَلَ غَيْرُهُ فِيهِ يُعَادِلُهُ لَا إِهْتِمَامًا الْمُجْتَمِعِ إِصْلَاحِ فِي إِهْتَمَّ وَلِذَلِكَ. جَانِبِ كُلِّ مِنَ الشَّقَاءِ
حَيَاتِهِ طَرْفِ جِهَةٍ وَمِنْ نَفْسِهِ فِي نَسَانِ إِلَّا لَيْسَتْصُلِحَ ذَلِكَ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ، فِيهَا أَمْكَنَ مَا إِجْتِمَاعِيَّةِ وَالصَّوْمِ وَالْحَجِّ الصَّلَاةِ مِنَ الْعِبَادَاتِ حَتَّى

"...But the prosperity of a person depends on the equilibrium of the social conditions where he lives, and how difficult it is for a person to achieve salvation in a corrupt society, which is embraced with wretchedness from all sides!

And that is why it (the Qur'a-n) gave unparalleled importance to effecting equilibrium in the society and strived to enact religious commandments and laws to be of a social nature, including devotions, such as the canonical prayer, hajj and fasting. All this was done so that the human being may attain equilibrium of himself and the vessel of his life..." [167]

One of the very important conditions of social reform is the support of the people that form the social unit. Although one may have the qualities of a true reformer, if he is not supported by the people, the state of social equilibrium cannot be attained. There is a subtle allusion to this truth in the following verse:

بِالْقِسْطِ النَّاسُ لِيُقُوْمَ

“...so that the people rise with justice.”[168]

Almighty Alla-h informs us here that the ‘na-s’ have a determining role to play. He does not tell us that the Prophets (as), would effect justice and equilibrium to the society, but says ‘so that the people (na-s) rise in justice.’ This alludes to collective participation. And this truth is evident for every sound intellect. If the components of the society were to be adamant in their rejection, the reformer would not be able to effect equilibrium. A majority of the masses need to undergo transformation, so that the society returns to the state of its equilibrium. The Holy Qur’a-n narrates the destructive end of many of the past nations, who simply refused to change themselves. Due to their obstinacy, they had to face a despicable doom. Look at the following verses:

الْمُجْرِمِينَ الْقَوْمَ نَجْزِي كَذَلِكَ لِيُؤْمِنُوا كَانُوا وَمَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ رُسُلُهُمْ وَجَاءَتْهُمْ ظُلْمُوا لَمَّا قَبْلَكُمْ مِنْ الْقُرُونِ أَهْلَكْنَا وَقَدْ

“Indeed We destroyed generations before you when they did wrong: their Messengers came to them with Clear Signs, and they were not those who would believe. Thus do We requite those who sin!”[169]

It should be noted here that those referred to in the above verse were so degenerate that they could not be changed. They are defined as “wa ma- ka-nu liyu ‘minu” (they were not those to believe). This state obviously was a result of their own misdeeds.

Political Stability: A Fundamental Unit of Social Reform

Reforming a society has always been a challenging task, but perhaps it has become even more challenging in the contemporary era. The prerequisite of social reform is political reform. So long as there is no valid political power, the other dimensions of the society would always be in the state of disequilibrium. Islam, which is a complete religion, and therefore caters for every need of the human being in different dimensions of his life, has not left mankind without a direction for political power and authority. The Holy Qur’a-n and the traditions as well as Islamic history vividly illustrate the unity of religion and politics. Islam would like to ensure that the laws of Alla-h prevail and that the government makes its decisions entirely on the principles laid by the Qur’a-n and the Sunnah. This is when every kind of imbalance in the society can be obliterated. Under a firm Islamic government, all the economic problems that stem from different kinds of mischief would be terminated. Under a strict government, promiscuity and other evils would lessen. The atmosphere of such a society would then enable the people to wake up from their slumber and attain Alla-h’s proximity.

One of the most rational and sublime concepts of political thought in Islam is the concept of wilayat al-faqi-h (the governance of the Islamic jurisprudent). Its rational definition is that in the

absence of the 12th holy Ima-m (as), the jurispudent identified as pious and knowledgeable in Islamic laws can govern a collectivity and lead it towards its material as well as spiritual prosperity. Such a person who enjoys sublime traits, is far from selfish interests, and is also well-aware of Islamic Law as well as the circumstances of his time, can ably control the government and lead the nation toward prosperity. To consider such a clear fact as dependant on what different clerics believe, and refrain from thinking about or involving oneself in the future of a collectivity of human beings who need to attain eternal salvation, is unreasonable.

The Timeless Reformer of Karbala

Sometimes a historical incident can conquer its spatial limitations and serve as an example for all times, places and people. Immortality is one issue and transcending time and space is another. Immortality deals with the future, but the conquerer of spatial limitations embrace and cover the past as well. The event of Karbala-', which is known to evoke the emotions of the coldest reader, was not only a tragedy as it is so labeled usually, but a reform movement (harakah isla-hiyyah) that could serve as a lesson both before and after it transpired. As it has been a source of inspiration for the followers of the Ima-m (as) after Ima-m Husayn (as), it has also been a source of inspiration for the preceding prophets of God too. Narrations indicate how the previous Prophets would curse the perpetrators of the heinous massacre [and thus take a stance]. If we understand Ima-m Husayn's motive, we would fully realize the movement's sublimity. In one of his addresses to Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, he says:

أَبِي بَنِ عَلِيٍّ وَأَبِي جَدِّي بِسِيرَةِ وَأَسِيرِ الْمُنْكَرِ، عَنِ وَأَنْهَى بِالْمَعْرُوفِ أَمْرًا أَنْ أُرِيدُ، (ص) جَدِّي أُمَّةً فِي الْإِصْلَاحِ لَطَلَبَ جُنُوحًا إِنَّمَا طَالِبِ (ع).

“I have only risen to seek reform and equilibrium in the nation of my grandfather, the Messenger of Alla-h; I would like to invite to good and dissuade evil; and adopt the path of my grandfather and my father, Ali- bin Abi- Ta-lib.”[170]

It looks like as if Ima-m Husayn (as) informs us of his motive, the method of achieving it, and those who also employed the method:

Motive: Seeking reform and equilibrium in the nation (ummah)

Method: Amr bil Ma'ru-f and Nahy 'ani 'l Munkar; Adopting the path of his grandfather and father.

Therefore, he aspired to restore equilibrium to the society. He desired that the society enjoy both material as well as spiritual prosperity. The physical amenities bestowed to man are means for his upliftment, and hence should also be given importance. Nevertheless, the main motive should not

be neglected and remain forgotten.

The timeless reformer with his utter steadfastness calls out to all epochs: ‘Do not allow the destruction of human values in any social organization! Do not sit quiet while oppressors control the affairs of the people! Struggle to eradicate all kinds of disequilibrium in the Muslim society! The prayer under discussion is a verbal expression. Husayn’s was a practical expression. He, like his noble grandfather, practically manifested his concern of eradicating all kinds of social as well as individual vices. His eagerness in restoring Islamic values was to see the eternal prosperity of humanity.’

Awaiting for the Noble Government

In the famous Du‘a- al-Iftita-h, we pray:

إِلَى وَالْقَادَةِ طَاعَتِكَ، إِلَى الدُّعَاةِ مِنْ فِيهَا وَتَجْعَلُنَا وَأَهْلَهُ، النَّفَاقَ بِهَا وَتُنْذِلُ وَأَهْلَهُ، الْإِسْلَامَ بِهَا تُعِزُّ تَكْرِيمَ دَوْلَةٍ فِي إِلَيْكَ نَرْغَبُ إِنَّا اللَّهُمَّ
...وَالْآخِرَةَ الدُّنْيَا كِرَامَةً بِهَا وَتُرْزُقْنَا سَبِيلِكَ،

“O Alla-h, indeed we ask you for a noble government in which you would elevate Islam and its followers, and degrade hypocrisy and its adherents, and make us among those who invite to your obedience, and leaders on your path, and to grant us by it, nobility in this world and the Hereafter...”

Our hadi-th literature clearly mentions many signs preceding the reappearance of our 12th Holy Ima-m (as). Many of us observe that a number of these signs already exist. Some of us have the tendency to say that ‘the world is so corrupt today; it is high time that 12th Ima-m should reappear.’ Such rhetoric may be found in different circles. But objectively speaking, it reveals the narrow-mindedness of those who speak about it. This does not mean that the signs prevalent would not precede his reappearance. However, one should try to observe whether the factors that would prepare the ground for the Ima-m’s reappearance exist or not.

The 12th Holy Ima-m (as) does not need corruption to reappear. He rather needs the support of the masses who overtly yearn for his reappearance so that equilibrium is created in the society. So long as the masses yearn for his reappearance without being ready for it, it would be futile for him to appear. We must remember that the 12th Ima-m’s mission is to create a global Islamic government. For such a government to take form, he needs our support [liyaqu-ma al-na-su bi al-qist (so that the people stand in justice)]. And support, we must understand, can be to forgo so many of our worldly interests. It may seem to be a simple issue, but the reality of the matter is quite different.

The concept of awaiting for the 12th Ima-m should be understood in its correct meaning. The

secret to its understanding is to ask ourselves about the purpose behind our intiza-r. Why are we waiting for his reappearance? To create social stability and prosperity? To eradicate corruption and oppression? If that is so, does our prayer conform with our practical lives? Do our actions reveal that we are practically working to create order and eradicate oppression in any circle that is in our limited sphere and power? Have we started with our family and neighborhood and observed whether we truly aspire for that great person who would effect reform globally? We should always try to measure ourselves against the purpose of intiza-r, and ask: 'Do our actions tally with the spirit of effecting reform?'

Characteristics of the Helpers of our 12th Ima-m (as) in the Reformation Process

In a tradition narrated in Biha-r al-Anwa-r we are informed that the 12th Ima-m (as) would have 313 sincere companions who would assist him in his reform process. Every one of us who has developed knowledge and love of the Ima-m (as) and knows his sublime aim as well, would aspire to be one of the 313 companions mentioned in the hadi-th. But in order for us to qualify for this sacred mission we should identify the characteristics that such reformers would possess. Many who have the strength to revive themselves and adopt a life full of spiritual blessings do have the opportunity to qualify. Mothers too, who can rear their children with excellent morals can shape their future and create the ground for their offspring to qualify for this lofty station. Youth also, who aspire to get married and select such spouses of noble descent and excellent morals that would enable a generation of purity to ensue, can also facilitate personalities who would qualify to be the Ima-m's loyal supporters. And what exactly are the characteristics of the helpers of the 12th holy Ima-m (as)? The following are traditions that outline the characteristics of the supporters of the 12th Holy Ima-m (as):

1. Possessing an Indepth Knowledge about God:

Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said about the soldiers of the 12th Holy Ima-m (as) that:

...الزَّمَانُ آخِرُ الْمُهْدِيِّ أَنْصَارُ وَهُمْ مَعْرِفَتِهِ، حَقَّ اللَّهُ | عَرَفُوا رِجَالًا...

"...Men who know Alla-h as He should be Known, and they are the helpers of al-Mahdi- at the end of time." [171]

Here obviously, the absolute knowledge of God is not meant, for that is beyond the reach of any dependent being, including the Prophet (s) who is reported to have said: ma-'arafna-ka haqqa- ma 'rifatika... we have not known You the way You absolutely deserve. Obviously, no finite being can ever comprehend the Infinite Being.

2. Possessing the Attributes of a Qualified Islamic Leader:

Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported[172] to have said in a lengthy tradition that those who would come out with Ima-m al-Mahdi (as) would be as follows:

...الدِّينِ فِي وَالْفُقَهَاءِ وَالْحُكَّامِ، وَالْفُضَّاءَةَ النَّجَبَاءِ، وَهُمْ، (ع) أَلْقَائِمِ فِيهَا اللَّهُ يُخْرِجُ الَّتِي (الْعِدَّة) هَذِهِ وَلَكِنَّ

“They are:

- * Of noble Descent [nujaba-’]
- * Qualified to rule [al-hukka-m]
- * Qualified to judge [al-quda-t]
- * Highly learned in religion [al-fuqaha-’ fi al-Din]”

These characteristics therefore create responsibilities for us: if we are of noble descent and marry the nujaba-’ (of noble descent), our children too would be of noble descent, if we rear our children and teach them how to be responsible from a young age and enable traits such as bravery, knowledge, etc., to develop, we can create the ground for them to be future leaders, if we inculcate the spirit of seeking religious knowledge in our children, their interest, zeal, etc., would attract them towards gaining indepth knowledge of religion and thus create in them the essential characteristics of the 12th Ima-m’s noble supporters.

Our Duties

Having understood the steps of reform, each one of us would be able to decide where he or she stands, and what is his or her immediate responsibility. Wherever it is possible for us to effect reform, however limited, we should do so. Otherwise, our supplication would be mere rhetoric or out of ignorance.

Notes:

[111] Mufrada-tu Alfa-zi’l Qur’a-n, new ed., pg. 636

[112] This is also a proverb in the Arabic language.

[113] Holy Qur’a-n, 2:11-12

[114] Ghuraru’l Hikam wa Duraru’l Kalim, tr. 4853, pg. 240

[115] Ibid., tr. 4765, pg. 237

- [116] Ibid., tr. 4772, pg. 237
- [117] Sharhu'l Asma- ' al-Husna-, pg. 213
- [118] Mawla- Muhsin Fayd Ka-sha-ni-, al-Mahajjat al-Bayda- ', v. 5
- [119] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 75, pg. 81
- [120] Zan dar A-ineye Jala-l o Jama-l, pg. 233
- [121] Ibid.
- [122] 'A-rifun Fi- al-Riha-b al-Qudsiyya, pg. 47
- [123] Ru-he Mujarrad, pg. 329
- [124] Darya-ye 'Irfa-n, pg. 97
- [125] Ibid., pg. 98
- [126] Qabasa-t min Haya-ti Sayyidina al-Usta-dh, pg. 118
- [127] al-Ihtija-j, v. 2, pg. 380
- [128] Mana-zil al-Sa-'iri-n, ch. 1 , pg. 36
- [129] Maqa-la-t- Tari-qe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiyeh (1), pg. 24
- [130] Jiha-d-e Akbar, pg. 51
- [131] Chehel Hadi-th, tr. Four, On Kibr pp. 97-98
- [132] Ibid., tr. Ten - On Desire and Hope
- [133] Mafa-ti-h al-Jina-n, Du'a- al-Saba-h, Arabic ed., pg. 93-94
- [134] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 5, pg. 203
- [135] Mafati-h al-Jina-n, Du'a- 'Arafah

- [136] Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim, tr. 3654
- [137] Muntakhab Mi-za-n al-Hikmah, pg. 432, tr. 5357
- [138] Ibid., pg. 431, tr. 5333
- [139] Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim, tr. 3730
- [140] al-Mufrada-t, new ed., pg. 283
- [141] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 63, pg. 331
- [142] Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v. 12, pg. 173
- [143] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, pg. 277
- [144] The Holy Qur'a-n, 57:16
- [145] The Holy Qur'a-n, 14:49 & 50
- [146] Maqa-la-t- Tari-qe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiyeh (1), pp. 29-30
- [147] The Holy Qur'a-n, 2:286
- [148] Nahj al-Bala-ghah, letter 28. Al-Khu'i- in his Minha-j al-Bara-'ah, a comprehensive commentary on the Nahj al-Balaghah says: Ima-m A by his statement wanna-su sana-yi 'un lana- (and the people are our handicrafts) meant that they are the intermediaries of Almighty Alla-h's grace (Mi-rza- Habi-bulla-h al-Ha-shimi- al-Khu-'i-, Minha-j al-Bara-'ah, vol.9, pg. 98)
- [149] A-yatulla-h Hasan Za-deh A-muli- quotes Bisha-rat al-Mustafa-, pg. 90 in his gloss over the Minha-j al-Bara-'ah of al-Khu-'i-
- [150] Mafa-ti-h al-Jina-n, Arabic ed., pp. 620-626
- [151] Maqa-la-t- Tari-qe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiye (1), pg. 37
- [152] Mafa-ti-h al-Jina-n, Arabic ed., pg. 503
- [153] Ibid.

[154] Holy Qur'a-n, 9:118

[155] The readers should note that tawbah is a relative matter, for with regard to Almighty Alla-h it means "to Return in Forgiveness and Mercy" whereas with regard to His servants it means "to return in repentance".

[156] Holy Qur'a-n, 24:31

[157] Maqa-la-t Tari-qe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiye (1), pp. 86-87

[158] Nahju'l Bala-gha, pg. 549

[159] al-Sahi-fah al-Sajja-diyah (The Psalms of Isla-m, English Translation by William Chittick), Supplication no. 16, pp. 59-60.

[160] Tafsi-r Majma' al-Baya-n, v. 4, pg. 762

[161] Al-Mufrada-t, pg. 768

[162] Tafsi-r al-Mi-za-n, v. 8, pg. 299

[163] Wasa-'il al-Shi-'a, v. 4, pg. 161

[164] Tahdhi-b al-Ahka-m, v. 2, pg. 239

[165] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 80, pg. 20

[166] Holy Qur'a-n, 67:14

[167] al-Mi-za-n fi- Tafsi-ri'l Qur'a-n, v. 12, pg. 330

[168] Holy Qur'a-n, 57:25

[169] Holy Qur'a-n, 10:13

[170] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 44, pg. 368

[171] Muntakhab al-Athar, volume 3, pg. 177

[172] Ibid.

Section 10 : O Alla-h, Cure Every Sick Person

مَرِيضٍ كُلِّ اشْفِ اللَّهُمَّ

O Alla-h, Cure Every Sick Person

Meaning

The Arabic word mari-d literally means ‘one who is sick or disordered.’ It originates from its infinitive ‘marad’ which means:

...الرَّدَائِلِ نَاءَ عِبَارَةٍ وَالثَّانِي...جِسْمِي مَرَضٌ الْأَوَّلُ : ضَرْبَانِ وَذَلِكَ بِالْإِنْسَانِ الْخَاصِّ الْإِعْتِدَالِ عَنِ الْخُرُوجِ

“...to exit from the state of the equilibrium particular to the human being[173]; and this is of two kinds: (1) bodily sickness... (2) vices.”[174]

Therefore, in reality, marad is another extension (misd-a-q) of the state of disequilibrium (fasa-d), and thus can be discussed under the previous verse of the supplication too.

Extensions of Illnesses

In the Holy Qur’a-n and traditions the word “marad” (illness) has been mostly employed to denote one of the abovementioned kinds of human disequilibria. Look at the following:

1. The Holy Qur’a-n [26:80] narrating the words of Prophet Ibra-hi-m (as), says:

يَشْفِينِ فَهُوَ مَرَضْتُ وَإِذَا

“And when I turn ill, He (alone) cures me.”

Two points should be noted here:

(i) The above verse does not imply that the Prophet (s) would not seek the natural means for the cure. What the verse means is that the Principal Curer (al-Sha-fi-) is only Alla-h. This is because the

existence, subsistence, and effect of the agent of cure is entirely by His Will and Permission.

(ii) Apparently what is meant in this verse is the physical extension of illness, for Prophets of Alla-h (as) are free from spiritual illnesses. They are infallible in their thoughts, words and actions. And that enables them to be propagators and Messengers of God.

2. The Holy Qur'a-n [2:8-10] describing the hypocrites says:

مَرَضًا اللَّهُ فَرَّادَهُمْ مَرَضٌ قُلُوبِهِمْ فِي

“In their hearts is a sickness; and Alla-h increased their sickness.”

The sickness referred to here is hypocrisy, which concerns the heart and not the body. Therefore marad is not limited to physical ailments.

3. Prophet 'I-sa- (as), is reported to have said:

...الْقَسْوَةَ مِنْ بَأْسَدِّ قَلْبٍ مَرَضَ مَا...

“...The heart did not fall sick with [a malady] more severe than the hardness of the heart...”[175]

4. Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

الْعَقْلُ قَلَّةٌ مِنْ أَضْنَى مَرَضٍ لَا

“There is no malady more debilitating than the paucity of intellect.”[176]

Here the ‘silliness’ or simplicity of a person is considered to be another kind of sickness. Therefore marad can also employed to denote the dull-wittedness of a person.

