A remedy for all maladies, and an elixir of eternal bliss

Eternal Life

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Translation: Sean Arde

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

HE IS OMNISCIENT

ETERNAL LIFE

The elixir of infinite bliss

A summary account of the will of Amir al-Mu'minīn 'Ali, to Imam Ḥasan (peace be upon them) in Ḥāḍirayn.

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Translation: Sean Arde

An excerpt of the will of Amīr al-Mu'minīn to Imam Ḥasan (peace be upon them).

أحي قلبكَ بالمَوعِظة و أمِتهُ بالزّهادَة، و قوّهِ باليَقين، و نوّرهُ بالحِكمَة.

Enliven your heart with guidance, depart it by self-purification, reinforce it with firm certainty, and enlighten it with divine knowledge. (Nahj al-Balāghah, Muḥammad 'Abduh, Vol.3, page.37)

Transliteration

Arabic Letters				
symbol	transliteration		symbol	transliteration
ء	ʾ		م	M
ب	b		ن	N
ت	t		و	W
ث	th		ه	H
ج	j		ي	Y
ح	ḥ		ة	ah; at
خ	kh		ى	Á
د	d			
ذ	dh		Long Vowels	
ر	r		ا	Ā
ز	z		و	Ū
س	s		ي	Ī
ش	sh			
ص	ṣ		Short Vowels	
ض	ḍ		ـَ	A
ط	ṭ		ـُ	U
ظ	ẓ		ـِ	I
ع	ʿ			
غ	gh		Persian Letters	
ف	f		پ	P
ق	q		چ	Ch
ك	k		ژ	Zh
ل	l		گ	G

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Preface

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

In the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate

Infinite praise is due to the Eternal Essence, who, with the wisdom of creation, placed the revealed religion to guide humankind from the abyss of generalization and potentiality to the abode of actualization and *Shuhūd* (intuition, the quality of witnessing). In this journey, those who are in the beloved house will lead those who are lost in perplexity and drowned in multiplicity, to the promised destination. They help man's pure *fiṭrat* (the human nature), his untainted celestial inmost being, and his wisdom enlightened by Divine Intoxication, to attain intimate knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and reach complete immateriality (*tajarrud*). Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) says:

فَبَعَثَ فِيهِم رُسُلَه، و وَاتَرَ إِلَيهِم أَنبِيائَه، لِيَستَأدُوهم مِيثَاقَ فِطرَتِه، و يُذكِّروهم مَنسِيَّ نِعمَتِه، و يَحتَجّوا عليهم بالتَّبليغ، و يُثيروا لهم دَفائِنَ العُقول.

Allah sent continuously among people His Messengers; to help them re-find their innate covenant with Allah regarding the truth of *tawḥīd* (Oneness of Allah), divinity of the Supreme Truth and their servitude to Him; to remind the forgotten blessing of their bond to The Divine Source; to propagate the fundaments principles of the *ma'rifah* by reasoning and clear proof; to uncover the buried treasure of hidden wisdoms so that facts of existence are revealed and connection to active wisdom is achieved, and wealth of *ma'rifah* is attained.[1]

And may the most deserved salutation be upon the pure soul of the standard-bearing man of monotheism, the sole contender of worldly detachment, the essence of existence, the seal of the messengers, the last of the prophets, Muḥammad ibn Abd-Allāh, and his Ahl al-Bayt (People of the Prophet's House), blessing of God be upon them all. By explaining the facts, they opened the gate for the wayfarers of monotheism to reach God and reside in His Essence. Their radiant words remove the darkness of confusion and the fatal effects of ignorance and thus cast the light of hope in the bewildered hearts of human beings. They give glad tidings of divine lights to astonished hearts that are baffled in multiplicity of this ignoble earthly world.

قَدْ جَاءَكُم مِّنَ اللَّـهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُّبِينٌ يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّـهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ .

There has come to you from God a light and a clear Book, by which God guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace.[2]

I am most grateful to God for enabling me to translate and disseminate one of the most valuable works of infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* (peace be upon them), the last will of *Imam Ali,* Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) in Ḥāḍirayn. The Exalted God gave me the honor to fulfill my decades-long wish and publish this miraculous testament, which is definitely rooted in the source of divine revelation. Although I intended to write an extensive description of this will, my various engagements limited me to this brief explanation along with some annotations. I present this to the enthusiasts of Imam Ali's (*'Alawī)* School and the lovers of Divine Beauty.

My late father, 'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Ṭihrānī (May God sanctify his spirit), after returning from the holy city of Najaf,

used to interpret this testament to his friends on Fridays. He recommended its themes and instructions and encouraged everyone to read and reflect on its phrases and instructions. In his view, persistence on practicing this will of Imam Ali is a religious duty and the main source of guiding the seeker towards God, the Exalted. In his last will, 'Allāmah Ḥusaynī Ṭihrānī asserted: I was intending to write a long will containing important moral advice, but I noticed that given the excellent themes and sublime facts that Amīr al-Mu'minīn has written in his last will to Imam Ḥasan Mujtabá (peace be upon them), it would be a source of shame to say anything more about moral virtues and conduct.[3]

In this will which deserves to be called the bylaw of prosperity and salvation, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) has taken into consideration all worldly, hereafter, individual and social aspects in order to bring man to the highest level of perfection. Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) codifies the secrets of *siyr* (journey toward God) which actualize one's potentialities and reveals the secrets of happiness in this world and hereafter in the context of social security and moderation.

In this testament, it seems that Imam Ali, peace be upon him, knows all creatures from the beginning of creation and is aware of their secrets. He is present in all circumstances and events objectively and intuitively, and now he makes his rare experiences available to all generations that are thirsty to find the path of salvation, and even to those who seek temporal security and prudence, especially at our time and era.

Every human being should fully comply and adhere to his holiness guidelines. Those who have based their life on the revealed truth and the teachings of *'Awliyā'Allāh (*those vested with the authority of Allah), those who have no destination but the vision of God, non-followers of *sharī'ah* principles, believers of other religions, and even those who deny the existence of a Creator, should all implement and follow the golden

instructions of this testament. Its rational instructions bring about a peaceful life that is free from social conflict, where everyone can enjoy their legitimate rights and live in security.

Today's West has realized that its social setting has not been able to fulfill the lofty goals of humanity. Their dramatic material progress and alluring attractions have undermined family relationships and divine civilization. People are lost in materialism and have forgotten their real purpose in life.[4] Alexis Carrel says: This book originated from the observation of a simple fact—the high development of the sciences of inanimate matter, and our ignorance of life. Mechanics, chemistry, and physics have progressed much more rapidly than physiology, psychology, and sociology. Man has gained the proficiency in the material world before knowing himself. Thus, modern society has been built at random, according to the chance of scientific discoveries and to the fancy of ideologies, without regard for the laws of our body and soul. We have been the victims of a disastrous illusion--the illusion of our ability to emancipate ourselves from natural laws. We have forgotten that nature never forgives...The triumphs of science in some fields mask its impotence in others... But they fail to bring us economic security, happiness, moral sense, and peace... Nevertheless, hygiene and medicine, even with the aid of the schools, have not succeeded in improving the intellectual and moral quality of the population. Modern men and women manifest nervous weakness, mental instability, and lack of moral sense...The tone of our civilization cannot help being influenced by the prevalence of mental weakness, dishonesty, and criminality...Today, as much as in the past, civilized humanity shows itself incapable of directing either its individual or its collective existence...Each one of us will be struck by the ruin brought about by a European war. Each one suffers already from the confusion in our life and in our social institutions, from

the general weakening of moral sense, from economic insecurity, from the burden imposed upon the community by defectives and criminals...It comes from the very structure of civilization. It is crises of man...The events of the last few years have rendered more evident the danger menacing the entire civilization of the Occident. However, the public does not yet fully understand the significance of the economic crisis, of the decline in the birth rate, of the moral, nervous, and mental decay of the individual. As a matter of fact, modern society—that society produced by science and technology—is committing the same mistake as have all the civilizations of antiquity. It has created conditions of life wherein life itself becomes impossible... It is a crisis of man. Man is not able to manage the world derived from the caprice of his intelligence. He has no other alternative than to remake this world according to the laws of life. He must adapt his environment to the nature of his organic and mental activities and renovate his habits of existence. Otherwise, modern society will join ancient Greece and the Roman Empire in the realm of nothingness. And the basis of this renovation can be found only in the knowledge of our body and soul.[5]

The main reason for the west to turn towards the apparent aspects of the life, was due to the despair of its people from Christian teachings and the method of the unrivaled opponent churches in promoting Christianity. Such despair resulted in the emergence of the Renaissance, and revision of beliefs and thoughts.

In the viewpoint of this humble author, although detaching from the Church and the Christian priesthood drove the West toward unbridled freedom, the very disconnection from the fallacious Christian surrounding that was filled with deception, coercion and material corruption was a blessed movement toward rationality and authentic standards of the human nature.

Aversion to religion is an inauspicious phenomenon and a devastating calamity that cannot be compared to any other threat or tragedy for humanity. It is impossible to deceive the aware inherent disposition of humankind and his heavenly innate intellect, to be enslaved by carnal desires, anti-human goals, and immoral values. Man, despite his creative talent to pursue growth and righteousness, is diverted to transgression only by adorning false goals. Even in most heinous crimes and cruelties, the innate disposition and the understanding of the perpetrators would admit the evil and obscene reality of their act.

Religion sometimes is used as a tool to promote beastly passions, lusts, and evil desires, and as a cover to hide the obscene intentions behind the religious teachings and actions. In such cases, the majority of people who have little knowledge of the fundaments of religion become susceptible to a devastating calamity that can overwhelm their innate nature and intellect.

The misuse of religion existed during the life of the Prophets. It was common for priests at synagogues and churches to intervene in social affairs of the people under the pretext of religious teaching. Such practice showed its disgraceful face after the death of the Prophet of Islam, when the caliphate was taken from its rightful owner; when the house of the Prophet's daughter was attacked and the door was set on fire on the pretext of taking allegiance for the caliph of Muslims; when the daughter of God's Messenger miscarried her child and eventually martyred and Amīr al-Mu'minīn, ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭālib on whom be peace, was dragged to the mosque to pay allegiance by force.

Ever since then, the usurpers of caliphate have taken advantage of the religious conviction of people, to commit every imaginable crime against the Household of the Prophet. They justified their oppression by labels and excuses such as: Opposition to consensus of Muslims, causing division in the unity of Muslims, posing danger to social order, insulting the ruler of

Islam and the Prophet's successor, waging war against God and His Messenger, apostasy, creating doubt in the religious beliefs of people, shaking the pillars of the Islamic government, setting the stage for foreign intervention in the Islamic nation, having ties with the enemies, and conspiracy against the Islamic government.

In a letter to Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Mu'awiya Ibn. Abī Sufyan blamed and insulted him by saying:

كنتَ تُقادُ، كما يُقادُ الجَمَلُ المَخشوشُ.

You were dragged [to the Mosque for allegiance] like a camel that is pulled with a rope in its nose.[6]

Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) replied to him as follows:

و قلتَ أنّی کنتُ أُقادُ کما یُقادُ الجَمَلُ المَخشوشُ حتّی أُبایعَ، و لَعَمرُ اللهِ لقد أردتَ أن تَذُمَّ فمَدَحتَ، و أن تَفضَحَ فافتَضَحتَ؛ و ما علی المُسلم مِن غَضاضَةٍ فی أن یکون مظلومًا، ما لم یکن شاکًا فی دینه و لا مُرتابًا بیَقینِه.

O, Mu'awiya, you compared me to a camel with a nose string being dragged for *ba'ya* (giving allegiance). By God, you intended to revile me, but you praised me instead. You wanted to humiliate me, but you humiliated yourself. There is no flaw for a Muslim to be oppressed and tyrannized as long as he is not doubtful in his religion, nor wavering in his certitude.[7] Shame, fault, and scandal is with oppressor and tyrant, not with the person who has become object of oppression and cruelty.

These words show the depth of the tragedy in the history of Islam after the death of its founder; a tragedy that has distorted the path of Islam for more than 1400 years, making the religion of hundreds of millions of Muslims flawed.

Thus, we claim without exaggeration that in the history of Islam, all crimes of the ruling class have occurred through misusing religious means to deceive the masses and taking advantage of their conviction.

Some Sunni scholars and jurists used this tool to stain their hands with the blood of thousands of innocent Muslims, accusing them of being Shiites, and thus created a shameful page in the history of Islam.

Imam Ali, the rightful successor of God's Messenger (peace be upon him and his progeny), openly engaged in debate and conversation with Jewish scholars and addressed them by: *"O Jewish brother!"* (*Yā akhā al-yahūd*).[8] However, there were people who issued *fatwa* (judicial ruling) to kill the followers of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) on the pretext of the differences in religion. That is how they have committed such dreadful crimes and disasters of such magnitude and have shed the blood of many innocent individuals. Unfortunately, this deviation still continues.

We should note here that such misuse of religion to serve one's materialistic interests has not been present only among Sunni scholars, but it is found in Shia history as well. Just as some great and unrivaled scholars such as the first and second Shahīd and Qāḍī Nūr-Allāh Shūshtarī were hanged or beheaded by legal edict of corrupt and wicked Sunni jurists, the great and venerable scholar Shaykh Faḍl-Allāh Nūrī was hanged by the legal edict of Shia scholars.

Similarly, who is responsible for the martyrdom of the honorable scholar, the gnostic of God, and pious jurist, Sulṭān Muḥammad Gunābādī? Who was behind the murder and hanging of great figures of mysticism on the pretext of Sufism? Whose permission and silence led to the disrespectful attacks and all kinds of restrictions in Najaf against the gnostic of God, Āyatullāh Sayyid ʿAlī Qāḍī? Which Source of Emulation (*marjaʿ*) ordered the banishment and exile of the great jurist and philosopher, Āyatullāh Sayyid Ḥasan Masqaṭī?

Recently, which insolent authority has written books on Islamic ethics and self-improvement and shamelessly insulted my father, ʿAllāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Ṭihrānī, who is a scholar of Islamic law. Who has excommunicated and charged with apostasy great scholars like Āyatullāh Anṣārī, Āyatullāh Dastghayb Shīrāzī, and greater than all, Ākhūnd Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Hamadānī (may God be pleased with them all)? Who oppresses the members of society and commits crimes against them on the charge of unacceptable tendency in a particular direction?

The root cause of all these problems and atrocities, whether committed in the context of Judaism, Christianity, Sunnism or Shīʿism, is egotism. It is the trait which manifests in Jewish, Christian, Sunni and Shia scholars alike and there is no difference between them in this respect. About 1400 years ago, they set fire to the house of the Prophet's daughter, made her abort her baby, and terminated her life for the crime of rising for the truth and demanding her right. Today they shed the blood of innocent people for the same crime. Both are the same.

The school of Shīʿism is the school of Alawī, the school of truth, justice, and liberty. Such a school has no room for degradation, hypocrisy and plunging into lust and multiplicity. It is a school of liberating souls, elevating the spirit, seeking divine knowledge, uniting with the One, and attaining the highest degree of actualization. In this school, there is only one red line, and that is God's wrath and displeasure.

Such a school moves the individuals toward their growth and perfection through peace, justice, and respect of rights. In such a setting, people get their share according to their capacity and destiny. It is a school which respects the good of the world and the hereafter alike, as two inseparable elements of human life, without either one compromising the other.

The life program at the school of Shiism is based on the defined supremacy over the man's soul, knowledge of his innate characteristics, full understanding of his traits and his positive and negative entities. Strict observance of its program facilitates acquisition of *ma'rifah* (the intimate knowledge) in the light of the security and comfort in the man's life.

The laws and injunctions of ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭālib's school are prescribed based on intuition and direct observation of the truth. They are issued by the very Creator of humankind, the Exalted God, and presented to humankind by His chosen servants.

قُلْ هَـٰذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّـهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي.

This is my Way: I call on God with sure knowledge, I and whosoever followed me.[9]

The will of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) serves to fulfil this aim and objective. It covers all angles of human life and relates to everyone irrespective of nationality, religion, and social class. It incorporates the welfare of both this world and the Hereafter and everyone should adhere to its fundamental instructions. This is especially true for public figures such as politicians, religious scholars, and Sources of Emulation (sing. *marjaʿ*). They must study this testament at least once a month to improve their actions and interactions.

It is very appropriate if different parts of this will are translated in an eloquent language and hung on walls in homes, offices, and public areas. The words of the Infallibles are also infallible. They are different from other words and statements, no matter how attractive they may be. This is because infallibility equals eternity, and eternity is that which is continuous, strong, stable, and deeply rooted. Therefore, their words shall

always be exposed to the eyes and minds of individuals. They should be viewed as divinely revealed statements and distinguished from any other statements.

Today, more than ever, our society needs to study the works and sayings of the Infallibles. It should compensate for its past neglect and adhere to all moral codes and instructions received from them. Following the luminous commands and explanations of Prophet's Household (peace be upon them) is the only way out of difficulties, suffering, plunging into pluralities, and wandering in the wilderness of ego and ignorance.

We should not even think about why others do not pay attention to these teachings and if our adherence to them can change anything. Instead, we must realize that this will is a remedy for all maladies, and it is an elixir of eternal bliss. Why should we care about the negligence of other people?

If our political and religious leaders had adhered to this testament, we would not have witnessed these tragic events and conditions in our society today, which are far from human dignity.

Having a selective approach to the words of the Infallibles, and therefore accepting what is consistent with our personal taste, and rejecting what is against our personal opinion, is wrong. This approach will only lead our society to misery, confusion, and devastation. I remember that shortly after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, a respected scholar published a fluent translation of this will of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) in one of the national newspapers. However, when it came to the part about women and their appropriate interactions at the individual and social levels, he completely dropped them from both the Arabic text and the Persian translation.

He censored and manipulated the words of the Imam according to his discretion and authority. Did he notice some shortcoming in the words of

the infallible Imam (peace be upon him? His act is a clear example of what the Qur'ān quotes:

نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ.

We believe in some and disbelieve in others.[10]

Is the will of the Imam only applicable to the time of its declaration, but not to other times such as ours? Has the spirit and nature of humankind changed and evolved?

Annie Rood, a famous British writer, says: I wish my country were like Muslim countries where women live with chastity, hijab, and comfortable life. It is a shame for England that girls mix with men in public and engage in lewd behavior. What prevents us from trying to harmonize the duties and responsibilities of women with their nature, marital and motherly responsibilities? Let us delegate male tasks to men to gain the dignity and worth of women.[11]

Clive Dalston, the famous psychologist, says: Research has confirmed that women like to work under supervision of others. They prefer to be subordinates and work under supervision of others. They are followers of their feelings while men follow wisdom and logic. It is often seen that women have higher intelligence than men, but their weakness is their strong emotional patterns. Men always think more practical, judge better, and are better organizers and leaders than women. Spiritual superiority of men over women is what the Almighty God has designed. To fight this reality, it is useless. Women are more sensitive, and they should accept supervision of men in their lives. The tasks which require constant thinking and accurate decisions, make women tired and weak. "Being supported by men" is the women's biggest goal in life and when this goal is reached, they withdraw from all activities.[12]

If these instructions of the Imam about gender relations were relevant and applicable to the people of those days, they are certainly far more related to our day and age. Today, the unbridled advancement of technology, which is easily available to everyone, has shaken the foundations of families and led to the most hateful interactions between men and women.

The abovementioned honorable translator deleted and distorted some themes of the will with the justification that our society today is not open to such propositions. He thinks that narrating those instructions may cause insult to the Infallibles. However, he should realize that his alteration is itself an insult to human values, chastity, social security, and the purity of the human soul. In fact, our society today is in dire need of these teachings more than ever.

Today's advancements in telecommunications, including the internet and cellular phones, have detrimental effects on marital relationships and family. I must admit that despite the limited scope of my interactions with people, I have witnessed many cases of family disintegration in the age of communication.

We should loudly broadcast to the world the following statement of the Imam (peace be upon him) as a divinely revealed miracle about family, social and sexual relations:

و إن استَطعتَ أن لا يَعرفنَ غَيرَک، فافعَل.

If you can manage that they would not know anyone other than you, do so.[13]

What happens to marital and family relationships due to the advent of the Internet and cellular communications, is so terrifying and shameful that it boggles the mind and intellect. This shows that there is no difference in the

applicability of ethical codes, human values, and religious duties between the people in the past and present.

Today, we should follow the divine teachings of Ḥaḍrat-i Ṣaddīqah Kubrā (The Great Truthful Woman), Fāṭimah Al-Zahrā (peace be upon her) regarding gender relations, when she says: The best thing for women is to neither see [unrelated] men, nor be seen by [unrelated] men.[14]

Some see it difficult or even impossible to comply with these issues in our age. They suggest that in today's society, there is no escape from the free interaction of males and females, and it is expected from them to talk and joke with one another. We will ask them: Who constructs societies? Do social conditions descend on us from heaven, or do they spring out of a well? Are we not the makers and developers of such conditions? A society that approves everything and submits to every phenomenon and situation, how will it be different from the society of wild animals?

Even today there are some educational institutions that are run entirely by women, without a single man among them. Not only do they exist, but they are among the most successful educational institutions in terms of rankings and research. [15] I remember that a similar policy was implemented in Imam Riḍā Hospital in Mashhad for six months, which had incredible results. Unfortunately, it did not last because some people were against the idea and had influence on the matter.

Are those in charge of teaching the religion, propagating Islam, and establishing Islamic laws more Catholic than pope and more royalist than the king?! Their duty is merely and legally nothing but transmitting the rules ordained by God, without a word more or less. Has God appointed us to remove or add certain regulations according to our own discretion? No! We have never been and will not be given such authority.

The only source of God's law is Imam Mahdi from the family of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) and no

other person has the right to add or remove even a word from God's religion, otherwise he must be held accountable.

In al-Baqarah (The Cow) Sura, Verse 75, Almighty God says:

أفَتَطْمَعُونَ أن يُؤْمِنُوا لكُمْ وَقَدْ كانَ فريقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلامَ اللـهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِن بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ.

Have ye any hope that they will be true to you when a party of them used to listen to the word of God, then used to change it, after they had understood it, knowingly?

Further, in An-Nisā (Women) Sura, Verses 150 and 151, we read:

إنّ الذينَ يَكفُرُونَ باللـهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أن يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللـهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولونَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أن يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذلِكَ سَبِيلاً. أولـئِكَ هُمُ الكافِرُونَ حقّا وَأعْتَدْنَا لِلكافِرِينَ عَذابًا مُهِينًا.

Indeed, those who disbelieve in God and His messengers and wish to discriminate between God and His messengers and say, "We believe in some and disbelieve in others," and wish to adopt a way in between, Those are the disbelievers, truly. And we have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment.

In these verses, the Exalted God clearly blames those who distort His commandments and revelation, and He repels them from His mercy and grace. Regretfully, this impurity has afflicted the body of Islamic history and the works of historians, to the point that their authenticity in many cases is reduced.[16]

One instance of such distortion is the part of the Imam's instructions concerning gender relations. There are other sermons from Nahj al-

Balāghah, such as the sermon after the Battle of Jamal about the wife of the Prophet's wife, ʿĀʾishah, in which he refers to the women's lesser degree of wisdom and intellect.

People who saw these verses have either denied them altogether or have left them aside from the commands of the Amir Al-Muʾminīn (peace be upon him). They distorted its content with ridiculous interpretations and justifications, contrary to what is the intention of the author of the word. With phrases like "we don't understand", or "we don't know about these things", or "maybe these words were added to the sermon later", they avoided the responsibility of delivering it.

It is not surprising that our scholars are so unfair with the miraculous words of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), because they have done the same with some verses of the Holy Qur'an.

The following account is by one of my teachers, the late Āyatullāh Gharawī-Tabrīzī: In a trip to Hamburg for medical reasons, I met few Iranian physicians and engineers at my brother's home. We had a discussion on some religious and ethical topics. One of the guests said: Once after the Evening Prayer, someone asked the resident scholar about the following verse of the Qurʾān:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ.

Men are in charge of women by [right of] what God has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what God would have them guard. [17]

The scholar answered: "As far as I know, men and women are equal in Islam."

Is there anyone who would miss to realize that this allusion is an implicit omission and distortion of the Qur'ān that God has revealed?

Concerning the abovementioned passages of Nahj al-Balāghah, the same scholar said, "We do not comprehend the words!" It is only natural that these people do not appreciate these words, because their understanding of Islam is different from the text of the Qur'ān, and the teachings of Islam and *sharī'ah*. Their view of Islam is an invented Islam by a disturbed mind and a malfunctioning soul. As Shabistarī says:

رمد دارد دو چشم اهل ظاهر
که از ظاهر نبیند جز مظاهر

People of the outward
Their eyes are inflamed.
They see His reflections,
But Himself can they find?[18]

They are blind to see the brilliant truth of revelation. They cannot perceive the truth, and consequently lead everyone away from truth. Someone should ask them: Are you the guardian of God's religion and a custodian of His *sharī'ah*? Why should you distort the fundaments of religion according to your own opinion? Why do you present the religion of God and His Prophet incomplete, distorted and useless? If Imam Ali were alive today, would he delete part of his sermons? Would he declare that some sermons belong to 1400 years ago and are no longer relevant in the enlightened and open-minded societies of today?!

They consider themselves as representatives of God on the earth and His messengers to the people — of course not at the level of the prophets, but one level lower.

If we see our true role in propagation of religion only as mediators and not as guardians, then we will not be concerned with the like or dislike of people. We would no longer worry

about their acceptance or rejection. All these problems are due to the fact that we have mistaken the status of the Imam of our Time for ourselves!

It is fitting that I share an enlightening story that I read in a book about the memoirs of a recently deceased scholar. [19] Before the Islamic revolution, he was exiled to one of the cities of Kurdistan province [in Iran]. It so happened that there were a drought and people were desperate for rain. They were worried about losing their crops and some people asked him to perform the recommended Rain Prayer. However, he did not accept the offer despite the people's insistence. He later explained the reasons of his refusal to one of his friends as follows: I thought to myself what if I perform the recommended "Rain Prayer," but it will not rain? Since the majority of people were Sunnis, that failure would weaken and disgrace Shī'ism. That is why I decided not to perform the Rain Prayer.

There is much to learn from this story. We evaluate religious laws and duties based on our personal preferences and interests, not based on their real welfare and the *sharī'ah* point of view. Wherever our personal opinion and interest instructs us to proceed, we proceed and wherever it instructs us to stop, we stop.

Our underlying incentive for caring about the honor of Islam and Shī'ism is to maintain our own reputation and protect our social status from humiliation. Otherwise, why should we care if God's religion is honored or disgraced? The Owner of religion and *sharī'ah* is God, and the only guardian of God's revelation is His pure servant, the Imam of the Time (may our souls be sacrificed for him). What makes us intervene in the realm of his guardianship and set ourselves in place of the Imam?

Thus, we can learn about the hidden intentions that are concealed by justified expression.

خوش بود گر محک تجربه آید به میان
تا سیه روی شود هرکه در او غشّ باشد

Happy the time when the touchstone of experience is revealed,
That shame befalls on him who is deceptive.[20]

There will come a day when our intentions, desires and hidden actions will be revealed, both in this world and in the world after. Then, like the shining sun, the purpose behind our sweet words, seductive metaphors, friendly gestures, and smiles will become clear. Everyone will know our ill intentions, self-centeredness, and hypocritical traits.

Why not telling people the exact word of God which we have received through His Prophet and the Infallibles, without any addition, omission, interpretation, justification, alteration, or replacement?

Hasn't the time come for us to come to our senses and not walk the path that our Sunni brothers have walked and lost and spent years in ruin and misguidance?! Let us not test their bitter and painful experience and not be caught by their fate?

A religious scholar, despite the knowledge of the definite priority and the Shariah's consent to the separation of the daily prayers, in order to oppose the Sunnis, ordered the priority of the sum of the prayers, so that the difference between the Shiites and the Sunnis could be achieved by this means. What answer does he have to the owner of Sharia and the Imam of his time in this regard? Is he the owner of authority in the Sharia law and have the will to intervene and control it, that he changes God's decree against the prophetic tradition? How could he issue an edict contrary to the Prophetic tradition and the conduct of the infallible Imams (peace be upon them)? Why does he alter God's ruling only to oppose the Sunnis? He should know that by issuing verdicts against the Prophet's tradition he would only humiliate Shī'ism before the Sunnīism? He gives others an excuse to rightfully criticize and mock the school of Ahl al-Bayt. Would this fatwā not cause separation between the two sects? Wouldn't it cause

the Sunnis to take a stand against Shī'ism, and raise suspicion in their minds against the Shias?

Therefore, the main duty of all Muslims, especially the leaders and those in charge of explaining the principles of Sharia, is to strictly observe and obsessively pay attention to the implementation of civil, social, and personal duties that have been handed down to them from the guardians of the school of law. This is so that those who have the ability to accept religious and moral teachings and want to follow the principles of Sharia, are not deprived. Otherwise, in that world, they will hold us responsible for depriving them of understanding these matters.

Religious preachers and lecturers should have a monotheistic approach to their work. Their only concern should be the implementation of divine decrees. They should not be afraid of being criticized and their motto and thoughts should be the following honorable verse:

وَلا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لائِمٍ.

They fear not the blame of any blamer.[21]

The responsibility of the integrity of Sharia and religion must be entrusted to its main owner, the infallible living Imam (may God hasten his reappearance).

In his testament, Imam Ali considers the welfare of a society in avoiding free-mixing between men and women—a fundamental principle to maintain security. According to his will, spiritual growth and refinement of self is possible within the framework of moral security and chastity. Peace of mind requires an environment free from sexual excitement and unhealthy relationships—elements that extinguish the light of spirituality. It is in such a setting that people can achieve spiritual realization and can rise to the planes of unseen and divine gnosis (*ma'rifah*). Otherwise, it is

very difficult to achieve divine gnosis and attain spiritual perfection in unsuitable conditions.

Some may feel that they are not mentally and behaviorally affected by interacting, talking, and socializing with a different sex. Then why discouraging gender mixing? Human beings by instincts incline to a different sex, and there is no difference between male and female in this regard. In some cases, this tendency might be stronger in males and in some other cases in women, according to their specific personalities and conditions.

ذرّه ذرّه کاندر این ارض و سماست
جنس خود را همچو کاه و کهرباست

Every particle and atom of, the earth and heaven,
Seeks after its pair, it is matter of straw and amber (magnetism).[22]

One's inner condition, physical and psychological dispositions are not always the same, but they are subject to change. Sometimes a person in certain circumstances has no psychological desire to deal with a different sex while in other circumstances the same person may be very eager to do so. Given these points, the answers to the above question should be clear.

These instincts and inclinations are latent and concealed. Many times, such relationships allow inappropriate images and concepts to penetrate into the mind and soul of either or both sides little by little, slowly and unconsciously. Once these fantasies and imaginations become firm, they conquer the person's heart, possess one's mind, and become "the new landlords of thoughts". They leave no room for the person's spiritual grounding and peace of mind. The sad thing is, at that point, an irreversible choice has been made. It does not matter what a person believes, because the dominance and conquest of those evil tendencies that are the new owners prevails. We should admit that there is no difference between the

general public and religious scholars, and between the uneducated and educated. The reason is that the inner instincts, traits, and dispositions of human beings are beyond their control, and the person is bound to obey and follow them once they are established.

The Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his family) said:

النظرةُ سَهمٌ من سِهام إبليسَ.

> Casting a glance at the face of a woman is an arrow from the arrows thrown by the Satan (the Devil) that sits on the heart of man, disable it, and decays it.[23]

At the time of Prophet Muḥammad (may the blessing and peace of God be upon him and his progeny), a young person attended before him and said: O Messenger of God, when we are in your service and hear your words, advices and explanations, we fly in the sky and have no connection with the world and we reach a special spiritual state from which we have no desire to come out. We always wish to remain in this appeal and divine realm. Once we leave your presence, and return to street and notice a woman, all those spiritual entities vanish at once. We descend to the lowest state of the plurality of thought, lusts, and desires. The Prophet said, "If you could stay in that situation for a while, you would see what I see and hear what I hear."[24]

Now, suppose that a man can overcome his desires and inclinations and suppose that such interactions do not affect his inner thoughts. Furthermore, suppose that despite such a relationship he can stay firm and stable, and continue to advance in his path to perfection. Even if so, can another party too remain stable and not be affected with adverse effects of such interaction and communication?

