Manifestations Of The All-Merciful

Reflections on the Daily Supplication of the Holy Month of Ramaḍān - Part I

Abū Muḥammad Zaynu'l 'Ābidīn

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Manifestations of the All-Merciful

Reflections on the Daily Supplication of the Holy month of Ramaḍān

Part I

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In the Name of Allāh,
the All-Merciful, the All-Beneficent

أَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلٰي مُحَمَّدٍ وَّ آلِ مُحَمَّد

O Allah, Bless Muhammad & his Progeny

Humble Presentation

I humbly present this short commentary of the daily supplication of the Holy Month of Ramaḍān to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) and his infallible progeny (upon whom be peace), who represent the perfect Manifestations of the All-Merciful, and sincerely pray to the All-Merciful Lord to accept the same.

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

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

Walhamdu lillahi Rabbi'l 'Alamin
And All praises belong solely to Allah, the Lord of the Universe

Utterly destitute to the All-Affluent
Abū Muḥammad Zaynu'l 'Ābidīn
Qum al-Muqaddasa
Sha'ban al-M'azzam 1423

From the heavenly atmosphere of the neighborhood of Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima Ma'ṣūma ('a), may the Almighty imbue our hearts with intense love for her, and may He Grace us with her intercession-
Āmīn

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اَللَّهُمَّ أَدْخِلْ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْقُبُورِالسُّرُورَ

اَللَّهُمَّ أَغْنِ كُلَّ فَقِيرٍ

اَللَّهُمَّ أَشْبِعْ كُلَّ جَائِعٍ

اَللَّهُمَّ اكْسُ كُلَّ عُرْيَان

اَللَّهُمَّ اقْضِ دَيْنَ كُلِّ مَدِينٍ

اَللَّهُمَّ فَرِّجْ عَنْ كُلِّ مَكْرُوبٍ

اَللَّهُمَّ رُدَّ كُلَّ غَرِيبٍ

اَللَّهُمَّ فُكَّ كُلَّ أَسِيرٍ

Introduction

Understanding the Merit of The Du'ā'

Introduction

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

مَنْ دَعَا بِهَذَا الدُّعَاءِ فِيْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَان بَعْدَ الْمَكْتُوْبَةِ اسْتُغْفِرَتْ ذُنُوْبُهُ إِلى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

Whosoever supplicates with this prayer in the Holy month of Ramaḍān after the prescribed prayer, his sins (*dhunūb*) would be forgiven till the Day of Judgment.[1]

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

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

Those however who have not attained this station of proximity should never despair but recite this prayer regularly with reflection. If such supplications of light were intended for perfect human beings only, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) would not teach it to all and sundry. Therefore, we should always try to recite the supplication with reflection and change. If one were to inculcate the sublime thoughts contained in this prayer, he/she can really wake up from his/her deep slumber and change his/her life.

In this Graceful Month when the over-flowing Grace of the All-Gracious is continuous, let us humbly ask Almighty Allah to enable

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[1] 'Allāma Majlisi, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.95, p.120, ch.6

us to be among those who utter this wonderful supplication as a translation of our inner spirits.

Section 1

اَللّٰهُمَّ أَدْخِلْ عَلى أَهلِ القُبُورِ السُّرُورَ

O Allāh, Instil happiness in the spirits
of the Inhabitants of the grave

اللّهُمَّ أَدْخِلْ على أَهلِ القُبُورِ السُّرُورَ

O Allāh, Instil happiness in the spirits
of the Inhabitants of the grave

Supplication and the Law of Cause & Effect

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

Some, on the other hand, may think that supplication is sufficient and there is no need of achieving our goals through the means that are at our disposal. Clearly, this path also is that of ignorance, for Almighty Allāh has established the system of cause and effect and encouraged the human being to employ the same for his exalted ends. The following word of wisdom from Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) endorses this:

أَبَي اللهُ أَنْ يُجْرِيَ الأَشْيَاءَ إلاّ بِأَسْبَابِهَا، فَجَعَلَ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَباً

Allāh does not permit things to take place except by their causes; thus He made a cause for every thing.[2]

Seeking the Cause of Instilling Happiness

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

1. Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) was asked: 'Is it possible to recite prayers for the dead?' He said, 'Yes, and added:

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[2] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.2, p.90

إِنَّ الْمَيِّتَ لَيَفْرَحُ بِالتَّرَحُّمِ عَلَيْهِ وَ الإِسْتِغْفَارِ كَمَا يَفْرَحُ الْحَيُّ بِا الْهَدِيَّة

Surely a dead person rejoices when he is pitied upon and forgiveness is sought for him, as is the case of a living being upon receiving a gift.[3]

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

لَرَكْعَتَانِ خَفِيْفَتَانِ مِمَّا تَحْتَقِرُوْنَ أَحَبُّ إِلَى صَاحِبِ هَذَا الْقَبْرِ مِنْ دُنْيَاكُمْ كُلِّهَا

'Two small units of prayer which you consider insignificant is more lovable to the inhabitant of this grave than your world in its entirety.'[4]

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

إِنَّ الْهَدَايَا لِلأَمْوَاتِ الدُّعَاءُ وَ الإِسْتِغْفَارُ

'Certainly the gifts [of the living] for the dead are *du'ā'* (supplication) and *istighfār* (seeking forgiveness of the sins of the dead).'"[5]

4. Imām 'Ali al-Riḍā ('a) is reported to have said:

مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ زَارَ قَبْرَ مُؤْمِنٍ فَقَرَءَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِيْ لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ سَبْعَ مَرَّاتٍ إِلاَّ غَفَرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُ وَ لِصَاحِبِ الْقَبْرِ

Whosoever of God's servants visits the grave of a beliver, and recites seven times *"Innā anzalnāhu fi laylati'l qadr* [...]" Allāh would forgive him and the inhabitant of the grave.[6][7]

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

مَنْ مَرَّ عَلَى الْمَقَابِرِ فَقَرَأَ قُلْ هُوَ اللّٰهُ أَحَدٌ إِحْدَى عَشْرَةَ مَرَّةً وَ وَهَبَ أَجْرَهُ لِلأَمْوَاتِ أُعْطِيَ مِنَ الأَجْرِ بِعَدَدِ الأَمْوَاتِ

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[3] Mawlā Fayḍ Kāshānī, al- Maḥajjat al-Bayḍā', v.8. p.292
[4] *Tanbīhu'l Khawāṭir*, p.453
[5] Mawlā Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al-Maḥajjatu'l Bayḍā'*, v.8, p.291)
[6] Sayyid Yūsuf Ibrāhimiyān Āmuli, *Armaghāne Asmān*, p.541
[7] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu' Faqih*, v.1, p.181

Whosoever passes by the graves and recites *Qul Huwallāhu Aḥad* 11 times and gifts its reward to the dead, he is rewarded equal to the number of the dead[8].

6. Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported[9] to have said:

تَدْخُلُ عَلَى الْمَيِّتِ فِي قَبْرِهِ الصَّلاةُ وَ الصَّوْمُ وَ الْحَجُّ وَ الصَّدَقَةُ وَ الْبِرُّ وَ الدُّعَاءُ وَ يُكْتَبُ أَجْرُهُ لِلَّذِي فَعَلَهُ وَ لِلْمَيِّتِ

Prayers, Fasting, Ḥajj, Ṣadaqa, good deeds and Du'ā reach the dead in his grave, and their reward is written for [both] the doer and the deceased.

7. Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported[10] to have said:

مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ عَنِ مَيِّتٍ عَمَلَ [عَمَلاً] خَيْرٍ أَضْعَفَ اللهُ لَهُ أَجْرَهُ وَ نَفَعَ اللهُ بِهِ الْمَيِّتَ

Whosoever among the Muslims does a good act for a dead person, Allah rewards him manifold and Allah makes the dead benefit from the same.

Therefore, as we pray for the deceased to attain happiness in the intermediate realm (*barzakh*), we should also struggle to employ the means of their happiness set before us and humbly pray to Almighty Allah to accept our deeds.

The late Āyatullāh Shahāb al-Din Mar'ashī in his last Will[11] gave thought provoking advices to His son. One of them was:

"I advise him (my son) to read the Holy Qur'ān and send its blessings to the souls of those Shi'ites of the Household of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) who did not leave any offspring."

Therefore, in this Holy month of grace, let us not forget the inhabitants of the grave, including those whom we are not familiar with. In addition, let us also pray for the well-being of those *kuffār*

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[8] al-Hāji Mirzā Ḥūsayn al-Nūrī al-Ṭabraṣi, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, v.2, p. 483

[9] al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'l al-Shī'a ilā Taḥṣili Masā'il al-Shari'a*, v.8, p.279

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Āyatullāh al-'Uẓmā Mar'ashi al-Najafī, *Waṣiyyatnāmeye Āyatullāh al-'Uẓmā Mar'ashī*

(disbelievers), who although were apparently known to be disbelievers, but had professed the unity of Allāh and became Muslims prior to the departure of their souls from this world.

In his *Chehl Hadith* (Forty Traditions), the late Imām al-Khumaynī (may Allāh elevate his soul) relates something thought provoking from his teacher in *'Irfān* (Divine gnosis) - Āyatullāh Shāh Ābādī. He says:

"Our Shaykh, an accomplished *'ārif* that he was (i.e. Āyatullāh Shāh Ābādī)- may my soul be his ransom- used to say: "Never call down curses (*la'n*) on anybody, though he be a *kāfir* concerning whom you do not know how he made the transit from this world to the next, and unless an infallible walī (saint) informs you concerning his condition after death. For it is possible that he may have attained faith before the time of death. Hence let your curse be of a general character.""[12]

And in another place[13] he says:

"Our great master, the accomplished `ārif, Shāhābādī- *rūḥī fidāh*- used to say, `Do not look down on even a *kāfir* (non-believer) in your heart. It is possible that the divine light of his inner nature may lead him to faith and your rebuke and disdain may lead you towards a wretched life in the Hereafter. Of course to practice *al amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa al-nahy `ani'l munkar* (enjoining right conduct and forbidding bad behavior) is something different from the inner feeling of contempt.' He would even say, `Never curse the unbelievers regarding whom it is not known that they will leave the world in the state of unbelief. If they leave the world as rightly-guided servants of God, their spiritual rectitude may prove to be an obstruction in the way of your own spiritual advancement.'"

Therefore, as we utter this verse of supplication, let us commit ourselves in performing deeds of virtue for the deceased Muslims, for a practical expression of real want of the happiness of the deceased.

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[12] Imām al-Khumaynī, *Chehl Ḥadith*, 28th tradition
[13] Imām al-Khumaynī, *Chehl Ḥadith*, 3rd tradition

Section 2

اَللّٰهُمَّ أَغْنِ كُلَّ فَقِيْرٍ

O Allāh, Enrich every Indigent (poor)

اللّٰهُمَّ أَغنِ كُلَّ فَقِيرٍ

O Allāh, enrich every indigent (poor)

The Supplicant's All-Embracing Spirit

[*Allahumma aghni **kulla**...*]: One preposition employed in nearly every verse of this supplication is "*kull*" which means "every". The supplicant always tries to seek the betterment of every human being. He assumes a Divine spirit throughout the invocation. Egoism no more exists. He frees himself from the shackles of yearning only for the betterment and repose of the self. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) and his infallible progeny were of such character. They yearned for the betterment and emancipation of all. In order to understand this exalted spirit better, study the following quotations of the Holy Qur'an and traditions:

1. Almighty Allāh says in the Qur'ān [Chapter al-Ā'rāf- 7:156]:

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

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

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

وَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَٰكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَٰلَمِينَ

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

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

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَٰخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلَىٰٓ ءَاثَٰرِهِمْ إِن لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوا۟ بِهَٰذَا ٱلْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا

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

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

يَا مَنْ يُعْطِي مَنْ لَمْ يَسْئَلْهُ وَ مَنْ لَمْ يَعْرِفْهُ تَحَنُّناً مِنْهُ وَ رَحْمَةً

O one who always gives to one from whom He is not asked and who knows Him not. He does this out of His Kindness and Mercy.

5. Almighty Allāh says in [Chapter Ṭāhā- 20:2]:

مَآ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ لِتَشْقَىٰٓ

We did not send the Qur'ān so that you distress yourself [in the path of propagation by struggling to force the people towards it]

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

...فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسَرَٰتٍ...

...And therefore do not consume yourself for them due to grief [of their unbelief]...

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

لَّا يَنْهَىٰكُمُ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَٰتِلُوكُمْ فِى ٱلدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُم مِّن دِيَٰرِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُقْسِطِينَ

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

8. In a will[14] addressed to his late son – Ḥāj Sayyid Aḥmad Khumaynī- the late Imām al-Khumaynī says:

'...These are the miracles of the Noble Messenger (Ṣ)...who, standing at the apex of the peak of human perfection, sees the realities clearly and without any

[14] Imām Khumaynī, *Jelwehāye Raḥmānī*, Translated by Al-Tawḥīd Journal, v. XI, Nos. 3&4 p.68

intervening *ḥijāb* (curtain). At the same time he is present in all the dimensions of humanity and stages of being, and being the highest manifestation of:

هُوَ ٱلْأَوَّلُ وَٱلْآخِرُ وَٱلظَّـٰهِرُ وَٱلْبَاطِنُ

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

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

طه . مَآ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ لِتَشْقَىٰٓ

Ṭā hā: We have not sent down the Qur'ān to you that you distress yourself [20:1-2]

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

مَا أُوْذِيَ نَبِيٌّ مِثْل مَا أُوْذِيْتُ

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

9. Marḥūm Amīn al-Islām Ṭabrasī in his Majma' al-Bayān narrates the following:

و لبث في قومه ألف سنة إلا خمسين عاما ... و كان يدعوهم ليلا و نهارا فلا يزيدهم دعاؤه إلا فرارا و كان يضربه قومه حتى يغشى عليه فإذا أفاق قال اللهم اهد قومي فإنهم لا يعلمون

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

10. Following is the first verse of a beautiful poem attributed to Imām 'Alī ('a)[17]:

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

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[15] 'Alī al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanzu'l 'Ummāl*, v.11, tradition no. 32161

[16] Amīn al-Islām Ṭabraṣī, *Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayān*, v.4, p.866

[17] *Minasha'r al-Manṣūb ila'l Imām al-Waṣiyy 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib*, p.64

أُرِيْدُ حَيَاتَهُ وَ يُرِيْدُ قَتْلِيْ

I want his life and he wants me to be killed...

11. It is narrated that Prophet 'Īsā ('a) once said[18]:

كُنْ كَالشَّمْسِ تَطْلَع عَلى البَرِّ وَ الْفَاجِرْ

Be like the sun, shining upon the virtuous and sinful

12. Sayyid Raḍī al-Dīn Ibn Ṭāwūs is one of the great Shi'a scholars whose works enjoy a certain veneration in the scholarly circles. In His well-known prayer manual- *Iqbāl al-Ā'māl*, which indeed is a masterpiece of devotional supplications, he narrates the following:

كنت في ليلة جليلة من شهر رمضان بعد تصنيف هذا الكتاب بزمان و أنا أدعو في السحر لمن يجب أو يحسن تقديم الدعاء له و لي و... فورد على خاطري أن الجاحدين لله جل جلاله و لنعمه و المستخفين بحرمته و المبدلين لحكمه في عباده و خليقته ينبغي أن يبدأ بالدعاء لهم بالهداية من ضلالتهم فإن جنايتهم على الربوبية و الحكمة الإلهية و الجلالة النبوية أشد من جناية العارفين بالله و بالرسول (ص)

'Some time after having written this book, during one of the great nights of the holy month of Ramaḍān, when I was praying at *sahar time* for those of whom it is compulsory or good to precede in prayer and also for myself and... then the following thought crossed my mind: it behooves one to first pray for the guidance of those who deny Allāh and reject His blessings and those who belittle His Sanctity and change His rule [over His servants and creation], for their crime with relation to the lordship of God, Divine wisdom, and prophetic majesty is more grave than the crime of those who know Allāh (swt) and His Messenger (may Allāh's blessings be on him and his progeny)...'

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

فدعوت لكل ضال عن الله بالهداية إليه و لكل ضال عن الرسول بالرجوع إليه و لكل ضال عن الحق بالاعتراف به و الاعتماد عليه.

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[18] Mawlā Sayyid Radī al-Dīn bin Ṭāwūs, *Iqbāl al-Ā'māl*, v.1, p. 385
[19] Mawlā Sayyid Radī al-Dīn bin Ṭāwūs, *Iqbāl al-Ā'māl*, v.1, p. 384

ثم دعوت لأهل التوفيق و التحقيق بالثبوت على توفيقهم و الزيادة في تحقيقهم و دعوت لنفسي و من...

So I prayed for all those who have deviated from Allāh to get guided towards Him, and all those who have deviated from His Messenger to return to Him, and all those who have strayed from the truth to admit it and rely on the same.

Then I prayed for the people of Divine succor (*ahl al-tawfīq*) to be established on their path and for the men of realization (*ahl al-taḥqīq*) to attain greater realization, and [then] I prayed for myself and those...

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

Objection:

Does the aforesaid mean that we should also pray for the material repose of every hypocrite and disbeliever when we know that they are sources of destruction and mischief in the society? Don't we know about their evil state in various places of the Qur'ān? How can we yearn for the material prosperity of one who would cause mischief in the world?

Response

Almighty Allāh wants both the spiritual as well as the physical betterment of every human being. The purpose of human creation according to the Holy Qur'ān, as shall be soon discussed, is not only meant for the believers, but for the entire caravan of humanity. The verses cited above clearly indicate how the Prophet (ṣ) suffered agony due to the adamant stance of the disbelievers. 'The agony' was due to the all-embracing spirit that he possessed. He wanted the salvation of every human being.

The supplicant who submissive to Almighty Allah too would like the same to be realized for *every human being*. However, it would be wrong for him to seek their material prosperity *for the sake of material prosperity*. When seeking the material prosperity of every human being, one must ask Almighty Allāh for that material prosperity *that would serve as a means for the human goal*. One should desire, for example, that every human being receives food

and shelter, so that he/she can worship Almighty Allah and attain His proximity.

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

أَنزَلَ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌۢ بِقَدَرِهَا ...

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

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

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

It is noteworthy that the word "*Raḥīm*" that we always utter when starting Chapter *al-Fātiḥa* does not literally indicate that His ever-rewarding Mercy and Guidance is only reserved for the believers; rather such Mercy is poured down upon all, but only those receptacles who believed in the truth and have the capacity to accept can absorb the same. For a better understanding of this vital truth those who are interested may look at *Ādāb al-Ṣalāt* of the late Imām Khumaynī.[20]

The Gracious Benefits of Prayers in Absence

Another very important trend in the supplication is praying for others in their absence. There are several holy verses and traditions

[20] Imām Khumaynī, *Tafsīr Ṣurat al-Ḥamd*, p.23

that lay great emphasis on this and enumerate good reward for the same. Following are examples worthy of consideration:

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

لَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَسْرَعُ إِجَابَةً مِنْ دَعْوَةِ غَائِبٍ لِغَائِبٍ

Nothing is accepted as quickly as one's supplication for another when both are absent from each other.

2. [It is reported from Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) that he said[22]]:

دُعَاءُ الْمُؤْمِنِ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ يَدْفَعُ عَنْهُ الْبَلاَءَ وَ يَدِرُّ عَلَيْهِ الرِّزْقَ

The *du'ā'* of a believer for another believer dispels calamities from him and showers him with abundant sustenance.

Absolute Need of the Human Being

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

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ أَنتُمُ ٱلْفُقَرَآءُ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ ۖ وَٱللَّهُ هُوَ ٱلْغَنِىُّ ٱلْحَمِيدُ

O human beings, you are needy to Allah, and it is Allah Who is Affluent, the praised one:

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

يَا دَائِمَ الْفَضْلِ عَلَى الْبَرِيَّةِ

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[21] Muḥammadī al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, v.2, p. 887, tr. 5730

[22] Muḥammadī al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mizān al-Ḥikma*, v.2, p. 887, tr. 5730]

[23] Kaf'amī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Kaf'amī*, section 46, p.647

O One Who Bestows Grace continuously on the creation.

Almighty Allāh is *Rabbu'l 'Ālamīn*. The meaning of 'Rabb' should not be equated to the word "Lord" as it is normally translated. *Rabb*- as mentioned by *Tafsīr al-Mizān*- means "*al-Mālik al-Mudabbir*" (The Owner and Manager of affairs), which indicates that Allah owns every dependent entity in its entirety and manages it by making it subsist and controlling its affairs each and every moment. Thus we should try to remove the irrational thinking of some people who separate God from creation and say that he is resting. Exalted is He, from such limitations.

Therefore if, the soul owner "in the real sense of the word" is Allah, every human being is poor and indigent.

A Step Towards Eradication of Poverty

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

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

If we carefully ponder over the verse under discussion, we would realize that the supplicant does not merely seek 'the temporal satisfaction' of the needy. Many of us temporarily satisfy the needy in the holy month of Ramaḍān by purchasing some household necessities of consumption and are pleased for having done something that Almighty Allāh desires. Obviously such an act is highly recommended and reaps lots of benefits, but is different from what we are trying to seek from our All-loving Creator in this particular verse: we are not merely after the temporal satisfaction of the poor; we are praying to Allāh to assist the needy with a permanent source of income. "O Allāh, *aghnī (enrich) kulla faqīr* (every poor person).

Having realized this subtle point, the supplicant should think of how to play an active role in making the poor affluent. Several

examples of such a requirement can come to mind. However each depends on the supplicant's limitation: one who happens to be extremely rich would think of supporting the poor to start small businesses of their own and enrich them thereby; one who owns a small-scale business and is need of employees, would employ the poor and thereby enrich them up to a certain extent. One may also be an employee of someone himself, but due to his acquaintance with other wealthy men, would try to intercede on the poor' s behalf and get them jobs. The readers do realize the variety of the extensions of this noble venture. The significant point here is that every one should take "a step".

Historical Examples

The life history of our Holy Prophet (ṣ) and the infallible Imāms ('a) are a practical translation of this verse of the du'ā'. Many examples can be cited, but due to the brevity of this article, we would suffice with only a few:

1. Historians have narrated how Imām Ḥasan al-Mujtabā (peace be upon him) in all his greatness and elevation would help the needy with great amounts of money at one go. It is also narrated of him that thrice during his life- time the Imam ('a) spent half of his wealth for the needy. [Ta'rīkh al-Khulafā- Suyūṭi]

2. Farazdaq is a well-known character to the lovers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). When the Ummayad governer of the time- Hisham bin Abdul Malik tries to belittle Imām Zaynu'l 'Ābidīn ('a) by asking about his identity, Farazdaq recites a beautiful couplet about the exalted character of the Imām ('a). This makes Hishām very angry and he terminates the continuous help that he would give to Farazdaq and imprisons him as well. Imam ('a) sends a good amount of money to him in prison, but Farazdaq does not accept at first. Then the Imām ('a) insists and he finally accepts. Later with the prayer of the Imām ('a) when he is released, he informs the Imām ('a) of how he was regularly paid by Hishām and that his name was afterwards deleted from Hisham's payroll. Imām ('a) thereupon gifts Farazdaq with an huge amount of money that would suffice him for 40 years. Farazdaq's life too extended for another 40 years. [Vide Manāqib]

3. In his Manāqib, Ibn Shahr Āshūb narrates that Imām Zaynu'l 'Ābidīn ('a) took the responsibility to cater for 100 needy families. [Vide al-Manāqib]

Therefore, we should try, through our ṣadaqāt, to 'eradicate' poverty. One of the best methods of doing so is to gather even very small amounts of support from those who would like to eradicate poverty and use the same for this sublime purpose.

Enriching the Motive of Our Action

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

وَٱسْتَعِينُوا۟ بِٱلصَّبْرِ وَٱلصَّلَوٰةِ ۚ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى ٱلْخَٰشِعِينَ

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

But one who has cleaned his heart and loves to whisper to the only beloved says:

قُمْ يَا بِلَالُ فَأَرِحْنَا بِالصَّلَاةِ

Stand O Bilāl, and make us happy with prayer[24]

And says:

قُرَّةُ عَيْنِيْ فِي الصَّلَاةِ

'The apple of my eye (*qurratu 'aynī*) is in prayer.'[25]

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

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

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[24] Muḥammadī al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, new ed., v.1, p. 62.
[25] 'Allāma Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, v.82, p.193

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

Section 3

اَللّٰهُمَّ أَشْبِعْ كُلَّ جَايِعٍ

O Allāh, Satisfy every Hungry Person

اَللّٰهُمَّ أَشْبِعْ كُلَّ جَائِعٍ

O Allāh, Satisfy every Hungry Person

Experiencing Hunger

One of the philosophies behind fasting in the holy month of Ramaḍān is to experience hunger and thereby understand the situation of those who are hungry and cannot afford to satisfy themselves properly. The following tradition quoted by Mawlā Fayḍ Kāshānī from *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu'l Faqīh*, speaks of the same: Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) in an authentic narration whilst explaining the philosophy of fasting says:

أَرَادَ اللهُ عَزَّ و جَلَّ أَنْ يُسَوِّيَ بَيْنَ خَلْقِهِ وَ أَنْ يُذِيْقَ الْغَنِيُّ نَيْلَ الْجُوْعِ وَ الأَلَمِ لِيَرِقَّ عَلَى الضَّعِيْفِ وَ يَرْحَمَ الْجَائِعَ

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

Causes of Hunger

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

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

We had earlier mentioned the fact that every dependent thing stands by Allāh's permission. Hence, if Allāh (swt) does not want

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[26] Mawlā Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al-Maḥajjat al-Bayḍā'*, v.2, p. 124.

one to encounter disasters or be affected by them nothing would happen to him. This universal law, as pointed earlier is not only presented by revelation, but also established by reason.

Ensuring Sustenance

Having realized this important truth, let us now look at the following verses of the holy Qur'ān:

1. [Chapter al-Ā'rāf -7: 96]:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ ٱلْقُرَىٰٓ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَٱتَّقَوْا۟ لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَٰتٍ مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ...

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

2. [Chapter al-Ṭalāq-65: 2-3]:

...وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا . وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

And whosoever is God-wary (observes piety) He would make for him an outlet [from difficulties] and Bestow on him sustenance from whence he thinks not...

3. [Chapter Nūḥ ('a)- 71: 10-12]:

فَقُلْتُ ٱسْتَغْفِرُوا۟ رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ غَفَّارًا . يُرْسِلِ ٱلسَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُم مِّدْرَارًا . وَيُمْدِدْكُم بِأَمْوَٰلٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ أَنْهَٰرًا.

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

These verses inform the human being the best path of ensuring sustenance and necessarily avoiding the calamity of hunger. If the culture of *taqwā* and *istighfār* (in its various manifestations and dimensions] were to prevail, hunger would no more be a predicament save in cases like that of Divine trial.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَىْءٍ مِّنَ ٱلْخَوْفِ وَٱلْجُوعِ ...

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

We also have ample traditions that inform the hungry and the destitute as well those who would like to disseminate the culture of independence, about the ways of achieving sustenance. Following are some examples:

Increasing Sustenance

1. Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said[28]:

إِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَزِيْدُ فِي الرِّزْقِ

Surely virtuousness increases sustenance

2. Imam al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said[29]:

حُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ يَزِيْدُ فِي الرِّزْقِ

Good behaviour (*akhlāq*) increases sustenance

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

دُمْ عَلَى الطَّهَارَةِ يُوَسَّعُ عَلَيْكَ فِي الرِّزْقِ

Always be in the state of *ṭahāra* (purity) and your sustenance would be increased

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

The esteemed author of *Mir'ātu'l Kamāl*, the late Āyatullāh al-Shaykh Māmaqānī has filled 6 pages full of reasons that cause poverty and hamper one's sustenance. References have also come in the gloss of a later edition of this 3- volume opus of devotions.

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[27] Holy Qur'ān, 2:155
[28] Muḥammadi Rayy Shahrī, *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, v.2
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.*

Those interested can look at pages 569-583. Here however we would like to suffice ourselves with mentioning only a few of them:

Causes that Hamper Sustenance

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

Āyatullāh Māmqānī mentions about 175 reasons in his manual.

Therefore, it is essential for us to propagate the culture of *taqwā* in those poor societies, which can absorb the teachings of Allāh (swt). Taqwā in every dimension of the human life enables one to earn happiness in this world as well as the Hereafter.

An Indepth Consideration: Another Extention of Food

Food in Qur'ānic terminology does not always refer to material food. Rather, there are clear allusions made by the Imāms of the Ahlu'l-Bayt ('a) who represent the most authoritative commentators of the Qur'ān, that *ṭa'ām* (food) in the language of the Qur'ān sometimes refers to knowledge. It refers to food of the soul, and not only that of the body. The following verse is an example:

In chapter 'Abasa [80:24], Almighty Allāh says:

فَلْيَنظُرِ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِۦٓ

Then let man look at his food

Under this holy verse the Shi'ite commentator Sayyid Hāshim Bahrānī in his *Tafsīr al-Burhān* quotes a tradition narrated by al-Kāfī [v.1, p.39, tr.8] from Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) as follows:

Zayd al-Shaḥḥām asks Imām ('a) what "man's[31] food" stands for in the verse above. The Imām ('a) responds saying:

عِلْمُهُ الَّذِيْ يَأْخُذُهُ عَمَّنْ يَأْخُذُهُ

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

Therefore if hunger means lack of knowledge many of us are indeed hungry. A scholar who has spent years in acquiring knowledge too would pray to Allāh to bestow on him more and more, for there is no limit to the acquisition of knowledge. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) himself would seek more knowledge by the following supplication that Almighty Allāh teaches him in the holy Qur'ān [20:114]:

وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِى عِلْمًا

And say: O my Lord increase me in knowledge

And saying:

مَا عَرَفْنَاكَ حَقَّ مَعْرِفَتِكَ

We have not known your reality completely

The solution to this hunger too is *taqwā*. The following two verses clearly prove this contention:

1. [Chapter al-Baqarā: 2:282]:

...وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ۖ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ ٱللَّهُ ...

And be God-wary, and Allah will teach you

2. [Chapter al-Anfāl: 8:29]

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

[32] Al-Sayyid Hāshim Baḥrānī, *al-Burhān Fī Tafsīri'l Qur'ān*, p.214

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِن تَتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ يَجۡعَل لَّكُمۡ فُرۡقَانٗا...

O believers, if you be God-wary (observe piety) Allah shall enable you to distinguish the truth from the falsehood

Hunger from A Mystical Dimension:

The late mystic-scholar as well as teacher of Imām Khumaynī, Āyatullāh Malikī Tabrīzī in his well-known manual of devotions "*al-Murāqibāt*" explains ample benefits of hunger for the spiritual traveler by mentioning some of the following traditions:

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

أَفْضَلُكُمْ عِنْدَ اللهِ مَنْزِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَطْوَلُكُمْ جُوْعًا وَ تَفَكُّراً فِي اللهِ سُبْحَانَهُ

The best of you in terms of rank near Allāh on the day of Judgment is that among you who experiences hunger and engages in contemplation about Allāh, the exalted, for the longest period.[33]

2. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have told Usāma:

إِن اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكَ مَلَكُ الْمَوتِ وَ بَطْنُكَ جَايِعٌ وَ كَبِدُكَ ظَمْآن فَافْعَلْ، فَإِنَّكَ تُدْرِكُ بِذٰلِكَ أَشْرَفَ الْمَنَازِلِ وَ تَحُلُّ مَعَ النَّبِيِّيْنَ وَ تَفْرَحُ بِقُدُوْمِ رُوْحِكَ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ وَ يُصَلِّ عَلَيْكَ الْجَبَّارُ

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

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

أَجِيْعُوْا أَكْبَادَكُمْ وَ أَعْرُوا أَجْسَادَكُمْ، لَعَلَّ قُلُوْبَكُمْ تَرَي اللهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ

[33] Āyatullāh Malikī Tabrīzī, *al-Murāqibāt*, p. 154- New ed.
[34] Āyatullāh Malikī Tabrīzī, *al-Murāqibāt*, p. 154- new ed.

Keep your stomachs hungry and afflict your bodies; perhaps [by doing so] your hearts would see Allāh, the exalted and glorious.[35]

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

مَنْ أَجَاعَ بَطْنَهُ عَظُمَتْ فِكْرَتُهُ

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

5. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) during his *mi'rāj* (his ascent to the proximity of God) asks Almighty Allāh:

يَا رَبِّ مَا مِيْرَاثُ الْجُوْعِ

O Lord what does hunger inherit?

Almighty Allāh says:

الْحِكْمَةُ وَ حِفْظُ الْقَلْبِ...

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

Therefore "hunger" has a fundamental role to play in uplifting the human being spiritually. However that should not be taken to mean that 'hunger' is recommended for all and sundry, including those who cannot resist the same and may fall sick or die. If we look at the book of Islamic laws[38] at our disposal, we would find that one of the etiquette of food consumption is to take two meals a day: one meal in the earlier part of the day and the other in the earlier part of the night. The gap between these two meals should not be filled with any other kind of food. Many of us do have the potential to resist such a diet, but the forces of desire never allow us to practice the same. There are people however who need more intake of food, and thus such a diet is out of question for them. Obviously that should not indicate that they are not religious or pious. It is by the

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[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid*, p.156
[37] Āyatullāh Ṣa'ādat Parwar, *Sirru'l Isrā'*, v. 1, p.13
[38] Āyatullāh al-'Uẓmā Sayyid 'Alī Sīstānī, *Tawḍīḥu'l Masā'il*, p.495

intake of food that they can practice their devotions and perform deeds of virtue and struggle in their lives according to the dictates of Divine law.

There comes a time in the life of one who has purified his soul and attained the proximity of Allāh when he has the ability to withstand hunger not only for short periods but also for unusual intervals. This contention undoubtedly sounds absurd in the language of science and experiment, but the experts of Islamic esotericism believe that when the spirit of man strengthens, such phenomena are feasible. Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), the great Shi'te philosopher, who is also known as Sayyid al-'Uqalā' (the doyen of intellectuals) in his monumental "*Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*" says:

إِذَا بَلَغَكَ اَنَّ عَارِفاً اَمْسَكَ عَنِ الْقُوْتِ الْمَرْزوء لَهُ مُدَّةً غَيْرَ مُعْتَادَةٍ فَاسْجَحْ بِالتَّصْدِيْقِ وَ اعْتَبِرْ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ مَذَاهِبِ الطَّبِيْعَةِ الْمَشْهُوْرَة

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

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

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[39] Shaykh al-Ra'īs Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa' l-Tanbihāt*, v.4, p.111

Section 4

اَللّٰهُمَّ اكْسُ كُلَّ عُرْيَانٍ

O Allāh, Clothe every Unclothed One

اَللّٰهُمَّ اكْسُ كُلَّ عُرْيَانٍ

O Allāh, Clothe every Unclothed One

Aim of Human Creation

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

In chapter 51, verse 56, Almighty Allāh says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

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

Here the aim is indicated as Allāh's Worship. But is it the 'final aim of creation?' To answer this we should look at chapter 15, verse 99 of the Qur'ān, which says:

وَٱعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ ٱلْيَقِينُ

"And worship your Lord until Conviction comes to you."

Therefore it is *ma'rifatullāh* that is the end. And the closer one gets to his Lord the better his knowledge of his Creator.

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

1. Imām 'Alī ('a) in his famous supplication of Kumayl cries:

يَا غَايَةَ آمَالِ العَارِفِيْنَ

O the Ultimate Hope of the Gnostics

2. And in the prayer of 'Arafa, Sayyid al-Shuhadā ('a) cries:

إِلٰهِيْ أَطْلُبْنِيْ بِرَحْمَتِكَ حَتّٰى أَصِلَ إِلَيْكَ

O Allāh Seek me by Your Mercy until I reach You

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

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

The Means and the Goal

Many who have not realized the purpose of human life busy themselves with the means and forget the end. When they look at the luster of the various kinds of material products of the so-called developed countries, they brand that as 'human progress' and even try to doubt the authenticity of Islam. Advancement in science and technology is not something abhorred by Islam at all. Rather it is encouraged. However it still comes under the umbrella of 'the means of the end' and thus one should not mistake it as 'the yardstick of human progress'. One should rather question himself/herself whether 'the material product' really serves to be 'means' on the path towards Allah or not. Both the VCR and the Internet, for example, are helpful means of communication, but if they hamper the human being from traversing to the path of eternal happiness what use do they have in serving as 'a means' for the goal? The proponents of advancement always present two kinds of products:

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

Commodities of the first category allow the human being to reason and work on the path towards perfection both before and after purchase. For example, when buying a television set, one may or may not decide to employ the same in watching only those programs that would enrich his mind and spirit. In the case of the second category, however, 'this choice' is out of question 'after purchase.' For example, if a person were to purchase an indecent film due to his base inclinations. Later if he were to decide to employ the same for a good purpose, he would not be able to do so. He cannot change the film to enrich his mind. All he can do is to erase the film and dub something that would enrich his spirit. Similar is the case with material items that directly concern human development and subsistence such as food, drink and clothing. Many kinds of food and clothing are forbidden is Islam and can thus not be branded as 'the means' for the human goal.

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

أَلْهَىٰكُمُ ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ . حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ ٱلْمَقَابِرَ .

Competing for Abundance has engaged you until you come to the graves

The Purpose Behind Clothing

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

Following are verses of Qur'ān and supplications worthy of contemplation:

1. [Chapter al-Ā'rāf -7: 26]:

يَٰبَنِىٓ ءَادَمَ قَدْ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُوَٰرِى سَوْءَٰتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا

وَلِبَاسُ ٱلتَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ...

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

2. Imām Mūsā bin Ja'far al-Kāẓim ('a) is reported[40] to have said that whenever a person would like to put on a new dress he should wipe his hand over it and say:

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ كَسَانِيْ مَا أُوارِيْ بِهِ عَوْرَتِيْ وَ أَتَجَمَّلُ بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ...

Praise belongs to Allah who clothed me with what I cover my shame and beautify myself among the people...

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

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

The Inner Attire

Having spoken about this great blessing, Almighty Allāh transports the reader to a very important truth, which if neglected would cause continual regret. He reminds the human being that he/she is not summed up in the material body to need 'the material attire' only. Rather 'the inner attire' is of fundamental significance. In the words of Qur'ān: *dhālika khayr* (that is the better!). 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī in his monumental *al-Mizān* has a beautiful explanation about this. In order to indicate the gravity of the situation of 'the pain' that the human being experiences when his shameful deeds are displayed, he says:

...إِلاَّ اَنَّ ظُهُوْرَ سَوْءاتِ البَاطِنِيَّةِ أَشَدُّ...

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

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[40] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Ḥilyatu'l Muttaqīn*, ch.9.

Other verses of the holy Qur'ān clearly explain the calamity of this situation. Look at the verses below:

1. [Chapter al-Ṭāriq: -86: 9]:

يَوْمَ تُبْلَى ٱلسَّرَآئِرُ

The day when the secrets shall be made manifest

2. [Chapter Ālī 'Imrān -3: 30]:

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِن سُوٓءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُۥٓ أَمَدًۢا بَعِيدًا...

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

3. [Chapter Āli 'Imrān -3:192]:

رَبَّنَآ إِنَّكَ مَن تُدْخِلِ ٱلنَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُۥ...