5. And he (as) is also reported to have said:

مُرْدٍ وَمَرَضٌ دَنِيٌّ خُلُقُ الْحَقْدِ

“Resentment (al-hiqd) is a degenerate characteristic and a destructive illness.”[177]

Therefore, in short, marad is not limited to physical illness, but covers mental and spiritual illnesses as well.

Supplication for a Sublime Purpose

Health, like any other Divine blessing is meant for a sublime purpose. To underutilize it would be tantamount to unthankfulness on the part of the human being. Our supplications for the betterment of ourselves and others should be purposeful: we must pray for health as a means to affect equilibrium in our souls. Were we to pray for health for the sake of sheer material enjoyment, we would be unthankful to Almighty Alla-h, since the practical reality of shukr is to employ the Divine Blessing for the purpose it was created.

Ima-m al-Sajja-d in his well-known prayer manual al-Sahi-fat al-Sajja-diyah prays:

طُنْتِي وَنَسَدَ رِزْقِكَ طَيِّبَاتٍ فِيهَا هَنَاتِي الَّتِي الصَّحَّةُ أَوْفَتْ. لَكَ بِالْحَمْدِ أَوْلَى الْوَقْتَيْنِ وَأَيُّ لَكَ بِالشُّكْرِ أَحَقُّ الْحَالَيْنِ أَيُّ إِلَهِي يَا أَدْرِي فَمَا... طَاعَتِكَ مِنْ لَهُ وَفَقَّنْتَنِي مَا عَلَيَّ مَعَهَا وَفَوَّيْنْتَنِي وَفَضْلِكَ مَرْضَاتِكَ لِابْتِغَاءِ بِهَا

“For I know not, my God, which of the two states deserves more my thanking You, And which of the two times is more worthy for my praise of You: the time of health, within which You Make me delight in the agreeable things of Your provision, through which You Give me the joy to seek the means to Your Good Pleasure and Bounty, And by which You Strengthen me for the acts of obedience which You Have Given me success to accomplish...”[178]

Here the Ima-m (as) teaches us that health should be sought to achieve Alla-h’s pleasure (libtigha-’i marda-tika) and to perform acts of His obedience (waffaqtani- lahu min ta-’atika). Therefore, when we seek the well-being of every member of the human race, we should do so because we would like the means of their perfection to be facilitated and not because they can regain their health to continue more damage to themselves or others.

The delight of our eyes, Sayyid Radi- al-Di-n bin Ta-wu-s in section 7 of his Fala-h al-Sa-’il, where he enumerates the characteristics of a supplicant, says:

مَنْ قَصْدُهُ يَكُونُ لَمْ يَرْضَ إِذَا: وَمِثَالُهُ. نَفْسِهِ إِرَادَةَ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِرَادَةَ وَيُقَدِّمُ بِهِ، جَلَالُهُ جَلَّ اللَّهُ مُرَادَ بِالدُّعَاءِ يُرِيدُ أَنْ: الدَّاعِي صِفَاتٍ مِنْ بِطَاعَتِهِ فِي جَلَالِهِ جَلَّ اللَّهُ مُرَادَ عَلَى لِيَبْقَى بَلْ أَخْرَجْتَهُ، عَنْ الشَّاعِلَةِ وَدُنْيَاهُ وَعَاجِلَتِهِ لِشَهْوَتِهِ بَقَاءَهُ مُجَرَّدَ بِعَافِيَتِهِ الدُّعَاءِ

“And among the characteristics of a supplicant is that he should seek through his supplication what Alla-h wants of Him and prefer Alla-h’s desire over his. For example: when he becomes ill, the purpose behind his supplication for his well-being should not be merely subsistence for the sake of lustful desire, temporal enjoyment and worldly existence that disengages him from his Hereafter, rather it should be for the purpose of living according to what Alla-h wants, which is His Obedience.”[179]

Beyond the Immediate Causes of Illnesses!

Although it is true to say that we must seek the natural causes of the various maladies to eradicate them, our aspiration should be loftier than to merely search for the immediate causes. Physicians categorize “illness prevention” into four stages:

1. Primordial prevention

The Holy Qur’a-n says:

بِأَنفُسِهِمْ مَا يُغَيِّرُوا حَتَّىٰ يَقُومَ مَا يُغَيِّرُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا

“Alla-h does not change what is with a community save that they change what is in them.”[180]

Primordial prevention is to avoid the emergence and establishment of social, economic and cultural patterns of living which are known to elevate risk of disease.

This is certainly the most important of all kinds of prevention. The human being is taught that his lifestyle can indeed determine what kind of future awaits him. To establish those social, economic and cultural patterns that would secure the health of the human being largely depends on the validity of the political body that governs the human society. Only an Islamic government subservient to the principles of Islam, can create a physically healthy environment. This is because the social, economic and cultural patterns would be defined by God, Who Created the human being for prosperity in both this world and the Hereafter, and Knows what laws would lead him to this prosperity. There is an interesting anecdote narrated about the situation prevailing in the Muslim community during the time of the Holy Prophet (s):

During the Holy Prophet (s)’s time, the king of Egypt sent a skilled doctor to the Holy Prophet (s). He lived one year with the Arabs but found no one approaching him for treatment. He therefore came to the Prophet (s) to complain. The Holy Prophet (s) explained to him that the reason behind the situation was that his people had adopted a path of moderation: they did not eat unless their appetite for food overcame them, and (ii) They stopped eating while they still had some appetite for food left. Hearing this, the doctor said: ‘This is the cause of [their] health.’ Then he kissed the earth, and left.[181]

In other words, they obeyed the Holy Prophet (s) and applied his well-known saying:

تَشْتَهِي وَأَنْتَ وَأَمْسِكْ تَشْتَهِي وَأَنْتَ كُلْ

“Eat while you have the appetite, and refrain from eating while you still have the appetite.”[182]

If the laws of Almighty Alla-h prevailed in the environment they would deter the human being

from engaging in sin, which leads to a substantial number, if not most of the prevalent illnesses. In a society where capitalism and consumerism prevail, what should one expect save the culture of overindulgence? In an environment where the woman is used as an item of advertisement and sale, what can one anticipate save sexual perversion? And these two major factors contribute to a great number of illnesses. In such a situation primordial prevention is a far fetched phenomenon.

One must understand that the fundamental unit for the realization of primordial prevention, is the government. It is the ideology of the ruling power that determines what kind of society it would like and what kind of lifestyle it encourages.

2. Primary Prevention

The Holy Qur'a-n says:

التَّهْلُكَةَ إِلَىٰ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ تُلْفُوا لَا وَ

“Do not lay yourself into destruction.”[183]

Primary prevention is action taken prior to the onset of disease, which removes the possibility that a disease will ever occur. For example the preventive measures taken to avoid diseases such as heart attacks, high cholesterol levels, ulcers, etc. is called primary prevention. Often these simple measures are not taken seriously, which leads us to the second stage of prevention i.e. secondary prevention.

In primary prevention, the human being refrains from the causes that would amplify the vulnerability of illness. Abstinence [abstaining from sex beyond marriage], consuming low cholesterol foods, nominal sugar, etc. are known to be kinds of primary prevention. This kind of prevention is also difficult for those suffering from spiritual maladies such as avarice, overindulgence, etc. The following traditions emphasize the important role of denial before sickness:

i) Ima-m Ami-ru'l Mu'mini-n (as) is reported to have said:

النَّهَمُ مَعَ تَصِدِّ لَا. الدَّوَاءُ رَأْسُ وَالْحَمِيَّةُ الأَدْوَاءُ، بَيِّنَةُ المَعِدَّةِ

“The stomach is the house of maladies, and denial is the principal medicine, and there is no well-being in greed.”[184]

ii) And he (as) has also said:

الْحَمِيَّةُ الْبَدَنُ صَلَاحُ

“In denial is the equilibrium of the body.”[185]

iii) Ima-m Abu- Ibra-hi-m al-Kazim (as) is reported to have said:

وَتُخَفِّفَ الشَّيْءَ مِنْ تَأْكُلَ أَنْ الْحَمِيَّةَ وَلَكِنَّ أَصْلًا، الشَّيْءَ تَدَعُ أَنْ الْحَمِيَّةَ لَيْسَ

“Denial does not mean that you avoid a thing totally, and do not eat it; rather, it means that you have a light consumption of something.”[186]

iv) And Ima-m Abu’l Hasan al-Rida- (as) is reported to have said:

بِالْبَدَنِ الرَّفْقُ الْحَمِيَّةُ رَأْسُ

“The peak of denial is to treat the body gently and with friendliness.”[187]

To deal with the body in a friendly manner does not mean to eat whatever you want. This wise dictum of Ima-m al-Rida- (as) calls us to identify those things that the body needs and provide it with the same. Overindulgence in eating would therefore be contrary to what our body requires. Although it would give utter pleasure to the taste buds of our tongues, but its consequences are detrimental to our bodies. Uncontrolled sexual activity is the same. The utmost pleasure can be sought from these acts, but the consequences are harmful for the body.

There is a beautiful poem attributed to Avicenna where he considers the secret of medicine in the moderation of food consumption and sex:

He says:

بِهَا وَاعْمَلْ وَصِيَّتِي حَمِيَّةً إِسْمَعْ

كَلَامِي بِنَظْمٍ مَجْمُوعٍ لَطِيفًا
فَإِنَّهُ اسْتَطَعْتَ مَا جَمَاعَكَ أَقْلَلْ

الْأَرْحَامِ فِي تَصْنُبِ الْحَيَاةِ مَاءُ
مَرَّةً يَوْمَ كُلِّ غَدَاةٍكَ وَاجْعَلْ

طَعَامَ هَضْمَ قَبْلَ طَعَامًا وَاحْذَرْ

Listen to all what I have to advise, and act accordingly

For medicine is gathered in the poetry of my word

Lessen your copulation as much as you can

For verily it is the water of life that is placed in the wombs

And make your meal once a day

And beware of eating before the digestion of what you have eaten

3. Secondary Prevention

Ima-m Abu- 'Abdilla-h al-Sadiq (as) is reported to have said:

تَنَدَاوَى، حَتَّى أَشْفِيكَ لَا إِلَهَ تَعَالَى اللَّهُ فَأَوْحَى بِشِفَائِي الَّذِي هُوَ أَمْرَضَنِي الَّذِي يَكُونُ حَتَّى أَتَدَاوَى لَا فَقَالَ مَرِضَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ مِنْ نَبِيٍّ إِنَّ مَنِّي الشِّفَاءَ فَإِنَّ

“One of the Prophets [once] got ill, whereupon he said: I shall not cure myself until He Who made me sick treats me Himself. Thereupon Almighty Alla-h revealed unto him: I will not cure you, until you treat yourself, for surely ‘cure’ comes from Me.”[188]

Secondary prevention is action, which halts the progress of a disease at its incipient stage and prevents complications. Treating diseases with medicines constitutes secondary prevention. The health programs initiated by governments are usually at the level of secondary prevention.

Islam does not encourage one to immediately seek medicine for illnesses that only need time to disappear. As long as the human being can bear the difficulty and pain of a certain sickness like mild flu, he or she is encouraged to do so. To immediately resort to medicine is not a wise course. Instead, one is highly advised to seek the natural foods that have a medicinal effect on the body. Yes, there are illnesses, which should be controlled at their incipient phases. If one is in doubt or detects such an illness, he should immediately seek medical treatment so that the situation does not get worse.

4. Tertiary Prevention

Tertiary prevention is a preventive measure used late in the stage of the disease. It includes limiting disabilities and carrying out rehabilitation programs.

Can Illness Be Totally Avoided?

With scientific advancement, the causes of many illnesses and their remedies have been discovered. But can we limit the causes of the various illnesses to what has been discovered so far? Both the scientist and the philosopher will respond in the negative. This is because there is always a probability of there being other unknown causes of certain maladies. The scientist has no right to limit the causes of a certain malady to what the latest empirical data suggests, since there is always a chance of discovery of other causes to different maladies. The scientist can also not claim that no psychological or spiritual factor is responsible for physical illnesses, for he does not comprehend the link between the body and the soul, and cannot transcend the senses.

Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) was once asked by an atheist as to why is it deserving for a small child to suffer from ailments and sicknesses while he is sinless and has committed no crime. The Ima-m (as) responded saying:

وَأَشْرَبِيَّةٍ رَدِيئَةٍ أُغْذِيَةٍ مِنْ ذَلِكَ أَنْ تَزْعُمَ وَأَنْتَ الْفَنَاءُ، عَلَيْهِ جُعِلَ وَمَرَضُ الْعُقُوبِيَّةِ، وَمَرَضُ بَلْوَى، مَرَضٌ شَتَّى وَجُوهٌ عَلَى الْمَرَضِ إِنَّ لَمْ النَّافِعِ مِنْ يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا الضَّارَّ وَعَرَفَ نَفْسِهِ أَحْوَالِ فِي النَّظَرِ وَأَجْمَلَ لِبَدَنِهِ السِّيَاسَةَ أَحْسَنَ مَنْ أَنْ وَتَزْعُمَ بِأَمِّهِ، كَانَتْ عِلَّةً مِنْ أَوْ وَبَيِّنَةٍ الْأَطْبَاءِ، مُعَلِّمُ أَرْسُطَاطَالِيْسُ مَاتَ قَدْ وَالْمَشْرَبِ، الْمَطْعَمِ مِنَ إِلَّا وَالْمَوْتُ الْمَرَضُ يَكُونُ لَا أَنَّهُ يَزْعُمُ مَنْ إِلَى قَوْلِكَ فِي وَتَمِيلُ يَمْرَضُ، بِسَاحَتِهِ نَزَلَ حِينَ مَوْتِ أَلْ دَفَعَ وَمَا بَصْرُهُ وَدَقَّ شَاخَ وَجَالِيئُوسُ الْحُكَمَاءِ، رَبِّيْسُ وَأَفْلَاطُونُ

“Indeed, illnesses are of various kinds: the illness of Divine tribulation, the illness of Divine punishment, and illness as a means for death. You think that the reason behind the illness is the partaking of rotten food and contaminated water, or a malady that was present in the child’s mother. You think that whosoever manages his body properly and takes good care of the conditions of his spirit and distinguishes the harmful foods from the advantageous will never fall sick? Your thinking resembles one who imagines that sickness and death do not occur save through food and drink; surely Aristotle, the mentor of physicians and Plato, the chief of the philosophers died; and Galen became old and his eyesight failed, and he could not repel death when it came to him.”[189]

Therefore even if one puts great efforts in observing hygiene as well as primary prevention, he cannot guarantee himself immunity from illness.

Illness - a Means of Self-Purification

The apparent form of physical illness may seem to be affliction and trouble, but its kernel manifests nothing but love, mercy and attention. In our traditions, illness for a believer plays the role of a detergent of the human soul that purifies it from the burden of sins so that the soul can qualify to be receptive and perhaps start the journey to Almighty Alla-h.

Following are some of the many traditions that clearly show how illnesses can be an advantage to the believing souls:

1. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

بِذَلِكَ فَيَبْلُغُهَا جِسْمِهِ فِي بِلَاءٍ يُبْتَلَى بِعَمَلِهِ ۖ يَبْلُغُهَا لَا إِلَهَ عِنْدَ الدَّرَجَةِ لَهُ لِيَكُونَ الرَّجُلُ إِنَّ

“Indeed a person may have a station near God which he could not attain only by his actions, (and thus) he would be afflicted by an ailment in his body by which he would attain the station.”[190]

2. Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

عَلَيْهِ يَقْدِرُ الذُّنُوبَ مِنْ عَندهُ أَسَقَطَ عَبْدًا اللَّهُ ابْتَلَى إِذَا

“When Alla-h afflicts His servant with a calamity, He reduces his sins in accordance with his malady.”[191]

3. Ima-m al-Rida- (as) is reported to have said:

...وَلَعَنَةُ تَعْذِيبٍ وَالْكَافِرِ وَرَحْمَةٌ، تُطَهِّرُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ الْمَرَضُ

“Sickness is purification and mercy for the believer and a punishment and curse for the disbeliever...”[192]

4. Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said:

الْكَبَائِرِ إِلَّا خَطِيئَةَ كُلِّ تَحُطُّ لَيْلَةَ صَدَاغِ

“A night’s headache removes all of one’s sins, save the major ones.”[193]

Mediation by those who possess Existential Influence

The human being has an ability to soar to such heights that he can influence the world of contingent existence (takwi-n) by the permission of Almighty Alla-h. As for the Prophets of Almighty Alla-h, this is a fact that one can observe in different places of the Holy Qur’a-n. An example is that of Prophet ‘I-sa- (as):

Almighty Alla-h says:

...بِإِذْنِي الْمَوْتَى تُخْرِجُ وَإِذْ بِإِذْنِي وَالْأَبْرَصَ الْأَكْمَهَ رَأَى وَتُبُّ بِإِذْنِي طَيْرًا فَتَكُونُ فِيهَا فَتَنْفُخُ بِإِذْنِي الطَّيْرُ كَهَيْئَةِ الطِّينِ مِنْ تَخْلُقُ وَإِذْ

“...and when you fashioned out of clay a thing like the form of a bird by My permission, then you

breathed into it and it became a bird by My permission, and you healed the blind and the leprous by My permission; and when you brought forth the dead by My permission....”[194]

In all the abovementioned wonders that Prophet ‘I-sa- (as) was able to perform, he required Divine permission to lay his influence on contingent existents. That is why the phrase “by My permission” is iterated after every wonder described.

As regards the infallible Ima-ms of the Ahlu’l Bayt (as), we do have reports of such influence by them and there is enough evidence to indicate that such phenomena are normal and simple for them, since they enjoy al-wila-yah al-takwiniyyah (the powers to lay influence in contingent existence), and they are intermediaries of Divine Grace (wasa’it al-fayd al-ila-hi-) as well.

Following are some instances worthy of contemplation:

1. Uprooting the door of Khaybar is a phenomenon that is beyond the scope of science to explain. No strong human being can do this with his bodily strength. While explaining to Sahl bin Hunayf how he managed to uproot the heavy door of Khaybar, Ima-m (as) said:

بِقُوَّةِ أُيُدَّتْ وَلِكُنِّي بَسْرِيَّةً، عَرِيزِيَّةً وَحَرَكَةِ جَسَدِيَّةِ بِقُوَّةِ أَعْضَائِي تَحْسَنَ لَمْ ذِرَاعًا أَرْبَعِينَ وَرَائِي بِهِ وَقَدَفْتُ خَيْبَرَ بَابَ قَلْعَتِ مَا وَاللَّهِ ضِيئُهُ مُرَبِّهَا بِنُورٍ وَنَفْسٍ مُلْكُوتِيَّةٍ.

“I swear by Alla-h, I did not uproot the door of Khaybar and throw it 40 forearms away while the members of my body did not feel anything, with bodily strength, or nutritive momentum, but I was supported by celestial power and the spirit which is radiant with the Light of its Lord.”[195]

2. History tells us that once in the gathering of the ‘Abbasid Caliph Ma’mu-n, Hami-d bin Mahra-n, a supporter of the Caliph, belittling Ima-m al-Rida- (as) tried to challenge him saying that his prayer for rain which was followed by heavy rains after a long drought was something ordinary and that rain came at its normal season. He said that if the Ima-m (as) could perform miracles which were beyond the powers of ordinary men, then he should order the pictures of the two lions that were painted on the curtains of the court of Ma’mu-n to become real lions and jump on him and swallow him up. The Ima-m (as) pointed to the two pictures and they became real lions, and pounced at Mehra-n and ate him up and then turned toward Ma’mun and started gazing at him. Thereafter facing the Ima-m (as) the lions said to the Ima-m: what do you order us to do with this one (i.e. Ma’mu-n)? On seeing this, Ma’mu-n fell unconscious. The Ima-m (as) said to the lions to return where they came from.[196]

These were instances that transpired through the Ima-ms?(as). However, is this possible also with other human beings who attain heights of perfection? Do the Awliya’-ulla-h (near ones to God) possess such power too? Can they cure a sick person without employing the conventionally known methods?