One whose action and deed causes someone to commit a sin, in fact is violating God's will. For example, some may not say it obligatory for a man to cover his entire body, but to cover only his private parts. However, this justification will not allow a man to appear in public without covering the rest of his body under all circumstances. He can only do so if no unlawful woman sees him, otherwise, it is incumbent on him to cover himself. A woman looking at him is actually committing a forbidden (*harām*) action, and the cause of such action is the man himself.

Thirdly, the notion that gender relations will have no effect on the mind, mood, and behavior of the individuals, is not true. In many cases the person may fail to realize that his deed is harmful and will prevent him from advancing on the path.

This also applies to physiology. For instance, the body's defense mechanism against illness is accompanied by pain. Pain is a signal that warns the person about the danger of disease, and the nervous system sends such signal to avoid tissue loss. Pain drives the person to seek remedy and cure. Yet, this is not always the case. For example, when a tooth is decaying, there is no pain and therefore one does not notice the decay inside the tooth. He will only notice when the sensory nerve of the tooth is exposed to the damage.

Another example is auto-regulation of the nervous system which controls blood pressure and gives warning about hypertension. Sometimes the system fails to give warning, and hypertension or the so-called "silent killer" develops while the patient feels healthy. He seeks no cure until the symptoms of disease become evident in him.

It is for the same reason that the great teachers have declared it unlawful to reside in non-Muslim cities. When one lives in the land of non-Muslims and is far from the spiritual setting of Islam, the dominant atmosphere of that land will gradually prevail. Sometimes a person may

not notice the transformation of his personality and does not believe that he has been influenced by the culture and atmosphere around him because he does not feel weak in his religious beliefs and practices. This has happened to many people in the West who are in touch with me. Even though the virtues of these people would not turn into vices, but their morality will gradually be affected by the color and taste of non-Islamic culture. Their religious practices and rituals will be like a "dead tree" that is devoid of any spiritual impact or growth. Thus, they lose the most important asset of life, and depart this world empty-handed, without proper provision for the Hereafter.

Hence, the duty of every individual, and especially the duty of the Islamic government, is to provide an environment which promotes moral security and spiritual balance; a place where every responsible and rational person can reach the highest levels of human perfection. There should not be any obstacle or barrier preventing man from reaching his final destination.

Even though the will of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) is addressed to Imam's son, Ḥasan (peace be upon them), it is in fact addressed to all his lovers and followers, and also written for those individuals who wish to have a rational lifestyle with peace, security, and mental composure. This point is quite obvious when Imam Ali says:

أوصيكما و جميعَ وُلدى و أهلى ومَن بَلغَه كِتابى بتَقوَى الله و نَظم أمركم.

I advise you [O Ḥasan and Ḥusayn], as well as all my children, the members of my family, and anyone who receives this writing of mine, to be wary of God and have order in your affairs.[25]

The same point is clearly obvious in the protocol that he wrote for Mālik al-Ashtar. Certainly, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) knew that his close friend and companion "Mālik" will be poisoned and martyred before reaching Egypt by the agents of Muʿāwiyah. So why did he write such a long and comprehensive protocol, which is unique in addressing all aspects of governing, as unanimously testified by experts of legislation and politics? Because Imam is the father, instructor, guide, and helper of all children of Adam until the Day of Judgment. Such a responsibility is on him, because he has reached absolute infallibility and his words have eternal qualities. Therefore, Imam] has a sense of responsibility for all those who live in his era and the generations coming after. This duty has been assigned by the Exalted Allah for Infallibles only and not for anybody else— even if one has reached the highest levels of spirituality, knowledge, and experience. That is why the Imam's testament has been written and addressed to all people who come to this world.

In the will, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) says; إلى المَولود المُؤمّل "ما لا يُدرک" (The child who seeks elusive dreams)[26]. Some say that the testament of Imam Ali is addressed to another son of the Imam named Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafiyyah. Such claim is contrary to the convention of writing a will, which necessitates addressing it to the eldest son, which is Imam Ḥasan (peace be upon him). Their main argument is the existence of phrases like "slave of this world, trader of deception, and victim of lusts," which are not compatible with absolute infallibility of Imam Ḥasan. Therefore, the addressee should have been another son of Imam Ali, Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafiyyah, or we should interpret such phrases metaphorically, not literally.

This way of thinking per se is against the formality of speech and communication. It is even more distant from reason to think of such

phrases metaphorically when two Imams are involved, namely Imams Ali and his son, Imam Ḥasan (peace be upon them).

If Mulā Ali, peace be upon him, used such words and phrases in addressing his son, who had not yet officially reached the status of guardianship and Imamate, then what will you say about the verses of Abū Ḥamzah Thumālī's prayer that Imam Sajjād, peace be upon him, when assuming the position of absolute guardianship addresses the Lord:

أنا الذی عَلی سَیّدِه اجتَرَی، أنا الذی عَصَیتُ جَبّارَ السّماء، أنا الذی أعطیتُ عَلی مَعاصی الجَلیل [المَعاصی جَلیلَ] الرُّشا.

I am the one who was bold against his Master! I am the one who disobeyed the Invincible King of heaven! I am the one who paid bribes to disobey the Majestic Lord [or paid major bribes for sins].[27]

How could one imagine an infallible Imam committing such great sins? Can it be imagined that the Imam, peace be upon him, intended other meanings from these words and phrases than the actual and original meaning?!

Similarly, we read in Imam Ali's supplication in the Mosque of Kūfah:

مَولایَ یا مَولایَ، أنتَ الجَوادُ و أنَا البَخیلُ و هَل یَرحَمُ البَخیلَ إلاّ الجَوادُ ... مَولایَ یا مَولایَ، أنتَ الهادی و أنَا الضّالُّ و هَل یَرحَمُ الضّالَّ إلاّ الهادی ... مَولایَ یا مَولایَ، أنتَ الغَفورُ و أنا المُذنِبُ و هَل یَرحَمُ المُذنِبَ إلاّ الغَفورُ.

O Master, my Master! Thou art the Generous and I am stingy. Shall anyone have mercy on the stingy other than the Generous?! O Master, my Master! Thou art the Guide and I am stray. Shall anyone have mercy on the stray other than the Guide?! O Master, my Master! Thou art the

Forgiver and I am sinful. Shall anyone have mercy on the sinful other than the Forgiver?!

It is natural that miserliness, misguidance, or sin is impossible for infallible Imam, whether he wants to talk to people or to share secrets with God.

Some say these phrases are to express humility and destitution before God, and when the magnificence, glory and majesty of the Truth are revealed to the infallible Imam, he finds himself sinful and infected with vices. Nevertheless, this justification is groundless for the following reasons: First, any act of obedience or disobedience that the Lord ordains, has a specific definition and a clear limit which makes it different from any other act, even though both may be equally conducive to receive reward or punishment. For instance, the nature of the ritual praying (*ṣalāh*) is different from that of fasting, even though both are obligatory. Similarly, drinking wine and taking bribes are different from one another, although both are forbidden and punishable. Given their clear definitions and limits, would it be acceptable for the Imam to tell the Exalted God that he has drunk wine while he has never done so? This is an absolute lie even if it is said to show one's humility and abasement.

Is it acceptable if Imam Sajjād says to God, "Lord! My father is a Bedouin and primitive Arab," and his intention is to humble himself? No, it is wrong and forbidden, because it is against the fact of the matter, and distorting a reality is impermissible by the rule of reason, religion, and social convention, even if it is committed out of humbleness and modesty.

Secondly, if Imam wanted to express his modesty and humility before God's glory and majesty, instead of using ambiguous terms, he could use flawless phrases.

Another explanation is that the Imam is speaking to God on behalf of all sinners, much like a king who considers himself a representative of his

nation when confronting other nations and governments. Then his words would be the words of his nation. Such propositions are not justified, because how could one who is free from sins and indecencies claim to be among sinners and wrongdoers? If one speaks as the representative of a person or a group of people but does not possess the same characteristic, then he should not express himself in a way suggesting that he has the same opinion, same objective, and same taste as theirs. This condition is not met in the above supplications. If Imam is the representative of people and includes himself among them, then what he says is questionable. In fact, this point is observed in many quoted supplications of the Infallibles (peace be upon them). For example, "the master of the time", *ṣāḥib al-zamān* (may God hasten his glad advent) says:

اللّٰهُمَّ إِنَّ شِيعَتَنَا خُلِقَتْ مِنْ شُعَاعِ أَنْوَارِنَا وَ بَقِيَّةِ طِينَتِنَا، وَ قَدْ فَعَلُوا ذُنُوباً كَثِيرَةً اتِّكَالاً عَلَى حُبِّنَا وَ وَلَايَتِنَا، فَإِنْ كَانَتْ ذُنُوبُهُمْ بَيْنَكَ وَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ فَقَدْ رَضِينَا، وَ مَا كَانَ مِنْهَا فِيمَا بَيْنَهُمْ فَأَصْلِحْ بَيْنَهُمْ وَ قَاصَّ بِهَا عَنْ خُمُسِنَا.

O God! Our Shias have been created from the beams of our lights and the remainder of our clay. Yet they have committed many sins relying on our love and guardianship. If their sins are things that are between You and them, then forgive them, for we are pleased [with that]. If their sins are between themselves, then make peace between them and pay from our share of *khums* [to appease them].[28]

In this hadith, when it comes to interceding for his sinful followers, the Imam offers his own right to amend their wrong [as opposed to including himself among them].

Yet there are others who claim that such attributes are not characteristic of Imam and that the Imam's intention of uttering such phrases is merely to educate people. They indicate that one should

remember the sins and humbly ask for help, forgiveness, and mercy. They also believe that every person naturally commits a certain sin in the field of his activities and interactions, and what the Imam (peace be upon him) mentions is actually one of the examples of this act, otherwise the thief must confess to theft and the liar must confess to lying. This justification is even weaker and less defendable than the previous ones. Is the extreme state of emotions, crying and appeal of the imam agree with this point of view? Does Imam act like an actor? Would he play the role of a thousand personalities? Is he displaying his artificial and virtual states as reality and true?

Here it is appropriate to address a point that may have remained a vague mystery for many people. The true gem of man is his divine soul, which descends from the Exalted God to the world of form and then settles in the world of matter. Because of such descent and settlement, the soul is entangled with appetite, anger, ego, and multiplicity. But angels on the other hand live in the world of immateriality and are free from those attributes. They cannot commit any sins. Instead, they are always engaged in glorifying God, praising, and fulfilling His orders.

The angels are created at an actualized level of immateriality, and thus each of them benefits from God's infinite knowledge according to its own immaterial level and capacity. They have a fixed essence throughout their life, and nothing adds to or subtracts from their level of actualization. It is because of their actualization that they never commit anything contrary to God's pleasure.

بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُكْرَمُونَ، لا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُم بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ.

They are [but] honored servants. They cannot precede Him in words, and they act by His command. [29]

The creation of human beings and angels differ in two respects: (1) in terms of origin and (2) in terms of destiny.

As with origin term, the human soul or spirit is created from the Essence of God, as He says in the Glorious Qur'ān [addressing the angels upon the creation of man]:

فإذا سَوّيتُهُ ونَفختُ فيهِ من رُوحي فقعُوا لهُ سَاجِدينَ.

So, when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration.[30]

This unique feature enables humankind [among all creatures] to be privileged by the robe of honor of being God's vicegerent. Just as the Divine Essence encompasses all Divine Names and Attributes, the human soul which has emanated from the Divine Essence, is also an encompassing reality. Given this essential universality and encompassment, humans can achieve total immateriality, be annihilated in God's Essence, and have knowledge of His Essence, and after annihilation in the essence, in the state *baqā'* (subsistence), they will manifest all Divine Names and Attributes.

The creation of the angels, on the other hand, is set at a level below the Divine Essence. Their existence originates at the level of Divine Knowledge and Power. Thus, they naturally do not have the universality of humans. As a result, the end of their long journey to perfection will also be at the level of their origin, and nothing beyond that. This means that for them annihilation in God's Essence is not perceivable.

As with their destiny, in terms of creation in the realm of nature or the visible world, after its formation, each soul according to its individual capacity, descends to the lowest realm of existence, which is the realm of

matter and nature. The soul is subsequently attached to the physical body, and this bond in turn entails the development of certain instincts and qualities that are compatible with life in this world. For example, the faculty of *shahwah* (attraction, appetite, lust) is needed for the survival of the individual, and the faculty of *ghaḍab* (repulsion, anger) is needed to protect one against the impediments of life. There are many other examples such as love, compassion and so on. This is true for all human beings despite their different levels and ranks.

The existence of humankind in this world entails different instincts such as appetite and anger for continuation of life. In this way, the attraction of a different sex lies in the nature of every human being, whether for an ordinary person or for the infallible Imam. As we enjoy smelling a sweet odor, looking at a beautiful face, and listening to graceful sounds, Imams also enjoy these qualities. As ordinary men and women enjoy intimacy with a person of a different sex, *'Awliyā'Allāh (*those vested with the authority of Allah) also enjoy it too. As our bodies and souls suffer from illnesses and pains, theirs also suffer too.

Some say that the Imams (peace be upon them) have no interest in sexual pleasures, but they marry formally only for their progeny to continue. Similarly, they say that imams do not enjoy eating and drinking and are unaffected by the defilements that occurs to others, which requires ritual bathing and ablution.

All these thoughts and impressions are rooted in ignorance. They imagine that enjoying such pleasures or becoming physically impure is not compatible with the honorable status of the Imams. Such misunderstanding!

Appetite, anger, pleasure, pain and so forth, are not compatible with the creation of the angels, but are compatible with the essence of the Imams (peace be upon them). Otherwise, they could not be a model for

human beings. If that were the case, then how could the story of Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) have any significance for us? What would be the message of the extraordinary migration of Hajar and her baby Ishmael, and Ishmael's slaughter at the hand of Prophet Abraham? How would these stories teach us a lesson about the discontinuation from inseparable worldly attachments and connection to Oneness? And most important of all, what is the lesson of the matchless historical event of 'Āshūrā' of Imam Ḥusayn? How could 'Āshūrā' be a message for the awakened souls seeking liberation and freedom from the shackles of the ego and the snares of the Devil —those who wish to soar in the realm of divine?

Are we created differently such that we grieve after losing a child, but they do not? Being submissive to God's decree and content with His will is one thing, but not feeling any sorrow or grief is another. The two should be distinguished, because one does not entail the other.

Some of the ignorant people think that since divine saints and infallibles do not know any phenomenon in the world outside the circle of existence and since the essence of existence is pure good, naturally the emanations of existence will also be good. As such, the unpleasant smell has no meaning for them, and bitter and sweet will be the same for them, and likewise.

These people have no image of the quality of creating two tastes. Does the idea of attributing all beings to the holy essence contradict their external identity, one of which is salty and the other sweet? Do seeing the manifestations of God as beautiful and believing them to be good, conflict with the sharpness of a knife and the cutting of skin and flesh?! Not only is there no conflict and contrast, but this comprehensiveness of unity and plurality brings the manifestation of truth. Without it, plurality will have no meaning. So, like us, divine saints feel bitterness and sweetness, and whatever affects us, will also affect them.

The above should clarify the matter in terms of existence and creation. As with religious duty, legislation, and self-purification, it is incumbent on every person to obey God's orders, and it is He who grants success and ability to people to fulfill their duties. The Qur'an says:

وَمَا بِكُم مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّـهِ

And whatever of favor, it is from God.[31]

Similarly, God addresses the Holy Prophet (blessing of God be upon him) as follow:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّـهِ لِنتَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ

So, by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you.[32]

In this noble verse, God attributes good morality to Himself, and man's gross disposition to man himself, his ego, material realm and worldly attachment.

Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) in *Du'ā' al-Ṣabāḥ* states:

إلٰهی، إن لم تُبتَدِئنی الرَّحمَةُ مِنک بحُسن التَّوفیق، فمَن السّالِکُ بی إلیک فی واضح الطَّریق.

O my God! If your mercy and favor were not with me from the very beginning and your granted success was not accompanying me in my journey, then who could have directed me and led me to the path to happiness, salvation, and attachment to you?

These words of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) are absolutely true, because without the Grace of God, the human souls that are dependent to this world will only plunge further into lusts, sins, and deviation.

Ad-Duha (The Morning Hours) *Sura* of the Glorious Qur'an, regarding the relationship of the Messenger of God with the Lord and the quality of His guidance, says:

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَىٰ . وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ.

Did He not find you an orphan and give [you] refuge? And He found you lost and guided [you]. [33]

The meaning of "lost" is the dependency of *nafs* (self, ego) on the world of multiplicity which leads humankind to misery, damage, and destruction, if not helped by the Eternal Grace.

In another verse, we read:

وَلَوْلَا أَن ثَبَّتْنَاكَ لَقَدْ كِدتَّ تَرْكَنُ إِلَيْهِمْ.

And if We had not strengthened you, you would have almost inclined to them a little.[34]

Allah is the one who grants success and ability to people to fulfill their tasks and this fact has been brought in numerous verses, supplications, and narrations from infallibles (peace be upon them).

In short, any person at any level of knowledge, gnosis and perfection can find two aspects in himself: The first aspect is the sense of poverty, need, loss and destruction, which stem from the existence in this world of multiplicity, and are accompanied by carnal desires, self-centeredness, and

violation of the rights of others. The second aspect pertains to Allah's grace and blessing, which demands servitude, inner purity, justice, and enjoyment of both the general and special Grace of Allah.

These two aspects are continuously coupled in human beings and do not leave humankind even for a split second. Each aspect has its own place, without interfering with the other, even for a moment. That is why we observe both aspects in the words of 'Awliyā' Allāh.

Khwājah Abd-Allāh Anṣārī says in one of his whispered supplications: O God! When I look at Thee, I am one of the crowned kings and I feel the crown on my head; and when I look at myself, I am earthy, ashes, and a man with dust on head.[35]

The master of both worlds, Prophet Muḥammad, is addressed by God as follows:

وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ * إِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ.

Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed.[36]

And his utmost proximity is described as:

ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّىٰ * فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ.

Then he approached and descended and was at a distance of two bow lengths or nearer.[37]

Yet, he expresses his servitude, poverty and need when he prays:

اللهمّ! لا تَكِلنى إلى نَفسى طرفةَ عَين أبداً فى الدّنيا و الآخرَةِ.

O God, do not let me to myself in this world and other even for a twinkling of an eye![38]

Our Master, Sayyid Hāshim Ḥaddād once said: A thousand outward miracles cannot match even one of our stations and realizations. Yet the same Ḥaddād describes his misery by saying: When I look at myself, I see that the Exalted God has not created anyone more *rūsīāh* (disgraced) than me in the universe.

Both of his statements are sincere. Similarly, in the state of manifestation of *Wilāyah*[39] and the Divine Will, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) describes himself as "the distributer of Paradise and Hell" and by his absolute guardianship over the world of existence, says; "سلونی قبلَ ان تفقدونی" ask me before you lose me.[40] Yet, in the state of devotion and obedience he expresses the supplications of the Mosque of Kūfah.

Thus, we must not think that the Infallibles (peace be upon them) have uttered such phrases merely to educate us. They had truly reached the essence and reality of these words and expressions, certainly more deeply than anyone else.

When Imam Sajjād says to God, "I am the one who paid bribes to disobey the Majestic Lord," he really sees himself in such state. He is not joking with God and pretending to be humble, because dwelling in the presence of God takes no jokes or pretension. What he says are not metaphorical expressions and figures of speech but are the facts of the matter—he feels and observes such a state just as we do.

God in the story of Prophet Joseph says:

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَن رَّأَىٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ.

And she certainly determined [to seduce] him, and he would have inclined to her had he not seen the proof of his Lord.[41]

He means that if the prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) had not seen the reality of that sin—which is darkness, fire, and distance from God — he would have certainly attempted this indecency. Therefore, the Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) certainly knew about the words of Imam Sajjād (peace be upon him) and felt the true reality in his concept.

Now that the issue is completely clear, we have to ask why the elders and infallibles (peace be upon them) have considered the human aspect and not the divine aspect when praying. The answer is simple: In a state of plea and request, a servant cannot assume his master's attributes to be his own. All the qualities and blessings have been bestowed upon him by his Lord.

Should the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) pray to God and say, "My Lord! I am the one who is able to split the moon! I can keep the sun still! I make the pebbles to testify for me! What exists in worlds is under my command, and angles obey my commands!?" If he says so, then God will ask: Are these attributes yours or were given to you by Me? You are not able to keep a fly away from yourself! Now you are expressing these extraordinary acts to show off before Me?!

The reality of monotheism is imprinted in the *wujūd* (existence) of *Awliyā' Allāh*, and others in their hierarchy of *ma'rifah* (intimate knowledge), are not free from hypocrisy and polytheism.

The world of *Awliyā' Allāh* is built on the truth, not on repute, allusion, and idle talk. Their remarks are based on reality, not on allusions, metaphors, interpretations, and justifications. People out of fantasy and illusion may praise someone to a point beyond a noteworthy evaluative standard, or they might inappropriately criticize to the lowest point possible, but this is not the approach and method of *Awliyā' Allāh*.

Although Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) has specifically addressed Imam Ḥasan (peace be upon him) as "trader of deception, and victim of lusts." he in fact wrote this will for all humankind including Imam Ḥasan (peace be upon him) and others.

Acting on this testament will certainly create an optimal setting for the society and its members, thus, some of my fellow scholars of religion and spiritual wayfarers obliged me to translate and explain this "elixir of eternal bliss" which is a provision and asset for the path to salvation. I accepted their request and hereby I present this translation along with some comments to those who are eager to meet the Beloved and are the true followers of Imam Ali. I hope for the prayer and intercession of all his *mukhlaṣin* (sincere) Shias on the Day of Judgment.

يَوْمَ لا يَنفعُ مَالٌ وَلا بَنُونَ * إلاّ مَنْ أتَى اللـهَ بِقَلبٍ سَلِيمٍ.

The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children, but only one who comes to God with a sound heart. [42]

مگر صاحبدلی از روی رحمت
کند در حقّ درویشان دعایی

May a devout person, out of benevolence,
Pray for Dervishes.[43]

I hope for Allah's forgiveness,
Sayyid Muḥammad Muḥsin Ḥusaynī Ṭihrānī
24 Ramaḍān, 1431 AH (September 3rd, 2010)
Holly City of Qom, home of Muḥammad household and Karīmat (Noble one) of the Ahl al-Bayt; Fāṭimah al-Ma'ṣūmah (peace be upon her).

INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION OF THE WILL

بسم اللّـهِ الرّحمَـٰن الرّحيم

In the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate

و من وصيّةٍ له عليه السّلام، للحسن بن عليّ عليهما السّلام، كتبها إليه بحاضرَينَ منصرفًا من صفّينَ.

This is the will of Amīr al-Mu'minīn to his son al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (peace be upon him), which he wrote in Ḥāḍirayn in his return from [the Battle of] Ṣiffīn.[44]

مِنَ الوالِدِ الفانِ، المُقِرِّ لِلزّمانِ، المُدبرِ العُمُرِ، المُستَسلِمِ لِلدّهرِ، الذّامِّ لِلدُّنيا، السّاكِنِ مَساكِنَ المَوتى، و الظّاعِنِ عَنها غَدًا، إلى المَولودِ المُؤَمِّلِ ما لا يُدرِكُ، السّالِكِ سَبيلَ مَن قَد هَلَكَ، غَرَضِ الأسقامِ، و رَهينَةِ الأيّامِ، و رَميّةِ المَصائِبِ، و عَبدِ الدُّنيا، و تاجِرِ الغُرورِ، و غَريمِ المَنايا، و أسيرِ المَوتِ، و حَليفِ الهُمومِ، و قَرينِ الأحزانِ، و نُصبِ الآفاتِ، و صَريعِ الشَّهَواتِ، و خَليفَةِ الأمْواتِ.

[This is a will] from a father who is [shortly] to die, who admits the passing of time, whose days have come to an end, who has submitted to the course of life, who disparages this world, who is residing in the houses of the dead, and is due to depart from them tomorrow.

نه عمر خضر بماند نه ملک اسکندر
نزاع بر سر دنیای دون مکن درویش

Khiḍr's life and Alexander's reign, both shall perish and go down the drain.
So do not fight over something so vain, if you are a dervish, pure and plain.[45]

This will is addressed to a son who nourishes unattainable wishes in his mind and soul, a son who traces the path of those who were perished [before him], and diseases and pains have surrounded him. Days have made him miserable by the circles of dominance and prevalence. The calamities and disasters of the time have placed him target of arrows and the world calls him to lowliness, humility, submission, and servitude to itself. Because of this servitude to the world, his vanity, pride, self-centeredness, and egoism increase continuously. He gains nothing from trading in this world but vanity, greed for multiplicity, and seeking superiority.

دنیا همه هیچ و اهل دنیا همه هیچ
ای هیچ، ز بهر هیچ بر هیچ مپیچ

The world is nothing, and those belonging to this world are entirely nothing.
O, Thou, nothing; Do not quarrel with nothing for nothing.

"He, who the hurricane of events has disabled him, and has become captive in the clutches of death,"

و إذا المنيّةُ أنشَبَت أظفارها
ألفيتَ كلّ تميمةٍ لا تَنفع

And when the death pierces its claw into the body of man, no shield or protector can help.[46]

"A son associated with mental engagement and carnal anxieties; one who is accompanied with grief and sadness. Diseases continuously aim him, and lusts knock him down; he walks on the road of dead peoples and eventually will join them."

آن قصر که جمشید در آن جام گرفت
آهو بچه کرد و روبه آرام گرفت
بهرام که گور می‌گرفتی همه عمر

دیدی که چگونه گور بهرام گرفت؟

The palace where Jamshid held his cup
The doe and the fox now rest and sup
Bahram who hunted game non-stop
Was hunted by death when his time was up[47]

أمّا بَعدُ، فإنّ فیما تَبَیّنتُ مِن إدبار الدُنیا عَنّی، و جُموح الدّهر عَلیّ، و إقبال الآخِرَةِ إلیّ، ما یُزَهِّدُنی [ما یَزَعُنی] عَن ذِکر مَن سِوایَ، و الاهتِمام بما وَرائی، غَیرَ أنّی حَیثُ تَفَرّدَ بی ـ دونَ هُموم النّاس ـ هَمُّ نَفسی، فَصَدَقَنی رَأیی، و صَرَفَنی عَن هَوای، و صَرَّحَ لی مَحضُ أمری، فَأفضَی بی إلی جِدّ لا یَکونُ فیهِ لَعِبٌ، و صِدق لا یَشوبُهُ کَذِبٌ، و وَجَدتُکَ بَعضی، بَل وَجَدتُکَ کُلّی، حَتّی کَأنّ شَیئًا لو أصابَکَ أصابَنی، و کَأنّ المَوتَ لو أتاکَ أتانی، فَعَنانی مِن أمرِکَ ما یَعنینی مِن أمرِ نَفسی، فَکَتَبتُ إلیکَ [کِتابی] مُستَظهِرًا بِهِ إن أنا بَقِیتُ لَکَ أو فَنِیتُ.

Indeed, it became clear to me the turning away of this world, the onslaught of time, and the advance of the Hereafter. And thus, I do not see any benefit in remembering anyone else or being concerned with anything beyond myself. But as this concern with myself completely absorbed me from being concerned with others, it kept me away from my personal opinion [or my reason confirmed me in this], it turned me away from my desires, and it clarified the reality of my affair to me.

There is a hadith which says:

کَفی بالمَرءِ شُغلاً بعیبِه لِنَفسِه عَن عُیوبِ النّاس.

It suffices for a man to deal with his own faults and avoid from searching the faults of others and finding shortcomings and defects.[48]

روزها فکر من اینست و همه شب سخنم
که چرا غافل از احوال دل خویشتنم
از کجا آمده‌ام آمدنم بهر چه بود
به کجا می‌روم آخر ننمایی وطنم
مرغ باغ ملکوتم نیم از عالم خاک
دو سه روزی قفسی ساخته‌اند از بدنم
خنک آن روز که پرواز کنم تا بر دوست
به هوای سرکویش پر و بالی بزنم

This is my thought and my word days and nights.
Why am I unaware of my heart?
Where have I been and why?
Where do I go? Wouldn't you show my homeland?
I am a bird of the heavenly garden.
Have made a cage from my body for two or three days.
Bless the day when I fly up on love.
So, in dream of his realm, I open my wings.

"Thus, it led me to a serious issue in which there is no joke and a truth that is not tainted with any falsehood. There I found you to be a part of me, to be my whole, such that if something happens to you it is as if it has happened to me, and if death comes to you, it is as if though has come to me. Consequently, your affairs matter to me as my own affairs. Whether I stay with you or I die, I hope this letter is accepted by you and you put your effort into it. [I didn't write this will to be applied after my death, for indeed is written for any moments of your life]."

"فإنّی أوصیکَ بتَقوَی الله [أی بُنَیّ] و لُزوم أمره، و عِمارَةِ قلبکَ بذِکره، و الإعتِصام بِحَبلِهِ، و أیُّ سَبَبٍ أوثَقُ مِن سَبَبٍ بَینَک و بَینَ اللهِ إن أنتَ أخَذتَ به؟"

I advise you, my son, to be wary of God, to adhere to His commands, to keep your heart fresh with His remembrance, and to hold fast to His rope—because after all, which rope is more reliable than a rope between you and God to hold onto?

دوست نزدیکتر از من به من است
وین عجبتر که من از وی دورم
چه کنم با که توان گفت که دوست
در کنار من و من مهجورم

My Friend is closer to me that my limb,
But strangely enough, I am far from Him.
What can I do, and to whom can I say,
That my Friend is with, me but I am far away?[49]

In a sacred tradition (*al-ḥadīth al-qudsī*) God says to Prophet David (peace be upon him):

يا داود، لو يعلم المدبرون عنى كيف انتظارى لهم، و رفقى بهم، و شوقى إلى ترك معاصيهم، لماتوا شوقا إلى...

O David! If those who have turned their backs to Me knew how much I await them, how lenient I am toward them, and how I yearn for them to stop sinning, they would certainly die out of yearning for Me.[50]

Hafiz, may God be pleased with him, says:

فاش می گویم از گفته ی خود دلشادم
بنده ی عشقم و از هر دو جهان آزادم
نیست بر لوح دلم جز الف قامت یار
چه کنم حرف دگر یاد نداد استادم
طایر گلشن قدسم چه دهم شرح فراق
که در این دامگه حادثه چون افتادم
من ملک بودم و فردوس برین جایم بود
آدم آورد در این دیر خراب آبادم
سایه طوبی و دلجویی حور و لب حوض
به هوای سر کوی تو برفت از یادم

I am saying this loud with joy and glee:
I am enslaved by love; from all else I am free.
There is only an *alif* on the tablet of my heart:
It is the only letter that my teacher had to impart,
Showing the fine stature my sweetheart.
I am a bird that belongs to the garden of divine.
How shall I recount my story of decline?
I am trapped in this world by snares that confine.
I was an angel in the Heavens above.
I was brought by Adam to the ruins thereof.
Thinking of Thy nearness made me forget.
Paradise and its houris: blond and brunette.[51]

"أحى قلبكَ بالمَوعِظة و أمِتهُ بالزّهادَةِ، و قوّهِ باليَقين، و نَوّرهُ بالحِكمَةِ."

Enliven your hearts with guidance, depart it by self-purification, reinforce it with firm certainty, and enlighten it with divine knowledge. You should never get involved in a problem without investigating it thoroughly; when confronting doubtful cases, you must not continue. You should not follow people's speculation, their imagination, and rumors. Stop in such cases and do not proceed.

وَمَا لَهُم بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلاَّ الظَّنَّ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لاَ يُغْنِي مِنَ الحَقِّ شَيْئًا.

And they have no knowledge thereof. They follow a guess, and lo! A guess can never take the place of the truth.[52]

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq' (peace be upon him) says:

قِفْ عِندَ الشُّبهةِ! فإنّ الوُقوفَ عِندَ الشُّبُهاتِ خَيرٌ مِنَ الاقتِحامِ فى الهَلَكاتِ.