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

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

The other fundamental use of clothing was to look presentable and beautiful. The inclination to be beautiful is inherent in every human being and there are ample indications in our holy traditions that encourage one to look beautiful and presentable in the limits of the Sharī'a. In order to observe the brevity of this commentary we would avoid mentioning them.

However, we must understand that in the manner "*taqwā*" and piety is a source of protection from sin and ignominy, it also is a source of embellishment. This is because it embellishes the inner form of the human being with excellent character and makes him

the Beloved of Allāh. How remote is the 'beloved of the apparently beautiful' from the Beloved of spiritually beautiful: *razaqanallāhu jamī'an* [May Allāh enable all of us to achieve the same]

A Word of Prayer

O Allāh, as we humbly ask you to clothe both the physically as well as spiritually naked ones, and seek your support to help those who have no proper clothes in their physical lives, enable us to struggle to clothe ourselves with the attire of *taqwā*, so that we may acquire the worth to clothe others as well.

Section 5

اَللّٰهُمَّ اقْضِ دَيْنَ كُلِّ مَدِيْنٍ

O Allāh, Facilitate the Payment
of Every Indebted One

اَللّٰهُمَّ اقْضِ دَيْنَ كُلِّ مَدِيْنٍ

O Allāh, Facilitate the Payment
of Every Indebted One

The Comprehensive Meaning of *'dayn'*

Many would conjecture that '*dayn*' (debt) is the same as '*qarḍ*' (loan). In the terminology of Islamic jurisprudence, however, the word *dayn* has a broader connotation then the word '*qarḍ*'. *Dayn* also covers *qarḍ* in its conceptual umbrella. Āyatullāh Makārim Shīrāzī in his *Tafsīr-e Namūne* alludes to this subtlety and says that *qarḍ* is only applied when one gets obliged to return the equivalent of the thing taken; for example, if he takes money as a loan, he would have to return the same amount of money; and if he takes a certain kind of food, he would be obliged to return the same. However, *'dayn'* has a broader framework, for it includes any kind of transaction such as 'settlement of claim' (*ṣulḥ*), leasing (*ijāra*), buying and selling, and the like[41].

Debt Sometimes Hampers One From Spiritual Progress

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

1. Imām Zaynu'l'Abidīn ('a) in his beautiful supplication[42] for relief from debt informs his followers the difficult situation that a debtor normally experiences. Look at the following:

O God,
bless Muḥammad and his Household
and release me from a debt

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[41] Āstāne Qudse Raḍawī, *Sharḥo Tafsīre Lughāte Qur'ān Bar Asāse Tafsīre Namūne*, p.70

[42] Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyya, Supp. no. 30]:

which makes me lose face,
confuses my mind,
disrupts my thinking,
and prolongs my occupation with attending to it!
I seek refuge in Thee, my Lord,
from worry and thought about debt,
from the distraction and sleeplessness of debt;
so bless Muhammad and his Household
and give me refuge from it!
I seek sanctuary in Thee, my Lord, from
debt's abasement in life
and its ill effects after death...

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

إِيَّاكُمْ وَ الدَّيْنَ فَإِنَّهُ هَمٌّ بِاللَّيلِ وَ ذُلٌّ بِالنَّهَارِ

Beware of debt for surely it causes grief during the night and humiliation during the day

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

1. Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported[44] to have said:

أَيُّمَا رَجُلٌ أَتَىَ رَجُلاً فَاسْتَقْرَضَ مِنْهُ مَالاً وَ فِيْ نِيَّتِهِ أَنْ لاَّ يُؤَدِّيْهِ فَذٰلِكَ اللِّصُّ الْعَادِيْ

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

2. Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported[45] to have said:

مَنْ اسْتَدَانَ دَيْنًا فَلَمْ يَنْوِ قَضَآءَهُ كَانَ بِمِنْزِلَةِ السَّارِقِ

Whosoever takes a loan and makes no intention to pay back the same, is equivalent to a thief

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[43] Muḥammadī al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mizān al-Ḥikma*, v.2, p.958
[44] al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'l al-Shī'a ilā Taḥṣīli Masā'il al-Sharī'a*, v.18, p. 329
[45] *Ibid*, v.18, p. 328

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

Those who are regularly habituated in taking loans from here and there should also realize the dangerous consequences that await them. Traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have alluded to some such dangers as follows:

1. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said[46]:

كَثْرَةُ الدَّيْنِ تُصَيِّرُ الصَّادِقَ كَاذِبًا وَ الْمُنْجِزَ مُخْلِفًا

Excess of debt turns the truthful to be a liar and one who accomplishes [his promises] to be unfaithful.

2. Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) is reported[47] to have said:

كُلُّ ذَنْبٍ يُكَفِّرُهُ الْقَتْلُ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللهِ إِلاَّ الدَّيْنَ، لاَ كَفَّارَةَ لَهُ إِلاَّ أَدَاءُهُ أَوْ يَقْضِيْ صَاحِبُهُ أَوْ يَعْفُو الَّذِيْ لَهُ الْحَقُّ

Martyrdom in Allāh's way expiates every sin, save debt, for it has no compensation save its payment, or payment by the inheritor (*ṣāḥibuhu*) or forgiveness from the creditor...

3. Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said[48]:

خَفِّفُوْا الدَّيْنَ فَإِنَّ فِيْ خِفَّةِ الدَّيْنِ زِيَادَةُ الْعُمْرِ

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

When Should One Take a Loan?

These above traditions should not be mistaken to mean that one has no right to take any loan whatsoever. Rather, in times of

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[46] Marḥūm Āmadī, *Ghurarū'l Ḥikam Wa Durarū'l Kalim*, p. 368

[47] al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'l al-Shī'a ilā Taḥṣili Masā'il al-Sharī'a*, v.18, p. 324

[48] Muḥammadī al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mizān al-Ḥikma*, v.2, p.958

difficulties believers are allowed to take loans within the framework of Islamic laws. The Infallible progeny of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) also took loans during their lifetime. But that which is very important is to understand properly *the correct circumstance of taking a loan*. A substantial number of people take loans to live a life of leisure or extravagance. So long as the believer has not learnt to observe an Islamic discipline, he would always have to live a life of hardship. Imam Zaynu'l 'Ābidīn ('a) teaches his followers in supplication no. 30 of the Saheefa al-Sajjadiyya to adopt some sublime traits in order to avoid debt and be freed from the same. Look at the following:

O God,
bless Muhammad and his Household
prevent me from extravagance and excess,
put me on the course of generous spending and moderation,
teach me excellent distribution,
hold me back through Thy gentleness from squandering,
allow me to attain my provisions through lawful means,
direct my spending toward the gateways of devotion,
and take away from me any possession
which will bring forth pride in me,
lead to insolence,
or drag me in its heels to rebellion!
O God,
make me love the companionship of the poor
and help me be their companion with excellent patience!
Whenever you take away from me
the goods of this perishing world,
store them for me in Thy abiding treasuries!
Make this world's broken pieces
which Thou hast conferred upon meand its goods
which Thou hast quickly granted to me
a way to reach Thy neighborhood,
a link to Thy nearness,
and a means to Thy Garden!
Verily Thou art Possessor of bounty abounding,
and Thou art the Munificent, the Generous.

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

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

1.Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said[49]:

مَكْتُوْبٌ عَلَى بَابِ الْجَنَّةِ: إِنَّ الصَّدَقَةَ بِالْعَشْرَةِ وَ الْقَرْضُ الْوَاحِدُ بِثَمَانِيَةَ عَشَرَةَ...

The following has been written on the door of Paradise: Surely ṣadaqa equals 10 times [reward], and one loan equals to 18 times [reward]...

2. Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said[50]:

مَنْ أَقْرَضَ مُؤْمِنًا قَرْضاً يَنْظر بِهِ مَيْسُوْرَهُ كَانَ مَالُهُ فِيْ زَكَاةٍ، وَ كَانَ هُوَ فِيْ صَلاةٍ مِنَ الْمَلاَئِكَةِ حَتَّى يُؤَدِّيْهِ

Whosoever gives loan to a mu'min, expecting his ease thereby, his wealth would be on the increment and the angels would invoke blessings on him until he is paid.

Shaykh Baha'i and the Du'a of Relief From Debt

In his well-known masterpiece of commentary of 40 traditions (*al-Arba'ūna Ḥadīthan*), Shaykh Bahā'ī relates an interesting incident that he had experienced after quoting the following tradition:

The esteemed Shaykh al-Ṣadūq Muḥammad bin Bābaway al-Qummī has narrated with his chain of narrators from Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) who narrated the same from his fathers (upon whom be peace), who narrated from Amīru'l mu'minīn ('a) who said:

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

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[49] Āyatullāh Mamaqānī, *Mir'ātu'l Kamāl*, p. 146

[50] al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'l al-Shi'a ilā Taḥṣili Masā'il al-Sharī'a*, v.18, p. 330

O 'Alī say:

أَللَّهُمَّ أَغْنِنِي بِحَلاَلِكَ عَنْ حَرَامِكَ وَ بِفَضْلِكَ عَمَّنْ سِوَاكَ

O Allāh make me needless of that which you have made unlawful through that which you have made lawful, and [make me needless] of other than you by Your Favor

Thereafter Shaykh Bahā'ī narrates:

During some years of my life I was so much in debt, that the amount I had to pay exceeded 1500 mithqals of Gold and the lenders were highly persistent is getting their money back. So difficult had the situation become that it diverted me from many of my occupations, and I had no solution in repaying them. So I adhered in reciting the above supplication, and would repeat it after every morning prayer, and at times would also recite the same after other prayers. Consequently, Allāh, the exalted made it easy for me to pay the loans and quickly enabled me to pay the same in a very short time through unknown sources[51].

Obligations

Relieving others from debt therefore is highly significant for their perfection. Consequently, this verse creates different obligations for different people:

- Those who have the ability to relieve others from any of the kinds of debt should struggle to do so. A generous moneylender having realized the faithfulness and inability of the debtor, may forgive him (partly or entirely) and thereby practically and faithfully translate this verse of the supplication.
- Those who have the capacity of relieving themselves from debt in any of the manifestations they have been entrapped, should struggle to do so, otherwise it would be an unfaithful cry on their part. How greedy would it be for one who has ample money to give but waits for help and prays for external support!
- Muslim societies who have a united system can solve this grave problem of debt in its different manifestations very quickly by the collection of even very minute contributions from individuals.

[51] Shaykh Bahā'ī, *al-Arba'ūnā Ḥadithan*, p. 243]

An In-depth Consideration

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

One of the significant laws that prevail the world of language is that words are coined for the spirit of their meanings. This is contrary to what some conjecture when saying that words are coined for their 'material extensions (*maṣādiq*)' and not 'the spirit of their meanings'. They mean to say for example, the word 'balance' only refers to the conventional balance that we are aware of. Clearly, this is not correct, for the examples of balance are not be limited to those instruments of balance that measure material entities. The Holy Qur'ān is also known as *mīzān* (balance). The personality of Imam 'Alī ('a) is another extension of *balance*, for the believers are judged and weighed according to his spirit. Most of the learned scholars believe that words are coined for the spirit of their meanings and not necessarily their material extensions. For further research on this subtle subject, one may refer to the introduction of *al-Mīzān* of 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī and the first chapter of the treatise of 'Encounter with God' by Ayatullāh Malikī Tabrīzī- the well-known Shi'ite saint. Āyatullāh Maliki Tabrīzī says:

"...Besides, according to what has been researched, words have been coined for the spirit of their meanings and the particulars of the meanings have nothing to do with the ['spirit of' the] meaning; for example the word *mīzān* (balance) has been coined for a thing by means of which other things are measured, but the particularity of having two sides of the scale or the rest of the particularities of a conventional scale has nothing to do with the meaning [for which the word was actually coined]. Thus using the word 'balance' to denote the different types and kinds of balances that have been invented, would mean 'correct usage' and employing a word to denote the meaning for which it was coined. Therefore, the meaning for which the word mizaan was coined is 'a measuring instrument' regardless of any specifics, neither of the 'instrument' nor 'the object measured'. Nowadays the instruments that measure the heat and temperature of the body and air as well as those that measure the blood temperature, the speed of vehicles, and a variety of other measuring instruments which number perhaps in hundreds or even thousands, all are the meanings of the word '*mīzān*', and employing the word mizaan for them would be

correct usage. Likewise is the case with other general words such as path (*ṣirāṭ*), light (*nūr*), reward (*thawāb*), punishment (*'iqāb*), etc."[52]

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

According to *Mu'jam Maqā'īs al-Lugha,* a comprehensive dictionary of Arabic words, the root word of dayn (d-y-n) means 'submission' (*inqiyād*) and 'surrender'. All the derivatives of the word (*dāl-ye-nūn*) reveal a kind of 'submission' and 'slavery'. Debt in one way enslaves the debtor and binds him/her until he/she relieves himself/herself from the same. The following sayings of Imām 'Alī ('a) are worthy of reflection:

1. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said[53]:

الدَّيْنُ رِقٌّ، الْقَضَاءُ عِتْقٌ

Debt is slavery and payment is freedom

2. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said[54]:

الدَّيْنُ أَحَدُ الرِّقَّيْنِ

Debt is one of the two kinds of slavery

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

لا تَزَالُ نَفْسُ الْمُؤْمِنِ مُعَلَّقَةً مَا كَانَ عَلَيْهِ دَيْنٌ

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

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

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[52] Āyatullāh Mirzā Jawād Malikī Tabrīzī, Risāleye Liqā'ullāh

[53] Marḥūm Āmadī, *Ghurarū'l Ḥikam wa Durarū'l Kalim*, p. 368

[54] *Ibid.*

[55] al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'l al-Shī'a ilā Taḥṣili Masā'il al-Sharī'a*, v.18, p. 317

Those acts that Almighty Allāh expects from every human being are likewise examples of 'dayn'. The human being therefore should struggle to perform them so that they have nothing on their shoulders. In the following radiant tradition, Ṣalāt is considered to be an extension of *dayn*:

Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) narrates[56] Ḥaḍrat Luqmān as saying:

إِذَا جَاءَ وَقْتُ الصَّلَاةِ فَلَا تُؤَخِّرْهَا لِشَيْءٍ، صَلِّهَا وَ اسْتَرِحْ، فَإِنَّهَا دَيْنٌ

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

[56] al-Shaykh Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'l al-Shī'a ilā Taḥṣīli Masā'il al-Sharī'a*

Section 6

اَللّٰهُمَّ فَرِّجْ عَنْ كُلِّ مَكْرُوْبٍ

O Allāh, Relieve every Deeply Anguished One

اللّٰهُمَّ فَرِّجْ عَنْ كُلِّ مَكْرُوْبٍ

O Allāh, Relieve every Deeply Anguished One

Meaning of *'Makrūb'*

'*Makrūb*' is an object noun whose origin is the verbal noun '*karb*' meaning 'deep anguish'. 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī in his al-Mīzān quotes Rāghib Iṣfahānī, the famous lexicographer of Qur'ānic words, as saying[57]:

اَلْكَرْبُ الغَمُّ الشَّدِيْدُ

Karb means deep anguish

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

Therefore, in short, '*makrūb*' is one who suffers deep sorrow and anguish.

The Source of Anguish

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

أَلَآ إِنَّ أَوْلِيَآءَ ٱللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Surely the Friends of Allāh neither fear nor grieve [Holy Qur'ān, 10:62]

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

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[57] 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān fi Tafsiri'l Qur'ān*, v. 7, p. 134

...فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسَرَاتٍ... .

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

Imām Khumaynī in his well-known Forty Traditions (*Chehl Hadith*) says:

'...whoever perceives the greatness and glory of the Lord to a greater extent and knows the sacred station of God Almighty more than others, he suffers more and is tormented to a greater extent by the sins of the creatures and their offences against the Lord's sanctity. Also, one who has a greater love and compassion for the creatures of God is tormented to a greater extent by their crooked and wretched condition and ways. And, of course, the Seal of the Prophets (Ṣ) was more perfect in all these stations and higher than all of the prophets and the *awliyā'* (those near to God) in respect of his degree of excellence and perfection. Hence his torment and suffering was greater than that of any one of them...'

Sometimes the source of grief is different. For example, with regard to Prophet Ayyūb ('a) we say the following[58] in one of the supplications of the Holy month of Ramaḍān:

يَا مُلَيِّنَ الْحَدِيْدَ لِدَاوُوْدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامِ يَا كَاشِفَ الْكُرَبِ الْعِظَامِ عَنْ أَيُّوْبَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامِ

O Softner of Iron for Dāwūd, upon whom be peace.
O Reliever of great sorrows from Ayyūb, upon whom be peace.

This indicates that Prophet Ayyūb had suffered heavy calamities during his lifetime. Perhaps the following tradition explains this better:

'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm in a long tradition narrates on the authority of Abū Baṣīr that al-'Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) said:

"...Then his [Prophet Ayyūb ('a)'s] whole body, excepting his, intellect and his eyes, was subjected to the disease. Then Iblis blew upon it and it became a single wound extending from his head to feet. He (Job) remained for a period in that condition, praising and thanking God, until it became infested with worms. Whenever a worm fell off from his body, he would put it back, saying to it, "Return

[58] Mawlā Sayyid Raḍī al-Dīn bin Ṭāwūs, *Iqbāl al-A'māl*, v.1, p. 364

to your place, from where God created you." And it began to stench until his townsfolk expelled him from his town and his food came from the garbage thrown outside the town."[59]

With regard to Prophet Nūḥ ('a) also 'intense grief' has been mentioned. Look at the following verse:

وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَىٰ مِن قَبْلُ فَٱسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُۥ فَنَجَّيْنَٰهُ وَأَهْلَهُۥ مِنَ ٱلْكَرْبِ ٱلْعَظِيمِ

And Nūḥ, when he cried aforetime, so We answered him, and delivered him and his followers from ***the great anguish***. [Holy Qur'ān, 21:76]

Exegetes of Qur'ān have different interpretations for the source of this grief. Some like Ṭabarsī in his *Majma' al-Bayān* surmise that it refers to the disturbance of his people, whereas Mawlā Kāshānī says that it may refer to both that and to the great flood.

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

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

Remembering the Anguished of Today

To keep abreast with the contemporary history of the world may seem to be insignificant for some: what can I do, for example, if

[59] Narrated by Imām Khumaynī in his 40 traditions

others are dying of starvation in Afghanistan? I have no means to attend them and thus it makes no difference whether I come to know their awful state or not.

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

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

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

Thirdly, there are so many things that we can do together to crush the power of the world arrogance, but we do not realize the same. Our businessmen who import goods from countries like Israel and buy them at relatively low costs, can stop such transactions, so that they may not indirectly take part in killing the innocent Palestinians. Many of us indirectly promote the commodities that the world arrogance produces. If we were to boycott such products, they would never be as materially prosperous as they are. Today if the Arab leaders were to wake up and stop bowing in front of the world arrogance, a great transformation can take place.

Individual Responsibility

But what is my duty as an individual when I recite this verse of the radiant supplication? Most of us enjoy a certain limit of power and can play an effective role accordingly. Therefore let us measure the power that we have at our disposal, and practically take steps to relieve those anguished and distressed people that we can support. For we are not obliged to do what is beyond our capacity. The Holy Qur'ān [al-Baqara- 2:286] says:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا...

Allah does not oblige a soul save to the extent of its capacity...

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

Instilling Happiness in the Hearts of Believers

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

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

مَنْ سَرَّ مُؤْمِنًا فَقَدْ سَرَّنِي، وَمَنْ سَرَّنِي فَقَدْ سَرَّ اللهَ

Whoever makes a believer happy, has indeed made me happy; and whosoever has made me happy, has indeed made Allāh happy.

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

إِنَّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ دَاراً يُقَالُ لَهَا دَارُ الْفَرَحِ لاَ يَدْخُلُهَا إِلاَّ مَنْ فَرَّحَ يَتَامَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

Surely there is a place in Paradise called 'the House of Joy'; none would enter therein save one who made the believers among the orphans happy

Recommended Extensions of Anguish

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

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[60] Muḥammadī al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, v. 2., p.1291, 8465

[61] Muḥammadi al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, v. 2., p.1291, tr. 8460

Imam 'Alī ('a) is reported[62] to have said:

سُرُوْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِ بِطَاعَةِ رَبِّهِ وَ حُزْنُهُ عَلَى ذَنْبِهِ

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

In fact repentance is a fundamental condition from among the six conditions of *istighfār* enumerated by Imam 'Ali ('a) in *Nahju'l Balāgha*. Imām ('a) says:

أَوَّلُهَا النَّدَمُ عَلَى مَا مَضَى

The first [condition of istighfār] is regret of the past [misdeeds]

The Holy Qur'ān [3:135] says:

وَٱلَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا۟ فَٰحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ فَٱسْتَغْفَرُوا۟ لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَن يَغْفِرُ ٱلذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ

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

In his *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī*, Mawlā Fayḍ Kāshānī under this verse narrates[63] the following incident:

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

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

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[62] Muḥammadī al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, v. 2, p.1291, tr. 8455
[63] Mawlā Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī*, v.1, pp. 382-384

I used to dig graves for seven years; I would remove the dead, and disrobe them. Once it so happened that a lady from the Anṣār died. After she was carried to her grave and buried, her family left the place; then the night came to pass. I neared her grave, dug it, and removed her out; thereafter I unshrouded her and left her naked near the grave; and started taking off. Suddenly Satan came in my mind and began attracting me towards her. By this, I returned back and lacking self-control committed the vile deed with her. Then I took off leaving her in that state. Suddenly I heard a voice from behind which said: O youth, woe be upon you from the Judge of the Day of Judgment, the day when He shall make me and you stand in the naked state that you left me among the dead, and took me out from my grave and removed my shroud from me and left me to stand in the state of impurity... So woe be upon you. Narrating this, the youth said: Therefore I do not think that I shall ever smell the scent of Paradise. Hearing all this the Prophet (ṣ) said: Be away from me O sinner; I am afraid I would burn by your Fire; how near are you from the Fire! The youth then left the noble presence of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and went to Medina where he took some provisions and left for one of its mountains; there he tied his hands onto his neck and started supplicating and seeking forgiveness and weeping and repenting. He did this for forty days and nights. It is said that the animals around him also wept for him. When forty days and nights were over, he raised his hands towards the sky and cried: 'O Allāh, what have you done about my wish? If you have accepted my supplication and forgiven my fault then inform the Holy Prophet (ṣ) through revelation about the same; and if not, then quickly send down a fire that would burn me, or a punishment in this world that would vanquish me, and emancipate me from humiliation of the Day of Resurrection. Upon this, Almighty Allāh sends the abovementioned verse [3:135].

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

Section 7

اللّٰهُمَّ رُدَّ كُلَّ غَرِيْبٍ

O Allāh, Return Every Stranger

اللّٰهُمَّ رُدَّ كُلَّ غَرِيْبٍ

O Allāh, Return Every Stranger

Meaning of *'Gharīb'*

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

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

In his Commentary of Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyya[64], Sayyid 'Alī Khān al-Ḥusaynī, says:

اَلْغُرْبَةُ بالضمّ اَلبُعْدُ و النَّوَى

Ghurba (with the vowel *dhamma* over *ghayn*) stands for remoteness and distance

Hence *gharīb* is anything that is far [in relation to something else].

In the Arabic language, unknown words are also known as *gharīb.*

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

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[64] Sayyid 'Alī Khān, *Riyāḍ al-Sālikān*, v.1, p.473

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

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

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

Extensions of Ghurba

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

Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported[65] to have said:

الْغَنِيُّ فِي الْغُرْبَةِ وَطَنٌ

The Affluent is a resident in a foreign place

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[65] Marḥūm Āmadī, *Taṣnifu Ghurari'l Ḥikam*, p.369

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

Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported[66] to have said:

الْفَقْرُ فِي الْوَطَنِ غُرْبَةٌ

Poverty in one's town is remoteness

Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported[67] to have said:

الْمُقِلُّ غَرِيْبٌ فِيْ بَلْدَتِهْ

The unpropertied is a stranger in his hometown

Perhaps this is one reason why in the Urdu language the word *gharīb* is used to denote poverty.

Other extensions of *ghurba* are as follows:

1. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

الْغَرِيْبُ مَنْ لَيْسَ لَهُ حَبِيْبٌ

A stranger is one who does not have a friend

3. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

الأَحْمَقُ غَرِيْبٌ فِيْ بَلْدَتِهِ، مُهَانٌ بَيْنَ أَعِزَّتِهِ

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

The Relative Aspect of the word 'Gharib'

The abovementioned tradition indicates that whosoever is silly is *gharīb* (a stranger). However, this should not be taken in the absolute sense. The word *gharīb* is relative. One who is silly despite being *gharīb* (far) in the company of the learned, is at home in the company of his likes. Similar is the case with the learned, for they

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[66] Marḥūm Āmadī, *Mu'jamu Alfāẓi Ghurari'l Ḥikam*, p.810
[67] Marḥūm Āmadī, *Mu'jamu Alfāẓi Ghurari'l Ḥikam*, p.810

are strangers in the company of the silly, but residents in the company of the learned: Another such instance is when a majority of the population are ignorant. Here again the learned are strangers:

Imām ʻAlī (ʻa) is reported to have said:

الْعُلَمَاءُ غُرَبَاء لِكَثْرَةِ الْجُهَّل

The learned are strangers due to the great number of the ignorant

Sometimes, however, the learned can be strangers in the company of the learned themselves. One who is specialized in Chemistry, for example, and has no acquaintance with Eastern philosophy is an alien in the company of the Muslim metaphysicians and vice versa.

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

Ahlu'lbayt (ʻa): Positive Extensions of Gharib

Most of the Muslims were oblivious of the future consequences of the decision made about caliphate after the Prophet (ṣ)'s demise. The question of caliphate was not a matter of enjoyment of power for some decades, but the question of safeguarding the true version of Islam and the guardianship of the bearers of the final religion and their future generations. The extreme grief (*karb*) of Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima (ʻa) indeed portrays, how far apart were the masses from her broad vision. She thought of the future, whereas others were after the destruction of Islam and the usurpation of material power. Her spirit was for the entire humanity, whereas others only thought of their own schemes. She together with her radiant family and very few trustworthy followers, was *gharīb*, since she was far from those who were disobedient to God and could NOT foresee the calamities that would befall the Muslim nation. Whenever one tries to reflect this extension of *ghurba*, the heart experiences constriction and the

tongue stops and tears roll down the cheeks. The following statement[68] of Fāṭima ('a) sums it all up:

Ummu Salama asks Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima ('a):

O daughter of the Messenger of Allāh (s), how did you approach your morning?

And Fāṭima ('a) replies:

أَصْبَحْتُ بَيْنَ كَمَدٍ وَ كَرْبٍ فَقْدِ النَّبِيِّ وَ ظُلْمِ الْوَصِيِّ

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

After this foundational blow on the Muslim Umma, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and their true followers always remained *gharīb* among a great number of the Muslim Umma.

The Ghurba of Every Human Being of Tainted Disposition

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

Ḥāfiz, the great mystic-poet says[69]:

Man az dayāre ḥabībam na az bilāde gharīb
Muḥayminā be rafiqāne khud rasān bāzam

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

Masters on the path towards human perfection believe that the human being is traveler in this world. He has path to cover, which is 'the religion' or in Qur'ānic terms '*ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*' and a

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[68] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 43, p.156, tr.5

[69] Ḥāfiz Shīrāzī, *Dīwāne Khwājah Ḥāfiz Shīrāzī*, ed. Pezhman, p. 150, ghazal 334.

'destination', which is Almighty Allāh Himself. Alluding to this Allāh (swt) says:

1. [The Human Being is a Traveler: Holy Qur'ān, 84:6]

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدۡحٗا فَمُلَٰقِيهِ

O human being you are always striving unto Your Lord laboriously & you shall meet him

2. [The Path: Holy Qur'ān, Al-Fātiḥa-1:6]

ٱهۡدِنَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلۡمُسۡتَقِيمَ

Guide us on the Straight Path

3. [The Destination, Holy Qur'ān, al-Fāṭir 35:18]

وَإِلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلۡمَصِيرُ

To Allah is the homecoming (destination).

Religion, if practiced properly, can uplift the human being so high that he can also transcend the angels in perfection. Interested men/women may ask what *dhikr* or act to perform if one would like to begin the spiritual journey to Allāh. The stereotype that 'the *ṭarīqa*' (the spiritual path) is other than the 'Sharī'a' (the apparent Islamic law) is a great impediment inculcated by the Satan. It is by reading and understanding the Qur'an and the Sunnah correctly and following the *Tawḍiḥu'l Masā'il* (the Book of Islamic Laws) that one can attain heights of perfection. Many of us tend to conjecture that an 'ārif (a mystic) is one who must isolate himself all the time and practice some specific *dhikr* and wait for spiritual revelations (*mukāshafāt*). Our Shi'a scholars do not agree to this misconception. They believe that both the *Sharī'a* and the *Ṭarīqa* enjoy a unity. And it is by practicing the apparent Islamic law and observing both its inner as well as its outer etiquette that a human being can attain Allāh's nearness and transcend the angels.

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

Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported[70] to have said:

نَحْنُ الأَسْمَاءُ الحُسْنَى

We are the Most Beautiful Names [of Allāh]

Hence, in order to return back to our hometown, which is Allāh's proximity, we must try to adopt the correct path set by Almighty Allah: The Holy Qur'ān [35:18] says:

وَمَن تَزَكَّىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّىٰ لِنَفْسِهِۦ ۚ وَإِلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْمَصِيرُ

And whosoever purifies himself, purifies himself only for his own soul's good. To Allah is the homecoming (destination).

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

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

This, however, should not dishearten those who are far from places where such masters exist, for there are instances, which indicate that one can attain such exalted destinations without a direct relationship with such masters. [The fundamental role of the Ahlu'l Bayt ('a) however always remains. We shall explain this in our later discussions- Inshā Allāh.] The late Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn

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[70] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.25, p.4, tr. 7

Ṭehrānī reports a thought-provoking incident in his *Anwār-e-Malakūt*[71] as follows:

Respect for Mother Turns one into A Friend of Allah

[Ayatullāh Tehrānī narrates that once in Tehran he had gone to the Islamiyya bookshop situated on Buzarjumhari Street to purchase books. He was a friend of one of the partners of the organization, Hāj Sayyid Muḥammad Kitābchī, who was responsible for the store of the Bookshop. He went to the bookshop to meet him and purchase some books as well. It was in the morning and approximately four hours remained for midday. A man had also come to the store to purchase books. Having purchased the books that he required, he started taking off, when suddenly he began saying: My beloved Allāh, my physician Allāh, my helper, my helper, my soul, my soul. The Āyatullāh narrates:] On looking at him, I saw that his face had turned red and he was sweating; he was plunged in happiness and ecstasy beyond limit. Addressing him, I said: 'Dear Mr! Dear Dervish, do not eat all alone; this is not the custom of etiquette'; He took a turn around himself and began chanting some poems of Bābā Tāhir 'Uryān [a well-known mystic buried in Hamadān]. Thereafter he kept silent and wept a lot. Then he turned happy and laughed. I said: 'Aḥsant! [Thereafter a conversation followed. During the conversation, Āyatullāh Muḥammad Husayn Tehrani asks the saint to inform him how he could attain such an exalted station, and the saint narrates his anecdote as follows:]:

I had an old mother who was sick and disabled. She was bed ridden for so many years. I alone was at her service, and would attend to her needs: I would cook food for her, bring water to her for ablution, and was at her service for her different needs. However she was very ill-mannered and would sometimes abuse me, but I would bear that and respond to her with a smile. Due to this very attitude of hers I did not get married, although my age exceeded forty years. This was because maintaining the family with the kind of character that my mother had was impossible for me. I knew that if I would marry, either she would cause our separation, or I would be forced to leave her. Abandoning my mother, however, was not agreeable to my conscience. Hence I observed patience in remaining a bachelor, and adopted myself with the situation. Sometimes, due to great patience in front of her ill encounter, I would experience a spark of light in my heart, a state of happiness and joy. However this would only be temporary. This situation continued until one cold winter night. I had placed my bed near hers so that she is not alone and would not need to raise her voice to call me for her necessities. On that night I had filled a jug with water, and placed it near my bedside all the time, so that if my mother required some water I would immediately give the same to her. In the middle of that night she asked for water. I stood up immediately and filled a small vessel with water and gave it to her saying: 'Take, dear mother.' She, being in the state of sleepiness did not realize that I attended to her request immediately; she thought that I had brought her the water late. Upon this, she

[71] Āyatullāh Ṭehrānī, *Anwāre Malakūt*, v. 1 pp. 141-145]

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

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

وَ مَا بَرِحَتْ لِلّٰهِ عَزَّتْ آلاَءُهُ فِي الْبُرْهَةِ بَعْدَ الْبُرْهَةِ وَ فِيْ أَزْمَانِ الْفَتَرَاتِ عِبَادٌ نَاجَاهُمْ فِيْ فِكْرِهِمْ وَ كَلَّمَهُمْ فِيْ ذَاتِ عُقُوْلِهِمْ

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

As long as the opportunity remains, our 'ardent aspiration' should be to attain this particular gracious abode before we leave the world and cannot do anything. There is a very thought-provoking incident narrated in *Rawḍat al-Kāfī* by Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a):[73]

The Prayer of A Broad Minded Old-Woman

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ ع قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) كَانَ نَزَلَ عَلَى رَجُلٍ بِالطَّائِفِ قَبْلَ الإِسْلاَمِ فَأَكْرَمَهُ فَلَمَّا أَنْ بَعَثَ اللَّهُ مُحَمَّداً (ص) إِلَى النَّاسِ قِيلَ لِلرَّجُلِ أَ تَدْرِي مَنِ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ إِلَى النَّاسِ قَالَ لا قَالُوا لَهُ هُوَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ يَتِيمُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ وَ هُوَ الَّذِي كَانَ نَزَلَ بِكَ بِالطَّائِفِ يَوْمَ كَذَا وَ كَذَا فَأَكْرَمْتَهُ قَالَ فَقَدِمَ الرَّجُلُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) فَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْهِ وَ أَسْلَمَ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ أَ تَعْرِفُنِي يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ وَ مَنْ أَنْتَ قَالَ أَنَا رَبُّ الْمَنْزِلِ الَّذِي نَزَلْتَ بِهِ بِالطَّائِفِ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَوْمَ كَذَا وَ كَذَا فَأَكْرَمْتُكَ فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) مَرْحَباً بِكَ سَلْ حَاجَتَكَ فَقَالَ

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[72] Imām 'Ali ('a), *Nahju'l Balāgha*, Sermon 222 (220-variation)
[73] Thiqatu'l Islām al-Kulaynī, *Rawḍat al-Kāfī*, v.8, pp. 110-111

أَسْأَلُكَ مِائَتَيْ شَاةٍ بِرُعَاتِهَا فَأَمَرَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) بِمَا سَأَلَ ثُمَّ قَالَ لِأَصْحَابِهِ مَا كَانَ عَلَى هَذَا الرَّجُلِ أَنْ يَسْأَلَنِي سُؤَالَ عَجُوزِ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لِمُوسَى (ع) فَقَالُوا وَ مَا سَأَلَتْ عَجُوزُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لِمُوسَى فَقَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ ذِكْرُهُ أَوْحَى إِلَى مُوسَى أَنِ احْمِلْ عِظَامَ يُوسُفَ مِنْ مِصْرَ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَخْرُجَ مِنْهَا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الْمُقَدَّسَةِ بِالشَّامِ فَسَأَلَ مُوسَى عَنْ قَبْرِ يُوسُفَ (ع) فَجَاءَهُ شَيْخٌ فَقَالَ إِنْ كَانَ أَحَدٌ يَعْرِفُ قَبْرَهُ فُلَانَةُ فَأَرْسَلَ مُوسَى (ع) إِلَيْهَا فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْهُ قَالَ تَعْلَمِينَ مَوْضِعَ قَبْرِ يُوسُفَ (ع) قَالَتْ نَعَمْ قَالَ فَدُلِّينِي عَلَيْهِ وَ لَكِ مَا سَأَلْتِ قَالَ لَا أَدُلُّكَ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا بِحُكْمِي قَالَ فَلَكِ الْجَنَّةُ قَالَتْ لَا إِلَّا بِحُكْمِي عَلَيْكَ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ إِلَى مُوسَى لَا يَكْبُرُ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ لَهَا حُكْمَهَا فَقَالَ لَهَا مُوسَى فَلَكِ حُكْمُكِ قَالَتْ فَإِنَّ حُكْمِي أَنْ أَكُونَ مَعَكَ فِي دَرَجَتِكَ الَّتِي تَكُونُ فِيهَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) مَا كَانَ عَلَى هَذَا لَوْ سَأَلَنِي مَا سَأَلَتْ عَجُوزُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

Before the advent of Islam, once when the Holy Prophet (ṣ) happen to visit Ṭā'if, someone generously hosted him. Later when the Prophet (s) was appointed as a Messenger of Allāh, the said person was asked: 'Do you know whom did Allāh appoint as his Messenger to the people? 'No.' he replied. They said: 'It is Muḥammad bin 'Abdillāh, the orphan of Abī Ṭālib, who, on such and such a day had been your guest in Ṭā'if and you graciously hosted him. Hearing this the person comes in the presence of the Prophet (s), greets him, embraces Islam, and then says: 'O Messenger of Allāh, do you recognize me?' The Prophet (s) says: 'And who are you?' The man then says: 'I am the owner of the house in which you had put up in Ṭā'if during the age of ignorance (before the advent of Islam) on such and such a day and I hosted you. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) said: 'You are welcome; ask what you what.' The man said: 'I want 200 sheep together with their shepherds. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) ordered that he be given what he wanted. Then addressing his companions he wished that the man would seek that which the old lady of Banī Isrā'il asked from Prophet Mūsa ('a). The companions asked: ' And what did the old lady of Banī Isrā'il seek from Mūsa?' The Prophet (s) said: 'Surely Allāh revealed to Prophet Mūsa ('a) to carry the bones of Prophet Yūsuf ('a) before he left Egypt for the holy land in Shām. Thereupon Prophet Mūsa ('a) asked about the whereabouts of the grave of Prophet Yūsuf ('a), and an old man approached him and said: If at all any one happens to know the whereabouts of the grave, it is such and such old woman. Prophet Mūsā ('a) asked her to be brought to him and when she came in his presence, he asked: 'Do you know the place of the grave of Prophet Yūsuf ('a)?' She said: 'Yes.' The Prophet said: 'Therefore guide me towards the grave and I you will get whatever you ask.' She said: 'I shall not guide you towards it except you agree to what I want in return.' The Prophet ('a) said: 'You shall get Paradise.' She said: 'No, except what I want.' Thereupon Almighty Allāh revealed to Prophet Mūsa ('a) that agreeing to her request should seem insurmountable to him. Therefore Prophet Mūsa ('a) said: 'Alright, you would have what you want.'

Thereupon she said: 'I would like to be with you in the same station that you would have in Paradise on the Day of Judgment.' Narrating this the Holy Prophet (ş) said: 'why didn't this man seek that which the old woman of Banī Isrā'īl sought?'