Let us look at the Holy Qur'a-n and find the answer:

أَكْفُرُ أَمْ أَشْكُرُ لِيُبْلُوَنِي رَبِّي فَضَّلَ مِنْ هَذَا قَالَ عِنْدَهُ مُسْتَوْرًا رَأَهُ فَلَمَّا طَرَفَكَ إِلَيْكَ يَرِنْدًا أَنْ قَبِلَ بِهِ أَتَيْكَ أَنَا الْكِتَابِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ عِنْدَهُ الَّذِي قَالَ
كَرِيمٌ عَنِّي رَبِّي فَإِنْ كَفَرَ وَمَنْ لِنَفْسِهِ يَشْكُرُ فَإِنَّمَا شَكَرَ وَمَنْ

“Said one who had knowledge of the Book: “I will bring it to you within the twinkling of any eye!” Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him, he said: “This is by the grace of my Lord! To test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful! And if any one is grateful, truly his gratitude is (a gain) for his own soul; but if any is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Free of All Needs, Supreme in Honor!”[197]

According to the traditions of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as), the ‘one who had knowledge of the book’ in the above verse, was the minister of Sulayma-n called A-saf bin Barkhiyyah[198]. He was the person who with Divine consent brought the throne of queen Bilqi-s within the twinkling of an eye. He was known to possess knowledge of al-Isim al-A'zam (the great Name of Alla-h), and therefore could perform such powerful feats.

We must understand however that according to authoritative Muslim scholars, neither does the al-Isim al-A'zam (Great Name) actually consist of letters and words, nor is the knowledge of the Great Name the conceptual or mental knowledge of a certain word or specific letters as the majority of the laity imagined and believed so far. The knowledge of al-Isim al-A'zam is a maqam and station that the human being attains after self-purification and attaining human perfection. ‘Alla-mah Tabataba-i- in volume 7 of his exegesis, al-Mi-za-n has explained this fact at length.[199]

Salma-n al-Muhammadi- and his Powers

One of the companions of the Holy Prophet (s) who enjoyed the station of al-wila-yah al-takwiniyyah was Salman al-Farsi, who was also known as Salman al-Muhammadi- by the Ahlu'l Bayt (as). Being utterly subservient to the Ahlu'l Bayt (as), he was also known to be from among them. Once Salma-n al-Farsi-'s name was mentioned near Ima-m Muhammad al-Baqir (as), and he said:

الْبَيْتِ أَهْلٌ مِنَّا رَجُلٌ ذَاكَ. الْمُحَمَّدِيُّ مَانَ سَأُ قُولُوا وَلَكِنَّ الْفَارِسِيَّ، سَلْمَانَ تَقُولُوا لَا

“Do not say Salma-n al-Farsi-, but say Salma-n al-Muhammadi-, for he is a man from us, the Ahlu'l Bayt (as).”[200]

It is important and necessary for us to realize and understand that ma'rifah and gnosis are of various levels. Those who attain the lower levels cannot comprehend the higher levels. Rather,

the matter becomes so intricate that if those of lower levels were to hear what the exalted ones have to say, they would have termed them as disbelievers and done things worse than that. Salma-n al-Muhammadi- enjoyed a very high rank, such that Ima-m Zayn al-'A-bidi-n is reported to have said about him:

أَفْتَلَهُ سَلْمَانَ قَلْبٍ فِي مَا دَرَّ أَبُو عَلِمٍ لَوْ وَاللَّهِ

“I swear by Alla-h, if Abu- Dharr knew what was in the heart of Salma-n, he would have killed him.”[201]

And Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as) is reported to have said:

وَلَا مَرَقَهَا مِنْ يَسْفُطُ فَلَمْ الْأَرْضِ، عَلَى وَجْهَهَا عَلَى الْقِدْرُ بَتَانِكَ إِذَا يَتَحَادَثَانِ هُمَا فَبَيْنَا لَهُ، قَدْرًا يَطْبُخُ وَهُوَ سَلْمَانَ عَلَى دَرِّ أَبُو دَخَلَ يَتَحَدَّثَانِ قَبْلًا وَثَانِيَةً، النَّارِ عَلَى الْأَوَّلِ خَالِيَهَا عَلَى فَوْضَعَهَا الْقِدْرُ سَلْمَانَ وَأَخَذَ شَدِيدًا، عَجَبًا دَرَّ أَبُو ذَلِكَ مِنْ فَعَجِبْتُ، شَيْءٍ وَدَكَّهَا مِنْ عِنْدِ مَنْ مَدْعُورٌ وَهُوَ دَرَّ أَبُو فَخَرَجَ قَالَ وَدَكَّهَا، مِنْ وَلَا مَرَقَهَا مِنْ عَشِيٍّ مِنْهَا يَسْفُطُ فَلَمْ وَجْهَهَا عَلَى الْقِدْرُ انْكَبَتْ إِذَا يَتَحَدَّثَانِ هُمَا فَبَيْنَمَا أَخْرَجَكَ الَّذِي مَا إِدْرَى بَا يَا: لَهُ قَالَ (ع) الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَمِيرٌ بِهِ بَصُرَ أَنْ فَلَمَّا الْبَابِ، عَلَى (ع) الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَمِيرٌ لَقِيَ إِذْ فَكَّرْتُ مَتَى هُوَ فَبَيْنَمَا سَلْمَانَ، إِدْرَى أَبَا يَا: (ع) الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَمِيرٌ فَقَالَ. ذَلِكَ مِنْ فَعَجِبْتُ وَكَذَا، كَذَا صَنَعَ مَنْ سَلَّرَ أَيُّتُ! الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَمِيرٌ يَا: دَرَّ أَبُو لَهُ فَقَالَ دَعْرَكَ؟ الَّذِي وَمَا إِسْلَمَانَ قَاتِلَ اللَّهُ رَحِمَ لَقُلْتُ يَعْلمُ بِمَا حَدَّثَكَ لَوْ سَلْمَانَ إِنَّ

“Abu- Dharr once came to Salma-n while he was cooking in a cooking pot; while they were conversing with each other, the cooking pot overturned and fell down on the ground, but not a drop of its curry or cooking fat fell down; Abu- Dharr was highly amazed at seeing this; Salma-n picked up the cooking pot and placed it on the fire the second time, and they began conversing once again; while they were talking to each other, the pot overturned again, and nothing of the curry or cooking fat spilled, Abu Dharr then left Salma-n in the state of great astonishment , and while he was deep in thought, he suddenly met Ami-r al-Mu’mini-n (as) at the door. When the Ima-m (as) saw Abu- Dharr’s state of amazement, he said to him: O Aba- Dharr, what made you leave the presence of Salma-n? And what made you frightened? Abu- Dharr said to the Ima-m (as): O Ami-r al-Mu’mini-n, I saw Salma-n doing such and such a thing, and I was amazed by that. Thereupon Ami-r al-Mu’mini-n (as) said to him: O Aba- Dharr, If Salma-n were to tell you what he knows, you would have said: May Alla-h have mercy on the killer of Salma-n.”[202]

This incident reveals much. It is important to note the following:

1. I-ma-n (belief) and ma’rifah (knowledge of God) have different levels. Those who enjoy the lower levels cannot bear the knowledge of the high ranking ones like Salma-n al-Muhammadi. Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as) is also reported to have said:

نُرْجِهَ عَلَى يُفَدِّرُ لَا الْعِلْمُ بَحْرُ سَلْمَانُ

“Salma-n is an ocean of knowledge, which cannot be drained and exhausted.”[203]

Abu- Basi-r is reported to have said that he heard Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) saying:

الاعْظَمُ الْإِسْمُ عَلِمَ سَلْمَانَ إِنَّ

“Surely Salma-n knew the Greatest Name of God (al-ism al-a‘zam).”

And as we said, this name is not a word to be memorized but an exalted spiritual state. Men of gnosis describe it as the state of exemplifying in oneself the beautiful attributes of Almighty Alla-h according to one’s limitations.

2. Salma-n al-Muhammadi- had powers that enabled him to lay influence in existence, and that is why not a drop of curry spilled off even if the vessel overturned. Other incidents are also narrated about him, which we have not considered here, due to the limited scope of this work.

3. The statement that if Abu- Dharr would have known what Salma-n knew he would have said ‘May Alla-h have mercy on the killer of Salma-n’ should not make us imagine that the belief of Salma-n and Abu- Dharr contradicted each other. Not at all. It is the stages of knowledge, as ‘Allamah Majisi-[204] and Mawla- Fayd al-Ka-sha-ni-[205] allude in their works, that differ. A narrow receptacle cannot contain more than its capacity. Can you fill a bucket full of water in a small cup? Otherwise, Abu- Dharr was one of the great companions of the Holy Prophet (s) about whom it is narrated from the Holy Prophet (s) that:

دَرَّ أَبِي إِلَى فَلْيَنْظُرْ (ع) مَرْيَمَ ابْنِ عَيْسَى زُهْدٍ إِلَى يَنْظُرَ أَنْ أَرَادَ مَنْ

“Whosoever would like to look at the zuhd (detachment of the world) of ‘Isa- (as) bin Maryam, should look at Abu- Dharr.”[206]

وَالْمِقْدَادِ دَرَّ وَأَبِي وَسَلْمَانَ عَمَّارٍ وَإِلَى عَلِيٍّ، يَا إِلَيْكَ تَشْتَأْنُ لُجْنَةً |

“O’ ‘Ali-, verily Paradise yearns for you and for ‘Ammar, Salma-n, Abu- Dharr and Miqda-d.”[207]

In short, both the examples of A-saf bin Barkhiyyah and Salma-n al-Muhammadi- reveal that other human beings too, are able to attain a station that can enable them to do things that those far away from God cannot do.

Ibn Si-na- in his great work Remarks and Admonitions, says: “You may receive information about the gnostics that almost runs counter to custom, and then you begin to disbelieve. And this is like saying a knower (‘a-rif) sought rain for people, hence, they received rain; or sought recovery for

them, hence, they recovered; or wished them ill, hence they were cast down, inflicted by earth tremors, or perished in another way. This is also like saying he wished them well, hence they were emancipated from diseases, murrain, torrential stream and flood; or a beast submits to some of them, or no birds flees from them, or other similar things occur that do not count as belonging to the kind of things that are clearly impossible. Stand still and do not rush into rejecting these things, for such things have causes in the mysteries of nature. Perhaps it will be possible for me to relate some of these causes to you.”[208]

Does Seeking Help from the Ahululbayt (as) for Curing Our Maladies Amount to Shirk?

Human beings have different degrees of power and strength. It is an obvious phenomenon that the less powerful seek assistance from the more powerful. When seeking support and assistance from other human beings, do we commit shirk (polytheism)? Certainly not, for we do not seek assistance from the strong ones and at the same time consider them to possess independent power. We are also not certain whether they would complete the job. Why? This is because they do not have anything of their own. They are contingent and dependent beings. They and their acts all depend and subsist by the All-Powerful Being. This truth is understood by contemplating on the adjective “al-Qayyu-m” in the well-known verse of the Throne (A-yat al-Kursi-):

الْقَيُّومُ الْحَيُّ هُوَ إِلَّا إِلَهَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“Alla-h; Except Him there is no God; He Alone is All-living and All-Subsisting.”[209]

Al-Qayyu-m is defined as al-Qa-‘imu bidha-tih wa al-Muqawwimu lighayrih, which means “One who is Essentially Subsisting and every other entity and being subsists by Him[210]. Therefore no one can ever claim to have any kind of independent perfection whatsoever. Consequently, seeking assistance from anyone other than Him in any limited degree, with the intention that every power solely comes from Him and belongs to Him is nothing but tawhi-d.

The Holy Qur’a-n says:

مَلُونَنَّمَا وَ خَلَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَ

“But Alla-h created you and what you do.”[211]

The same applies with regard to the Infallible Ima-ms (as) of the progeny of the Holy Prophet (s), who have more power than others and have access to the higher realms too. Should we consider seeking their support to be shirk? The answer is clear: shirk is out of question because we do not consider them to have independent power. We certainly know that every effect that they would lay would be entirely with Alla-h’s leave. This reality is aptly stated in the verse of the Throne of

the Holy Qur'a-n:

بِإِذْنِهِ إِلَّا عِنْدَهُ يَشْفَعُ الَّذِي ذَا مَنْ

“Who can mediate near Him save by His permission.”[212]

It should be noted that shafa-'ah and mediation here refers to existential mediation.

'Alla-mah Tabataba-'i- in his al-Mi-za-n says:

كلامه في تعالى أسند وقد إنكاره، إلى سبيل لا ضروري تعالى غيره في مادي غير أو مادياً كان سواء التأثير ثبوت أن أولاً فاتهم وقد العلية والمعلولية يستلزم إبطال قانون مطلقاً تعالى غيره عن التأثير ونفي غيره، إلى أنواعه بجميع التأثير العام الذي هو الركن في جميع أدلة التوحيد، وفيه هدم بنيان التوحيد. نعم، المنفي من التأثير عن غيره تعالى هو الاستقلال في التأثير ولا كلام لأحد فيه، وأما نفي مطلق التأثير ففيه إنكار بديهية العقل والخروج عن الفطرة الإنسانية.

“They however did not realize the following: establishing influence, be that material or immaterial with regard to other than Alla-h is necessary and inarguable. Further, God has attributed in his speech all kinds of influence to other than Him; and the absolute negation of influence from other than Him necessitates the annulment of the [intellectually established] universal law of causality [every effect necessitates a cause] which is a fundamental principle in all the proofs of monotheism; and in that [i.e. the annulment of..] is the destruction of the foundation of monotheism.

Yes, that influence which is unacceptable from other than God is ‘Independent Influence’ and there is no contradiction in this. However, negating ‘influence’ in the absolute sense is contradicting the rationally self-evident and transgressing the bounds of the human disposition (fitrah)...”[213]

Visiting the Sick: A Manifestation of True Concern

One of the manifestations of true concern for the sick is to visit them and seek information about their well-being. To verbally pray for them but be indifferent of their condition seems to be somewhat paradoxical. Of course this is different from a situation in which one does pray for sick people, but has no opportunity to visit them due to his or her important schedule.

Besides psychological research, which proves that visiting the sick confers a lot of solace and sometimes can radically improve the condition of the ailing one as well, our traditions enumerate lots of blessings for visiting sick people. Following are traditions worthy of contemplation:

i) The Messenger of Alla-h is reported to have said:

سُبْحَانَكَ: فَيَقُولُ تَعُوذُ بِكَ؟ أَنْ مَرَضْتُ إِذَا مَنَعَكَ مَا عِنْدِي: فَيَقُولُ الْقِيَامَةَ يَوْمَ عِبَادِهِ مِنْ عَبْدًا وَجَلَّ رَعَا اللَّهُ يُعَيِّرُ: قَالَ (ص) النَّبِيُّ عَن تَمَّ عِنْدَهُ لَوْ جَدَّتْ عِدَّتِي لَوْ وَجَلَّ لِي وَعِزَّتِي عُدَّة، دَقَلَمُ الْمُؤْمِنُ أَخُوكَ مَرِيضًا: فَيَقُولُ: تَمَرَضُ وَلَا تَأَلَمُ لَا الْعِبَادِ، رَبُّ أَنْتَ! سُبْحَانَكَ الرَّحِيمِ الرَّحْمَنُ وَأَنَا الْمُؤْمِنُ، عِبْدِي كَرَامَةٌ مِنْ وَدَلِكْ لَكَ، فَفَضِيَّتُهَا بِحَوَائِجِكَ أَتَكْفُلْتُ

On the Judgment Day Almighty Alla-h would reproach a servant among his servants, and say: ‘O My servant, what hampered you from visiting Me when I fell sick.’ The servant thereupon would say: ‘Free from imperfections are You! Free from imperfections are You! You are the Lord of the people, neither do You sense any pain, nor do You fall sick.’ Thereupon Alla-h would say: ‘Your mu’min brother fell sick, and you did not visit him; I swear by my Invincibility and Majesty, were you to visit him, you would have found Me near him, and I would have taken the responsibility of attending to your needs and would give them to you; and this is due to the nobility of My believing servant, and I am the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful.’”[214]

2. Ima-m Muhammad al-Ba-qir (as) is reported to have said:

فِي يَعُودُهُ مَلَكًا بِهِ أَوْكُلُ: وَجَلَّ عَزَّ اللَّهُ فَفَعَالَ الْأَجْرُ؟ مِنَ الْمَرِيضِ عِبَادَةَ مِنْ بَلَّغَ مَا رَبِّ يَا: قَالَ أَنْ رَبَّهُ (ع) مُوسَى بِرِنَاجِي فِيمَا كَانَ مَحْشَرِهِ إِلَى قَبْرِهِ.

“Among those things that Mu-sa- (as) whispered to his Lord was : ‘O Lord inform me the extent of reward that a person who visits the sick would get?’ Alla-h said: ‘I would entrust an angel over him who would visit him in his grave until his resurrection [on the Judgment Day].’”[215]

3. Ima-m Abu- ‘Abdilla-h al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said:

مَنْزِلِهِ إِلَى يَرْجِعَ حَتَّى لَهُ يَسْتَعْفِرُونَ مَلَكٍ أَلْفَ سَبْعُونَ سَبْعَةَ مَرِيضًا عَادَ مَنْ

“Whosoever visits a sick person, 70,000 angels escort him while they seek for forgiveness for him, until he returns back to his house.”[216]

Despite all the above merits, a selfless and concerned human being would visit the sick because his innate disposition (fitrah) calls him to do that, and not due to the attraction of the reward.

Visiting the sick, however, should be brief as has been indicated in various traditions, and one must also try to observe the etiquette of visiting the sick. Due to the brevity of the present work, we will avoid going into details about this. However, those who are interested to know the details can refer to traditional texts such as vol. 81 of Bi-ha-r al-Anwa-r of ‘Alla-mah Majlisi.

“A-h” is One of the Names of Alla-h

Both the Holy Qur’a-n as well as the traditions of the Ahlu’l Bayt (as) greatly emphasize that one should not complain in the state of sickness and affliction. And whosoever observes patience is promised great reward. Look at the following traditions:

1. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

الْوَجَعُ وَكِنْمَانُ الْمُصِيبَةِ، وَكِنْمَانُ الصَّدَقَةِ، اِنْ وَكِنْتُمُ الْفَاقَةَ، كِنْمَانٌ: الْجَنَّةُ كُنُوزٌ مِنْ اَرْبَعٍ

“Four things are from among the treasures of Paradise: to hide one’s need; to give sadaqah secretly, to hide one’s calamity, and to hide one’s pain.”[217]

2. ‘Abdulla-h bin Mas’u-d is reported to have said:

يَعْلَمُ وَلَوْ السُّقْمَ، مِنْ وَجَرَ عِهِ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ عَجِبْتُ: (ص) فَقَالَ تَبَسَّمْتَ؟ اللَّهُ رَسُولٌ يَا لَكَ مَا لَهُ فَقُلْتُ تَبَسَّمْتُ، إِذْ (ص) اللَّهُ رَسُولٌ عِنْدَ نَحْنُ بَيْنَا وَجَلَّ عَزَّ رَبُّهُ يَلْقَى حَتَّى سَقِيمًا يَزَالُ لَا أَنْ لِأَحَبِّ النَّوَابِ مِنَ السُّقْمِ فِي لَهُ مَا

“While we were in the presence of the Holy Prophet (s), when he suddenly smiled. So I asked him: What happened; why did you smile O Messenger of Alla-h? He said: I am surprised at the believer and his apprehension due to his illness; were he to know what reward there is for him in the illness, he would have loved to be ill until he meets his Lord, the Invincible and Majestic.”[218]

3. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

اللَّامِعِ كَالْبَرْقِ الصَّرَاطُ يَجُوزُ حَتَّى الرَّحْمَنِ، خَلِيلِ اِبْرَاهِيمَ مَعَ اَلْقِيَامَةِ يَوْمَ اللَّهُ بَعَثَهُ عُوَادِهِ، اِلَى يَشْكُ فَلَمْ وَلَيْلَةً يَوْمًا مَرَضَ مَنْ

“Whosoever is ill for a day and night but does not complain about his situation to his visitors, Alla-h would raise him on the Judgment Day with Prophet Ibra-hi-m (as), the Friend of the All-Merciful, so that he would cross the path like radiant lightening.”[219]

The meaning of complaint and shika-yah, however, should be understood properly. One who expresses the sensation of pain that he encounters cannot, for example, be known to be complaining against Almighty Alla-h. In fact in some traditions of the Ahlu’l Bayt (as) the expression “a-h” from the ailing one is considered as one of the Names of Almighty Alla-h.