Never act when the truth is not revealed to you, because stopping in doubtful cases is better than plunging into perdition.[53]

Mawlānā Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, May God have mercy on him, says:

بر خیالی صلحشان و جنگشان
از خیالی فخرشان و ننگشان

Their war and peace are based on illusion.
Their shame and pride are nothing but delusion.[54]

***

جان همه روز از لگدکوب خیال
وز زیان و سود و از خوف زوال
نی صفا می‌ماندش نی لطف و فرّ
نی به سوی آسمان راه سفر

Our soul is crushed by thoughts all day.
Of profit, loss, and fear of decay.
It is left bereft of peace and grace.
Its way is blocked from rising to space.[55]

"Make your heart revolve with actual contents that are based on rational arguments and divine vision. [avoid

rumors, fantasies, and other matters that are based on speculation, and do not consider them the criterion of your deeds and thoughts or your life plan].”

Assumptions are mental phenomena that are either based on external realities or made by the mind. Sometimes they have nothing to do with external reality, and for example, it is observed that children report the existence of a creature only based on their imaginations. Of course, this is not only among young children, and many times, "little adults" also suffer from such imaginations. For example, many people in Iran during the revolution saw the image of a person on the surface of the moon. This type of phenomenon is called imagination and illusion.

Neither reason nor religion approves such assumptions because they have no effect and cannot solve a problem. Those who are caught in such assumptions sink further into the swamp of ignorance and their distance from reality increases.

It is important to mention that in contrast to logical thinking, there are two things that create imagination and illusion: First: Human ignorance about external events and realities. This has to do with lack of sufficient understanding of: (1) universal logical principles; (2) the callings of our innate human nature, which is an extremely precious asset that helps humankind distinguish between right and wrong; and (3) divinely revealed teachings brought by the prophets and messengers of truth. Immersion in imaginations and illusions causes complete exhaustion of human potential.

ای بسا ابلیس آدم روی هست
پس به هر دستی نباید داد دست

There are devils that look like men,
So do not shake hands with everyone again.[56]

There are many incompetent and deceitful people with glamorous looks and smiling faces and pleasant words whose generosity is rooted in their

evil carnal intentions. Following and obeying them will bring nothing but misery, waste of time and opportunity. The main reason is that people are unaware of the conditions and standards of following and obeying, otherwise they would not blindly obey anyone based on their feelings and insufficient reasoning.

This is why Amir al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) advises his son to acquire wisdom (*ḥikmah*), which is strong speech and strong faith. Wisdom is a tool to identify suspicious issues and prevents getting caught in the trap of ego and Satan.

The second reason for the emergence of illusions is the tendency of the human soul towards external, sensual, and material things. All people are like that, except those who have cultivated their soul, actualized their spiritual talents, traveled beyond particularity, and reached universality.

The human soul (*nafs*, soul, or essence) is tied to the material world, which is the domain of the manifestation of particular and delimited phenomena, and that is why it is naturally more inclined to apparent things than to real and universal principles. For example, when a young man decides to marry, he thinks a lot about the beauty of his wife's face and body, and disregards rational aspects like family background and commitment to responsibilities of life. His ignorance will in turn cause bitterness, failure, and disintegration of the marriage in future. Similarly, the young woman also thinks more about apparent considerations like his husband's social class, employment status and physical fitness. She neglects his degree of commitment, rationality, morality, and adherence to religion.

In the case of elections, we see that one's vote is often based on the family affiliations of a candidate, his hometown or neighborhood, his deceptive sweet words, his false and eye-catching promises, his artful gestures, his glittering posters, his planned party meetings, and so on. But

does anyone think about the candidate's ability and talent to manage a society and run a country?

All such problems and tribulations are caused by humankind's excessive attention to things that are only superficial, visible, and material. It was reported that in the presidential election of one country, the deciding factor was the candidate's physical fitness and his reputation as a movie actor. Of course, this trend is not limited only to that specific country. Think for a moment and see how in the most vital social decision, where a person is to be chosen as the president to carry the entire burden of a nation, absurd and stupid considerations prevail over rational, moral, and reasonable criteria. This is the result of conforming to illusions and imaginations instead of reason and real values.

One of deceiving illusion and imagination is caring for number and multitude, as the Glorious Qur'ān points out:

قُل لاَ يَستَوِي الخَبِيثُ وَالطَيِّبُ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الخَبِيثِ فَاتَّقُوا اللّـهَ يَا أُولِي الأَلبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ.

Say, not equal are evil and the good, although the abundance of evil might impress you." So, fear Allah, O you of understanding, that you may be successful.[57]

In this verse, God refers to one of the cases of illusion and imagination, which is pluralism and excessiveness, and declares that the common people and those who oppose truth, consider it one of the values and criteria of superiority. Interestingly, at the end of the verse, God addresses those who have wisdom and understanding. That is, this deficiency is not related to rationality and rationalism and following rational teachings, but it is based on the predominance of emotions and outward appearances and the preference of the sensual aspect over the rational and natural human dignity.

Another verse concerning the same matter says:

فلا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلا أَوْلادُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُم بِهَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ.

So let not their wealth or their children impress you. Allah only intends to punish them through them in worldly life and that their souls should depart [at death] while they are disbelievers.[58]

This point has been further clarified and unveiled in the following verse:

وَإِن تُطِعْ أَكْثَرَ مَن فِي الأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ.

And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allah.[59]

Among the cases and examples of illusion is the social status and personality of people, which will lead others astray. Sometimes fame and dignity is achieved through the increase of property and giving and giving, and sometimes it is achieved through holding a position and government seat or because of scientific aspects and sharia responsibilities. Therefore, it can be seen that a person who has no popularity among people and no one even greets him, when he gets a government post, he is noticed by people. All are due the dominance of the power of imagination and illusion over the natural and rational powers of man.

Another incidence of illusion is the attribution of a person to a respectable personality in society or a particular sect, such as the children of that person, or the families of that person. In this case, the imaginative power expands the situation drawn by that great personality through the existence and emergence of moral values for humans to the surrounding people and replaces the same criterion of acceptance and obedience to that great person in a way for other people. Imaginative power is unaware of the fact that the mere attribution of evidence is not proof of the same standards and criteria of superiority and preference. The people around

him and his associates are moving in the exact opposite direction of his ideals and methods and are in complete conflict with his strong methods.

The strife that occurred after Prophet Moses the *Kalīmullāh* (the one who talked to Allah) was caused by his wife, *Ṣaffūrah*. [60] Similarly, the Battle of Camel and confrontation with righteous and appointed-by-the Prophet Successor, Amīr al-Mu'minīn, ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him) was led by ʿĀʾishah (the prophet's widow) and two close companions of the Prophet namely Ṭalḥah and Zubayr. What created doubts in the minds of people? We see the examples of illusions, such as ʿĀʾishah being related to the Messenger of God or the fame of Ṭalḥah and Zubayr among the society, through the fight against the infidels, created doubts. Impersonating the nation of Islam, claiming to follow the Sunnah of the Messenger of God, accepting the Qur'an as the only source of revelation and guidance (Basra Army), and the desire to retaliate for the blood of the Muslim Caliph (ʿUthmān), were also a source of doubt and illusion for some of the people around Amīr al-Mu'minīn.

In response to a man who was confused by these thoughts, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

إنّک رجلٌ ملبوسٌ عَلَیک، لا یُعرفُ الحقُّ بأقدار الرّجال، اعرفِ الحقّ تُعرفْ أهله، اعرفِ الباطلَ تُعرفْ أهله.

Illusions and fantasies have dominated your thoughts and have hidden the truth from you. They have moved you away from fairness and moderation, and the apparent attractiveness of such tendencies has seduced you. Know that the truth is not measured by the appearance of individuals or their status. Therefore, you must first recognize the truth clearly, and only then you are able to identify its followers. You should also recognize falsehood and become fully aware of all its angles. Then you will

recognize its followers and you will be able to distinguish them from the seekers of the truth.[61]

Once I asked one of my dear friends who is an expert of identifying precious stones and genuine jewelry about the secret of his success and worldwide renown. I asked about his exceptional skill in distinguishing genuine and artificial gemstones and why he is invited to different countries to distinguish real stones from fakes. He said that from the first day, I focused all my attention only on precious stones. I read and researched all aspects, qualities, and nobility of their characters. Later on, I was able to recognize fake, counterfeit, and artificial ones very easily. Other people, however, start by studying both artificial and genuine stones together. That is why they cannot so accurately tell the fine characteristics of precious stones.

Such was the case of the man who was undecided and dumbfounded in the Battle of Jamal. He could not see that being the Prophet's wife does not make one infallible and immune from mistakes and sins; being a close companion of God's Messenger does not solve any problem; and being a Muslim is not by itself protect one from falling into error and slip.

In the course of history, such illusions led many to deviations, revolutions, and crimes against humanity. Many naive and unaware souls were exploited in this way to achieve the carnal desires of an evil minority, and many young and inexperienced people were deceived to facilitate their evil intentions.

Being a caliph has no value in itself unless such a claim is supported by clear and rational evidence. Only when a caliph is appointed by God and His Messenger, his orders are valid and everyone must obey them, not when the caliph is elected by the masses or by another caliph. The divinely

chosen caliph was only Ali bin Abi Talib, peace be upon him, and no one else.

In this light, Shī'ism is a school of thought that is based on knowledge, certainty, and evidence, not based on slogans, creating unwelcomed sounds and clamour to attract attention, numbers, sophistry, or force.

Holding religious ceremonies and rituals without improvement in one's understanding and conduct according to the school of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), is futile and ineffective. What is the point of celebrating the birth dates of religious leaders and mourning for their martyrdom if one misses their message, does not change his worldview, and is not freed from imaginations and illusions toward the realm of reason and understanding. The core principles and values of the school of Ahl al-Bayt should be preached and taught by knowledgeable scholars who are well-versed in the history and practice of the Shia Imams—those who are neither driven by their base desires nor have worldly motives and do not seek to impress the audience. Otherwise, one's way of thinking, acting and behavior would remain unchanged.

Our great mystics have ordered us to consider religious occasions and ceremonies as an opportunity to revive the school of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). In religious ceremonies, one should not focus only on poems, eulogies, chanting, and chest-beating, because in this case, the imaginative power is strengthened and the intellectual power is forgotten, and this is exactly the opposite point of the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt school. Walking barefoot in their martyrdom and beating the chest in the street may be admired and cherished by the ordinary people, but a true Shia and believer conforms to the principles of Ahl al-Bayt. All the calamities and sufferings that the ignorant majority brought upon our imams were precisely because of this issue. People participated in religious ceremonies, mosques, and congregations during the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace

be upon him), but a few hours after the Prophet's death, the same people caused the Saqīfah tragedy. Were the participants in that event not the same people who sat at the foot of the Prophet's pulpit? Did they not hear him say?

إنيّ تاركٌ فيكم الثقلين، كتابَ الله و عترَتى و إنهما لن يَفترقا، حتىٰ يَردا علَيّ الحوض.

I am leaving among you two weighty things; one of them (i.e., the Thaqalayn) is the Book of Allah and the other one is my select progeny (*Itrat*) that is family (Ahl al-Bayt). Beware of how you behave (with) them when I am gone from amongst you, for Allah, the Merciful, has informed me that these two (i.e., Qur'ān and Ahl al-Bayt) shall never separate from each other until they reach me in Heaven at the Pool (of al-Kawthar).[62]

Did they forget these words, or did they simply ignore them!? You are claiming that the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him and his progeny) never even uttered these words!

In the Battle of Ṣiffīn [when 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ and Mu'āwiyah ordered their army to raise copies of the Quran on spears] who were the people that fell for this deceitful plotting? Who was overcome by imagination and illusion and gave up war and accepted negotiation? The same people who had sworn in the Mosque of Kūfah not to disobey the commands of Imam Ali (peace be upon him). Didn't they swear to be loyal to his school until the last drop of blood?

Those who fought with the Prophet's grandson in the army of Yazīd and Ibn Zīyād and committed an unprecedented crime in history, were the same ones who sent thousands of invitation letters to the Imam. They had asked the Imam to join them and only a few days before that they had pledged allegiance to Muslim bin 'Aqīl (Imam's deputy).

Why did the Karbala incident happen? Firstly, the lack of adequate knowledge about the Imams and the obligation to obey him. Secondly, letting rumors and the deceiving appearances of the material world conquer one's heart, and thus allowing true knowledge and reasoning to be replaced by imaginations and illusions. For instance, 'Umar ibn Sa'd preferred the governorship of Rayy over the eternal salvation and bliss. What a bunch of vain thoughts, empty imaginations, and futile desires! And we witnessed their faith and destination.

The Glorious Qur'ān criticizes imaginations and illusions—which manifest in poetry—as follows:

وَالشُّعَرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ * أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ * وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ.

And the poets - [only] the deviators follow them; don't you see that in every valley they roam, and that they say what they do not do?[63]

In such a situation, a poem that expresses imaginations and illusions is condemned in Islam, but a poem that expresses wisdom and morality is praised.

In contrast to imaginations and illusions, wisdom (*ḥikmah*) reveals the truth and corresponds the mental image to the fact of the matter. This fact can be expressed in prose or poetry, and it is sometimes discovered in a dream as an inspiration from the unseen inspirations. It is occasionally expressed through a spiritual unveiling, like in the story of Prophet David (peace be upon him), when he was worshiping in his prayer niche. There, he was advised that he should beware of illusions and unwarranted assumptions in his judgment: just because the sheep of one side of a dispute outnumber the other side, it does not prove that the one with fewer

sheep has been oppressed. Instead, one's judgment must be based on solid proof and evidence.[64]

Such unveiling is *ḥikmah* (wisdom) because it clarifies the truth and avoids mistakes. Similarly, a judge's verdict is called a *ḥukm* (rule, judgment) because it removes uncertainty and ambiguity, settles the dispute, ends the complaint, and makes the truth unveil. The miracles of the Prophets, peace be upon them, are wisdom as opposed to magic, which strengthen the power of imagination and illusion in the viewers, and they think their illusions are real and external.

The Qur'ān says:

سَحَرُوا أَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ.

They cast spell upon the people's eyes.[65]

In other words, they did not distort their apparent external world, but in fact they conquered people's insight.

In this sense, the miracle of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was *ḥikmah* (wisdom, judgment), because it removed the spell from the people's eyes and brought the magicians scandal to light.

Khwājah Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī, on whom be the mercy of God, says:

علم و فضلی که به چل سال دلم جمع آورد
ترسم آن نرگس مستانه به یغما ببرد
سحر با معجزه پهلو نزند دل خوش دار
سامری کیست که دست از ید بیضا ببرد

The knowledge and the eloquence that, in forty years, I acquired.
I fear that the intoxicated narcissus plunders.
With miracles, sorcery would not match, do not worry.
Who is the Sameri to shine a bright hand?[66]

In the same manner, the tyrant rulers and kings, in order to prove their fake supremacy, lead people to a state of

lowliness or submission. They try to overcome people's mind and imagination, and through this evil intention, deprive many to think logically. They do not allow people to use their innate rational disposition which is a God-given tool to distinguish right and wrong, purity and deception, reality, and fantasy.

This was the intention of the great palaces of Nimrod, Pharaoh, Nero, Tatar rulers, Chinese emperors, Achaemenid and Sasanid kings, Roman Caesars, and Greek monarchs. Their ornaments, troops and officers were all meant to dominate people through distancing them from their human free will. This supremacy separates man from the Origin of Existence, and earns him nothing other than weakness, misery, and abasement. One whose thoughts are dominated by these people loses his divine assets such as his innate nature, intellect, and independence. The Imam (peace be upon him) says:

يا بُنَيّ، لا تَكُن عَبدَ غيرِک و قد جعلک الله حُرّا!

My son! Be slave of no one but God. God has created you as a free man.

When faced with these false and evil manifestations, most people forget their identity, and humble themselves before the apparent majesty and power of a handful of bricks and timber. Unconsciously they accept the authority of the cunning tyrant and submit to his will. Instead of devotion to the Creator of the heavens and earth, they worship the miserable creature, fulfill his lustful and evil intentions, and make their bodies and minds subject to his charismatic character.

This matter is even seen among the religious authorities of churches and synagogues. Today, churches and synagogues with their soaring spires and exquisite architecture astonish every visitor. Their location, height, craftsmanship, ornaments, expensive stones, construction materials, and

place of the priest or bishop, all highlights the faculty of imagination and undermining the power of rational thinking and contemplation. They place the religious leaders and priests at an extraordinarily exalted and unconventional position. They serve to move one away from one's independent identity to a state of humility and subservience before the empty glamor of these individuals.

Why do these leaders allow themselves to occupy such positions that separate them from other people? Why should they want others to bow and humble themselves in front of them? Are they different from others?

The secret rests in the fact that such authorities do not feel a connection to the Source of existence, because they are plunged in arrogance, pride, egocentricity, and narcissism, and do not see themselves subject to the will and authority of God. Thus, they try to have a share of God's glory and majesty by resorting to empty, metaphorical and deceptive glamor. They are deprived of true noble virtues and lofty ethics, have nothing valuable to offer in the market of knowledge and gnosis, and have no asset to offer to the people of intellect and reasoning. That is why they have no choice but to captivate the minds through deception, treachery, intimidation, terror, and external worldly beauty and might. They brag about the apparent beauty of this world in order to direct people's attention to its empty glory; to subjugate people in the way of fulfilling their own lusts and pleasures and keep them away from Allah and His real magnificence, and thus serve their purpose rapidly.

Now, let us compare this approach with the approach of the Prophet and the way of the infallible Imams. On one side, we have high-raised temples with more than fifty meters of height, decorated by precious stones, breath-taking illustrations, awe-inspiring handicrafts, and elevated stands for the pope, bishops, and priests. On the other side, we have a simple mosque built in Medina which its floor is covered by dust and

straw, enclosed by walls that are only two meters high, and with a roof made of palm branches. Such mosque has no special sign or distinction for the leader of the congregation, the receiver of divine revelation, the possessor of major intercession (*al-shafā'at al-kubrā*) and the holder of the flag of praise (*liwā' al-ḥamd*). When the Prophet was asked to build a roof of clay and wood on top of the walls, he did not allow it and said:

لا، عريش كعريش موسى.

Nay! Only a canopy like that of Moses.[67]

Why should it be like this? What motivated the Messenger of God to issue such order? The answer lies in the principle of monotheism or *tawḥīd*, upon which the principle of servitude is based. The school of prophets is based on the fact that existence and reality is exclusive to Allah's Divine Lordship. Anything that exists and the entire world of creation is an effect of Allah's existence. Beyond His scope of existence is pure extinction and nonexistence.

The prophets and *'Awliyā'Allāh* invite people only to the Self-Existent Essence of God. Their message is not mixed by any tinge of ego or self-interest. That is why they do not need to decorate their surroundings like the rulers, kings and authority figures of churches and synagogue. Why should they imitate such people?

The more important reason is that the place of worship should be free from all the obstacles that divert people's attention from God. A servant who engages in worship should feel his heart filled only by God's presence. His attention should be completely directed at Him. Anything that debars him from maintaining such a state would be in conflict with the very act of worship and journeying toward the realm of oneness (*tawḥīd*).

In the school *'Awliyā'Allāh*, glory is an attribute of God not a trait of His slaves. *Kibriyyat* (Allah's Divine Grandeur and magnificence) is a

cloak that is suitable only for graceful stature of Him, not for graceless statures of pretenders and deceivers. Only the Lord of Majesty deserves to be worshipped, not those who are immersed in lust and power. It is only before God's infinite majesty that one should humble himself, not before wicked and ignoble individuals. One should prostrate himself only for the Creator of the heavens and earth, not for brutish and fiendish rulers.

This is why the Messenger of God (peace and blessings of God be upon him) orders that the mosque be free of everything that distracts the mind of the worshiper from the Holy Essence of God. The Prophet recommends the simplest possible structure for a place of worship.

In the mosque of God's Messenger, glory and majesty belong to God, but in churches and synagogues, they belong to their owners and priests. In the mosque of God's Messenger, people are directed to God Who is Absolutely One and All-Dominant, but in other places they are directed to the owners and authorities of those places. In the mosque of God's Messenger, people are called to oneness, but elsewhere they are called to multiplicity and egotism.

In the mosque of God's Messenger, the place of the Seal of Prophets does not differ even a bit from that of the other worshippers, but in churches, synagogues, and other temples, the highest, finest, and most spectacular spots belong to the priests, rabbis, and the like. In the mosque of God's Messenger, the motto is "God is the Greatest" (*Allāhu Akbar*), but in other places, even though it may not be verbalized, the real motto is "I am the greatest" (*anā akbar*). In the mosque of God's Messenger, what is promoted is absolute servitude before God's absolute Lordship, but in other places the lordship of the self, the ego, and the pride is promoted.

If a man were to enter the mosque in Medina to see the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his family), he would not recognize the Prophet because there was no difference between the Prophet and others.

He had no doorkeeper or secretary, and there was no line or waiting list to see him. The prophet used to sit in the mosque like everyone else and would then govern the affairs of society. He was frank with everyone, without any deception in his relationships.

My late father, may God be pleased with him, once told me: When I had just returned from Najaf to Tehran, I went to meet a famous scholar in another city to discuss an important issue. Because I did not want anyone to find out about our meeting, I decided to visit him after the Morning Prayer and before sunrise. So, I went to his house when it was still dark. I knocked on the door and his servant opened the door and let me in since he knew me. He told me that "my master (*Āqā*) is still in the private room (*andarūnī*) and has not come to the parlor (*bīrūnī*) yet. I will let him know that you have come." After a few minutes, the servant returned and said, "He is waiting to receive you in next room." I went into the room and saw him in his formal dress, sitting behind the desk and reading a large book of jurisprudence book in folio format. This did not match what his servant told me a few minutes ago—that he is still in the private room and will come out soon. When I saw this scene, I addressed him in my heart, "Should you act in front of me as you act in front of others?!" Thus, I left the room and cut off my relationship with him forever.

Regretfully, the tradition of the Messenger of God – may the blessing and the peace of God be upon him and his family – was altered after his death. The usurpers of the caliphate adopted the customs and traditions of the kings, rulers, and emperors of other nations. They built conspicuous palaces and castles under the pretext of "guarding Islam's reputation" and "observing the dignity of Muslim rulers." Muslim mosques were decorated by various ornaments and illustrations just like churches. The only thing missing in them was the call to monotheism, to God's absolute existence, to humility and servitude, and to rejection of credentials and individuation.

Similar to the authorities of churches, the leaders of Muslim congregations began rivaling for having a better-looking mosque, prayer niche and pulpit. Each tried to promote his own position and place in comparison to his peers.

Such deviation has continued up to this day, depriving people from the opportunity to experience attending a mosque that is truly Islamic. Today, our mosques are far from the path drawn by Islam and the school of God's Messenger (peace be upon him and his family). Fancy tiles, fine mirrors, and other ornaments including gilding have distanced them from the exemplary practice of the Prophet. Those who worship in our mosques think about everything but the unlimited and all-pervasive presence of the Lord. Why should they think of Him? This is natural, and it makes perfect sense, because God is absent there! The heart and mind are moving in all directions except toward God. These images and adornments only serve to strengthen the faculties of imagination and illusion.

Instead of teaching the genuine and solid principles of Islam and enlightening the minds with the authentic teachings of the Shia school, these places incline the people toward seeking glory and gaining supremacy over others. People are led to continuously strive for more social status and fame. They do not refrain from concealing the true teachings of the school of Ahl al-Bayt under the pretext of maintaining "collective interests." Likewise, they do not hesitate to use any means to disturb the minds and cast doubt in the hearts under the same pretext.

Now, how can we differentiate our path from other sects and religions? How do we consider ourselves righteous and others deviated? Have we not stepped on the same path that we have been constantly criticizing others for? Are we not also strengthening the fantasies, illusions, and unrealistic notions of ordinary people, instead of fostering their rationality and pure understanding according to their innate nature?

In some of my travels, I used to see extravagant churches and palaces of rulers and sultans, and then I would sit aside and say to myself: Aren't we hypocritical like these people and those in power? Isn't the same standard that forces the past and the present generation to be proud, selfish, and arrogant in ourselves and our religious leaders?

Now we can better appreciate the depth and meaning of these verses of the Holy Qur'ān:

وَ لَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الحِكْمَةَ.

And verily We gave Luqmān wisdom.[68]

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وَمَن يُؤْتَ الحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا.

Whoever is given wisdom has verily been given much good.[69]

By means of wisdom, the inner meaning and truth of things in the outside world are revealed to man, and the ambiguities of doubts are removed, and the possessor of such a trait is aware of all events. Would someone who is granted such a great blessing ever be misled from the right path? Can events of varying nature and the course of time divert him from the right path? Will his way of thinking ever be affected by the number of people, the continuous repetition of advertisements and propaganda, or rumors? Never! In the light of wisdom and guidance, he not only advances on his own journey toward felicity, but he also delivers others from the abyss of perdition to salvation. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) says:

ضلّ مَن ليس له حكيمٌ يُرشِدُه.

One who does not have a sage to guide him, falls into error.[70]

Imam Ali describes the people of *ḥikmah* as follows:

هَجَم بهم العلمُ على حقيقة البصيرة و باشَروا روحَ اليقين، و استلانوا ما استَوْعَره المُترفونَ، و أنِسوا بما استَوحَشَ منه الجاهِلونَ، و صَحِبوا الدُنيا بأبدان أرواحُها مُعَلّقة بالمَحَلّ الأعلى، أولئک خلفاءُ اللهِ فی أرضِه، و الدُعاةُ إلى دينه.

Knowledge conquered their true insight, and they sensed the spirit of certainty. They found easy what was difficult for the extravagant souls, and became intimate with what frightened the ignorant. Their bodies are in this world while their spirits cling to the Supreme Realm. Only those are God's heirs on earth, who call to His religion.[71]

There are few factors that strengthen the faculty of illusion and undermine the light of reason and faith: lack of God's remembrance, paying attention to the ornaments of this world, being deprived of sincere advisors, being deceived by flatterers, insincere followers, and deceitful disciples, and falling in the circles of deviant speakers who are enslaved by praise and applause. As one's faculties of illusion and imagination solidify, he sees right as wrong, and wrong as right. He will consider the sincere advice of his true friends as enmity, and the empty flattery of apple polishers as favor and kindness. Thus, the people surrounding him will confirm his wrong and erroneous path instead of trying to correct and criticize him, and a handful of ignoble flatters will take the place of his sincere and real friends. People of knowledge and wisdom will distance themselves from him, only to be replaced by worldly-minded, heedless devils. They lead him in the way of their own desires and interests—a path that ends in Hell. His life will end, and he will enter the eternal world empty-handed, with a burden of responsibility and injustice on his shoulders. Thus, he will settle in the eternal abode of transgressors and wrongdoers.

خَسِرَ الدُّنيا وَالأخِرَةَ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الخُسْرَانُ المُبِينُ.

He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what the manifest loss.[72]

و ذَلِّلهُ بِذِكرِ المَوتِ، و قَرِّرهُ بِالفَناءِ، و بَصِّرهُ فَجائِعَ الدُّنيا، و حَذِّرهُ صَولَةَ الدَّهرِ، و فُحشَ تَقَلُّبِ اللَّيالي و الأيّامِ، و اعرِضْ عَلَيهِ أخبارَ الماضينَ، و ذَكِّرهُ بِما أصابَ مَن كانَ قَبلَكَ مِنَ الأوَّلينَ.

"Humble it [your heart] by remembering death; make it confess to [your] mortality; make it see the tragedies of this world; warn it against the assaults of this life and the unpleasant vicissitudes of the passing of nights and days; expose to it the stories of those who have passed away; and remind it of what struck your predecessors."

When Imam Ali (peace be upon him) passed by Madā'in (Ctesiphon) and reached the Arc of Kasrá, he dismounted the horse, performed two units of prayer, and then recited following verses of the Glorious Qur'ān:[73]

كَمْ تَرَكُوا مِن جَنّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ* وَزُرُوعٍ وَمَقامٍ كَرِيمٍ * وَنَعْمَةٍ كَانُوا فِيهَا فَاكِهِينَ * كَذٰلِكَ وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ * فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالأَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنظَرِينَ.

How many were the gardens and fountains that they left behind; and cornlands and splendid stations; and bounties wherein they had rejoiced! So it was, and We bequeathed them to another people. Neither heaven nor earth wept for them, nor were they respited.[74]

"This is the Divine Will of the Exalted God. He replaces people with other nations. Neither the heavens will cry for their departure, nor will the

earth get sad and mournful, nor did we grant them any opportunity for continuation of living."[75]

Khayyām says:

آن قصر که جمشید در آن جام گرفت
آهو بچه کرد و روبه آرام گرفت
بهرام که گور می‌گرفتی همه عمر
دیدی که چگونه گور بهرام گرفت؟

The place where Jamshid held his cup,
The doe and the fox now rest and sup.
Bahram who hunted game non-stop,
Was hunted by death when his time was up.

Great mystics have always encouraged their disciples to visit graveyards and learn lessons from previous generations. The late Qāḍī (may God be pleased with him) would recommend his disciples to go to the cemetery, recite al-Fātiḥah (Chapter 1 of the Qur'ān), and then sit in a corner in silence for one hour, contemplating about their end and death. He said: Such practice is very effective in cutting world ties and paying attention to the origin of existence and prevents the soul from inclinig to multiplicities.

My late father, 'Allāmah Ṭihrānī (May God sanctify his spirit) had a very pure and enlightened friend, Ḥājj Hādī Abharī who was blessed with some spiritual unveilings. Until I became seventeen, I had the privilege of benefiting from him. He once told me: Because of the nature of my occupation, I used to travel a lot at a young age, and it happened so often that I had to walk between cities. Once in a hot summer, I became thirsty and rested beside a mountain where there was a stream of clear water. The strange silence of the desert and its burning sun revealed no signs of life. Suddenly, a thought occurred to me, and I asked myself: Is it possible that there were people here who had a prosperous life, society and trades? Or has this land never been inhabited by a mortal? Right at that moment, God removed the veil before my eyes. I saw that in the course of history, many

tribes and communities had lived there. Each had built its own houses, villages, cities, gardens, and buildings, and then had left the place for the next group to come and replace them. They had lived there for hundreds of years, and this cycle repeated so many times that I could not keep count of them.

Once I had a trip to Shīrāz. when I returned to Mashhad to visit my late father, he asked me, "Did you visit Persepolis?" I said, "No, I did not." He said, "It is good to visit these places and learn lessons from their past for one's own future."

What is conveyed in his message is different from that of ordinary people. People commonly wish to preserve their cultural heritage to validate memories of the past and satisfy their sense of pride. This is a grave mistake and is highly reprehensible. Why should one revive the symbols from the era of pre-Islamic ignorance, the signs of polytheism, non-religious traditions, and national superstitions in a monotheistic society where the focus of attention should be on God and religious teachings? Instead of paying attention to the origin, God's oneness and the final faith, people are diverted to symbols of plurality, ignorance, egotism, oppression, materialism, and heedlessness. These are the heritage of despots who were corrupted by wealth, who oppressed their subjects, and who were most distant from God and human values. Such practice drives people away from the monotheistic teachings of religious leaders toward absurd traditions and vain superstitions. Nevertheless, visiting such historical places as a means of learning, awakening and reevaluation of one's path is advisable.[76]

Similarly, when we visit the shrines of the Infallibles (peace be upon them), we should recite their *ziyārah* and then sit quietly in a corner and contemplate their lives in silence. Excessive time spent on prayer books, Qur'ān, *Du'ā'* and *ziyārah* will prevent the pilgrim from acquiring more

benefits. Instead, we must feel the Imam's presence, submit ourselves to him and embrace his *wilāyah* (spiritual authority, guardianship). We must start an intimate conversation in our heart with him and annihilate ourselves in his holy soul. We should recall the life of the Imam and imagine ourselves at his time and circumstances. Then we should evaluate our deeds in his time and era. We must do our best to accept the implications and requirements of Imamate and *wilāyah* to the extent possible with utmost determination and sincerity. Then our *ziyārah* is fruitful and makes us advance toward God at a much faster pace.

Loud recitation of *ziyārah* is ineffective, wrong, and sinful and it causes distraction to others. Imam can hear us, and he is fully aware of our utmost secret.

People who make noise in the shrines of the Infallibles by reciting elegies and poems aloud will certainly not be graced and looked upon by the Imam. One should observe utmost courtesy at the site of God's friends and should express his love and devotion with respect and proper manners.