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

1. [Holy Qur'ān: Chapter al-Fajr- 89: 27-30]

يَٰٓأَيَّتُهَا ٱلنَّفْسُ ٱلْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ . ٱرْجِعِىٓ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً . فَٱدْخُلِى فِى عِبَٰدِى.
وَٱدْخُلِى جَنَّتِى

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

2. [Holy Qur'ān 54: 54-55]

إِنَّ ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ فِى جَنَّٰتٍ وَنَهَرٍ . فِى مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِندَ مَلِيكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ

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

Clearly the aspiration of the old lady of Banī Isrā'īl draws all of us to 'understand our real innate need' and pray accordingly. Let us not waste the opportunity of the nights of *qadr* at our disposal. Our aspiration should be the forgiveness of sins and Allāh's proximity. Yes, seeking 'long life', 'a lot of sustenance' etc. as 'the means to enable us attain Allāh's proximity is also highly recommended. Our supplications are full of expressions of such needs. But the material needs must always be sought as a means for the 'Great Return' to God. Otherwise the same worldly benefits can widen the gap. Let us take a lesson from Bībī Āsiya, Fir'awn's wife, who despite enjoying

all the worldly pleasures, did not surrender to Fir'awn and faced painful torture from him. Almighty Allāh mentions her supplication as follows:

رَبِّ ٱبْنِ لِي عِندَكَ بَيْتًا فِي ٱلْجَنَّةِ

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

Āyatullāh al-'Uẓmā and the Apple of our eyes, Shaykh Jawādī Āmūlī (may Almighty Allāh prolong his exalted shadow), the contemporary commentator of Qur'ān and indeed a true successor of his teacher 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī in the field of Tafsīr says[74]:

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

'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī[75] says:

الْجَمْعُ بَيْنَ كَوْنِ الْبَيْتِ الْمَبْنِيِّ لَهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَ فِي الْجَنَّةِ لِكَوْنِ الْجَنَّةِ دَارَ الْقُرْبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ...

Seeking a house to be built near Allāh and in Paradise at the same time is due to the fact that Paradise is the abode of Nearness to God.

True Believers are Gharib!

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

1.Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) is reported[76] to have said:

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[74] Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Zan dar āineye Jamālo Jalāl*, pp. 156-157
[75] 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān*, v.19, p. 344
[76] *Mustadrak Safinat al-Biḥār*, v.7, p. 550]

الْمُؤْمِنُ غَرِيْبٌ وَ طُوبَى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ

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

2. Kāmil at-Tammār[77] says:

سَمِعْتُ أبا جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُوْلُ: «النَّاسُ كُلُّهُمْ بَهَائِم (ثلاثا) إلا قَلِيْل مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنُ غَرِيْبٌ ثلاث مَرّاتٍ

'I heard Abū Ja'far [Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir], upon whom be peace, saying thrice: The people are all beasts' save a few of the believers; and thrice, "a believer is a stanger (*gharīb*.)"

'Allāma Majlīsī in his magnum opus 'The Oceans of Lights' comments on this tradition as follows:

بيان كلهم بهائم أي شبيه بها في عدم العقل و إدراك الحق و غلبة الشهوات النفسانية على القوى العقلانية كما قال تعالى إِنْ هُمْ إِلاَّ كَالأَنْعامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيل إلا قليل كذا ...المؤمن غريب لأنه قلما يجد مثله فيسكن إليه فهو بين الناس كالغريب النبي بعد عن أهله و وطنه ...

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

Thus, following can be reasons why a believer is "*gharīb*":

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

الدُّنْيَا دَارُ الْغُرْبَةِ وَ مَوْطِنُ الأَشْقِيَاءِ

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[77] Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, v.2, p. 242

[78] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.64, p. 160

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

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

حُبُّ الْوَطَنِ مِنَ الإِيْمَانِ

Love for one's hometows is a sign of faith.

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

Why was Imam 'Alī al-Riḍā ('a) known as Imām al-Gharīb

Sometimes when addressing our 8th Holy Imām ('a) we say:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا غَرِيْبَ الْغُرَبَاء

Peace be on you, O Stranger of the Strangers

The teacher of Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭehrānī in the discipline of gnosis- Sayyid Hāshim Ḥaddād, was once asked the reason why Imām al-Riḍā ('a) was known as *Imām al-Gharīb*. He responded in some details. Two reasons[80] one can mention about this are:

1- The Imām enjoyed the station of wilāya, which was so exalted, and close to Divine proximity, but far from other human beings. Necessarily, majority of the people were not acquainted with the attributes of wilāya and the characteristics of a walī [who is a manifestation of Divine Attributes]. Thus Imām was *gharīb* in their company.

2- Ma'mūn al-Rashīd forced the Imām ('a) to Marv and the Imām ('a) had to leave his hometown, his family and the neighborhood of the Holy Prophet (s)'s tomb. Thus he was *gharīb*. In addition calling him to Marv was a kind of captivity, exile and imprisonment, for despite granting him power and princely station, he deprived him from all his functions: neither was he allowed to give legal rulings nor to offer Friday and 'Īd prayer.

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[79] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Safīnat al-Biḥār*, v.8, p.525

[80] Āyatullāh Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭehrānī. *Al-Tawḥid Quarterly Journal*, v. XIII, no.4, pp.72-85

In another *ziyara*[81] we also call Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a) as *Gharīb al-ghurabā'*. And in a tradition narrated in al-Mashhadī's *al-Mazār al-Kabīr*, Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have asked the following about a group of people:

فَمَا يَمْنَعُهُمْ مِنْ زِيَارَةِ قَبْرِ الْغَرِيْبِ...

And what hampers them from visiting the grave of al-Gharīb? [he means Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a)][82]

The Hometown of the Gharib

Sayyid 'Alī Khān Husaynī, in his Riyāḍ al-Sālikīn, quotes the following:

سئل أبو جعفر الشّاشي: من الغريب؟ فقال: الذي يطلبه رضوان في الجنّة فلا يجده و يطلبه مالك في النّار فلا يجده و يطلبه جبرئيل في السّماوات فلا يجده و يطلبه إبليس في الأرض فلا يجده، فقال له أهل المجلس و قد تفطّرت قلوبهم: يا أبا جعفر فأين يكون هذا الغريب؟ فقال: في مقعد صدق عند مليك مقتدر

Abū Ja'far al-Shāshī was asked: who is a stranger (gharīb)? He said: 'He is one whom the Riḍwān seeks in Paradise, but does not find, one whom the Mālik seeks in Hell Fire, but does not find, one whom Gabrial seeks in the heavens but does not find, one whom Iblīs seeks in the earth, but does not find. So the people of the gathering asked him with broken hearts: A Abā Ja'far, where then is this stranger? He said: ***'In the seat of truth with the Most Powerful King (54:55)'***

The Great Sign Complains of *ghurba* in the Supplication of Kumayl

The infallibility of Imām 'Alī ('a) is an established fact and hence we would not like to engage in explaining the details of the same. We also know his famous dictum[83] that says:

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[81] 'Allāma Majlīsī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.98, ch.18, p.230

[82] al-Shaykh Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad bin Ja'far al-Mashhadī, *al-Mazār al-Kabīr*, p.333, 1st ed, Qum, Irān

[83] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥāru 'l Anwār*, v.40, p.153, tr. 5

لَوْ كُشِفَ الْغِطَآءُ مَا ازْدَدْتُ يَقِيْنًا

If the curtain was unveiled nothing would be added to my certitude

Why then should he show his fear of separation from the Beloved? What kind of separation is this? What kind of unbearable *ghurba* is this? Imām Khumaynī, in his forty traditions when enumerating the levels of patience of the gnostics says:

Another level is that of *ṣabr `an Allāh* (ṣabr from God) which pertains to the stations of lovers of God and piners for Him, of those blessed with epiphany (*ahl al-shuhūd wa al-`ayān*) at the time of returning to their own world, the world of plurality and sobriety (after intoxication with God). This is the hardest and the most difficult of the stations, and to it has referred the Master of the Wayfarers, the Commander of the Faithful, and the Leader of the Perfect (i.e. 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (`a) in the noble Du`ā' Kumayl:

فَهَبْنِيْ يَآ إِلٰهِيْ وَ سَيِّدِيْ وَ مَوْلاَيَ وَ رَبِّي صَبَرْتُ عَلى عَذَابِكَ، فَكَيْفَ أَصْبِرُ عَلَى فِرَاقِكَ

O my God, my Master and my Lord! Even if I were able to endure Thy chastisement, how shall I bear Thy separation?!

Perhaps the following dictum of Imām 'Ali ('a) also explains the reality of the matter:

نَارُ الْفُرْقَةِ أَحَرُّ مِنْ نَارِ جَهَنَّمِ

The fire of separation is hotter than Hell Fire[84]

اَللّٰهُمَّ رُدَّ كُلَّ غَرِيْبٍ

Hence when we seek the return of all the strangers we must pray to Allah to:

1. Return all those who have been driven out of their homes and suffer the pain of separation
2. Return all the sinful folk back to the proximity of Allāh, which in reality is: (1) Perfecting the human being in terms of Divine Attributes like knowledge, patience, etc., and (2) Lessening the gap

[84] *Mīrāth-e-Ḥadithe Shi 'e*, v.8, p.217

of the high-ranking strangers like the Aimma ('a) and the low-ranking ones like the sinful, and thus removing the *ghurba* of the Imāms from the rest too. [This point is worthy of reflection]. Otherwise, in another sense, the Imāms ('a) being close to Almighty Allāh, were never *gharīb* (strangers). This is because they were never far from their spiritual hometown. There is a beautiful report narrated by al-Zamakhshari in his *Rabī'al-Abrār* worthy of reflection. He reports:

لَمّا أُخْرِجَ يُوْسف عليه السلام من الجبّ و اشتُرِي قَالَ لهم قائل: استوصوا بهذا الغريب خَيْراً. فقال لهم يوسف: من كان مع الله فَليس عليه غربة.

"When Yūsuf ('a) was taken out of the well, and bought, a person said to them: 'Take care of this stranger (*gharīb*). [Hearing this,] Yūsuf ('a) said to them: whosoever is with Almighty Allāh, is not a stranger."[85]

[85] Abū'l Qāsim Maḥmūd bin 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Rabī' al-Abrār wa Nuṣūṣ al-Akhbār*, v.3, p.5

Section 8

اَللّٰهُمَّ فُكَّ كُلَّ أَسِيْرٍ

O Allāh, Free Every Captive

اللّٰهُمَّ فُكَّ كُلَّ أَسِيْرٍ

O Allāh, Free Every Captive

Meaning of Asīr

The word *Asīr* originates from *al-asr*, which means:

الشَّدُّ بِالْقَيْدِ

Fastening with a bond

Rāghib, the famous lexicographer, in his Qur'ānic dictionary al-Mufradāt[86] says:

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

أَنَا أَسِيْرُ نِعْمَتِكَ

I am bound to your favor

From the abovementioned definition, the comprehensiveness of the concept of the word '*asīr*' becomes clear. The traditions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and his immaculate progeny also reveal this truth. Following are some examples for your perusal:

a. Imām Abu'l Ḥasan al-Thālith[87] ('Alī al-Naqī ('a)) is reported to have said:

وَالْجَاهِلُ أَسِيْرُ لِسَانِهِ

The ignorant one is a captive of his tongue

b. In a supplication[88] from Yūsha' bin Nūn ('a) we find the following expression:

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[86] Rāghib Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, p. 76, new ed.
[87] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.78, p. 368, tr. 3

إِلٰهِيْ أَنْتَ مَلِكُ الْعَطَايَا وَ أَنَا أَسِيْرُ الْخَطَايَا

O God, You are the sovereign of bestowals while I am a captive of my faults

c. In one Ziyāra of Arba'īn[89] (40th of Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a)) said to be taught by Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a), we address Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a) as follows:

اَلسَّلاَمُ عَلى أَسِيْرِ الْكُرُبَاتِ

Peace be upon the captive of deep sorrows

d. In his well known epistle[90] to Mālik al-Ashtar Imām 'Alī ('a) says:

...فَإِنَّ هَذَا الدِّيْن قَدْ كَانَ أَسِيْرًا فِيْ أَيْدِي الأَشْرَار يُعْمَلُ فِيْهِ بِا لْهَوَى وَ تُطْلَبُ بِهِ الدُّنْيَا...

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

e. In Nahju'l Balāgha[91], while explaining the characteristics of the angels, Imam 'Ali is reported to have said:

...فَهُمْ أُسَرَآءُ إِيْمَان...

...for they are captives of faith...

The word '*asīr*' likewise has a relative connotation: whereas a group of people may be captives of their vain inclinations but suffer no physical imprisonment, a group may enjoy utter spiritual freedom, but be in the state of physical captivity.

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[88] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.94, p. 93, tr. 8
[89] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.101, p. 331, tr. 2
[90] Imām 'Alī ('a), *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Letter 53
[91] Imām 'Alī ('a), *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 91

The Apparent Extension of Asir

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

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

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

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

Prisoners Suffering Torture

1. MEN, WOMEN & CHILDREN: "... but torture continues and is not confined to military dictatorships or authoritarian regimes; torture is inflicted in democratic states too. It is also clear that victims of torture are criminal suspects as well as political prisoners, the disadvantaged as well as the dissident, people targeted because of their identity as well as their beliefs. They are women as well as men, children as well as adults."[93]

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

2. WOMEN: "Amnesty International (AI) has documented countless cases of women being tortured in custody. In its coverage of armed conflicts, it has reported the systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war."[94]

3. CHILDREN: "The fact that children could suffer torture at all should come as a terrible shock. Their dependency and vulnerability should render them immune from the atrocities adults inflict on one another. Their very innocence should put them beyond reach.

Yet violence against children is endemic: children are tortured by the police or security forces..."[95]

Methods Of Torture

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

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

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

The most common forms of judicial corporal punishment include amputation and flogging. Some forms such as amputation and branding are deliberately designed to permanently mutilate the human body. However, all of these punishments can cause a range of long-term or permanent injuries."[96]

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

1. The first war that the Muslims valiantly fought was Badr. Overwhelming the disbelievers, the Muslims apprehended many

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[94] [A branch of Amnesty International http://www.stoptorture.org/report/index.htm]
[95] *Ibid.*
[96] *Ibid.*

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

وَ كَانَ يُفَادِيْ بِهِمْ عَلَى قَدْرِ أَمْوَالِهِمْ

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

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

2. It is reported[98] that after Ibn Muljam struck the fatal blow on Imām 'Alī ('a), the Imām addressing his two sons ('a), said:

إِحْبِسُوْا هَذَا الأَسِيْرَ وَ أَطْعِمُوْهُ وَ اسْقُوْهُ وَ أَحْسِنُوْا إِسَارَهُ

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

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

إِنَّهُ أَسِيْرٌ، فَأَحْسِنُوْا نُزُلَهُ وَ أَكْرِمُوْا مَثْوَاهُ، فَإِنْ بَقِيْتُ قَتَلْتُ أَوْ عَفَوْتُ، وَ إِنْ مِتُّ فَاقْتُلُوْهُ قَتْلَتِيْ، وَ لاَ تَعْتَدُوْا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ

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

This practical encounter of Imām 'Alī in those sensitive moments exemplifies the outlook of the embodiment of Islam. Grudge and revenge does not remain in the heart of 'Alī ('a), for every element of his body is the instrument of Allāh (swt).

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[97] *Ḥayāt al-Nabī wa Sīratuhu*, v.2, p. 60, Uswa Publications

[98] Muḥammadī al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mawsū'at al-Imām 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib*, v.7, p. 250, tr. 2949

[99] Mawsū'at al-Imām 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, v.7, p. 250, tr. 2950

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

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

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

Look at the following traditions carefully:

Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ عَلِيّاً (ع) كَانَ يُطْعِمُ مَنْ خُلِّدَ فِي السِّجْنِ مِنْ بَيْتِ مَالِ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ

Surely 'Alī ('a) would feed the captive who served life imprisonment from the treasury of the Muslims

Imām 'Alī ('a)[101] is reported to have said:

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[100] Shaykh Najm al-Din Ṭabasī, *Mawārid al-Sijn*, pp. 493 onwards
[101] Muḥammadī al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, v.1, p.76

إِطْعَامُ الأَسِيْرِ وَ الإِحْسَانُ إِلَيْهِ حَقٌّ وَاجِبٌ وَ إِنْ قَتَلْتَهُ مِنَ الْغَدِ

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

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

1. The Holy Qur'ān [Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ 28: 50] says:

...وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ ٱتَّبَعَ هَوَىٰهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ...

'...and who is more stray than he who follows his low desires without any guidance from Allāh?'

2. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported[102] to have said:

كَمْ مِنْ عَقْلٍ أَسِيْرٍ عِنْدَ هَوَىً أَمِيْرٍ

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

3. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported[103] to have said:

إِنَّ أَخْوَفَ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ إِثْنَتَانِ: اتِّبَاعُ الْهَوَى وَ طُوْلُ الأَمَلِ

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

One of the most destructive extensions of captivity is the captivity of the soul by base inclinations. In the language of the Qur'ān, it is called "*al-hawā*". It is a great hurdle on our way to God. *Nearly every world problem today stems from this very element of destruction.* Rather, the entire history of creation is replete with examples that show how destructive has this kind of captivity been: due to this very captivity, Satan did not prostrate before Adam although he was commanded to do so, Cain was led to kill Abel

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[102] Marḥūm Āmadī, *Mu'jamu Ghuraril Ḥikam*, p.34]
[103] Imām 'Alī ('a), *Nahjul Balāgha*, sermon no. 28]

despite the latter being his own brother, Noah ('a)'s son left his father although the latter was a prophet of Allāh (swt), and the list goes on. Study the causes of the different wars and conflicts of the past and present and you would realize that *the root cause is this very kind of captivity.* When a president suffers such captivity, he kills so many innocent civilians; when a minister of finance is shackled by such captivity, he embezzles millions of dollars; when an irreligious and aimless human being suffers such captivity, he engages in different kinds of evils. In short, whosoever enjoys more power affects mischief accordingly.

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

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

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

وَٱتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ٱلَّذِىٓ ءَاتَيْنَٰهُ ءَايَٰتِنَا فَٱنسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَأَتْبَعَهُ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ فَكَانَ مِنَ ٱلْغَاوِينَ . وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَٰهُ بِهَا وَلَٰكِنَّهُۥٓ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱتَّبَعَ هَوَىٰهُ ۚ فَمَثَلُهُۥ كَمَثَلِ ٱلْكَلْبِ إِن تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَث أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَث ۚ

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

This verse, according to a tradition quoted by 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī in his Al-Mizān and narrated by Tafsīr al-Burhān, talks about Bal'am bin Bā'ūrā. He was a man who lived during the time of Prophet Musa ('a) and enjoyed a high spiritual state for according to a tradition reported from Imam al-Riḍā ('a) he knew the *ism al-a'ẓam* (the Great Name of Allāh). Later, due to his base

inclinations, he became a supporter of Fir'awn and became spiritually ignoble. Imam al-Riḍā ('a) is reported to have said[104]:

Surely Bal'am bin Bā'ūrā was given the Great Name of God and whenever he would pray with the same, his supplication would be accepted. Then he inclined towards Fir'awn. Once when Fir'awn was after Prophet Mūsā ('a) and his followers, he met Bal'am and said: 'Pray to Allah to throw Mūsā ('a) and his followers into our trap.' Subsequently he climbed his donkey to set out for searching Mūsā ('a) and his companions. The donkey, however, did not move. So he began hitting it. Thereafter Allāh (the invincible and exalted) enabled it to speak and [addressing Bal 'am] it said: Woe unto you! For what are you hitting me? Do you want me to accompany you so that you pray against Prophet Mūsā ('a), the Prophet of Allah and the believing nation? Bal'am [paid no attention] and continued hitting the donkey until he killed the animal. Thereupon Bal'am forgot the great Name of God.

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

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

فَمَثَلُهُۥ كَمَثَلِ ٱلْكَلْبِ إِن تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَث ۚ ذَّٰلِكَ مَثَلُ ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا۟ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا ۚ فَٱقْصُصِ ٱلْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

So his parable is as the parable of a dog; if you attack him, he lolls out his tongue; and if you leave him alone he lolls out his tongue; this is a parable of those who reject our signs; therefore relate the narrative so that they may reflect.

Preference of External Imprisonment Over Internal Imprisonment

The Qur'ān [12:33] quotes Yūsuf ('a) praying:

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[104] Sayyid Hāshim, Baḥrānī, *Al-Burhān Fī Tafsīri'l Qur'ān*, v.3, pp. 246-247

قَالَ رَبِّ ٱلسِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِيٓ إِلَيْهِ...

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

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

The Holy Qur'ān says:

1- [The news spread and the women began talking]

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي ٱلْمَدِينَةِ ٱمْرَأَتُ ٱلْعَزِيزِ تُرَٰوِدُ فَتَىٰهَا عَن نَّفْسِهِۦ ۖ قَدْ شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا ۖ إِنَّا لَنَرَىٰهَا فِي ضَلَٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ

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

Whereas at the onset the women reckon Zulaykha to be in manifest error, they themselves invite Yūsuf ('a) to have a relationship with him later.

2- [Zulaykha invites the women]

فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَـًٔا وَءَاتَتْ كُلَّ وَٰحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا وَقَالَتِ ٱخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ ۖ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُۥٓ أَكْبَرْنَهُۥ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَٰشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَٰذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَٰذَآ إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ

When she heard of their scheming talk, she sent for them, and prepared for them a repast and gave each of them a knife and said [to Yūsuf]: 'Come out unto them'. And when they saw him they extolled him; and [in their amazement] cut their hands saying: Ḥāshā lilLāh! (Far from Allāh is every imperfection!) This is no mortal; this is none but a noble angel.' [Surat Yūsuf- 12:31]

3- [Zulaykha admits that they were right, and threatens Yūsuf of Imprisonment]

قَالَتْ فَذَٰلِكُنَّ ٱلَّذِى لُمْتُنَّنِى فِيهِ ۖ وَلَقَدْ رَٰوَدتُّهُۥ عَن نَّفْسِهِۦ فَٱسْتَعْصَمَ ۖ وَلَئِن لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَآ ءَامُرُهُۥ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُونًا مِّنَ ٱلصَّٰغِرِينَ

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

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

4- [The women would like to have relationship with Yūsuf ('a)]

قَالَ رَبِّ ٱلسِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَىَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِىٓ إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّى كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُن مِّنَ ٱلْجَٰهِلِينَ

'He said, 'O My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that unto which they invite me (*yad'ūnanī ilayhi*); and if you do not avert from me their conspiracy I may yearn unto them and become of the ignorant ones' [Surat Yūsuf- 12:33]

In a lengthy tradition narrated[105] by Abu Hamzā al-Thumālī, Imām Zayn al-'Abidīn ('a) is reported to have said that after leaving the gathering that Zulaykha had organized, each one of the women sent a message to Yusuf secretly [in the absence of Zulaykhā] and asked

[105] 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tafsir al-Mizān*, v. 11, pp. 164-165]

him that they would like to meet him. But Prophet Yūsuf ('a) refused, and prayed to Allāh:

وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُن مِّنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

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

According to commentators of the Qur'ān, the word *yad'ūnanī ilayhi* (is dearer to me than "they call me to") which is in the imperfect tense (*muḍāri'*) indicates that they were persistently inviting Yūsuf ('a) towards themselves. However, Prophet Yūsuf ('a) cried:

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُن مِّنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

'O My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that unto which they invite me; and if you do not avert from me their conspiracy I may yearn unto them and become of the ignorant ones' [Ṣūrat Yūsuf- 12:33]

This verse clearly shows that Prophet Yūsuf ('a) had the sexual desire, and was aware of the danger he was entrapped in. He therefore beseeched Almighty Allāh to protect him from what they conspired. He preferred to be imprisoned and accepted humiliation [of being attributed falsely to be at fault] but dared to disobey his Lord. And the All-merciful Lord responded:

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

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

These are situations when the true visage of a believer is unraveled. Prophet Yūsuf ('a) prefers to be a captive of the external forces then to be entrapped by the licentious forces within, which ruin the human being and his entire future. The prison here is a place of safety and salvation. It is a place of shelter for this spirit, which is burning with the love of Allāh (swt). He is ready to suffer

the travails and hardships of imprisonment and humiliation but cannot withstand the torture of disobeying the only Beloved, who reared him to be what he was. And how can it ever be conceivable for one whose heart brims with the love of Allāh to even think of blemishing his hands with sin?

A Subtle Allusion

'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī in his Al-Mīzān says something worthy of reflection: when Zulaykha tighly closed the doors of her room (*ghallaqat al-abwāb*), and depending on the apparent power that she had, said: '*hayta lak*' (Come [to me]!), Yūsuf ('a) was immersed in the love of Allāh and forgot every apparent means of refuge, including himself; hence when seeking refuge in Almighty Allāh, he never said "*Innī a'ūdhu*" (Surely I seek refuge) but said: '*ma'ādhallāh*!' [Nb: Although both *a'ūdhu billāhi* and *ma'ādhallāh* show that Yūsuf seeks Refuge in Allāh, but in the case of the latter (i.e. *ma'ādhallāh*) the supplicant forgets all the apparent means of refuge, including himself].

'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī [106] says

...فَلَمْ يَقُلْ: إِنِّيْ أَعُوْذُ مِنْكَ بِاللّٰهِ أَوْ مَا يُؤَدِّيْ مَعْنَاهُ، وَ إِنَّمَا قَالَ: مَعَاذَ اللّٰه...

...he [prophet Yusuf ('a)] did not say: 'Indeed I seek refuge with Allah from you...' or a statement similar to that; rather he only said: 'ma'aadhallaah' (hence not making any mention of "I" or "You" or any other means)...

Then 'Allāma continues saying:

...و كَمْ مِنَ الْفَرْقِ بَيْنَ قَوْلِهِ هٰذَا وَ بَيْنَ قَوْلِ مَرْيَمَ لِلرُّوحِ لَمَّا تَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَراً سَوِيًّا: إِنِّي أَعُوْذُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ مِنْكَ...

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

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[106] 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān*, v.11, pp.120-123

The Captive of Allah on Earth!

'Allāma Majlisī in his magnum opus 'The Oceans of Lights' narrates[107] a tradition in which the Prophet (s) is asked to explain the status of Imām 'Alī ('a), whereupon the Prophet (ṣ) speaks about his merits at great length. At one point he says:

أَلا ومَنْ أَحَبَّ عَلِيّاً سُمِّيَ أَسِيْرُ اللّهِ فِي الأَرْضِ وَ بَاهَى اللّهُ بِهِ مَلاَئِكَتَهُ وَ حَمَلَةَ عَرْشِهِ

Indeed whosoever loves 'Alī is called the captive of Allāh on the earth and Allāh is proud of him near His angels and the Bearers of His throne.

Here two points must be understood:

1. What does 'love for 'Alī ('a)' mean in this tradition?
2. What does it mean to be Allāh's captive on earth?

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

The believers, therefore, who experience love for Imam 'Ali ('a), in reality seek 'his Attributes'. And 'the attributes of 'Alī ('a)' are the attributes of the Prophet (ṣ); and the attributes of the Prophet (s) are manifestations of the Attributes of Allāh (swt). Look at the following traditions painstakingly:

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

مَنْ أَحَبَّ عَلِيّاً فَقَدْ أَحَبَّنِيْ، وَ مَنْ أَحَبَّنِيْ فَقَدْ أَحَبَّ اللّهَ

Whosoever loves Alī, loves me; and whosoever loves me, loves Allāh

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[107] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.27, p.115, tr.89
[108] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.5, p.69, tr.1]

What use is that love which has no effect to follow? In a tradition, Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) addressing Jābir Ju'fī, says[109]:

...يَا جَابِرُ مَنْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَ أَحَبَّنَا فَهُوَ وَلِيُّنَا، وَ مَنْ عَصَى اللَّهَ لَمْ يَنْفَعْهُ حُبُّنَا

...O Jābir! He who obeys Allāh and loves us, is our friend; and whosoever disobeys Him, our love would not benefit him.

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

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

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

... وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَشَدُّ حُبّٗا لِّلَّهِ ...

And those who believe have more intense love for Allāh

A Free Man in Karbala

The timeless event of Karbalā reveals a beautiful example of one who freed himself from the shackles of his vain inclinations and consequently represented an embodiment of his name. He was

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[109] Muḥammadī al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mizān al-Ḥikma*, v.1, p.519, tr. 3211]

called Ḥurr (the free one). At the onset he was among the commanders of Yazīd. However, upon realization of the worth of the truth, he repented and joined the ranks of Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a). Having fought very bravely in the ranks of the Imām ('a) against the Kuffār, he attained the exalted station of martyrdom. In his last moments, as Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a) was wiping blood from his radiant face, he said:

أَنْتَ حُرٌّ كَمَا سَمَّتْكَ أُمُّكَ، وَ أَنْتَ حُرٌّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَ الآخِرَةِ

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

The well-known Shi'a historian, Baqir Sharīf al-Qarashī, in his Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a) after quoting the above, remarks:

لَقَدْ كَانَ الْحُرُّ حُرّاً حِيْنَمَا تَغْلِبُ عَقْلُهُ هَوَاهُ...

Surely Ḥurr was 'a free man' when his intellect won over his vain inclination (*hawāhu*)[110]

A Deliberation on the Solution

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

2. Both physical and spiritual captivity sometimes are genuine and the fault of the prisoner himself. For example: if one were to intentionally steal or prefer his/her mundane desires to Divine law. Hence, the supplicant should also try to humbly seek the eradication

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[110] Baqir Sharīf al-Qarashī, *Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a)*, v.3, p.222]

of the causes that lead to such imprisonment. In reality both kinds of imprisonment in their genuine state stem from ittibaa' al-hawaa (following one's base inclinations]. Therefore, we must pray that the culture of *taqwā* penetrates into our societies so that 'genuine' imprisonment no more prevails.

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

4. A substantial number of so-called Muslim states can hamper the mass killings of the blood thirsty superpowers, for one of the most significant sources of energy are in their hands: oil, or 'black gold'. The case of Palestine also can be solved very easily by them. But it is their base interests that hamper them from using their intellects, and in the process make them earn eternal ignominy.

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ٱهْدِنَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلْمُسْتَقِيمَ

Guide us on the Straight Path

Ṣūrat al-Baqara- Chapter 2

2:45: p.25

وَٱسْتَعِينُوا۟ بِٱلصَّبْرِ وَٱلصَّلَوٰةِ ۚ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى ٱلْخَٰشِعِينَ

And take recourse in patience and prayer, and that is indeed hard except for the fearful ones

2:155: p.29-30

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَىْءٍ مِّنَ ٱلْخَوْفِ وَٱلْجُوعِ ...

And We would certainly try You with somewhat of fear and hunger ...

2: 165: p.94

... وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلَّهِ ...

And those who believe have more intense love for Allāh

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...وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ۖ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ ٱللَّهُ ...

And be God-wary, and Allah will teach you

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لَا يُكَلِّفُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا...

Allah does not oblige a soul save to the extent of its capacity...

Sūrat Āli 'Imrān ('a)- Chapter 3

3: 30: p.41

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِن سُوٓءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُۥٓ أَمَدًۢا بَعِيدًا...

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

3:135: p.59

وَٱلَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا۟ فَٰحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ فَٱسْتَغْفَرُوا۟ لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَن يَغْفِرُ ٱلذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ

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

3:192: p.41

رَبَّنَآ إِنَّكَ مَن تُدْخِلِ ٱلنَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُۥ...

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

Sūrat al-A'rāf- Chapter 7

7: 26: pp.39-40

يَٰبَنِىٓ ءَادَمَ قَدْ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُوَٰرِى سَوْءَٰتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا ۖ وَلِبَاسُ ٱلتَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ...

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

7: 96: p.29

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ ٱلْقُرَىٰٓ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَٱتَّقَوْا۟ لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَٰتٍ مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ...

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

7:156: p.16

وَرَحْمَتِى وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ

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

7:175-176: p.87,88

وَٱتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ٱلَّذِىٓ ءَاتَيْنَٰهُ ءَايَٰتِنَا فَٱنسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَأَتْبَعَهُ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ فَكَانَ مِنَ ٱلْغَاوِينَ . وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَٰهُ بِهَا وَلَٰكِنَّهُۥٓ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱتَّبَعَ هَوَىٰهُ ۚ فَمَثَلُهُۥ كَمَثَلِ ٱلْكَلْبِ إِن تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَث أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَث ۚ

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

Ṣūrat al-Anfāl- Chapter 8

8:29: p. 32-33

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِن تَتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا...

O believers, if you be God-wary (observe piety) Allah shall enable you to distinguish the truth from the falsehood

Ṣūrat Yūnus ('a) – Chapter 10

10:62: p. 54

أَلَآ إِنَّ أَوْلِيَآءَ ٱللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Surely the Friends of Allāh neither fear nor grieve

Ṣūrat Yūsuf ('a)- Chapter 12

12:23: p.92

مَعَاذَ ٱللَّهِ...

I seek refuge with Allah

12:30: p.89

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِى ٱلْمَدِينَةِ ٱمْرَأَتُ ٱلْعَزِيزِ تُرَٰوِدُ فَتَىٰهَا عَن نَّفْسِهِۦ ۖ قَدْ شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا ۖ إِنَّا لَنَرَىٰهَا فِى ضَلَٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ

Certain women that were in the city said, 'The Governor's wife seeks to seduce her slave from his (pure) self; surely he has affected her deeply with love; verily we see her in manifest error.'

12:31: pp.89-90

فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَـًٔا وَءَاتَتْ كُلَّ وَٰحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا وَقَالَتِ ٱخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ ۖ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُۥٓ أَكْبَرْنَهُۥ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَٰشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَٰذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَٰذَآ إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ

When she heard of their scheming talk, she sent for them, and prepared for them a repast and gave each of them a knife and said [to Yūsuf]: 'Come out unto them'. And when they saw him they extolled him; and [in their amazement] cut their

hands saying: Ḥāshā lilLāh! (Far from Allāh is every imperfection!) This is no mortal; this is none but a noble angel.'

12:32: p.90

قَالَتْ فَذَٰلِكُنَّ ٱلَّذِى لُمْتُنَّنِى فِيهِ ۖ وَلَقَدْ رَٰوَدتُّهُۥ عَن نَّفْسِهِۦ فَٱسْتَعْصَمَ ۖ وَلَئِن لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَآ ءَامُرُهُۥ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُونًا مِّنَ ٱلصَّٰغِرِينَ

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

12:33: pp 88-91

قَالَ رَبِّ ٱلسِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَىَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِىٓ إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّى كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُن مِّنَ ٱلْجَٰهِلِينَ

'He said, 'O My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that unto which they invite me (*yad'ūnanī ilayhi*); and if you do not avert from me their conspiracy I may yearn unto them and become of the ignorant ones'

12:34: p.91

فَٱسْتَجَابَ لَهُۥ رَبُّهُۥ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْعَلِيمُ

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

Ṣūrat al-Ra'd – Chapter 13

13:17: p.21

أَنزَلَ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌۢ بِقَدَرِهَا ...

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

Ṣūrat al-Ḥijr- Chapter 15

15:99: p.37

وَٱعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ ٱلْيَقِينُ

"And worship your Lord until Conviction comes to you."

Ṣūrat al-Kahf- Chapter 18

18:6: p.16

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَٰخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلَىٰٓ ءَاثَٰرِهِمْ إِن لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوا۟ بِهَٰذَا ٱلْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا

Then it is near that you will kill yourself in grief, for their outcomes, if they do not believe in this announcement.

Ṣūrat Maryam ('a) – Chapter 19

19:18: p.92

إِنِّىٓ أَعُوذُ بِٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ مِنكَ ...

'Surely I take refuge in the All-merciful from you...

Ṣūrat Ṭāhā - Chapter 20

20:1-2: pp. 17 &18

طه . مَآ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ لِتَشْقَىٰٓ

Ṭā hā: We have not sent down the Qur'ān to you that you distress yourself

20:114: p.32

وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِى عِلْمًا

And say: O my Lord increase me in knowledge

Ṣūrat al-Anbiyā' ('a)- Chapter 21

21:76: p. 56

وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَىٰ مِن قَبْلُ فَٱسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُۥ فَنَجَّيْنَٰهُ وَأَهْلَهُۥ مِنَ ٱلْكَرْبِ ٱلْعَظِيمِ

And Nūḥ, when he cried aforetime, so We answered him, and delivered him and his followers from ***the great anguish***.

21:107: p.16

وَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَٰكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَٰلَمِينَ

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

Ṣūrat al-Qaṣaṣ- Chapter 28

28: 50: p.86

...وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ ٱتَّبَعَ هَوَىٰهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ...

'...and who is more stray than he who follows his low desires without any guidance from Allāh?'

Ṣūrat Fāṭir- Chapter 35

35:8: p.17& 55

...فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسَرَٰتٍ...

...And therefore do not consume yourself for them due to grief [of their unbelief]...

35:15: p.22

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ أَنتُمُ ٱلْفُقَرَآءُ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ ۖ وَٱللَّهُ هُوَ ٱلْغَنِىُّ ٱلْحَمِيدُ

O human beings, you are needy to Allah, and it is Allah Who is Affluent, the praised one:

35:18: pp. 67 & 68

وَمَن تَزَكَّىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّىٰ لِنَفْسِهِۦ ۚ وَإِلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلْمَصِيرُ

And whosoever purifies himself, purifies himself only for his own soul's good. To Allah is the homecoming (destination).

Ṣūrat al-Dhāriyāt- Chapter 51

51:56: p.37

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

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

Ṣūrat al-Qamar – Chapter 54

54: 54-55: p.72

إِنَّ ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ فِى جَنَّٰتٍ وَنَهَرٍ ۝ فِى مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِندَ مَلِيكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ

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

Ṣūrat al-Ḥadīd- Chapter 57

57:3: p.18

هُوَ ٱلْأَوَّلُ وَٱلْآخِرُ وَٱلظَّـٰهِرُ وَٱلْبَاطِنُ

He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden

Ṣūrat al-Mumtaḥana- Chapter 60

60:8: p.17

لَّا يَنْهَىٰكُمُ ٱللَّهُ عَنِ ٱلَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَـٰتِلُوكُمْ فِى ٱلدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُم مِّن دِيَـٰرِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُقْسِطِينَ

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

Ṣūrat al-Ṭalāq- Chapter 65

65: 2-3: p.29

...وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا . وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ۚ

And whosoever is God-wary (observes piety) he would make for him an outlet [from difficulties] and bestow on him sustenance from whence he thinks not...

Ṣūrat al-Taḥrīm- Chapter 66

66:11: p.73

رَبِّ ٱبْنِ لِى عِندَكَ بَيْتًا فِى ٱلْجَنَّةِ

O my Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise.

Ṣūrat Nūḥ ('a)- Chapter 71

71: 10-12: p.29

فَقُلْتُ ٱسْتَغْفِرُوا۟ رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ غَفَّارًا . يُرْسِلِ ٱلسَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُم مِّدْرَارًا . وَيُمْدِدْكُم بِأَمْوَٰلٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ أَنْهَٰرًا.

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

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Ṣūrat 'Abasa- Chapter 80

80:24: p.31

فَلْيَنظُرِ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِۦٓ

Then let man look at his food

Ṣūrat al-Inshiqāq- Chapter 84

84:6: p. 67

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَٰقِيهِ

O human being you are always striving unto Your Lord laboriously & you shall meet Him

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Ṣūrat al-Ṭāriq- Chapter 86

86: 9: p.41

يَوْمَ تُبْلَى ٱلسَّرَآئِرُ

The day when the secrets shall be made manifest

Ṣūrat al-Fajr- Chapter 89

89: 27-30: p.72

يَٰٓأَيَّتُهَا ٱلنَّفْسُ ٱلْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ . ٱرْجِعِىٓ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً . فَٱدْخُلِى فِى عِبَٰدِى.