Observe the following:

Ja'far bin Yahya- al-Khuza-'i- is reported to have narrated from his father that he said:

فَقَالَ بِهِ وَاسْتَعِثَّ رَبِّكَ اذْكُرْ اَخِي، يَا لَهْ فَقُلْتُ. اَهْ قَوْلٍ مِنْ يُكْتَبُ الرَّجُلُ فَرَأَيْتُ يَعُوْدُهُ، مَوَالِيَهُ بَعْضِ عَلِيٍّ (ع) اللهُ عَبْدِ أَبِي مَعَ دَخَلْتُ
جَلَّ وَ عَزَّ بِاللَّهِ اسْتَعَاثَ اَهْ، قَالَ فَمَنْ تَعَالَى، اللهُ اَسْمَاءٍ مِنْ اَسْمِ "اَهْ": (ع) اللهُ عَبْدِ اَبُو

“I accompanied Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) who came to visit one of his [ailing] slaves, and I saw the slave saying “a-h” many times. So I said to him: O my brother, remember your Lord and seek His Support. Thereupon Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) said: ‘A-h is a Name among the Names of Alla-h, and whosoever says “a-h” seeks the Help of Alla-h, the Invincible and Majestic.”[220]

It should be known that expressing the sensation of pain by employing the word “a-h” is in reality expressing one’s poverty and need for perfection and bodily equilibrium. And it is a known fact that NONE but the All-Affluent and the Principal Curer (al-Sha-fi-) can relieve the ailing patient.

Prophet Ibra-hi-m (as) says:

يَشْفِيْنِ فَهُوَ مَرَضْتُ اِذَا وَ

“And when I turn sick, then He Alone Cures Me.”[221]

Therefore in reality, one is seeking the support of the Almighty, and is well-aware that no doctor or nurse or anyone whatsoever can relieve him from any kind of malady independently. Hence by saying ‘A-h’ he is in reality calling ‘al-Sha-fi-’ (the Curer) or ‘Ghiya-th al-Mustaghi-thi-n’ (the Helper of the Seekers of help) and Alla-h is the All-Knowing.

The Suffering Believer in the Garden of Paradise

There are purified souls who have been bestowed with inner vision and can thus behold the reality of different people. They need not to wait for the Hereafter to know the inner reality. Almighty Alla-h has already gifted them with the knowledge thereof in this world. One such personality is Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) who expressed this reality in the following dictum:

يَقِيْنًا اِنْ دَدْتُ مَا الْعِطَاءُ كُنَيْفَ لَوْ

“If the curtains are unveiled no conviction would be added to what I have.”[222]

In other words, nothing among the higher realities such as Paradise and Hell was hidden for the Ima-m (as). He could behold things that others could not.

There is an interesting narrative in which Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

جَمِيعاً، إِلَيْهِ فَمَضَيْنَا. عُوذُهُدَّ إِلَيْهِ بِنَا أَمْض: (ص) فَقَالَ. وَعِكَ قَدْ دَرَّ أَبَا إِنَّ! اللَّهُ رَسُولَ يَا: فَقُلْتُ (ص) اللَّهُ رَسُولُ فَأَتَيْتُ دَرَّ أَبُو وَعِكَ مِنْ رَوْضَةٍ فِي أَصْبَحْتُ: (ص) فَقَالَ. اللَّهُ رَسُولُ يَا وَعِكَ أَصْبَحْتُ: قَالَ. دَرَّ أَبَا يَا أَصْبَحْتُ كَيْفَ: (ص) اللَّهُ رَسُولُ قَالَ جَلَسْنَا فَلَمَّا...الْجَنَّةِ رِيَاضِ

“Abu- Dharr [once] fell sick; so I came to the Messenger of Alla-h and said: O Messenger of Alla-h, verily Abu- Dharr has fallen sick. He said: let us go to visit him. So, all of us together went to visit him. And when we sat besides him, the Messenger of Alla-h asked him: O Abu- Dharr, how did you confront your morning? He said: I have confronted the morning in sickness. The Holy Prophet (s) thereupon said: Surely you have confronted the morning while you are in a garden among the gardens of Paradise...”[223]

Here the Holy Prophet (s) beheld the kernel of Abu- Dharr’s situation, and informed him of his higher rank which he could not vision.

Sadaqah - A Powerful Means of Curing the Sick

The human being due to his limited knowledge cannot perceive all the means to the cure of the different maladies and diseases. Further, since he or she perceives the world of matter and cannot witness the celestial realm (‘a-lam al-malaku-t) or beyond that, he or she is oblivious of so many other ways to the cure of maladies. This is where the important role of wahy (revelation) and Ima-mate comes. Those entrusted with Divine secrets, acknowledging the need of unveiling them, have informed us of much to learn. With regard to curing the sick, we have traditions worthy of contemplation. Observe the following:

1. Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said:

بِالصَّدَقَةِ مَرَضَاكُمْ دَاوُوا

“Treat your sick by giving sadaqah.”[224]

2. He (as) is also reported to have said:

الرَّيْبِ سَوَاسٍ وَوَوَ الْأَسْقَامِ الْوَعَكِ مِنْ شِفَاءِ الْبَيْتِ أَهْلَ ذِكْرُنَا

“Remembering us the Ahlu’l Bayt (as) is a cure from illness and diseases as well as from the insinuation of doubt.”[225]

One should note however that giving sadaqah (alms) has some etiquette, a most important of which is al-muba-sharah which means that the sick person should himself or herself give the sadaqah. Observe the following tradition:

Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said:

لَهُ يَدْعُو أَنْ السَّائِلَ وَيَأْمُرَ بِيَدِهِ السَّائِلَ يُعْطِي أَنْ لِلْمَرِيضِ يُسْتَحَبُّ

“It is recommended for the sick person to give a beggar with his own hands and tell him to pray for him.”[226]

Why are Spiritual Illnesses Worse than Physical Maladies?

One of the very important discussions that the ‘ulama- of akhla-q present in their ethical texts is how spiritual ailments are more dangerous to the human being than the physical illnesses. Mawla-Muhammad Narra-qi-, the great ethician in his ethical corpus Ja-mi’ al-Sa’a-da-t says in his introductory discussions on ethics:

لم أن الإنسان منقسم إلى سر وعلن، وروح وبدن، ولكل منهما منافيات وملانمات، وآلام اع ذات، ومهلكات ومنجيات. ومنافيات البدن وآلامه هي الأمراض الجسمانية. وملانماته هي الصحة واللذات الجسمانية. والمتكفل لبيان تفاصيل هذه الأمراض ومعالجاتها هو علم الطب. ومنافيات أهل مجاورة إلى وتوصله وتنجيه، تسعده التي فضائلها إلى رجوعه وصحته. وتشقيه تهلكه التي الأخلاق رذائل هي وآلامه ح الرو فإن اتصف باقٍ، مجردٌ والروح فان، مادي البدن إن ثم. (الأخلاق علم) هو ومعالجاتها الرذائل هذه لبيان والمتكفل. ومقريبه الله...مخلداً والشفاعة العذاب في كان برذائلها اتصف وإن أبدأ، والسعادة هجتشرائف الصفات كان في الب

“Know that the human being is divided into “the kernel” (sirr) and “the apparent” (‘alan) and [or in other words] “the spirit” and “the body” and for each of these two dimensions there are incompatibilities (muna-fiya-t) and compatibilities (mula-yima-t), pains and pleasures, elements of destruction and salvation. The incompatibilities of the body and its pains are the physical illnesses whereas its compatibilities are good health and physical pleasures. And the discipline that caters to expound the details of these illnesses and their treatments is medicine. And the incompatibilities of the soul and its pains are bad characteristics that destroy it and make it wretched, and its wellbeing is to return towards good morals that bring it felicity and emancipate it and make it attain the neighborhood of the people of God and His Near ones, and the discipline that caters to expound these evil characteristics and their treatment is the discipline of ethics. Then it should be known that the body is material and prone to destruction, whereas the spirit and soul is eternal, and therefore if the soul characterizes itself with noble qualities it would be in the state of joy and felicity forever, but were it to characterize itself with evil ethics it would be in the state of punishment and wretchedness forever....”[227]

Therefore since the spirit has always to remain, one should be very careful and purify it before it is too late. The material body on the other hand would have to stay in this world and probably turn into earth after burial.

Spiritual Illnesses Is The Principal Cause

If one were to understand the aim of human life, the gravity of spiritual sickness over physical sickness would become more apparent. In fact, if we painstakingly ponder over the causes of the different illnesses, we would come to realize that the principal cause of many of the physical illnesses stem from spiritual illnesses, either from oneself or from others: sometimes the source of physical illnesses is oneself, sometimes others, and at times, a product of cooperation with others. An example of the first is when a person has no sense of temperance and allows his faculty of desire to prevail over his faculty of intellect, and engages in overindulgence in eating, copulation, etc. Such a lifestyle would be replete with illnesses. Sometimes however, you are invited to a friend's house and served with delicious food, but because your friend did not observe some religious or hygienic precautions while cooking, you turn ill. If you are invited by one who, for example, does not care whether the meat he buys is from a believer or non believer or whether he earns through lawful or unlawful means, you would undoubtedly be affected spiritually. This can then be a basis for immoderation, which would lead to physical illnesses. An example of the third situation is when genetically made food is produced, and you show your cooperation in purchasing the same. Here the fault is both yours and the producer's. If your purchase is due to your mundane attachments and you know that the producer's aim is nothing but to satisfy his capitalistic demands, you would have cooperated with him to cause physical illnesses in your self. Here greed and avarice enveloped your intellect and you were led to physical illnesses. However, if the circumstances are such that you have to cope with these foods and you have no option, then you remain in danger of the physical illnesses but can be free from spiritual maladies.

The Traveling Physician

Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have described the Prophet (s) in the following manner in one of his sermons compiled in the Nahju'l Bala-ghah:

مُنْتَبِعُ بَعْضِكُمْ، وَالسِّنَّةُ صَمٌّ وَأَذَانٌ عُمِّي قُلُوبٍ مِنْ إِلَيْهِ الْحَاجَةُ حَيْثُ ذَلِكَ يَضَعُهَا، مَوَاسِمَهُ وَأَحْمَى مَرَاهِمَهُ، أَحْكَمَ قَدْ بَطِيْبُهُ، دَوَارٌ طَبِيْبٌ
الْحَيْرَةُ وَمَوَاطِنُ الْعَفْلَةِ مَوَاضِعَ بَدَوَائِهِ.

“The Prophet (s) was like a traveling physician who has set ready his ointments and heated his instruments. He uses them wherever the need arises for curing blind hearts, deaf ears, and dumb tongues. He went with his medicines to the places of negligence and places of perplexity.”[228]

One of the excellent methods of treating the ailing ones is to go to them for treatment. Ami-r al-

Mu'mini-n 'Ali- (as) calls the Holy Prophet (s) بِطَبِّهِ دَوَّارٌ طَيِّبٌ tabi-bun dawa-run bitibbih- A traveling physician. Physicians who deal with the human body normally treat others in return for payment. This is because it is a means of their livelihood. Nevertheless, not all physicians have the same financial status. Whereas some work in certain hospitals or clinics, others own hospitals and clinics themselves. There are different poverty-stricken areas in the world where due to indigence, people do not have the privilege of getting treated from illnesses. Physicians who truly have concern for all the poor to get cured would either personally arrange a team of doctors to visit the area, and thereafter treat the various patients, or if resources do not permit, try to form a friendly circle of doctors who would voluntarily contribute what they can. By visiting these poverty-stricken areas, not only would they practically show their concern for the ailing ones, but also practise the Prophet's way of life in the physical dimension. Hence, although this beautiful narrative of Ima-m 'Ali- (as) refers to the spiritual dimension, it can also be applied in the life of the physicians of the body too.

A very interesting narrative is reported in the historical text al-Si-rah al-Nabawiyah of Ibn Hisham, where the practical import of Ima-m 'Ali-'s (as) statement is brilliantly reflected. Ibn Hisham quotes Ibn Isha-q to have said:

أَنَّ وَيَسْتَلْهُمُ مُرْسَلًا، نَبِيٌّ أَنَّهُ وَيُخْبِرُهُمُ اللَّهُ، إِلَى يَدْعُوهُمْ الْعَرَبِ، قَبَائِلَ عَلَى كَانَتْ إِذَا الْمَوَاسِمِ فِي نَفْسِهِ رُضِيَغُ (ص) اللَّهُ رَسُولٌ فَكَانَ... يُصَدِّقُوهُ

“The Messenger of Alla-h (s) would present himself to [to the people] in [different] occasions; and when he would confront the Arabs, he would invite them to Alla-h, inform them that He is an Apostle of Alla-h, and seek their verification....”[229]

And in the same book Ibn Isha-q is reported to have said:

رَسُولٌ وَبِمَنَى، أَبِي مَعَ شَابٍ لَغْلَامٍ إِنِّي قَالَ: أَبِي يُحَدِّثُهُ عِبَادَ، بِن رَبِيعَةَ سَمِعْتُ: قَالَ عَبَّاسُ، بِنِ اللَّهِ عُبَيْدِ بِنِ اللَّهِ عَبْدِ بِنِ حُسَيْنٍ وَحَدَّثَنِي وَشَيْئًا، بِهِ تُشْرِكُوا وَلَا اللَّهُ تَعْبُدُوا أَنْ يَأْمُرَكُمْ إِلَيْكُمْ، اللَّهُ لِرَسُولِ إِنِّي فَلَانِ، بِنِي يَا: قَيْفُولُ الْعَرَبِ، مِنْ الْقَبَائِلِ مَنَازِلَ عَلَى يَقْفُ (ص) اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعَثَنِي أَمَّ اللَّهُ عَن أَبِيي حَتَّى وَتَمَنَعُونِي بِي، وَتُصَدِّقُوا بِي، ثَامِنُوا وَأَنْ الْأَنْدَادِ، هَذِهِ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ تَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَخْلَعُوا أَنْ

“Ubaydulla-h bin'Abba-s narrates: I saw my father telling Rabi-'a bin 'Ubba-d: “During my youth I was once together with my father in Mina-; I observed that the Holy Prophet (s) would visit the different tents (mana-zil) of the Arabs, and say: ‘O children of such and such personality, certainly I am a Messenger of Alla-h towards you, who invites you to worship Alla-h and that you must not associate anyone with Him, and renounce the [imaginary] partners that you worship other than Him, and believe in Me and accept me and protect me so that I may expound for you from Alla-h that which He has sent me with.”[230]

It is interesting to note that in his propagation to Banu- 'A-mir, a person called Fira-s bin 'Abdilla-h

is reported to have said about him: 'I swear by Alla-h, if I would have this youth from Quraysh, I would have ruled over the Arabs by him. Thereafter addressing the Holy Prophet (s) he said that we can only pay our oath of allegiance to you on the condition that you make me your successor after you. Here was a very sensitive moment. If the Holy Prophet (s) was merely after gaining support of his personal fame, he would have consented to this transaction. But it was not a matter of personal interests. The Holy Prophet (s) said:

يَشَاءُ حَيْثُ يَضَعُ اللَّهُ إِلَى الْأَمْرِ

“The matter is with Alla-h, He would place in whoever’s hand He wishes...”[231]

As a result, they did not listen to the Holy Prophet (s) and remained adamant in their disbelief.

Our muballighu-n should emulate this highly important tradition of the Holy Prophet (s) within their own limitations. There is a law, we must understand, which prevails all the verses of this supplication:

وَسَعَهَا إِلَّا نَفْسًا اللَّهُ يُكَلِّفُ لَا

“Alla-h does not burden a soul save what it can bear.”[232]

Hence, each one of us is responsible according to his or her abilities. The resourceful, for example, would undertake great ventures to disseminate Islam in different parts of the world, and thus try to treat the maladies of the spiritually sick, whereas those who have limited resources could struggle to do the most from the least that they have at their disposal. There is another very beautiful law in the holy Qur’a-n that implicitly tells us how to make advantage of the limited resources at our disposal. The secret is ‘struggle.’ The lazy carpenter by making small things, would worry about his financial status and perhaps seek unlawful means, but the diligent carpenter who possesses the similar tools would struggle hard and increase his tools so that he can produce better wooden items and develop himself financially. The Holy Qur’a-n says:

سَعَىٰ مَا إِلَّا لِلْإِنْسَانِ لَيْسَ أَنْ وَ

“And there is nothing for man save that which he strives for.”[233]

We should remember that the extent of the struggle would reflect the firmness of our resolution to assist the ailing ones and the intensity of our concern for their well-being.

How Can We Contribute in Dispelling Illnesses from Others?

It should be well understood by now that seeking the well-being of others is not limited to prayer only. Our contributions would vary according to the ability that we have. Further, we should understand how grave is our need for spiritual well-being. Therefore, we should not be oblivious of this fundamental and decisive dimension of the human beings.

Those who can create conditions that would obliterate illnesses from the society are responsible to do the needful, those who can assist others in guiding them to observe precaution before they suffer dangerous illnesses have the duty to do so, those who can financially afford to assist others in getting their sickness treated should take the noble step of doing so; and those who do not have any of the preceding status due their limited powers, are expected to pray for the ailing and visit them as well. For those who have more power, they are required to play a greater role in all the areas that determine the treatment of the ailing ones.

As we humbly pray to Alla-h for the well-being of everyone, we should not forget ourselves, for although we may enjoy very good physical health, but have we tried to diagnose ourselves spiritually yet? Are we sure that we do not suffer from any of the spiritual illnesses? Is spiritual illness so insignificant due to the absence of any immediate physical pain? If one looks at the depth of the matter, he or she would realize that eternal salvation is entirely dependent on the spiritual well-being of a person.

Our prayers should be continual. This is because persistence in prayer is a corollary of “true concern”. One who has no concern would not be persistent in his prayer. In fact, as we said in our introduction to the first volume of this commentary, du’a is a reflection of one’s true state. There is complete harmony between one’s spirit and the prayer that one utters.

Notes:

[173] Some have also translated the word ‘mari-d ‘ as ‘disordered ‘ [See E.W.Lane Arabic-English Lexicon]

[174] Mufrada-t Alfa-zi’l Qur’a-n, pg. 765

[175] Mustadrak al-Wasa’il, v. 12, pg. 94

[176] Ghuraru’l Hikam wa Duraru’l Kalim, pg. 55

[177] Ibid.

[178] al-Sahi-fat al-Sajja-diyya, Supg. 15, pg. 54, His supplication when Sick or Visited by Distress or an Affliction.