It is witnessed that the pilgrims to Baqī' Cemetery, walk all the way to the tombs of the Imams without removing their shoes. This is an insult to the Imams. What is the difference between the holy shrine of Imam Riḍā and that of the Imams in Baqī' (peace be upon them all)? Why should we behave so differently? This only stems from the ignorance of pilgrim who is fascinated by the elegant doors, walls, mirrors, gilt, and chandeliers. Being so occupied with these ornaments, he is diverted from the reality of the Imam and his all-encompassing guardianship.

و سِرْ فی دیارِهِم و آثارِهِم، فانظرْ فیما فعَلوا، و عَمّا انتَقَلوا، و أینَ حَلوا و نَزَلوا، فإنّکَ تَجِدُهُم قَدِ انتَقلوا عَن الأحِبّةِ، و حَلوا دِیارَ الغُربَةِ؛ و کأنکَ عَن قلیلٍ قَد صِرتَ کأحَدِهِم؛ فأصلِح مَثواک، و لا تُبعْ آخِرَتَک بِدُنیاک.

Visit their [ruined] cities and remnants: observe what they did, where they departed from, and where they settled and descended. For indeed you will find that they left their loved ones behind, and [instead] settled in the abode of estrangement. And it shall be soon that you become one of them. So, build your [eternal] abode, and do not sell your Hereafter to your world.

The lofty points made in the will require further reflection because they make it clear that there is absolutely no difference between past and future people and the only thing that separates them is time. They follow exactly the same path. Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

إذا أنتَ حَمَلتَ جَنازَةً فكُنْ كأنّكَ أنتَ المَحْمُولُ وَ كأنّكَ سألتَ رَبَّكَ الرُّجُوعَ إلى الدّنيا ففعَلَ فانظرْ ما ذا تَستأنِفُ.

When you carry a dead person [in a funeral], imagine that you are the one who is being carried. Imagine you asked your Lord to return you to the world and He did so. Then see how you will act from then on![77]

"ودع القول فيما لا تعرف، و الخطاب فيما لم تكلف، و أمسك عن طريق إذا خفت ضلالته، فإن الكف عند حيرة الضلال خير من ركوب الأهوال."

Abstain from speaking about what you do not know, or addressing what is not incumbent upon you. Keep away from a path that you fear might lead you astray, for indeed having restraint when one is uncertain about the truth is better than embarking on dangers.

From this point onward, the Imam gives practical instructions for personal and social concerns. He begins with explaining one's duty in doubtful situations and clarifies man's place in relation to external events whether doubtful or not.

There are a few points to clarify here. *First*: Someone who is engaged in public speaking and oration must have a full knowledge of the content or else can move an audience toward wrongful conduct and irreparable consequences may ensue.

It is usually said that everyone is an expert in three things, medicine, building construction and Sharia rules, but it is not correct to interfere in these matters. One should be careful about religious rulings, and religious scholars should be very careful not to issue fatwa unless they are absolutely sure of it. They should not think that saying "I don't know" will undermine religion.

Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) says:

لا تَقُلْ ما لا تَعلم! بل، لا تَقُل كلّ ما تَعلم!

Keep silent about what you are not informed about, and not disclose anything you are aware of![78]

In other words: "There is a time for a dialogue, and a place to preach."

In many cases, the disclosure of a matter may have dire consequences, and accordingly, in such circumstances, the disclosure of information is *ḥarām* (forbidden). For instance, prescribing medication by non-physicians is a forbidden act. This is an example of negligence or incompetence on the part of professional conduct. One who is involved in such implementation must be held accountable, go through lawsuit, and must pay *diyya*[79], as mentioned in a hadith.[80]

Second: The Imam then warns against vague issues and ambiguous circumstances—when one cannot clearly discern the truth, or judge the reality of the information, and may be biased by the surrounding atmosphere or common rumors. In the hands of the general public or a specific group with certain interests, his fame and status become a tool for exploitation. Such instrumentalization will eventually lead him to despair and loss!

What may especially deceive the person in such cases are obsessive thoughts of having responsibility to act or to oppose injustice. Such enticements and temptations only intensify the deviation and make the person justify his or her sense of fulfillment of religious duty.

However, the Glorious Qur'ān says:

وَ لا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَ الْبَصَرَ وَ الْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْؤُولاً.

Follow not that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed the hearing, the sight and the heart—all of them shall be questioned of.[81]

Imam Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) says:

إنّما الأمورُ ثلاثة: أمرٌ بَيِّنٌ رُشْدُه فيُتَّبَع، و أمرٌ بَيِّنٌ غَيُّه فيُجتَنَب، و أمرٌ مُشكِلٌ يُرَدّ علمُه إلى الله و إلى رسوله. قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم: حلالٌ بَيِّنٌ و حرام بَيِّنٌ و شبهاتٌ بَيْنَ ذلك، و مَن تَرك الشُّبُهاتِ نجىٰ مِن المُحَرّمات، و مَن ارتَكب الشُّبُهات دخل فى المُحَرّمات و هَلك مِن حيث لايَعلم.

Matters around us are of three kinds: *First*, if the concept, conclusion, or measurement of a matter is well-founded, clear, and unambiguous. Naturally that matter should be followed. *Second*, if the falsehood and uncertainty of a matter is evident; it is incumbent on man to avoid such matter. *Third*, if the truth or falsehood of a matter is not obvious. This also should be avoided because it may cause humankind to fall into forbidden action. One who commits such act destroys his potentialities unknowingly and would feel remorse forever.[82]

Here, Imam Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) clarifies the responsibility and obligation of all individuals regarding disputes, conflicts, and sectarianisms—matters that have always preoccupied people throughout their life.

Undoubtedly, true moral values and development are found in clear situations where the person is well-

informed about them, or they can be extracted from religious laws that anyone is obliged to follow. However, in doubtful cases, the opinion of an expert would justify the matter. An example would be a patient who refers to a competent physician, or when a person follows an expert of Islamic jurisprudence (*mujtahid*)—the one who is connected to unseen world and is able to distinguish between truth and falsehood; the one who is fully aware of the mysteries of *malakūt* (the angelic world) and comprehends the events intuitively (not by means of media such as TV, radio or press), and perceives all events as if he himself is present in them. The verdict of such scholar is valid, and it is an obligation to obey him.[83] The late Sayyid Mahdī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, the late Ākhūnd Mullā Ḥusayn-Qulī Hamadānī, the late Sayyid Aḥmad Karbalāʾī, the late Sayyid ʿAlī Qāḍī, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, and ʿʿAllāmah Ṭihrānī– may God be pleased with them all – are among those unequivocal examples of scholars.

In circumstances different from those considered above, obedience is not absolute, and caution should be exercised in regard to the knowledge of the *mujtahid* and his proximity to Allah. Here, the true commitment to the principles and commandments is based on the validity of the matter. The extent to which one should follow a *mujtahid* and perform duties depends on the intellectual doctrine of the individual and the level of competency of the *mujtahid*. If a person is confident about invalidity of a matter, it is forbidden for him to follow the ruling of *mujtahid* on that matter, and without the proof of the accuracy and consistency of the ruling, caution should be taken.

Many great Muslim scholars' rule against permissibility of music and gambling tools such as chess, backgammon and so forth, and some neither forbid nor recommend them. In these cases, caution should be exercised, and one should refrain from these tools. The authoritative opinion to use

such tools by some scholars or jurisprudents, does not automatically abandon the verdict of others.

"وَ اٰمُر بالمعروفِ تَكُنْ مِن اَهلِه، و اَنكِرِ المُنكرَ بيدكَ و لِسانِك، و بايِنْ مَن فَعَلَهُ بجُهدِكَ، و جاهِدْ فى الله حَقَّ جِهادِهِ، و لا تَأخُذْكَ فى الله لومَةُ لائِم، و خُضِ الغَمَراتِ لِلحَقِّ حَيثُ كانَ، و تَفقَهْ فى الدّين."

Enjoin good, and you will become a doer thereafter. Discourage people continuously from committing sin and the actions contrary to Allah's satisfaction. Aversion should be felt towards those who commit forbidden actions. As much as you can, act with your limbs and tongue to obey Allah's commands and be subjected to his satisfaction, and do not be afraid of the reproach of others. Plunge in overwhelming difficulties for the cause of the truth wherever it might be and resolve a dispute by fairness and justice and do not be terrified by imposed bans and barriers. As the social condition allows and up to the extent of your ability, try hard to have a deep insight of religious thoughts, the fundamental principle of *Sharī'ah* Law and *wahy*.

In the above passage, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) clarifies responsibilities of religious scholars and experts of *sharī'ah* principles at different level of awareness and knowledge. He reminds the vital tasks of guidance, restoration of justice, eradication of oppression, and people's expectation of truth and disclosure of injustice.

Commanding what is just and forbidding what is evil (*amr bi 'l-Ma'rūf wa 'n-nahy 'ani 'l-munkar*) are two essential Ancillaries of the Faith (*furū' ad-dīn*). What leads society to disintegration of law and civility is nothing but ignoring these principles. In such a society, tyrants continue their dominations, the oppressed people are deprived of their rights,

potentialities to attain actuality are wasted and the final fate is destruction. The noble verse of Qur'an says:

وَلتَكُن مِنكُمْ اُمَّة يَدْعُونَ إلى الخَيْر وَيَأمُرُونَ بالمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَن المُنكَر وَأولـئِكَ هُمُ المُفلِحُونَ.

And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.[84]

Of course, it must be noticed that the state of calling people to goodness and forbidding them from evil, should be accompanied by a complete and accurate understanding of "goodness" and "evil." It is often seen that advice given openly in public will cause discomfort, and a negative reaction may ensue. Thus, in such a situation, providing openly even sound practical advice must be avoided.

Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) says:

نُصحُک فی المَلاء تَقریعٌ.

Giving advice in public will crush the "self" and damage the "soul."[85]

It can be concluded from the noble verse that "calling people to goodness and dissuading people from committing sin" is not a matter by which some person with special taste or incentives should intervene. It must be carried out by certain individuals who are aware of the circumstances and can distinguish right from wrong.

In every Islamic society, there must be an organization to assume the task of Islamic propagation with utmost elegance. Such an organization must seek help from the *mujtahid*s who are well-known for their piety and know the conditions of their society. The mottos and slogans which promote certain views must be in accordance with religious rules and codes, and false dilemmas must be

avoided. The minds of the public, youth and teenagers should not be deviated by groundless and irrational thoughts, in order to be misused by some people or group.

Therefore, "enjoining good and forbidding evils and wrongs" is one of the basic pillars of shaping society based on the teaching of revelation. In order to leave no room for opportunists to disturb mind and soul of the people and in order to form a society based on moderation and functionality, one who assumes such task must be more insightful, courageous, educated than any other member of the society and he and those appointed by him must be expert in Islamic jurisprudence.

Similarity, *jihād* (the religious duty of Muslims to maintain the religion) for the sake of God, must be based on knowledge and understanding of the conditions and the requirements of such divine obligation. *Mujāhid* (one who is engaged in *jihād*) must not be influenced by emotions and rumors or encouraged by ignorant friends. An inappropriate act may have irreparable consequences and therefore *Mujāhid* must protect the life, property, and reputation of his people.

After accepting the responsibility of government, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) encouraged people to *jihād* to repel Mu'awiya and spent eighteen months in the battle of Ṣiffīn to overthrow the tyrant dynasty. But Imam Mujtabā (peace be upon him) at such critical conditions, undertook the responsibility of accepting peace with Mu'awiya and prevented people from any hasty act against him.

During the Imamate and spiritual guidance of the lord of both worlds, Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (peace be upon him), he did not carry out any act against Mu'awiya for ten years but when Yazīd came to power, Imam ordered for *Jihād* and that history's great calamity in the desert of *Karbala* happened. Nevertheless, Imām al-Bāqir (peace be upon him)

warns Zaid ibn Ali not to rise against the oppressive rule of Banī Marwān caliphs.

It is in this context that we find out that *Jihād* for the cause of God shall be made in one of two ways. *First*: under the subordination, subjection, and obedience to the living infallible Imam (peace be upon him). *Second*: under supervision of the special representative of Imam, a person like Muslim ibn 'Aqīl (peace be upon him), who had a direct contact with Imam Ḥusayn (peace be upon him). Otherwise, *Jihād* would not be based on insight and sharī'ah logic, and the responsibility of its inseparable consequences rests on the involved person.

Of course, what was said above relates to the physical struggle against the enemies and obviously for defense, you do not need any permission.

In the school of truth, war and peace must be permitted by the infallible Imam (peace be upon him), and elements such as carnal desires and personal discretion must not be used to interpret the orders of the Infallible Imam (peace be upon him).

Then, Imam (peace be upon him) reminds us about the importance of having insight in religion and fundaments of *waḥy* (divine revelation). He orders that one must be informed and clear-sighted about the revealed teachings. Even though the Imam summaries his point in a very short sentence but at the same time the master key to all treasuries of *ma'rifah* (intimate knowledge), mysteries of *sharī'ah*, and fundaments of *waḥy* (divine revelation) is hidden in it.

It must be admitted that unfortunately in the field of beliefs and spiritual knowledge, many incompetent individuals claim to be well-informed and thus express their opinions and *fatwa* (authoritative opinion) openly about religious rules. In giving opinion and *fatwa*, they substantiate their words by saying that "I understand that. . .," "it must be...," "I guess that. . .," and "religious is for all and every person should interpret..."

The words become lengthy, and detailed explanation may be seen in "The Horizon of Revelation" written by this writer[86], but an explanation is given here briefly.

The root of the sacred law and the fundaments of religion rest on the world of revelation and unseen source, and the divine prophets are able to bring the fundaments of religion and religious rules only through connection to that horizon and field (not through reading books or listening to speeches).

Accordingly, after the divine prophets, only those whose hearts and minds are connected to Angelic Realm (*Alam-i-Malakut*) and Realm of Divinity (*Alam-i-Lāhūt*), are capable of explaining the rulings and interpreting the foundations of revelation. They descend the revealed truth from the *taqdīr* stage (refers to the doctrine of fate or predestination, all events have been established by God) to the level of actualization. These individuals are the *'Awliyā 'Allāh* (those vested with the authority of God) and '*Urafā* (scholars of the intimate knowledge or *ma'rifa*) who act for God and in obedience to His orders. They are equipped with intuition and power to disclose all the secrets of the unseen world. Let it not remain unsaid that the rank of the Infallible Imams (peace be upon them) is beyond the intuitive, illuminative, and supervisory ranks of the person I enumerated above, and I did not include the Infallible Imams in the list.[87]

Based on these reasoning, learning *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) is achieved when someone is reached the level of certainty (*Shuhūd*) or when is learned and accepted through someone who is connected to the unseen world. Otherwise, both the follower (*muqallid*) and the followed (*muqallad*) would be unaware of the fundamentals of *sharī'ah*.

"و عَوِّد نفسَکَ التَّصبُرَ علی المکروہِ، و نِعْمَ الخُلقُ التَّصبُرُ [فی الحقّ]، و ألجِیءْ نفسَکَ فی الأمور کُلِّها إلی إلٰهکَ، فإنّکَ تُلجِئُها إلیٰ کَهفٍ حَرِیز، و مانِع عزیز، و أخلِصْ فی المسألةِ

لِرَبِّکَ، فإنّ بیَدهِ العَطاءَ و الحرمانَ، و أکثِر الاستِخارَةَ، و تَفهَمْ وصیَتی، و لا تَذهَبَنّ عَنها صَفحًا، فإنّ خیرَ القول ما نَفعَ، و اعلم أنّهُ لا خَیرَ فی عِلمٍ لا یَنفعُ، و لا یُنتفعُ بعِلمٍ لا یَحقّ تَعلُمُهُ."

Accustom yourself to tolerate hardships; it is such a virtue to have forbearance in the cause of the truth, (Endurance and determination for the truth in any form and in any place should be continuous and consistent, and in dealing with hardship, no weakness in determination and dedication should be exercised). Entrust yourself to your God in all of your affairs, for you would thus be entrusting it to a secure shelter and a mighty protector. Make your requests only from your Lord, for indeed it is only up to Him to give or deprive. Entreat [God] for what is best for you [or what is your good] frequently. Try to comprehend my will, and do not take it lightly, for indeed the best speech is that which is beneficial. Know that there is no good in a knowledge that is of no benefit, and one does not benefit from a knowledge that is forbidden to acquire [or a knowledge that is not worthy of learning].

There are a few points in this passage that must be explained. *First point*: Having patience in hardship, accepting them as a part of life trends, and knowing the effect of their impact on the quality of moral and spiritual wayfaring.

There is no doubt that the divine destiny has considered a consistent association between all events, in respect of their origin and effects. So, no phenomenon can be separately assessed, and like a circle of chains, all events are interconnected. On the other hand, based on divine wisdom, each event is moving toward a specific destination and aim, and infringement on any point of the circle would cause damage and failure of the rest.

جهان چون چشم و خط و خال و ابروست
که هر چیزی به جای خویش نیکو است

The world is like eye, line, spot, and eyebrow.
Everything is good and needed in its place.[88]

***

پیر ما گفت خطا بر قلم صنع نرفت
آفرین بر نظر پاک خطا پوشش باد

Our spiritual master said that there is no error made by creating pen.
Bravo to his clean error-hiding eye.[89]

On the other hand, these events in their totality are associated with difficulties and blessings, ups and downs, perfection and deficiency, health, and illness. It is difficult for the *nafs* (self) to accept the two opposite effects, but man should be able to endure all these calamities, because they are necessary for transformation of man's potentiality to reach actualization, and without them, no purpose is achieved. So, the followers of the path, must have no fear of facing hardships and should know that the power of the Eternal Essence is above all powers, and thus entrust Him with all their affairs.

Second point: Purity of intention in beseeching Almighty God. It has been clarified that all events are ordained by God, as He states in Qur'ān:

بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ.

His hand is the realm of all things[90]

Man must pay attention to Him only and should not rely on others. The human heart and *fiṭrah*, with the knowledge of such subject, look at the impact of the deceitful manifestations of the world and consider them to be the true causes. It is so because such knowledge has not penetrated into all corners of the heart and consciousness and has not become sustainable.

This is true for most people even for those who have high degrees of *ma'rifah* (intimate knowledge) and perfection.

Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him), in prison said to the one of the two prisoners who he knew would be set free:

اذْكُرْنِي عِندَ رَبِّكَ.

Mention me before your master.[91]

But Satan caused him to forget mentioning this to his lord and so Joseph remained in prison for seven years. During this period, God blessed him with Divine Gnosis and incorporablity of the soul. He was totally bound to the source of *"Ḥayyu yā Qayyūm"* (the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of all existence). He was given the *maqām* (a permanent station) of self-purification *(Tazkīah)* of souls. It was at this point that God released him from prison for the guidance of the society.

Third point: the subject of *istikhārah*, or asking God for guidance, which has lost its true meaning among the Shiite beliefs and culture and is often used inappropriately. *Istikhārah* means asking God for goodness (*khayr*), virtue (ṣalāh) and salvation (*afīat*). These terms can find their true meaning in relation to man's spiritual growth, his proximity to God, and the incorporablity of his soul. Many a time, the profit of business transactions, or good health of the body, lead man toward a pervasive dependence on others than God and are thus harmful for mystical unveilings and incorporablity of the soul. Equally, some hardships and restrictions may be in favor of man, as Qur'an says:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الأَمْوَالِ وَالأَنفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ.

And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits but give good tidings to the steadfast."[92]

[We would know the degree of your severity, tolerance, and patience and make them the reason of your refinement and growth.]

It is narrated from the Messenger of God, may the blessing and the peace of God be upon him and his family, that: The Exalted God blesses His slaves by diseases and hardship.[93]

Khwājah Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī Says:

تا شدم حلقه به گوش در میخانه عشق
هر دم آید غمی از نو به مبارک بادم

Ever since I became ear-ringed slave of love's tavern
new sorrows come to me every moment welcomingly.[94]

Therefore, many times, health and welfare are not in man's favor. Thus, we should ask for *afīat* of both worlds, as we say in some prayer: "O God, grant me well-being and make it everlasting."[95]

The servant of God should ask Him for *khayr* and *afīat,* not profit, health or happiness, and this is the true meaning of *istikhārah.*

In doubtful matters, Imams (peace be upon them) and *'Awliyā'Allāh* have recommended us to seek help from the experienced and clear-sighted people:

ما خاب من استشار.

One who consults about his affairs, would never suffer damages[96]

If the question is still in doubt, the instruction is to perform *Ghusl (*the full body washing ablution) of *istikhārah* and recite a two *raka'ah* (cycle) prayer, then prostrate and while in prostration, say the following sentence hundred times:

أستخيُر اللهَ برَحمَتِهِ.

I beseech God goodness and I hope his mercy[97]

After completion, the man should follow his heart, and thus, surrender his will to God.

But in case of conventional *istikhārah* (*istikhārah* by resorting to Qur'an and or by rosary) which is prevalent among people, performing *istikhārah* would not remove the doubt from the person's thought and therefore ambiguity in the matter or concern would still remain.

Last point is about the virtues of beneficial knowledge and good words. Imam believes that one should utter good words which benefit the audience. He rejects the unbeneficial sciences and says: "a science with no beneficial purposes, worth not to be learned."

The major pilar of Imam's words is the gain of the individual and society in terms of cultural issues, and that the profit or loss, is the basic condition of acceptance or non-acceptance of the scientific and human ethical matters.

In the view of man's wisdom and his innate disposition toward virtue, all gains and losses are assessed in relation to the growth and development of one's eternal salvation. The worldly profits must be used for eternal salvation and promotion toward actualization and incorporablity, or else they create obstacles on the path toward the God.

Man should be highly sensitive about what enters his mind. He must not open his eyes, ears, and heart to every word, phenomena, and voice. One who is highly cautious for food intakes and considers their effects or side effects, must also be equally cautious and sensitive toward today's sciences—the mind and spirit can always have the readiness for either growth or decay—a science which doesn't promote the soul or perhaps is causing deviation from destination, should be avoided.

Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, says: Learn from honeybees. Even though there are many types of flowers but bees forage nectar from the most beneficial one. You too must search and find the science or a technology which is more useful and efficient for your happiness and salvation.

Shaykh Bahā'ī, on whom be the mercy of God, says:

علمی بطلب که تو را فانی
سازد ز علایق جسمانی

Seek a science which makes you free from the carnal desires.[98]

Or, as Sanā'ī says:

علم کز تو تو را نبستاند
جهل از آن علم به بُوَد صدبار

Ignorance is hundred times better than
a science not separating you from you.[99]

The aim and purpose of the scholars in the acquisition of education should be pleasing to God, not merely addressing the development and welfare of the world. Knowledge must benefit the person and society, and if a man feels that he may fall or cause others to fall into Satan's temptation, he must refrain from learning such knowledge. One who seeks knowledge must analyze all the aspects then proceed purely to gain the contentment of God and must keep self away from temporal and carnal desires.

All seekers of Islamic sciences and followers of *sharī'ah* must commit themselves to *Tazkīah* (purification of the self) and carry out their tasks and actions with utmost sincerity and they should not lose their pure intention along the way. The apparent worldly affairs, Satan's temptation and mischief of devils should not fade away the color of Divinity in them

and deviate these individuals from the school of *Ahl al-Bayt* (People of the Prophet's House, blessing of God be upon all of them).

Imam also reminds us about the rules of effective verbal communication; when one should or should not speak and how one should convey his intended meaning; the listener and the place of verbal communication, or the situation where the content of a speech may be interpreted incorrectly.

اى بُنَيّ! إنّى لمّا رأيتُنى قد بلغتُ سِنّا، و رأيتُنى أزدادُ وَهنًا، بادَرتُ بوَصيّتى إليكَ، و أوْرَدتُ خِصالاً مِنها قبلَ أن يَعجَلَ بى أجَلى دونَ أن أفضىَ إليكَ بما فى نَفسى، و أن أنقُصَ فى رَأيى كما نَقَصتُ فى جسمى، أو يَسبِقَنى إليكَ بَعضُ غَلباتِ الهَوَى، أو فِتَنِ الدُّنيا، فتَكونَ كالصَّعبِ النَّفور، و إنّما قلبُ الحَدَثِ كالأرضِ الخاليةِ: ما أُلقِىَ فيها مِن شَىءٍ قبلتَهُ، فبادَرتُكَ بالأدَبِ قبلَ أن يَقسُوَ قَلبُكَ، و يَشتَغِلَ لُبُّكَ، لِتَستَقبِلَ بِجِدِّ رَأيِكَ مِنَ الأمرِ ما قد كفاكَ أهلُ التَّجارِبِ بُغيَتَهُ و تَجرِبَتَهُ، فتَكونَ قد كُفيتَ مَؤُونَةَ الطَّلَبِ، و عوفيتَ مِن عِلاجِ التَّجرِبَةِ، فأتاكَ مِن ذلكَ ما قد كُنّا نأتيهِ، و استَبانَ لكَ ما رُبَّما أظلَمَ عَلَينا مِنهُ.

My son, indeed as I found myself reaching old age and increasing in weakness, I hastened to write my will to you and set forth some moral advices for you, lest my death rushes to me while I have not imparted to you what I have in my heart; lest my mind deteriorates as my body has deteriorated; and lest you are overtaken by some overwhelming desires and tribulations of this world, for that would make you like an intractable stampeded animal [i.e. you would not give ear to my advice]. Indeed, the heart of a youth is like an empty land: it accepts any seed that is cast upon it. So, I hastened to discipline you before your heart hardens and your mind becomes preoccupied [with other affairs], that you may with a resolute mind receive the results of what experienced individuals have sought and tried before you. This way you are spared from examining them yourself. Hence, what we used to pursue would readily come to you,

and things that might have been obscure to us would become evident to you.

Here, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) reminds of three vital aspects. *First*: Prevention of the probability and/or impact of unfortunate events; prevention before treatment.

The human soul is based on the *tawḥīd* foundation and thus has the potentiality to reach actualization and perfection. As one starts his journey toward God, he will need the guidance of a righteous man, one who is insightful, expert, and aware of the steps of wayfaring. Through his guidance, the stages of incorporablity and actualization are traversed with ease and contentment.

The *second* point relates to the first in which Imam declares that early adolescence is the best time to grasp ethical issues and understand the principle of spiritual wayfaring. According to the innate truth and the implicit order within the whole of being, the heart and mind of youth, are not polluted by carnal desires, and therefore, they will not resist the truth, and soon will embrace it, as Imam (peace be upon him) says:

عَلَيْكُمْ بِالأَحْدَاثِ.

It is incumbent on you, juveniles![100]

Do not miss the opportunity of educating youth, before the environment, surrounding, friends and community, deviate them from the right path and engage their enthusiasms, tastes, and mind into carnal desires and separate them from the teaching of *waḥy* (divine revelation) and *sharī'ah* foundations. As the scholars of the Divine m*a'rifah* (intimate knowledge) and mentors of self-purification say: Achieving perfection and advancing in the path toward the worlds of m*a'rifah*, must start from a young age,

otherwise, it would be difficult to pass from the ups and downs of the world of plurality later on.

The *third* point is about learning and utilizing the experience of others to make our journey towards God flawless and moderate—the process of eliminating or lessening extremes. This point deserves the highest degree of attention and dedication, because human life with all ups and downs, and differences in methods and manners, and differences in the occurrence of suspicious and dubious accidents, requires man to face the life with a force beyond the human perception. It requires man to use the means and tools for his journey with greater efficiency. In many events, if one wants to verify an effect or experience the authenticity of a phenomenon, the opportunity will be lost and damage, perdition, and remorse will ensue. The person might also get entangled in that event and find no way out of it. Hence, one should strive toward acquiring knowledge through experience of others and compare it to the current trends and events; to facilitate his own and to pave his path toward God.

"أیْ بُنَیَّ! إنّی - و إن لم أکُنْ عُمِّرتُ عُمُرَ مَن کانَ قبلی - فقد نَظَرتُ فی أعمالِهم، و فکّرتُ فی أخبارِهم، و سِرتُ فی آثارِهم، حتّی عُدتُ کأحَدِهِم، بَل کأنّی بما انتَهی إلیّ مِن أمورِهم قد عُمِّرتُ مَعَ أوّلِهِم إلی آخِرِهِم، فعَرَفتُ صَفوَ ذٰلِک مِن کَدرِهِ، و نَفعَهُ مِن ضَرَرِهِ، فاستَخلَصتُ لک مِن کُلّ أمرٍ نَخیلَهُ و تَوَخَّیتُ لک جَمیلَهُ، و صَرَفتُ عَنکَ مَجهولَهُ، و رَأیتُ - حَیثُ عَنانی مِن أمرِکَ ما یَعنی الوالِدَ الشَّفیقَ، و أجمَعتُ عَلیهِ مِن أدَبِک - أن یَکونَ ذٰلِک و أنتَ مُقبِلُ العُمُرِ و مُقتَبَلُ الدَّهرِ، ذو نِیَّةٍ سَلیمَةٍ و نَفسٍ صافِیَةٍ، و أن أبتَدِئَک بِتَعلیمِ کِتابِ اللهِ و تَأویلِهِ، و شَرائِعِ الإسلامِ و أحکامِهِ، و حَلالِهِ و حَرامِهِ، [و] لا أجاوِزُ لک إلی غَیرِهِ، ثُمَّ أشفَقتُ أن یَلتَبِسَ عَلیک ما اختَلَفَ النّاسُ فیهِ مِن أهوائِهِم و آرائِهِم مِثلَ الَّذی التَبَسَ عَلَیهِم، فکانَ إحکامُ ذٰلِک عَلی ما کرِهتُ مِن تَنبیهِک لَهُ أحَبَّ إلیّ مِن إسلامِک إلی أمرٍ لا آمَنُ عَلیک بِهِ الهَلَکَةَ، و رَجَوتُ أن یُوَفِّقَک اللهُ فیهِ لِرُشدِک، و أن یَهدِیَک لِقَصدِک، فعَهِدتُ إلیک وصیَّتی هٰذِهِ.

My son! Even though I did not live the time of those who were before me, I have reflected on their actions, have contemplated their stories, and have visited their [ruined] remnants, to the point that I became like one of them. Rather, based on what has reached me about their affairs, it is as though I have lived with them from the very first to the very last. This enabled me to discern the pure thereof from the impure [of their actions and affairs], and what is beneficial from what is harmful. Thus, I have sifted out the choicest [or greatest] of every affair for you, have picked the most beautiful parts for you, and have turned away what is obscure there from you. Since I found myself to be concerned with your affairs as a compassionate father, I determined to discipline you while you are at an early age with a life in front of you, and while you have a sincere intention and a pure soul. And I decided to begin [your discipline] by teaching you the Book of God, Mighty and Majestic is He, along with its interpretation, the laws, and rules of Islam, and what is lawful and unlawful, without taking you on digressions to other topics.

But then I feared that you may be confused by the opposing opinions and desires of the people just as they have been confused. Therefore, despite my reluctance to inform you of these [different opinions and desires], I prefer to clarify them for you rather than leaving you to face certain affairs that I am afraid might be fatal to you. I hope that God may assist you to reach your rectitude in these affairs, and to guide you to your straight path. That is why I have charged you with this will of mine.

و اعلمْ - يا بُنَيَّ! - أنّ أحَبَّ ما أنتَ آخِذٌ بِهِ إليَّ مِن وَصِيَّتي، تَقوَى اللهِ و الاقتِصارُ عَلى ما فرَضَهُ اللهُ عَليك، و الأخذُ بما مَضَى عَلَيهِ الأوّلونَ مِن آبائك و الصّالِحونَ مِن أهل بَيتِك؛ فإنّهُم لم يَدَعوا أن نَظروا لأنفُسِهم كما أنتَ ناظِرٌ، و فكّروا كما أنتَ مُفكِّرٌ، ثُمّ رَدّهُم آخِرُ ذلِك إلى الأخذِ بما عَرَفوا، و الإمساك عَمّا لم يَكلفوا، فإن أبَت نَفسُك أن تَقبَلَ ذلِك دونَ أن تَعلَمَ كما عَلِموا فليكُنْ طَلَبُك ذلِك بِتَفهُّم و تَعَلُّم، لا بِتَورُّطِ الشُّبُهاتِ و عُلوِّ الخُصوماتِ.