وَٱدْخُلِى جَنَّتِى

O soul at peace, return to your Lord, while You are pleased with Him, and He is pleased with you then enter the company of My obedient servants and enter My Paradise.

Ṣūrat al-Takāthur- Chapter 102

102: 1-2: p.39

أَلْهَىٰكُمُ ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ . حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ ٱلْمَقَابِرَ .

Competing for Abundance has engaged you until you come to the graves

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Holy Mon[illegible] Ramadān

Abū Muḥammad Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn

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Reflections on the Daily Supplication of the Holy month of Ramadan

Part II

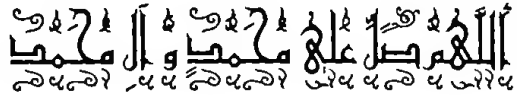
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In the Name of Allah,
the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful



اَللَّهُمَّ أَصْلِحْ كُلَّ فَاسِدٍ مِنْ أُمُوْرِ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ

اَللَّهُمَّ اشْفِ كُلَّ مَرِيْضٍ

اَللَّهُمَّ سُدَّ فَقْرَنَا بِغِنَاكَ

اَللَّهُمَّ غَيِّرْ سُوْءَ حَالِنَا بِحُسْنِ حَالِكَ

اَللَّهُمَّ اقْضِ عَنَّا الدَّيْنَ

وَاَغْنِنَا مِنَ الْفَقْرِ

اِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٍ

Humble Presentation

I humbly pray to Almighty Allāh to accept this short commentary of the noble supplication; and if He Accepts the same, I present it to the most perfect Manifestations of the All-Merciful- Muḥammad and his infallible progeny (upon whom be peace).

Wa'l Ḥamdu lillāhi Rabbi'l 'Ālamīn
And All praises belong solely to Allāh, the Lord of the Universe

Utterly destitute to the All-Affluent
Abū Muḥammad Zayn al-'Ābidīn
Qum al-Muqaddasah

5th Sha'bān al-Mu 'aẓẓam 1425 AH
Blessed Birthday of Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn, who through his supplications continues guiding the true Muslims to the path of salvation.

The Heavenly atmosphere of the neighborhood of Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima Ma'ṣūmah ('a)- may the Almighty Allāh imbue our hearts with intense love for her, and may He Grace us with her *intercession-Āmīn*

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Section 9

اَللّٰهُمَّ أَصْلِحْ كُلَّ فَاسِدٍ مِنْ اُمُوْرِ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ

O Allah, Reform Every
Uneven Affair of the Muslims

اَللّٰهُمَّ أَصْلِحْ كُلَّ فَاسِدٍ مِنْ أُمُوْرِ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ

O Allah, Reform Every Uneven Affair of the Muslims

THE MEANING

أَصْلِحْ *(Aṣliḥ)*: This imperative verb is normally translated as 'Reform!' and 'Rectify!' in the English language. It originates from the word *al-Ṣalāḥ*, which means 'equilibrium' and 'balance'. And '*Ṣalāḥ*' is the opposite of the word '*fasād*', which according to Rāghib al-Isfahānī means:

خُرُوج الشَّيْءِ عَنِ الإِعْتِدَالِ

'The departure of an entity from its equilibrium.'[1]

Consequently, the word *aṣliḥ* literally means 'Restore [such and such a thing or affair] to [its] equilibrium!'

And the word فَاسِد "*fāsid*" means 'something out of its equilibrium'.

أُمُوْرُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ *Umūru'l Muslimīn* means "Affairs of Muslims".

Thus we are asking Almighty Allah to restore all those affairs of Muslims, which have lost their equilibrium and balance to their equilibrium. Such affairs may pertain to the individual or social life, and may concern all the members of the Muslim *ummah* or a certain class in particular.

As understood earlier [in the previous discussions of the supplication], whenever one prays for something, he/she must also seek its respective cause. The same law applies here too. Seeking reform in any of its manifestations should precede knowledge and struggle to facilitate the

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[1] Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradātu Alfāẓi'l Qur'ān*, new ed., p.636

cause of reform. As we pray for effecting equilibrium in the affairs of the Muslims, we should try to:

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

Self-reform is the Beginning

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

فَاقِدُ الشَّيءِ لاَ يُعْطِيه

One who does not possess something cannot confer the same[2]

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

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[2] This is also a proverb in the Arabic language.

The Holy Qur'ān says:

﴿ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ قَالُوٓا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾ أَلَآ إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَٰكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴾

And when it said to them, do not create disequilibrium in the earth, they say we alone are the reformers. Mind they themselves are mischief mongers, but they are not aware.[3]

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

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

1. Almighty Allāh says in chapter 10, verse 35:

.... أَفَمَن يَهْدِىٓ إِلَى ٱلْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَن يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّن لَّا يَهِدِّىٓ إِلَّآ أَن يُهْدَىٰ ..

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

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

2. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

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[3] *Holy Qur'an*, 2: 11-12

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2. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

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[3] *Holy Qur'an*, 2: 11-12

عَجِبْتُ لِمَنْ يَتَصَدّى لإِصْلاَحِ النّاسِ وَنَفْسُهُ أَشَدُّ شَيْءٍ فَسَاداً فَلاَ يُصْلِحُهَا وَيَتَعاطَى إِصْلاَحَ غَيْرِهِ

I am surprised at one who takes charge of reforming the people while his soul is in greater need of reform, and he does not reform it but undertakes to reform others.[4]

3. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

إِنْ سَمَتْ هِمَّتُكَ لإِصْلاَحِ النّاسِ فَابْدَأْ بِنَفْسِكَ فَإِنْ تَعاطِيْكَ صَلاَحَ غَيْرِكَ وَأَنْتَ فَاسِدٌ أَكْبَرُ الْعَيْبِ

If your aspiration rises to reform the people, then start with your self for your mission to reform other than yourself while you are corrupt is the greatest of deficiencies.[5]

4. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

مَنْ لَمْ يُصْلِحْ نَفْسَهُ لَمْ يُصْلِحْ غَيْرَهُ

Whosoever does not reform himself would not reform others.[6]

The Reality of Self-Reform

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

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

1- The Intellectual Faculty (*al-quwwat al-'aqliyyah*)
2- The Appetitive Faculty (*al-quwwat al-shahwiyyah*)

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[4] Āmadi, *Ghuraru'l Ḥikam wa Duraru'l Kalim*, tr. 4853, p. 240
[5] *Ibid.*, tr. 4765, p.237
[6] *Ibid.*, tr. 4772, p.237

3- The Irascible Faculty (*al-quwwat al-'aqliyyah*)

If the faculty of intellect does not deviate towards the directions of excess (*ifrāṭ*) or negligence (*tafrīṭ*) and the faculties of desire and anger are submissive to the faculty of the intellect, the soul would enjoy its equilibrium. And this, according to some ethicians is the state of *'adālah* (equilibrium). The esteemed mystic Mullā Hādi Sabzawārī in his excellent commentary of *Du'ā' Jawshan al-Kabīr* called *Sharḥ al-Asmā'* says:

إنّ للإنسان ثلاث قوى: قوّة دراكة، وقوّة شهويّة، وقوّة غضبيّة، فانحراف القوّة الدراكة منه إلى جانبي الإفراط والتفريط يسمّى(جربزة) و(بلاهة) واعتدالها (حكمة)، وانحراف القوّة الشهويّة إلى طرفي الإفراط والتفريط يسمّى(شرها) و(خمودا) واعتدالها (عفة)، وانحراف القوّة الغضبيّة إلى حدّي الإفراط والتفريط يسمّى (تهورا) و(جبنا) واعتدالها شجاعة.وهذا الإعتدال هو المسمّى (بالعدالة) وهو الصراط المستقيم الذي هو أحدّ من السيف و أدقّ من الشعر...

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

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

The diversion of the faculty of comprehension towards the two directions of excess and negligence are called *jurbuzah* (deception) and *balāhah* (silliness) respectively, and *its state of equilibrium is known as al-ḥikmah (wisdom)*;

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

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

And this state of *al-i'tidāl* (equilibrium of the aforementioned three faculties) is called *al-'adālah* (justice) and it is the straight path (*ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) which is sharper than the sword and thinner than hair...'[7]

In order to have a better picture of what Mullā is trying to say, let us look at what Mawla Fayḍ Kashānī has to say in his *al-Maḥajjat al-Bayḍā'*:

...أمّا قوّةُ العلمِ فحُسنُها و صَلاحُها في أنْ تَصيرَ بحيثُ يَسهُلُ لَها دركُ الفَرقِ بينَ الصِّدقِ والكذبِ في الأقوالِ وبينَ الحقِّ والباطلِ في الإعتقاداتِ وبينَ الجميلِ والقبيحِ في الأفعالِ فإذا تحصّلتْ هذه القوّةُ حصلَ منها ثمرةُ الحكمةِ والحكمةُ رأسُ الأخلاقِ الحسنةِ وهي التي قالَ اللهُ تعالى فيها: ومَنْ يؤتَ الحكمةَ فقدْ أوتيَ خيرًا كثيرًا وإمّا قوّةُ الغضبِ فحُسنُها في أنْ يقتصرَ انقباضُها وانبساطُها على حدِّ ما تقتضيهِ الحكمةُ، وكذلكَ الشهوةُ حسنُها وصلاحُها في أنْ تكونَ تحتَ إشارةِ الحكمةِ أعني إشارةَ العقلِ و الدينِ، وأمّا قوّةُ العدلِ فهي في ضبطِ قوّةِ الغضبِ والشهوةِ تحتَ إشارةِ العقلِ والشرعِ ...

'The rational faculty is sound and good when it is easily able to discriminate, that is, to distinguish honesty from lies in speech, truth from falsehood in questions of belief, and beauty from ugliness in actions. When this faculty is sound it bears fruit in the form of wisdom, which is the chief of the good traits of character, and regarding which God has said, *And whosoever is granted wisdom has truly been granted abundant good*. Regarding the irascible faculty, this is sound when its movements lie within the bounds required by wisdom. Likewise the appetitive faculty is sound and good when it is under the command of the religion and the intellect. As for the faculty to effect a just equilibrium, it is this which sets desire and anger under the command of the intellect and the religion...'[8]

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

Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

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[7] Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥu 'l Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*, p. 213
[8] Mawlā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al-Maḥajjat al-Bayḍā'*, v.5

الْفَضَائِلُ أَرْبَعَةُ أَجْنَاسٍ: أَحَدُهَا الْحِكْمَةُ وَقِوَامُهَا فِي الْفِكْرَةِ وَالثَّانِي الْعِفَّةُ وَقِوَامُهَا فِي الشَّهْوَةِ، وَالثَّالِثُ الْقُوَّةُ وَقِوَامُهَا فِي الْغَضَبِ. وَالرَّابِعُ الْعَدْلُ وَقِوَامُهُ فِي اعْتِدَالِ قِوَى النَّفْسِ.

Virtues are four kinds: First is wisdom (*al-ḥikmah*) which is sustained by intellection (*al-fikrah*), second is temperance (*al-'iffah*) which is sustained by appetite (*al-shahwah*), third is power (*al-quwwah*) which is sustained by anger (*al-ghaḍab*), and the fourth is justice (*'adālah*) which is sustained by the equilibrium of the faculties of the soul.[9]

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

The Grand Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī says:

ابدال در اصطلاح سالکانی هستند که تحت تدبیر شخص معین نیستند. و از آنها بعنوان ((مفرِد)) یا ((مفرَد)) یاد می شود چه این که اینها راه را به تنهائی طی می کنند. گرچه سخت است ولی رفتنی است و گرچه پیشرفت انسان تحت نظر مدیر و مدبر بیشتر است، لکن بتنهائی هم می توان طی طریق نمود

"*Abdāl* terminologically stands for those wayfarers on the path of God who are not trained by a specific master. They are also called "*mufrid*" or "*mufrad*" This is because they traverse the path by themselves. Despite this being difficult it can be traversed, and although the human being develops more under the tutelage of a trainer and supervisor, however, one can also traverse the path by himself."[10]

He also narrates:

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[9] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.75, p.81

[10] Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Zan dar Āineye Jalāl o Jamāl*, p. 233

وقتی از عارفی پرسیدند : ((ابدال)) چند نفرند؟ فرمود: ((اَرْبَعُوْنَ نَفْسًا)) ابدال چهل تن هستند، و سوال کردند که: چرا نگفتید: ((اَرْبَعُوْنَ رَجُلاً))، چهل مردند، و گفتید چهل نفس هستند؟ در جواب گفت: اولاً: همه این بزرگان مرد نیستند، بلکه در بین آنان زنان هستند. و ثانیاً: کسی که به مقام ابدال نائل می آید انسان است و انسان بودن اختصاص به زن یا مرد ندارد.

"When a saint was asked how many are the '*abdāl*'? He responded saying: '*Arba'ūna nafsan*' (40 souls). He was asked: Why did you say 'forty souls' instead of 'forty men'? He responded saying: 'Firstly: not all of these great personalities are men; rather we also have women among them'; and secondly: whosoever attains the station of the *abdāl* is 'a human being [in the true sense of the word]', and being human is not restricted to men."[11]

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

1. The late saint Āyatullāh Sayyid Hāshim al-Mūsawī reports Āyatullāh al-'Uẓmā Sayyid 'Alī Qāḍī al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the spiritual mentor of 'Allāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī to have said:

قَالَ لِيْ أُسْتَاذِيْ الْمَرْحُوْم اَلْقَاضِيْ قُدِّسَ سِرُّهُ: أَنَّهُ مُحَالٌ أَنْ يَصِلَ إِنْسَانٌ إِلى مَقَامِ التَّوْحِيْدِ بِدُوْنِ طَرِيْقِ سَيِّدِ الشُّهَدَاءِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامِ.

My teacher, Marḥūm Qāḍī (may his spirit be sanctified) said to me that it is impossible for a human being to attain the station of tawḥīd [proximity to God] without the path of Sayyid al-Shuhadā.[12]

2. Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Tehrānī in his 'Spirit Immaterial' narrates that Sayyid 'Alī Qāḍī Ṭabāṭabā'ī said:

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[11] Ayatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Zan dar Āīneye Jalāl o Jamāl*, p. 233
[12] Sayyid 'Alī Mūsawī al-Ḥaddād, *'Ārifun Fī al-Riḥāb al-Qudsiyya*, p.47

وصول به مقام توحید و سیر صحیح الی الله و عرفان ذات احدیت عزّ اسمُه بدون ولایت امامان شیعه و خلفای به حق از علی بن ابی طالب (ع) و فرزندانش از بتول عذراء محال است

It is impossible to attain the station of Divine unity and traverse correctly towards God and attain the knowledge of the His Unique Essence (Invincible is His Name), without the guardianship of the Shī'ah Imāms (upon whom be peace) and the true Caliphs starting from 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib and his progeny through the *Batūl-e-'Adhrā'* (Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima ('a))[13].

3. 'Allāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the Author of al-Mīzān, is reported to have said:

آن حضرت (امام الحسین (ع)) را برای رفع حجاب و موانع طریق نسبت به سالکین راه خدا عنایتی عظیم است

That Ḥaḍrat [i.e. Imam al-Ḥusayn ('a)] has great attention towards the wayfarers of the path of God in removing the veil and impediments of the 'path of God'.[14]

4. Āyatullāh Qāḍī Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the spiritual mentor of 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī is reported to have said:

اگر من به جائی رسیده باشم از دو چیز است:(۱) قرآن کریم, (۲) زیارت سید الشهداء

If I have attained any station, it is by two things: (1) The Noble Qur'ān, and (2) Ziyārah of Sayyid al-Shuhadā' [Doyen of the Martyrs].'[15]

5. Sayyid 'Ādil al-'Alawī, quotes his late mentor, the pious Shi'ite Marja', Āyatullāh al-'Uẓmā Shahāb al-Dīn al-Najafī al-Mar'ashī as having advised him as follows:

إذا أردت التوفيق في حياتك العلمية فعليك بثلاثة أعمال: الأول: كن دوماً على طهارة ووضوء فإنه ينير القلب ويزيل الهم. الثاني: شيع الجنائز أي جنازة رأيتها ولو بأقدام.

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[13] Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭhcrānī, *Rūḥe Mujarrad*, p.329
[14] Hādi Hāshimiyān, *Daryāye 'Irfān*, p.97
[15] *Ibid.*, p.98

الثّالثُ: شَارِكْ فِي قَضِيَّةِ الْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامِ بِأَيِّ نَحْوٍ مِنَ الْمُشَارَكَةِ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: كُنْتُ مِنْ مُدَرِّسِي الْحَوْزَةِ الْمَعْرُوفِينَ، وَكُنْتُ آنَذَاكَ أُوَزِّعُ الشَّايَ عَلَى النَّاسِ فِي الْمَجَالِسِ وَالْمَآتِمِ الْحُسَيْنِيَّةِ.

If you would like divine succor (*tawfīq*) in your intellectual and practical life, you should practice the following three acts:

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

Then he said to me: I was one of the famous professors of the Islamic Seminary; and during that period I would distribute tea to the people who attended ceremonies for mourning Imam al-Ḥusayn ('a).[16]

Scholars of ethics and gnosis have produced thought provoking works about the path to self-reform. The limited scope of this commentary however does not allow the author to delve on all the details of this path. Nevertheless, God willing we would try to cover some of the significant rudimentary stations of wayfaring very soon.

In short one must reflect on the following tradition: both the Shī'ah as well as Sunnī narrators of tradition quote that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said:

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمُ الثَّقَلَيْنِ مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا بَعْدِي كِتَابَ اللهِ وَعِتْرَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي

...I leave behind you the two weighty things; if you hold fast unto them you will never go astray after my demise: The Book of Allāh and my Progeny...[17]

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

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[16] Sayyid 'Ādil al-'Alawī, *Qabasāt min Ḥayāti Sayyidina al-Ustādh*, p. 118

[17] al-Ṭabrasī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, v.2, p.380

WAKING UP: THE FIRST STAGE OF SELF-REFORM

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

قُلْ إِنَّمَآ أَعِظُكُم بِوَٰحِدَةٍ ۖ أَن تَقُومُوا۟ لِلَّهِ مَثْنَىٰ وَفُرَٰدَىٰ

'Say [O Prophet of Allah] I exhort you only to one word: rise for Allāh, in two's and one...'

Khwājah 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, in his monumental work of practical gnosis, *Manāzil as-Sā'irīn* (the Dwellings of the Wayfarers), which is a text studied by many of the wayfarers on the path of God, after quoting the above verse says:

القَوْمَةُ للهِ هِيَ اليَقَظَةُ مِنْ سِنَةِ الغَفْلَةِ، وَالنُّهُوضُ عَنْ وَرْطَةِ الفَتْرَةِ. وَهِيَ أَوَّلُ مَا يَسْتَنِيرُ قَلْبُ العَبْدِ بِالحَيَاةِ لِرُؤْيَةِ نُورِ التَّنْبِيهِ

'To rise for Allāh' [as indicated in the verse] means to wake up from the sleep of heedlessness (*ghaflah*) and spring up from the entanglement of lassitude, and that is the first illumination of the heart of the servant with [true] life due to beholding the light of awakening (*tanbih*).[18]

When the human being wakes up from his slumber of heedlessness, his imaginative life subsides and his true life begins. His entire past, which was brim with 'mundane aspirations' collapses and he starts experiencing a life, which would benefit him eternally. So important is this step, that experts of practical gnosis (*al-'irfān al-'amalī*) believe that *yaqẓah* is:

'the first step of wayfaring towards Allāh, and accurately speaking 'the foundation in the journey to God.'[19]

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[18] Khwāja 'Abdullāh Ansārī, *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, ch.1 , p.36

[19] Ustād Muḥammad Shujā'ī, *Maqālāt- Ṭuriqe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiyeh (1)*, p. 24

The late Imām Khumaynī, who was also known as an authority in gnosis (*'irfān*), at one time in Najaf advised the seminarians as follows:

تا كي مي‌خواهيد در خواب غفلت به سر بريد، و در فساد و تباهي غوطه‌ور باشيد؟ از خدا بترسيد از عواقب امور بپرهيزيد از خواب غفلت بيدار شويد. شما هنوز بيدار نشده‌ايد هنوز قدم اول را برنداشته‌ايد. قدم اول در سلوك «يقظه » است. ولی شما در خواب به سر مي‌بريد چشمها باز و دلها در خواب فرو رفته است.

How long do you wish to remain in the sleep of negligence, plunged in corruption? Fear God! Beware of the aftermath of your deeds! Wake up from the sleep of negligence! You have not yet awakened. You have not yet taken the first step. *The first step of wayfaring is yaqẓah (awakening)*, but you are still asleep. Your eyes may be open, but your hearts are asleep...[20]

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

منزل اوّل انسانيت «يقظه » است. و آن بيدار شدن از خواب غفلت و هشيار شدن از سكر طبيعت است، و فهميدن اينكه انسان مسافر است، و هر مسافر زاد و راحله مي‌خواهد. زاد و راحله انسان خصال خود انسان است

"...The first stage of humanness (*insāniyyat*) is *yaqẓah*. It signifies the awakening from the slumber of obliviousness and the intoxication of physical nature, and the realization of the fact that man is a traveler and like any other traveler he also needs some provisions for this journey. His morality and character are his provisions for this journey..."[21]

بدان كه اول منزل از منازل انسانيت منزل يقظه و بيداري است، چنانچه مشايخ اهل سلوك در منازل سالكان بيان فرموده‌اند . و از براي اين منزل، چنانچه شيخ عظيم الشأن شاه آبادي، دام ظله، بيان فرمودند، ده بيت است كه اكنون در مقام تعداد آن نيستيم

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[20] Imām Khumaynī, *Jihād-e Akbar*, p. 51
[21] Imām Khumaynī, *Chehel Ḥadith*, tr. Four, On Kibr pp. 97-98

"...Remember that the first and foremost step towards authentic humanness is that of awareness and awakening (*yaqẓah*), as mentioned by the leading mystics (*mashāyikh*) concerning the stages of wayfaring. There are ten stages in this step, as enumerated by the great Shaykh Shāhābadī, which we are not in a position to elaborate here..."[22]

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

The Holy Qur'ān and the teachings of the Sunnah inform us that the source of this noble spark is Almighty Allāh. It is He who wakes the slumbering human being and enables him to start this significant journey of eternal human salvation:

1. Almighty Allāh says in chapter 4, verse 79:

مَّآ أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ ٱللَّهِ

Whatever good befalls you is from Allāh

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

وَمَا بِكُم مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ ٱللَّهِ

Whatever blessing you have is from Allāh...

3. In the morning supplication of "*al-Ṣabāḥ*" Imam 'Alī ('a) cries:

إِلٰهِي إِنْ لَمْ تَبْتَدِئْنِي الرَّحْمَةُ مِنْكَ بِحُسْنِ التَّوْفِيقِ فَمَنِ السَّالِكُ بِي إِلَيْكَ فِي وَاضِحِ الطَّرِيقِ

O God, if Mercy from You does not begin with fair success for me, ***then who can take me to You upon the evident path***?[23]

4. Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn ('a) in his supplication of praise says:

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[22] Imām Khumaynī, *Chehel Ḥadīth*, tr. No.10- On Desire and Hope

[23] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, Du'ā al-Ṣabāḥ, Arabic ed., p.93-94

...ثُمَّ سَلَكَ بِهِمْ طَرِيقَ ارادَتِهِ وَبَعَثَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ مَحَبَّتِهِ...

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

5. Sulaymān bin Khālid narrates that Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) [once] said to him:

يَا سُلَيْمَانُ إِنَّ لَكَ قَلْباً وَمَسَامِعَ وَإِنَّ اللهَ إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَهْدِيَ عَبْداً فَتَحَ مَسَامِعَ قَلْبِهِ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ بِهِ غَيْرَ ذلِكَ خَتَمَ مَسَامِعَ قَلْبِهِ فَلاَ يَصْلُحُ أَبَداً وَهُوَ قَوْلُ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ:(أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُها)

O Sulaymān, surely you have a heart and senses of hearing, and certainly if Allah wants to guide a servant, He Opens the ears of his heart; but if he wants other than that for him, he closes the ears of his heart, as a result of which he can never attain the state of his equilibrium; and to this does the following speech of God allude: '*Or are there locks upon their hearts*?'[47:24][24]

In fact the entire Qur'ān has been sent down in order to wake the human being up. Almighty Allah teaches His servants to reflect and ponder over the verses of the Qur'ān so that they can attain the state of light of wakefulness. Look at the following verses:

1. In Ṣūrat al- Ṣād (38), verse 29 He says:

كِتَٰبٌ أَنزَلْنَٰهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَٰرَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوٓاْ ءَايَٰتِهِۦ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُوْلُواْ ٱلْأَلْبَٰبِ

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

2. And in chapter 14, verse no.1 He says:

[24] Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.5, p.203

الٓرٰ ۚ كِتَٰبٌ أَنزَلْنَٰهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ ٱلنَّاسَ مِنَ ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ إِلَى ٱلنُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطِ ٱلْعَزِيزِ ٱلْحَمِيدِ

Alif, Lām, Rā; This is a Book We sent down unto you so that you bring mankind out from darkness into light by their Lord's permission, to the path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable.

3. And in chapter 47, verse no. 24, He says:

﴿ أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ أَمْ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَآ ﴾

Do they not then ponder over the Qur'ān or is it that there are locks upon their hearts?

The reason, we are told, why many are still asleep is their unprepared state of receiving the divine spark. Due to their continual sinning, they have accumulated barriers in their hearts, and thus are not receptive and cannot wake up from their slumber of heedlessness. So long as they have not 'locked their hearts as explained in the previous tradition' and [not] lost their discerning spirit and 'innate nature' [like those hypocrites and disbelievers referred to in verses 7 & 18 of Sūrat al-Baqarah] they still have the opportunity to change, and they should not despair. Rather, while trying to prepare themselves to attain this foundational state by pondering over the verses of the Holy Qur'ān, they should be steadfast in refraining from sin, obey the laws of Almighty Allāh and perpetually pray for the state of wakefulness too.

Imam al-Ḥusayn('a) in his well-known supplication of 'Arafah cries:

إِلٰهِي اُطْلُبْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ حَتّٰى أَصِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَاجْذُبْنِي بِمِنَّكَ حَتّٰى أُقْبِلَ إِلَيْكَ

O God, Seek me by Your Mercy until I reach You and attract me by Your Favor until I draw towards You.[25]

[25] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Mafatīḥ al-Jinān*, Du'ā' 'Arafah

Besides, the aspirants of wakefulness should also refrain from those *makrūhāt* [abominable deeds] that blur the heart and the intellect from comprehension, and engage themselves in elements that quicken the process of the soul's enlightenment. The following traditions are worthy of reflection:

1. Imam 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

اِستَدِيمُوا الذِّكْرَ فَإِنَّهُ يُنِيرُ الْقَلْبَ وَهُوَ أَفْضَلُ الْعِبَادَةِ

Be constant in the remembrance of God (*dhikr*), *for that enlightens the heart*, and it is the best worship.[26]

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

2. Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ لِلْقُلُوبِ صَدَأً كَصَدَإِ النُّحَاسِ فَاجْلُوهَا بِالإِسْتِغْفَارِ

Surely there is a corrosion for the hearts as the corrosion of copper; therefore *shine them by seeking God's forgiveness*.[27]

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

لاَ تُكْثِرُوا الْكَلاَمَ بِغَيْرِ ذِكْرِ اللّهِ فَإِنَّ كَثْرَةَ الْكَلاَمِ بِغَيْرِ ذِكْرِ اللّهِ تُقْسِي الْقُلُوبَ وَإِنَّ أَبْعَدَ النَّاسِ مِنَ اللّهِ الْقَاسِي الْقَلْبِ

Do not talk much about that which concerns other than the remembrance of Allāh, for that *hardens the heart*; and surely the most remote from Allāh among the people is the one who possesses a hard heart.[28]

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[26] Āmadi, *Ghurarū'l Ḥikam wa Durarū'l Kalim*, tr. 3654
[27] *Muntakhab Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, p.432, tr. 5357
[28] *Ibid.*, p.431, tr. 5333

4. Imam 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

الْبُكَاءُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ يُنِيرُ الْقَلْبَ وَيَعْصِمُ مِنْ مُعَاوَدَةِ الذَّنْبِ

Weeping out of the fear of Allāh, enlightens the heart and prevents [one] from repeating sin[29]

[We should understand that '*khashyah*' which is translated as fear should not be taken to merely mean 'the conventional fear' that we know of. '*khashyah*', according to Rāghib al-Isfahānī, is:

خَوْفٌ يَشُوبُهُ تَعْظِيمٌ

'fear mixed with veneration'.[30]

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

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

لاَ تُمِيتُوا الْقُلُوبَ بِكَثْرَةِ الطَّعَامِ وَالشَّرَابِ، فَإِنَّ الْقُلُوبَ تَمُوتُ كَالزُّرُوعِ إِذَا كَثُرَ عَلَيْهِ الْمَاءُ

Do not deaden your hearts by a lot of food and drink for surely the hearts die like plantations if a lot of water is put on them.[31]

6. Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

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[29] Āmadī, *Ghurar'l Ḥikam wa Durar'l Kalim*, tr. 3730
[30] Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, new ed., p.283
[31] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.63, p. 331

...طَلَبْتُ نُورَ الْقَلْبِ فَوَجَدْتُهُ فِي التَّفَكُّرِ وَالْبُكَاءِ...

...I sought for *the light of the heart* and found it in intellection and weeping [for those things that one should weep for such as regret of sin, etc.]...[32]

7. Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) is reported to have advised Jābir al-Ju'fī as follows:

اِسْتَجْلِبْ شِدَّةَ التَّيَقُّظِ بِصِدْقِ الْخَوْفِ

Attract *extreme wakefulness* by true fear

And true fear of God can only be achieved when one has knowledge of Allah and His Sublime Attributes. And the beginning of 'knowledge' is conceptual knowledge: knowledge by the intellect. Then comes presential knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍurī*), when the spirit attains its height.

8. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) in a lengthy tradition says:

... وَمَنْ أَحَبَّ عَلِيًّا بَعَثَ اللهُ مَلَكَ الْمَوْتِ إِلَيْهِ بِرِفْقٍ وَدَفَعَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَنْهُ هَوْلَ مُنْكَرٍ وَنَكِيرٍ وَنَوَّرَ قَلْبَهُ وَبَيَّضَ وَجْهَهُ...

And whosoever loves 'Alī, Allāh (swt) would send the Angel of death to him in a friendly manner and remove from him the fear of *Munkir* and *Nakīr and enlighten his heart* and whiten his face...[33]

As pointed out much earlier, it is important to understand what kind of '*ḥubb*' of 'Alī is spoken about in this radiant tradition. Obviously it is not an evanescent emotional pull. For a better understanding of this, look at the following tradition:

عَنْ أَبِي عُبَيْدَةَ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ(ع) قَالَ: مَنْ أَحَبَّنَا فَهُوَ مِنَّا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ: قُلْتُ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ مِنْكُمْ؟ قَالَ: مِنَّا وَاللهِ، أَمَا سَمِعْتَ قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ(ع): (فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي)

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[32] Hāji Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, v.12, p.173

[33] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, p. 277

Abū 'Ubaydah is reported to have said that Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) said:

Whosoever loves us then he is from us the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)

Abū 'Ubaydah said: May I be made your ransom; "from you [the Ahl al- Bayt('a)]?

Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) responds: "[yes] from us, I swear by Allah; have you not heard the statement of Prophet Ibrāhīm ('a):

"*Then whosoever follows me, then verily he is from me.*'

[Sūrat Ibrāhim,v 36]

This tradition is narrative of a love that is coherent with following the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Were we to ponder a little more, we would come to understand true love is the unity of the lover with the beloved. The veracity of one's claim of the love of Ahl al-Bayt ('a) becomes apparent when one reflects their attributes in his personality. Readers are requested to ponder over this contention carefully.

FUDHAYL WAKES UP!

History informs us of people who at a sensitive moment of their lives woke up from their deep slumber, and underwent a transformation that served the foundation of their eternal salvation. One such person was Fuḍayl bin 'Ayyāḍ.

In the beginning Fuḍayl was well-known as a caravan robber. He would stop different caravans in the middle of their journeys and would steal from them whatever he desired. However it is said that he would not transgress the limits by hurting anyone or leaving them with no provisions to reach their destination... Once he got in love with a certain woman, and headed for her house. While climbing the wall of her house, he happened to hear the following verse of Qur'ān from someone who was reciting the Qur'ān in the neighborhood:

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَن تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ ...

Has the time not yet come for the believers that their hearts turn humble for the remembrance of Allāh...?[34]

On listening to this verse, he underwent a transformation and cried:

Yā Rabbī qad āna
O Lord, the time indeed has come!

Thereafter he left the place and returned back and adopted a path of detachment from the world and self-reform. It is also said that he had a son called 'Alī who was higher than him in rank in terms of detachment, worship and self-reform; however, he did not live for long. One day while he was standing near the spring of Zamzam in Masjid al-Ḥarām he heard the following verses of Qur'an from someone nearby:

﴿ وَتَرَى ٱلْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّقَرَّنِينَ فِى ٱلْأَصْفَادِ ﴿٤٩﴾ سَرَابِيلُهُم مِّن قَطِرَانٍ وَتَغْشَىٰ وُجُوهَهُمُ ٱلنَّارُ ﴿٥٠﴾ ﴾

And you will see the guilty on that day linked together in chains. Their shirts made of pitch and the fire covering their faces.[35]

On hearing this verse, he fell down and died.[36]

Such changes do not happen for all. One must prepare himself/herself in order to be overtaken by the divine hold. Despite Fuḍayl's evil attitude, he must have had elements that enabled him to be receptive and wake up from his slumber. We should not conjecture that wakefulness is reserved for a certain class, and others are deprived of the same. The following universal law sums it up:

﴿ ... لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا ٱكْتَسَبَتْ ... ﴾

...For it (i.e. the soul) is what it has earned, and against it is what it has earned....[37]

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[34] The Holy Qur'an, 57: 16
[35] The Holy Qur'an, 14:, 49 & 50
[36] Ustād Muḥammad Shujā'ī, *Maqālāt- Tariqe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiye (1)*, p. 29-30
[37] Holy Qur'an, 2:286

Therefore one should struggle to refine his heart and prepare it for the first spark to ignite.

THE AHLU'LBAYT ('A)- INTERMEDIARIES OF ALLAH'S GRACE

Seeking the support of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and his sinless progeny (upon whom be peace) can also be very helpful in igniting the spark of wakefulness. Rather, as we pointed out earlier, 'it is impossible for one to attain the heights of perfection without their support'. This is because the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are the intermediaries of Allāh's Grace. Every thing that anyone possesses originates from Almighty Allāh, but passes through them. This should in no way make us think that they bestow grace independently, for every element of the world of contingent existence entirely subsists by Allāh, including the noble beings of the Prophets ('a) and Imāms ('a).

Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

إِنَّا صَنَايِعُ رَبِّنَا وَالنَّاسُ بَعْدُ صَنَايِعُ لَنَا

We are the handicrafts of our Lord and the people then are our handicrafts.[38]

Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

نَحْنُ السَّبَبُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ اللهِ تَعَالَى

We are the intermediary between you and Allāh[39]

Look at the following verses of the famous Ziyārah of Jāmi'ah for a better understanding of the significant role played by the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and his infallible progeny (upon whom be peace):

مَنْ أَرَادَ اللّٰهَ بَدَأَ بِكُمْ

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[38] Imām 'Alī ('a), *Nahj al-Balāghah*, letter 28. Al-Khu'ī in his *Minhāj al-Barā'ah*, a comprehensive commentary on the *Nahj al-Balaghah* says: Imām ('a) by his statement *wannāsu ṣanāyi'un lanā* (and the people are our handicrafts) meant that they are the intermediaries of Almighty Allāh's grace (Mīrzā Ḥabibullāh al-Hāshimī al-Khū'ī, *Minhāj al-Barā'ah*, vol.9, p. 98)

[39] Āyatullāh Ḥasan Zādeh Āmulī quotes *Bishārat al-Muṣṭafā*, p.90 in his gloss over the *Minhāj al-Barā'ah* of al-Khū'ī

Whosoever seeks Allāh begins through you

ومن قصده توجه بكم

And whosoever intends Him pays attention to Him by means of you[40]

Therefore the light of wakefulness originates from Allāh but passes through the station of *wilāyah* (which the Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible progeny occupy by Allāh's permission).

Past history has manifested this verity in different places. An example of such light of wakefulness can be seen in the personality of Zuhayr bin Qayn, who is reckoned as one of the highly esteemed supporters of Sayyid al-Shuhadā' ('a) in the plains of Karbalā. At the onset he was among those who disliked confronting the Imām('a). Later however he is said to have woken up by the Imām ('a)'s special attention.

The Spark Ignited by Imam al-Husayn ('a) in Zuhayr!

The companions of Zuhayr narrate:

During the very days when Imam al-Ḥusayn('a) left Makkah for Kūfah, we also together with Zuhayr were leaving Makkah. Due to the path being the same between the stopovers on our way, we would reach the gathering of the Imām('a) but try to remain aloof from them and disliked to move with the Imām('a) and his group. And Zuhayr likewise was the same. Whenever the caravan of the Imām('a) moved, we would remain behind so that we should not be together; then we would continue our way; and wherever the Imām ('a) stopped, we would move and continue. This trend continued until we reached a stopover when the Imām ('a) together with his companions camped on one side, and we too had no option but to camp on the other side. While we were seated eating our meals, a messenger from the Imam's camp came to us, and after expressing his salutations addressing Zuhayr, said: 'Imām('a) is calling you'. Witnessing this we were so overtaken that we left the morsels of food from our hands and were left in amazement. The wife of Zuhayr, who also was with him, said to him: Subhānallāh! The son of the Messenger of Allāh is calling you and you are thinking whether to go or not?!! Rise and go and see what he has to say. Zuhayr stood up and in the state of astonishment went to the presence of the Imām('a) and entered the specific tent of the Imām('a). It did not take long before we

[40] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Mafātiḥ al-Jinān*, Arabic ed., pp. 620-626

saw Zuhayr coming out of the Imam's tent, while his face was radiant and he was in the state of complete happiness and joy. When he reached us, he said: Remove my tent and place it near the tent of the Imām ('a). And he said to his wife 'I have resolved to be in the company of the Imām ('a) and sacrifice my soul for him. Then he left her in the company of one of his relatives so that he may take her to her family.[41]

Ethicians believe that the sudden transformation in Zuhayr needed special attention of Imam al-Ḥusayn('a), who was also an intermediary of grace.

Dear readers this light of wakefulness can take a person so high that he can rank among those who had the privilege of being a noble companion of Imam al-Ḥusayn('a). If we carefully read the Ziyārah of the martyrs of Karbala we come to realize how exalted was Zuhayr and his likes:

السَّلامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَوْلِيَاءَ اللهِ وَ أَحِبَّاءَهُ...

Peace be on you O friends of Allāh and His lovers...

السَّلامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ دِيْنِ اللهِ

Peace be on you O helpers of the religion of Allāh

السَّلامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ

Peace be on you O helpers of the Messenger of Allāh

السَّلامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ أَمِيْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ

Peace be on you O helpers of the Commander of the faithful

السَّلامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ فَاطِمَةَ سَيِّدَةِ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِيْنَ

Peace be on you O helpers of Fāṭimah,
The Mistress of the Women of the Universe

السَّلامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ أَبِي مُحَمَّدٍ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ الزَّكِيِّ النَّاصِحِ

Peace be on you O helpers of Abī Muḥammad al-Ḥasan bin 'Alī...[42]

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[41] Ustād Muhammad Shujā'ī, *Maqālāt- Tariqe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiye (I)*, p. 37

[42] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Mafātiḥ al-Jinān*, Arabic ed., p.503

And is it possible for one to be a helper of someone whom he has not met or seen? Why do we say that these companions were the helpers of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), Imam ʻAlī (ʻa), Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima (ʻa) and Imam al-Ḥasan (ʻa) while they accompanied and supported Imam al-Ḥusayn (ʻa)? This is because they are the helpers of religion (*yā anṣāra dīnillāh*). Therefore they help all those who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of *dīn*. Hence they live before their time. They live with Ādam (ʻa), they live with Nūḥ (ʻa), they live with Ibrāhīm (ʻa); they live with Mūsā (ʻa), they live with ʻĪsā (ʻa), they live with all the Prophets of Allāh (swt). This is because they sacrificed their lives to revive the teachings of religion and woke the slumbering folk. Such people live in the past, present, and future. They are beyond time and place. Small wonder it is that we are taught to address them saying:

فَيَالَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ مَعَكُمْ فَأَفُوزَ مَعَكُمْ

I wish I would have been in your company so that I may have succeeded with you.[43]

After one has woken up from his deep slumber and attained the light of *yaqẓah*, there are particular effects that he would experience. Such effects are outlined and expounded in books of practical gnosis. Observing brevity here we would not like to cover their details. Instead, let us briefly look at the second foundational stage of self-reform:

The second stage of self-reform is *al-tawbah* (return to Allāh).

The Reality of Tawbah

Tawbah (which literally means "to return") is a state of the return of God's servant to his Lord. Wakefulness makes one realize the extent of oppression one had done to himself all his life. This reality does not give him any rest, and he struggles to clear himself off sin. It is not as simple as it seems, but the wakeful wayfarer, is always resolute in clearing himself from the dirt by which he blemished his heart all his life.

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[43] Shaykh ʻAbbās Qummī, *Mafātiḥ al-Jinān*, Arabic ed., p.503.

Ethicians believe that before the servant returns to his Lord, Almighty Allāh returns to His servant with His Mercy. Small wonder it is that one of the beautiful names of Almighty Allāh is *al-Tawwāb* [The One Who often turns in Mercy]. This reality is manifested in the following verse of the Qur'ān:

﴿ وَعَلَى ٱلثَّلَٰثَةِ ٱلَّذِينَ خُلِّفُواْ حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا ضَاقَتۡ عَلَيۡهِمُ ٱلۡأَرۡضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتۡ وَضَاقَتۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ أَنفُسُهُمۡ وَظَنُّوٓاْ أَن لَّا مَلۡجَأَ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ إِلَّآ إِلَيۡهِ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ لِيَتُوبُوٓاْ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلتَّوَّابُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ ﴾

And to the three who were left behind, until, when the earth became strait for them, for all its breadth, and their souls became strait for them, and they thought that there was no shelter from God except in Him, then He turned towards them [Mercifully] [*tāba 'alayhim*], that they may turn [*liyatūbū*]; surely Only Allāh is Oft-returning [with mercy] [*al-Tawwāb*] and is All-Compassionate.[44]

This verse refers to three Muslims who refused to participate in the battle of Tabūk due to their laziness. Then after the battle, when the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and the Muslims returned to Madīnah, the three went to the Prophet (ṣ) and expressed their apology, but the Prophet(ṣ) did not speak to them, and the Muslims likewise, following the Prophet (s), did not speak to them, and left them alone. The children too stayed away from them and their own wives were not responsive to them. In this way, they were left so much alone, that the town of Madīnah was a constriction for them, and they left for the mountains and open grounds. The situation had become such that both time and place was a source of constriction for them. And finally they knew that besides Allāh, there was no point of hope. This is when Almighty Allāh turned to them in Mercy, as a result of which they started repenting and doing *tawbah*. Then Almighty Allāh again returned to them in His Mercy by forgiving them.

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[44] Holy Qur'ān, 9:118

The aforementioned verse therefore inspires us that the first *tawba* (*return in mercy*)[45] is from Allāh. This then enables the servant to turn to Him and repent. Then he needs another *tawba* (return) from Almighty Allāh so that his sins are forgiven. Therefore the *tawbah* of the servant is sandwiched by two returns of Almighty Allāh. The verse also indicates that Allāh's return to his servants was continuous, until they repented and returned to their Lord. The letter "*waw*" at the beginning of the verse "*wa 'alā al-thalāthah*" is a conjunction, which indicates a continuation of the previous verse which talks about the return of Allāh in Mercy to His Prophet (ṣ), the Emigrants and the Anṣār. Thus, apart from Allāh returning in Mercy to the Holy Prophet (ṣ), the emigrants, and the helpers, He also returned in Mercy to the three men (*wa 'alā al-thalāthah* "...and the three men") who did not participate in the battle of Tabūk. Then Allāh (swt) once again turns to the three men in Mercy: "*thumma tābā*" (thereafter He turned in Mercy). Therefore there is a clear mention of two consecutive *tawbas* (returns) before the phrase "*liyatūbū*" (so that they may repent and turn to Allāh): one through the conjunction and the other by the phrase "*thumma tāba*". This subtle aspect needs a little attention to understand.

If *tawbah* is taken in its universal sense, it is the second and the last station before Meeting Almighty Allāh. This is because the process of covering the different stages of practical gnosis is in fact covering the degrees of returning to God. Every return from Almighty Allāh makes the wayfarer return, until he attains the proximity of Almighty Allāh. The following verse is worthy of contemplation:

﴿ ... وَتُوبُوٓاْ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴾

...And turn to Allāh all of you, O believers, so that you may attain salvation.[46]

Ponder over the phrase '*tūbū ilallāh* [return to Allāh]'. Firstly, all believers are enjoined to return to Allāh. This means that *tawbah* (in all

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[45] The readers should note that *tawba* is a relative matter, for with regard to Almighty Allah it means "to Return in Forgiveness and Mercy" whereas with regard to His servants it means "to return in repentance".

[46] Holy Qur'ān, 24:31

its various levels) is the path to Almighty Allāh. Secondly, since Almighty Allāh is the end of the journey, the journey is necessarily endless, for one can never achieve Absolute and Infinite Perfection which is Allāh. In other words, however much one covers the journey, he still possesses finite perefection. Consequently, the imperative verb '*tūbū* [return] also includes the great saints who already enjoy the last stage of wayfaring- but still need wayfaring, for the journey never ends. Experts say that after a certain limit of perfection has been attained the journey is no more vertical, but horizontal. In the words of the people of gnosis- after sayr ilā Allāh (journey to Allāh) ends, sayr fī Allāh begins and never ends. Because the journey is towards Infinite Perfection. In simple terms the journey from the finite to The Infinite is infinite. *Fa tūbū ilallāh*!!! Therefore return to Allāh O believers.

Although *tawbah* in its initial stages would mean returning from denial and sin to approval and obedience and from heedlessness and forgetfulness to remembrance and seeking God, but later there would be nothing like sin or heedlessness. Rather the return would be from 'other than God' to 'God' and from '*shirk* in its very minute level' to '*tawḥid* in its highest levels', and from the 'self' to the 'Only beloved'. Ustād Muḥammad Shujā'ī in his monumental ethical masterpiece alludes to this reality[47].

Conditions of *Tawbah*

Have we ever thought about the conditions of true *tawbah*? Many of us may conjecture that perhaps the elements of 'regret' and expression of 'sorrow' to God can suffice for *tawbah*. The reality of the matter, however, is quite different. *Tawbah* is not just a transient emotional experience but 'a transformation of one's state'. It is the process of clearing one's heart and soaring to the higher planes of existence. It begins as follows:

وَقَالَ (ع) لِقَائِلٍ قَالَ بِحَضْرَتِهِ: (أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللّٰهَ) ثَكِلَتْكَ أُمُّكَ أَتَدْرِي مَا الإِسْتِغْفَارُ؟ الإِسْتِغْفَارُ دَرَجَةُ الْعِلِّيِّينَ وَهُوَ اسْمٌ وَاقِعٌ عَلَى سِتَّةِ مَعَانٍ: أَوَّلُهَا النَّدَمُ عَلَى مَا مَضَى.

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[47] Ustād Shujā'ī, *Maqālāt, Ṭarīqe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiye (1)*, pp.86-87

وَالثَّانِي الْعَزْمُ عَلَى تَرْكِ الْعَوْدِ إِلَيْهِ أَبَداً. وَالثَّالِثُ أَنْ تُؤَدِّيَ إِلَى الْمَخْلُوقِينَ حُقُوقَهُمْ حَتَّى تَلْقَى اللَّهَ أَمْلَسَ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ تَبِعَةٌ. وَالرَّابِعُ أَنْ تَعْمِدَ إِلَى كُلِّ فَرِيضَةٍ عَلَيْكَ ضَيَّعْتَهَا فَتُؤَدِّيَ حَقَّهَا. وَالْخَامِسُ أَنْ تَعْمِدَ إِلَى اللَّحْمِ الَّذِي نَبَتَ عَلَى السُّحْتِ فَتُذِيبَهُ بِالأَحْزَانِ حَتَّى تُلْصِقَ الْجِلْدَ بِالْعَظْمِ وَيَنْشَأَ بَيْنَهُمَا لَحْمٌ جَدِيدٌ. وَالسَّادِسُ أَنْ تُذِيقَ الْجِسْمَ أَلَمَ الطَّاعَةِ كَمَا أَذَقْتَهُ حَلاوَةَ الْمَعْصِيَةِ. فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ تَقُولُ: (أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ)

Once in the presence of Imām 'Alī ('a) a person said:

Astaghfirullāh
I seek forgiveness from Allāh

Hearing this, the Imām ('a) said to him

Thakalatka ummuka; atadrī ma'l istighfār
May your mother weep after you; do you know what is 'seeking forgiveness'?

Then he continued as follows:

Istighfār is a station of the exalted ones (*'illiyyīn*); and it is a name, which stands for six things:

1. First is to regret for what one has done [of sin]
2. Second, to resolve never to return to what one has done [of sin]
3. To return to the creatures their rights so that you meet Allāh while you have nothing on your shoulders.
4. To intend to perform every compulsory act that you had wasted and paying its due right
5. To melt the flesh that has been grown out of unlawful means with sorrows until the skin touches the bone and new flesh grows [out of lawful sustenance] between them.
6. To make the body taste the pain of submission the way you made it taste the pleasure of sin

That is when you say:

Astaghfirullāh
I seek Allāh's forgiveness.[48]

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[48] Sharīf Raḍī, *Nahju'l Balāgha [sermons, letters and sayings of Imām 'Ali ('a)]*, p. 549

Therefore, in order for one to successfully cover this level of *tawbah*, which would purify the heart and make it ready for the higher stations of spiritual wayfaring, one must struggle to meet the abovementioned conditions.

Entirely His Grace

It should be noted however that when one is in the state of *tawbah*, no kind of self esteem should ever deceive him. He should never think that it is his *tawbah* that would transport him to the house of the Only Beloved. Rather it is entirely Allāh's Grace and Mercy that enables him to undertake this great journey. Indeed *tawbah* is necessary, and in fact a succor (*tawfiq*) of Almighty Allāh Himself, but that should never deceive the repentant. He should always hopeful of its acceptance and understand the fact that it is not his struggle that would reap any benefit, but Allāh's Grace and Mercy. This is a monotheistic vision of the reality. Imām al-Sajjād ('a) teaches us the same in supplication no. 16 of his radiant scripture al-Ṣaḥifat al-Sajjādiyyah as follows:

(٣٠) لَوْ بَكَيْتُ إِلَيْكَ حَتّى تَسْقُطَ أَشْفارُ عَيْنَيَّ وَانْتَحَبْتُ حَتّى يَنْقَطِعَ صَوْتي وَقُمْتُ لَكَ حَتّى تَتَنَشَّرَ قَدَماىَ وَرَكَعْتُ لَكَ حَتّى يَنْخَلِعَ صُلْبي وَسَجَدْتُ لَكَ حَتّى تَتَفَقَّأَ حَدَقَتايَ وَأَكَلْتُ تُرابَ الأَرْضِ طُولَ عُمْري وَشَرِبْتُ ماءَ الرَّمادِ آخِرَ دَهْري وَذَكَرْتُكَ فِي خِلالِ ذلِكَ حَتّى يَكِلَّ لِساني ثُمَّ لَمْ أَرْفَعْ طَرْفي إِلى آفاقِ السَّماءِ اسْتِحْياءً مِنْكَ مَا اسْتَوْجَبْتُ بِذلِكَ مَحْوَ سَيِّئَةٍ واحِدَةٍ مِنْ سَيِّئاتي (٣١) وَاَنْ كُنْتَ تَغْفِرُ لِي حِينَ اسْتَوْجِبُ مَغْفِرَتَكَ وَتَعْفُو عَنّي حِينَ اسْتَحِقُّ عَفْوَكَ فَإِنَّ ذلِكَ غَيْرُ واجِبٍ لِي بِاسْتِحْقاقٍ وَلا أَنَا اَهْلٌ لَهُ بِاسْتِيجابٍ إِذْ كانَ جَزائي مِنْكَ فِي أَوَّلِ مَا عَصَيْتُكَ النّارَ فَإِنْ تُعَذِّبْني فَأَنْتَ غَيْرُ ظالِمٍ لِي...

30 My God,
were I to weep to Thee until my eyelids drop off,
wail until my voice wears out,
stand before Thee until my feet swell up,
bow to Thee until my backbone is thrown out of joint,
prostrate to Thee until my eyeballs fall out,

eat the dirt of the earth for my whole life,
drink the water of ashes till the end of my days,
mention Thee through all of that until my tongue fails,
and not lift my glance to the sky's horizons in shame before Thee,
yet would I not merit through all of that
the erasing of a single one of my evil deeds!
31 Though Thou forgivest me when I merit Thy forgiveness
and pardonest me when I deserve Thy pardon,
yet I have no title to that through what I deserve,
nor am I worthy of it through merit,
since my repayment from Thee
from the first that I disobeyed Thee
is the Fire!
So if Thou punishest me,
Thou dost me no wrong.[49]

Due to the brevity of this commentary we would suffice with these fundamental stations of the path towards Almighty Allāh over here. Those interested in understanding the intricacies of each and every station of wayfaring may refer to texts such as the *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn* of Khwājah 'Abdullāh Anṣārī and other relevant texts of practical gnosis.

Having known the basics of self-reform, which is the beginning of every kind of reform, let us now look at how one can effect reform in others. It is incumbent, however, for us to first understand the characteristics of a true reformer.

Characteristics of a True Reformer

The Holy Qur'ān [chapter 7, verse no. 170] says:

﴿ وَٱلَّذِينَ يُمَسِّكُونَ بِٱلْكِتَٰبِ وَأَقَامُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ ٱلْمُصْلِحِينَ ﴾

And those who [1] hold fast by the book and [2] keep up prayer; verily We waste not the recompense of the reformers

The above verse informs us that a reformer must:

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[49] *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah* (The Psalms of Islām, English Translation by William Chittick), Supplication no. 16, pp.59-60.

1) Hold steadfast onto the book

The great Shī'ah commentator of the Qur'ān Shaykh Ṭabrasī in his *Majma' al-Bayān* says:

امسك و مسك و تمسك و استمسك بالشيء بمعني واحد اي اعتصم به

The verbs *amsaka* and *tamassaka* and *istamsaka bi al-shay'* all have the same meaning, which is 'to adhere to something'[50]

And in his *Al-Mufradāt*, an authoritative dictionary of Qur'ānic words, Rāghib al-Isfahānī says:

اِمْسَاكُ الشَّيْءِ التَّعَلُّقُ بِهِ وَحِفْظُهُ

Imsāk al-shay' (to adhere to something) means to cling to it and protect it.'[51]

Therefore, to adhere to the Book in this verse would mean:

'To hold fast on to it and protect it.'

Obviously such adherence and protection should not be conjectured to mean safeguarding the physical Qur'ān from being torn, mishandled or misplaced [all of which are also important]. Holding fast on to the Qur'ān and protecting it means to follow its teachings and revive the same in the different dimensions of human life. The Holy Qur'ān is a book of instructions for both individual as well as social reform. It teaches us how to refine our spirits and beautify it with the Attributes of Almighty Allāh; it outlines the skills and conditions necessary to revive a society; one, therefore, who holds fast onto it and protects its teachings would obviously qualify to be a reformer. And protection of its teachings substantially cover the practical plane. It is not a matter of being learned and able to expound the sublime teachings of the Qur'ān. It is a matter of action and qualification.

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[50] 'Allāmah Ṭabrasī, *Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayān*, v.4, p.762
[51] Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt*, p.768

2) Establish Prayer:

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in his monumental *al-Mīzān* says:

وَتَخْصِيصُ إِقَامَةِ الصَّلَاةِ بِالذِّكْرِ مِنْ بَيْنِ سَائِرِ أَجْزَاءِ الدِّينِ لِشَرَفِهَا وَكَوْنِهَا رُكْنًا مِنَ الدِّينِ يُحْفَظُ بِهَا ذِكْرُ اللهِ وَالْخُضُوعُ إِلَى مَقَامِهِ الَّذِي هُوَ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الرُّوحِ الْحَيَّةِ فِي هَيْكَلِ الشَّرَائِعِ الدِّينِيَّةِ

And the particular mention of establishing prayer from among the parts of relgion is due to its sacred position and that it is the pillar of religion, which protects and ensures the remembrance of Allāh and humility to His exalted station, the latter being the living spirit in the body of religious creeds.[52]

One who establishes prayer is different from one who only prays. The expression that the Holy Qur'an employs in this verse as well as other verses is not '*yuṣallūna*' (those who pray) but '*aqāmuṣṣalāta*' (those who establish prayer), which calls for responsibility. One who establishes prayer, observes all the perfect etiquette of prayer and ensures that others pray as well. Such a person is not satisfied in observing prayer alone; his selfless spirit would like to see others benefiting from this vehicle of ascension to God. In order to be able to reform an individual or community one should have the ability to establish prayer. The fundamental significance of prayer can well be appreciated by looking at the following traditions:

1. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ مِنْ عَمَلِكَ تَبَعٌ لِصَلَاتِكَ

Beware that every thing that you do is according to your prayer.[53]

2. Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) is reported to have said:

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[52] 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, v.8, p. 299
[53] al-'Āmili, *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, v.4, p. 161

إِنْ قُبِلَتْ قُبِلَ مَا سِوَاهَا

If it [i.e. Ṣalāt] is accepted the other actions would be accepted.[54]

3. Imām al-Riḍā ('a) is reported to have said:

...وَأَوَّلُ مَا يُحَاسَبُ الْعَبْدُ عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ فَإِنْ صَحَّتْ لَهُ الصَّلَاةُ صَحَّتْ لَهُ مَا سِوَاهَا وَإِنْ رُدَّتْ رُدَّتْ مَا سِوَاهَا...

...The first thing that a servant would be accounted for is prayers; if his prayers are in order for him, then all else would be correct, and if it is rejected for him then all else would be rejected...[55]

Understanding this link between the spirit of one's prayer and the spirit of one's action calls for one to revive his prayer so that his acts would carry meaning and value. The reason why many people end in committing *al-shirk al-khafi* (hidden polytheism) is their ignorance of what they recite in prayer. One who infuses the spirit of utter monotheism in his prayer, his acts would bear the color of monotheism.

Social Reform

Reforming a society and conferring to it its equilibrium is to revive the teachings of Islam and the Qur'ān in the society. The phrase '*Surely we do not waste the recompense of the reformers*' of the aforementioned verse (7:170) clearly alludes to the fact that "reviving the teachings of the Qur'ān" (*yumassikūna bi'l kitābi*) is the reality of effecting equilibrium (*iṣlāḥ*)'. In order for a society to enjoy its state of equilibrium, it must be governed by laws that ensure its stability and purpose. And the only person who can formulate such laws is Almighty Allah who knows every subtle aspect of the human being and his salvation. The Holy Qur'ān says:

﴿ أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ ٱللَّطِيفُ ٱلْخَبِيرُ ﴾

Would He who has created not know? And He is the All-Attentive, the All-Aware.[56]

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[54] Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, v.2, p.239
[55] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.80, p.20
[56] Holy Qur'ān, 67:14

And when one is successful in doing so, the individuals that form the society would easily be able to attain perfection.

In his Al-Mīzān, the late 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī says:

...لَكِنَّ سَعَادَةَ الشَّخْصِ مَبْنِيَّةٌ عَلَى صَلَاحِ الظَّرْفِ الاجْتِمَاعِيِّ الَّذِي يَعِيشُ هُوَ فِيهِ، وَمَا أَصْعَبُ أَنْ يَفْلَحَ فَرْدٌ فِي مُجْتَمَعٍ فَاسِدٍ أَحَاطَ بِهِ الشَّقَاءُ مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ.

وَلِذَلِكَ اهْتَمَّ فِي إِصْلَاحِ الْمُجْتَمَعِ اهْتِمَامًا لَا يُعَادِلُهُ فِيهِ غَيْرُهُ وَبَذْلَ الْجُهْدَ الْبَالِغَ فِي جَعْلِ الدَّسَاتِيرِ وَالتَّعَالِيمَ الدِّينِيَّةَ حَتَّى الْعِبَادَاتِ مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ وَالْحَجِّ وَالصَّوْمِ اجْتِمَاعِيَّةً مَا أَمْكَنَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ ، كُلُّ ذَلِكَ لِيَسْتَصْلِحَ الإِنْسَانُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَمِنْ جِهَةِ ظَرْفِ حَيَاتِهِ.

"...But the prosperity of a person depends on the equilibrium of the social vessel where he lives, and how difficult it is for a person to achieve salvation in a corrupt society, which is embraced with wretchedness from all sides!

And that is why it gave unparalleled importance in effecting equilibrium to the society and struggled as much as possible to form religious commandments and laws to be of a social nature, including devotions, such as the canonical prayer, ḥajj and fasting. All this was done so that the human being may attain equilibrium of himself and the vessel of his life..."[57]

One of the very important conditions of social reform is the support of the people that form the social unit. Although one may enjoy the conditions of a true reformer, if he is not supported by the people, the state of social equilibrium cannot be attained. There is a subtle allusion of this truth in the following verse:

﴿ ... لِيَقُومَ ٱلنَّاسُ بِٱلْقِسْطِ ...﴾

...so that the people rise with justice[58]

Almighty Allāh informs us here that the *'nās'* have a determining role to play. He does not tell us that the Prophets, upon whom be peace, would effect justice and equilibrium to the society, but says '*so that the people*

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[57] 'Allāma al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīri'l Qur'ān*, v. 12, p. 330

[58] Holy Qur'ān, 57:25

(nās) rise in justice'. This alludes to collective participation. And this truth is evident for every sound intellect. If the components of the society were to be adamant in their rejection, the reformer would not be able to effect equilibrium. A majority of the masses should undergo transformation; so that the society returns to the state of its equilibrium. The holy Qur'ān narrates the destructive end of many of the past nations, who simply refused to change themselves. Due to their unchangeable state they had to face a despicable doom. Look at the following verses:

وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا ٱلْقُرُونَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا۟ وَجَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِٱلْبَيِّنَٰتِ وَمَا كَانُوا۟ لِيُؤْمِنُوا۟ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِى ٱلْقَوْمَ ٱلْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

Indeed We destroyed generations before you when they did wrong: their Messengers came to them with Clear Signs, and they were not those who would believe. Thus do We requite those who sin![59]

It should be noted here that those referred to in the above verse were so degenerate that they could not be changed. They are defined as "*wa mā kānu liyu'minu*" (they were not those to believe). This state obviously was a result of their own misdeeds.

Political Stability: A Foundational Unit of Social Reform

Reforming a society has always been a challenging task, but perhaps it has become even more challenging in the contemporary era. The foundational unit of social reform is political reform. So long as there is no valid political power, the other dimensions of the society would always be in the state of disequilibria. Islam, which is a complete religion, and therefore caters for every need of the human being in different dimensions of his life has not left mankind without a direction for political power and authority. The Holy Qur'ān and the traditions as well as Islamic history vividly illustrate the unity of religion and politics. Islam would like to ensure that the laws of Allāh prevail and that the

[59] Holy Qur'ān, 10:13

government makes its decisions entirely on the principles laid by the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. This is when every kind of unevenness of the society can be obliterated. Under a firm Islamic government all the economic problems that stem from different kinds of mischief would be terminated. Under a strict government promiscuity and different kinds of evils would lessen. The atmosphere of such a society would then enable the people to wake up from their slumber and attain Allah's proximity.

One of the most rational and sublime concepts of political thought in Islam is the concept of *wilāyat al-faqīh* (the governance of the Islamic jurisprudent). Its rational definition is that in the absence of the 12th holy Imām ('a), the jurisprudent identified as pious and knowledgeable in Islamic laws can govern a collectivity and lead it towards its material as well as spiritual prosperity. Such a person who enjoys sublime traits, is far from selfish interests, and is also well-aware of Islamic Law as well as the circumstances of his time, can aptly control the government and lead the nation toward its prosperity. To consider such a clear fact to depend on what different clerics believe and refrain from thinking about or involving oneself in the future of a collectivity of human beings who need to attain eternal salvation is unreasonable.

The Timeless Reformer of Karbala

Sometimes a historical incident can conquer its spatial limitations and serve as an example for all times, places and people. Immortality is one issue and transcending time and space is another. Immortality deals with the future, but the conquer of spatial limitations embrace and cover the past as well. The event of Karbalā', which is known to evoke the emotions of the coldest reader, was not only a tragedy as it is so labeled mostly, but a reform movement (*ḥarakah iṣlāḥiyyah*) that could serve as a lesson both before and after it transpired. As it has been a source of inspiration for the followers of the Imām ('a) after Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a), it has also been a source of inspiration for the preceding prophets of God too. Narrations indicate how the previous Prophets would curse the perpetrators of the heinous massacre [and thus take a stance]. If we understand Imam al-Ḥusayn's motive, we would fully realize the movement's sublimity. In one of his addresses to Muḥammad bin Ḥanafiyyah, he says:

إِنَّمَا خَرَجْتُ لِطَلَبِ الإِصْلاَحِ فِي أُمَّةِ جَدِّي(ص) أُرِيْدُ أَنْ آمُرَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَأَنْهَى عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَسِيْرُ بِسِيْرَةِ جَدِّي وَأَبِي عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِيْ طَالِب(ع)

I have only risen to seek reform and equilibrium in the Nation of my grandfather, the Messenger of Allāh; I would like to invite to good and desist from evil; and adopt the lifestyle of my grandfather and my father, Alī bin Abī Ṭālib.[60]

It looks like as if Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a) informs us of his motive, the method of achieving the same, and those who also employed the method:

Motive: Seeking Reform and equilibrium in the Nation
Method: *Amr bil Ma'rūf and Nahy 'ani'l Munkar*;
Adopting the lifestyles of his grandfather and father

Therefore he aspired to restore equilibrium to the society. He yearned that the society should enjoy both material as well as spiritual prosperity. The physical amenities bestowed to man are means for his upliftment, and hence should also be given importance. Nevertheless the main motive should not be left into oblivion and be forgotten.

The timeless reformer with his utter steadfastness echoes to all the epochs: 'Do not allow the destruction of human values in any social setup! Do not sit quiet when oppressors control the affairs of the people! Struggle to eradicate all kinds of disequilibrium in the Muslim society! The prayer under discussion is a verbal expression. Ḥusayn's was a practical expression. He, like his noble grandfather, practically manifested his concern of eradicating all kinds of social as well as individual misfortunes. His eagerness in restoring Islamic values was to see the eternal prosperity of its inhabitants.

Awaiting for the Noble Government

In the famous *Du'ā' al-Iftitāḥ*, we pray:

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[60] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, v. 44, p. 368

اللّٰهُمَّ إِنَّا نَرْغَبُ إِلَيْكَ فِي دَوْلَةٍ كَرِيمَةٍ تُعِزُّ بِهَا الإِسْلاَمَ وَ أَهْلَهُ وَتُذِلُّ بِهَا النِّفَاقَ وَأَهْلَهُ وَتَجْعَلُنَا فِيهَا مِنَ الدُّعَاةِ إِلَى طَاعَتِكَ وَالْقَادَةِ إِلَى سَبِيلِكَ وَتَرْزُقُنَا بِهَا كَرَامَةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ...

O Allāh surely we ask you for a noble government in which you would elevate Islām and its followers, and degrade hypocrisy and its adherents, and make us among those that invite to your obedience, and leaders to your path, and sustain us with the nobility of this world and the Hereafter...

Our texts of *ḥadīths* clearly mention so many signs preceding the reappearance of our 12th Holy Imām ('a). Many of us observe that a number of these signs already exist. Some of us have the tendency to say that 'the world is so corrupt today; it is high time that 12th Imam should reappear'. Such rhetoric may be found in different circles. But impartially speaking, it reveals the narrow mindedness of those who speak about it. This does not mean that the signs prevalent would not follow his reappearance. However, one should try to observe whether the elements that would prepare the ground of the Imam's reappearance exist or not. The 12th Holy Imām ('a) does not need corruption to reappear. He rather needs the support of the masses who overtly yearn for his reappearance so that equilibrium is created in the society. So long as the masses yearn for his reappearance without being ready for the same, it would be futile for him to appear. We must remember that the 12th Imām's mission is to create a global Islamic government. For such a government to take form, he needs our support [*liyaqūma al-nāsu bi al- qisṭ* (so that *the people* stand in justice)]. And support, we must understand, can be to forgo so many of our worldly interests. It may seem to be a simple issue, but the reality of the matter is quite different.

The concept of awaiting for the 12th Imām should be understood in its correct meaning. The secret to its understanding is to ask ourselves about the *purpose* behind our *intiẓār*. Why are we waiting for his reappearance? To create social stability and prosperity? To eradicate corruption and oppression? If that is so, does our prayer tally with our practical lives? Do our actions reveal that we are practically working to create order and eradicate oppression in any circle that is in our limited helm and power? Have we started with our family and neighborly environments and observed whether we truly aspire for that great ideal who would effect

reform globally? We should always try to weigh ourselves with the purpose of *intiẓār*, and ask: 'Do our actions tally with the spirit of effecting reform?'

Characteristics of the Helpers of our 12th Imam ('a) in the Reformation Process

In a tradition narrated in *Biḥār al-Anwār* we are informed that the 12th Imām ('a) would have 313 sincere companions who would assist him in his reform process. Every one of us who has developed knowledge and love of the Imām ('a) and knows his sublime aim as well, would aspire to be one of the 313 companions mentioned in the *ḥadīth*. But in order for us to qualify for this sacred mission we should identify the characteristics that such reformers would enjoy. Many who have the strength to revive themselves and adopt a life full of spiritual blessings do have the opportunity to qualify. Mothers too, who can rear their children with excellent morals can shape their future and create the ground for their offsprings to qualify for this lofty station. Youth also, who aspire to get married can select such spouses of noble descent and excellent morals that would enable a generation of purity to ensue, can also facilitate personalities who would qualify to be the Imām's loyal supporters. And what exactly are the characteristics of the helpers of the 12 holy Imām('a)? Following are traditions that outline the characteristics of the supporters of the 12th Holy Imām ('a):

1. Possessive of Indepth Knowledge about God:

Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said about the soldiers of the 12th Holy Imam ('a) that:

...رِجَالٌ عَرَفُوا اللهَ حَقَّ مَعْرِفَتِه، وَهُمْ أَنْصَارُ الْمَهْدِي(ع) آخِرَ الزَّمَانِ

"...Men who know Allah as He should be Known, and they are the helpers of al-Mahdī during the last days."[61]

Here obviously the Absolute Knowledge of God is not meant, for that is beyond the reach of any dependent being, including the Prophet (ṣ) who

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[61] Āyatullāh Ṣāfī Golpaygānī, *Muntakhab al-Athar*, volume 3, p. 177

is reported to have said: *mā 'arafnāka ḥaqqā ma'rifatika...*we have not known You the way You Absolutely. Obviously no finite being can ever comprehend an infinite being.

2. Possessive of Characteristics of a Qualified Islamic Leader

Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported[62] to have said in a lengthy tradition that those who would come out with Imām al-Mahdi ('a) would be as follows:

وَلَكِنَّ هَذِهِ (الْعِدَّة) الَّتِي يُخْرِجُ اللهُ فِيهَا الْقَائِمَ(ع)، وَهُمُ النُّجَبَاءُ، وَالْقُضَاةُ وَالْحُكَّامُ، وَالْفُقَهَاءُ فِي الدِّينِ...

They are:

- Of Noble Descent [*nujabā'*]
- Qualified to Rule [*al-ḥukkām*]
- Qualified to Judge [*al-quḍāt*]
- Highly learned in Religion [*al-fuqahā' fi al-Din*]

These characteristics therefore create responsibilities on us: if we are of noble descent and marry the *nujabā'* (of noble descent), our children too would be of noble descent, if we rear our children and teach them how to be responsible from a young age and enable traits such as bravery, knowledge, etc., to develop, we can create the ground for them to be future leaders, if we inculcate the spirit of seeking religious knowledge in our children, their interest, zeal, etc., would attract them towards gaining indepth knowledge of religion and thus create for them the ground of enjoying one the essential characteristics of the 12th Imām's noble supporters.

Our Duties

Having understood the steps of reform, each one of us would be able to tell where he/she stands, and what is his/her immediate responsibility. Wherever it is possible for us to effect reform, however limited be that

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[62] Āyatullāh Ṣāfī Golpaygānī, *Muntakhab al-Athar*, volume 3, p. 177

area, we should do so. Otherwise our supplication would be mere rhetoric or ignorance.

Section 10

اَللّٰهُمَّ اشْفِ كُلَّ مَرِيْضٍ

O Allah, cure every sick person

اَللّٰهُمَّ اشْفِ كُلَّ مَرِيْضٍ

O Allāh, Cure every Sick Person

MEANING

The Arabic word *marīḍ* is an adjectival noun that denotes illness. It originates from its infinitive *maraḍ* which means:

الْخُرُوْجُ عَنِ الاعْتِدَالِ الْخَاصُّ بِالاِنْسَانِ وَذٰلِكَ ضَرْبَان : الاَوَّلُ مَرَضٌ جِسْمِيٌّ...وَالثَّانِي عِبَارَةٌ عَنِ الرَّذَايِلِ...

'...to exit from the state of the equilibrium[63] particular to the human being; and this is of two kinds: (1) bodily sickness... (2) vices[64]

Thus, in reality, *maraḍ* is another extension (*miṣdāq*) of the state of disequilibrium (*fasād*), and thus can be discussed under the previous verse of the supplication too.

EXTENSIONS OF ILLNESSES

In the Holy Qur'ān and traditions the word "*maraḍ*" (illness) has been mostly employed to denote one of the abovementioned kinds of human disequilibria. Look at the following:

1. The Holy Qur'ān [26:80] narrating the words of Prophet Ibrāhīm ('a), says:

﴿ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ ﴾

And when I turn ill, He alone Cures me.

Two points should be noted here:

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[63] Some have also translated the word '*marīḍ*' as 'disordered' [See *E.W.Lane Arabic-English Lexicon*]

[64] Rāghib al-Iṣfahāni, *Mufradāt Alfāẓi'l Qur'ān*, p. 765

(i) The above verse does not imply that the Prophet (ṣ) would not seek the natural causes for the cure. What the verse means is that the Principal Curer (*al-Shāfī*) is only Allāh. This is because the existence, subsistence, and effect of the agent of cure is entirely by His Will and Permission.

(ii) Apparently what is meant in this verse is the *physical extension of illness*, for Prophets of Allāh, upon whom be peace, are free from spiritual illnesses. They are infallible in their thoughts, words and actions. And that enables them to be propagators and Messengers of God.

2. The Holy Qur'ān [2:8-10] describing the hypocrites says:

﴿...فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ مَرَضًا ...﴾

In their hearts is a sickness; and Allāh increased their sickness

The sickness referred to here is hypocrisy, which concerns the heart and not the body. Therefore *maraḍ* is not limited to physical ailments.

3. Prophet ʻĪsā, upon whom be peace, is reported to have said:

...مَا مَرِضَ قَلْبٌ بِأَشَدَّ مِنَ الْقَسْوَةِ...

...The heart did not fall sick with [a malady] more severe than the hardness of the heart...[65]

4. Imām ʻAlī (ʻa) is reported to have said:

لاَ مَرَضَ أَضْنَى مِنْ قِلَّةِ الْعَقْلِ

There is no malady more debilitating that the scantiness of intellect[66]

Here the 'silliness' or simplicity of a person is considered to be another kind of sickness. Therefore *maraḍ* can also employed to denote the dull-wittedness of a person.

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[65] Ḥājī Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, v. 12, p. 94
[66] Āmadi, *Ghurarū'l Ḥikam wa Dararu'l Kalim*, p. 55

5. And he ('a) is also reported to have said:

الْحِقْدُ خُلْقٌ دَنِيٌّ وَ مَرَضٌ مُرْدِي

Resentment (*al-ḥiqd*) is a degenerate characteristic and a destructive illness[67]

Therefore, in short, *maraḍ* is not limited to physical illness. Rather it covers the avenues of mental and spiritual illnesses as well.

Supplication for a Sublime Purpose

Health, like any other Divine Blessing is meant for a sublime purpose. To underutilize the same would be equal to unthankfulness on the part of the human being. Our supplications for the betterment of ourselves and others should be purposeful: we must pray for health *as a means to effect equilibrium in our souls.* Were we to pray for health for the sake of sheer material enjoyment, we would be unthankful to Almighty Allāh, since the practical reality of *shukr* is *to employ the Divine Blessing for the purpose it was created.*

Imām al-Sajjād in his well-known prayer manual *al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyyah* prays:

فَمَا أَدْرِي يَا إِلَهِي أَيُّ الْحَالَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالشُّكْرِ لَكَ
وَأَيُّ الْوَقْتَيْنِ أَوْلَى بِالْحَمْدِ لَكَ
أَوَقْتُ الصِّحَّةِ الَّتِي هَنَأْتَنِي فِيهَا طَيِّبَاتِ رِزْقِكَ
وَنَشَّطْتَنِي بِهَا لِابْتِغَاءِ مَرْضَاتِكَ وَفَضْلِكَ
وَقَوَّيْتَنِي مَعَهَا عَلَى مَا وَفَّقْتَنِي لَهُ مِنْ طَاعَتِكَ...

For I know not, my God, which of the two states deserves more my thanking You, And which of the two times is more worthy for my praise of Thee: the time of health, within which You Make me delight in the agreeable things of Your provision, through which You Give me the joy to seek the means to Your Good Pleasure and

[67] Āmadī, *Ghurarū'l Ḥikam wa Durarū'l Kalim*, p. 55

Bounty. And by which You Strengthen me for the acts of obedience which You Have Given me success to accomplish...[68]

Here the Imām ('a) teaches us that health should be sought to achieve Allāh's pleasure (*libtighā'i marḍātika*) and perform acts of His obedience (*waffaqtanī lahu min ṭā'atika*). Therefore, when we seek the well-being of *every* extension of the human race, we should do so because we would like *the means* of their perfection to be facilitated and not because they can regain their health to continue more damage to themselves or others.