- [179] Fala-h al-Sa-'il wa Naja-h al-Masa-'il, pp. 102-103
- [180] Holy Qur'a-n, 13:11
- [181] Masa-'il-e-Darma-ni-, v. 2, pg. 73
- [182] Wasa-'il al-Shi-'ah, v. 16, pg. 540
- [183] Holy Qur'a-n, 2:195
- [184] Mustadrak al-Wasa-'il, v. 16, pg. 452
- [185] Ghuraru'l Hikam, pg. 320
- [186] Wasa-'il al-Shi-'a, v. 25, pg. 229
- [187] Fiqh al-Rida-, pg. 340
- [188] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 59, pg. 66
- [189] al-Ihtija-j, v. 2, pg. 225
- [190] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 81, pg. 174
- [191] Ibid., v. 81, pg. 176
- [192] Ibid.
- [193] Biha-r al-Anwa-r ,v. 81, pg. 200
- [194] Holy Qur'a-n, ch. Al-Ma-'idah (5), v. 110
- [195] A-yatulla-h Hasan Za-deh A-moli-, Sarh al-'Uyu-n Fi- Sharh al-'Uyu-n, pg. 730
- [196] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 49, pg. 184
- [197] Holy Qur'a-n, 27:39
- [198] al-Mi-za-n, v. 55, pg. 370

- [199] Ibid., v. 7 pp. 354-355
- [200] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 22, pg. 349
- [201] Ibid., v. 22, pg. 343
- [202] Bahj al-Saba-ghah Fi- Sharhi Nahj al-Bala-ghah, v. 3, pg. 402
- [203] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 22, pg. 347
- [204] Ibid., v. 22, pg. 343
- [205] al-Mahajjat al-Bayda-', v. 1, pg. 65
- [206] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 22, pg. 243
- [207] Ibid., v. 22, pg. 243
- [208] Al-Isha-ra-t wa al-Tanbi-ha-t (Ibn Sina and Mysticism), tr. by Shams Inati, pg. 104
- [209] Holy Qur'a-n, 2:252
- [210] Sharh al-Asma-', pg. 363
- [211] Holy Qur'a-n, 37:96
- [212] Holy Qur'a-n, 2:255
- [213] al-Mi-zan, v. 10, pg. 295
- [214] Wasa'il al-Shi-'a, v. 2, pg. 417
- [215] Bihar al-Anwa-r, v. 81, pg. 218
- [216] Mi-za-n al-Hikmah, v. 4, pg. 2888
- [217] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 81, pg. 208
- [218] Ibid., v. 81, pg. 206

- [219] Ibid., v. 81, pg. 203
- [220] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 81, pg. 202
- [221] Holy Qur'a-n, 26:80
- [222] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 40, pg. 153
- [223] Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v. 1, pg. 57
- [224] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 81, pg. 203
- [225] Ibid., v. 81, pg. 203
- [226] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 81, pg. 209
- [227] Ja-mi' al-Sa'a-da-t, v. 1, pg. 5
- [228] Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon 108
- [229] al-Si-rah al-Nabawiyah, v. 2, pp. 35-36
- [230] Ibid., pg. 36
- [231] Ibid., v. 2, pg. 38
- [232] Holy Qur'a-n, 2:286
- [233] Holy Qur'a-n, 53:39

Section 11 : O Alla-h, Fill Our Poverty With Your Needlessness

بِعْنَاكَ فَقْرَنَا سَدَّ اللَّهُمَّ

O Alla-h, Fill Our Poverty With Your Needlessness

OAlla-h, fill (sudda) our poverty (faqrana-) with Your affluence (bighina-ka). This verse does not pertain to the need of the commonly needy individuals, but a need that is shared by every human being, or rather every contingent being[234], which due to the nature of its essence, possesses nothing of its own. Therefore, even the apparently self-sufficient among the created beings are termed poor and needy in this verse. Similarly, ghina-ka (lit. Your Needlessness) is not the common self-sufficiency shared by some of the human beings, but that which is restricted only to Almighty Alla-h. In reality, if one understands the relation between the Creator and the creation, self-sufficiency makes no sense with regard to the creation at all. The Holy Qur'a-n alluding to this says:

الْحَمِيدُ الْغَنِيُّ هُوَ وَاللَّهُ اللَّهُ إِلَى الْفُقَرَاءِ أَنْتُمْ النَّاسُ أَيُّهَا يَا

“O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Alla-h, and Alla-h - He is the All-Sufficient, the All-Laudable.”[235]

الْحَمِيدُ الْغَنِيُّ لَهُوَ اللَّهُ وَإِنَّ الْأَرْضَ فِي وَمَا مَوَاتِ السَّمَاءِ فِي مَا لَهُ

“To Him only belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth; and indeed Alla-h is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable.”[236]

And in his well-known supplication of ‘Arafah, Ima-m Husayn (as) humbly cries:

فَقْرِي؟ فِي فَقِيرٍ أَكُونُ لَا فَكَيْفَ غِنَايَ، فِي الْفَقِيرِ أَنَا: إِلَهِي

“O God, I am the poor in my self-sufficiency; therefore how can I not be needy in my state of need?”

And Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) in his famous whisperings (muna-ja-t) cries:

الْغَنِيُّ؟ إِلَّا الْفَقِيرَ يَرْحَمُ وَهَلْ الْفَقِيرُ، وَأَنَا الْغَنِيُّ أَنْتَ: مَوْلَايَ يَا مَوْلَايَ

“My Master, My Master, You are the All-Sufficient and I am the needy; and who other than the All-Sufficient can have mercy on the needy?”

And in the recommended prayer after ‘Asr, we introduce ourselves as:

...نُشُوراً وَلَا حَيَاةً وَلَا مَوْتاً وَلَا ضَرّاً وَلَا نَفْعاً لِنَفْسِهِ يَهْلِكُ لَا...

“...one who does not own any benefit, nor harm, nor death, nor life, nor resurrection...”[237]

Can we turn into the necessary being?

Faqrana- (lit. our poverty) refers to the utterly dependent state of the human being, which in the language of metaphysicians is termed as ‘contingency’ (imka-n), and in the vision of mystics ‘manifestation’ (zuhu-r). All that exists other than Alla-h does not have existence of its own. To come into being and subsist in any state whatsoever requires the Divine Will. The following verse of the Qur’a-n expounds the continual process of causation with relation to the creation:

الْفَهَّارُ الْوَّاجِدُ هُوَ وَ شَيْءٌ كُلُّ خَالِقٍ اللهُ قُلُّ

“Say, ‘God is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-paramount.’”

It should be noted that Kha-liqu in the above verse denotes perpetual creation. This concept is also beautifully expounded by Mulla- Sadra- in his philosophical texts, where he intellectually establishes, through his well-known theory of transubstantial motion (harakah jawhariyyah), the fact that every contingent being receives existence every moment. Reflect over the following verses of the Holy Qur’a-n:

جَدِيدِ خَلْقٍ مِنْ لَبَسٍ فِي هُمْ بَلِ الْأَوَّلِ بِالْخَلْقِ أَفَعِينَا

“Were We exhausted by the first creation? Rather they are in doubt about a new creation.”[238]

السَّحَابِ مَرَّ تَمُرٌ وَ هِيَ جَامِدَةٌ تَحْسَبُهَا الْجِبَالُ يَوْتَرٌ

“And you see the mountains, which you suppose to be stationary, while they drift like passing clouds...”[239]

The mystics also vision this reality when they behold this universe. ‘Ayn al-Quda-t al-Hamada-ni says: “Small children, observing a lamp burning continuously, would naturally think that what we see is one single flame. But the grownups know very well that it is a series of different flames appearing and disappearing moment by moment. And from the viewpoint of mystics this must necessarily be the case with everything in the world except God.”[240]

Having understood the aforesaid, we ask: Is it possible for the human being to lose his or her contingent identity and become Essential and Necessary in existence? In other words, is it possible for us to change from the utterly poor to the absolutely affluent? Intellectually speaking, such a phenomenon can never transpire for it is evidently impossible. This is because, ‘a Necessary Being’ (wa-jib al-wuju-d) is only necessary and essential when it did not and does not

depend on any kind of cause whatsoever. If one says that a certain being was contingent (mumkin) and thereafter turned into a Necessary Being (wa-jib), this would depict nothing but absurdity. This is because an entity changing from contingency (imka-n) to necessity (wuju-b) means change of the essence (dha-t) of the entity. This change either was causeless or needed a cause. If we say that it did not require a cause and changed by accident, we have said what is intellectually absurd. If we say it needed a cause, then that would also be incorrect because for something to be necessary no cause is needed whatsoever. A Necessary Being is Causeless. It is never brought about. Hence a contingent being can never turn into a Necessary Being.

Therefore, what exactly do we mean when we utter the above verse of this supplication? What do we actually seek from Almighty Alla-h?

One of the Sublime Names of Almighty Alla-h is al-Samad. There are several meanings for this name, but they in reality are corollaries (lawa-zim) of its exact lexical meaning[241] which is: 'One who is besought and every entity returns to Him for any need.' One of the corollary meanings of al-Samad is 'the All-compact (al-musmat).' Ima-m al-Husayn (as) is reported to have said:

لَهُ جَوْفٌ لَا الَّذِي: الصَّمَدُ

“As-Samad is One Who has no hollowness.”

Due to His Infinite Existence, there is no gap of deficiency in any of His perfections. If He is All-Knowing, then there is no perforation in His Infinite knowledge, if He is All-Powerful, there is no kind of power that he lacks... In short, He has no kind of deficiency in the level of His Essence, Attributes or Actions. Mulla- Ha-di- Sabzawa-ri- in his Sharh al-Asma-' says:

و الشبيه عن تعالى - له جوف لا الذي كالمصمت كان خير، عنه يسلب لا والخيرات للكمالات واجداً الحقيقة بسيط كان لما فاته... كمال، في مرتبة ذاته بذاته لكل الفاقدة الجائع الناقص الأجوف هو الذي الممكن بخلاف فهو - كبيراً علواً النظير

“Because His reality is Simple[242] and Non-composite [Basi-t al-Haqi-qa] and He possesses all the perfections and virtues, and does not lack any goodness (khayr), He is like a compact entity (al-musammata) that does not have any hollowness- highly exalted is He from comparison and similarity- and so He (Alla-h) is contrary to a contingent being (al-mumkin) who is hollow (al-ajwaf), imperfect, hungry, and lacks any perfection in the level of his essence...”[243]

Therefore, every dependent entity is hollow in its reality. Only Alla-h is al-Samad. Several parables are given to show this relation. One such relation is that of the ocean and its waves. The waves have nothing of their own yet they seem to be different to the Ocean. Perhaps the best comparison is that of the reflection and the mirror. The creation is like the reflection of Divine Names in the Mirror.

Having considered the aforesaid, what do we mean when we ask Almighty Alla-h to fill up our existential poverty with His existential affluence?

Seeking the Proximity of Alla-h

One of the interpretations of this sacred verse is to seek the state of human perfection through utter submission to Alla-h, such that the human being gains sufficiency (ghina-) through the Absolutely Sufficient (al-Ghani-). The following sacred tradition (hadith al-qudsi-) refers to this exalted station:

لَا حَيًّا أَجْعَلُكَ أَمْرُكَ فِيمَا أَطْعِنِي أَمُوتُ، لَا حَيًّا أَنَا: أَدَمُ ابْنُ يَا تَفْتَقِرُ لَا غَنِيًّا أَجْعَلُكَ أَمْرُكَ فِيمَا أَطْعِنِي أَفْتَقِرُ، لَا غَنِيًّا أَنَا: أَدَمُ ابْنُ يَا فَيَكُونُ كُنْ لِلشَّيْءِ تَقُولُ أَجْعَلُكَ أَمْرُكَ فِيمَا أَطْعِنِي فَيَكُونُ، كُنْ لِلشَّيْءِ أَقُولُ أَنَا: أَدَمُ ابْنُ يَا تَمُوتُ.

“O offspring of Adam, I am the All-sufficient, and will never become needy; obey Me, and I will make you All-sufficient such that you will never become needy; O offspring of A-dam, I am All-living and will never die, obey Me, and I will make you All-living and you will never die; O offspring of Adam, I say [to a thing] be! And it is; Obey Me in what I have commanded you, and I will make you such that when you say be! [to a thing], it would come into being.”[244]

In order to attain this fundamental level of proximity (qurb), which is the highest point of the first spiritual journey (لله السير الى ا) one must rise through the way -stations of human perfection, which are expounded by the experts of gnosis in their manuals of direction. The fundamental stages, however, as we discussed earlier, are yaqzah and tawbah. It should also be understood that for one to maintain himself or herself on the straight path and never divert from it, he or she needs a master of gnosis (‘irfa-n) who has already traversed the levels of perfection and has the ability to take others as well.

Seeking The Infinite

Another possible interpretation of this verse of the blessed supplication is to seek greater perfection of the Divine attributes one already possesses. The authoritative mystics in their works present different levels[245] in the journey of human perfection. One of the basic classifications they propound is that the human being has two fundamental journeys:

Ibn Maytham al-Bahra-ni-, in his Sharhu Mi’at Kalimah quoting the mystical scholars says:

فِي إِنْتِقَالِهَا إِلَى إِشَارَةِ وَالثَّانِي السُّلُوكِ، مَرَاتِبِ فِي النَّفْسِ إِنْتِقَالَاتٍ إِلَى إِشَارَةِ وَالْأَوَّلِ. اللَّهُ فِي وَسَفَرٌ اللَّهُ، إِلَى سَفَرٍ سَفَرَانِ، السَّفَرُ...
الْوُصُولِ دَرَجَاتٍ

“There are two journeys: journey to Alla-h, and journey in Alla-h; the first alludes to the transformations of the soul in the different levels of wayfaring, and the second refers to its transformations in the stages of attainment (wusu-l)...”[246]

1. Al-sayr ila- Alla-h إلى الله (Journey towards Alla -h) which culminates with the state of tawhi-d when one does not see anything save Alla-h.

2. Al-sayr fi- Alla-h في الله (Journey in Alla -h) which never culminates, for it has no end. When we say “in God”, one should not conjecture that God is a vessel (‘arf) in which the human being travels. Far is He from any kind of limitation and imperfection whatsoever. Al-sayr fi- Alla-h means journeying in the Attributes of God, or the continual process of coloring oneself with the Divine Attributes. And because Alla-h is al-Samad and Infinite, all His perfect attributes are infinite too. And since the journey from the finite to the Infinite is infinite, the human being, however exalted he may be, is still in need of more and more perfection. The following famous dictum of Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) according to some scholars[247] refers to this very journey:

...السَّفَرُ بُعْدُ وَ الطَّرِيقُ، وَطُولُ الزَّادِ، قَلَّةٌ مِنْ آهِ

“O, how little is the provision, and how long the path and distant the journey...!”[248]

Hence, there will never be an occasion when the human being would be needless of this prayer.

Readers however should note that for the one who has not attained the proximity of Alla-h, ‘seeking more’ carries no meaning. He should strive to cover the first journey so that he may be able to swim across the oceans of the different names of Almighty Alla-h. Scholars of ethics however advise that in such cases when the supplicant realizes how remote he is from uttering such lofty words, he should pray with utter humility and shame, and while feeling repentant of his state of separation, pin his hopes entirely on the One who can jerk him to start his journey and later have the ability to swim across the vast oceans of His Attributes.

Notes:

[234] Contingent beings are those that do not exist essentially nor are they impossible to exist. Therefore in order for them to exist, they always need a cause. All the created beings are such.

[235] Holy Qur’a-n, 35:15

[236] Ibid., 22:64

[237] Mifta-h al-Fala-h, v. 1, pg. 198

[238] Holy Qur'a-n, 50:15

[239] Ibid., 27:88

[240] Zubdat al-Haqa-'iq, pg. 62

[241] al-Mi-za-n, v. 20, pg. 391

[242] Here 'simplicity' denotes the non-compositeness of God. (Author)

[243] Sharh al-Asma-' , pg. 365

[244] 'Uddat al-Da-'i-, pg. 310

[245] It should be noted that the well-known classification, which is not contradictory to what we have mentioned above, is the al-Asfar al-Arb'ah (the four journeys) which Sadru'l Muta 'allih-n and his school of thought has adopted. We have not mentioned this due to the limited scope of this work.

[246] Sharh Mi'at Kalimah, v. 1, pg. 40

[247] A-yatulla-h Jawa-di- A-moli- alludes to this point in his lessons on Ibn 'Arabi-'s Fusu-s al-Hikam. See also 'Buhuth Fi- 'Ilm al-Nafs' [Transcripts of the notes of Sayyid Kama-l al-Haydari- on the section about the human soul from Mulla- Ha-di- Sabzawa-ri-'s philosophical poetry al-Manzu-mah, page 298]

[248] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 34, pg. 284

Section 12 : O Alla-h, Change Our Unpleasant State Into Your Beautiful State

حَالِكَ بِحُسْنِ حَالِنَا سُوءَ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ

O Alla-h, Change Our Unpleasant State Into Your Beautiful State

In order to properly understand the above verse, it is imperative to know the meaning of the word

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“husn” in the phrase ‘bi husni Ha-lik.’ According to Ra-ghib al-Isfaha-ni, the word husn means:

مِنْ مُسْتَحْسَنِ الْهُوَى، جَهَةٌ مِنْ مُسْتَحْسَنِ الْعَقْلِ، جَهَةٌ مِنْ مُسْتَحْسَنِ الْأَصْرَابِ ثَلَاثَةٌ ذَلِكَ فِيهِ، مَرْغُوبٌ مُبْهِجٌ كُلٌّ عَنْ عِبَارَةِ الْحُسْنِ... تَضَادَهَا يَنْهَوُ السُّوءَ وَأَحْوَالِهِ وَيَدْنِيهِ نَفْسِهِ فِي الْإِنْسَانِ تَنَالُ نِعْمَةً مِنْ يَسْرٍ مَا كُلٌّ عَنْ عَنِهَا يُعْبَرُ وَالْحَسَنَةُ الْحَسَنُ جَهَةٌ

“Husn is every pleasant and desirable thing. And it is of three kinds:

- * Pleasant according to the intellect;
- * Pleasant according to worldly inclination;
- * Pleasant according to sense perception.

And the word al-hasanah is employed to mean every pleasant blessing that the human being attains in his spirit, body or states. And al-sayyi’ah is opposite to that...”[249]

حَالِكَ بِحُسْنِ The personal pronoun “ka-f” here implies that we are after the utter Beauty of Almighty Alla-h, who is the Most Pleasant and Beloved[250]. We can therefore not limit the extensions of husn to what al-Isfaha-ni- enumerates in his lexicon of Qur’a-nic words. The universal sense of the word itself allows every pleasant entity to come under its conceptual umbrella. In addition, the Husnu’l Ha-l (the pleasant state) possessed by Almighty Alla-h is beyond intellectual and sensory perception.

It should be noted that the main components of husn are ‘mubhij’ (pleasant, delightful, etc.) and marghu-b fi-h (desirable). This is one key to understanding the various extensions of beautiful entities.

The particle “bi” in the phrase ‘bi husni ha-lik’ here can have two probable meanings:

(1) It can mean into[251] (the same as the particle إلى ila-). Therefore the prayer would read: “O Alla-h change our unpleasant state into Your Beautiful State”. This also reminds us of another supplication which is recommended to be recited on the first day of the solar year – Nawru-z:

...الْحَالِ أَحْسَنَ إِلَى خَالِنَا حَوْلٍ...

...change our state into the most beautiful state...[252]

(2) It can denote sababiyah (mediation)[253], and thus the prayer would read: “O Alla-h change my evil state by Your Beautiful State”.

حَالِكَ بِحُسْنِ Ha-l حَالِ denotes ‘a changing state.’ Due to his imperfect nature, the human being undergoes a movement of perfection and thus “ha-l” can be correctly attributed to him or her.

But is it correct to employ it for Almighty Alla-h? Does His Exalted Essence undergo change? Intellectually speaking, God, Who is Absolutely Perfect, can never undergo change. Change manifests deficiency and imperfection, while Almighty Alla-h is Absolutely Perfect. Thus, it would be incorrect to talk about change with regard to His Sublime Essence. In a morning supplication narrated in the prayer manual Balad al-Ami-n[254], we glorify Almighty Alla-h saying:

!حَالٍ إِلَى حَالٍ مِنْ يَتَغَيَّرُ لَا مَنْ يَا

“O One Who does not change from one state to another!”

And in one of his sermons, while glorifying Almighty Alla-h, Ami-ru'l Mu'mini-n'Ali- (as) says:

...الأقولُ عَلَيْهِ يَجُوزُ وَلَا يَزُولُ وَلَا يَحُولُ لَا الَّذِي...

“One Who neither changes nor ceases to exist, nor is He transitory.”[255]

In expounding the meaning of “la- yahu-lu” ‘Alla-mah Majlisi-[256] in his remarks says: la- yahu-lu ay la- yataghayyaru [la- yahu-lu means ‘He does not change.’]

Then what does ‘bi husni Ha-lika’ mean in this noble supplication? To answer this, we need to understand that the extensions of concepts employed to describe different attributes of contingent entities (mumkina-t), are not completely the same as those of the Absolute Perfect Being. When we say that a certain person, for example, is kind and merciful, we mean that he or she has a sense of pity which follows acts of support to others. But we can never conceive the state of pity which is an experience of change in the heart with regard to the Exalted Being. Similar is the case with ‘ha-l’ which when employed for Almighty Alla-h is not ‘a changing state’ but rather His Exalted Reality of Absolute Perfection that always was and will ever be. Small wonder it is that Ima-m Abu'l Hasan al-Rida- (as) in one of his debates with a theologian hired by Ma ‘mu-n is reported to have employed the word “Ha-l” for Almighty Alla-h, which of course does not depict “a changing state”. He says:

...ذَلِكَ عَنْ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى حَالِهِ، عَنْ يَتَغَيَّرُ وَلَا نَفْسَهُ يُحْدِثُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَا لِأَنَّهُ...