و ابدأ ـ قبلَ نَظرک فی ذٰلک ـ بالاستِعانَةِ بإلٰهکَ، و الرَّغبَةِ إلیهِ فی تَوفیقِک، و تَرکِ کُلّ شائِبَةٍ أوْلَجَتک فی شُبهَةٍ، أوْ أسلمَتک إلی ضَلالَةٍ؛ فإذا أیقنتَ أن قد صَفا قلبُک فخَشَعَ، و تمّ رَأیُک فاجتَمَعَ، و کانَ هَمُّک فی ذٰلک هَمّا واحِدًا؛ فانظرْ فیمَا فسّرتُ لک، و إن أنتَ لم یجتَمِعْ لک ما تُحِبُّ مِن نَفسِک، و فراغ نَظرک و فِکرک؛ فاعلمْ أنّک إنّما تَخبِطُ العَشْواءَ، و تُثَوِّرُ الظَّلماءَ، و لیسَ طالِبُ الدّینِ مَن خَبَطَ أوْ خَلَطَ، و الإمساکُ عَن ذٰلک أمثَلُ.

Know, my son, that the dearest things to me that can take from my will are to be wary of God, to confine yourself to what God has made incumbent upon you, and to take up what your forefathers and the righteous in your family followed. Indeed, they did not neglect to reflect upon their good just as you reflect [upon yours], and they contemplated [about their affairs] just as you contemplate [about yours]. Then their reflection and contemplation led them to hold fast to what they realized [to be right, or to be their duty], and to refrain from what they were not assigned to do.

Now, should your *nafs* (self, soul, ego) refuse to accept this [conclusion of theirs] without reaching it for itself, then your search for it should be a quest for understanding and knowledge, without being caught up in doubts or carried away by quarrels. But before you probe into this search [for knowledge], start with seeking help from your God, turning to Him to make you succeed, and leaving behind anything that might put you in doubt or deliver you to misguidance. Once you have made sure that your heart is cleared [from impurities] and humbled, that your mind is gathered and focused, and that you are determined with a single objective in this regard [to seek the truth], then reflect upon what I have explained for you [in this will]. But if you do not find what you want from your soul [i.e., humbleness] gathered with peace of mind and clarity of thought, then know that you would only be straying like a night-blind camel, and you would only be falling into darkness. However, a seeker of religion [i.e.,

religious truth] is not one who strays or mixes up [truth and untruth]. Then it is better to withhold from this quest [for knowledge] to begin with."

Imam says that the best virtue is *taqwā (*piety*)* and having commitment to fulfill one's duty assigned by God and that man should not add or subtract from his set of obligation solely based on his own discretion.

Some may think that hardship, tribulation, or difficulty brings salvation and that the harder you worship, the more you will be rewarded. There are still those who may think that *mustaḥabb* actions [those whose status of approval in Islamic law (*aḥkām*) falls between *mubāḥ* (neither encouraged nor discouraged) and *wājib* (compulsory)] are *wājib* for them. For instance, where they have to perform *tayammum*[101] , they perform *wuḍu*[102], and put themselves into troubles, or in special circumstances where fasting is forbidden, they fast and damage their body. There are also some women who in their pilgrimage to Mecca violate the natural law ordained by God. They take special pills to prevent their cycles and thus neglect the God's Divine Line of Conduct. They damage themselves by ignoring the natural course of affairs and formative will of God.

We are helped by God only if we act in line with His Satisfaction and Decree, and we are not allowed to add or subtract from His Commands based on our own discretion. We cannot be more compassionate for fulfillment of duties than the owner of religion and we shall not pollute and infest our pure intention with carnal desires or personal tastes.

All the religious heresies in the prophetic sharī'ah have occurred due to the establishment of some personal taste in the religious beliefs. Among these heresies are shaking hands after finishing the prayer, a ceremony held on the 40th day of someone's death and following the corpse of the deceased with the participation of women.

Decorating mosques by tiles, building minarets and domes for mosques are also considered heretical. A Hadith from Imam Muḥammad

Bāqir, peace be upon him, says: When the Upholder, *ṣāḥib al-zamān* (may God hasten his glad advent) appears, he will destroy all mosques and will build them again according to the tradition of the Messenger of God.[103]

Movement of mourning processions with music, drums, standards, and so on, have become conventional heresies. Installation of loudspeakers outside the mosques, *ḥusaynīyah*, and other similar places, which disturb neighbors, are considered heresy and *ḥarām* (sinful). Sharī'ah and the religion of God do not need our sympathy and guardianship and we should not let ourselves out of the circle of religion and the religious scholars.

Someone says to the Imam (peace be upon him), that I have invented a *du'ā* for my prayers. The Imam (peace be upon him) says angrily:

دَعْنی من اختِراعک.

What is your business with invention?[104]

The other point is about benefiting from the experiences of past generations. There is no doubt that for many centuries, people have sought to gain benefits and prevent losses. In the future, there will be no change in this fact, and as such all civilizations and societies are built on this basis. Each generation benefits from the good manners of antecedents and learns from their shortcomings and deficiencies. This issue is common in family, social, and international relationships, to the extent that if an individual wants to take some steps contrary to this act, he or she will be blamed by intellectuals.

A very important point which cannot be overemphasized is man's journey in an atmosphere of skepticism, doubt, and ignorance. Most deviations of human societies and individuals are certainty due to this point.

The glamorous appearances and tempting attractions commonly create calamity and deviation for humankind, and the apparent personality of the people and their reputation play an essential role in this issue. The same is true for the unjust and unsupported promises that are solely based on slogans and can lead the deficient minds and souls of the ordinary people into the valley of darkness and ignorance.

The deceitful personality of people and their eye-catching appearances play an important role in this deviation. The civil strife that occurred after departure of the Messenger of God (may the blessing and peace of God be upon him and his family) was due to the lack of insight and awareness of Muslims about that strife. The lack of insight and awareness of Muslims regarding the reality and the lack of attention to the serious issue of guardianship and leadership on the one hand, and the deceptive appearances of the opposite spectrum of wilāyah and guardianship such as old age and being a friend of the Messenger of God and causal attribution have played a role in this issue. The presence of some famous people like Anas (the servant of the Messenger of God), Uthman (son-in-law of the Prophet) and others among the opponents, caused further deviation as well.

We were faced with the same shortfall in the Persian constitution of 1906. The presence of prominent scholars, famous clergymen, and *marāji'* (plural of, *Marja'*, meaning source to imitate or follow) in both sides of the dispute, and the flood of accusations, plunged people into confusion so gravely that destroyed them all. Only those who had confined themselves to seclusion and those who had invited people to retreat from this planned trap, were not harmed.

Therefore, when the reality of an event is not clear to man, he must not incline to either side and count himself as a follower. He must proceed with caution and prudence and secure himself from the traps set by each party.

Certainly, in such events, all parties consider themselves "absolutely right." To prove their claim, they create evidence and reasons based on past events and they show themselves as the objective reference of those events. Naturally, one should not pay attention to their speech and appearance characteristics and emergence of the truth should be the criteria to realize which party is right.

Ḥajjāj ibn al-Thaqafī, who outstripped the antecedents in killing Shiites, justified his acts by the following verse of the Glorious Qur'an.

أطِيعُوا اللـهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ.

Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.[105]

The last point is about the purity of intention, inner wholesomeness, and submission to the truth and will of the God. Imam (peace be upon him) emphasizes that the words of the `Awliyā' Allāh and great scholars will not be beneficial unless the heart is purified to accept those words.

آئینه شو وصال پری طلعتان طلب
اوّل بروب خانه دگر میهمان طلب

Become a mirror and wish for unity with Pari-visaged creatures.
First sweep the house, then invite the guest.[106]

Thus, we see that the religious awliyā' believe that the essential condition for speech efficiency, is the clarity of the intention and the purity of the heart. The words of scholars have no effect on heart as long as the turbidity of inner self and rust on heart continues to dominate the man. Therefore, the leaders of the path to God believe that the heart should be cleared from belongingness, dispositions, and rust before its exposure to

the divine light and blessings. They consider God's remembrance and praying, highly dangerous and harmful if the soul has no condition to accept the truth.

It is for the above reason that Imam (peace be upon him) says: Should your nafs refuse to accept this without reaching it for itself, then your search for it should be a quest for understanding and knowledge, without being caught up in doubts or carried away by quarrels. But before you probe into this search [for knowledge] and seek every place, let not enter any path and in any place. At this time, the truth and fiction, ugly and beautiful, pure, and impure would be mixed and eventually destroy you.

"فَتَفَهَّم - يا بُنَيَّ! - وَصِيَّتى، و اعلم أنّ مالِکَ المَوتِ هو مالِکُ الحَياةِ، و أنّ الخالِقَ هُو المُميتُ، و أنّ المُغنِيَ هو المُعيدُ، و أنّ المُبتَلِيَ هو المُعافى، و أنّ الدُّنيا لم تَکن لِتَستَقِرَّ إلا عَلى ما جَعَلها اللهُ عَلَيهِ مِنَ النَّعماء و الابتِلاء و الجَزاء فى المَعادِ، أو ما شاءَ مِمّا لا نَعلَمُ. فإن أشکلَ عَليک شَىءٌ مِن ذٰلِک فاحمِلهُ عَلى جَهالَتِک به؛ فإنّک أوّلُ ما خُلِقتَ جاهِلاً ثُمَّ عُلِّمتَ، و ما أکثَرَ ما تَجهَلُ مِنَ الأمرِ، و يَتَحَيَّرُ فيهِ رَأيُک، و يَضِلُّ فيهِ بَصَرُک، ثُمَّ تُبصِرُهُ بَعدَ ذٰلِک، فاعتَصِم بِالَّذى خَلَقَک و رَزَقَک و سَوّاک، و لِيَکُنْ لهُ تَعَبُّدُک، و إلَيهِ رَغبَتُک، و مِنهُ شَفَقَتُک."

So, try to grasp my will, O my son. Know that indeed the Possessor of death is the same as the Possessor of life; the Giver of death is the same as the Creator; the Restorer is the same as the Annihilator; and the saver [of afflictions] is the same as the One Who sends afflictions. Indeed, this word will only subsist on what God has based it on: pleasure and pain, and then retribution [to follow] in the Hereafter—or whatever He has willed beyond your [our] ken. Now, if something does not make sense to you in this regard [i.e., concerning what is said in this will, or concerning God's creation and the affairs of this world], then attribute it to your ignorance, for indeed you were born ignorant at first, and you were taught later on. Likewise, there are many affairs that you do not know [yet], in which your

mind is puzzled, and your view is baffled, but you will see them later on. Hence, hold fast to the One Who created you, provided for you, and proportioned you: your service shall be unto Him [alone], your zeal shall be directed at Him [alone], and your fear shall be of Him [alone]."

By these words, Imam (peace be upon him) implies that not only the existence [of universe and creatures] has origin in the Pure One, but also all events and their consequences are based on His will and decree. This fact has been proved in philosophical issues, mystical intelligence, Unity of Divine Essence, Unity of Divine Acts, monotheism in deeds, and monotheism in belief.

Therefore, man must seek assistance from the Supreme Being and must worship Him, obey Him, and submit to Him all his affairs and acts. As the Exalted God sent a revelation to Moses, peace be upon him, that, O Moses! In all things, even in the salt of our food, ask and beg of Me, we must go to Him with all our hearts too.[107]

Therefore, man must exclusively set his eyes on the Supreme Being, fear Him, and do not care for any other authority or influence in the universe.

و اعلمْ ـ يَا بُنَيَّ! ـ أنّ أحَدًا لم يُنبئ عَن اللهِ كما أنبأ عنه الرّسولُ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم؛ فارْضَ بِهِ رائدًا و إلى النّجاةِ قائدًا، فإنى لم آلكَ نَصيحَةً، و إنّک لن تَبلغَ فى النّظر لِنَفسِک ـ و إن اجتَهَدتَ ـ مَبلغَ نَظرى لک.

Know, O my son, that no one has reported about God, Glorified is He, as His Messenger has done (peace be upon him and his family). So be pleased with him as a guide and leader toward salvation. Indeed, I do not spare you any advice, and no matter how much you try you will never be able to discern your welfare as I discern it for you.

Here, the position of man in this world and his transfer to the final house are explained, and the facts and mental considerations and what is in favor of the prosperity or ruin of man are clarified. The purity of intention and good virtue is considered as the prerequisite of salvation. It is also clarified that, in doubtful cases, caution should be exercised, and one must comply with customs and ways of wisdom and authority of reason and nature.

To resolve uncertainty and ambiguity, guidance from someone who is aware of all aspects of suspicious cases, is a must. The opinion of such a person is a light in the valley of darkness and one should follow his orders and recommendations. Based on this clear reasoning and common sense (that stipulates following one who knows more), the messengers of God and their religious teachings shall be obeyed because doubtful cases are apparent to them, and they enjoy the divine insight. Their orders are superior to all wishes, expectations, threats, and different tastes.

بی پیر مرو تو در خرابات
هرچند سکندر زمانی

Do not go to tavern unaccompanied by spiritual master.
Even if you are Alexander of the time.[108]

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قطع این مرحله بی‌همرهی خضر مکن
ظلماتست بترس از خطر گمراهی

Do not pass the stage without assistance of Khiḍr.
It is a land of darkness; beware of the risk of going astray.[109]

The ultimate purpose of human creation is to pass through the unseen worlds and wayfaring in the Divine Names and Attributes, and eventually reaching the Sacred Boundary and the Holly Essence. To embark on this journey, one must seek leadership from someone who has witnessed and passed through all the Divine Names and Attributes one after another;

someone who knows the secrets and mysteries of the unseen worlds and can pass the barriers with confidence and skill.[110]

It is in this context that we understand why Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) identifies the Messenger of God and his Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) as the most qualified people to guide, direct, and assist human beings.

Farīd al-Dīn, Aṭṭār of Nishābur, may God be pleased with him, says:

ز مشرق تا به مغرب گر امام است علی و آل او ما را تمام است

If there are Imams from the East to the West.
For us, Ali and his descendants would suffice.[111]

Accordingly, 'Awliyā'Allāh who have completed the stages of immateriality and have reached the essence of servitude, can guide the wayfarers and those advancing on the path of God, to reach the ultimate destination. In this respect, there is no difference between educated and uneducated people, or between the practitioners of different occupations. We all need the guidance of perfect man who is united with the God. Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) says:

ضَلّ مَن لیس له حَکیمٌ یُرشِدُه.

A person, who is not led by a man of wisdom and insight, surely in the occurrence of events and doubts, will deviate from the path and will incur everlasting perdition upon self.[112]

و اعلم - یا بُنَیّ! - أنّهُ لو کان لِرَبّک شَریکٌ لأتَتک رُسُله، و لرَأیْتَ آثارَ مُلکهِ و سُلطانِهِ و لعَرَفتَ أفعالهُ و صِفاتِهِ، و لکِنّه إلهٌ واحِدٌ کَما وَصَفَ نَفسَهُ، لا یُضادُّهُ فی مُلکهِ أحَدٌ، و لا یَزولُ أبَدًا و لم یَزَلْ. أوّلٌ قَبلَ الأشیاءِ بلا أوّلیةٍ، و آخِرٌ بَعدَ الأشیاءِ بلا نِهایةٍ. عَظُمَ عَن أن تَثبُتَ رُبوبیّتُهُ بإحاطةِ قَلبٍ أو بَصَرٍ؛ فإذا عَرَفتَ ذٰلِکَ فافعَلْ کَما یَنبَغی لِمِثلِکَ أن یفعَلَهُ فی صِغَرِ خَطَرِهِ؛ و قِلّةِ مَقدِرَتِهِ،

و كَثرَةِ عَجزِهِ، و عظيمِ حاجَتِهِ إلى رَبِّهِ فى طَلَبِ طاعَتِهِ، و الخَشيَةِ مِن عُقوبَتِهِ، و الشَّفقَةِ مِن سُخطِهِ؛ فإنَّهُ لم يأمُركَ إلاّ بحَسَنٍ و لم يَنهَكَ إلاّ عَن قَبيحٍ.

Know, O my son, that if your Lord had a partner, then surely His messengers would have come to you, you would have certainly seen the signs of His sovereignty and dominion, and you would have indeed recognized His actions and attributes. However, He is the only god, as He has described Himself. No one can oppose Him in His sovereignty. He has always been and will always be. He is the First: before everything and without having a beginning; and He is the Last: after everything and without having an end. He is far greater than having His Lordship proven by the encompassment of any heart or eye. So now that you know this, you should behave as it befits someone like you—one of petty status, little power, great weakness, and immense need to his Lord— to behave: to seek His obedience, fear His punishment, and dread His wrath. For indeed He has not commanded you except to good and has not forbidden you except of evil.

يا بُنَيَّ! إنّى قد أنبَأتُكَ عَن الدُّنيا و حالِها، و زَوالِها و انتِقالِها، و أنبَأتُكَ عَنِ الآخرةِ و ما أعِدَّ لأهلِها [فيها]، و ضَرَبتُ لكَ فيهما الأمثالَ لِتَعتَبِرَ بها، و تَحدُوَ عليها، إنّما مثَلُ مَن خَبَرَ الدُّنيا كمَثَلِ قومٍ سَفرٍ نَبَا بهم مَنزِلٌ جَديبٌ، فأمّوا مَنزِلاً خَصيبًا و جَنابًا مَريعًا، فاحتَمَلوا وَعثاءَ الطَّريقِ، و فِراقَ الصَّديقِ، و خُشونَةَ السَّفَرِ، و جُشوبَةَ المَطعَمِ، لِيأتوا سَعَةَ دارِهِم و مَنزِلَ قَرارِهِم، فليسَ يَجِدونَ لِشَىءٍ مِن ذلِكَ أَلَمًا، و لا يَرَوْنَ نَفَقَةً [فيهِ] مَغرَمًا، و لا شَىءَ أحَبُّ إليهِم ممّا قَرَّبَهُم مِن مَنزِلِهِم، و أدناهُم مِن مَحَلِّهِم؛ و مَثَلُ مَن اغتَرَّ بها كمَثَلِ قومٍ كانوا بمَنزِلٍ خَصيبٍ فنَبَا بهم إلى مَنزِلٍ جَديبٍ، فليسَ شَىءٌ أكرَهَ إليهِم و لا أفظَعَ عِندَهُم مِن مُفارَقَةِ ما كانوا فيهِ إلى ما يَهجُمونَ عَلَيهِ، و يَصيرونَ إليهِ.

My son! Indeed, I have [already] informed you about this world, how it is today, and how it shall decay and fade away. I have also informed you

of the Hereafter and what has been prepared for its people. I have provided you with examples and analogies for them so that you may learn from them and put them into practice.

Indeed, the likeness of those who have examined this world is as the likeness of a group of travelers who found themselves settled in a barren land. Thus, they have headed for plentiful land and a fertile region. In order to arrive at the expanse of their nest and their home where they can rest, they eat that which is coarse and follow a harsh course; they leave their friends behind and bear hardships of every kind. They do not find any of these things painful, and do not view any spending on their journey as a burden. Nothing is more beloved to them than what takes them closer to their home and makes them approach their abode. But the likeness of those who are deceived by this world is as the likeness of a group of people who were in a plentiful land which then led them to a barren place. So, nothing is more painful and unpleasant to them than leaving where they were toward where they shall travel right away and end up.

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In dealing with occurrence of an event, humankind assumes three kinds of behaviors. *First*: If the probability of an event is favorable, the tendency is to make it happen, otherwise some kind of anxiety and nervous behavior is expected. *Second*: If the possibility is not in favor, there is concern about its occurrence and its occurrence is prevented in any way. *Third*: If there is no connection to an event, it would not matter if it happened.

Believers with the insight into the other life, know that transferring from this world to another is about leaving behind the pains, troubles, disputes, diseases, and dangers. They are certain about entering the realm beyond the physical world where they enjoy the endless blessing and perfect exultation — they would meet 'Awliyā'Allāh and enjoy the gift of divine lights. All sorrows and anxieties are removed, and they will be

served by divine beauty *ḥūr* and *Ghilmān* (young servants in paradise). Certainly, with confidence and peace of mind, they count seconds to be transited from this world to the Hereafter and cannot tolerate any barriers standing between them and the world after. Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) describes the pious believers as follow: If there was not the period of grace fixed for their transfer to Hereafter, their souls would not stay one moment in their bodies, and all would fly to celestial court of God.[113]

My late father (may God be pleased with him) once said: The late Āyatullāh Anṣārī Hamadānī (may God be pleased with him) in his declining years, suffered from many diseases and he had limited livelihood and various restriction. Once he told me: Why do these friends make vows to God and sacrifice animals for my survival in this world? What is in this world other than trouble, disease, and problem? He added, "If it hadn't been for the people and those who come from different corners to visit me, I would not have remained in this world for even a moment."

One of my relative said to me that when you late father (may God be pleased with him) was released from Qā'im (peace be upon him) hospital, I told him, "Thank God you are better now." Your father became upset and said: What do these friends want from me? Why don't they leave me alone? Why don't they allow me to depart from this world? Why do they pray and resort to vows and prayers? Haven't we said everything for their happiness and well-being? Well, let me fulfill my task and go to the other world. I saw him so distressed, expressing his displeasure and I thought it might be bad for his condition. So, I said: My dear, we do so because we think about ourselves and our misery, or your virtuous status in the other world where you are blessed by the Exalted God is known, and we know that you cannot wait to reach that place.

When my father was in hospital, his soul was transferred to the world after for a short period of time, and he said to this humble writer: I was transferred to another world, but the prayers of the friends brought me back to this world. I was told that my time was limited and that I should speed up my writing. I know that books will remain unfinished, and I will be transported to another world with incomplete publications. I, the writer of these lines, was in the hospital. After his transfer from C.C.U to the ward, he told me: This is my will, and you should be careful to get it done. Firstly, my body should be buried primarily in the vicinity of 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Rezā (Peace be upon him) shrine. I am not happy to be buried near the top or in front of the Imam (peace be upon him) towards qibla (direction of Mecca).[114] Secondly: It is not necessary to inform or bother distant friends, relatives, and acquaintances who are living in remote countries and cities. With some who are here, pick up the body with joy and laughter, and in short, be happy throughout the funeral and escort my body to hereafter place. No one should be upset or cry! You do not know what I am heading toward. Thirdly. The mourning ceremonies and festivals [for Imams], with the same quality and no changes, must go on forever in my home, and you have to be observant of this task!

When I heard those words, I became upset. He said: Why are you upset? While his hands were moving forward, he said: I am happy! His words were uttered with specific kind of tension, joy, and happiness, so evident on his face, that will never fade away in my eyes and its sweat memory after more than twenty years, brings joy and dance to my spirit and soul, and overflows my lifeless body and my soul with the breath of life and the shower of mercy.

رِجَالٌ لاَ تُلهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكرِ اللّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصّلاَةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلّبُ فِيهِ القُلوبُ وَالأبْصَارُ

[Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allah and performance of prayer and giving of *zakah*. They fear a Day in which the hearts and eyes will [fearfully] turnabout].[115]

In contrast, there are people who promote sharī'ah law. They spend their lives on mosque pulpits and are involved in sermons and speeches to describe and explain the fundamentals of faith and encourage people for the world after. They quote religious teachings as if they have heard them directly from the Infallible Imams. They pretend to have acquired certain knowledge and experienced the Divine Vision and purgatory touching. Nevertheless, when they become ill with a fatal disease, they realize that what they have preached about is happening to them. Then, they lose control and resort to any means to free themselves from the fatal disease. They spend enormous amounts of money even from the people's royal treasury of Muslims (*Bayt al-māl)* and or from religious funds to go after treatment. Hopelessly, they wish to survive a bit longer and surpass the will of God and the divine pre-ordination. They want to reject the angel of death who calls them to the eternal world and free themselves from the clutches of fate and God's wrath. This is not possible at all!

In his remarks, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) conveys a very clear principle by which the wellbeing of individuals can be tested and explored—a tool that measures the status and personality of peoples, weighs their inner disposition to the world and materialism, and makes them become aware of the degree of validity of their words and beliefs. It deserves that we resort to a poem of Khwājah of Shīrāz (Ḥāfiẓ) who has said:

فردا که پیشگاه حقیقت شود پدید
شرمنده رهروی که عمل بر مجاز کرد

Tomorrow when the truth appears,

One, who acted on falsehood, will be ashamed.[116]

These hallmarks are for all members of society, whether educated or not, to measure their degree of closeness to truth, their beliefs, and their belongings to the earthy world.

يا بُنَيّ! اجعَلْ نَفسَکَ میزانًا فیما بَینَکَ و بَینَ غَیرِکَ؛ فَأحبِبْ لِغَیرِکَ ما تُحِبُّ لِنَفسِکَ؛ و اکرَهْ لَهُ ما تَکرَهُ لَها، و لا تَظلِم کما لا تُحِبُّ أن تُظلَمَ، و أحسِنْ کَما تُحِبُّ أن یُحسَنَ إلیکَ، و استَقبِحْ من نَفسِکَ ما تَستَقبِحُهُ من غَیرِکَ، و ارْضَ منَ النّاس بما تَرضاهُ لَهُم من نَفسِکَ، و لا تَقُلْ ما لا تَعلَمُ و إن قَلَّ ما تَعلَمُ، و لا تَقُلْ ما لا تُحِبُّ أن یُقالَ لکَ. و اعلَمْ أنَّ الإعجابَ ضِدُّ الصَّوابِ. و آفَةُ الألبابِ؛ فاسْعَ فی کَدحِکَ، و لا تَکُنْ خازِنًا لِغَیرِکَ، و إذا أنتَ هُدیتَ لِقَصدِکَ فَکُنْ أخشَعَ ما تَکونُ لِرَبِّکَ.

"My son! Set yourself as a scale in your dealings with others: like for others what you like for yourself, and dislike for them what you dislike for yourself. Do not wrong others as you do not like to be wronged. Do good to others as you like others to do good to you. Condemn yourself for what you condemn others for. Be satisfied with receiving from the people that which you are willing to give them on your part. Do not say what you do not know even though you may not know much. Do not say about others what you do not like to be said about you [or do not tell others what you do not like to be told]. Know that self-conceit is against rectitude and is a defect to the brain. So, spend [in advance] for your own hard day, and do not be a hoarder for someone else. And when you are guided to your straight path be humbler than ever to your Lord. Always think about your own affairs and be seriously worried about that. Do not think about other people and do not interfere in their affairs; do not make yourself busy and occupied by their affairs, or else you will change into a box of their secrets and their defects while it is not in your favor. Now that Almighty God has showed you the path to your wishes, you must be entirely modest to him

and act with utmost humbleness and obedience toward him. Be aware that the success to reach this great blessing is from Him only."

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We have to clarify two facts here: *First*: like for others what you like for yourself, and dislike for them what you dislike for yourself. This doctrine is the richest and the most useful doctrine of moral rights in the social and personal relationships in human life.

Commitments to its principle and proscriptive aspects, will immune man from many deviations, obstacles of growth, hopelessness, and anxiety. It paves the way to form a strong association between people and provides the so-called Utopia which has been designed and explained by famous philosophers since ancient times. In a phrase, it is the foundation of the divine justice that is constructed by the capable hands of the ṣāḥib al-zamān, Ḥujjat ibn al-Ḥasan al- 'Askarī (may our spirits be sacrificed for him).

Today, all human beings in different societies have realized that ignoring this vital principle is the root of all deviations, arrogances, oppressions, extortions, and deceptions among the governments and peoples.

As long as we have no power to influence the behavior of people, we speak softly to conquer their intellects and consciousness. We act by fairness and justice, fight any tyranny, commit ourselves to carry out actions objectively and don't conceal the truth from people. However, when we gain power and our situation changes, we forget all those thoughts and claims and return to a point of one hundred and eighty degrees from our views. We justify our acts by all sorts of tricks, deceits, interpretation of words and sentences. This is true for all individuals in all professions and ages.

The *second* point is about dealing with one's own affairs and not interfering in the affairs of others.

Imam's concern is that one should not interfere in other people's affairs, and knowing about matters that have no effect on the relationships between people, may cause them to be suspicious of each other, and this action has irreparable consequences. In short, people do not want their secrets to be revealed. Still, awareness about the difficulty of others to resolve their problems is highly praised.

Excessive revelation of information on individuals can conflict with virtues of privacy and confidentiality. This indecent habit of worldly desire is practiced by many governments and rulers against their own nation and people.

چو بد کردی مشو ایمن ز آفات
که واجب شد طبیعت را مکافات

When you do evil acts, you are not safe from mischief.
Since in nature, retribution is inevitable.[117]

آنکه عیب دگران پیش تو آورد و شمرد
لاجرم عیب تو پیش دگران خواهد برد

One who revealed the faults of other to you,
Surely will reveal your faults to others[118]

Another indecent habit is "eavesdropping" or secretly listening to the private conversation of others without their consent. For instance, when two people are talking to each other at a normal distance and a third party tries to hear what they say; or telephone tapping which is the monitoring of telephone and internet conversations by a third party, often by covert means.

Another routine behavior frequently observed in people is their inquiry about the other people's transactions

or deals. For instance, a friend buys a house or a vehicle, and he will be asked about the price of that property or vehicle, or when someone is in debt due to a transaction or is hospitalized due to illness, he will not be asked how you want to pay off your debt, but as soon as he is discharged from the hospital, he will be asked how you paid the expenses!

The destructive effects of these behaviors create fantasy, illusion, and miniature attributes in the human soul. The soul which must pass from particularity to excellence would be confined to details. This is the most dangerous obstacle that blocks one's path toward God, weakens the unity with God and strengthens the multiplicity in the soul.

"و اعلمْ أنّ أمامَکَ طریقا ذا مَسافةٍ بَعیدَةٍ و مَشَقّةٍ شَدیدَةٍ، و أنّهُ لا غِنًی لکَ فیهِ عَن حُسن الارتیادِ، و قَدْرِ بَلاغِکَ مِنَ الزّادِ مَعَ خِفّةِ الظّهرِ؛ فلا تَحمِلَنّ عَلی ظهرِکَ فوقَ طاقَتِکَ، فیَکونَ ثِقْلُ ذٰلِکَ وَبالاً عَلَیکَ، و إذا وَجَدتَ مِن أهلِ الفاقَةِ مَن یَحمِلُ لکَ زادَکَ إلی یَومِ القِیامَةِ ـ فیُوافیکَ بِهِ غَدًا حَیثُ تَحتاجُ إلَیهِ ـ فاغتَنِمهُ و حَمِّلهُ إیّاهُ، و أکثِرْ مِن تَزْوِیدِهِ و أنتَ قادِرٌ عَلَیهِ؛ فلَعَلَّکَ تَطلُبُهُ فلا تَجِدُهُ، و اغتَنِمْ مَن استَقرَضَکَ فی حالِ غِناکَ، لِیَجعَلَ قَضاءَهُ لکَ فی یَومِ عُسرَتِکَ."

Know that you have a path of long distance and severe hardship ahead of you. In this path you are indeed in need of planning ahead and taking sufficient provision that will get you to your destination without unburdening back. So do not load your back beyond your ability, because that weight will cause you trouble. If you find a needy person who can carry your provision for you until the Day of Resurrection and pay you back tomorrow when you need it, then take advantage of this golden opportunity and load him up! Load him abundantly with your provision while you can because you might look for him later but not find him. Take advantage of the One Who has asked you for a loan when you are solvent, to repay you on your day of distress [or take advantage of one who is

willing to borrow from you when you are solvent, to repay you on your day of distress].

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Although every word demands an extensive exploration, but my ill fingers and lack of knowledge would be the best justification before the men of *ma'rifah* (intimate knowledge) to ward off any attempt to explain all details and thus I resort myself to mention vital points for the people of knowledge.

Here, the Imam, peace be upon him, says: There is a very long road ahead of us and the lighter your load, the easier you travel.

Almighty God says:

لا يُكَلِّفُ اللـهُ نَفسًا إلا وُسْعَهَا.

Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity.[119]

Or as the Infallible Imam (peace be upon him) says:

النّاسُ فى سَعَةٍ ما لم يَعلموا.

As long as a man does not know his obligation, there is no fear, and there is no reason for performing unknown duty.[120]

Assuming the responsibilities of other people and committing yourself to their duties requires a power beyond the ability of humankind. One who calls people to follow his rulings, should not merely give opinion based on personal discretion but should guaranty people's salvation in this world and Hereafter; the kind of salvation that serves man's level of absolute servitude and leads him to incorporablity of the soul, *tawḥīd* (oneness of Allah), and truth of intimate knowledge. How could one who has not

reached this status help his follower to attain such a position? In other words.