The Apple of our eyes, Sayyid Raḍī al-Dīn bin Ṭāwūs in section seven of his *Falāḥ al-Sā'il* where he enumerates the characteristics of a supplicant, says:

مِنْ صِفَاتِ الدَّاعِي: أَنْ يُرِيدَ بِالدُّعَاءِ مُرَادَ اللهِ جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ بِهِ وَ يُقَدِّمُ إِرَادَةَ اللهِ عَلَى إِرَادَةِ نَفْسِهِ وَ مِثَالُهُ إِذَا مَرِضَ لَا يَكُونُ قَصْدُهُ مِنَ الدُّعَاءِ بِعَافِيَتِهِ مُجَرَّدَ بَقَاءِهِ لِشَهْوَتِهِ وَ عَاجِلَتِهِ وَدُنْيَاهُ الشَّاغِلَةِ عَنْ آخِرَتِهِ بَلْ لِيَبْقَى عَلَى مُرَادِ اللهِ جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ فِي طَاعَتِهِ.

And among the characteristics of a supplicant is that he should seek through his supplication what Allah wants of Him and prefer Allāh's Desire over his. For example: when he becomes ill, the purpose behind his supplication for his well-being should not be merely subsistence for the sake of lustful desire, temporal enjoyment and worldly existence that disengages him from his Hereafter, rather it should be for the purpose of living according to what Allāh Wants, which is His Obedience.[69]

Beyond the Immediate Causes of Illnesses!

Although it is true to say that we must seek the natural causes of the various maladies to eradicate them, our aspiration should be loftier then to merely search for the immediate causes. Physicians categorize "illness prevention" into four stages:

1. Primordial prevention

The Holy Qur'ān says:

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[68] Imām al-Sajjād ('a). Sup. 15, *al-Saḥifat al-Sajjādiyya*, p.54, [His supplication when Sick or Visited by Distress or an Affliction

[69] Sayyid Raḍi al-Dīn bin Ṭawūs, *Falāh al-Sā'il wa Najāḥ al-Masā'il*, pp. 102-103.

﴿إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا۟ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ..﴾

Allāh does not change what is with a community save that they change what is in them.[70]

Primordial prevention is to avoid the emergence and establishment of the social, economic and cultural patterns of living that are known to contribute to an elevated risk of disease.

This is certainly the most important of all kinds of prevention. The human being is taught that his lifestyle can surely determine what kind of future awaits him. To establish those social, economic and cultural patterns that would secure the health of the human being highly depends on the validity of the political body that governs the human society. Only an Islamic government subservient to the principles of Islam, can create a physically healthy environment. This is because the social, economic and cultural patterns would be defined by God, Who Created the human being for prosperity in both this world and the Hereafter, and Knows what laws would lead him to this prosperity. There is an interesting anecdote narrated about the situation prevailing the Muslim community during the time of the Holy Prophet (ṣ):

During the Holy Prophet (ṣ)'s time, the king of Egypt sent a skilled doctor to the Holy Prophet (ṣ). He lived one year with the Arabs but found no one approaching him to get cured. He therefore came to the Prophet (ṣ) and complained about the situation. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) explained to him that the reason behind the situation was that his people had adopted a path of moderation: they do not eat unless their appetite for food overcomes them, and (ii) They stop eating while they still have some appetite for food left. Hearing this, the doctor said: 'This is the cause of [their] health.' Then he kissed the earth, and left.[71]

In other words, they obeyed the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and applied his well-known saying:

كُلْ وَأَنْتَ تَشْتَهِي وَأَمْسِكْ وَأَنْتَ تَشْتَهِي

[70] Holy Qur'ān, 13:11

[71] 'Abdu'l Karim Bi Āzār Shirāzī, *Masā 'il-e-Darmāni*, v.2, p. 73.

Eat while you have the appetite, and refrain from eating while you still have the appetite.[72]

If the laws of Almighty Allāh prevailed in the environment they would deter the human being from engaging in sin, which can be said to cater for a substantial number if not most of the prevalent illnesses. In a society where capitalism and consumerism prevail, what should one expect save the culture of overindulgence? In an environment where the woman is used as an item of advertisement and sale, what can one anticipate save sexual perversion? And these two major factors contribute to a great number of illnesses. In such a situation primordial prevention is a far fetched phenomenon.

The fundamental unit, one must understand, for the realization of primordial prevention is the government. It is the ideology of the ruling power that determines what kind of society it would like and what kind of lifestyle does it encourage.

2. Primary Prevention

The Holy Qur'ān says:

﴿ ...وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى ٱلتَّهْلُكَةِ... ﴾

Do not lay yourself into destruction[73]

Primary prevention is action taken prior to the onset of disease, which removes the possibility that a disease will ever occur. For example the preventive measures taken to avoid diseases such as heart attacks, high cholesterol levels, ulcers, etc. is called primary prevention. Often these simple measures are not taken seriously, which leads us to the second stage of prevention i.e. secondary prevention.

In primary prevention, the human being refrains from the causes that would amplify the vulnerability of illness. Abstinence [abstaining from sex beyond marriage], consuming low cholesterol foods, nominal sugar,

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[72] Al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shi'ah*, v.16, p.540
[73] Holy Qur'ān, 2:195

etc. are known to be kinds of primary prevention. This kind of prevention is also difficult for those suffering from spiritual maladies such as avarice, overindulgence, etc. The following traditions emphasize the important role of denial before sickness:

i) Imām Amīru'l Mu'minīn ('a) is reported to have said:

الْمَعِدَةُ بَيْتُ الأَدْوَاءِ وَ الْحِمْيَةُ رَأْسُ الدَّوَاءِ لاَ صِحَّةَ مَعَ النَّهَمِ

The stomach is the house of maladies, and denial is the *principal* medicine, and there is no well-being in greed.[74]

ii) And he ('a) has also said:

صَلاَحُ الْبَدَنِ الْحِمْيَةُ

In denial is the equilibrium of the body.[75]

iii) Imam Abū Ibrāhīm al-Kaẓim ('a) is reported to have said:

لَيسَ الْحِمْيَةُ أَنْ تَدَعَ الشَّيْءَ أَصْلاً وَلَكِنَّ الْحِمْيَةَ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ مِنَ الشَّيْءِ وَتُخَفِّفَ

'Denial does not mean that you avoid a thing totally, and do not eat it; rather, it means that you have a light consumption of something' [76]

iv) And Imām Abu'l Ḥasan al-Riḍā ('a) is reported to have said:

رَأْسُ الْحِمْيَةِ الرِّفْقُ بِالْبَدَنِ

The peak of denial is to treat the body gently and in friendliness.[77]

To deal with the body in a friendly manner does not mean to eat whatever you want. This wise dictum of Imām al-Riḍā ('a) calls us to identify those things that the body needs and provide it with the same. Overindulgence in eating would therefore be contrary to what our body requires.

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[74] Ḥājī Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, v. 16, p. 452
[75] Āmādī, *Ghuraru'l Ḥikam*, p. 320
[76] al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Waṣā'il al-Shī'a*, v. 25, p. 229
[77] Imām al-Riḍā, *Fiqh al-Riḍā*, p. 340

Although it would give utter pleasure to the taste buds of our tongues, but its consequences are detrimental to our bodies. Uncontrolled sex likewise is the same. Utmost pleasure can be sought from this act, but the consequences are harmful to the body.

There is a beautiful poem attributed to Avicenna where he considers the secret of medicine in the moderation of food consumption and sex:

He says:

إِسْمَعْ جَمِيْعَ وَصِيَّتِيْ وَ اعْمَلْ بِهَا فَالطِّبُّ مَجْمُوْعٌ بِنَظْمِ كَلَامِيْ
اَ قْلِلْ جِمَاعَكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتَ فَإِنَّهُ مَاءُ الْحَيَوةِ تَصُبُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ
وَ اجْعَلْ غَذَاءَكَ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ مَرَّةً وَ احْذَرْ طَعَاماً قَبْلَ هَضْمِ طَعَامِ

Listen to all what I have to advise, and act accordingly
For medicine is gathered in the poetry of my word
Lessen your copulation as much as you can
For verily it is the water of life that is placed in the wombs
And make your meal once a day
And beware of eating before the digestion of what you have eaten

3. Secondary Prevention

Imām Abū 'Abdillāh al-Ṣadiq ('a) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ نَبِيًّا مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ مَرِضَ فَقَالَ لَا أَتَدَاوَى حَتَّى يَكُوْنَ الَّذِيْ أَمْرَضَنِي هُوَ الَّذِي يَشْفِيْنِي فَأَوْحَى اللهُ تَعَالَى إِلَيْهِ لَا أَشْفِيْكَ حَتَّى تَتَدَاوَى فَإِنَّ الشِّفَاءَ مِنِّي

One of the Prophets [once] got ill, whereupon he said: I shall not treat myself until He Who made me sick treats me Himself. Thereupon Almighty Allah revealed unto him: I will not treat you, until you treat yourself, for surely 'cure' comes from Me.[78]

Secondary prevention is action, which halts the progress of a disease at its incipient stage and prevents complications. Treating diseases with medicines constitutes secondary prevention. The health programs initiated by governments are usually at the level of secondary prevention.

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[78] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 59, p. 66

Islam does not encourage one to immediately seek medicine for illnesses that only need time to disappear. So long as the human being can bear the difficulty and pain of a certain sickness like mild flue, he/she is encouraged to do so. To immediately resort to medicine is not a wise instruction. Instead one is highly advised to seek the natural foods that have a medicinal effect on the body. Yes there are illnesses, which should be controlled at their incipient phases. If one doubts or deciphers such an illness, he should immediately seek his/her treatment so that the situation does not get worse.

4. Tertiary Prevention

Tertiary prevention is a preventive measure used late in the stage of the disease. It includes limiting disabilities and carrying out rehabilitation programs.

Can Illness Be Totally Avoided?

With scientific advancement, the causes of many illnesses and their remedies have been discovered. But can we limit the causes of the various illnesses to what has been discovered so far? Both the scientist and the philosopher will respond in the negative. This is because there is always a probability for there being other unknown causes of certain maladies. The scientist has no right to limit the causes of a certain malady to what the latest empirical data suggest, since there is always room for the discovery of other causes to different maladies. The scientist can also not claim that no psychological or spiritual factor is responsible for physical illnesses, for he does not comprehend the link between the body and the soul, and cannot transcend the senses.

Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) was once asked by an atheist as to why is it deserving for a small child to suffer from ailments and sicknesses while he is sinless and has committed no crime. The Imām ('a) responded saying:

إِنَّ الْمَرَضَ عَلَى وُجُوهٍ شَتَّى مَرَضُ بَلْوَى وَمَرَضُ الْعُقُوبَةِ وَمَرَضٌ جُعِلَ عَلَيْهِ الْفَنَاءُ وَأَنْتَ تَزْعُمُ أَنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَغْذِيَةٍ رَدِيئَةٍ وَأَشْرِبَةٍ وَبِيئَةٍ أَوْ مِنْ عِلَّةٍ كَانَتْ بِأُمِّهِ وَتَزْعُمُ أَنَّ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ

السِّيَاسَةَ لِبَدَنِه وَأَجْمَلَ النَّظَرَ فِي أَحْوَالِ نَفْسِه وَعَرَفَ الضَّارَّ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ مِنَ النَّافِعِ لَمْ يَمْرَضْ وَتَمِيلُ فِي قَوْلِكَ إِلَى مَنْ يَزْعُمُ أَنَّهُ لاَ يَكُونُ الْمَرَضُ وَالْمَوْتُ إِلاَّ مِنَ الْمَطْعَمِ وَالْمَشْرَبِ قَدْ مَاتَ أَرِسْطَاطَالِيسُ مُعَلِّمُ الأَطِبَّاءِ وَأَفْلاَطُونُ رَئِيسُ الْحُكَمَاءِ وَجَالِينُوسُ شَاخَ وَدَقَّ بَصَرُهُ وَمَا دَفَعَ الْمَوْتَ حِينَ نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِه

Surely illnesses are of various kinds: the illness of Divine tribulation, the illness of Divine punishment, and illness as a means for death. Do you think that the reason behind the illness is to partake rotten food and contaminated water, or a malady that was present in the child's mother? Do you think that whosoever manages his body properly and takes good care of the conditions of his spirit and distinguishes the dangerous foods from the advantageous will never turn sick?

In line with the same thinking is one who conjectures that sickness and death do not occur save through food and drink; surely Aristotle, the mentor of physicians and Plato, the president of the philosophers died; and Galen became old and his eyesight decreased, and he could not repel death when it came to him.[79]

Therefore even if one puts great efforts in observing hygiene as well as primary prevention, he cannot assure himself to be immune from illness.

Illness - a Means of Self-Purification

The apparent form of physical illness may seem to be affliction and trouble, but its kernel manifests nothing but love, mercy and attention. In our traditions, illness for a believer plays the role of a detergent of the human soul that purifies it from the burden of sins so that the soul can qualify to be receptive and perhaps start the journey to Almighty Allāh.

Following are some of the many traditions that clearly show how illnesses can be an advantage to the believing souls:

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

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَكُونُ لَهُ الدَّرَجَةُ عِنْدَ اللهِ لاَ يَبْلُغُهَا بِعَمَلِهِ يُبْتَلَى بِبَلاَءٍ فِي جِسْمِهِ فَيَبْلُغُهَا بِذَلِكَ

[79] al-Ṭabrasī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, v.2, p. 225

Surely someone may have a station near God which he would not attain by his actions, (and thus) he would be afflicted by a calamity in his body by which he would attain the station.[80]

2. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

إِذَا ابْتَلَى اللهُ عَبْدًا أَسْقَطَ عَنْهُ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ بِقَدْرِ عِلَّتِهِ

When Allāh afflicts His servant with a calamity, He reduces his sins in accordance with his malady.[81]

3. Imām al-Riḍā ('a) is reported to have said:

الْمَرَضُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ تَطْهِيرٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ، وَلِلْكَافِرِ تَعْذِيبٌ وَلَعْنَةٌ...

Sickness is purification and mercy for the believer and a punishment and curse for the disbeliever...[82]

4. Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

صُدَاعُ لَيْلَةٍ تَحُطُّ كُلَّ خَطِيئَةٍ إِلاَّ الْكَبَائِرَ

A night's headache removes all of one's sins, save the major ones.[83]

Mediation by those who possess Existential Influence

The human being has an ability to soar to such heights that he can influence the world of contingent existence (*takwīn*) by the permission of Almighty Allāh. As for the Prophets of Almighty Allah, this is a fact that one can observe in different places of the Holy Qur'ān. An example is that of Prophet 'Īsā ('a):

Almighty Allāh says:

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[80] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 174
[81] *Ibid.*, v. 81, p. 176
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār* ,v. 81, p. 200

وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ ٱلطِّينِ كَهَيْـَٔةِ ٱلطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِى فَتَنفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًۢا بِإِذْنِى ۖ وَتُبْرِئُ ٱلْأَكْمَهَ وَٱلْأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِى ۖ وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ ٱلْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِى ۖ

...and when you determined out of clay a thing like the form of a bird *by My permission*, then you breathed into it and it became a bird *by My permission*, and you healed the blind and the leprous by My permission; and when you brought forth the dead *by My permission*....[84]

In all the abovementioned wonders that Prophet ʻĪsā (ʻa) was able to perform, he required Divine permission to lay his influence on contingent existents. That is why the phrase "*by My permission*" is iterated after every wonder described.

As regards the infallible Imams of the Ahlu'lbayt (ʻa), we do have reports of such influence by them and there is enough evidence to indicate that such phenomena are normal and simple for them, since they enjoy *al-wilāyah al-takwiniyyah* (the powers to lay influence in contingent existence), and they are intermediaries of Divine Grace (*wasā'iṭ al-fayḍ al-ilāhī*) as well. Following are some instances worthy of contemplation:

1. Uprooting the door of Khaybar is a phenomenon that is beyond the scope of science to explain. No very strong human being can do this with his bodily strength. While explaining to Sahl bin Ḥunayf how he managed to uproot the heavy door of Khaybar, Imām (ʻa) said:

وَاللهِ مَا قَلَعْتُ بَابَ خَيْبَرٍ وَقَذَفْتُ بِهِ وَرَائِي أَرْبَعِينَ ذِرَاعًا لَمْ تَحُسَّ أَعْضَائِي، بِقُوَّةٍ جَسَدِيَّةٍ وَحَرَكَةٍ غَرِيزِيَّةٍ بَشَرِيَّةٍ وَلَكِنِّي أُيِّدْتُ بِقُوَّةٍ مَلَكُوتِيَّةٍ وَنَفْسٍ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا مُضِيئَةٍ

I swear by Allah, I did not uproot the door of Khaybar and throw it 40 forearms away while the members of my body did not feel anything, with bodily strength, or nutritive momentum, but I was supported by celestial power and the spirit which is radiant with the Light of its Lord.[85]

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[84] Holy Qur'ān, ch. Al-Mā'idah (5), v. 110

[85] Āyatullāh Ḥasan Zādeh Āmolī, *Sarḥ al-ʻUyūn Fī Sharḥ al-ʻUyūn*, p. 730

2. History tells us that once in the gathering of the Abbasid Caliph Ma'mūn, Ḥamīd bin Mahrān, a supporter of the Caliph, belittling Imām al-Riḍā ('a) tried to challenge him saying that his prayer for rain which followed heavy rains after a long drought was something ordinary and that rain came at its normal season. He said that if the Imām ('a) could perform miracles which were beyond the powers of ordinary men, then he should order the pictures of the two lions that were painted on the curtains of the court of Ma'mūn to become real lions and jump on him and swallow him up. The Imām ('a) pointed to the two pictures and they became real lions, and pounced at Mehrān and ate him up and then turned toward Ma'mun and started gazing at him. Thereafter facing the Imām ('a) the lions said to the Imām: what do you order us to do with this one (i.e. Ma'mūn)? On seeing this, Ma'mūn fell unconscious. The Imām ('a) said to the lions to return where they came from.[86]

These were instances that transpired through the Imāms('a). However, is this possible also with other human beings who attain heights of perfection? Do the Awliyā'ullāh (near ones to God) possess such power too? Can they cure a sick person without employing the conventionally known methods?

Let us look at the Holy Qur'ān and find the answer:

﴿ قَالَ ٱلَّذِى عِندَهُۥ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ أَنَا۠ ءَاتِيكَ بِهِۦ قَبْلَ أَن يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ ۚ فَلَمَّا رَءَاهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِندَهُۥ قَالَ هَٰذَا مِن فَضْلِ رَبِّى لِيَبْلُوَنِىٓ ءَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ ۖ وَمَن شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِۦ ۖ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّى غَنِىٌّ كَرِيمٌ ﴾

Said one who had knowledge of the Book: "I will bring it to thee within the twinkling of any eye!"Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him, he said: "This is by the grace of my Lord! to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful! And if any

[86] 'Allāmah Majlīsī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 49, p. 184

one is grateful, truly his gratitude is (a gain) for his own soul; but if any is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Free of All Needs, Supreme in Honor!"[87]

According to the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), the 'one who had knowledge of the book' in the above verse, was the minister of Sulaymān called Āsaf bin Barkhiyyah[88]. He was the person who with Divine Consent brought the throne of queen Bilqis within the twinkling of an eye. He was known to possess knowledge of *al-Ism al-A'ẓam* (the great Name of Allah), and therefore could perform such powerful phenomena.

We must understand however that according to authoritative Muslim scholars neither does the *al-Ism al-A'ẓam* (Great Name) actually consist of letters and words, nor is the knowledge of the Great Name the conceptual or mental knowledge of a certain word or specific letters as have a majority of the laity conjectured and believed so far. The knowledge of *al-Ism al-A'ẓam* is a *maqām* and station that the human being attains after self-purification and attaining human perfection. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in volume 7 of his monumental *al-Mīzān* has explained this reality at length.[89]

Salman al-Muhammadi and his Powers

One of the companions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) who enjoyed the station of *al-wilāyah al-takwīniyyah* was Salman al-Farsi, who was also known as Salman al-Muḥammadī by the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Being utterly subservient to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), he was also known to be from among them. Once Salmān al-Fārsī's name was mentioned near Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a), and he said:

لا تَقُولُوا سَلْمَانَ الْفَارِسِيُّ وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا سَلْمَانَ الْمُحَمَّدِيُّ ذَاكَ رَجُلٌ مِنَّا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ

Do not say Salmān al-Farsī, but say Salmān al-Muḥammadī, for he is a man from us, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).[90]

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[87] Holy Qur'an, 27:39
[88] 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mizān*, v.55, p.370.
[89] *Ibid.*, v.7 pp. 354-355
[90] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.22, p. 349

It is important and necessary for us to realize and understand that *ma'rifah* and gnosis are of various levels. Those who attain the lower levels cannot comprehend the higher levels. Rather, the matter becomes so intricate that if those of lower levels were to hear what the exalted ones have to say, they would have termed them as disbelievers and done things worse than that. Salmān al-Muḥammadī enjoyed a very high rank, such that Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn is reported to have said about him:

وَاللهِ لَوْ عَلِمَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ مَا فِي قَلْبِ سَلْمَانَ لَقَتَلَهُ

I swear by Allāh, if Abū Dharr knew what was in the heart of Salmān, he would have killed him.[91]

And Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) is reported to have said:

دَخَلَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ عَلَى سَلْمَانَ وَهُوَ يَطْبَخُ قِدْراً لَهُ فَبَيْنَا هُمَا يَتَحَادَّثَانِ إِذَا انْكَبَّتِ الْقِدْرُ عَلَى وَجْهِهَا عَلَى الأَرْضِ فَلَمْ يَسْقُطْ مِنْ مَرَقِهَا وَلاَ مِنْ وَدَكِهَا شَيْءٌ فَعَجِبَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ عَجَباً شَدِيداً وَأَخَذَ سَلْمَانُ الْقِدْرَ فَوَضَعَهَا عَلَى حَالِهَا الأَوَّلِ عَلَى النَّارِ ثَانِيَةً وَأَقْبَلاَ يَتَحَدَّثَانِ فَبَيْنَمَا هُمَا يَتَحَدَّثَانِ إِذَا انْكَبَّتِ الْقِدْرُ عَلَى وَجْهِهَا فَلَمْ يَسْقُطْ مِنْهَا شَيْءٌ مِنْ مَرَقِهَا وَلاَ مِنْ وَدَكِهَا قَالَ فَخَرَجَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ وَهُوَ مَذْعُورٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ سَلْمَانَ فَبَيْنَمَا هُوَ مُتَفَكِّرٌ إِذْ لَقِيَ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ(ع) عَلَى الْبَابِ فَلَمَّا أَنْ بَصُرَ بِهِ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ(ع) قَالَ لَهُ: يَا بَا ذَرٍّ مَا الَّذِي أَخْرَجَكَ وَمَا الَّذِي ذَعَرَكَ؟ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَبُو ذَرٍّ: يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَأَيْتُ سَلْمَانَ صَنَعَ كَذَا وَكَذَا فَعَجِبْتُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَقَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ(ع) يَا بَا ذَرٍّ إِنَّ سَلْمَانَ لَوْ حَدَّثَكَ بِمَا يَعْلَمُ لَقُلْتَ رَحِمَ اللهُ قَاتِلَ سَلْمَانَ يَا بَا ذَرٍّ

Abū Dharr once came to Salmān while he was cooking in a cooking pot; while they were conversing with each other, the cooking pot overturned and its front side fell down on the ground, but not a drop of its curry or cooking fat fell down ; Abū Dharr was highly amazed at seeing this; Salmān picked up the cooking pot and placed it on the fire the second time, and they began conversing once again; while they were talking to each other, the pot overturned again, and nothing of the curry or cooking fat spilled...Abū Dharr then left Salmān in the state of great astonishment, and while

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[91] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 22, p. 343

fat spilled...Abū Dharr then left Salmān in the state of great astonishment, and while he was in his thoughts, he suddenly met Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) at the door. When the Imām ('a) saw Abū Dharr's state of amazement, He said to him: O Abā Dharr, what made you leave the presence of Salmān? And what made you frightened? Abū Dharr said to the Imām ('a): O Amīr al-mu'minīn, I saw Salmān doing such and such a thing, and I was amazed by that. Thereupon Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) said to him: O Abā Dharr, If Salmān were to tell you what he knows, you would have said: May Allāh have mercy on the killer of Salmān.[92]

This incident reveals much. It is important to note the following::

1. *Īmān* (belief) and *ma'rifah* (knowledge of God) have different levels. Those who enjoy the lower levels cannot bear the knowledge of the high ranking ones like Salmān al-Muḥammadi. Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) is also reported to have said:

سَلْمَانُ بَحرُ العِلْمِ لاَ يُقْدَرُ عَلَى نَزْحِه

Salmān is an ocean of knowledge, which cannot be drained and exhausted..[93]

Abū Baṣīr is reported to have said that he heard Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) saying:

إِنَّ سَلْمَانَ عَلِمَ الإِسْمَ الاَعْظَمَ

Surely Salmān knew the Greatest Name of God (*al-ism al-a'ẓam*)

And as we said, this name is not a word to be memorized but an exalted spiritual state. Men of gnosis describe it as the state of exemplifying in oneself the beautiful attributes of Almighty Allāh according to one's limitations.

2. Salmān al-Muḥammadī had powers that enabled him to lay influence in existence, and that is why not a drop of curry spilled off even if the vessel overturned. Other incidents are also narrated about him, which we have not considered here, due to the limited scope of this work.

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[92] 'Allāmah al-Tustarī, *Bahj al-Sabāghah Fī Sharḥi Nahj al-Balāghah*, v.3, p. 402
[93] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.22, p. 347

3. The statement that if Abū Dharr would have known what Salmān knew he would have said 'May Allāh have mercy on the killer of Salmān' should not make us conjecture that the belief of Salmān and Abū Dharr contradicted each other. Not at all. It is the stages of knowledge, as 'Allāmah Majisī[94] and Mawlā Fayḍ al-Kāshānī[95] allude in their works, that differ. A narrow receptacle cannot contain more that its capacity. Can you fill a bucket full of water in small cup? Otherwise Abu Dharr was one of the great companions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) such that it is narrated from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) that:

مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَنْظُرَ إِلَى زُهْدِ عِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ(ع) فَلْيَنْظُرْ إِلَى أَبِي ذَرٍّ

Whosoever would like to look at the *zuhd* (detachment of the world) of 'Isā('a) bin Maryam he should look at Abū Dharr[96]

الْجَنَّةُ تَشْتَاقُ إِلَيْكَ يَا عَلِيُّ وَإِلَى عَمَّارٍ وَسَلْمَانَ وَأَبِي ذَرٍّ وَالْمِقْدَادِ

O 'Alī, verily Paradise yearns for you O 'Alī, 'Ammār, Salmān, Abū Dharr and Miqdād.[97]

In short, both the examples of Āsaf bin Barkhiyyah and Salmān al-Muḥammadī reveal that other human beings too are able to attain a station that can enable them to do things that those far away from God cannot do.

Ibn Sīnā in his monumental work *Remarks and Admonitions*, says:

You may receive information about the Gnostics that almost runs counter to custom, and then you begin to disbelieve. And this is like saying a knower ('Ārif) sought rain for people, hence, they received rain; or sought recovery for them, hence, they recovered; or wished them ill, hence they were cast down, inflicted by earth tremors, or perished in another way. This is also like saying he wished them well, hence they were emancipated from diseases, murrain, torrential stream and flood; or a beast submits to some of them, or no birds flees from them, or other similar things occur

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[94] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.22, p. 343
[95] Mawlā Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Maḥajjat al-Bayḍā'*, v.1, p.65
[96] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.22, p. 243
[97] *Ibid.*, v.22, p. 243

that do not count as belonging to the kind of things that are clearly impossible. Stand still and do not rush into rejecting these things, for such things have causes in the mysteries of nature. Perhaps it will be possible for me to relate some of these causes to you.[98]

Does Seeking Help from the Ahlulbayt ('a) for Curing Our Maladies Lead to Shirk?

Human beings have different degrees of power and strength. It is an obvious phenomenon that the less powerful seek assistance from the more powerful. When seeking support and assistance from other human beings, do we commit *shirk* (polytheism)? Certainly not, for we do not seek assistance from the strong ones and at the same time consider them to possess independent power. We are also not certain whether they would complete the job. Why? This is because they do not have anything of their own. They are contingent and dependent beings. They and their acts all depend and subsist by the All-Powerful Being. This truth is understood by contemplating on the adjective *"al-Qayyūm"* in the well-known verse of the Throne (Āyat al-Kursī):

ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ٱلْحَىُّ ٱلْقَيُّومُ

Allah; Except Him there is no God; He Alone is All-living and All-Subsisting.[99]

Al-Qayyūm is defined as *al-Qā'imu bidhātih wa al-Muqawwimu lighayrih*, which means "One who is Essentially Subsisting and every other entity and being subsists by Him[100]. Therefore no one can ever claim to have any kind of independent perfection whatsoever. Consequently seeking assistance from anyone other than Him in any limited degree whatsoever, with the intention that every power solely comes from Him and belongs to Him is nothing but Tawḥīd.

The Holy Qur'ān says:

وَٱللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

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[98] Ibn Sinā, *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt* (Ibn Sina and Mysticism), tr. by Shams Inati, p.104
[99] Holy Qur'ān, 2:252
[100] Mullā Hādi Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-Asmā'*, p. 363

"But Allāh created you and what you do[101]

The same applies with regard to the Infallible Imāms ('a) of the progeny of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), who have more power than others and have access to the higher realms too. Should we consider seeking their support to be *shirk*? The answer is clear: *shirk* is out of question because we do not consider them to have independent power. We certainly know that every effect that they would lay would be entirely with Allāh's power. This reality is aptly stated in the verse of the Throne of the Holy Qur'ān:

مَن ذَا ٱلَّذِى يَشْفَعُ عِندَهُۥٓ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِۦ

Who can mediate near Him save by His permission[102]

It should be noted that *shafā'ah* and mediation here refers to existential mediation.

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in his monumental *al-Mīzān* says:

وقد فاتهم أولا أن ثبوت التأثير سواء كان ماديا أو غير مادي في غيره تعالى ضروري لا سبيل إلى إنكاره، وقد أسند تعالى في كلامه التأثير بجميع أنواعه إلى غيره ونفي التأثير عن غيره تعالى مطلقا يستلزم إبطال قانون العلية والمعلولية العام الذي هو الركن في جميع أدلة التوحيد ، وفيه هدم بنيان التوحيد .

نعم المنفي من التأثير عن غيره تعالى هو الاستقلال في التأثير و لا كلام لأحد فيه، وأما نفي مطلق التأثير ففيه إنكار بديهة العقل والخروج عن الفطرة الإنسانية

"They however did not realize the following: establishing influence, be that material or immaterial with regard to other than Allah is necessary and inarguable. Further, God has attributed in his speech all kinds of influence to other than Him; and the absolute negation of influence from other than Him necessitates the annulment of the [intellectually established] universal law of causality [every effect necessitates a

[101] Holy Qur'ān, 37:96
[102] Holy Qur'ān, 2:255

cause] which is a fundamental principle in all the proofs of monotheism; and in that [i.e. the annulment of..] is the destruction of the foundation of monotheism.

Yes, that influence which is unacceptable from other than God is 'Independent Influence' and there is no contradiction in this. However, negating 'influence' in the absolute sense is contradicting the rationally self-evident and transgressing the bounds of the human disposition (*fiṭrah*)..."[103]

Visiting the Sick: A Manifestation of True Concern

One of the manifestations of true concern for the sick is to visit them and seek information about their well-being. To verbally pray for them but be indifferent of their condition seems to be somewhat paradoxical. Of course this is different from a situation in which one does pray for the sick people, but has no opportunity to visit them due to his/her important and busy schedule.

Besides psychological research, which proves that visiting the sick confers a lot of solace and sometimes can radically improve the condition of the ailing one as well, our traditions enumerate lots of blessings for visiting the sick people. Following are traditions worthy of contemplation:

i) The Messenger of Allāh is reported to have said:

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ(ص) قَالَ يُعَيِّرُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَبْداً مِنْ عِبَادِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيَقُولُ عَبْدِي مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذَا مَرِضْتُ أَنْ تَعُودَنِي فَيَقُولُ سُبْحَانَكَ سُبْحَانَكَ أَنْتَ رَبُّ الْعِبَادِ لاَ تَأْلَمُ وَلاَ تَمْرَضُ فَيَقُولُ مَرِضَ أَخُوكَ الْمُؤْمِنُ فَلَمْ تَعُدْهُ وَعِزَّتِي وَجَلاَلِي لَوْ عُدْتَهُ لَوَجَدْتَنِي عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ لَتَكَفَّلْتُ بِحَوَائِجِكَ فَقَضَيْتُهَا لَكَ وَذَلِكَ مِنْ كَرَامَةِ عَبْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِ وَأَنَا الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

On the Judgment Day Almighty Allāh would reproach a servant among his servants, and say: 'O My servant, what hampered you from visiting Me when I turned sick.' The servant thereupon would say: 'Free from imperfections are You! Free from imperfections are You! You are the Lord of the people, neither do You sense any

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[103] 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'i, *Al-Mizan Fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, v. 10, p.295

pain, nor do You get sick.' Thereupon Allāh would say: 'Your *mu'min* brother turned sick, and you did not visit him; I swear by my Invincibility and Majesty, were you to visit him, you would have found Me near him, and I would have taken the responsibility of attending to your needs and would give them to you; and this is due to the nobility of a My believing servant, and I am the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful.[104]

2. Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) is reported to have said:

كَانَ فِيمَا نَاجَى بِهِ مُوسَى رَبَّهُ أَنْ قَالَ يَا رَبِّ مَا بَلَغَ مِنْ عِيَادَةِ الْمَرِيضِ مِنَ الأَجْرِ فَقَالَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أُوَكِّلُ بِهِ مَلَكاً يَعُودُهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ إِلَى مَحْشَرِهِ

Among those things that Mūsā ('a) whispered to his Lord was: 'O Lord inform me the extent of reward that a person who visits the sick would get? Allāh said: 'I would entrust an angel over him who would visit him in his grave until his resurrection [on the Judgment Day].'[105]

3. Imām Abū 'Abdillāh al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

مَنْ عَادَ مَرِيضاً شَيَّعَهُ سَبْعُونَ أَلْفَ مَلَكٍ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لَهُ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ إِلَى مَنْزِلِهِ

Whosoever visits a sick person, 70,000 angels escort him while they seek for forgiveness for him, until he returns back to his house.[106]

Despite all the above merits, a selfless and concerned human being would visit the sick because his innate disposition (*fiṭrah*) calls him to do that, and not due to the attraction of the reward.

Visiting the sick, however should be short as has been indicated in different traditions, and one must also try to observe the etiquette of visiting the sick. Due to the brevity of the present work, we would avoid going into details about this. Those however who are interested to know the details of these can refer to traditional texts such as vol. 81 of *Biḥār al-Anwār* of Allama Majlisi.

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[104] al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, v. 2, p. 417
[105] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥar al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 218
[106] al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, v.4, p. 2888

"AAH" is One of the Names of Allah

Both the Holy Qur'ān as well as the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) greatly emphasize that one should not complain in the state of sickness and affliction. And whosoever observes patience is promised great reward. Look at the following traditions:

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

أَرْبَعٌ مِنْ كُنُوزِ الْجَنَّةِ كِتْمَانُ الْفَاقَةِ وَكِتْمَانُ الصَّدَقَةِ وَكِتْمَانُ الْمُصِيبَةِ وَكِتْمَانُ الْوَجَعِ

Four things are from among the treasures of Paradise: to hide one's need; to give *ṣadaqah* secretly, to hide one's calamity, and to hide one's pain.[107]

2. 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd is reported to have said:

بَيْنَا نَحْنُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ(ص) إِذْ تَبَسَّمَ فَقُلْتُ لَهُ مَا لَكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ تَبَسَّمْتَ فَقَالَ(ص) عَجِبْتُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ وَجَزَعِهِ مِنَ السُّقْمِ وَلَوْ يَعْلَمُ مَا لَهُ فِي السُّقْمِ مِنَ الثَّوَابِ لأَحَبَّ أَنْ لا يَزَالَ سَقِيماً حَتَّى يَلْقَى رَبَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

While we were in the presence of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), we found him suddenly smile. So I asked him: What happened; why did you smile O Messenger of Allāh? He said: I am surprised at the believer and his apprehension due to his illness; were he to know what reward there is for him in the illness, he would have loved to be ill until he meets his Lord, the Invincible and Majestic.[108]

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

مَنْ مَرِضَ يَوْماً وَلَيْلَةً فَلَمْ يَشْكُ إِلَى عُوَّادِهِ بَعَثَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَعَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلِ الرَّحْمَنِ حَتَّى يَجُوزَ الصِّرَاطَ كَالْبَرْقِ اللامِعِ

Whosoever gets ill for a day and night but does not complain about his situation to his visitors, Allāh would raise him on the Judgment Day with Prophet Ibrāhīm ('a),

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[107] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 208
[108] *Ibid.*, v. 81, p. 206

the Friend of the All-Merciful, so that he would pass the path like radiant lightening.[109]

The meaning of complaint and *shikāyah*, however, should be understood properly. One who expresses the sensation of pain that he encounters cannot, for example, be known to be complaining against Almighty Allāh. In fact in some traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) the expression "āh" from the ailing one is considered as one of the Names of Almighty Allāh. Observe the following:

Ja'far bin Yaḥyā al-Khuzā'ī is reported to have narrated from his father that he said:

دَخَلْتُ مَعَ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ(ع) عَلَى بَعْضِ مَوَالِيهِ يَعُودُهُ فَرَأَيْتُ الرَّجُلَ يُكْثِرُ مِنْ قَوْلِ آهِ فَقُلْتُ لَهُ يَا أَخِي اذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ وَ اسْتَغِثْ بِهِ فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ(ع) آهِ اسْمٌ مِنْ أَسْمَاءِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى فَمَنْ قَالَ آهِ اسْتَغَاثَ بِاللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ

I accompanied Imam al-Ṣādiq ('a) who came to visit one of his [ailing] slaves, and I saw the slave saying "*āh*" many times. So I said to him: O my brother, remember your Lord and seek His Support. Thereupon Imam al-Ṣādiq ('a) said: Āh is a Name among the Names of Allāh, and whosoever says "āh" seeks the Help of Allah, the Invincible and Majestic.[110]

It should be known that expressing the sensation of pain by employing the word "āh" is in reality expressing one's poverty and need for perfection and bodily equilibrium. And it is a known fact that NONE but the All-Affluent and the Principal Curer (*al-Shāfī*) can relieve the ailing patient.

Prophet Ibrāhīm ('a) says:

وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ

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[109] *Ibid.*, v.81, p. 203
[110] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 202

And when I turn sick, then He Alone Cures Me[111]

Therefore in reality, one is seeking the support of the Almighty, and is well-aware that no doctor or nurse or anyone whatsoever can relieve him from any kind of malady independently. Hence by saying 'Āh' he is in reality calling '*al-Shāfī*' (the Curer) or '*Ghiyāth al-Mustaghīthīn*' (the Helper of the Seekers of help) and Allāh is the All-Knowing.