“...This is because it is impossible that he created Himself, nor does He change from His State, Exalted is Alla-h from that...”[257]

Therefore when we say “bi Husni Ha-lika” we do not mean “a changing state”, Exalted is Alla-h from any deficiency whatsoever.

Physical Extensions of Husnu'l Ha-l

Our trend so far has been to consider both the apparent as well as the subtle meanings of this noble supplication. In this verse, however, it is clear that the human being opts for the Infinite Beauty and thus the state of physical beauty is not taken into consideration. Nevertheless, it is important to know what Islam has to say with regard to physical beauty. Does Islam consider physical beauty (whose pleasant (mubhij) state the sense perception admits) as insignificant and trivial? Ample proofs indicate that although physical beauty is pleasant and important it should not be reckoned as a distinction in the absolute sense. Whereas the Holy Qur'a-n promises damsels with beautiful features[258] for the believing men as well as handsome young men[259] for heavenly women, and therefore does not consider physical beauty as insignificant, it warns the believing men and women that even if an unbeliever is so beautiful or so handsome, you are not allowed to marry with him or her. Consider the following verses:

خَيْرٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ وَلَعَبْدٌ يُؤْمِنُ حَتَّى الْمُشْرِكِينَ تَنْكِحُوا وَلَا أَعْجَبْتُكُمْ وَلَوْ مُشْرِكَةٌ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ وَلَا مَآءَةٌ يُؤْمِنُ حَتَّى الْمُشْرِكَاتِ تَنْكِحُوا وَلَا (يَتَذَكَّرُونَ لَعَلَّهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ آيَاتِهِ وَيُبَيِّنُ وَإِنْ يَدْعُوا إِلَى يَدْعُو وَاللَّهُ النَّارِ إِلَى يَدْعُونَ أُولَئِكَ أَعْجَبْتُكُمْ وَلَوْ مُشْرِكٌ مِنْ

“Do not marry idolatresses until they embrace faith. A faithful slave girl is better than an idolatress, though she should impress you. And do not marry [your daughters] to idolaters until they embrace faith. A faithful slave is better than an idolater, though he should impress you. Those invite [others] to the Fire, but God invites to paradise and pardon, by His will, and He clarifies His signs for the people so that they may take admonition.”[260]

It should not be misconceived that Islam discourages one to marry with the physically beautiful. There are traditions which clearly encourage one to be a companion of one who enjoys beautiful features. Ima-m Abu'l Hasan (al-Rida-) (as) is reported to have said:

الْحَسَنُ الْوَجْهِ إِلَى وَالنَّظْرُ الْجَارِي، الْمَاءُ إِلَى وَالنَّظْرُ الْحُضْرَةَ، إِلَى النَّظْرُ: الْبَصَرَ يَجُولُونَ ثَلَاثَةً.

“Three things enlighten the eye: (1) Looking at greenery, (2) looking at running water, and (3) looking at a beautiful face (al-wajh al-hasan).”[261]

That which Islam considers wrong is to establish the basis of one's marriage on material interests. Physical beauty without morality would create nothing but chaos in one's family life. In addition, purity of descent is also highly significant as spiritual heredity plays a fundamental role in one's future generation. Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said:

فِي الْحَسَنَاءِ الْمَرْأَةُ: قَالَ الدَّمَنُ؟ حَضْرَاءُ وَمَا: (ص) اللَّهُ رَسُولٌ يَا: قِيلَ. الدَّمَنُ وَحَضْرَاءُ إِيَّاكُمْ! النَّاسُ أَيُّهَا: فَقَالَ خَطِيبًا (ص) النَّبِيِّ قَامَ السُّوءَ مَنَّبَتِ.

“The Holy Prophet (s) once addressing the people said: O people, beware of the verdure of the

dung. He was asked: 'O Messenger of Alla-h, 'And what does the verdure of the dung mean?' The Holy Prophet (s) said: 'A beautiful woman (al-hasna-) from unpleasant roots.'"

Effulgence of the Face!

There is however another group of traditions that talk of spiritual light and the effulgence of the face. They also instruct the aspirants of marriage that the fundamental criteria of spousal selection is 'the brilliance of the heart which is manifest on the face'. Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said that the Holy Prophet (s) said:

مَهْرًا وَأَقْلَهُنَّ وَجْهًا أَصْبَحُهُنَّ أُمَّتِي نِسَاءً أَفْضَلُ: (ص) اللَّهُ لِرَسُولِهِ قَالَ

"The best of the women of my Nation are the most radiant in complexion and seek the least of dowry." [262]

Note that the word أَصْبَحُهُنَّ "asbahahunna" is employed in the above tradition and not أَجْمَلُهُنَّ "ajmalahunna", which means that the yardstick of excellence and perfection is radiance and luminance of the complexion and not physical beauty.

In short, while Islam encourages physical beauty and reckons it as something good and naturally pleasant, it warns us from bartering our spiritual beauty for physical beauty. There is a prophetic tradition that says:

الْجَمَالَ يُحِبُّ جَمِيلٌ اللَّهُ

"Alla-h is Beautiful and He Loves beauty."

Beauty appreciated by the intellect likewise is naturally lovable and pleasant. In fact one of the proofs of God's existence is by appreciating the orderliness of the world of creation through the intellect. The intellect appreciates that we live in the most beautiful system. In religious terminology this world is known as al-niza-m al-ahsan (The most beautiful system). The holy Qur'a-n terms the entire creation of Alla-h as beautiful. Observe the following verse:

خَلَقَهُ شَيْءٌ كُلَّ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي

"One Who Made Beautiful every thing that He Created." [263]

The beauty of every creature can be well appreciated by intellectually considering the orderliness of its system, and its relation with the rest of the world of creation.

Husnu' l Ha-I - A Unique State of Utter Ecstasy

The contemporary mystic-scholar, A-Ila-mah Hasan Zadeh A-moli-, may the Almighty Alla-h protect his noble presence, in his treatise- Nu-run'Ala- Nu-r[264], says:

ای آن وقت است که
(خَالِكٌ بِحُسْنِ حَالِنَا سُوءَ غَيْرِ اللّٰهِمْ) : که است آمده مآثور دعای در. آید
: « »
« فافهم .» هو الاول بذاته

“Try to reach the water, although you are not cut off from water. And when you reach the water, you would have husnu 'l ha-I and your joy would be inexpressible. In one of the narrated supplications we read: O Alla-h change our unpleasant state into your Beautiful State. Thus Almighty God Has the State of Husnu' l Ha-I. Yes, this State of Joy (Husnu' l Ha-I) is that very state that Shaykh (Ibn Sina-) speaks about in chapter eighteen of the section on Joy and Happiness of his monumental work al-Isha-rah-t:

بِدَاتِهِ الْأَوَّلُ هُوَ عَيْشِي مُبْتَهَجٍ أَجَلٌ

The Being that has the greatest joy in a thing is the First (i.e. God) as having joy in His Essence.”[265]

With regard to Almighty Alla-h's sincere servants, the state of Rida- is known to be the state of joy and ecstasy. Shaykh al-Ra'i-s also mentions this in section nine of his monumental al-Isha-rah-t, as follows:

وَأَحَقُّ بِأَفْرَحَانٍ وَهُوَ يَهْتَشُّ، لَا وَكَيْفَ. النَّبِيُّ مِنَ يَنْبَسِطُ وَالْكَبِيرُ، يُبْجَلُ مَا مِثْلُ تَوَاضِعِهِ مِنَ الصَّغِيرِ يُبْجَلُ بِسَامٍ، بَشُّ هَشُّ الْعَارِفِ
إِلْبَاطِلُ؟ يَا سَعْلُوا قَدْ الرَّحْمَةَ أَهْلُ سَوَاسِيَةِ عِنْدَهُ وَالْجَمْعُ يُسَوِّي لَا وَكَيْفَ! الْحَقُّ؟ فِيهِ يَرَى فَإِنَّهُ شَيْءٌ بِكُلِّ

“The Gnostic ('a-rif) is bright faced, friendly and smiling. Due to his modesty he honors the young as he honors the old. He is as pleased with the unclearheaded as he is with the alert. How could he not be bright-faced when he enjoys the Truth (i.e. God) and everything other than the Truth, for he sees the Truth even in everything other than the Truth. Furthermore, how could he not treat all as equal when, to him all are equal! They are objects of mercy preoccupied with falsehoods.”[266]

Avicenna's statement "... for he sees the Truth even in everything other than the Truth" reminds us of the Holy Prophet (s), and the Holy Ima-ms of the Ahlu' l Bayt (as). Ima-m 'Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

وَمَعَهُ وَبَعْدَهُ قَبْلَهُ اللَّهُ وَرَأَيْتُ إِلَّا شَيْئًا رَأَيْتُ مَا

“I did not see anything save that I saw Alla-h before it, after it, and with it.”

A similar dictum is reported also from Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as). Some analysts say that the following tradition also alludes to the sublime state of ecstasy and joy of the Leader of martyrs, Ima-m al-Husayn (as), as he neared his supreme sacrifice, which guaranteed the salvation of Islam forever: Shaykh Sadu-q in his Ma’a-ni al-Akhba-r reports Ima-m al-Sajja-d (as) to have said:

اشد كلما لانهم بخلافهم، هو فإذا معه كان من بن علي عليهما الصلاة والسلام نظر إليه بالحسين الأمر اشدد لماً وبعض من معه من خواصه تشرق السّلام عليه الحسين وكان قلوبهم، ووجلّت فرانسهم، وارتعدت ألوانهم، تغيرت الأمر ألوانهم، وتهدأ جوارحهم، وتسكن نفوسهم

“When the situation became tense for Ima-m al-Husayn (as) those who were with him looked at him and saw that his state was contrary to theirs, for whenever the situation grew tense they changed color and were shaken and experienced fear, whereas the faces of al-Husayn (as) and some of his companions shone, their bodily members were relaxed and their souls were tranquil...”[267]

Such is the spirit which is ready to meet his Lord while both he is Pleased with his Beloved and the Beloved is pleased with him. The last verses of Su-ratu’l Fajr, because of which the chapter was also known as Su-ratu’l Husayn (as), also depicts the state of Sayyid al-Shuhada-:

جَنَّتِي وَادْخُلِي . عِبَادِي فِي فَادْخُلِي . مَرْضِيَّةً رَاضِيَةً رَبِّكَ إِلَى ارْجِعِي . الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ النَّفْسُ أَيُّهَا يَا

“O soul that art at rest! Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with him), well-pleasing (Him), So enter among My servants, And enter into My garden.”[268]

There is a beautiful statement that Sayyid Hadda-d al-Mu-sawi-, a great mystic and contemporary of the late ‘Alla-mah Taba-taba-’i-, is reported to have said. His disciple, the late Ayatulla-h Muhammad Husayn al-Tehra-ni- in his Ru-h-e-Mujarrad quotes him as saying:

صحنه عاشوراء عالیترین مناظر عشقیازی است و زیباترین مواطن جمال و جلال الهی و نیکوترین منسلخ و جاویدان حیات ذرّوة اعلی به وصول و مراتب و درجات از اسماء رحمت و غضب و برای اهل بیت جز عبور به اصل ظاهر و فناي مطلق در ذات احدیت چیزی نبوده است تحقق و مظاهر از شدن

“The scene of ‘A-shura- is the sublimest expression of love and reveals the most beautiful scenes of Divine Beauty and Glory, and the finest manifestations of the Names of Mercy and Wrath. For the Prophet’s Household it was nothing more than a transition across all the levels and degrees, to reach the highest peak of eternal life, coming off from the ‘manifestations ‘ to realize the

Manifesting Principle and to obtain absolute annihilation in the Being of the One.”

A-yatulla-h Tehra-ni- adds saying[269]:

تحقیقا روز شادي و مسرت اهل بیت است زیرا روز کامیابی و ظفر و قبولی و ورود در حریم خدا و حرم جزئیت و دخول در عالم کلیت است. روز پیروزی و نجاح است. روز امن و امان او است. روز عبور از وصول به مطلوب غائی و هدف اصلی است. روزی است که گوشه ای از آن را اگر به سالکان و عاشقان و شوریدگان راه خدا نشان دهند در تمام عمر از فرط شادی مدهوش می گردند و یکسره تا قیامت برپا و در می افتندشود به سجده شکر به ر

“Truly it was the day of joy and delight for the Ahlu’l Bayt as it was a day of success and victory, of reception into the Divine Sanctity and the sanctuary of peace and security. It was a day of rising above particularity and entry into the realm of universality. It was the day of triumph and deliverance, the day of the attainment of the ultimate end and the principal goal. It is such a day that if a fraction of it were shown to the wayfarers and ardent lovers of the path of God, they would swoon with extreme ecstasy until the end of their lives and fall on their faces to remain in prostration of gratitude until Judgment’s Day....”[270]

In reality, as A-yatulla-h Tehra-ni later explains in his biographical account of his mentor, the event of Kerbala-’ is like a double sided coin, one side of which is love, zeal, victory and the triumphant attainment of the Ima-m (as), and the other side is sorrow, grief torment, torture, and mourning. A-yatulla-h Tehra-ni- believes that one can only see its other side (i.e. the side of ‘ishq) after one has seen the sorrowful side and transcended it. He says:

A-yatulla-h Tehra-ni- says[271]:

اما سایر افراد مردم که در عالم کثرات گرفتارند و از نفس برون نیامده اند حتما باید گریه و انی کنند تا بدین طریق بتوانند راه را طی کنند و بدان مقصد عالی عزاداری و سینه زنی و نوحه خو نائل آیند...همچنانکه در روایات کثیره مستفیضه ما را امر به عزاداری نموده اند تا بدین وسیله جان خود را پاک کنیم و با آن سروران در طی این سبیل هم آهنگ گردیم

“But those who are still captives within the realm of multiplicity and have not emerged from the domain of the self, they should definitely engage in lamentation and mourning, in beating their breasts and reciting elegies so that thereby they may traverse the way and reach the high goal...Accordingly, in a large number of traditions we have been commanded to mourn, so that we may purify our souls by these means and fall in step with those masters in traversing this way.”[272]

All these radiant narratives demonstrate that the path is open for the faithful believers too. If one adopts the path of Ima-m al-Husayn (as) and his sincere followers, he can reach the husnu’l ha-l

that he or she eagerly asks from Almighty Alla-h from this noble supplication.

Notes:

[249] Mufrada-tu Alfa-zi'l Qur'a-n, pg. 235

[250] In his Mufrada-t al-Isfaha-ni- has extensively discussed about the etymology of the word 'ila-h.' He reports different origins for the same. One of these, he says, is ولاء 'wila-h' (passionate love). At the onset it was pronounced as wila-h; thereafter the letter wa-w (و) was changed into the letter hamza (!) and it became ila -h. And God was named wila-h because every created being has passionate love for Him. Al-Isfaha-ni- says:

لَا وَلَكِنْ بِحَمْدِهِ يُسَبِّحُ الْأَشْيَاءُ مِنْ وَإِنْ: تَعَالَى وَعَلَيْهِ دَل قَوْلُهُ ، قَالَ بَعْضُ الْحُكَمَاءِ: اللَّهُ مَحْبُوبُ الْأَشْيَاءِ كُلِّهَا
تَسْبِيحَهُمْ تَفْقَهُونَ

“A certain theosophist is reported to have said, ‘Alla-h is the beloved of all things.’ And upon this does the following speech of Almighty Alla-h indicate: ‘And there is nothing save that it glorifies Alla-h and praises Him, but you do not comprehend their glorification.’” [Mufrada-tu Alfa-zi'l Qur'a-n, pg. 83]

[251] Dr. Ra-mi-l Badi- 'Ya'qu-b, Mawsu-'at al-Nahw wa al-Sarf wa al-l'ra-b, pg. 186

[252] Mafa-ti-h al-Jina-n, v. 1, pg. 299

[253] Ibid.

[254] Balad al-Ami-n, v. 1, pg. 60

[255] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 4, pg. 254

[256] Ibid., v. 4, pg. 257

[257] Ibid., v. 10, pg. 334

[258] Holy Qur'a-n, 56:22

[259] Ibid., 56:17

[260] Ibid., 2:221

[261] Wasa'il al-Shi'a, v. 5, pg. 340

[262] Usul al-Kafi, v. 5, pg. 324

[263] Holy Qur'an, 32:7

[264] Nu-run 'Ala- Nu-r, section 9, pg. 78

[265] al-Isha-rah wa al-Tanbihat, pg. 350 [trans. By Shams Inati, pg. 78 – Translation]

[266] al-Isha-rah wa al-Tanbihat, pg. 364 [trans. By Shams Inati, pg. 89 – Translation]

[267] Ma'ani al-Akhbar, pg. 288

[268] Holy Qur'an, 89:27-30

[269] Ru-h-e-Mujarrad, pg. 84

[270] Spirit Immaterial, translated by Sayyid 'Ali- Qu-li- Qara'i-, Al-Tawhid Quarterly Journal, v. 12, no.3, pp. 42-43

[271] Ru-h-e-Mujarrad, pg. 91

[272] Spirit Immaterial, translated by Sayyid 'Ali- Qu-li- Qara'i-, Al-Tawhid Quarterly Journal, v. 12, no.3, pp. 52

Section 13 : O Alla-h, Change Our Unpleasant State Into Your Beautiful State/2

الدَّيْنَ عَنَّا اقْضِ اللَّهُمَّ

O Alla-h, Facilitate the Payment of Our Debt

We have already discussed extensively on the subject of debt in our commentary on the verse 'Alla-humma aqdi dayna kulli- madi-n' (O Alla-h, facilitate the payment of the debt of every indebted one). It is possible that this verse speaks about the same subject, but is an emphasis and

thus reveals the fundamental importance of relieving oneself from debt before departing this mortal world. In fact, if we look at several other supplications, we find that the following two requests have frequently come together: seeking relief from debt and enriching oneself (wa aghnina- min al-faqr - which is to follow).

Following are some examples:

1. In a supplication that the Holy Prophet (s) is narrated to have taught his beloved daughter Fatimah I for sustenance, we find the following:

...الْفَقْرِ مِنْ وَأَعْنِينِي الدَّيْنَ عَنِّي إِقْضِ ... وَالْفَرْقَانَ وَالرَّبُورَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ التَّوْرَةَ مُنْزِلٍ ۝، شَيْ كُلِّ وَرَبُّ رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ

“Alla-h is our Lord and the Lord of all things; He is the Revealer of Torah, Inji-l, Zabu-r and Furqa-n...facilitate the payment of my debt and make me needless...”[273]

2. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said to his noble companion Salma-n:

الْفَقْرِ مِنْ وَأَعْنِينِي الدَّيْنَ عَنِّي أَقْضِ رَبِّي تَقُولُ أَنْ أَكْثَرَ: سَلْمَانَ يَا

“O Salma-n frequently say: ‘O Lord, pay for me my debt and make me needless.’”[274]

3. In the well-known supplication of ‘Alqamah we recite:

... وَالْفَقْرِ مِنْ وَتُجِيرَنِي دِينِي عَنِّي وَتَقْضِي ...

“...and pay for me my debt and save me from my poverty...”[275]

4. In a lengthy supplication recommended for the first day of the Holy month of Ramada-n we say:

عَنِّي وَأَقْضِ وَإِلَهُ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلَى فَصَلِّ ۞، شَيْ دُونَكَ فَلَيْسَ الظَّاهِرُ وَأَنْتَ ۞، شَيْ بَعْدَكَ فَلَيْسَ الْآخِرُ وَأَنْتَ ۞، شَيْ قَبْلَكَ فَلَيْسَ الْأَوَّلُ أَنْتَ الْفَقْرِ مِنْ وَأَعْنِينِي الدَّيْنَ

“You are the First[276], and thus there is none before You, and You are the Last, and therefore there is none after You; and You are the Apparent, and therefore there is none other than You; so send Your Blessings on Muhammad and his progeny (as) and facilitate the payment of my debt and make me needless.”[277]

The supplicant therefore, is humbly asking Almighty Alla-h to make his situation such that after having paid his debts, he would never need to take another debt again. For he realizes how difficult it is to be suspended by debt, and thus would like to be free from its chains so that if

death were to overtake him he would have nothing on his shoulders.