ذات نایافته از هستی بخش
کی تواند که شود هستی بخش

A substance with no share of existence.
How could it give existence?[121]

On the Day of Resurrection, the imitators will tell him that we have been prepared to walk to Allah and if your fatwa and verdict were of a different quality and oath, we would have accepted it wholeheartedly. We could move towards the highest destination and actualize our talent points. Why did you deprive us of this great blessing? Why did you prevent us from this complete reality with your inappropriate fatwa that caused us to move away from the purpose of life? What would be his answer? None![122]

This is the reason the great men of *ma'rifah*, the divine scholars and Gnostics, always avoid expressing themselves as the major public figures or issuer of *fatwa*. They do not grant such a permit to anyone except to some special disciples, and they strongly discourage others from such declarations. The story of the 'Allāmah, the Great Āyatullāh, the perfect Gnostic and connected wayfarer, the late Ḥāj Sayyid Aḥmad Karbalā'ī, becoming a *marja'* (Source to Imitate or Follow), in the holy book of *Tawḥīd 'ilmī wa* 'aynī (Objective and intellectual *Tawḥīd*)[123] , is the best indicator and proof of this purpose.

A far more sensitive and important point is to assume responsibility of guiding people, educating, and transforming their *nafs* (self, soul) from its deplorable state of ego-centrality through various spiritual stages—towards the level of purity and submission to the will of Allah, under the pretext of being well-informed, clear-sighted master of the path. Regretfully, in this era, there are many individuals who try to conquer the hearts of simple-minded peoples, by pretending to be knowledgeable and

supreme, and by labeling others as being deviated and deceitful. They take advantage of unaware people and exploit them to boost their own market and world. They are the best examples that are brought in the will of the Imam (peace be upon him).

و اعلم أنّ أمامَک عَقَبَةً كَئودًا، المُخِفُّ فيها أحسَنُ حالاً مِنَ المُثقِل، و المُبطِئُ عَلَيها أقبَحُ حالاً مِنَ المُسرِع، و أنّ مَهبطَک بِها لا مَحالةَ إمّا عَلى جَنّةٍ أوْ عَلى نارٍ؛ فارتَدْ لِنَفسِک قبلَ نُزولِک، و وَطِّئ المنزلَ قبلَ حُلولِک؛ فليسَ بَعد المَوتِ مُستَعتَبٌ و لا إلى الدُّنيا مُنصَرَفٌ.

Know that you have an arduous pass ahead of you, where one who is light-burdened will be better off there than one who is heavy-burdened, and one who is slow-paced will be worse off than one who is swift-paced. You will necessarily descend from it into either a garden [of Paradise] or a fire [of Hell]. So, plan ahead for your settlement before your descent, and prepare your home before your arrival, because no excuse will be accepted after death and there will be no return to this world anymore.

و اعلمْ أنّ الذى بيَدِه خَزائنُ السّماواتِ و الأرض، قد أذِنَ لکَ فى الدُّعاء، و تَكفّلَ لکَ بالإجابَةِ، و أمَرَکَ أن تَسألَهُ لِيُعطِيَک، و تَسترحِمَهُ لِيَرحَمَک، و لم يَجعَلْ بَينَک و بَينَهُ مَن يَحجُبُهُ عَنکَ، و لَمْ يُلجِئکَ إلى مَن يَشفَعُ لکَ إليهِ، و لَمْ يَمنَعکَ إن أسأتَ مِن التّوبةِ، و لَمْ يُعاجِلکَ بالنِّقمَةِ [و لَمْ يُعَيِّرکَ بالإنابَةِ] و لَمْ يَفضَحکَ حَيثُ الفضيحَةُ بکَ أولى، و لَمْ يُشَدِّدْ عَليکَ فى قبولِ الإنابَةِ، و لَمْ يُناقِشْکَ بالجَريمَةِ، و لم يُؤيِسکَ مِنَ الرَّحمَةِ، بَل جَعَلَ نُزوعَکَ عَنِ الذَّنبِ حَسنَةً، و حَسَبَ سَيِّئَتَکَ واحِدَةً، و حَسَبَ حَسَنَتَکَ عَشرًا، و فَتَحَ لکَ بابَ المَتابِ و بابَ الاستِعتابِ.

فإذا نادَيتَهُ سَمِعَ [نِداءَک]، و إذا ناجَيتَهُ عَلِمَ نَجواکَ، فأفضَيتَ إليهِ بِحاجَتِکَ، و أبثَثتَهُ ذاتَ نَفسِکَ، و شَكَوتَ إليهِ هُمومَکَ، و استَكشَفتَهُ كُروبَکَ، و استَعَنتَهُ عَلى أمورِکَ، و سَألتَهُ مِن خَزائِنِ رَحمَتِهِ ما لا يَقدِرُ عَلى إعطائِهِ غَيرُهُ، مِن زِيادَةِ الأعمارِ، و صِحَّةِ الأبدانِ، و سَعَةِ الأرزاقِ. ثُمَّ جَعَلَ فى يَدَيکَ مَفاتيحَ خَزائِنِهِ بِما أذِنَ لکَ [فيهِ] مِن مَسألَتِهِ؛ فمَتَى شِئتَ استَفتَحتَ بالدُّعاءِ أبوابَ نِعمَتِهِ، و استَمطَرتَ شَآبيبَ رَحمَتِهِ؛ فلا يُقنِطَنَّکَ إبطاءُ إجابَتِهِ، فإنَّ العَطيَّةَ عَلى قَدرِ النِّيَّةِ، و رُبَّما أخِّرَتْ عَنکَ الإجابَةُ، لِيَكونَ ذلِکَ أعظَمَ لأجرِ السّائِلِ، و أجزَلَ لِعَطاءِ الآمِلِ؛ و رُبَّما سَألتَ الشَّيءَ فلا

تُؤتاهُ، و أوتيتَ خَيرًا مِنهُ ـ عاجلاً أوْ آجلاً ـ أوْ صُرِفَ عَنكَ لِما هُو خَيرٌ لكَ؛ فلرُبَّ أمرٍ قد طلبتَهُ فيهِ هَلاكُ دينِكَ لو أوتيتَهُ. فلتَكُنْ مَسألَتُكَ فيما يَبقىٰ لكَ جَمالُهُ، و يُنفى عَنكَ وَبالُهُ، و المالُ [لا] يَبقى لكَ و لا تَبقى له.

Know that the One Who has the treasuries of the heavens and the earth in His hand has indeed given you permission to call Him and has taken upon Himself to answer you. He has ordered you to ask Him so that He may give you, and to beseech His mercy so that He may have mercy on you. He has not placed any chamberlain that may block you from Him. He has not made you have recourse to one who would intercede for you before Him. He has not prevented you from repentance should you err. He has not hastened your punishment, and He does not scold you for returning to Him. He has not disgraced you at times when you deserved to be disgraced [or when you exposed yourself to disgrace]. He is not strict with you about accepting your return, and He does not scrutinize your sins. He has not evaded you from His mercy. Rather, He has made your withdrawal from sin a good deed, then He counts your evil deeds as one, but He counts your good deeds tenfold. He has opened for you the doors of repentance and the gates of apology. So, whenever you call unto Him, He hears your call, and whenever you whisper to Him, He knows what you whisper. Thus, take your needs to Him; confide to Him what you hold within yourself; complain to Him about your worries; ask Him to remove your distresses; seek help from Him in your affairs; and request Him to grant you from the treasuries of His mercy what no one else can grant: long life, healthy body, and ample sustenance.

He has placed the keys of His treasuries in your hands by giving you permission to ask Him. Hence, whenever you wish you can open the doors of His blessings upon yourself through supplication and call His abundant rains of mercy to shower over you. And let not His delay in responding to you

disappoints you, because [God's] bestowment is a function of [one's] intention. Sometimes God's response is delayed so that the one who asks Him receives a greater reward and the one who hopes in Him is granted more. Sometimes you are not given what you ask, but instead you are given something better either now or later [or either in this world or in the Hereafter]. Sometimes you ask for something that would destroy your religion if it were granted to you, so it is withheld from you for your own good. Thus, ask for something that would be a lasting beauty for you, but would not remain as a burden on you, [instead of asking for wealth,] because wealth does not remain for you, nor do you remain for wealth."

Therefore, whenever you want, the doors of God's grace can be opened to you through ''*dua*'' (a spiritual entity through deliberate communication or an act of supplication) and He will shower you with His mercy. Make sure not to be disappointed if your 'du'ā' is not granted because the grace and mercy of God is relative to the degree of the person's intention, (If your intention and object is noble, God's grace is dignified and eminent) and perhaps the granting of one's prayer may be delayed so that God's reward increases, and forgiveness is more abundant.

And your prayer is not answered, but instead you receive a better outcome than what you expected, in either the near or far future. God may also never accept your request because your true benefit lays somewhere else and your demand may ruin your life, faith, and religion. You should ask for things that bring you true benefits, not those that will bring you difficulties and discomfort because wealth does not remain for you, nor do you remain for wealth.

و اعلمْ أنّک إنّما خُلِقتَ لِلآخِرَةِ لا لِلدُنیا، و لِلفناء لا لِلبَقاء، و لِلمَوتِ لا لِلحَیاةِ، و أنّک فی مَنزِلِ قُلعَةٍ، و دار بُلغَةٍ، و طریقٍ إلی الأخِرَةِ، و أنّک طریدُ المَوتِ الذی لا یَنجو مِنهُ هارِبُهُ، و لا یَفوتُهُ طالِبُهُ، و لابُدّ أنّهُ مُدرِکُهُ؛ فکنْ مِنهُ عَلی حَذَرٍ أن یُدرِکَکَ و أنتَ عَلی حالٍ سَیِّئَةٍ، قد کنتَ تُحَدِّثُ نَفسَکَ مِنها بالتّوبَةِ، فیَحولَ بَینَکَ و بَینَ ذلِکَ فإذا أنتَ قد أهلکتَ نَفسَکَ.

And know that you are created for the afterworld, not for this world; you are mortal and to be destroyed and not to remain forever, for eternity and you have come to this world to die and not to live, and you have settled in a transitory place, in a house in which there is no hope for any replacement. You are moving on a path to reach the hereafter, and you try to keep death away while no one can be rescued or get away from it and whoever tries to escape it will not succeed and will surely reach to the point of death.

So, beware of it, lest it should find you while you are not in a good state to depart. You kept telling yourself that you are to return to God and that you should repent to Him but then suddenly death arrives and leaves no chance for repentance. You would have gone on to the hereafter when repentance would have no effect and therefore you set a seal of destruction upon yourself.

يا بُنَيَّ! أكثِرْ مِن ذِكر المَوتِ، و ذِكر ما تَهجُمُ عَلَيهِ، و تُفضى بَعدَ المَوتِ إلَيهِ، حتّى يَأتِيَكَ و قَد أخَذتَ مِنهُ حِذرَكَ، و شَدَدتَ لَهُ أزرَكَ، و لا يَأتِيَكَ بَغتَةً فَيَبهَرَكَ.و إيّاكَ أن تَغتَرَّ بِما تَرَى مِن إخلادِ أهلِ الدُّنيا إلَيها، و تَكالُبِهِم عَلَيها! فَقَد نَبّأَ اللهُ عَنها، و نَعَتَ لَكَ نَفسَها [و نَعَتَ هِيَ لَكَ عَن نَفسِها] و تَكَشَّفَتْ لَكَ عَن مَساوِيها؛ فإنّما أهلُها كِلابٌ عاوِيَةٌ، و سِباعٌ ضَارِيَةٌ، يَهِرُّ بَعضُهُا بَعضًا، و يَأكُلُ عَزيزُها ذَليلَها، و يَقهَرُ كَبيرُها صَغيرَها، نَعَمٌ مُعَقَّلَةٌ، و أُخرَى مُهمَلَةٌ، قَد أضَلَّت عُقولَها، و رَكِبَت مَجهولَها، سُروحُ عاهَةٍ بِوادٍ وَعثٍ، لَيسَ لَها رَاعٍ يُقيمُها، و لا مُسيمٌ يُسيمُها، سَلَكَت بِهِمُ الدُّنيا طَريقَ العَمَى، و أخَذَت بِأبصارِهِم عَن مَنارِ الهُدَى، فَتاهوا فى حَيرَتِها، و غَرِقوا فى نِعمَتِها، و اتَّخَذوها رَبّا، فَلَعِبَت بِهِم و لَعِبوا بِها، و نَسوا ما وَراءَها. رُوَيدًا يُسفِرُ الظَّلامُ، كَأن قَد وَرَدَتِ الأظعانُ، يوشِكُ مَن أسرَعَ أن يَلحَقَ!

O' my child, frequently remember death and the events that you are forever hastening towards experiencing and moving towards, so that through this remembering and meditation, you are prepared for such an event and have

gained ability and capabilities to deal with it and you have therefore gained the power to deal with such events. Do not let it be that you live in ignorance and unawareness of death so that death reaches you all of a sudden and overwhelms you in ignorance and surprise, while you still have not acquired the abilities and readiness to transfer from this world to the Hereafter.

Do not be deceived by what people of this world are content with! [And you too get involved in their destiny of ignorance and negligence and beware lest you imagine an endless or an eternal life which drives you towards ignorance, deviation, and confusion]. Do not follow and learn lessons from those who are lured by worldly and carnal desires. For God has identified and explained the world and its ornament and the world itself too has revealed its truth and reality [and fully informed you about whatever goes on in this world and what people are busy with and how they pass their days] and God brought to light the undesirable and common obscene, indecent things that are conventional in this world.

Therefore, be aware that the ones who desire this world are similar to barking dogs that attack each other like devouring carnivores. The stronger ones rip the weaker apart and eat them and the bigger ones have no mercy over the small. People who desire this world resemble livestock; of which some are tied to stalls, and some are busy grazing, and they are mindless. [They are unable to distinguish between good and bad, honesty and corruption] and have based their affairs on Illusions, fantasies, and ignorance.

People who desire this world, ride on a ruinous carriage in a sandy place which is exhausting to pass through. There is no guide, leader, or reference for this caravan to take them to grazing land.

The world has led them to a dark, dim, and unclear path, depriving their eyes from the beacons of guidance. Therefore, they are lost and

dismayed in this wilderness. They have fallen upon a dark desert and immersed in transient pleasure. [They worship and aggregate wealth, ambition of position and follow carnal passion and greed] So the world began to play with them, and they too played with the world, and they forgot what awaits them in the hereafter.

But it will not be long before the veils of ignorance and darkness [due to death] will be removed and like a camel who takes its owner home, people arrive at their abode and enter and become aware of their status, like someone in a rush, looking forward to reaching home and his sanctuary.

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In the sentences above, *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (peace be upon him) determines the true place of soul and body and elucidates on the position of each in terms of creation and worldly life.

Ordinary people do not use their intellect and insight to distinguish righteousness from corruption, but instead they use these tools to seek worldly prosperity. Naturally, they welcome whatever leads them toward seeking pleasure, carnal desires, and sensual attraction. They do all sorts of things to achieve their goals and inevitably are not aware of the modes and means by which they can connect their spirit and body to the unseen worlds. Even if they become aware to some extent, they will not welcome them. They always confront these modes with negligence, carelessness and disregard and are tangled in worldly affairs. If one wants to guide them toward moral issues, he will be either ignored or harshly treated by them.

In contrast, people with wisdom and intellect have properly evaluated the status of their souls. They think of this world as a bridge to eternal abode and consider all losses as purely transitory. They do not consider the world as home, but as a means to use their potential to ascend to the afterlife. They demonstrate great sensitivity in matters that lift their spirits

and souls to the unseen, incorporable, and remissive worlds. These people use every opportunity to take the best provisions to the hereafter, and they use all devices and means which assist them in this regard.

In their meetings, their words have a scent and color from other worlds, intoxicating humans with the holy, unseen inspirations and smells. They are not willing to discuss world issues and are indifferent toward everyday events and all the changes around them. They reject and suppress the world in any stage or order and do not accept any forms or manifestations even overlaid and masked to be religious. The deception and temptation of demons and narrow-minded people, slogans, and interests, cannot deviate their righteous path and strong fundamentals. They greet the world with derision and disbelief and laugh at what others die for.

Indeed, they are "burning the world Rends [and] enlightening the soul cleavers" as the Sayyid of the universe and the extract of all possibilities, the Holy prophet (peace be upon him and his Holy household) states.

كَم مِن صائمٍ لیس له مِن صِیامِه إلا الجوعُ و الظمأ، و کَم مِن قائمٍ لیسَ له مِن قِیامِه إلا السَّهَرُ و العَناءُ؛ حَبّذا نَومُ الأکیاس و إفطارُهُم!

How great in numbers are those who fast and are left with nothing other than hunger and thirst, and how great in numbers are those who are vigilant during the night and are left with nothing other than tired eyes and body. Blessed are those astute' Rends' and holders of insight and wisdom who have found their path of life commendably and distinguished right from wrong, justice from corruption and reality from fantasy. In contrast to the ones who have deprived themselves of eating and sleeping the Rend have surpassed all those ones and have come closer to the destination and the purpose.[124]

ترسم که صرفه‌ای نبرد روز بازخواست
نان حلال شیخ ز آب حرام ما

But when the Day of Reckoning is here, I fear.
The lawful bread of Shaykh is less than our forbidden water.[125]

Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) advises us about our approaches toward this world. He explains the purpose of us being here, and warns us not to substitute right by wrong, truth by fantasy, and the intrinsic by extrinsic principle, because the result will not be anything other than misery, loss, and despair.

و اعلم [يا بُنَيَّ!] أنّ مَن كانَت مَطِيَّتُهُ اللّيلَ و النّهارَ، فإنّهُ يُسارُ بهِ و إن كانَ واقِفا، و يَقطَعُ المَسافَةَ و إن كانَ مُقيمًا وادِعًا.
و اعلَمْ يَقينًا أنّكَ لَن تَبلُغَ أمَلَكَ، و لَن تَعدُوَ أجَلَكَ، و أنّكَ فى سَبيلِ مَن كانَ قَبلَكَ؛ فخَفِّضْ فى الطَّلَبِ، و أجمِلْ فى المُكتَسَبِ، فإنّهُ رُبَّ طَلَبٍ قد جَرَّ إلى حَرَبٍ؛ فليسَ كُلُّ طالِبٍ بمَرزوقٍ، و لا كُلُّ مُجمِلٍ بمَحرومٍ. و أكرِمْ نَفسَكَ عَن كُلِّ دَنِيَّةٍ و إن ساقَتْكَ إلى الرَّغائِبِ، فإنّكَ لَن تَعتاضَ بِما تَبذُلُ مِن نَفسِكَ عِوَضًا. و لا تَكُنْ عَبدَ غَيرِكَ و قد جَعَلَكَ اللهُ حُرًّا. و ما خَيرُ خَيرٍ لا يُنالُ إلا بِشَرٍّ، و يُسرٍ لا يُنالُ إلا بِعُسرٍ.

Be informed, O my son, that one who is riding on the carriage of night and day is being carried forth even though he may be stationary; he is traversing the distance even though he might have settled to rest. And know with certainty that you will never fulfill your hopes and you can never exceed your appointed time. You are on the path of those who were before you. Therefore, curtail your seeking [of sustenance] and be moderate in earning a living, for it does happen that seeking leads to deprivation. Not every seeker [of livelihood] receives sustenance [for his seeking]; and not everyone who is moderate in seeking is deprived. Honor yourself from every base quality,

even if it takes you to desirable things, because you can never be compensated for a loss of yourself. Do not be a slave of anyone else while God had made you free. What good is there in a good that is achieved only through evil, and in a comfort that is achieved only through difficulty? [Do not be hard on yourself and in order to achieve your desires, do not reach out to everyone; let things run their natural course].

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In the above sentences, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) mentions many valuable points. The first point is about people's ability in achieving their goals and fulfilling (substantiate) their wishes. Due to the characteristics and instincts that the Exalted God has placed in us, we refuse to recognize any specific boundaries, limits, or barriers in seeking pleasure and happiness and always fight with the intrinsic and extrinsic obstacles.

We naturally build shelters to stay and protect ourselves from the dangers of heat and cold, but we go beyond the limits and if our strength and ability allow, nothing can stop our desire to have an attractive and interesting shelter.

Men marry to satisfy their instincts and to preserve their race, but they only go after rich or beautiful women. Women also look for men with different characteristics, and if they are provided with thousands of them, they will still fantasize in other horizons.

Humankind also recognizes no limit for material possessions, superiority, power, good repute, fame, popularity and governing and conquering countries, and many pages of history attest to this issue. But, to act in accordance with wisdom and expediency, these affairs should be limited to an extent which is necessary for spiritual perfection, and one who spends too much time on them will destroy his life and opportunities.

Once the late Qāḍī (may he reside in God's paradise) asked those around him about one of his students who had returned home from Najaf. They said, "thank God, he's doing very well, and he is very popular, and people are gathered around him." After hearing this story, he expressed his sorrow and said: That does not sound very good!

The worldly affairs should not distract our attention from the Exalted Allah, as the holy verse says:

قُلْ إِن كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ.

Say, [O Muhammad], "If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives and wealth which you have accumulated and business in which you fear loss and dwellings which you are pleased with are more beloved to you than God and His Messenger and Jihād in His cause; then wait for God to execute His command.[126]

Many great men of ma'rifah have said that the degree of effort in acquisition of sustenance and education should be based on one's needs and necessities, not based on illusions and fantasies.

But the second point that Ḥaḍrat Ali (peace be upon him) says is to do your best in good deeds and don't expect that your efforts will get the desired result. In other words, you are obligated to work and earn a livelihood based on *tawḥīd* (unity), not based on worldly motives and self-pluralities. Therefore, do not think of profit or loss because God Himself is the guardian of people's affairs.

Today, the intention of many people in choosing a profession is to earn a greater income and to compete against one another for worldly pleasures.

The young people, who seek acquisition of knowledge and experience, are constantly concerned about choosing a profession which will bring them and their family a better and more acceptable future. They do not consider the needs of their society, and do not feel responsible towards the needs of their people and nation. They prefer comfort and prosperity and when they are well-off, they will forget their responsibilities. They abandon home and migrate to non-Muslim countries. They offer their knowledge and experience to the nations of disbelief, atheism, and foreign nations. Finally, they become servants of foreigners and take steps in the direction of demonic goals to help them conquer oppressed nations and dominate worldly interests. This issue causes them to be misused and their power is exhausted, and there is no result except worldly and hereafter losses.

Similarity, the young and talented students who wish to study Islamic teachings and principles of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), should purify all their efforts and intentions. They must not allow even the slightest idea of worldly greed, desires, fame, and popularity, to enter in their mind and soul and should not pollute their true intentions and pure heart with these ideas. In attempting such vital task, they must seek God's satisfaction and His closeness. They must avoid what many people violate and must stay away from fame and popularity. They should utilize the knowledge of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) ideology to educate and purify their hearts and conscience. When they want to preach, they must always consider God's satisfaction and should not be concerned by people's diversity, their incentives, and threats. They must also avoid two excesses, *ifrāṭ* (too much) and *tafrīṭ* (too little) and walk on moderation, and emotions should not conquer their intellects.

The third point is in regard to the dignity and nobility of the soul in contrast to transitory pleasures and worldly interests. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) warns people not to go after the vanities of the world at the cost

of losing their free spirit and their status as the Divine Vicegerent which there is no better state except the Holy Essence!

Humankind should not exchange their elixir of prosperity with worthless and priceless glass beads, and in order to enjoy worldly pleasures, they should not deprive themselves of eternal life! Or else, they become servants of others, while God created them free and regarded them as his servants.

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و إيّاكَ أن توجفَ بكَ مَطايا الطّمَع! فتوردَكَ مَناهِلَ الهلكةِ. و إن استطعتَ أنْ لايكونَ بَينَكَ و بَينَ اللهِ ذو نِعمَةٍ فافعَلْ، فإنّكَ مُدركٌ قِسمَكَ، و آخِذٌ سَهمَكَ؛ و إنّ اليسيرَ مِنَ اللهِ - سُبحانَهُ - أعظمُ و أكرَمُ مِنَ الكثيرِ مِن خَلقِهِ، و إن كانَ كُلٌّ مِنهُ.

Beware of the careers of greed should they overcome your wisdom, reason and faith and throw you in a deadly valley of darkness and make you fall down in the springs of destruction.

Avoid having someone interceding between yourself and God, and do not rely more than usual on people with worldly position and do not forget God in your worldly matters, because you will surely find what is destined for you. A little received directly from God is greater and more dignified than a lot received through (the obligation of) his creatures, although all things are His.

و ثلافيكَ ما فرَطَ مِن صَمْتِكَ أيسَرُ مِن إدراكِكَ ما فاتَ مِن مَنطِقِكَ، و حِفظُ ما فى الوعاءِ بِشَدِّ الوكاءِ، و حِفظ ما فى يَدَيكَ أحَبُّ إلَيَّ مِن طلبِ ما فى يَدِ غَيرِكَ، و مَرارَةُ اليَأسِ خَيرٌ مِنَ الطَّلَبِ إلى النّاسِ؛ و الحِرفَةُ مَعَ العِفّةِ خَيرٌ مِنَ الغِنَى مَعَ الفُجورِ، و المَرءُ أحفَظُ لِسِرِّهِ؛ و رُبَّ ساعٍ فيما يَضُرُّهُ.

Commit yourself to speak less or to be silent because it is easier to rectify what you miss by silence than to secure what you lose by speaking. It has been said: "A word once spoken is like an arrow which has been released and can never be retracted and whatever is in a pot can be preserved by closing the lid tightly.

Contentment with your belongings is more pleasant than keeping an eye on what others possess, and bitterness of disappointment is better than turning toward people to ask help for your own desires. Being poor but pious is better than being rich [through debauchery and libertinism]. A man is the best guardian of his own secrets and often strives for what eventually harms him.

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Imam (peace be upon him) advises us to maintain silence and to keep our tongue from uttering pointless words. Silence has been emphasized more than any other point in all religious texts.

Luqmān, The Wise, used to say to his son "O son! If you think that speech is silver, know that silence and reticence are gold."[127]

It is received by The Fourteen Infallibles (*Ma'sūmūn*) that: "Man is the ruler of his speech when it is not out of the mouth, but after speaking, he is convicted by his speech, his words become the ruler and take him to wherever they wish.[128]

Many Elite men have also said: one who reveals the secrets [between himself and God] or expresses his spiritual states will cause himself an eternal loss of blessings.

مَن أكثَرَ أهجَرَ، و مَن تَفكَّرَ أبصَرَ. قارِن أهلَ الخَيرِ تَكُنْ مِنهُم، و باين أهلَ الشَّرِّ تَبِن عَنهم. بِئسَ الطَّعامُ الحَرامُ! و ظُلمُ الضَّعيفِ أفحَشُ الظُّلمِ.

He who speaks much has a great deal of futile words which can be found in his speech, and he who is constantly thinking, will take wise steps toward events. Join the company of the righteous people to become one of them and avoid corrupt and vicious people to become distant from them.

پسر نوح با بدان بنشست
خاندان نبوّتش گم شد
سگ اصحاب کهف روزی چند
پی مردم گشت و مردم شد

Son of *Nūḥ* sat with bad people.
His Prophet-hood was lost.
The dog of "the people of cave"
Went after people and became one of them[129]

There is no doubt that man's soul is influenced by external factors, such as time, location, friends, and phenomena occurring around him. These factors, whether good or bad, can have an enormous impact on his soul, and many moral codes from religious leaders have discouraged us from socializing with inappropriate friends. Thus, residing in non-religious lands is prohibited by sharī'ah, because inappropriate environments alter the soul transform it from the realm of light to the valley of darkness and this is a gradual transformation that cannot be sensed by anyone. By the passage of time and through connection with the surrounding environment, such a change will turn our personality into a completely different character, and even though we apparently adhere to some extend to our previous manner, our demands will change.

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"...*ḥarām* (forbidden) foods are the worst, thus avoid eating foods that are forbidden and doubtful by Islamic laws. And know that injustice, anywhere and in any situation is denounced, especially if the oppressed person is the poor and needy one."

إذا كانَ الرّفقُ خُرقا كانَ الخُرقُ رفقا. رُبّما كانَ الدّواءُ داءً و الدّاءُ دَواءً، و رُبّما نَصَحَ غَيرُ النّاصِح و غَشّ المُستَنصَحُ.

و اِيّاکَ و اِتّکالکَ عَلی المُنیٰ! فاِنّها بَضائعُ المَوتیٰ، و العَقلُ حِفظُ التّجارب؛ و خَيرُ ما جَرّبتَ ما وَعَظکَ.

Friendship and tolerance should be put aside in places where they cause boldness and daring of the oppressive person and therefore your act should be coarse and tense because,

ترحّم بر پلنگ تیز دندان
ستمکاری بود بر گوسفندا

Pity on the saber-toothed tiger is injustice to sheep[130]

It does happen so often that a remedy turns out to be a malady, and a malady turns out to be a real remedy.

And you may hear a remarkable point from someone who is not expected to admonish and exhort and may observe obscene behavior and hear heartfelt words from someone who is expected to advise and guide. (In all circumstances, man should not be fond of people words, and should not view every word with doubt; however, he should study and think about people's statements.)

"Beware of the long wishes and aspirations on which you build your life and prosperity on. Learn from them and change your behavior accordingly, because all these wishes are goods of the dead which have been left behind. "

آن قصر که جمشید در آن جام گرفت
آهو بچه کرد و روبه آرام گرفت
بهرام که گور می‌گرفتی همه عمر
دیدی که چگونه گور بهرام گرفت؟

The place where *Jamshid* held his cup.
The doe and the fox now rest and sup.
Bahram who hunted game non-stop
Was hunted by death when his time was up.

Ḥāfiẓ (may God sanctify his spirit) says:

بده جام می و از جم مکن یاد
که می‌داند که جم کی بود و کیْ کی

(O Saki!) The cup of wine, give; and recollection of *Jamshid*, make not:
Who knows when *Jamshid* was? Or when - *Kay*?[131]

"The faculty of intellect learns from the occurrences and experiments and then applies them to improve the path of life, and the best experience you may benefit from is the one that gives you advices and reveals the good and the evil to you."

"بادِرِ الفُرصَةَ قبلَ أن تَكونَ غُصَّةً. لیسَ کُلُّ طالِبٍ یُصیبُ، و لا کُلُّ غائبٍ یَئوبُ. و مِن الفَسادِ إضاعَةُ الزّادِ، و مَفسَدَةُ المَعادِ. و لِکُلِّ أمرٍ عاقِبَةٌ، سَوفَ یَأتیکَ ما قُدِّرَ لکَ. التّاجِرُ مُخاطِرٌ؛ و رُبَّ یَسیرٍ أنمَیٰ مِن کَثیرٍ وَ لا خَیرَ فی مُعینٍ مَهینٍ، و لا فی صَدیقٍ ظَنینٍ. ساهِلِ الدَّهرَ ما ذَلَّ لکَ قَعودُهُ، و لا تُخاطِرْ بِشَیءٍ رَجاءَ أکثَرَ مِنهُ، و إیّاکَ أن تَجمَحَ بِکَ مَطِیَّةُ اللَّجاجِ!"

"Do not miss the opportunity or else you regret."

Humankind should always seek excellent opportunities because they may not reoccur ever again. It is brought by Imam (peace be upon him) that.

إغتَنِموا الفُرَصَ، فإنّها تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحابِ.

Take good advantage of opportunities, because they pass quickly by you, like clouds.[132]

It is narrated that the prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his family) said:

إنّ لله فی أيّام دَهرِكم نَفحاتٍ، ألا! فتَعَرّضوا لها، و لا تُعرضوا عَنها.

In the days of your life, there are blessing breezes from the exalted God. Thus, beware of those opportunities and embrace your soul constantly with them.[133]

صوفی این الوقت باشد ای رفیق
نیست فردا گفتن از شرط طریق

O companion, the mystic is "the son of time present."
It is not the rule of his spiritual path to say, "Tomorrow."[134]

Not every seeker would arrive at his destination, and what has been lost, will never be found.