The Suffering Believer in the Garden of Paradise

There are purified souls who have been bestowed with inner vision and can thus behold the reality of different people. They need not to wait for the Hereafter to know the inner reality. Almighty Allāh has already gifted them with the knowledge thereof in this world. One such personality is Imām 'Alī ('a) who expressed this reality in the following dictum:

لَوْ كُشِفَ الْغِطَاءُ مَا ازْدَدْتُ يَقِيناً

If the curtains are unveiled no conviction would be added to what I have[112]

In other words, nothing among the higher realities such as Paradise and Hell was hidden for the Imām ('a). He could behold things that others could not.

There is an interesting narrative in which Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

وُعِكَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ فَأَتَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ(ص) فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَبَا ذَرٍّ قَدْ وُعِكَ فَقَالَ(ص) امْضِ بِنَا إِلَيْهِ نَعُودُهُ فَمَضَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعاً فَلَمَّا جَلَسْنَا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ(ص) كَيْفَ أَصْبَحْتَ يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ قَالَ أَصْبَحْتُ وَعِكاً يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ(ص) أَصْبَحْتَ فِي رَوْضَةٍ مِنْ رِيَاضِ الْجَنَّةِ ...

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[111] Holy Qur'ān, 26:80

[112] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 40, p. 153

Abū Dharr [once] turned sick; so I came to the Messenger of Allāh and said: O Messenger of Allāh, verily Abū Dharr has fallen sick. He said: let us go to visit him. So all of us together went to visit him. And when we sat besides him, the Messenger of Allah asked him: O Abū Dharr, how did you confront your morning? He said: I have confronted the morning in sickness. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) thereupon said: Surely you have confronted the morning while you are in a garden among the gardens of Paradise...[113]

Here the Holy Prophet (ṣ) beheld the kernel of Abū Dharr's situation, and informed him of his higher rank which he could not vision.

Sadaqah- A Powerful Means of Curing the Sick

The human being due to his limited knowledge cannot perceive all the means to the cure of the different maladies and diseases. Further, since he/she perceives the world of matter and cannot vision the celestial realm (*'ālam al-malakūt*) or beyond that, he/she is oblivious of so many other ways to the cure of maladies. Here is where the important role of *waḥy* (revelation) and Imāmate comes. Those entrusted with Divine secrets, acknowledging the need of unveiling them have informed us much to learn. With regard to curing the sick, we have traditions worthy of contemplation. Observe the following:

1.Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

دَاوُوا مَرْضَاكُمْ بِالصَّدَقَةِ

Treat your sick by giving *ṣadaqah*[114]

2. He ('a) is also reported to have said:

ذِكْرُنَا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ شِفَاءٌ مِنَ الْوَعْكِ وَالأَسْقَامِ وَوَسْوَاسِ الرِّيْبِ

Remembering us the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) is a cure from illness and diseases as well as the insinuation of doubt.[115]

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[113] al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, v. 1, p. 57
[114] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 203
[115] *Ibid.*, v. 81, p. 203

One should note however that giving *ṣadaqah* (alms) has some etiquette, a most important of which is *al-mubāsharah* which means that the sick person should himself/herself give the *ṣadaqah*. Observe the following tradition:

Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

يُسْتَحَبُّ لِلْمَرِيضِ أَنْ يُعْطِيَ السَّائِلَ بِيَدِهِ وَيَأْمُرَ السَّائِلَ أَنْ يَدْعُوَ لَهُ

It is recommended for the sick person to give a beggar with his own hands and tell him to pray for him[116]

WHY ARE SPIRITUAL ILLNESSES WORSE THAN PHYSICAL MALADIES?

One of the very important discussions that the 'ulamā al-akhlāq bring about in their ethical texts is how spiritual ailments are more dangerous to the human being than the physical illnesses. Mawlā Muḥammad Narrāqī, the great ethician in his ethical corpus *Jāmi' al-Sa'ādāt* in his introductory discussions on ethics says:

اعلم أن الإنسان منقسم إلى سر وعلن، و روح وبدن ولكل منهما منافيات وملائمات، وآلام ولذات، ومهلكات ومنجيات.

ومنافيات البدن وآلامه هي الأمراض الجسمانيه. وملائماته هي الصحة واللذات الجسمانية. و المتكفل لبيان تفاصيل هذه الأمراض ومعالجاتها هو علم الطب. ومنافيات الروح و آلامه هي رذائل الأخلاق التي تهلكه وتشقيه، وصحته رجوعه إلى فضائلها التي تسعده وتنجيه و توصله إلى مجاورة أهل الله ومقربيه. والمتكفل لبيان هذه الرذائل ومعالجاتها هو (علم الأخلاق).

ثم إن البدن مادي فإن، والروح مجرد باق، فإن اتصف بشرائف الصفات كان في البهجة والسعادة أبدا، وإن اتصف برذائلها كان في العذاب والشقاوة مخلدا...

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[116] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 209

Know that the human being is divided into "the kernel" (*sirr*) and "the apparent" (*'alan*) and [or in other words] "the spirit" and "the body" and for each of these two dimensions there are incompatibilities (*munāfiyāt*) and compatibilities (*mulāyimāt*), pains and pleasures, elements of destruction and salvation.

The incompatibilities of the body and its pains are the physical illnesses whereas its compatibilities are good health and physical pleasures. And the discipline that caters to expound the details of these illnesses and their treatments is medicine. And the incompatibilities of the soul and its pains are bad characteristics that destroy it and make it wretched, and its wellbeing is to return towards good morals that bring it felicity and emancipate it and make it attain the neighborhood of the people of God and His Near ones, and the discipline that caters to expound these evil characteristics and their treatment is the discipline of ethics.

Then it should be known that the body is material and prone to destruction, whereas the spirit and soul is eternal, and therefore if the soul characterizes itself with noble qualities it would be in the state of joy and felicity forever, but were it to characterize itself with evil ethics it would be in the state of punishment and wretchedness forever....[117]

Therefore since the spirit has always to remain, one should be very careful and purify it before it is too late. The material body on the other hand would have to stay in this world and probably turn into earth after burial.

Spiritual Illnesses Is The Principal Cause

If one were to understand the aim of human life, the gravity of spiritual sickness over physical sickness would become more apparent. In fact, if we painstakingly ponder over the causes of the different illnesses, we would come to realize that the principal cause of many of the physical illnesses stem from spiritual illnesses, either from oneself or from others: sometimes the source of physical illnesses is oneself, sometimes others, and at times a product of cooperation with others. An example of the first is when a person has no sense of temperance and allows his faculty of desire to prevail over his faculty of intellect, and engages in overindulgence in eating copulation, etc. The result of such a lifestyle would be brim with illnesses. Sometimes however, you are invited to

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[117] Mawlā Muḥammad Narrāqī, *Jāmi' al-Sa 'ādāt*, v.1, p. 5

your friend's house and served with delicious food, but because your friend did not observe some religious or hygienic precautions while cooking, you turn ill. If you are invited by one who, for example, does not care whether the meat he buys is from a believer or non believer or whether he earns through lawful or unlawful means, you would undoubtedly be affected spiritually. This can then be a basis for immoderation, which would lead to physical illnesses. An example of the third situation is when genetically made food is produced, and you show your cooperation in purchasing the same. Here the fault is both yours and the producer's. If your purchase is due to your mundane attachments and you know that the producer's aim is nothing but to satisfy his capitalistic demands, you would have cooperated with him to cause physical illnesses in your self. Here greed and avarice enveloped your intellect and you were led to physical illnesses. However, if the circumstances are such that you have to cope with such foods and you have no option, then you remain in danger of the physical illnesses but can be free from spiritual maladies.

The Traveling Physician

Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have described the Prophet (ṣ) in the following manner in one of his sermons compiled in the *Nahj al-Balāghah*:

طَبِيبٌ دَوَّارٌ بِطِبِّهِ قَدْ أَحْكَمَ مَرَاهِمَهُ وَ أَحْمَى مَوَاسِمَهُ يَضَعُ ذَلِكَ حَيْثُ الْحَاجَةُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ قُلُوبٍ عُمْيٍ وَ آذَانٍ صُمٍّ وَ أَلْسِنَةٍ بُكْمٍ مُتَتَبِّعٌ بِدَوَائِهِ مَوَاضِعَ الْغَفْلَةِ وَ مَوَاطِنَ الْحَيْرَةِ

The Prophet (ṣ) was like a traveling physician who has set ready his ointments and heated his instruments. He uses them wherever the need arises for curing blind hearts, deaf ears, and dumb tongues. He followed with his medicines the spots of negligence and places of perplexity.[118]

One of the excellent methods of treating the ailing ones is to go to them for treatment. Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī ('a) calls the Holy Prophet (ṣ) طَبِيبٌ دَوَّارٌ بِطِبِّهِ *ṭabībun dawārun biṭibbih*- A traveling physician.

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[118] Sharif Radī, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 108

Physicians who deal with the human body normally treat others in return for payment. This is because it is a means of their livelihood. Nevertheless, not all physicians have the same financial status. Whereas some work in certain hospitals or clinics, others own hospitals and clinics themselves. There are different poverty-stricken areas in the world where due to indigence, people do not have the privilege of getting treated from illnesses. Physicians who truly have concern for all the poor to get cured would either personally arrange a team of doctors to visit the area, and thereafter treat the various patients, or if resources do not permit, try to form a friendly circle of doctors who would voluntarily contribute what they can. By visiting these poverty-stricken areas, not only would they practically show their concern for the ailing ones, but also practice the Prophet's way of life in the physical dimension. Hence although this beautiful narrative of Imām 'Alī ('a) refers to the spiritual dimension, it can also be applied in the life of the physicians of the body too.

A very interesting narrative is reported in the historical text *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah* of Ibn Hishām, where the practical import of Imām 'Alī ('a)'s statement is brilliantly reflected. Ibn Hishām quotes Ibn Isḥāq to have said:

فكان رسول الله (ص) يَعْرِضُ نَفْسَهُ فِي الْمَوَاسِمِ، إِذَا كَانَتْ عَلَى قَبَائِلِ الْعَرَبِ يَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى اللهِ، وَيُخْبِرُهُمْ أَنَّهُ نَبِيٌّ مُرْسَلٌ، وَيَسْأَلُهُمْ أَنْ يُصَدِّقُوهُ ...

The Messenger of Allāh (ṣ) would present himself to [to the people] in [different] occasions; and when he would confront the Arabs, he would invite them to Allāh, inform them that He is an Apostle of Allāh, and seek their verification....[119]

And in the same book Ibn Isḥāq is reported to have said:

وَحَدَّثَنِي حُسَيْنُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللهِ بْنِ عُبَيْدِ اللهِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَبِيعَةَ بْنَ عِبَادٍ، يُحَدِّثُهُ أَبِي: قَالَ إِنِّي لَغُلَامٌ شَابٌّ مَعَ أَبِي بِمِنًى، وَ رَسُولُ اللهِ (ص) يَقِفُ عَلَى مَنَازِلِ الْقَبَائِلِ مِنَ الْعَرَبِ، فَيَقُولُ: يَا بَنِي فُلَانٍ، إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللهِ إِلَيْكُمْ، يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَعْبُدُوا اللهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ

[119] Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, v.2, pp. 35-36

شَيْئاً. وَ اَنْ تَخْلَعُوْا مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْأَنْدَادِ، وَ اَنْ تُؤْمِنُوا بِي، وَتُصَدِّقُوْا بِي، وَتَمْنَعُوْنِي حَتّٰى أُبَيِّنَ عَنِ اللهِ مَا بَعَثَنِي بِهِ.

'Ubaydullāh bin 'Abbās narrates: I saw my father telling Rabī'a bin 'Ubbād: "During my youth age once I was together with my father in Minā; I observed that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) would visit the different tents (*manāzil*) of the Arabs, and say: 'O children of such and such personality, certainly I am a Messenger of Allāh towards you, who invites you to worship Allāh and that you must not associate anyone with Him, and renounce the [imaginary] partners that you worship other than Him, and believe in Me and accept me and protect me so that I may expound for you from Allāh that which He has sent me with.[120]

It is interesting to note that in his propagation to Banū 'Āmir, a person called Firās bin 'Abdillāh is reported to have said about him: 'I swear by Allāh, if I would have this youth from Quraysh, I would have ruled over the Arabs by him. Thereafter addressing the Holy Prophet (ṣ) he said that we can only pay our oath of allegiance to you on the condition that you make me your successor after you. Here was a very sensitive moment. If the Holy Prophet (ṣ) was merely after gaining support of his personal fame, he would have consented to this transaction. But it was not a matter of personal interests. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) said:

الأَمْرُ إِلى اللهِ يَضَعُ حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ...

The matter is with Allāh, He would place in whoever's hand He wishes...[121]

And on this they did not listen to the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and remained adamant to their disbelief.

Our *muballighūn* should emulate this highly important tradition of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) within their own limitations. There is a law, we must understand, which prevails all the verses of this supplication:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا...

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[120] Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, v.2, p. 36
[121] *Ibid.*, v.2, p. 38

Allāh does not burden a soul save what it can bear.[122]

Hence, each one of us is responsible according to his/her abilities. The resourceful, for example, would undertake great ventures to disseminate Islām in different parts of the world, and thus try to treat the maladies of the spiritually sick, whereas those who have limited resources could struggle to do the most *from the least that they have at their disposal.* There is another very beautiful law in the holy Qur'ān that implicitly tells us how to make advantage of the limited resources at our disposal. The secret is 'struggle'. The lazy carpenter by making small things, would worry about his financial status and perhaps seek unlawful means, but the diligent carpenter who possesses the similar tools would struggle hard and increase his tools so that he can produce better wooden items and develop himself financially. The Holy Qur'ān says:

وَأَن لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنسَٰنِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ

And there is nothing for man save that which he strives for[123]

We should remember that the extent of the struggle would reflect the firmness of our resolution to assist the ailing ones and the intensity of our concern for their well-being.

How Can We Contribute in Dispelling Illnesses from Others?

It should be well understood by now that seeking the well-being of others is not limited to prayer only. Our contributions would vary according to the ability that we have. Further, we should understand how grave is our need for spiritual well-being. Therefore we should not be oblivious of this fundamental and decisive dimension of the human beings.

Those who can create conditions that would obliterate illnesses from the society are responsible to do the needful, those who can assist others in guiding them to observe precaution before they suffer dangerous illnesses

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[122] Holy Qur'ān, 2:286
[123] Holy Qur'ān, 53:39

have the duty to do so, those who can financially afford to assist others in getting their sickness treated should take the noble step of doing so; and those who do not have any of the preceding status due their limited powers, are expected to pray for the ailing and visit them as well. For those who have more power, they are required to play a greater role in all the areas that determine the treatment of the ailing ones.

As we humbly pray to Allāh for the well-being of everyone, we should not forget ourselves, for although we may enjoy very good physical health, but have we tried to diagnose ourselves spiritually yet? Are we sure that we do not suffer from any of the spiritual illnesses? Is spiritual illness so insignificant due to the absence of any immediate physical pain? If one looks at the depth of the matter, he/she would realize that eternal salvation is entirely dependent on the spiritual well-being of a person.

Our prayers should be continual. This is because persistence in prayer is a corollary of "true concern". One who has no concern would not be persistent in his prayer. In fact, as we said in our introduction to the first volume of this commentary, du'a is a reflection of one's true state. There is complete harmony between one's spirit and the prayer that he/she utters.

Section 11

اَللّٰهُمَّ سُدَّ فَقْرَنَا بِغِنَاكَ

O Allah, fill our poverty
with Your Needlessness



اَللّٰهُمَّ سُدَّ فَقْرَنَا بِغِنَاكَ

O Allāh, fill our poverty with Your Needlessness

O Allāh, fill (*sudda*) OUR poverty (*faqranā*) with YOUR Affluence (*bighināka*). This verse does not pertain to the need of the commonly needy individuals, but need that is shared by every human being, or rather every contingent being[124], which due to the nature of its essence possesses nothing of its own. Therefore, even the apparently self-sufficient among the created beings are termed poor and needy in this verse. Similarly, *ghināka* (lit. Your Needlessness) is not the common self-sufficiency shared by some of the human beings, but that which is restricted only to Almighty Allāh. In reality, if one understands the relation between the Creator and the creation, self-sufficiency makes no sense with regard to the creation at all. The Holy Qur'ān alluding to this says:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ أَنتُمُ ٱلْفُقَرَآءُ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ ۖ وَٱللَّهُ هُوَ ٱلْغَنِىُّ ٱلْحَمِيدُ

O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Allāh, and Allāh—He is the All-Sufficient, the All-Laudable. [125]

لَّهُۥ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ ۚ وَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَهُوَ ٱلْغَنِىُّ ٱلْحَمِيدُ

To Him only belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth; and surely Allah is the All-Sufficient, the All-Laudable[126]

And in his well-known supplication of 'Arafah, Imām al-Ḥusayn('a) humbly cries:

إِلٰهِي أَنَا الْفَقِيرُ فِي غِنَايَ فَكَيْفَ لا أَكُونُ فَقِيرا فِي فَقْرِي

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[124] Contingent beings are those that do not exist essentially nor are they impossible to exist. Therefore in order for them to exist, they always need a cause. All the created beings are such (Author)
[125] Holy Qur'ān, 35:15
[126] *Ibid.*, 22:64

O God, I am the poor in my self-sufficiency; therefore how can I not be needy in my state of need?

And Imām 'Alī ('a) in his famous whisperings (*munājāt*) cries:

مَوْلايَ يَا مَوْلايَ أَنْتَ الْغَنِيُّ وَأَنَا الْفَقِيرُ وَهَلْ يَرْحَمُ الْفَقِيرَ إِلا الْغَنِيُّ

My Master, My Master, You are the All-Sufficient and I am the needy; and who other than the All-Sufficient can have mercy on the needy?

And in the recommended prayer after 'Aṣr, we introduce ourselves as:

...لا يَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِه نَفْعا وَلا ضَرّاً وَلا مَوْتا وَلا حَيَاةً وَلا نُشُورا...

...one who does not own any benefit, nor harm, nor death, nor life, nor resurrection...[127]

CAN WE TURN INTO THE NECESSARY BEING?

Faqranā (lit. our poverty) refers to the utterly dependent state of the human being, which in the language of metaphysicians is termed as 'contingency' (*imkān*), and in the vision of mystics 'manifestation' (*ẓuhūr*). All what exists other than Allāh do not have existence of their own. To come into being and subsist in any state whatsoever requires the Divine Will. The following verse of the Qur'ān expounds the continual process of causation with relation to the creation:

قُلِ ٱللَّهُ خَٰلِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ ٱلْوَٰحِدُ ٱلْقَهَّٰرُ

Say, 'God is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-paramount.'

It should be noted that *'Khāliqu* in the above verse denotes perpetual creation. This concept is also beautifully expounded by Mullā Ṣadrā in his philosophical texts, where he intellectually establishes, through his well-known theory of transubstantial motion (*ḥarakah jawhariyyah*), the fact that every contingent being receives new existence every moment. It

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[127] Shaykh Bahā'ī, *Miftāh al-Falāḥ*, v.1, p.198

is also interesting to note that in his *al-Mashā'ir* he says[128] that he understood this subtle reality by reflecting over the following among other verses of the Holy Qur'ān:

أَفَعَيِينَا بِٱلْخَلْقِ ٱلْأَوَّلِ ۚ بَلْ هُمْ فِى لَبْسٍ مِّنْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ

Were We exhausted by the first creation? Rather they are in doubt about a new creation.[129]

وَتَرَى ٱلْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِىَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ ٱلسَّحَابِ

And you see the mountains, which you suppose to be stationary, while they drift like passing clouds...[130]

The mystics also vision this reality when they behold this universe. 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadāni says:

'Small children, observing a lamp burning continuously, would naturally think that what we see is one single flame. But the grownups know very well that it is a series of different flames appearing and disappearing moment by moment. And from the viewpoint of mystics this must necessarily be the case with everything in the world except God.[131]

Having understood the aforesaid, we ask: Is it possible for the human being to lose his/her contingent identity and become Essential and Necessary in existence? In other words, is it possible for us to change from the utterly poor to the absolutely affluent? Intellectually speaking, such a phenomenon can never transpire for it is evidently impossible. This is because 'a Necessary Being' (*wājib al- wujūd*) is only necessary and essential when it did not and does not depend on any kind of cause whatsoever. If one says that a certain being was contingent (*mumkin*) and thereafter turned into a Necessary Being (*wājib*), this would depict

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[128] Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Mashā'ir*, p.64. For those who are after the philosophical exposition of the subject and can appreciate the Arabic language may refer to the following texts: *Al-Asfār al-Arba'ah*, volume 7,p. 298 and Ayatullāh Ḥasan Zadeh Amoli's glosses over Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī's philosophical poetry *al-Manẓūmah*, volume 4, p. 288.

[129] Holy Qur'ān, 50:15

[130] *Ibid.*, 27:88

[131] al-Hamadānī, *Zubdat al-Ḥaqā'iq*, p.62

nothing but absurdity. This is because an entity changing from contingency (*imkān*) to necessity (*wujūb*) means change of the essence (*dhāt*) of the entity. This change either was causeless or needed a cause. If we say that it did not require a cause and changed by accident, we have said what is intellectually absurd. If we say it needed a cause, then that would also be incorrect because for something to be necessary no cause is needed whatsoever. A Necessary Being is Causeless. It is never brought about. Hence a contingent being can never turn into a Necessary Being.

Therefore, what exactly do we mean when we utter the above verse of this supplication? What do we actually seek from Almighty Allāh?

One of the Sublime Names of Almighty Allāh is *al-Ṣamad*. There are several meanings for this name, but they in reality are corollaries (*lawāzim*) of its exact lexical meaning[132] which is: 'One who is besought and every entity returns to Him for any need'. One of the corollary meanings of *al-Ṣamad* is 'the All-compact (*al-musmat*). Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a) is reported to have said:

اَلصَّمَدُ الَّذي لاَ جَوْفَ لَهُ...

Aṣ-Ṣamad is One Who has no hollowness

Due to His Infinite Existence, there is no gap of deficiency in any of His perfections. If He is All-Knowing, then there is no perforation in His Infinite knowledge, if He is All-Powerful, there is no kind of power that he lacks... In short, He has no kind of deficiency in the level of His Essence, Attributes or Actions. Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī in his *Sharḥ al-Asmā'* says:

فانّه لمّا كان بسيط الحقيقة واجدا للكمالات والخيرات لا يسلب عنه خير، كان كالمصمّت الّذي لا جوف له - تعالى عن الشبيه و النظير علوّا كبيرا - فهو بخلاف الممكن الّذي هو الأجوف النّاقص الجائع الفاقد لكلّ كمال، في مرتبة ذاته بذاته...

Because His reality is Simple[133] and Non-composite [*Basīṭ al-Ḥaqiqa*] and He possesses all the perfections and virtues, and does not lack any goodness (*khayr*), He

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[132] 'Allāma Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabṭabā'i, *Tafsīr al-Mizān*, v.20, p.391

[133] Here 'simplicity' denotes the non-compositeness of God. (Author)

is like a compact entity (*al-muṣammat*) that does not have any hollowness- highly exalted is He from comparison and similarity- and so He (Allāh) is contrary to a contingent being (*al-mumkin*) who is hollow (*al-ajwaf*), imperfect, hungry, and lacks any perfection in the level of his essence...[134]

Therefore, every dependent entity is hollow in its reality. Only Allāh is *al-Ṣamad*. Several parables are given to show this relation. One such relation is that of the ocean and its waves. The waves have nothing of their own yet they seem to be different to the Ocean. Perhaps the best comparison is that of the reflection and the mirror. The creation is like the reflection of Divine Names in the Mirror.

Having considered the aforesaid, what do we mean when we ask Almighty Allāh to fill up our existential poverty with His existential affluence?

Seeking the proximity of Allah

One of the interpretations of this sacred verse is to seek the state of human perfection through utter submission to Allāh, such that the human being gains sufficiency (*ghinā*) through the Absolutely Sufficient (*al-Ghanī*). The following sacred tradition (*hadith al-qudsī*) refers to this exalted station:

يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ أَنَا غَنِيٌّ لاَ أَفْتَقِرُ أَطِعْنِي فِيمَا أَمَرْتُكَ أَجْعَلْكَ غَنِيّاً لاَ تَفْتَقِرُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ أَنَا حَيٌّ لاَ أَمُوتُ أَطِعْنِي فِيمَا أَمَرْتُكَ أَجْعَلْكَ حَيّاً لاَ تَمُوتُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ أَنَا أَقُولُ لِلشَّيْءِ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ أَطِعْنِي فِيمَا أَمَرْتُكَ أَجْعَلْكَ تَقُولُ لِلشَّيْءِ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

O offspring of Adam, I am the All-Sufficient, and will never become needy; obey Me, and I will make you All-Sufficient such that you will never become needy; O offspring of Ādam, I am All-Living and will never die, obey Me, and I will make you All-living and you will never die; O offspring of Adam, I say [to a thing] be! And it is; Obey me in what I have commanded you, and I will make you such that when you say be [to a thing], it would come into being.[135]

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[134] Mullā Hādi Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-Asmā'*, p.365
[135] Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī, *'Uddat al-Dā'ī*, p.310

In order to attain this fundamental level of proximity (*qurb*), which is the highest point of the first spiritual journey (السير الى الله) one must undergo the way-stations of human perfection, which are expounded by the experts of gnosis in their manuals of direction. The fundamental stages, however, as we discussed earlier, are *yaqẓah* and *tawbah*. It should also be understood that for one to maintain himself/herself on the straight path and never divert from the same, he/she needs a master of gnosis (*'irfān*) who has already covered the levels of perfection and has the ability to take others as well.

Seeking The Infinite

Another possible interpretation of this verse of the blessed supplication is to seek greater perfection of the Divine Attributes one already possesses. The authoritative mystics in their works present different levels[136] in the journey of human perfection. One of the basic classifications they propound is that the human being has two fundamental journeys:

Ibn Maytham al-Baḥrānī, in his *Sharḥu Mi'at Kalimah* quoting the mystical scholars says:

السَّفَرُ سَفَرَانِ، سَفَرٌ إِلَى اللهِ، وَسَفَرٌ فِي اللهِ، وَالأَوَّلُ إِشَارَةٌ إِلَى انْتِقَالاَتِ النَّفْسِ فِي مَرَاتِبِ السُّلُوكِ، وَالثَّانِي إِشَارَةٌ إِلَى انْتِقَالِهَا فِي دَرَجَاتِ الْوُصُولِ...

There are two journeys: journey to Allāh, and journey in Allāh; the first alludes to the transformations of the soul in the different levels of wayfaring, and the second refers to its transformations in the stages of attainment (*wuṣūl*)...[137]

1. *Al-sayr ilā Allāh* السير إلى الله (Journey towards Allāh) which culminates with the state of *tawḥīd* when one does not see anything save Allah.

2. *Al-sayr fī Allāh* السير في الله (Journey in Allāh) which never culminates, for it has no end. When we say "in God", one should not conjecture that

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[136] It should be noted that the well-known classification, which is not contradictory to what we have mentioned above, is the *al-Asfar al-Arb'ah* (the four journeys) which Ṣadru'l Muta'allihin and his school of thought has adopted. We have not mentioned this due to the limited scope of this work.

[137] Ibn Maytham al-Baḥrānī, *Sharḥ Mi'at Kalimah*, v.1, p.40

God is a vessel (*ẓarf*) in which the human being travels. Far is He from any kind of limitation and imperfection whatsoever. *Al-sayr fi Allāh* means journeying in the Attributes of God, or the continual process of coloring oneself with the Divine Attributes. And because Allāh is *al-Ṣamad* and Infinite, all his perfect attributes are infinite too. And since the journey from the finite to the Infinite is infinite, the human being, however exalted he may be, is still in need of more and more perfection. The following famous dictum of Imām 'Alī ('a) according to some scholars[138] refers to this very journey:

آه مِنْ قلّة الزّاد، وَطُول الطّريق، وَبُعد السّفَر...

O, how less is the provision, and how long the path and distant the journey...![139]

Hence no occasion will there ever come when the human being would be needless of this prayer.

Readers however should note that for the one who has not attained the proximity of Allāh, 'seeking more' carries no meaning. He should strive to cover the first journey so that he may be able to swim across the oceans of the different names of Almighty Allāh. Scholars of ethics however advise that in such cases when the supplicant realizes how remote he is from uttering such lofty words, he should pray with utter humility and shame, and while feeling repentant of his state of separation, pin his hopes entirely on the One who can jerk him to start his journey and later have the ability to swim across the vast oceans of His Attributes.

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[138] Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmolī alludes to this point in his lessons on Ibn 'Arabi's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. See also '*Buhuth Fī 'Ilm al-Nafs*' [Transcripts of the notes of Sayyid Kamāl al-Ḥaydari on the section about the human soul from Mullā Hādī Sabzawāri's philosophical poetry *al-Manẓūmah*', page 298.]

[139] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.34, p.284

Section 12

اَللّٰهُمَّ غَيِّرْ سُوْءَ حَالِنَا بِحُسْنِ حَالِكَ

O Allah, change our unpleasant state
into Your Beautiful State

اَللّٰهُمَّ غَيِّرْ سُوْءَ حَالِنَا بِحُسْنِ حَالِكَ

O Allah, change our unpleasant State into Your Beautiful State

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In order to properly understand the above verse, it is imperative to know the meaning of the word *"ḥusn"* in the phrase '*bi ḥusni Ḥālik*'. According to *Rāghib al-Isfahāni*, the word *ḥusn* means:

الحُسْنُ: عِبَارَةٌ عَنْ كُلِّ مُبْهِجٍ مَرْغُوْبٍ فِيهِ، وَذَلِكَ ثَلَاثَةُ أَضْرُبٍ: مُسْتَحْسَنٌ مِن جِهَةِ الْعَقْلِ، مُسْتَحْسَنٌ مِنْ جِهَةِ الْهَوَى، مُسْتَحْسَنٌ مِنْ جِهَةِ الْحِسِّ وَالْحَسَنَةُ يُعبَّر عَنْهَا عَنْ كُلِّ مَا يَسُرُّ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تَنَالُ الإِنْسَانَ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَبَدَنِهِ وَأَحْوَالِهِ وَالسَّيِّئَةُ تَضَادُّهَا...

'*Ḥusn* is every pleasant and desirable thing. And it is of three kinds:

- Pleasant according to the intellect
- Pleasant according to worldly inclination
- Pleasant according to sense perception

And the word *al-ḥasanah* is employed to mean every pleasant blessing that the human being attains in his spirit, body or states. And *al-sayyi'ah* is opposite to that...'[140]

بِحُسْنِ حَالِكَ The personal pronoun "*kāf*" here implies that we are after the utter Beauty of Almighty Allāh, who is the Most Pleasant and Beloved[141]. We can therefore not limit the extensions of *ḥusn* to what *al-*

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[140] Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradātu Alfāẓi'l Qur'ān*, p. 235

[141] In his *Mufradāt* al-Iṣfahāni has extensively discussed about the etymology of the word إله *'ilāh'*. He reports different origins for the same. One of these, he says, is ولاه *'wilāh'* (passionate love). At the onset it was pronounced as *wilāh*; thereafter the letter *wāw* (و) was changed into the letter *hamza* (ا) and it became *ilāh*. And God was named *wilāh* because every created being has passionate love for Him. *Al-Isfahānī* says:

قال بعض الحكماء: الله محبوب الأشياء كلها و عليه دل قوله تعالى: وان من شيء إلا يسبح بحمده ولكن لا تفقهون تسبيحهم

A certain theosophist is reported to have said, 'Allāh is the beloved of all things'. And upon this does the following speech of Almighty Allāh indicate: 'And there is nothing save that it glorifies Allāh and praises Him, but you do not comprehend their glorification.' [*Rāghib al-Isfahānī, Mufradātu Alfāẓi'l Qur'ān, p. 83*]

Iṣfahānī enumerates in his lexicon of Qur'ānic words. The universal sense of the word itself allows every pleasant entity to come under its conceptual umbrella. In addition, the *Ḥusnu'l Ḥāl* (the pleasant state) possessed by Almighty Allāh is beyond intellectual and sensory perception.

It should be noted that the main components of *ḥusn* are '*mubhij*' (pleasant, delightful, etc.) and *marghūb fih* (desirable). This is one key to understanding the various extensions of beautiful entities.

The particle "*bi*" in the phrase '*bi ḥusni Ḥālik*' here can have two probable meanings:

(1) It can mean into[142] (the same as the particle إلى *ilā*). Therefore the prayer would read: "O Allāh change our unpleasant state into Your Beautiful State". This also reminds us of another supplication which is recommended to be recited on the first day of the solar year – Nawrūz:

...حَوِّل حَالَنَا إِلَى أَحْسَنِ الْحَال...

...change our state into the most beautiful state...[143]

(2) It can denote *sababiyyah* (mediation)[144], and thus the prayer would read: "O Allāh change my evil state by Your Beautiful State".

بُحسن حَـالِـنَا *Ḥāl* حـال denotes *'a changing state'*. Due to his imperfect ıture, the human being undergoes a movement of perfection and thus *ıāl*" can be correctly attributed to him/her. But is it correct to employ it ıor Almighty Allāh? Does His Exalted Essence undergo change? Intellectually speaking, God, Who is Absolutely Perfect, can never undergo change. Change manifests deficiency and imperfection, while Almighty Allāh is Absolutely Perfect. Thus it would be incorrect to talk about change with regard to His Sublime Essence. In a morning

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[142] Dr. Rāmil Badi' Ya'qūb, *Mawsū 'at al-Naḥw wa al-Ṣarf wa al-I'rāb*, p. 186
[143] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Mafātiḥ al-Jinān*, v.1, p. 299
[144] *Ibid.*

supplication narrated in the prayer manual *Balad al-Amīn*[145], we glorify Almighty Allāh saying:

يا مَنْ لا يتغير مِنْ حالٍ إلى حالٍ

O One Who does not change from one state to another

And in one of his sermons, while glorifying Almighty Allāh, Amīru'l Mu'minīn 'Alī ('a) says:

...الّذي لا يَحُوْلُ وَلاَ يزولُ وَلاَ يَجُوْزُ عَلَيْهِ الأفُولُ ...

One Who neither changes nor ceases to exist, nor is He transitory[146]

In expounding the meaning of "*lā yaḥūlu*" 'Allāmah Majlisī[147] in his remarks says: *lā yaḥūlu ay lā yataghayyaru* [*lā yaḥūlu* means *'He does not change'*]

Then what does *'bi ḥusni Ḥālika'* mean in this noble supplication? To answer this we need to understand that the extensions of concepts employed to describe different attributes of contingent entities (*mumkināt*), are not completely the same as those of the Absolute Perfect Being. When we say that a certain person, for example, is kind and merciful, we mean that he or she has a sense of pity which follows acts of support to others. But we can never conceive the state of pity which is an experience of change in the heart with regard to the Exalted Being. Similar is the case with *'ḥāl'* which when employed for Almighty Allāh is not 'a changing state' but rather His Exalted Reality of Absolute Perfection that always *was* and will ever *be*. Small wonder it is that Imām Abu'l Ḥasan al-Riḍā ('a) in one of his debates with a theologian hired by Ma'mūn is reported to have employed the word *"Ḥāl"* for Almighty Allāh, which of course does not depict "a changing state". He says:

...لأنّه لاَ يَكُوْنُ أنْ يُحدِثَ نَفْسَهُ ولاَ يَتَغَيَّرُ عَنْ حالِه، تعالى الله عنْ ذلكَ...

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[145] Kaf'amī, *Balad al-Amīn*, v.1, p.60

[146] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 4, p. 254

[147] *Ibid.*, v.4, p. 257

...This is because it is impossible that he created Himself, nor does He change from His State, Exalted is Allāh from that...[148]

Therefore when we say "*bi Ḥusni Ḥālika*" we do not mean "a changing state", Exalted is Allāh from any deficiency whatsoever.

Physical Extensions of Husnu'l Haal

Our trend so far has been to consider both the apparent as well as the subtle meanings of this noble supplication. In this verse, however, it is clear that the human being opts for the Infinite Beauty and thus the state of physical beauty is not taken into consideration. Nevertheless, it is important to know what Islam has to say with regard to physical beauty. Does Islam consider physical beauty (whose pleasant (*mubhij*) state the sense perception consents) as insignificant and trivial? Ample proofs indicate that although physical beauty is pleasant and important it should not be reckoned as a distinction in the absolute sense. Whereas the Holy Qur'ān promises damsels with beautiful features[149] for the believing men as well as very handsome young men[150] for heavenly women, and therefore does not consider physical beauty as insignificant, it warns the believing men and women that even if an unbeliever is so beautiful or so handsome, you are not allowed to marry with him/her. Consider the following verses:

﴿ وَلَا تَنكِحُوا۟ ٱلْمُشْرِكَٰتِ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنَّ ۚ وَلَأَمَةٌ مُّؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّن مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُنكِحُوا۟ ٱلْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا۟ ۚ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّن مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ ۗ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى ٱلنَّارِ ۖ وَٱللَّهُ يَدْعُوٓا۟ إِلَى ٱلْجَنَّةِ وَٱلْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِۦ ۖ وَيُبَيِّنُ ءَايَٰتِهِۦ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴾

Do not marry idolatresses until they embrace faith. A faithful slave girl is better than an idolatress, though she should impress you. And do not marry [your daughters] to idolaters until they embrace faith. A faithful slave is better than an idolater, though he should impress you. Those invite [others] to the Fire, but God invites to paradise and

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[148] *Ibid.*, v.10, p. 334
[149] Holy Qur'ān, 56:22
[150] *Ibid.*, 56:17

pardon, by His will, and He clarifies His signs for the people so that they may take admonition..[151]

It should not be misconceived that Islam discourages one to marry with the physically beautiful. There are traditions which clearly encourage one to be a companion of one who enjoys beautiful features. Imām Abu'l Ḥasan (*al-Riḍā*) ('a) is reported to have said:

ثَلاثَةٌ يَجْلُونَ الْبَصَرَ: النَّظَرُ إِلَى الْخُضْرَةِ، وَالنَّظَرُ إِلَى الْمَاءِ الْجَارِي، وَالنَّظَرُ إِلَى الْوَجْهِ الْحَسَنِ.

Three things enlightens the eye: (1) Looking at greenery, (2) looking at running water, and (3) looking at a beautiful face (*al-wajh al-ḥasan*).[152]

That which Islam considers wrong is to establish the basis of one's marriage on material interests. Physical beauty without morality would create nothing but chaos in one's family life. In addition, purity of descent is also highly significant as spiritual heredity plays a fundamental role in one's future generation. Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

قَامَ النَّبِيَّ خَطِيبًا فَقَالَ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِيَّاكُمْ وَ خَضْرَاءُ الدِّمَنْ قِيلَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ(ص) وَمَا خَضْرَاءُ الدِّمَنْ؟ قَالَ: اَلْمَرْأَةُ الْحَسْنَاء فِي مَنْبَتِ السُّوءِ

The Holy Prophet (ṣ) once addressing the people said: O people, beware of the verdure of the dung. He was asked: 'O Messenger of Allāh, 'And what does the verdure of the dung mean?' The Holy Prophet (ṣ) said: 'A beautiful woman (*al-ḥasnā'*) from unpleasant roots.'