Another Aspect: Paying A Common Debt

Another probable meaning of this verse is that it speaks of a common debt that every human being shares. The phrase 'iqdi- 'anna- al-dayn'... اقض عنا الدين... (lit. pay for us the debt) can imply that all the human beings are in debt. This is when the article 'al' in al-Dayn is for 'determination' and thus refers to a particular debt. What kind of debt actually is this? There is well-known dictum (which some scholars narrate as a tradition[278]) that says:

دَيْنُهُ يُفْضَى لَا عَرِيمٍ، سُبْحَانَهُ اللَّهُ.

“Alla-h is a Creditor whose debt cannot be paid.”

A rephrasal of this dictum is mentioned in the first sermon of Ima-m 'Ali- (as) in Nahju'l Bala-ghah as follows:

.... الْمُجْتَهِدُونَ حَقَّهُ يُؤَدِّي وَلَا...

“...One Whose rights the diligent cannot fulfill...”[279]

In simpler words: He is One Whose rights cannot be fulfilled even by those who struggle hard and are diligent. In his Minha-j al-Bara-'ah- a commentary on the Nahju'l Bala-ghah - 'Alla-mah Habi-bulla-h al-Khu'i- expounds the above statement of Ima-m 'Ali- (as) as follows:

الْحَمْدُ لِأَنَّ حَمْدَهُ، بِوِطَائِفِ الْفَيْئَامِ يُمَكِّنُ لَا أَنَّهُ إِلَى السَّلَامِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَشَارَ الْآلَاءِ، وَحَمْدِ النِّعَمَاءِ، شُكْرٌ عَلَى الْفَيْئَامِ هُوَ اللَّازِمُ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمُرَادُ بِالْعَجْزِ الْإِعْتِرَافُ جِبْنَنْدِ فَالْأُولَى نِعْمِهِ، تَنَاهَى لِعَدَمِ الْمَحَامِدِ، مَنْ يَسْتَحِقُّهُ مَا يَنْقُضِي فَلَا وَشُكْرًا، حَمْدًا عَلَيْهِ فَيَسْتَحِقُّ نِعْمَهُ، جُمْلَةً مِنْ وَالْفُصُورِ.

“The meaning of compulsory rights [as depicted in the dictum of Ima-m 'Ali- (as) - 'One whose rights...'] is to thank God for His blessings and praise Him for His bestowals; therefore the Ima-m (as) alluded to the fact that it is impossible for one to bear the responsibility of praising Him, because 'to praise him' is in itself among His blessings, which then necessitates another praise and thanks; consequently, the praises that He deserves would never end, due to His endless blessings. Hence it is better to confess one's inability and shortcoming [in praising and thanking Him]...”[280]

Almighty Alla-h says in the Qur'a-n:

تُحْصُواهَا لَا اللَّهُ نِعْمَتَ تَعُدُّوا إِنَّ وَ

“...If you enumerate Alla-h’s blessings, you will not be able to count them...”[281]

In his supplication when confessing his shortcomings in giving thanks, Ima-m al-Sajja-d (as) says:

كَانَ إِلَّا اجْتَهَدَ وَإِنْ طَاعَتِكَ مِنْ مَبْلَغًا يَبْلُغُ وَلَا شُكْرًا يُلْزِمُهُ مَا إِحْسَانِكَ مِنْ عَلَيْهِ حَصَلَ إِلَّا غَايَةَ شُكْرِكَ مِنْ يَبْلُغُ لَا أَحَدًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ طَاعَتِكَ عَنْ مَقْصَرٍ وَأَعْبُدُهُمْ شُكْرِكَ، عَنْ عَاجِزٍ عِبَادِكَ فَأَشْكُرُ بِفَضْلِكَ اسْتِحْقَاقِكَ دُونَ قَصْرَاهُ.

O Alla-h,

no one reaches a limit in thanking You

without acquiring that of Your beneficence

which enjoys upon him thanksgiving,

Nor does anyone reach a degree in obeying You,

even if he strives,

without falling short of what You deserve

because of Your bounty.

The most thankful of Your servants

has not the capacity to thank You,

and the most worshipful of them

falls short of obeying You.[282]

Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is sermon 52 of Nahja’l Bala-ghah says:

وَلَوْ أَعْمَلَكُمْ جَزَتْ مَا أَقْبِيَهُ الدُّنْيَا مَا-الدُّنْيَا فِي عُمْرْتُمْ ثُمَّ دَمًا مِنْهُ رَهْبَةً أَوْ إِلَيْهِ رَغْبَةً مِنْ عِيُونِكُمْ وَسَأَلْتِ-انْمِيَاتًا قُلُوبِكُمْ انْمَانَتْ لَوْ وَاللَّهِ الْإِيمَانَ إِلَى إِيَّاكُمْ وَهَذَا-الْعِظَامَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْعَمَهُ-جَهْدِكُمْ مِنْ شَيْئًا تُنْفِقُوا لَمْ

“By Alla-h, if your hearts melt down thoroughly and your eyes shed tears of blood either in hope for Him or for fear from Him and you are also allowed to live in this world for all the time that it exists, even then your actions cannot pay for His great bounties over you and His having guided you towards faith.”[283]

Thanking Alla-h As He Deserves

But despite all this, Almighty Alla-h has shown us a method of thanking Him. Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said:

إِلَّا بِهِ أَشْكُرُكَ شُكْرٍ مِنْ سِوَالِي شُكْرِكَ حَقَّ أَشْكُرُكَ كَيْفَ رَبِّ يَا: فَقَالَ. شُكْرِي حَقَّ أَشْكُرُنِي مُوسَى يَا: (ع) مُوسَى إِلَى تَعَالَى اللَّهُ أَوْحَى مِنِّي ذَلِكَ أَنْ عَلِمْتَ حِينَ شُكْرِي حَقَّ شُكْرُنِي مُوسَى يَا: فَقَالَ. عَلَيَّ بِهِ أَنْعَمْتَ وَأَنْتَ

“Alla-h, the Exalted, Revealed unto Mu-sa- (as): ‘O Mu-sa-, thank Me the way I deserve to be thanked. Mu-sa- (as) said: O Lord, how can I thank you the way You deserve to be thanked, while there is no gratitude that I express save that it in itself is a blessing that You have bestowed on me; Alla-h said: O Mu-sa-, It is now that you have thanked me the way I deserve to be thanked, knowing that that was from me.”[284]

Therefore understanding the fact that ‘every thanksgiving’ is in itself a blessing of Almighty Alla-h on His servant is highly important. Rather those who have realized through Divine Revelation (Qur’a-n), intellectual reasoning (burha-n) or inner vision (‘irfa-n) that every element of their beings depend on the Almighty, whether in the level of their essence, attributes or actions, are in a better position of achieving this kind of thankfulness. The following verse of the Holy Qur’a-n clearly says the every being together with its action stands by the permission of Almighty Alla-h:

تَعْمَلُونَ مَا وَ خَلَقَكُمْ اللَّهُ وَ

“And Alla-h has created you and whatever you do.”[285]

Therefore whatever good we do, whether in form of thanks, praise, worship, etc. all belong to Almighty Alla-h and are by His permission, succor (tawfi-q), and assistance. Neither is our essence our property nor our actions of virtue. Therefore ‘paying the common debt of Alla-h’ can never be conceived. Consequently, asking Alla-h to pay our common debt is like asking Him to accept our deeds of worship, praise and thanks.

Thanking the Means of Grace - a Condition of Thanking Alla-h

Although every advantage that we receive is principally from and by Alla-h, there are secondary causes that Almighty Alla-h Creates to allow things to happen. For example, He helps His poor servants through His benevolent rich ones. He feeds the human beings through the plants and animals and requires them to work and facilitate the conditions of preparing food so that they can consume it and maintain their health to worship and get closer to Him. Therefore it would be incorrect to discard the ‘intermediary’ of an advantage by saying that my monotheistic outlook

dictates that al-shukr lilla-h (thanks belong solely to Alla-h). It is correct to say that thanks belong solely to Alla-h, but the Almighty has taught the human being to show gratitude to one who does anything good to someone despite his limitation and utter dependence. Observe the following narrations:

1. Ima-m al-Sa-diq (as) is reported to have said:

يَدِهِ عَلَى النِّعْمَةِ تَلْكَ أَجْرَى مَنْ تَشْكُرَ أَنْ لِلَّهِ الشُّكْرُ حَقٌّ مِنْ

“An example of thanking Alla-h the way He deserves to be thanked is when you thank one in whose hands He enabled the blessing to take place.”[286]

2. Ima-m al-Rida- (as) is reported to have said:

وَجَلَّ عَزَّ اللَّهُ يَشْكُرُ لَمْ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ مِنَ الْمُنْعَمِ يَشْكُرُ لَمْ مَنْ

“Whosoever does not thank the giver of the blessing from among the creatures, would not thank Alla-h, the Invincible and Majestic.”[287]

Alla-h is the both the Sha-kir [one who thanks] and the Mashkur [one who is thanked]

Having understood the monotheistic outlook that every action of ours entirely comes into being and subsists by Alla-h, it is clear that both the sha-kir and the mashku-r is Alla-h. Mulla- Ha-di-Sabzawa-ri- in his Sharh al-Asma-' under the verse ‘...ya- khayra Sha-kirin wa Mashku-r, ya- khayra Ha-midin wa Mahmu-d...’ says:

الْمَحْمُودِيَّةَ أَنْ يُقْصَدَ لَا (الْحَمْدُ لَهُ) : يَقِيلُ إِذَا أَنَّهُ سَابِقًا ذَكَرْنَا قَدْ : (وَمَحْمُودٍ حَامِدٍ خَيْرَ يَا وَمَشْكُورٍ، شَاكِرٍ خَيْرَ يَا وَمَذْكُورٍ، ذَاكِرٍ خَيْرَ يَا) وَبِهِ لَهُ وَنَظَائِرُهَا وَالْحَامِدِيَّةُ وَالشَّاكِرِيَّةُ فَالذَّاكِرِيَّةُ تَعَالَى، وَبِهِ لَهُ أَيْضًا الْحَامِدِيَّةُ أَنْ الْمَقْصُودُ بَلَّ تَعَالَى، لَهُ وَكَلَّا أَطْرَ وَقَعَتْ أَيْنَمَا فَقَطُّ تَعَالَى وَقُوَّتِهِ بِحَوْلِهِ إِنَّهُ : يُقَالُ أَنْ الْمَرَاتِبِ بَعْضُ فِي الْأُولَى وَالْعِبَارَةُ تَعَالَى.

“We mentioned earlier that if it is said ‘to Him belongs all praises’ it does not only mean that every praise wherever it may occur belongs to Alla-h, but also means that ‘the agency of praise’ [wherever it may be] too belongs to Alla-h and takes place by Him; hence thankfulness (sha-kiriyyah), remembrance (dha-kiriyyah), praise (ha-midiyyah) and the like [all] belong to him and take place by Him, the Exalted. And a better expression about the same in a certain level is to say: that it [i.e. praise, thankfulness, etc.] transpires by His power and strength, the Exalted.”[288]

Ima-m Husayn (as) in his famous supplication of ‘Arafah alludes to the subtly that even before we try to remember Him, He remembers us. He attracts us; He pulls us; He encourages us to thank and praise and remember Him. If we were to free ourselves from the spatial limitations, we

can understand a subtler meaning to such precedence: Not only does He Remember us before we remember Him, but causally it is essential for Him to Remember us so that we Remember Him. Rather, our remembrance is entirely by Him. Ima-m Husayn (as) says:

...الذَّاكِرِينَ قَبْلَ الذَّاكِرِ أَنْتَ...

“...You are the Rememberer before the rememberers...”[289]

Alla-h is Thanked according to the Limitation of the Thankful One

It should be noted that although the tradition on shukr that we mentioned earlier clearly states how one can thank Almighty Alla-h appropriately, it makes a hint to the fact that thanking Him the way He deserves is beyond the limitation of the human being. None can ever claim that he has thanked Almighty Alla-h for every blessing. Firstly, because every ‘thanks’ necessitates another thanks, since thanking him is a blessing in itself. And secondly, we cannot enumerate and count the blessings of Almighty Alla-h. Ima-m al-Sajja-d (as) in his prayer Muna-ja-t al-Sha-kiri-n mentions these two reasons as follows:

بِتَخْصِيلِ لِي فَكَيْفَ اسْتِقْصَائِهَا، عَنِ فَضْلًا إِذْرَاكِهِ عَنْ فَهْمِي قَصْرَ كَثِيرَةٍ وَنِعْمَاؤُكَ إِحْصَائِهَا، عَنْ لِسَانِي ضَعْفَ جَمَّةٍ فَالْأُوْكَ...
الْحَمْدُ لَكَ أَقُولُ أَنْ لِدَلِّكَ عَلَيَّ وَجِبَ الْحَمْدُ لَكَ قُلْتُ فَكُلَّمَا شُكِرْتُ؟ إِلَى يَفْتَقِرُ إِلَيْكَ وَشُكْرِي الشُّكْرِ

“Your boons are abundant -

my tongue is too weak to count them!

Your favours are many -

my understanding falls short of grasping them,

not to speak of exhausting them!

So how can I achieve thanksgiving?

For my thanking You requires thanksgiving.

Whenever I say, ‘To You belongs praise!’,

it becomes thereby incumbent upon me to say,

‘To You belongs praise!’[290]

Therefore, no one should ever think that he or she has the ability to thank Him the way He deserves. Yes, out of His overflowing Mercy, He accepts the thankfulness and praise of one who has realized that his thankfulness itself is from Alla-h and that it deserves another thanking. But that should not be taken as the ‘perfect’ thanks of the ‘abd (servant of Alla-h). Rather it should be taken as ‘the imperfect and incomplete thanks ‘accepted by the All-Merciful. Furthermore the degrees of comprehending that every thanksgiving is a blessing and from Alla-h are various. Whereas some have accepted this truth by following the Revelation, others have established its verity through intellectual reasoning. Another group however, due to the purification of their hearts, can literally behold this truth through presential knowledge (al-’ilm al-hudu-ri-).

In another supplication Ima-m al-Sajja-d (as) confesses that the dhikr (remembrance of Alla-h, whether that be in the form of thanks (shukr), praise (hamd), etc.) of the supplicant is according to his imperfect state and not according to what Almighty Alla-h deserves. In his Muna-ja-t al-Dha-kiri-n, Ima-m al-Sajja-d (as) whispers:

...بِقَدْرِكَ لَا يَقْدِرِي لَكَ ذِكْرِي أَنْ عَلَىٰ إِيَّاكَ، ذِكْرِي [عَنْ] مِنْ لَنْزَاهَتِكَ أَمْرًا قَبُولِ مِنَ الْوَاجِبِ لَوْلَا إِلَهِي. الرَّحِيمِ نِ الرَّحْمَةِ اللَّهُ بِسْمِ

“My God,

were it not incumbent to accept Your command,

I would declare You far too exalted for me to remember You,

for I remember You in my measure,

not in Your measure...”[291]

Worship - A Form of Thanking Almighty Alla-h

Those who have realized the utter dependence of the human being and the absolute affluence of Almighty Alla-h would never deem whatever they do as perfect. Consequently, they would not worship Almighty Alla-h in transaction for Paradise. They would worship Him because He deserves to be worshipped. Their worship would be a worship of thankfulness or love. Ima-m ‘Ali- (as) is reported to have said:

عِبَادَةُ فِتْلِكَ شُكْرًا اللَّهُ عَبْدُوا قَوْمًا وَإِنَّ الْعَبِيدَ، عِبَادَةُ فِتْلِكَ رَهْبَةً اللَّهُ عَبْدُوا قَوْمًا وَإِنَّ التُّجَّارَ، عِبَادَةُ فِتْلِكَ رَغْبَةً اللَّهُ عَبْدُوا قَوْمًا إِنَّ الْأَحْرَارَ.

“Surely a people worshipped Alla-h in anticipation [of reward]; this is the worship of traders; and a

people worshipped Alla-h out of fear [of Hell]; this is the worship of bondsman; and another group of people worshipped Alla-h out of thankfulness, this is the worship of the liberated and free ones (ahra-r).”[292]

Readers can appreciate the fundamental reason why some worship Alla-h as a transaction. It is due to their ignorance of the relation between the human being and Alla-h. They feel they can offer something independent from themselves. They do not realize that every perfect action entirely stands by Alla-h:

اللَّهُ فَمِنْ نِعْمَةٍ مِّنْ بِكُمْ وَمَا

Whatever blessing you have is from God...[293]

It should however not be misunderstood and thought that every evil deed also stems from Almighty Alla-h. Indeed it is through the support of Almighty that every deed regardless of its nature is done. The human beings however have a volition and can choose what to do. The human conscience is a proof to this contention. When they resolve to do bad, Almighty Alla-h out of His Wisdom does not intercept their way. Rather every movement they make is entirely by His support. Trial and tribulation, and obedience and disobedience would carry no meaning if every one was forced to do what Almighty Alla-h wants. Therefore good and bad is by His support but not forced by Him on man.

It should also be realized that ‘to do bad’ stems from imperfection on the part of the human being. And imperfection is the non-existence of a perfection, which does not require any cause. Therefore attributing the non-existence of a perfection to Almighty Alla-h is evidently absurd. For example, the stingy behavior of a certain person reveals deficiency on his part. The person lacks the ‘broadness of heart’ and the trait of ‘open-handedness (ju-d).’ We cannot say that Almighty Alla-h creates his stinginess. This is because stinginess (bukhl) is not a trait to be created. It is the absence of a trait. But when the person is openhanded and benevolent, the trait of benevolence which is an existential trait (sifah wuju-diyah) needs a cause. And it is only by Almighty Alla-h that this trait can exist and subsist. Therefore we can say that benevolence is from and by Alla-h, but we cannot say that stinginess is from and by Alla-h. Yes, the actions that stem from a stingy heart, need the support and strength of Alla-h. However, since Almighty Alla-h has given every one a free will, he himself chooses the action and Alla-h (swt) enables him to carry out the same. But that should not lead us to imagine that Alla-h has forced him to do the action.

The Holy Prophet’s (s) Worship

Several traditions narrate that the Holy Prophet (s) would worship Almighty Alla-h so much that his feet would get swollen. He was once asked by one of his wives: ‘Why do you distress yourself

when Almighty Alla-h has forgiven all your past and future sins?’ and he replied: ‘should I not be a thankful servant of Alla-h?’[294]

Despite all this, he (s) is reported to have said:

عِبَادَتِكَ حَقَّ نَاكَ عِبْدُ مَا...

“We have not worshiped you the way You deserve to be worshipped...”

The angels of Alla-h (swt) likewise, despite their utter purity and perpetual worship, declare their shortcoming in worshipping Almighty Alla-h the way He deserves to be worshipped. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said to Abu- Dharr:

رَبَّنَا سُبْحَانَكَ: جَمِيعًا فَيَقُولُونَ الْآخِرَةَ، النَّفْخَةُ الصُّورِ فِي يُنْفَخُ حَتَّى رُؤُوسُهُمْ رَفَعُوا مَا اللَّهُ، خِيفَةَ مِنْ قِيَامًا مَلَائِكَةُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ! ذَرَّ أَبَا يَا تُعْبُدُ أَنْ لَكَ يَنْبَغِي كَمَا عِبْدُ نَاكَ مَا وَبِحَمْدِكَ،

“O Abu- Dharr, surely Alla-h has angels who stand in fear of Him; they would not raise their heads until the final blow of the trumpet; thereupon all of them would say: Free from imperfection are You, Our Lord, and we praise You; we did not worship You the way You should be worshipped.”[295]

And Ima-m al-Sajja-d (as) alluding to this in one of his supplications quotes the angels of Alla-h saying:

عِبَادَتِكَ حَقَّ نَاكَ عِبْدُ مَا سُبْحَانَكَ.

“Free from imperfection are You! We have not worshipped You the way You deserve to be worshipped.”[296]

Hence one should never rely on any of his deeds of virtue. Obviously this does not mean that he should despair and think that his deeds have no value. One should instead totally rely on the Grace of the All-Merciful and continue in his struggle of perfection.