Among all losses, loss of provision for hereafter is the worst since it ruins the one's Hereafter.[135]

Every action, work, or deed of an individual influences the future of that individual (It cannot be imagined that one's intentions, attitudes and desires will not have any consequences).

What is ordained for you will inevitably reach you, and one who is involved in trading should get ready for the events and possibilities to come; and perhaps being satisfied and contented with little is better than trading for large returns.

And there is no good in asking assistance from someone who might be a total disgrace someday, and there is no advantage in friendship with someone whose wrongdoing has been strengthened in him.

Be lenient toward the world, till becomes your obedient [and when your words have no listener, close your mouth, and unnecessarily do not

put yourself into trouble]. Do not burden yourself to earn more [Do not place extra time and energy for your affairs and works]. Beware of the hostilities, hatreds, and obstinacies; the elements that take you far away from the right path, steal your free-will, and keep you away from your intellect and wisdom to the point that you no longer are able to make any decision—And take you to a road that has no end but cruelty and violating human boundary and its divine principles.

"إحمِلْ نَفسَكَ مِن أخيكَ ـ عِندَ صَرمِهِ ـ عَلَى الصِّلَةِ، و عِندَ صُدودِهِ عَلَى اللُّطفِ و المُقارَبَةِ، و عِندَ جُمودِهِ عَلَى البَذلِ، و عِندَ تَباعُدِهِ عَلَى الدُّنُوِّ، و عِندَ شِدَّتِهِ عَلَى اللِّينِ، و عِندَ جُرمِهِ عَلَى العُذرِ؛ حتّى كأنَّكَ لهُ عَبدٌ، و كأنَّهُ ذو نِعمَةٍ عَلَيكَ؛ و إيّاكَ أن تَضَعَ ذلِكَ فى غَيرِ مَوضِعِهِ، أو أن تَفعَلَه بِغَيرِ أهلِهِ!

لا تَتَّخِذَنَّ عَدُوَّ صَدِيقِكَ صَدِيقًا فَتُعادِيَ صَدِيقَكَ، و امحَضْ أخاكَ النَّصيحَةَ حَسَنَةً كانَت أوْ قَبيحَةً، و تَجَرَّعِ الغَيظَ فإنّى لم أرَ جُرعَةً أحلى مِنهَا عاقِبَةً و لا ألَذَّ مَغَبَّةً. و لِن لِمَن غالَظَكَ؛ فإنَّهُ يوشِكُ أن يَلِينَ لكَ. و خُذ عَلَى عَدُوِّكَ بالفَضلِ؛ فإنَّهُ أحلى الظَّفرَينِ. و إن أرَدتَ قَطيعَةَ أخيكَ فاستَبقِ له مِن نَفسِكَ بَقِيَّةً يَرجِعُ إلَيها إن بَدا له ذلِكَ يَومًا ما.

و مَن ظَنَّ بِكَ خَيرًا فَصَدِّقْ ظَنَّهُ. و لا تُضيعَنَّ حَقَّ أخيكَ، اتِّكالاً عَلى ما بَينَكَ و بَينَهُ؛ فإنَّهُ لَيسَ لكَ بِأخٍ مَن أضَعتَ حَقَّهُ. و لا يَكُن أهلَكَ أشقَى الخَلقِ بِكَ، و لا تَرغَبَنَّ فيمَن زَهِدَ عَنكَ، و لا يَكونَنَّ أخوكَ أقوَى على مُقاطَعَتِكَ مِنكَ عَلَى صِلَتِهِ، و لا يَكونَنَّ عَلَى الإساءَةِ أقوَى مِنكَ عَلَى الإحسانِ. و لا يَكبُرَنَّ عَلَيكَ ظُلمُ مَن ظَلَمَكَ؛ فإنَّه يَسعَى فى مَضَرَّتِه و نَفعِكَ. و لَيسَ جَزاءُ مَن سَرَّكَ أن تَسوءَهُ."

When you see disrespect from your friend and brother, take the lead and reunite with him, and when he withholds, move toward him with kindness and sympathy. When he reserves, spend for him; when he goes away, approach him; when he is harsh, be kind and lenient toward him; when he commits wrong, think of excuses and treat him as though you were his slave and he was the benevolent master—you shouldn't relate any faults to

your master and must accept the responsibility—consider yourself convicted and regard him as your ruler and lord of beneficence.

You should never apply theses in the wrong place or with undeserving people [Some people cannot handle keen behavior and when you show love and sympathy, their behavior changes and they go beyond their limits. These people should not be treated with these instructions because the purpose would not be served].

Never become acquainted with your friend's enemy because you would eventually lose your sincere friend. Offer your true advice whether sweet or bitter to your brother and friend. Control your anger always because through experiences I have not found anything more pleasant than suppressing your anger and nothing more enjoyable than seeing the end result.

Behave out of kindness to anyone who shows anger; because their views might change, and they become lenient toward you. Treat your enemy with nobility and goodness because forgiveness is sweeter than revenge.

Do not break all bonds of your friendship and by using improper remarks do not even leave a trace of bad memory in your friend's mind or soul.

Do not blame those who see some goodness in you—greet them with kindness and gratitude—do not violate their rights through friendship—and do not leave a bad memory in their souls, because one whose right is been violated never becomes your sincere friend.

Step away from an action which causes your family to show hostility toward you. Do not show a sense of logging for a person who has turned his back on you; someone who does not appreciate your kindness.

Your behavior should not provoke people to feel contented when cutting ties with you. They should not complain or become sad because

you are not ought to socialize and interact with them as much as you should. You must have the upper hand in your relationship. Your relationship with people should be as such that they do not think you deserve blame and hostility— they should think that your grace and dignity does not deserve such responses.

Do not magnify the bad deeds of others (do not let their actions penetrate your soul and do not rely on them), for indeed their intent and action benefits you and earns them negative; do not reward the kindness of people with obscenity.

"و اعلمْ - يا بُنَيَّ! - أنّ الرّزقَ رزقان: رزقٌ تَطلُبُهُ و رزقٌ يَطلُبُكَ، فإنْ أنتَ لم تَأتِه أتاكَ. ما أقبَحَ الخُضوعَ عندَ الحاجَةِ، و الجَفاءَ عندَ الغِنَى. إنّ لكَ من دُنياكَ ما أصلَحْتَ به مَثواكَ. و إن جَزِعْتَ عَلى ما تُفلِتُ مِن يَدَيكَ فاجزَعْ عَلى كُلّ ما لم يَصِل إليكَ. استَدِلَّ عَلى ما لم يَكُنْ بما قد كانَ [فإنّ الأمورَ أشباهٌ]، و لا تَكونَنّ ممّن لا تَنفَعُهُ العِظَةُ إلاّ إذا بالغَتَ في إيلامِه؛ فإنّ العاقِلَ يتّعِظُ بالآدابِ، و البَهائِمَ لا تَتّعِظُ إلاّ بالضّرب.

اطرَحْ عَنكَ واردِاتِ الهُمومِ بعَزائِمِ الصّبرِ و حُسنِ اليَقين. مَن تَرَكَ القَصدَ جارَ، و الصّاحِبُ مُناسِبٌ، و الصّديقُ مَن صَدَقَ غَيبُهُ، و الهَوَى شَريكُ العَمَى. رُبَّ قَريبٍ أبعَدُ مِن بَعيدٍ و بَعيدٍ أقرَبُ مِن قَريبٍ؛ و الغَريبُ مَن لم يَكُن لهُ حَبيبٌ.

مَن تَعَدّى الحَقَّ ضاقَ مَذهَبُهُ، و مَنِ اقتَصَرَ عَلى قَدرِهِ كانَ أبقَى لهُ. و أوثَقُ سَبَبٍ أخَذتَ بِه سَبَبٌ بَينَكَ و بَينَ اللهِ، و مَن لم يُبالِكَ فهُوَ عَدُوُّكَ. قد يَكونُ اليَأسُ إدراكًا إذا كانَ الطّمَعُ هَلاكًا. ليسَ كُلّ عَورَةٍ تَظهَرُ، و لا كُلُّ فُرصَةٍ تُصابُ؛ و رُبّما أخطأ البَصيرُ قَصدَهُ، و أصابَ الأعمَى رُشدَهُ.

أخِّرِ الشّرَّ، فإنّكَ إذا شِئتَ تَعَجّلتَهُ. و قَطيعَةُ الجاهِلِ تَعدِلُ صِلَةَ العاقِلِ. مَن أمِنَ الزّمانَ خانَهُ، و مَن أعظَمَه أهانَهُ. ليسَ كُلُّ مَن رَمَى أصابَ، إذا تَغَيَّرَ السُّلطانُ تَغَيَّرَ الزّمانُ. سَل عَنِ الرّفيقِ قَبلَ الطّريقِ، و عَنِ الجارِ قَبلَ الدّارِ. إيّاكَ أن تَذكُرَ مِنَ الكَلامِ ما كانَ مُضحِكًا! و إن حَكَيتَ ذلِكَ عَن غَيرِكَ."

Know O' my child, that livelihood is of two kinds - a livelihood that you seek and a livelihood that seeks you, which is such that if you do not reach it, it will come to you. How bad it is to be modest at the time of need

and poverty, and to be harsh in time of richness. The world is beneficial to you so long as is useful for the hereafter, and you take some moral provision for your trip to the last day (more than that, has no result but trouble). If you shed tears over what has gone out of your hands, then also cry for what has not at all come to you. Infer what has not yet happened from what has already happened, because all affairs are similar and in terms of decaying and perishing, they are common.

Do not be among those whom preaching will not benefit them unless spoken harshly and the path of advice changes direction toward unkind treatment, because the wise takes instruction from a descent behavior while beast learns only from beating and discipline.

When tragedy or hardship is descended, ward off from yourself the onslaught of worries by firmness of endurance and purity of belief toward the God's will and volition.

He who gives up moderation commits excess and goes toward a deviated path. Be always with a proper companion in your missions because he is like a relative to you. A true friend is someone who is honest in your absence. And he, who follows the path of *nafs*, is like a blind person in ignorance and misguidance. Often the near ones are remoter than the distant ones, and often the distant ones are nearer than the near ones. A stranger or poor is he who has no truthful friend.

He who steps out of the truth, his path becomes narrow, and his way becomes hard. He who stays in his position remains constant upon it. Strongest and most trusted means you can count on is your connection with God which is safer than any means and modes. He who does not respect your interests is your enemy.

In some cases, greed may lead to destruction and therefore despair is righteous and expedient. There is no need for hidden matters to be revealed and it is not always true that any opportunity will get you the

desired effect. And perhaps many experienced people will not arrive at the desired result, but a blind, inexperienced raw person reaches the ideal result.

کیمیاگر از غصه مرده و رنج
ابله اندر خرابه یافته گنج

The alchemist died of sorrow and suffering.
While the fool found the treasure in the rubble[136]

Do not rush in doing evil and wrong, as you will be able to do so whenever you wish. Breaking the connection with ignorance is equal to socializing and making friendship with wise people.

Anyone trusting the world will be betrayed by it, and whoever considered it great, it will make him inferior. This is not the case that every shot hits the target. And when a ruler or Sultan chooses the path of injustice and oppression, the world too becomes oppressive and unjust.

Before embarking on a journey, find a friend (whether your journey is outward or inward spiritual journey to God) and before buying a house, ask about the neighbor. Avoid using funny, faulty, and disdainful words, even though you quoted it from someone else.

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If we wish to study about the fundamental nature of the Imam's words, we will need a more detailed description of each line, but giving the limitations of these pages, we hope a brief explanation would serve the purpose.

The first point is about the provision that we need to elucidate the fundamental facts briefly.

Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī (may he live in God's paradise) says:

بنوش باده که قسّام صنع قسمت کرد
در آفرینش از انواع نوش‌دارو و نیش

Drink the wine that the divider of creation.
Has made all sort of panacea and bitterness[137]

Sustenance in Gnosticism refers to inspirations of heart, God's manifestations, soul extroversion and understanding the truth of the higher universe. Of course, these connotations can be derived from Qur'ān verses and narrations of *Ahl al-Bayt* (peace be upon them). Sustenance is provided by divine provider for all; however, its use is subject to the person's decision, ambition and free-will. The same is true in regard to the Divine Prophets, infallibles (peace be upon them) and *'Awliyā' Allāh*. Their words open the doors of the unseen world and man should with great determination follow their paths and with total submission should bring his potential talent to actualization.

My Late father (may he reside in God's paradise) used to say: We have widened our table for all, but if someone does not come to this table, it should be said; if the beggar is lagging, what is the landlord's fault?

This type of sustenance can only be obtained by the individual's own choice and a person will not get anywhere with laziness.

The "apparent sustenance" refers to any means of livelihood that is needed for survival and continuity of life, and one must use it to spend one's life in convenience and peace of mind and should avoid excess and greed. Man should not have an inordinate desire to acquire or possess more than what he needs.[138]

The experts in the mystical way consider employment for everyone, but they do not emphasize the amount of income or the final result of the work. They know everything from God, and they consider spending days without useful work as harmful for man's path to God.

Tradesmen must earn *Ḥalāl* (lawful or permissible) sustenance. Physicians should have moral responsibility to assist needy people and

avoid putting money aside for saving. Religious scholars should promote the solid principles of *sharī'ah* and avoid fame and popularity—they should not use their knowledge for accumulation of worldly possessions and should confine themselves to what God has ordained them. This is also true of all occupations and classes of people, and all should be grateful and satisfied with what God's destiny has provided for them.

Ḥadrat Ḥāfiẓ says:

به پادشاهی عالم فرو نیارد سر
اگر ز سرّ قناعت خبر شود درویش

"If Dervish realizes the secret of contentment,
he shall not bow down to the king of the universe."[139]

The second point is about "having modesty at the time of needing guidance", and "expressing hostility and long ambitions at time of prosperity" — both of which terminate our relevance to the Source and deviate our attention towards the material means. They are not compatible with human dignity and self-esteem and make humans look inferior in the eyes of the public.

Unfortunately, these undesirable traits are seen in many of us. We look for opportunities in our relationships, but as soon as calamities are over, we return to our corrupted, ugly, and decadent state. By charm and volubility, and by combined rhythmic words for sexual purposes, we deceive each other and involve one party in a virtual space with thousands of promises and deceit. We ought to reach to our lustful intentions—whether our objective is to acquire a social position or fabricating the symptoms of mental or physical disorders for a variety of "secondary gain" motives— or a motivational state for sexual desire. Nonetheless, after reaching the desired idea, we change our misleading appearance and return to the previous wicked face, and we forget about all the promises we made. This attribute is the attribute of hypocrisy and mischief, but in any

case, a person should be calm, free, and noble, whether he reaches his goal or not.

Thirdly, the quality of our approaches towards the missed opportunities. ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib describes the parallels between the past and future issues, and also asserts the lack of our access to any of them—because the world is transitory and we all live in present and thus our relation to what has been lost and what is still not achieved, is the same.

ما فاتَ مَضى و ما سَيَأتيک فأين؟ قُم فاغتَنِم الفُرصَةَ بَينَ العَدَمَين

What is lost would not be returned and the future is unknown. Get up and enjoy the opportunity between two nothingness and nonexistence. [140]

In this case, like the previous one, the word of Amir al-Mu'minīn relates to both worlds, here and hereafter.

What is related to this world is transitory, and the heart and mind should not be concerned about something that is lost, because the world is a place of passing, not a place of eternal rest, and anyone who gets caught up in lost opportunities will suffer psychological damage. When a person faces a very sad reality such as the loss of a spouse or the loss of property, he should realize that these are temporary. They are transient preoccupations and worldly affairs that separate us from the true origin, and from the final destination, as Mawlānā (may God bless his soul) states:

مرغ باغ ملکوتم نیم از عالم خاک
دو سه روزی قفسی ساخته‌اند از بدنم
خنک آن روز که پرواز کنم تا بر دوست
به هوای سرکویش پر و بالی بزنم
من به خود نامدم اینجا که به خود باز روم
آنکه آورد مرا باز برد در وطنم
می وصلم بچشان تا در زندان ابد
از سر عربده مستانه به هم در شکنم

I am a heavenly bird from the garden of paradise
I am not from this dusty earth. My body's being trapped.
inside this worldly cage for just a few days.
The happiest day of my life is when I fly away
towards my Friend flapping my wings faster
to reach His heavenly abode...[141]

We have to devote our efforts and determination to the solid matters that are good for the world after and must grieve for the losses that could have led us to Hereafter. We should compensate for the losses and be prepared for the opportunities to come and act on *Khwājah Shīrāzī* orders.

چنینم هست یاد از پیر دانا
فراموشم نشد هرگز ، همانا
که روزی رهروی در سرزمینی
به لطفش گفت رندی همنشینی
که ای سالک چه در انبانه داری
بیا دامی بنه گر دانه داری
جوابش داد گفتا دام دارم
ولی سیمرغ می‌باید شکارم
بگفتا چون به‌دست آری نشانش
که از ما بی‌نشان است آشیانش
چو آن سرو روان شد کاروانی
چو شاخ سرو می‌کن دیده‌بانی
مده جام می و پای گل از دست
ولی غافل مباش از دهر سرمست
لب سرچشمه‌ای و طرف جویی
نم اشکی و با خود گفت و گویی
به یاد رفتگان و دوستداران
موافق گرد با ابر بهاران
چو نالان آمدت آب روان پیش
مدد بخشش از آب دیدهٔ خویش

That one day, a seeker in a land
A wise one helped him understand
Seeker, what do you keep in your bag
Set up a trap, if bait you drag
In reply said I keep a snare
But for the phoenix I shall dare
Asked how will you find its sign

We can't help you with your design
Like the spruce become so wise
Rise to the heights, open your eyes
Don't lose sight of the rose and wine
But beware of your fate's design
At the fountainhead, by the riverside
Shed some tears, in your heart confide
This instrument won't tune to my needs
The generous sun, our wants exceeds
In memory of friends bygone
With spring showers hide the golden sun
With such cruelty cleaved with a sword
As if with friendship was in full discord
When flows forth the crying river
With your own tears help it deliver. [142]

The Fourteen Infallibles (peace be upon them) and the divine mystics have always occupied themselves with matters of the other world and earned lure of this world to some extent in order to facilitate hereafter.

The fourth point is about taking advice and having good acceptance when moral advice is given.

Anyone before reaching "The Rational Actualization" has faults in his thought and action and must realize his own imperfection and try to improve them. If his deficiencies are improved, the ego or "self" promotes and prepares him to step up to the next state. It also prepares a ground to accept a harder level for *nafs* and in fact brings the *nafs* one step closer to the absolute incorporablity. If someone reacts to the advice of the authorities with egotism, justifications, and interpretations, his *nafs* will stay in the same negative self-actualization. He not only loses his power and talent to reach a higher state, but also predisposes himself to a lower state; this is called a boundless danger that threatens us all to decline and closes doors of progression and blessing to us.

My late father (May he reside in God's paradise) told me many times that: I used to investigate, analyze, and rectify my mistakes before my

teacher's warning; however, we explicitly warn the people, but they do not care.

People do not realize that this issue is a secret to their advancement to upper levels. He also said: The master of path is for cases where a person does not realize his mistake, not where it is possible for a person to recognize the error.er is possible.

The fifth point; men should rely on their own will and power. If a man wishes to act by relying on the advice of a great man, Walī or Infallible (peace be upon him), the desired effect would not be reached.

"و إيّاکَ و مُشاوَرَةَ النِّساءِ! فإنّ رَأيَهُنّ إلى أفنٍ، و عَزمَهُنّ إلى وَهنٍ، و اکفُفْ عَليهِنّ مِن أبصارِهِنّ بِحِجابِکَ إيّاهُنّ، فإنّ شِدّةَ الحِجابِ أبقى عَليهِنّ، و ليسَ خُروجُهُنّ بِأشَدّ مِن إدخالِکَ مَن لا يوثَقُ بِه عَلَيهِنّ، و إنِ استَطَعتَ أنْ لا يَعرِفنَ غَيرَکَ فافعَلْ، و لا تُملِکِ المَرأةَ مِن أمرِها مَا جاوَزَ نَفسَها، فإنّ المَرأةَ رَيحانَةٌ و ليسَت بِقَهرَمانَةٍ، و لا تَعْدُ بِکَرامَتِها نَفسَها، و لا تُطمِعْها فى أن تَشفَعَ بِغَيرِها.

و إيّاکَ و التَّغايُرَ فى غَيرِ مَوضِعِ غَيرَةٍ! فإنّ ذلِکَ يَدعو الصَّحيحَةَ إلى السُّقمِ، و البَريئَةَ إلى الرِّيبِ. و اجعَلْ لِکُلّ إنسانٍ مِن خَدَمِکَ عَمَلاً تَأخُذُهُ بِه، فإنّهُ أحرَى أنْ لا يَتَواکَلوا فى خِدمَتِکَ. و أکرِمْ عَشيرَتَکَ، فإنّهُم جَناحُکَ الذى بِه تَطيرُ، و أصلُکَ الذى إلَيهِ تَصيرُ، و يَدُکَ الّتى بِها تَصولُ. استَودِعِ اللهَ دينَکَ و دُنياکَ، و أسألُهُ خَيرَ القَضاءِ [لکَ] فى العاجِلَةِ و الآجِلَةِ، و الدّنيا و الآخِرَةِ، و السّلامُ."

Do not acquire advice from women, because their thoughts and verdicts are not often solid, and their determinations vary and evolve quickly. With proper dressing, keep their eyes from harmful damages, because the more you try in this issue (i.e., covering and preventing them from dealing with men), the more you keep them in health and blessing, and that the risk of them leaving home, is not more than allowing a mistrusted man into your house. And if you can do something to prevent them to see no men other than you, do it. Do not give women authorities

outside their personal matter, because they are like basil, not like fighting hero. They are not made for difficult tasks or social crisis. Do not go too far in respecting women, and do not encourage them to intercede for others before yourself. Do not show a great ardor in wrong places, because a contrary result may ensue, and this would have a reverse effect on your mood as such you develop doubt toward honest people. Specify a work plan for each servant, so no one can leave responsibility to another and show laxity accordingly.

Respect your family and relatives because they act as wings by which you fly toward your goals and objectives and are your root and origin. They are your strong hands by which you defend. I entrust your faith and world to God. And ask him for the best Divine Destiny, salvation and blessing for your present moments and future, in this world and the world after.

***

In his insightful rulings, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) mentions the quality of relationship between men and their spouses. His words are not understood properly even by many sharī'ah scholars, and thus they delete some in their speeches, and others who dare not to disrespect the sacred realm of the Imam (peace be upon him), relate his words to circumstances of that time. Some people also admit their own lack of sufficient knowledge and therefore accept no accountability and there are still others who wish to justify their views by strange interpretation of Imam Ali's words.

Some claimants of the Divine Grace and Wisdom have ignored the historical facts and the works of authentic clerical establishment of religion and pioneer of *sharī'ah* and have become more royalist than the king. By delusional reasoning, they have tried to show superiority of women over men and consider themselves pioneers in the field of propagation of the

faith. They seek status among today's immature and malformed culture by welcoming uneducated and immature groups of people, not knowing that such matter has no place in the field of science and research.

فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاء وَأَمَّا مَا يَنفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الأَرْضِ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللهُ الأَمْثَالَ.

Delusions and justifications decay like foam of flood, and what is useful and valuable for the people would remain in the earth.[143]

Interestingly, some use the verse below to show superiority of women over men.

رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنثَى وَاللهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعَتْ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالأُنثَى.

O God, I brought Mary as a female to this world and God knows better what she has born and that males are not like females ever.[144]

They assert that God has placed the status of men superior to women, and that men will never be like women, while they should declare that women will never be like men. The primacy of the woman in this verse is only to comply with the principal, because in many verses, the male gender is considered prior to females, but this is not the reason that men are superior to women.

I have emphasized repeatedly in my speeches and writings that our job is simply to articulate the principles and fundamentals of the holly *sharī'ah* law based on our perception of the truth of the *sharī'ah*, and nothing more.

Religion does not need "a guardian more compassionate than mother" and no one has chosen us to be a custodian. Our authority figure, protector

and *Walī*, at the present time, is Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Al-Mahdī (may our spirits be sacrificed for him), the only possible pole of existence, and the pillar of the possible universe; and for our duty and faith promotion, we must be held accountable to him and to him only.

Instead of Imam of our time (may God hasten his holly reappearance) we are foisting ideas on community to urge them to understand our authority figure as faith and *sharī'ah* leaders, and we claim that the religion is maintained so long as we live. We do not realize that the religion of the messenger of God has a custodian, and many have come and left this world, and nothing has happened, and people are still keeping their faiths.

Mankind deal with religious teaching according to their level of understanding, capacity and readiness, and there are many who are urgent in dwelling upon anything and confront the *sharī'ah* law and prophecy by their willful obstinacy, but they should know that the mission of the divine prophets will never be interrupted by their determinations or denial. The guidance of the messengers of God and their enlightenment and purification of hearts would remain forever.

The revealed religion is descended for acceptors, not for deviated individuals or those who wish to undermine their accountability by bringing up different excuses.

Qur'ān says to the prophet:

وَمَا أَنتَ بِهَادِي الْعُمْيِ عَن ضَلَالَتِهِمْ.

And you cannot guide the blind away from their error.[145]

The books of the Divine Knowledge and guidance of *'Awliyā'Allāh* are only for acceptors, not for the "blind hearted people". The training system of revelatory guards is set for particular people, not for any disloyal thugs

whose only purpose in life is to promote and advertise deviations, confront principles of monotheism, and bring obstacle into path of *ʿAwliyāʾAllāh*.

Therefore, the following materials are based on the acceptance of the truth and submission to sharīʿah principles and virtuous doctrines, and of course by no means we claim that we will not slip from mistakes as such assertion is related to infallibles (peace be upon them) only.

In the remained texts of infallibles (Peace be upon them), there are materials to explain the relationship of men and women in public and family environment. For example, in The Battle of the Camel, Ṭalḥah and Zubayr tempted and encouraged ʿĀʾishah to battle, a full-scale war against Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (peace be upon him), and a significant number of parties, especially in the Basra Army and ʿĀʾishah Guard died. In that battle, Ṭalḥah and Zubayr as two advocates, were killed too.

After the war and the defeat of the ʿĀʾishah armies, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) criticized her and said:

كُنتم جُندَ المَرأةِ و أتباعَ البَهيمَةِ، رَغا فأجَبتُم و عُقِرَ فهَرَبتُم.

You, the people of Basra! You were the army of a woman and followed her camel. When her camel grumbled, you responded, and when it was wounded you fled away.[146]

أمّا فُلانَةُ، فأدرَكَها رَأيُ النِّساءِ، و ضِبنٌ غَلا في صَدرِها كمِرجَلِ القَينِ؛ و لو دُعِيَت لِتَنالَ مِن غَيرِي ما أتَت إلَيَّ لم تَفعَلْ؛ و لَها - بَعدُ - حُرمَتُها الأولى؛ و الحِسابُ عَلَى اللهِ تَعالى.

As regards a certain woman (ʿĀʾishah), she is in the grip of womanly illusions, and malice is boiling in her bosom like the furnace of the blacksmith. If she were called upon to deal with others as she is dealing with me, she would not have done it so. (As for me), even hereafter she

will be allowed her original respect, while the reckoning (of her misdeeds) is an obligation on Allah.[147]

After the Battle of the Camel, Imām (peace be upon him) said to people:

مَعاشِرَ النّاس! إنّ النّساءَ نَواقِصُ الإيمان، نَواقِصُ الحُظوظِ، نَواقِصُ العُقول؛ فأمّا نُقصانُ إيمانِهِنّ فقُعودُهُنّ عَن الصّلاةِ و الصّيام فى أيّامِ حَيضِهِنّ؛ و أمّا نُقصانُ حُظوظِهِنّ فمَواريثُهُنّ عَلى الأنصافِ مِن مَواريثِ الرّجال. و أمّا نُقصانُ عُقولِهِنّ فشَهادَةُ امرَأتَين كَشَهادَةِ الرّجُل الواحِدِ؛ فاتّقوا شِرارَ النّساءِ! و كونوا مِن خِيارِهِنّ عَلى حَذَرٍ! و لا تُطيعوهُنّ فى المَعروفِ، حَتّى لا يَطمَعنَ فى المُنكَرِ!

O people! Women are deficient in Faith, deficient in shares and deficient in intelligence. As regards the deficiency in their Faith, it is their abstention from prayers and fasting during their menstrual period. As regards deficiency in their intelligence it is because the evidence of two women is equal to that of one man. As for the deficiency of their shares that is because of their share in inheritance being half of men. So, beware of the evils of women. Be on your guard even from those of them who are (reportedly) good. Do not obey them even in good things so that they may not attract you to evils.[148]

وَاستَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِن رِّجَالِكُمْ فَإِن لَّمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّن تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ أَن تَضِلَّ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَىٰ.

And get two witnesses among your men. And if there are not two men (available), then a man and two women, such as you agree for witnesses, so that if one of them (two women) errs, the other can remind her.[149]

It is quite obvious from the words of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) and this holy verse that Islam and its sharīʿah laws are based on rationality, truthfulness and righteousness, and these statements are said simply to consolidate the social relations along with the foundation of civilization, and nothing more.

In order to welcome certain individuals, contrary to the clear wording of the Qurʾān, some commentators surrender the foundations of their own beliefs, alter the concepts of this revealed book, and improperly explain and interpret its verses. This act is contrary to the aim of divine revelation. For example, in the holly verse, "misguidance" interpreted as "forgetfulness" and they say, since a woman is involved in housework and rearing children, she might forget some events and make mistakes in official testimony, therefore the testimony of two women equal to one man!

It is hard to understand such justifications. We do not see how the woman's household tasks and child rearing, especially in the current circumstances, is more frustrating than man's multiple social involvements! Why should we trade sharīʿah principles so generously?

This servant of God, within my social relationships with friends and others, confess that the social problems and anxiety of men are more often felt than women. Have women endured some of these troubles that led them toward memory impairment? Incidentally, on the contrary, women's retention of memory and details is superior to men and there is no doubt about it.

Does *Zāl* (Arabic:ضالّ) in Qurʾān mean forgetfulness?

وَمَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا.

And he who associates others with Allah has certainly gone far astray.[150]

فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَن ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا.

Whoever is guided is only guided for [the benefit of] his soul, and whoever goes astray only goes astray [in violation] against it.

Are we more compassionate, more merciful than God to alter the revealed concepts? Aren't we completely oblivious to what pleases God and what causes his wrath? We have closed the door of salvation to people and have prevented them from reaching a great victory. People on the Day of Judgment will stop us and before the Divine Justice ask: O lord! Although we have been ignorant of our duties in the world, but your religious scholars (*'Ulamā*) and *sharī'ah* missionaries did not show us the path and concealed the truth in order to please us. If they had accomplished their tasks, we would have been warned and a window of salvation in our heart would have been opened.

This issue above is about those who argue against the basics, but those who are looking forward to hearing *sharī'ah* truth, have another story.

It is in this context that, without any consideration, solely based on my findings from Islamic texts and works of revelation and *sharī'ah* flag-holders, I consider myself obligated to elucidate and explain words and path of religious leaders. My words are merely for those who in their reading and studying these words, set aside Satan's temptation, and look deeply through the words with fairness; those who have no purpose but pleasing God, reaching actualization and His closeness.

The human nature, whether male or female, is rooted from a single source of the Holy spirit of the Sacred Essence. The holy verse: فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ "So blessed is Allah, the best of creators"[151], is addressing both manhood and womanhood aspects. As Qur'ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ.

O mankind, indeed, We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.[152]

In this holy verse, the exalted human soul is the scale of proximity to God, not the gender type. As elsewhere in holy verse of Qur'ān, male and females are addressed parallel, and they are the same in terms of fulfilling duties.

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا.

Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.[153]

Accordingly, the soul and spirit of both sexes are derived from the same order which is the state of *Wājib al-wujūd* (necessary existent) of the Divine Essence, as God stated "I breathed into him my spirit"[154] and the

value of all entities in the universe depends on their roots, not on their manifestations, because in state of returning, everything goes back to its origin.

It is clear that the issue of manhood and womanhood originates from the lower state of *nafs*. The human soul is a single reality that descends from the Divine Essence and when its order is formulated is called *malakut*. In its *malakut* form, the soul's aspects of subjectivity and reactivity form. This feature is lacking in the soul prior to its *malakut* form, and the prostration of angles towards the creation of man relates to the state before, and not after. It is in this degree of formation where the characteristics of both sexes become differentiated and accordingly all tasks and obligations which are based on facts and functionality are assigned. At this time, physical strength, talents, instincts, and attributes are formulated. All individuals of the same species become differentiated and according to their different characteristics, female elegant-spirit, and male coarse-soul, social rules and relations are formulated, and specific tasks are developed for each gender.

Here an extremely important point must be understood that one who acts on orders of God, not only brings comfort, security, and moderation in his or her relation, but each of two in terms of soul's education, growth and self-completeness reach the state of self-actualization and therefore the purpose of creation is fulfilled. In contrast, failure to obey God, impairs social system, disintegrates principals of the worldly life, and prevents self-actualization and thus God's plan of creation is not discovered.

In the system of creation, men as hunter chase women and women as prey, in order to be safe from the fatal incidents and instability around them, seek refuge in the arms of the hunter. This distinction between men and women is beautiful and sweet.

The wise divine of creation has made men to struggle and deal with hardship and social affairs outside the family settings, and has made women to bring peace, joy, friendship, charm, and security to homes. It is quite evident that the warm family environment and kid's management require a very special grace that can only be found in women—and obtaining lawful sustenance, solving problems, and dealing with external obstacles, all are in the ability and power of the men.

It is natural that any changes in the obligations of these two spectrums would create a chaotic situation. It is proven by experience that men commonly try to possess the opposite sex and this fact looks unchanged throughout the history. This problem exists in every condition and in any capacity and there is no end to it. If a man is reluctant at some point, it is not because he has no instincts or desires, but it is due to temporary setbacks or hobbies. By removing these barriers, he returns to the same state, and woman, who has inherent kindness and gentleness, when confronted with the desire and will of the man, will be pulled toward him. In this regard, there is no difference between all parts of society, and Satan makes no exceptions.

There is a famous quote which states; "there is no sentence more enjoyable, more charming, and more deceitful than saying "I love you", to bring a woman to a man. This sentence can be a true and honest or a deceitful gesture to attract women. The same theme of the story is narrated from the Messenger of God.

"قول الرّجل للمرأة إنّى أحبّک، لا يذهَب من قلبها أبدًا."

If a man says "I love you" to a woman, this sentence never exits the woman's heart and soul. [155]

The emphasis on privacy in relationships between men and women in Islam is to protect women against the motivated desires of men.

At the present time, it must be admitted that the miraculous word of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him) which is a guideline for male-female relations in the context of social requirements, has been codified for this era, not for 1400 years ago.

Unfortunately, the quality of life in today's communities is embarrassing. Lack of modesty and chastity in residential apartments and complexes with open views, as well as free communication between men and women, boys, and girls, have seriously threatened the social status and family relationships in these communities.

God knows how destructive free mingling [between men and women in stores and shopping centers] is to families. The mixed relationships, face to face communication, humor, and laughter, and sitting mixed on tables under the pretext of intimacy in relations with families and friends—and women welcoming guests, shaking hands, and serving men, joking with them and telephone communication— all have brought us to this calamity.

Unfortunately, the free interaction of men and women, doctors, nurses, and staff in hospitals has triggered irreparable consequences. The same issue may cause absurd irrational problems in the academic environment, and in places where men and women participate freely in classrooms and educational spaces; in places where women appear inappropriately.

Why must women and men share the same classrooms? Why should men instructors be selected for women classes? What goes wrong if our academic environment is free from these problems and issues?

Today, in some countries, there are some universities for women that all members from the door attendant to the director are entirely females, and not only they have no shortcomings, but also in terms of scientific and

academic outcomes, they are among the world's most famous universities. The University of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia is an example of such universities which is managed entirely by women.

A few years ago, in the holy city of Mashhad, all staff members of Imam Riḍā Hospital were chosen to be female by some devout, committed, compassionate and competent physicians and only a few male surgeons were used in the operating room. Interestingly enough, all medical doctors acknowledged better coordination and management during the six months of this venture. Unfortunately, the plan was abandoned because of some mediated excuses by irrelevant authorities.

The same problem also exists in the *ḥawza* (a traditional *Shi'a* center), where the individuals in charge of teaching and answering women are men. This is wrong because teaching Islamic subjects does not automatically authorize men to teach women. The ego is ego, and evil is waiting for every opportunity to seduce the parties. It is here that we find the reason behind the remarks of Ḥaḍrat Fāṭimah Al-Zahrā (peace be upon her) that:

خَيْرُ النِساء أنْ لايَرَيْنَ الرِّجالَ و لايَراهُنَّ الرِّجالُ.

The best women are those who see no man, and no man sees them. [156]

And the word of infallible Imam reveals its meaning that:

لا تُنزلوا النِسَاءَ الغُرَفَ.

Do not put women in the room overlooking the street and the house.[157]

When Imam (peace be upon him) says, "Prevent your spouse from speaking to any man," he definitely knows something that we require more effort to understand it.

Because of my responsibilities and association with different people, I, the writer of these lines expressly state that Satan's seduction and temptation has no specific ties to negligent people but encompasses men and women believers too. In addition, no one should assume to be safe from the seduction of the devil, and with such an assumption, ignore the standards and principles of the holy Sharia.

Today, it must be acknowledged regretfully that the free interaction between men and women by cellular phones, internet or other means has brought disgrace to families and has destroyed the basis of family ties. I do not know why and for what reason women must respond to men's calls, and what tragedy may follow if women do not answer any calls. Why should women buy their groceries alone? Why should they go to the shopping malls to be confronted with strange men with evil intentions? Why should they bargain in shops for any reason? Why don't their partners feel responsible?! One may see these claims to be unusual or too extreme and may assert that not every interaction would lead to corruption and deviation, and not every conversation will lead to astray. In response, it must be said: *Firstly*, the reason behind *ḥijāb* (a veil that covers the head and chest) and avoiding free interactions, is not the outward corruption and deviation which is observed in all ages but is the inward loss of spiritual growth toward incorporablity, and there is no doubt about this fact. *Secondly*, who can ensure that the incidence of deviations and alterations are assigned to a particular class of people, and others are exempted? As stated earlier, experience has proven otherwise and therefore, it is wise to adhere to Sharia rules.

Some critics wish to promote a culture in which man and woman are not deprived from the benefits of free interaction and socializing, and therefore assume that through this promotion, all terrible consequences could be voided. To prove their points, they give examples from western societies and family connections in western nations. In Reply, we ask: Aren't there any corruption, abuse, and violation of the rights in western society? Ironically, despite all the deviations and abuses, we reject the facts and leave all the debate and research on the side. Do they deny statistical reports that are published from time to time about deviations and wrongdoings of their communities? Which culture can control the carnal desires, passions, and animal desires of mankind?

Interaction with the opposite sex not only is not permitted through establishment of a new culture, but also ruins the foundation of family ties and culture. Could two opposite magnet poles be kept away from each other by building a new cultural awareness? By the assumption that one party can embrace his or her moral values to some extent, what will you do with the other? "*Nafs* (the self or ego) is *nafs*" and as such does not recognize "culture" but interprets everything with its own desires and everyone whether educated, civilized or famous confess to this matter.

On the other hand, we still have not yet understood the benefits of free mixing between the opposite sexes! What goes wrong if in the parks and recreation centers, women engage in sports and activities in their own designated area? What goes wrong if offices, hospitals, universities, banks, and institutions are taken over by one party only? And each party would get involved in the debate and speaking with its own gender? What is the benefit of free mixing in workplaces and outside of the employment environment, in streets, parks, theatre or buses?

"Not to consult women" is another matter that has been mentioned and appears otherwise in similar statements. The secret of this statement lies in

woman's emotional state, which is dominant over man and naturally, this verdict is factual in sensitive matters like transaction, war, *Jihād,* and complicated matters that we encounter in lifetime—matters requiring extra thinking and reasoning.

The gentle spirits of women are created to deal with delicate matters, but in dealing with harsh issues, they cannot decide and therefore may fall in temptations. For example, In the Battle of the Camel, Ṭalḥah and Zubayr tempted and encouraged ʿĀʾishah to confront Amīr al-Mu'minīn (peace be upon him).

It can be argued subsequently that the statements issued by religion rulers are not universal and are only limited to some special cases.

There are other similar concerns in which "disagreement with dominant *Sunnis* community" (As Abū Ḥanīfah is quoted explicitly) have been cited as a source to derive Islamic law (i.e., because the foundation of community jurisprudence is based on disagreement with rulings issued by *Ahl al-Bay*t (peace be upon them). This subject is valid in places where there is a likelihood of misconduct in community jurisprudence, not necessarily every place and every ruling. Therefore, many great jurists look to the community rulings and narrative sources before any declarations, and even in some cases, they prefer community ruling.

The disagreement with the community in all aspects cannot be justified, but it is justified primarily in cases where a contradiction between the community and Shi'a ruling (*fatwā*) exists. Also, it is not justified in a place where the disagreement posed by certain *Shi'a* principles has some conflict with the soul of Islamic jurisprudence.

Accordingly, the word of the Imam (peace be upon him) rediscovers its meaning:

شاوروهُنّ و خالِفوهُنّ.

To consult with women then do the opposite[158]

This is true in places where personal thoughts and discussions with rightful people remain in doubt. Furthermore, there are cases where the votes and thoughts of women are different from men and this predicament is due to their feelings and imaginative thoughts. This concept is interpreted as "the failure of intelligence." What causes this failure is not theoretical reasoning, but practical elucidation and creation force of human act. Humans for example may confirm goodness of justice and evil of oppression, but not able to act upon these challenges in the right manner when confronted.

No one should imagine that men never commit wrong doings, but on the contrary, they are bound to do so more often, and essentially their decisions are based on awareness, knowledge, and consciousness. If a man wants to deviate from a direct route, he will do it deliberately and consciously. This problem is clearly seen and felt in the history of judgments and trials. On the other hand, women may subconsciously, out of fantasies, emotions, or illusions, commit wrong, but their actions are not based on cruelty and arrogance. Therefore, the testimony of two women can equal that of one man.

Here I conclude the word of the Holy Imam (peace be upon him), and I do not allow myself to show more courage and boldness before his absolute divine infallibility. I desperately wish success in rectitude and salvation for all researchers and wayfarers in the school of truthful infallibles.

مادح خورشید، مدّاح خود است که دو چشمم سالم و نامرمد است

He who admires the sun is the admirer of self,

As such my eyes are healthy and have no pain.[159]

May peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon us and upon all righteous slaves of Allah.

Sayyid Muḥammad Muḥsin Ḥusaynī Ṭihrānī,
Holly City of Qom, 29, Rabī' al-Thānī 1432 AH (April 4th, 2011)

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[1] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 1.

[2] Qur'ān, 5:15-16.

[3] Ḥusaynī Ṭihrānī, *Maṭla'-i Anwār*, 1:111.

[4] For more information and discussion about this issue, see Ḥusaynī Ṭihrānī, *Nūr Malakūt Qur'ān*, 2:223.

[5] Alexis Carrel, *"man, the unknown"*, Introduction

[6] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 28:367.

[7] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Letter 29.

[8] Ṣadūq, al-Khiṣāl, 2:365-382. Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz* al-'Ummāl, 1:407.

[9] Qur'ān, 12:108.

[10] Qur'ān, 4:150.

[11] Quoted from "Al Merat fi Zel al Islam (a mirror in the shade of Islam) written by Maryam Nooruddin Fazlullah, p.45.

[12] *Niẓām Ḥuquwq Zan Dar Islām* (The System of Women's Rights in Islam), p.185.

[13] *Nahj al-Balāghah,* Muhammad Abduh, Vol.3, page 61.

[14] Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghummah*, 1:466. Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 10:238.

[15] Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

[16] I have discussed this further in the first volume of *Asrār-i Malakūt*.

[17] Qur'ān, 4:34.

[18] Shabistarī, *Gulshan Rāz*, lines 104 and 114.

[19] The Late Āyatullāh Muntaẓirī.

[20] Ḥāfiẓ, *ghazal* 159.

[21] Qur'ān, 5:54.

[22] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 6, line 2909.

[23] Ṣadūq, *Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh*, 4:18.

[24] Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 2:423-424.

«عَلِيٌّ بنُ إبراهيمَ عَن أبيهِ و عِدَّةٌ من أصحابنا عَن سَهل بن زيادٍ و مُحَمَّدُ بنُ يَحيَى عَن أحمَدَ بن مُحَمَّدٍ جَميعًا عَن ابن مَحبوبٍ عَن مُحَمَّدِ بن النُّعمانِ الأحول عَن سَلام بن المُستنير قالَ: كُنتُ عِندَ أبي‌جَعفر عليه السّلام فدَخَلَ عَليهِ حُمرانُ بنُ أعيَنَ و سَألَهُ عَن أشيَاءَ فلمّا هَمَّ حُمرانُ بالقيام قالَ لأبي‌جعفر عليه السّلام:

Once Ḥumrān ibn A'yan visited Imam Bāqir (peace be upon him). When he wanted to leave, he said to the Imam:

أخبِرُكَ أطالَ اللهُ بَقاءَكَ لنا و أمتَعَنا بِكَ، أنّا نأتيكَ فمَا نَخرُجُ مِنْ عِندِكَ حَتّى تَرِقَّ قُلوبُنا و تَسلوَ أنفُسُنا عَنِ الدُّنيا و يَهُونَ عَلَينا ما في أيدِي النّاسِ مِنْ هَذِهِ الأموَالِ، ثُمَّ نَخرُجُ مِنْ عِندِكَ، فإذا صِرنا مَعَ النّاسِ و التُّجّارِ أخبَثَنا الدُّنيا.

I shall tell you something — may God protect you for us and let us benefit from you for long: whenever we come to see you, by the time we want to leave our hearts are softened, our souls forget about this world, and what people possess loses significance in our minds. But when we leave and go among the people and traders, we incline again toward this world.

The Imam told him:

إنّما هِيَ القُلوبُ: مَرَّةً تَصعُبُ و مَرَّةً تَسهُلُ.

Such are the hearts: sometimes they harden and sometimes they soften.

The Imam then narrated that once the Prophet's Companions told him, "O Messenger of God! We are afraid that we might be hypocrites." He asked them, "What makes you afraid of this?" They said:

أمّا إنّ أصحابَ مُحمّدٍ صلى الله علي و آله قالوا: يا رَسُولَ اللهِ نَخافُ عَلَيْنا النِّفاقَ. فقالَ: و لِمَ تَخافونَ ذلكَ؟ قالوا: إذا كُنّا عِنْدَكَ فَذَكَّرتَنا و رَغَّبْتَنا وَجِلنا و نَسينا الدُّنيا و زَهِدْنا، حتّى كأنّا نُعايِنُ الأخِرَةَ و الجَنّةَ و النّارَ و نَحْنُ عِنْدَكَ، فإذا خَرَجْنا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ و دَخَلنا هذِهِ البُيُوتَ و شَمِمْنا الأوْلادَ و رَأيْنا العِيالَ و الأهْلَ، يَكادُ أنْ نُحَوِّلَ عَنِ الحالِ الّتي كُنّا عَلَيْها عِنْدَكَ، و حَتّى كأنّا لَمْ نَكُنْ عَلى شَيْءٍ، أفَتَخافُ عَلَيْنا أنْ يَكونَ ذلكَ نِفاقا؟

When we are with you, you admonish us and encourage us, so we are moved: we forget about this world and lose interest in it, as if we can see the Hereafter, the Garden, and the Fire, as we are with you. But then when we leave your presence, go to our homes, smell our children, and see our wives and families, and we almost turn back from the condition that we had with you, as if we never had that condition. Would you suspect this to be hypocrisy in us?

The Prophet replied:

كلاّ، إنّ هذِهِ خُطُواتُ الشَّيْطانِ لِيَرُدَّكُمْ في الدُّنيا، و اللهِ لَوْ تَدُومُونَ على الحالَةِ الّتي وَصَفْتُمْ أنْفُسَكُمْ بِها لَصافَحَتْكُمُ الملائِكَةُ و مَشَيْتُمْ عَلَى الماءِ، و لَوْ لا أنَّكُمْ تُذنِبُونَ فَتَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللهَ لَخَلَقَ اللهُ خَلْقا حَتّى يُذْنِبُوا ثُمّ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا اللهَ فيَغْفِرَ اللهُ لَهُمْ.

No. These are the footsteps of the Devil that inclines you to the world. By God if you were to persist with the condition that you described for yourselves, you would shake hands with the angels and walk on water. If you were not to sin and ask God for forgiveness, God would surely create another people to sin and ask forgiveness of Him so that He may forgive them.

The Imam then concluded:

إنّ المُؤْمِنَ مُفْتَنٌ تَوّابٌ، أما سَمِعْتَ قَوْلَ اللهِ عزّ و جَلّ: إنّ اللهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوّابينَ و يُحِبُّ المُتَطَهِّرينَ، و قالَ: اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمّ تُوبُوا إلَيْهِ.

Indeed, the believer is ever tempted ever repents. Have you not heard God, the Mighty and Majestic, saying: "God loves those who repent a lot, and He loves those who cleanse themselves" (2:222) and "Ask forgiveness of your Lord, then repent to Him" (11:3)?[24]

[25] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Letter 47.

[26] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Muhammad Abduh, Vol.3, p.42.

[27] Du'ā' Abī Ḥamzah al-Thumālī.

[28] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 53:302.

[29] Qur'ān, 21:26-27.

[30] Qur'ān, 38:72.

[31] Qur'ān, 16:53.

[32] Qur'ān, 3:159.

[33] Qur'ān, 93:6-7.

[34] Qur'ān, 17:74.

[35] Anṣārī, *Munājāt-nāmih*, p.112; Supplications 213: p.110; Supplications 223 with trivial difference.

[36] Qur'ān, 53:3-4.

[37] Qur'ān, 53:8-9.

[38] *Al-Iqbal*, pp.81 and 160; *Miṣbāḥ al-Kaf'amī*, p. 604.

[39] *Wilāyah* means guardianship and *Walī* is the one who is vested with the "authority of God "and has *Wilāyah*.

[40] Ṣadūq, *al-ʿAmālī*, pp.133, 341 and 343.

[41] Qur'ān, 12:24.

[42] Qur'ān, 26:88-89.

[43] Shurīdah Shīrāzī, Muḥammad Taqī, Dīwān.

[44] Ṣiffīn is a place near a city called Riqqah, which is about 200 km from Aleppo, and it is the place where the Battle of Ṣiffīn took place. Today it hosts the graves of the martyrs of that Battle such as Uways al-Qaranī and ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir.

[45] Ḥāfiẓ, *ghazal* 296.

[46] Al-Aqd al-Farīd, Vol.3, p.210, a line of Abū Dhuʿayb al-Hudhalī.

[47] Khayyām, *Rubāʿiyyāt*.

[48] Ibn Shuʿbah al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl*, p. 282.

[49] Sa'dī, *Gulistān*, *bāb* 2, *ḥikāyat* 11.

[50] Ghazzālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, 14:95.

[51] Ḥāfiẓ, *ghazal* 317.

[52] Qur'ān, 53:28.

[53] Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:67.

[54] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 1, line 71.

[55] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 1, lines 414-415.

[56] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 1, line 317.

[57] Qur'ān, 5:100.

[58] Qur'ān, 9:55.

[59] Qur'ān, 6:116.

[60] Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Niʿmah*, 1:27; Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa al-Jarāʾiḥ*, 2:934; Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, *Ithbāt al-Hudāh*, 1:402.

[61] Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, p. 239. Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 40:126, with some difference.

[62] See Ḥusaynī Ṭihrānī, *Imām Shināsī*, 1:31, 12:250, 13:221ff.

Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal in his Musnad has reported this hadith on the authority Zaid ibn Thabit in two occasions; first, in the beginning of page 182, and secondly, at the bottom of page 89, in the fifth volume, that the Prophet said:

إنيّ تاركٌ فيكم الثقلين، كتابَ الله و اهل بيتي و إنهما لن يفترقا، حتىٰ يَردا عَلَيّ الحوضَ

Verily, I am leaving among you two weighty things: one being the Book of Allah. Second are the members of my household (Ahl al-Bayt). These two (i.e., the Qur'ān and Ahl al-Bayt) shall never separate from each other until they reach me in Heaven at the Pool (of al-Kawthar).

In the *Al-Durr Al-Manthur Fi Tafsir Bil-Ma'thur*, Volume 6, p7, al-Albani

mentions in his *Sahih Sunan al-Tirmidhi* on the authority of Zayd ibn Arqam, that Allah's Messenger said:

إني تارک فیکم ما إن تمسّکتم به لن تضلّوا بعدی، أحدهما أعظم من الآخر ، کتاب الله حبل ممدود من السّماء إلی الأرض و عترتی أهل بیتی و لن یفترقا حتّی یردا علیّ الحوض، فانظروا کیف تخلفونی فیهما

I am leaving for you two precious and weighty Symbols that if you adhere to BOTH of them you shall not go astray after me. They are, the Book of Allah, and my progeny, my Ahl al-Bayt. The Merciful has informed me that these two shall not separate from each other till they come to me by the Pool (of Paradise). Watch out how you treat them after me.

[63] Qur'ān, 26:224-226.

[64] This refers to verses 38:21-26 of the Qur'ān.

[65] Qur'ān, 7:116.

[66] Ḥāfiẓ, *ghazal* 128.

[67] Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 3:295-296.

[68] Qur'ān, 31:12.

[69] Qur'ān, 2:269.

[70] Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, *Al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimmah fi Ma'rifat al-A'immah*, 2:859.

[71] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Saying 147.

[72] Qur'ān, 22:11.

[73] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 89:299.

[74] Qur'ān, 44:25-29.

[75] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 89:299.

[76] The reader is strongly advised to consult Sermon 221 of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, (concerning verses 102:1-2 of the Qur'ān), where Imam Ali criticizes taking pride in one's ancestors.

[77] Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 3:258.

[78] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Saying 382.

[79] *diyya* in Islamic Sharia law, is the financial compensation paid to the victim or heirs of a victim in the cases of murder, bodily harm, or property damage.

[80] Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 7:364.

[81] Qur'ān, 17:36.

[82] Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:67.

[83] If God wills and blessed by him, the explanation of this matter will be given in "*Ijtihad wa Taqlīd*" (Interpretive Reasoning and Following an Islamic Jurisprudence) written by the late Allamah, my father, may God sanctify his spirit.

[84] Qur'ān, 3:104.

[85] *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, p225.

[86] The Horizon of Revelation, Chapter 3, pp207-284.

[87] If God wills, this point too will be discussed in detail in "*Ijtihād wa Taqlīd*" (Interpretive Reasoning and Following an Islamic Jurisprudence) written by Allamah Tihrani (may God sanctify his spirit).

[88] Golshan-e-Raz, Part 50.

[89] Anthology of *Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī* (Collection of Hafiz's Poems), Pezhmān Printing,

Lyric Ode No.147.

[90] Qur'ān, 36:83.

[91] Qur'ān, 12:42.

[92] Qur'ān, 2:155.

[93]. Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 79:25.

[94] Anthology of *Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī* (Collection of Hafiz's Poems), Pezhmān Printing, Lyric Ode N°.362.

[95] Al-Tazhib, Vol.5, p276, اللهمّ ارزقنی العافیة إلی منتهیٰ أجلی.

[96] "Important Chapters in Familiarity with Imams", Vol.1, p558, with trivial differences.

[97] Al-Kāfī, Vol.3, p.472.

[98] al-'Āmilī, *Mathnawī Sheer o Shikār*. chapter 5.

[99] Sanā'ī Ghaznawī, *Ganjūr*, ode section.

[100] Al-Kāfī, Vol.8, p93

[101] *tayammum* is the Islamic act of dry ablution using a purified sand or dust, which may be performed in place of ritual washing (*wudu* or *ghusl*) if no clean water is really available or if one is suffering from moisture-induced skin inflammation or scaling.

[102] In a tradition narrated from the Messenger of God (may the blessing and peace of God be upon him and his family), the Prophet says:

"أفضلُ الأعمال أحمزُها

The best prayer is the one accompanied by more hardship.

In this case and in many others, one must realize that the fulfillment of religious practices and obeying the Commands of God make sense only in the context of God's order, and the pure worship must be carried out according to His laws. When you are not bound to fulfill a certain duty, committing, or not committing yourself to its fulfillment based solely on your discretion, is considered violation of the pillars of servitude to God. It is obvious that the Command of God is one thing and acting on one's own authority and judgment is another.

Nevertheless, for those religious practices undertaken for the purpose of spiritual experiences and cultivating spiritual development, in which there are different ways acceptable to lawgiver to perform them, one which sacrifices the immediate self-interest and bears more servitude and humiliation is deemed more acceptable to God. For instance, *Hajj* is an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, and a mandatory religious duty for Muslims that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime by all adult Muslims who are physically and financially capable of undertaking the journey. It is sometimes called *Umrah*, the 'minor pilgrimage' or 'lesser pilgrimage'; the *Hajj* being the 'major' pilgrimage, and which is compulsory for every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it, *Umrah* is not compulsory but highly recommended. While most modern-day pilgrims travel by Air, tour bus or car, a small minority still set out the old-fashioned way on foot to Mecca to embrace the importance of the journey. It is in such cases that the said hadith from the Prophet makes sense, and thus one who travels on foot and bears this hardship would feel more servitude toward God.

Imam Mujtabā (peace be upon him) walked from Medina to Mecca several times, while the for-riding-animals were going ahead of him. Imam Mūsā ibn Ja

'far al-Kāẓim (peace be upon him) and Imam Sajjād too had been seen many times travelling on foot.

Mulla Ṣadrā Shīrāzī, the famous philosopher who is the honor of Muslim world, travelled several times on foot from his house to Mecca and joined the Divine grace (died) in his last trip in Baṣrah.

Similarly, a person who is under an obligation to fast compensatory (the fast after the stipulated time) shall fast one day in any conditions, whether the day is a short winter-day or a long summer-day with intense heat. In this case, fasting in summer certainly will bring more reward than fasting in winter.

This hadith implies that any task performed beyond the limits of Sharia law is considered heretical, and certainly is despised by the lawgiver, and that the harder the task, the more acceptable by God, because it brings more humility before Him.

[103] Wasā'il al-Shia', Vol.5, p.216.

[104] Al-Kāfī, Vol.3, p.476.

[105] Qur'ān, 4:59.

[106] Collection of the Poems of Saeb of Tabriz, Vol.1, Chapter 1, lyric poem No.920.

[107] 'Uddat al-dā'ī wa najāḥ al-sā'ī, p.134.

[108] Proverbs and Sayings of Dihkhudā, Vol.1, p.484.

[109] Anthology of *Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī* (Collection of Hafiz's Poems), Pezhmān Printing, Lyric Ode N°.466.

[110] This point has been explained in Volume 2 of "*The Mysteries of Malakut*" (the Angelic World).

[111] *Ilahi*-Nama of Attar, Beginning of the Book, the poems idolizing the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon his, "Ali is The Impetuous Line."

[112] Ibn al-Sabbagh, *al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimmah li ma`rifat al-a'immah,* p.859.

[113] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Muhammad Abduh, Vol.2, page.160.

[114] In view of this humble author, burial of body upper the Imam's head and or ahead of him is an act of indignity and so canonically *ḥarām* (forbidden).

[115] Qur'ān, 24:37.

[116] Anthology of Hafiz, Pezhmān Printing, Ghazal 114.

[117] Ganjawī, Niẓāmī, Khamsah of Niẓāmī (collection of five works by Niẓāmī, Khusruw and Shirin), No. 119.

[118] Gulistān of Sa'dī, Chapter 1, On Lessons for Kings.

[119] Qur'ān, 2:286.

[120] Awālī al-Laali, Vol.1, p424, narrated from Holy Prophet (May the blessing and the peace of God be upon him and his family).

[121] Jāmī, *Haft O'Rang, Sobhat al-Abrar*, Part 5.

[122] Here one may ask why different *fatwas* are issued by the men of *ma'rifah* (intimate knowledge). The detailed answer is brought in the book "*ijtihād wa Taqlīd*" (Interpretive Reasoning and Following an Islamic Jurisprudence) of my late father (may God be pleased with him) and my marginal notes on that book clarifies this point. But here, I briefly mention that different fatwas of a religious authoritative figure and a perfect Gnostic certainty are issued based on "expediency discernment of matters" that their reality is concealed from us but will not affect the process of our growth and development. This differs from the case when

different *fatwas* given by others may cause calamity and irreparable consequences.

[123] Ṭihrānī, *Tawḥīd-I 'ilmī wa 'aynī* (Objective and intellectual *Tawḥīd*), p.23

[124] [It should be noted that this noble hadith in Musnad Ahmad, vol 2, p 441, has been quoted with little difference by the holly prophet, but in traditionary Shi'a communities in Nahj Al-Balāghah (Abdu), V.4, P. 171, has been cited by Imam Ali, peace be upon him.

[125] Khwājah Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī (Collection of Hafiz's Poems), Pezhmān Printing, Ghazal 4.

[126] Qur'ān, 9:24.

[127]Fayḍ al-Qadīr sharḥ al-Jāmi 'al-Saghīr min aḥādīth al-Bashīr al-Nadhīr Vol. 6, p.277, quotes from Luqmān the Wise, also in Mishkāt al-anwār, p.175 quotes from the Holy Prophet. (scholar)

[128] Nahj al-Balāghah, Muhammad Abduh, Vol.4, page.227.

[129]Gulistān of Sa'dī, in some version of Gulistān, we read.

با بدان یار گشت همسر لوط
خاندان نبوّتش گم شد
سگ اصحاب کهف روزی چند
پی نیکان گرفت و مردم شد

Nhu's wife associated with bad people.
His Prophet-hood was lost.
The dog of "the people of cave"
Went after people and became one of them.

[130] Gulistān of Sa'dī, Chapter 8.

[131] Khwājah Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī (Collection of Hafiz's Poems), Pezhmān Printing, Ghazal. 301.

[132] *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Way of Eloquence), Muhammad Abduh, Vol.4, p.142.

[133] Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 68:221.

[134] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 1, Chapter 6.

[135] My late father, 'Allāmah Ṭihrānī (may God be pleased with him), once said; One night in a dream, I was in dry burning desert, where there was no sign of development. A shadow appeared from a distance until came forward, I saw a woman that all her clothes were torn, and she was ugly and full of pus. She walked with a cane while she was sick, aged, and fatigued. When I looked closely, she was one of the closest relatives of mine. I told her: "what have you done to yourself?" she said: "I spent my life in the world neglecting the remembrance of God and I followed my desires," and she asked for assistance. I told her:" I advised you many times to change your behavior, but you refused, now you are requesting for assistance. Finally, she insisted, and I reached my pocket and gave her a chick-pea seeds. She turned to me and said, "Is that all?" I said, "I do not have anything else." And she turned and walked away.

[136] Gulistān Sa'dī, Chapter one, on nature of king.

[137] Khwājah Shams al -Dīn Muhammad Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī (Collection of Hafiz's Poems), Pezhmān Printing, Ghazal. 586.

[138] Description of the content is brought in 'Unwān Baṣrī session.

[139]Khwājah Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī (Collection of Hafiz's Poems), Pezhmān Printing, Ghazal 586.
[140] Shāhrūdī, *Mustadrak* Safīnah *al-Bihār*,7:420
[141] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 4, P.437
[142] Khwājah Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī (Collection of Hafiz's Poems), Pezhmān Printing, p.304
[143] Qur'ān,13:17.
[144] Qur'ān, 3:36.
[145] Qur'ān, 27:81.
[146] Nahj al-Balāghah, Muhammad 'Abduh, Vol.1, p.44.
[147] Ibid, Vol.2, p.47.
[148] Ibid, Vol.1, p.129.
[149] Qur'ān, 2:282.
[150] Qur'ān, 4:116.
[151] Qur'ān, 23:14.
[152] Qur'ān, 49:13.
[153] Qur'ān,33:35.
[154] Qur'ān,15:29.
[155] Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 5:569.
[156] Al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, 2:67.
[157] Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 5:516.
[158] Al-Ahsa'I, Ibn Abī Jumhūr, Muḥammad ibn *'Alī, 'Awālī al-la'ālī' al- 'azīzīyah fī al-aḥādīth al-dīnīyah*, 1:289.
[159] Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, vol. 5, chapter.1.