A Noteworthy Incident

The night before he left for the hospital where he was to pass the last moments of his life, the late A-yatulla-h Khumayni- was in the company of Mrs. Fa-timah Taba-taba-'i-, his daughter-in-law among other relatives. The latter narrates the following conversation, which took place after A-yatulla-h Khumayni- had eaten very little of his dinner:

A-yatulla-h Khumayni:- Now I have one or two advices for you: I shall not return. However, I don't want you to express grief and anxiety on my demise. I am asking God to give you patience. Be careful not to weep and lament. This is what I had to say.”

Fa-timah Taba-taba-'i:- I and Kha-num (the wife of A-yatulla-h Khumayni-) were present; I do not recollect exactly; I think Zahra- Kha-num Ishra-qi- was (also) present. I don't know whether someone else was present or not. It was difficult for us to listen to this issue; all of us had turned sad.

Kha-num said: No, A-gha-, God Willing, you will recover...

A-yatulla-h Khumayni:- No, I will not return. However, let me tell you this: to go [to the next world] is very difficult; to go [to the next world] is very difficult.’

Fa-tima Taba-taba-'i- said: ‘A-gha-, If you say all this, then we shall greatly lose our hopes. This is because, as far as I know, although I am young, those who have been with you narrate that not only have you performed all the obligatory deeds, and abstained from the forbidden ones, you have also observed the recommended acts and even abstained from most of the unpleasant deeds (makru-ha-t). If it is really difficult for you also, then what should we say? We get greatly despondent.

A-yatulla-h Khumayni:- ‘No, you must not despair from God's Mercy[297]; this itself is the greatest sin...[298] However, bear this in mind that to go [to the next world] is very difficult; I do not have any [good] deed, so that I should want to be happy thereby.’

Fa-timah Taba-taba-'i:- But A-gha-, these words that you utter are very difficult for us to bear, for if it is as such, we are extremely frightened, worried and upset.’

A-yatulla-h Khumayni:- ‘It is really as such. If Hadrat Sajja-d (as) wept and said: “O Lord it is likely that my good deeds are bad”[299], do I possess a deed to get happy and confident thereby? I only have hope of God's Grace[300] and have no [action] at my credit to be hopeful...; and to go [to the next world] is very difficult; to go [to the next world] is very difficult.

The doctors then came, and Ima-m [Khumayni-] said: ‘It is time to leave.’[301]

A Supplication to the Only Beloved

O Alla-h, all of us have debts to pay. Some pertain to the material world and others concern the immaterial realm. You Have taught us how important it is to ensure that our debts are paid before we enter Your sanctuary of love. Therefore enable us to pay our debts. You very well know that

the common debt that all of us have to pay can never be paid unless You forgive us and accept our few deeds of virtue, if any. O Alla-h, we have no hope in our actions however much we have struggled; our hope is on Your Enveloping Mercy. Therefore deprive us not from the same. Our hope (raja-'), which again is entirely by Your Grace, is our capital asset (ra'suma-l). Enable us to maintain it so that it can facilitate the Divine spark to glow in our spirits and always inspire us to come closer to You.

It is indeed interesting to note the extent of hope in our infallible Ima-ms (as), who enjoyed very exalted stations: Ima-m 'Ali- (as) whispers in his Sha'ba-n whisperings (Muna-ja-t al-Sha'aba-niyyah):

أُحِبُّكَ أَنِّي أَهْلَهَا أَعْلَمْتُ النَّارَ أَذْخَلْتَنِي إِنَّ

“If you place me in the Hell Fire I will inform its inhabitants that I love You...”[302]

And in his well-known Du'a- al-Kumayl he cries:

ضَجِيحٌ أَهْلِهَا بَيْنَ إِلَيْكَ لِأَضِجَنَّ نَاطِقًا، تَرَكْتَنِي لِنُنْ صَادِقًا، أَقْسَمُ وَمَوْلَايَ سَيِّدِي يَا قَبِيحَ نَبِيِّكَ عَفْوِكَ؟ وَرَجَائِي النَّارِ فِي أَسْكُنُ كَيْفَ أَمْ
...الْفَاقِدِينَ بُكَاءَ عَلَيْكَ وَلَا بُكَيْنَ...الْأَمْلِينَ

“How can I stay in the Hell Fire when I am hopeful of Your forgiveness; for by Your Invincibility, O my Leader and my Master- I swear truthfully, if you do allow me to speak; I would surely cry to You among its inhabitants, the cry of the hopeful... and I would most surely lament for You the lamentation of those who are separate from their dear ones...”[303]

Notes:

[273] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 29, pg. 297

[274] al-Mu'jam al-Kabi-r, pg. 233

[275] Mafa-ti-h al-Jina-n, v. 1, pg. 459

[276] This supplication reveals the Pre-eternity & Necessity of the Non-Composite Creator.

[277] al-Iqba-l al-A'ma-l, v. 1, pg. 130

[278] This dictum is mentioned by 'Allamah Taba-taba- 'i- in the introduction of al-Mi-za-n [See Tafsi-r al-Mi-za-n, v. 1, pg. 27]. In his anthology of questions (Dar Mahdare Usta-d) that he had

asked the grand 'Alla-mah during his life time, Hujjat al-Isla-m Rukhsha-d quotes this dictum as a hadi-th and attributes the same to 'Alla-mah. The reference however has not been cited. Nevertheless, the dictum itself bears witness to its veracious content.

[279] Nahj al-Bala-ghah, Sermon 1

[280] Minha-j al-Bara-'ah fi Sharhi Nahj al-Bala-ghah, v. 1, pg. 247

[281] Holy Qur'a-n, 14:34

[282] al-Sahi-fat al-Sajja-diyah (The Psalms of Isla-m, English Translation by William Chittick), Supplication no. 37, pp. 123-124

[283] Nahj al-Bala-ghah, sermon 52, pg. 72

[284] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 13, pg. 351

[285] Holy Qur'a-n, 37:96

[286] Wasa-'il al-Shi-'ah, v. 16, pg. 311

[287] Ibid., v. 16, pg. 313

[288] Sharh al-Asma-', pp. 759-760

[289] Du'a-' al-'Arafah, Mafa-ti-h al-Jina-n, v. 1, pg. 273

[290] al-Sahi-fah al-Sajja-diyah (The Psalms of Isla-m, English Translation by William Chittick), Supplication no. 37, pp. 243-244

[291] Sahi-fat al-Sajja-diyah, pg. 255

[292] Nahj al-Bala-ghah, wisdom no. 237

[293] Holy Qur'a-n, 16:53

[294] Biha-r al-Anwa-r, v. 16, pg. 264

[295] Maka-rim al-Akhla-q, v. 1, pg. 464

[296] al-Sahi-fat al-Sajja-diyah, sug. no.3

[297] The Holy Qur'a-n [39:54] says: Say: O My servants who have been extravagant against yourselves, do not despair of Alla-h's Mercy; surely Alla-h forgives sins altogether. Surely, He is the All-forgiving, the All-compassionate. The Holy Qur'a-n [15:56] also says: He said, 'And who despairs of the Mercy of his Lord, excepting those that are astray?'

[298] Ima-m 'Ali- A is reported to have once told a person, whom fear had made to despair, due to the amplex of his sins: 'O you! Your despondency of Alla-h's Mercy is worse than your sins.' [Ja-mi' al-Sa'a-da-t, vol. 1, pg. 247]

[299] This also refers to what Imam al-Husayn A says in his famous supplication of 'Arafah. He says: 'O God, one whose good deeds are bad, how can his bad deeds not be bad?' [Mafati-h al-Jina-n, Du'a- al-'Arafah by Ima-m al-Husayn A].

[300] The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said: 'Know that no one of you will be saved by his action, including me; except if Alla-h's Mercy and Grace were to cover me.' (Mi-za-n al-Hikmah, new ed., vol. 3, pg. 2131)

[301] Fasl-e Sabr - Memoirs of the days of Ima-m's illness and demise by the team of physicians and those affiliated to A-yatulla-h Khumayni-, pp. 83-84.

[302] Mafa-ti-h al-Jina-n, v. 1, pg. 158

[303] Ibid.,v. 1, pg. 65

Section 15 : Surely You Are All-Powerful Over Everything

قَدِيرٌ شَيْءٌ كُلٌّ عَلَىٰ إِيَّاكَ

Surely You Are All-Powerful Over Everything

Al-Qadi-r is one of the most beautiful names (al-Asma-' al-Husna-) of Almighty Alla-h. Theologians (mutakallimu-n) define it as:

...عَنْهُ نَاقِصاً وَلَا عَلَيْهِ زَائِدًا لَا الْحِكْمَةَ تَقْتَضِي مَا قَدَّرَ عَلَى يَشَاءُ لِمَا الْفَاعِلُ هُوَ...

“...One who does whatever He wants according to Wisdom, nothing more or less than that...”[322]

And the form (wazn) of the word “Qadi-r” which is fa’i-l فَعِيل denotes permanence. Therefore, He is permanently Able and Powerful.

Not only is He Powerful, but he is the Powerful, such that none other than He has any kind of independent power. If any power is found with anyone it is by the permission of Alla-h. No one can claim to have a power ‘other than His Power.’ Every conceivable power exists and subsists by His Power. The following dictum, which appears in a number of supplications, refers to this very subtle issue:

بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا قُوَّةٌ وَلَا حَوْلٌ لَا

“There is no strength or power save by Alla-h.”[323]

The Holy Qur’a-n, emphasizing the fact that every kind of power belongs to Alla-h, says:

الْعَذَابِ شَدِيدٌ اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ جَمِيعًا لِلَّهِ الْقُوَّةُ أَنَّ الْعَذَابَ يَرَوْنَ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا الَّذِينَ يَرَىٰ وَلَوْ

“...though the wrongdoers will see, when they sight the punishment, that power, altogether, belongs to God, and that God is severe in punishment...”[324]

Realizing this, we conclude that only He can fulfill all our aforementioned requests. It is therefore important to seek His assistance solely. In saying ‘Innaka ‘ala- kulli shay’in Qadi-r’ we mean ‘since You are All-Powerful, we ask all the aforementioned needs from You.’

If we ponder over the Holy Qur’a-n we find that many of the verses are concluded with Names of Almighty Alla-h. Exegetes say that in order to understand such verses properly, we should try to reflect on these Divine Names, for they form the reason behind the verses. For example in verse 1 of chapter al-Fa-tir we read:

كُلٌّ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنْ يَشَاءُ مَا الْخَلْقِ فِي يَرِيدُ وَرُبَاعٌ وَثَلَاثٌ وَمِئَاتٌ أَوْ أُخْرَجَ أُولَىٰ رُسُلًا الْمَلَائِكَةِ جَاعِلٍ وَالْأَرْضِ السَّمَوَاتِ فَاطِرٍ اللَّهُ الْحَمْدُ قَدِيرٌ شَيْءٍ

“All praise belongs to God, originator of the heavens and the earth, maker of the Angels [His] messengers, possessing wings, two, three or four [of them]. He adds to the creation whatever He wishes. Indeed God has power over all things.”[325]

Commenting on the last clause of this verse, ‘Alla-mah Tabataba’i- says:

أَطْهَرُ وَالْأَوَّلُ الْأَخِيرَةَ الْجُمْلَةَ أَوْ مُتَقَدِّمًا مَا لِجَمِيعِ تَعْلِيلٍ (قَدِيرٌ شَيْءٍ كُلِّ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ) وَقَوْلُهُ

“The clause ‘Indeed God has power over all things’ of the verse is a reason for all the aforementioned [i.e. originating the Heavens and the earth, making the angels...etc.] or a reason for the last clause [i.e. He adds to the creation whatever He wishes]. But the former is more apparent [i.e. it is a reason for all the aforementioned].”[326]

Likewise is the case with many of our supplications[327], including the supplication under discussion. If we look at the supplication as a whole, we would realize that the last verse is the reason behind all the aforementioned verses. In other words:

- * Since only Alla-h is the All-Powerful, only He Can do whatever He Wants;
- * Therefore we seek all the aforementioned requests from Him.

In the previous verses we came to realize that God has a universal law: to get things done by their causes. Hence we should also seek the causes of what we aspire. However, we emphasized that the Principal Cause is Almighty Alla-h alone. Therefore we should not look at the agent of grace as an independent provider. The only Independent Provider is Alla-h. To Him Alone belongs everything in all the stages of its existence and subsistence. Therefore, to rely on the causes stems from ignorance and is a manifestation of practical polytheism.

Was it was not for him I would have perished?

There is an ignorant tendency among some people when it comes to appreciating the help they receive from their friends. A well-wisher may support a person and his family, and thereby emancipate him from many obstacles in life. Then, having attained the state of affluence, the person would say I thank Alla-h first and then so and so, for had it not been for his assistance I would not have reached where I am. Such kind of thinking in our traditions is termed as practical polytheism. This is because the helper is just an intermediary of grace (wa-sitah) and has no independence whatsoever, and thus cannot be taken as a second independent helper.

The great saint Ibn Fahd al-Hilli- in his well-known prayer manual ‘Uddat al-Da’i- narrates the following tradition:

لَهَأَكْتُ، فَلَانَ لَا لَوْ: لِرَجُلٍ اِقْوَلُ هُوَ: قَالَ، (مُشْرِكُونَ وَهُمْ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ أَكْثَرُ يُؤْمِنُ وَمَا (تَعَالَى اللَّهُ قَوْلُ فِي (ص) اللَّهُ عَبْدُ أَبِي عَنْ لَوْلَا فَيَقُولُ: قُلْتُ عَنْهُ؟ وَيَدْفَعُ يَرْزُقُهُ مُلْكِهِ فِي شَرِيكَائِهِ جَعَلَ قَدْ أَنَّهُ تَرَى أَلَا. عِيَالِي لَضَاعَ فَلَانَ وَلَوْلَا وَكَذَا، كَذَا أَصْنَبْتُ لَمَا فَلَانَ وَلَوْلَا وَنَحْوَهُ بِهِذَا بَأْسَ لَا نَعَمْ، قَالَ لَهَأَكْتُ؟ بِفُلَانٍ عَلَيَّ مِنَ اللَّهِ أَنْ

“Ima-m Abu- ‘Abdilla-h (al-Sa-diq (as)) is reported to have said about the verse (And most of them do not believe in Alla-h without associating others (with Him)) (12:106) that it refers to when a man says: ‘Was it not for so and so, I would have perished, and was it not for so and so I would not have got such and such a thing, and was it not for so and so, my family would perish. Don’t you see that he has made a partner for Alla-h in His Kingdom, who sustains him and averts [evil from him]? [The narrator says:] I said: ‘What if he were to say if Alla-h would not have Blessed me with so and so I would have perished. The Ima-m (as) said: Yes, there is no problem in this and the like.”[328]

The above however should not lead one to overlook the traditions of expressing gratitude and thanks to whosoever has done good. Such traditions emphasize the ‘nobility’ of the agent of Alla-h’s Grace. But gratitude should never be mingled with polytheism and words of ignorance. In fact the good doer is required to express gratitude to Almighty Alla-h for having given him the succor (tawfi-q) to do all the good, and hence be availed with the Godly spirit.

The Imperfection of the Receptacle

Some times although the agent of grace is infinitely able, but the receptacle of grace is imperfect. Therefore, if the receptacle due to its narrowness cannot attain more than its capacity, the fault is not with the Provider of Grace, Who is al-Jawa-d, and always wishes to give more and more. To explain this law, Almighty Alla-h cites a very beautiful a parable is Su-rat al-Ra’d:

يَقْدِرُهَا أَوْدِيَةً فَسَالَتْ مَاءَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ أَنْزَلِ

“He sent down water from the sky, and the channels flowed, each according to their measure...”[329]

Hence, water is poured down in abundance, but not all receptacles receive equally. Those receptacles, which are narrow receive less, whereas those with greater capacity receive more. Therefore, it is not the fault of the provider, but the recipient and receptacle.

If this law is correctly understood, we will be able to realize the reason why many of the aforementioned requests are not accomplished. Consider the first two verses of this noble supplication and apply the same law in the other verses:

O Alla-h: Instill happiness in the hearts of the inhabitants of the grave.

We said that one of the means of instilling happiness in the grave is seeking forgiveness for the deceased:

...وَالْإِسْتِغْفَارَ عَلَيْهِ دِيَانَةٌ لِيَفْرَحَ أَلْمَيِّتُ

“Surely a dead person rejoices when he is pitied upon and forgiveness is sought for him....”[330]

But such forgiveness can only benefit one who has not extinguished the light of his innate nature (al-fitrah) and has left this world in the state of belief (i-ma-n). For the kuffa-r (those disbelievers who despite knowing the truth of Islam, rejected the same) seeking forgiveness would not instill any kind of happiness. Here the receptacle is deficient and not Alla-h’s Grace. The Holy Qur’a-n citing examples of such hard-hearted people says:

قَسْوَةٌ أَشَدُّ أَوْ كَالْحِجَارَةِ فَوَيْ ذَلِكَ بَعْدَ مِنْ قُلُوبِكُمْ قَسَتْ ثُمَّ

“Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness...”[331]

And in verses 6-7 of chapter al-Baqarah Almighty Alla-h informs us about the disbelievers that:

عَذَابٌ وَلَهُمْ عِشَاوَةٌ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ حَتْمٌ يُؤْمِنُونَ لَا تُنذِرُهُمْ أَمْ أَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَعْلَيْهِمْ سَوَاءٌ كَفَرُوا الَّذِينَ إِنَّ عَظِيمٌ

“As for the disbelievers, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. Alla-h has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight, and there is a great punishment for them.”

It should be noted that these disbelievers earned the causes that lead to the sealing of the hearts themselves. One should therefore not make an error and conceive that Alla-h (swt) forcefully sealed their hearts and they had no volition to select a better path. However eagerly were we to aspire for the salvation of such people, there is no room for change, because the receptacle is deficient.

Perhaps the following verse draws our attention to the same situation:

الْفَاسِقِينَ الْقَوْمَ يَهْدِي لِآءِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ بِاللَّهِ كَفَرُوا بِأَنَّهُمْ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ اللَّهُ يُعْفِرُ فَلَنْ مَرَّةً سَبْعِينَ لَهُمْ تَسْتَغْفِرُ إِنَّ لَهُمْ تَسْتَغْفِرُ لَأَوْ لَهُمْ اسْتَغْفِرُ

“Whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, God shall never forgive them because they defied God and His Apostle; and God does not guide the transgressing lot.”[332]

O Alla-h Enrich Every Poor Person

Those poor people who continue doing acts that hinder their sustenance, should never dream to be rich. Negative poverty both in the material as well as spiritual sense is a deficiency that comes about due to the receptacle of sustenance. Persistence in extravagant spending, indiscipline, etc. are a practical expression of saying 'I do not want to be self-sufficient. Therefore the individual as well as the society in order to attain affluence should eradicate the impediment hampering their receptacle of grace.

In short, not getting our needs, even if they serve as means for our spiritual upliftment, is due to the impediments that we create and bring about.

Notes:

[322] This should not be mistaken to mean that He is unable to do what is not according to His Wisdom. Rather whatever He does is always wise.

[323] It is reported in al-Ka-fi- that Ima-m al-Ba-qir A ould recite the following whenever he left his house: Bismilla-hi kharajtu wa 'ala Alla-hi- tawakkaltu la- hawla- wa la- quwwata illa- billa-h [In the Name of Alla-h I leave and on Alla-h do I trust, and there is no strength or power save by Alla-h [al-Ka-fi-, v. 2, pg. 543].

[324] Holy Qur'a-n, 2:165

[325] Ibid., 35:1

[326] al-Mi-za-n, v. 17, pg. 7

[327] Refer to the supplications of Sahi-fat al-Sajja-diyah and you will notice that Ima-m al-Sajja-d ('a) concludes a number of his supplications with the Sublime Names of Almighty Alla-h. (Author.)

[328] 'Uddat al-Da-'i-, pg. 99

[329] Holy Qur'a-n, 13:17

[330] al-Mahajjat al-Bayda-', v. 8. pg. 292

[331] Holy Qur'a-n, 2:74

[332] Holy Qur'a-n, 9:80

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