Effulgence of the Face!

There is another group of traditions, however that talk of spiritual light and the effulgence of the face. They also instruct the aspirants of marriage that the fundamental criteria of spousal selection is ' the

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[151] Holy Qur'ān, 2:221
[152] al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, v.5, p. 340

brilliance of the heart which is manifest on the face'. Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) said:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللّٰه(ص) أَفْضَلُ نِسَاءِ أُمَّتِي أَصْبَحُهُنَّ وَجْهاً وَأَقَلُّهُنَّ مَهْراً

The best of the women of my Nation are the most radiant in complexion and seek the least of dowry.[153]

Note that the word أَصْبَحُهُنَّ "*aṣbaḥahunna*" is employed in the above tradition and not أَجْمَلُهُنَّ "*ajmalahunna*", which means that the yardstick of excellence and perfection is radiance and luminance of the complexion and not physical beauty.

In short, while Islām encourages physical beauty and reckons it as something good and naturally pleasant, it warns us from bartering our spiritual beauty for physical beauty. There is a prophetic tradition that says:

اَللّٰهُ جَمِيلٌ يُحِبُّ الْجَمَالَ

Allāh is Beautiful and He Loves beauty

Beauty appreciated by the intellect likewise is naturally lovable and pleasant. In fact one of the proofs of God's existence is by appreciating the orderliness of the world of creation through the intellect. The intellect appreciates that the we live in the most beautiful system. In religious terminology this world is known as *al-niẓām al-aḥsan* (The most beautiful system). The holy Qur'ān terms the entire creation of Allāh as beautiful. Observe the following verse:

اَلَّذِيَ أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ...

One Who Made Beautiful every thing that He Created[154]

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[153] al-Kulayni, *Usūl al-Kāfi*, v.5, p.324

[154] Holy Qur'ān, 32:7

The beauty of every creature can be well appreciated by intellectually considering the orderliness of its system, and its relation with the rest of the world of creation.

Husnu'l Haal- A Unique State of Utter Ecstasy

The contemporary mystic-scholar, Āllāmah Ḥasan Zadeh Āmolī, may the Almighty Allah protect his noble presence, in his treatise- *Nūrun 'Alā Nūr*[155], says:

سعي كن تا به آب برسي با اينكه از آب بريده نيستي. و چون به آب رسيده‌اي آن وقت است كه حسن حال داري و ابتهاج تو به وصف نمي‌آيد. در دعاي مأثور آمده است كه: (اللّهُمّ غَيِّرْ سُوءَ حَالِنَا بحُسْنِ حَالِكَ) . پس خداي تعالى حسن حال دارد، آري اين حسن حال همانست كه شيخ در فصل هجدهم نمط بهجت و سرور «اشارات» فرمود: «أجل مبتهج بشيء هو الاول بذاته». فافهم.

Try to reach the water, although you are not cut off from water. And when you reach the water, you would have *ḥusnu'l ḥāl* and your joy would be inexpressible. In one of the narrated supplications we read: O Allāh change our unpleasant state into your Beautiful State. Thus Almighty God Has the State of *Ḥusnu'l Ḥāl*. Yes, this State of Joy *(Ḥusnu'l Ḥāl)* is that very state that Shaykh (Ibn Sinā) speaks about in chapter eighteen of the section on Joy and Happiness of his monumental work *al-Ishārāt*:

أَجَلُّ مُبْتَهِجٍ بِشَيْءٍ هُوَ الأَوَّلُ بِذَاتِه

The Being that has the greatest joy in a thing is the First (i.e. God) as having joy in His Essence.[156]

With regard to Almighty Allāh's sincere servants, the state of *Riḍā* is known to be the state of joy and ecstasy. Shaykh al-Rā'īs also mentions this in section nine of his monumental *al-Ishārāt*, as follows:

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[155] 'Allāma Ḥasan Ḥasan Zādeh Āmulī, *Nūrun 'Alā Nūr*, section 9, p.78

[156] Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, p.350 [trans. By Shams Inati, p.78 – Translation]

العَارِفُ هَشٌّ بَشٌّ بَسَّامٌ، يُبَجِّلُ الصَّغِيرَ مِنْ تَوَاضُعِهِ مِثْلَ مَا يُبَجِّلُ الْكَبِيرَ، وَ يَنْبَسِطُ مِنَ النَّبِيهِ. وَكَيْفَ لاَ يَهُشُّ، وَهُوَ فَرْحَانٌ بِالْحَقِّ وَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ- فَإِنَّهُ يَرَى فِيهِ الْحَقَّ؟! وَكَيْفَ لاَ يُسَوِّي وَالْجَمْعُ عِنْدَهُ سَوَاسِيَةٌ أَهْلُ الرَّحْمَةِ قَدْ شَغَلُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ؟!

The Gnostic (*'ārif*) is bright faced, friendly and smiling. Due to his modesty he honors the young as he honors the old. He is as pleased with the unclearheaded as he is with the alert. How could he not be bright-faced when he enjoys the Truth (i.e. God) and everything other than the Truth, for he sees the Truth even in everything other than the Truth. Furthermore, how could he not treat all as equal when, to him all are equal! They are objects of mercy preoccupied with falsehoods.[157]

Avicenna's statement "*... for he sees the Truth even in everything other than the Truth*" reminds us of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), and the Holy Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

مَا رَأَيْتُ شَيْئًا إِلاَّ وَرَأَيْتُ اللّٰهَ قَبْلَهُ وَبَعْدَهُ وَمَعَهُ

I did not see anything save that I saw Allāh before it, after it, and with it.

A similar dictum is reported also from Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a). Some analysts say that the following tradition also alludes to the sublime state of ecstasy and joy of the Leader of martyrs, Imam al-Ḥusayn ('a), as he neared his supreme sacrifice, which guaranteed the salvation of Islām forever: Shaykh Ṣadūq in his *Ma'āni al-Akhbār* reports Imām al-Sajjād ('a) to have said:

لمّا اشتدّ الأمر بالحسين بن علي عليهما الصلاة والسلام نظر إليه من كان معه فإذا هو بخلافهم لانّهم كلما اشتد الأمر تغيرت ألوانهم، وارتعدت فرائصهم، ووجلت قلوبهم، وكان الحسين عليه السّلام وبعض من معه من خواصه تشرق ألوانهم، وتهدأ جوارحهم، وتسكن نفوسهم.

When the situation became tense for Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a) those who were with him looked at him and saw that his state was contrary to theirs, for whenever the situation grew tense they changed color and were shaken and experienced fear, whereas the

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[157] Sinā, *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, p.364 [trans. By Shams Inati, p.89 – Translation]

faces of al-Ḥusayn ('a) and some of his companions shone, their bodily members were relaxed and their souls were tranquil..[158]

Such is the spirit which is ready to meet his Lord while both he is Pleased with his Beloved and the Beloved is pleased with him. The last verses of *Ṣūratu'l Fajr*, because of which the chapter was also known as *Ṣūratu'l Ḥusayn* ('a), also depicts the state of Sayyid al-Shuhadā:

﴿ يَٰٓأَيَّتُهَا ٱلنَّفْسُ ٱلْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ﴿٢٧﴾ ٱرْجِعِىٓ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ﴿٢٨﴾ فَٱدْخُلِى فِى عِبَٰدِى ﴿٢٩﴾ وَٱدْخُلِى جَنَّتِى ﴿٣٠﴾ ﴾

O soul that art at rest! Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with him), well-pleasing (Him), So enter among My servants, And enter into My garden.[159]

There is a beautiful statement that Sayyid Ḥaddād al-Mūsawī, a great mystic and contemporary of the late 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, is reported to have said. His disciple, the late Ayatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Tehrānī in his *Rūḥ-e-Mujarrad* quotes him as saying:

صحنة عاشوراء عاليترين مناظر عشقبازی است و زيباترين مواطن جمال و جلال الهی و نيكوترين اسمآء رحمت و غضب و برای اهل بيت جز عبور از درجات و مراتب و وصول به اعلی ذروة حيات جاويدان و منسلخ شدن از مظاهر و تحقّق به اصل ظاهر و فنای مطلق در ذات احديت چيزی نبوده است.

The scene of 'Āshurā is the sublimest expression of love and reveals the most beautiful scenes of Divine Beauty and Glory, and the finest manifestations of the Names of Mercy and Wrath. For the Prophet's Household it was nothing more than a transition across all the levels and degrees, to reach the highest peak of eternal life, coming off from the 'manifestations' to realize the Manifesting Principle and to obtain absolute annihilation in the Being of the One.

Āyatullāh Ṭehrānī adds saying[160]:

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[158] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Ma'āni al-Akhbār*, p.288
[159] Holy Qur'ān, 89: 27-30
[160] Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭehrāni, *Rūḥ-e-Mujarrad*, p.84

تحقیقا روز شادی و مسرت اهل بیت است زیرا روز کامیابی و ظفر و قبولی ورورد در حریم خدا و حرم امن و امان او است. روز عبور از جزئیت و دخول در عالم کلیت است. روز پیروزی و نجاح است. روز وصول به مطلوب غائی و هدف اصلی است. روزی است که گوشه ای از آن را اگر به سالکان و عاشقان و شوریدگان راه خدا نشان دهند در تمام عمر از فرط شادی مدهوش می گردند و یکسره تا قیامت برپا شود به سجده شکر به رو در می افتند.

Truly it was the day of joy and delight for the Ahl al-Bayt as it was a day of success and victory, of reception into the Divine Sanctity and the sanctuary of peace and security. It was a day of rising above particularity and entry into the realm of universality. It was the day of triumph and deliverance, the day of the attainment of the ultimate end and the principal goal. *It is such a day that if a fraction of it were shown to the wayfarers and ardent lovers of the path of God, they would swoon with extreme ecstasy until the end of their lives and fall on their faces to remain in prostration of gratitude until Judgment's Day....*[161]

In reality, as Āyatullāh Ṭehrāni later explains in his biographical account of his Mentor, the event of Kerbala is like a double sided coin, one side of which is love, zeal, victory and the triumphant attainment of the Imām ('a), and the other side is sorrow, grief torment, torture, and mourning. Āyatullāh Ṭehrānī believes that one can only see its other side (i.e. the side of *'ishq*) after one has seen the sorrowful side and transcended it. He says:

Āyatullāh Ṭehrānī says[162]:

أما سایر افراد مردم که در عالم کثرات گرفتارند و از نفس برون نیامده اند حتما باید گریه و عزاداری و سینه زنی و نوحه خوانی کنند تا بدین طریق بتوانند راه را طی کنند و بدان مقصد عالی نائل آیند...همچنانکه در روایات کثیرة مستفیضه ما را امر به عزاداری نموده اند تا بدین وسیله جان خود را پاك کنیم و با آن سروران در طی این سبیل هم آهنگ گردیم

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[161] Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭehrāni, *Spirit Immaterial*, translated by Sayyid 'Alī Qūlī Qarā'ī, *Al-Tawḥid Quareterly Journal*, v.12, no.3, pp. 42-43

[162] Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭehrāni, *Rūḥ-e-Mujarrad*, p.91

But those who are still captives within the realm of multiplicity and have not emerged from the domain of the self, they should definitely engage in lamentation and mourning, in beating their breasts and reciting elegies so that thereby they may traverse the way and reach the high goal...Accordingly in large number of traditions we have been commanded to mourn, so that we may purify our souls by these means and fall in step with those masters in covering this way.[163]

All these radiant narratives demonstrate that the path is open for the faithful believers too. If one adopts the path of Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a) and his sincere followers he can reach the *ḥusnu'l ḥāl* that he/she eagerly asks from Almighty Allah from this noble supplication.

[163] Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭehrāni, *Spirit Immaterial*, translated by Sayyid 'Alī Qūlī Qarā'ī, Al-Tawḥid Quarterly Journal, v.12, no.3, pp. 52

Section 13

اَللّٰهُمَّ اقْضِ عَنَّا الدَّيْنَ

O Allah, Facilitate the Payment
of Our Debt

اَللّٰهُمَّ اقْضِ عَنَّا الدَّيْنَ

O Allāh, facilitate the payment of our debt

We have already discussed extensively on the subject of debt in our commentary on the verse *'Allahumma aqḍi dayna kullī madīn'*. It is possible that this verse speaks about the same subject, but is an emphasis and thus reveals the fundamental importance of relieving oneself from debt before departing this mortal world. In fact if we look at several other supplications, we find that the following two requests have frequently come together: seeking relief from debt and enriching oneself (*wa aghninā min al-faqr*-which is to follow). Following are some examples:

1. In a supplication that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) is narrated to have taught his beloved daughter Fāṭimah ('a) for sustenance, we find the following:

اَللهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّ كُلِّ شَئٍ ، مُنزِلُ التَّوْرَاةِ وَالانجِيلِ وَالزَّبُوْرِ وَالْفُرْقَان...اِقْضِ عَنِّي الدَّيْنَ وَأَغْنِنِي مِنَ الْفَقْرِ...

Allāh is our Lord and the Lord of all things; He is the Revealer of Torah, Injīl, Zabūr and Furqān...*facilitate the payment of my debt and make me needless*...[164]

2. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said to his noble companion Salmān:

يَا سَلْمَان أَكْثِرْ أَنْ تَقُوْلَ رَبِّي اقْضِ عَنِّي الدَّيْنَ وَاَغْنِنِي مِنَ الْفَقْرِ

O Salmān frequently say: 'O Lord, *pay for me my debt and make me needless.*[165]

3. In the well-known supplication of 'Alqamah we recite:

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[164] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.29, p. 297

[165] al-Ṭabrānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, p. 233

... وَتَقْضِي عَنِّي دَيْنِي وَتُجِيرُنِي مِنَ الْفَقْرِ وَ ...

...and pay for me my debt and save me from my poverty...[166]

4. In a lengthy supplication recommended for the first day of the Holy month of Ramaḍān we say:

اَنْتَ الاوَّلُ فَلَيْسَ قَبْلَكَ شَيْءٌ، وَاَنْتَ الآخِرُ فَلَيْسَ بَعْدَكَ شَيْءٌ، وَاَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ فَلَيْسَ دُونَكَ شَيْءٌ، فَصَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَاقْضِ عَنِّي الدَّيْنَ وَاَغْنِنِي مِنَ الْفَقْرِ

You are the First[167], and thus there is none before Thee, and You are the Last, and therefore there is none after Thee; and You are the Apparent, and therefore there is none other than Thee; so send Your Blessings on Muḥammad and his progeny ('a) *and facilitate the payment of my debt and make me needless.*[168]

The supplicant therefore, is humbly asking Almighty Allāh to make his situation such that after having paid his debts, he would never need to take another debt again. For he realizes how difficult it is to be suspended by debt, and thus would like to be free from its chains so that if death were to overtake him he would have nothing on his shoulders.

ANOTHER HORIZON: PAYING A COMMON DEBT

Another probable meaning of this verse is that it speaks of a *common debt* that every human being shares. The phrase '*iqdī 'annā al-dayn*... اقض عنا الدين (lit. pay for us Our debt) can imply that all the human beings are in debt. This is when the article 'al' in al-Dayn is for 'determination' and thus refers to a particular debt. What kind of debt actually is this? There is well-known dictum (which some scholars narrate as a tradition[169]) that says:

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[166] Shaykh 'Abbās al-Qummī, *Mafātiḥ al-Jinān*, v.1, p. 459

[167] This supplication reveals the Pre-eternity & Necessity of the Non-Composite Creator.

[168] Sayyid Raḍī al-Din bin Ṭāwūs, *al-Iqbāl al-A'māl*, v.1, p.130

[169] This dictum is mentioned by 'Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in the introduction of *al-Mīzān* [See *Tafsir al-Mīzān*, v.1, p. 27]. In his anthology of questions *(Dar Maḥḍare Ustād)* that he had asked the grand 'Allāmah during his life time, Ḥujjat al-Islām Rukhshād quotes this dictum as a ḥadīth and attributes

اَللّٰهُ سُبْحَانَهُ غَرِيْمٌ لاَ يُقْضَى دَيْنُهُ

Allāh is a Creditor whose debt cannot be paid.

A rephrasal of this dictum is mentioned in the first sermon of Imām 'Alī ('a) in *Nahj al-Balāghah* as follows:

...وَلاَ يُؤَدِّي حَقَّهُ الْمُجْتَهِدُوْنَ....

...One Whose rights the diligent cannot fulfill...[170]

In simpler words: He is One Whose rights cannot be fulfilled even by those who struggle hard and are diligent. In his *Minhāj al-Barā'ah*- a commentary on the *Nahj al-Balāghah*- 'Allāmah Ḥabībullāh al-Khu'ī expounds the above statement of Imām 'Alī ('a) as follows:

وَالْمُرَادُ بِالْحَقِّ اللاَزِمِ هُوَ الْقِيَامُ عَلى شُكْرِ النَّعْمَاءِ، وَحَمْدِ الآلاَءِ، فَأَشَارَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ إِلى أَنَّهُ لاَ يُمْكِنُ الْقِيَامُ بِوَظَايِفِ حَمْدِهِ، لأَنَّ الْحَمْدَ مِنْ جُمْلَةِ نِعَمِهِ، فَيَسْتَحِقُّ عَلَيْهِ حَمْدًا وَشُكْرًا، فَلاَ يَنْقَضِي مَا يَسْتَحِقُّهُ مِنَ الْمَحَامِدِ، لِعَدَمِ تَنَاهِي نِعَمِهِ، فَالأَوْلى حِيْنَئِذٍ الاعْتِرَافُ بِالْعَجْزِ وَالْقُصُوْرِ.

The meaning of compulsory rights [as depicted in the dictum of Imām 'Alī('a)- '*One whose rights...*'] is to thank God for His blessings and praise Him for His Bestowals; therefore the Imām ('a) alluded to the fact that it is impossible for one to bear the responsibility of praising Him, because 'to praise him' is in itself among His blessings, which then necessitates another praise and thanks; consequently, the praises that He deserves would never end, due to his endless blessings. Hence it is better to confess one's inability and shortcoming [in praising and thanking Him]...[171]

Almighty Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

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the same to 'Allāmah. The reference however has not been cited. Nevertheless, the dictum itself bears witness to its veracious content.

[170] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 1.

[171] 'Allāmah Ḥabibullāh al-Khū'i, *Minhāj al-Barā'ah fi Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, v.1, p. 247

وَإِن تَعُدُّواْ نِعْمَتَ ٱللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَآ

...If you enumerate Allāh's blessings, you will not be able to count them...[172]

In his supplication when confessing his shortcomings in giving thanks, Imām al-Sajjād ('a) says:

(١) اللّٰهُمَّ إِنَّ أَحَدا لا يَبْلُغُ مِنْ شُكْرِكَ غَايَةً إِلا حَصَلَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ إِحْسَانِكَ مَا يُلْزِمُهُ شُكْرا (٢) وَلا يَبْلُغُ مَبْلَغا مِنْ طَاعَتِكَ وَإِنِ اجْتَهَدَ إِلا كَانَ مُقَصِّرا دُونَ اسْتِحْقَاقِكَ بِفَضْلِكَ (٣) فَأَشْكَرُ عِبَادِكَ عَاجِزٌ عَنْ شُكْرِكَ، وَ أَعْبَدُهُمْ مُقَصِّرٌ عَنْ طَاعَتِكَ

1 O Allāh,
no one reaches a limit in thanking Thee
without acquiring that of Thy beneficence
which enjoins upon him thanksgiving,
2 nor does anyone reach a degree in obeying Thee,
even if he strives,
without falling short of what Thou deservest
because of Thy bounty.
3 The most thankful of Thy servants
has not the capacity to thank Thee,
and the most worshipful of them
falls short of obeying Thee.[173]

Imām 'Alī ('a) is sermon no. 52 of *Nahj al-Balāghah* says:

وَاللّٰهِ لَوِ انْمَاثَتْ قُلُوبُكُمُ انْمِيَاثاً-وَسَالَتْ عُيُونُكُمْ مِنْ رَغْبَةٍ إِلَيْهِ أَوْ رَهْبَةٍ مِنْهُ دَماً-ثُمَّ عُمِّرْتُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا-مَا الدُّنْيَا بَاقِيَةً مَا جَزَتْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَبْقُوا شَيْئاً مِنْ جُهْدِكُمْ-أَنْعَمَهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعِظَامَ-وَهُدَاهُ إِيَّاكُمْ إِلَى الايمَانِ

By Alláh, if your hearts melt down thoroughly and your eyes shed tears of blood either in hope for Him or for fear from Him and you are also allowed to live in this

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[172] Holy Qur'ān, 14:34

[173] *al-Ṣaḥifat al-Sajjādiyyah* (The Psalms of Islām, English Translation by William Chittick), Supplication no. 37, pp. 123-124

world all the time that it lasts even then your actions cannot pay for His great bounties over you and His having guided you towards faith[174].

THANKING ALLAH AS HE DESERVES

But despite all this, Almighty Allāh has shown us a method of thanking Him. Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

أَوْحَى اللّٰهُ تَعَالَى إِلَى مُوسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ يَا مُوسَى اشْكُرْنِي حَقَّ شُكْرِي فَقَالَ يَا رَبِّ كَيْفَ أَشْكُرُكَ حَقَّ شُكْرِكَ وَلَيْسَ مِنْ شُكْرٍ أَشْكُرُكَ بِهِ إِلاَّ وَأَنْتَ أَنْعَمْتَ بِهِ عَلَيَّ فَقَالَ يَا مُوسَى شَكَرْتَنِي حَقَّ شُكْرِي حِينَ عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنِّي.

Allāh, the Exalted, Revealed unto Mūsā ('a): 'O Mūsā, thank Me the way I deserve to be thanked. Mūsā ('a) said: O Lord, how can I thank you the way You deserve to be thanked, while there is no gratitude that I express save that it in itself is a blessing that You have bestowed on me; Allāh said: *O Mūsā, It is now that you have thanked me the way I deserve to be thanked, knowing that that was from me.*[175]

Therefore understanding the fact that 'every thanksgiving' is in itself a blessing of Almighty Allah on His servant is highly important. Rather those who have realized through Divine Revelation (Qur'ān), intellectual reasoning (*burhān*) or inner vision (*'irfān*) that every element of their beings depend on the Almighty whether in the level of their essence, attributes or actions are in a better position of achieving this kind of thankfulness.The following verse of the Holy Qur'ān clearly says the every being together with its action stands by the permission of Almighty Allāh:

وَٱللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

And Allāh has Created you and whatever you do[176]

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[174] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 52, p. 72
[175] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.13, p.351
[176] Holy Qur'ān, 37:96

Therefore whatever good we do, whether in form of thanks, praise, worship, etc. all belong to Almighty Allah and are by His permission, succor (*tawfiq*), and assistance. Neither is our essence our property nor our actions of virtue. Therefore 'paying the common debt of Allāh' can never be conceived. Consequently asking Allāh to pay our common debt is like asking Him to accept our deeds of worship, praise and thanks.

THANKING *THE MEANS OF GRACE*- A CONDITION OF THANKING ALLAH

Although every advantage that we receive is principally from and by Allāh, there are secondary causes that Almighty Allāh Creates to allow things happen. For example, He helps His poor servants through His benevolent rich servants. He feeds the human beings through the plants and animals and requires them to work and facilitate the conditions of preparing food so that they can consume the same and maintain their health to worship and get closer to Him. Therefore it would be incorrect to discard the 'intermediary' of an advantage by saying that my monotheistic outlook dictates that *al-shukr lillāh* (thanks belongs solely to Allāh). It is correct to say that thanks belong solely to Allāh, but the Almighty has taught the human being to show gratitude to one who does anything good to someone despite his limitation and utter dependence. Observe the following narrations:

1. Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

مِنْ حَقِّ الشُّكْرِ لِلّٰهِ أَنْ تَشْكُرَ مَنْ أَجْرَى تِلْكَ النِّعْمَةَ عَلَى يَدِهِ

An example of thanking Allāh the way He deserves to be thanked is when you thank one in whose hands He enabled the blessing to take place.[177]

2. Imām al-Riḍā ('a) is reported to have said:

مَنْ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ الْمُنْعِمَ مِنَ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ اللّٰهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

Whosoever does not thank the giver of the blessing from among the creatures, would not thank Allāh, the Invincible and Majestic.[178]

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[177] al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shi'ah*, v. 16, p. 311

ALLAH IS THE BOTH THE SHAAKIR [ONE WHO THANKS] AND THE MASHKUR [ONE WHO IS THANKED]

Having understood the monotheistic outlook that every action of ours entirely comes into being and subsists by Allāh, it is clear that both the *shākir* and the *mashkūr* is Allāh. Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī in his *Sharḥ al-Asmā'* under the verse '*...yā khayra Shākirin wa Mashkūr, yā khayra Ḥāmidin wa Maḥmūd...*' says:

(يَا خَيْرَ ذَاكِرٍ وَمَذْكُوْرٍ، يَا خَيْرَ شَاكِرٍ وَمَشْكُوْرٍ، يَا خَيْرَ حَامِدٍ وَمَحْمُوْدٍ): قَدْ ذَكَرْنَا سَابِقًا أَنَّهُ إِذَا قِيْلَ: (لَهُ الْحَمْدُ) لَا يُقْصَدُ أَنَّ الْمَحْمُوْدِيَّةَ فَقَطْ أَيْنَمَا وَقَعَتْ طُرًّا وَكُلًّا لَهُ تَعَالَى، بَلْ الْمَقْصُوْدُ أَنَّ الْحَامِدِيَّةَ أَيْضًا لَهُ وَبِهِ تَعَالَى، فَالذَّاكِرِيَّةُ وَالشَّاكِرِيَّةُ وَالْحَامِدِيَّةُ وَنَظَائِرُهَا لَهُ وَبِهِ تَعَالَى. وَالْعِبَارَةُ الْأَوْلَى فِي بَعْضِ الْمَرَاتِبِ أَنْ يُقَالَ: إِنَّهُ بِحَوْلِهِ وَقُوَّتِهِ تَعَالَى.

We mentioned earlier that if it is said 'to Him belongs all praises' it does not only mean that every praise wherever it may occur belongs to Allāh, but also means that 'the agency of praise' [wherever it may be] too belongs to Allāh and takes place by Him; hence thankfulness (*shākiriyyah*), remembrance (*dhākiriyyah*), praise (*ḥāmidiyyah*) and the like [all] belong to him and take place by Him, the Exalted. And a better expression about the same in a certain level is to say: that it [i.e. praise, thankfulness, etc.] transpires by His power and strength, the Exalted.[179]

Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a) in his famous supplication of 'Arafah alludes to the subtlely that even before we try to remember Him, He remembers us. He attracts us; He pulls us; He encourages us to thank and praise and remember Him. If we were to free ourselves from the spatial limitations, we can understand a subtler meaning to such precedence: Not only does He Remember us before we remember Him, but Causally it is essential for Him to Remember us so that we Remember Him. Rather, our remembrance is entirely by Him. Imām al-Ḥusayn ('a) says:

...أَنْتَ الذَّاكِرُ قَبْلَ الذَّاكِرِينَ...

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[178] *Ibid.*, v. 16, p. 313

[179] Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-Asmā'*, pp. 759-760

...You are the Rememberer before the rememberers ...[180]

ALLAH IS THANKED ACCORDING TO THE LIMITATION OF THE THANKFUL ONE

It should be noted that although the tradition on *shukr* that we mentioned earlier clearly states how one can thank Almighty Allāh appropriately, it makes a hint to the fact that thanking Him the way He deserves is beyond the limitation of the human being. None can ever claim that he has thanked Almighty Allāh for every blessing. Firstly, because every 'thanks' necessitates another thanks, since thanking him is a blessing in itself. And secondly, we cannot enumerate and count the blessings of Almighty Allāh. Imām al-Sajjād ('a) in his prayer *Munājāt al-Shākirīn* mentions these two reasons as follows:

إ...فَآلاؤُكَ جَمَّةٌ ضَعُفَ لِسَانِي عَنْ إِحْصَائِهَا وَنَعْمَاؤُكَ كَثِيرَةٌ قَصُرَ فَهْمِي عَنْ إِدْرَاكِهَا فَضْلا عَنِ اسْتِقْصَائِهَا فَكَيْفَ لِي بِتَحْصِيلِ الشُّكْرِ وَشُكْرِي إِيَّاكَ يَفْتَقِرُ إِلَى شُكْرٍ فَكُلَّمَا قُلْتُ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ وَجَبَ عَلَيَّ لِذَلِكَ أَنْ أَقُولَ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ

Thy boons are abundant -
my tongue is too weak to count them!
Thy favours are many -
my understanding falls short of grasping them,
not to speak of exhausting them!
So how can I achieve thanksgiving?
For my thanking Thee requires thanksgiving.
Whenever I say, 'To Thee belongs praise!',
it becomes thereby incumbent upon me to say,
'To Thee belongs praise'![181]

Therefore, no one should ever think that he/she has the ability to thank Him the way He deserves. Yes, out of His overflowing Mercy, He accepts the thankfulness and praise of one who has realized that his thankfulness itself is from Allāh and that it deserves another thanking.

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[180] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Du 'ā' al-'Arafah*, *Mafātih al-Jinān*, v.1, p. 273

[181] *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah* (The Psalms of Islām, English Translation by William Chittick), Supplication no. 37, pp. 243-244.

But that should not be taken as the 'perfect' thanks of the *'abd* (servant of Allāh). Rather it should be taken as 'the imperfect and incomplete thanks' *accepted* by the All-Merciful. Furthermore the degrees of comprehending that every thanksgiving is a blessing and from Allāh are various. Whereas some have accepted this truth by following the Revelation, others have established its verity through intellectual reasoning. Another group however, due to the purification of their hearts, can literally behold this truth through presential knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*).

In another supplication Imām al-Sajjād ('a) confesses that the *dhikr* (remembrance of Allāh, whether that be in the form of thanks (*shukr*), praise (*ḥamd*), etc.) of the supplicant is according to his imperfect state and not according to what Almighty Allāh deserves. In his *Munājāt al-Dhākirīn*, Imām al-Sajjād ('a) whispers:

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إِلَهِي لَوْ لا الْوَاجِبُ مِنْ قَبُولِ أَمْرِكَ لَنَزَّهْتُكَ مِنْ ﴿عَنْ﴾ ذِكْرِي إِيَّاكَ عَلَى أَنْ ذِكْرِي لَكَ بِقَدْرِي لا بِقَدْرِكَ...

1 My God,
were it not incumbent to accept Thy command,
I would declare Thee far too exalted for me to remember Thee,
for I remember Thee in my measure,
not in Thy measure...[182]

WORSHIP- A FORM OF THANKING ALMIGHTY ALLAH

Those who have realized the utter dependence of the human being and the absolute affluence of Almighty Allāh would never deem whatever they do as perfect. Consequently, they would not worship Almighty Allāh in transaction for Paradise. They would worship Him because He deserves to be worshipped. Their worship would be a worship of thankfulness or love. Imām 'Alī is reported to have said:

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[182] *Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyyah*, p. 255

انْ قَوْمًا عَبَدُوا اللهَ رَغْبَةً فَتلْكَ عِبَادَةُ التُّجَّارِ، وَانْ قَوْمًا عَبَدُوا اللهَ رَهْبَةً فَتلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْعَبِيْدِ وَانْ قَوْمًا عَبَدُوا اللهَ شُكْرًا فَتلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الاَحْرَارِ

Surely a people worshipped Allāh in anticipation [of reward]; this is the worship of traders; and a people worshipped Allāh out of fear [of Hell]; this is the worship of bondsman; *and another group of people worshipped Allah out of thankfulness*, this is the worship of the liberated and free ones (*aḥrār*).[183]

Readers can appreciate the fundamental reason why some worship Allāh as a transaction. It is due to their ignorance of the relation between the human being and Allāh. They feel they can offer something independent from themselves. They do not realize that every perfect action entirely stands by Allāh:

وَمَا بِكُم مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ ٱللَّهِ

Whatever blessing you have is from God...[184]

It should however not be misunderstood and thought that every evil deed also stems from Almighty Allāh. Indeed it is through the support of Almighty that every deed regardless of its nature is done. The human beings however have a volition and can choose what to do. The human conscience is a proof to this contention. When they resolve to do bad, Almighty Allāh out of His Wisdom does not intercept their way. Rather every movement they make is entirely by His support. Trial and tribulation, and obedience and disobedience would carry no meaning if every one was forced to do what Almighty Allāh wants. Therefore good and bad is by His support but not forced by Him on man.

It should also be realized that 'to do bad' stems from imperfection on the part of the human being. And imperfection is the non-existence of a perfection, which does not require any cause. Therefore attributing the non-existence of a perfection to Almighty Allāh is evidently absurd. For example, the stingy behavior of a certain person reveals deficiency on his part. The person lacks the 'broadness of heart' and the trait of 'open-

[183] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, wisdom no. 237
[184] Holy Qur'ān, 16:53

handedness (*jūd*)'. We cannot say that Almighty Allah creates his stinginess. This is because stinginess (*bukhl*) is not a trait to be created. It is the negation of a trait. But when the person is openhanded and benevolent, the trait of benevolence which is an existential trait (*ṣifah wujūdiyyah*) needs a cause. And it is only by Almighty Allāh that this trait can exist and subsist. Therefore we can say that benevolence is from and by Allāh, but we cannot say that stinginess is from and by Allāh. Yes, the actions that stem from a stingy heart, need the support and strength of Allāh. However, since Almighty Allāh has given every one a free will, he himself chooses the action and Allāh (swt) enables him to carry out the same. But that should not lead us to conjecture that Allāh has forced him to do the action.

THE HOLY PROPHET (S)'S WORSHIP

Several traditions narrate that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) would worship Almighty Allāh so much that his feet would get swollen. He was once asked by one of his wives: 'Why do you disturb yourself when Almighty Allāh has forgiven all your past and future sins?' and he replied: 'Shouldn't I be a thankful servant of Allāh?'[185]

Despite all this, he (ṣ) is reported to have said:

مَا عَبَدْنَاكَ حَقَّ عِبَادَتِكَ...

We have not worshiped you the way You deserve to be worshipped...

The angels of Allāh (swt) likewise, despite their utter purity and perpetual worship, declare their shortcoming in worshipping Almighty Allah the way He deserves to be worshipped. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said to Abū Dharr:

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍ إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَلَائِكَةً قِيَامًا مِنْ خِيفَةِ اللهِ مَا رَفَعُوا رُءُوسَهُمْ حَتَّى يُنْفَخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ النَّفْخَةَ الْآخِرَةَ فَيَقُوْلُوْنَ جَمِيْعًا سُبْحَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَبِحَمْدِكَ مَا عَبَدْنَاكَ كَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَكَ أَنْ تُعْبَدَ

[185] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.16, p.264

O Abū Dharr, surely Allāh has angels who stand in fear of Him; they would not raise their heads until the final blow of the trumpet; thereupon all of them would say: Free from imperfection are You, Our Lord, and we praise You; *we did not worship You the way You should be worshipped.*[186]

And Imām al-Sajjād alluding to this in one of his supplications quotes the angels of Allāh saying:

سُبْحانَكَ ما عَبَدْناكَ حَقَّ عِبادَتِكَ

Free from imperfection are You! We have not worshipped You the way You deserve to be worshipped.[187]

Hence one should never rely on any of his deeds of virtue. Obviously this does not mean that he should despair and think that his deeds have no value. One should instead totally rely on the Grace of the All-Merciful and continue in his struggle of perfection.

A NOTEWORTHY INCIDENT

The night before he left for the hospital where he was to pass the last moments of his life, the late Imām Khumaynī was in the company of Mrs. Fāṭimah Ṭabāṭabā'ī-his daughter-in-law among other relatives. The latter narrates the following conversation, which took place after Imām Khumaynī had eaten very little of his dinner:

Imām Khumaynī: Now I have one or two advices for you: I shall not return. However, I don't want you to express grief and anxiety on my demise. I am asking God to give you patience. Be careful not to weep and lament. This is what I had to say."

Fāṭimah Ṭabāṭabā'ī: I and Khānum (the wife of Imām Khumaynī) were present; I do not recollect exactly; I think Zahrā Khānum Ishrāqī was (also) present. I don't know whether someone else was present or not. It was difficult for us to listen to this issue; all of us had turned sad.

Khānum said: No, Āghā, God Willing, you will recover...

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[186] al-Ṭabrasī, *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, v.1, p.464
[187] *al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyyah*, sup. no.3

Imām Khumaynī: No, I will not return. However, let me tell you this: to go [to the next world] is very difficult; to go [to the next world] is very difficult.'

Fāṭimah Ṭabāṭabā'ī said: 'Āghā, If you say all this, then we shall greatly lose our hopes. This is because, as far as I know, although I am young, those who have been with you narrate that not only have you performed all the obligatory deeds, and abstained from the forbidden ones, you have also observed the recommended acts and even abstained from most of the unpleasant deeds (*makrūhāt*). If it is really difficult for you also, then what should we say? We get greatly despondent.

Imām Khumaynī: 'No, you must not despair from God's Mercy[188]; this itself is the greatest sin...[189] However, bear this in mind that to go [to the next world] is very difficult; ***I do not have any [good] deed, so that I should want to be happy thereby.'***

Fāṭimah Ṭabāṭabā'ī: But Āghā, these words that you utter are very difficult for us to bear, for if it is as such, we are extremely frightened, worried and upset.'

Imām Khumaynī: ***'It is really as such. If Ḥadrat Sajjād ['a] wept and said: "O Lord it is likely that my good deeds are bad"[190], do I possess a deed to get happy and confident thereby? I only have hope of God's Grace[191] and have no [action] at my credit to be hopeful...;*** and to go [to the next world] is very difficult; to go [to the next world] is very difficult.

The doctors then came, and Imām [Khumaynī] said: 'It is time to leave.'[192]

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[188] The Holy Qur'ān [39:54] says: Say: O My servants who have been extravagant against yourselves, do not despair of Allāh's Mercy; surely Allāh forgives sins altogether. Surely, He is the All-forgiving, the All-compassionate. The Holy Qur'ān [15:56] also says: He said, 'And who despairs of the Mercy of his Lord, excepting those that are astray?'

[189] Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have once told a person, whom fear had made to despair, due to the ampleness of his sins: 'O you! Your despondency of Allāh's Mercy is worse than your sins.' [al-Narāqī, *Jāmi' al- Sa'ādāt*, vol. 1, pg. 247]

[190] This also refers to what Imam al-Ḥusayn ('a) says in his famous supplication of 'Arafah. He says: 'O God, one whose good deeds are bad, how can his bad deeds not be bad?' [Shaykh Abbās Qummī, *Mafatiḥ al-Jinān*, Du'ā al-'Arafah by Imām al-Ḥusayn (A)].

[191] The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said: ' Know that no one of you will be saved by his action, including me; except if Allāh's Mercy and Grace were to cover me.' (al-Ray Shahrī, *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, , new ed., vol.3, pg. 2131)

[192] *Faṣl-e Ṣabr*-Memoirs of the days of Imām's illness and demise by the team of physicians and those affiliated to Imām Khumaynī, pp. 83-84.

A SUPPLICATION TO THE ONLY BELOVED

O Allāh, all of us have debts to pay. Some pertain to the material world and others concern the immaterial realm. You Have taught us how important it is to ensure that our debts are paid before we enter Your sanctuary of love. Therefore enable us to pay our debts. You very well know that the common debt that all of us have to pay can never be paid unless You forgive us and accept our few deeds of virtue, if any. O Allāh, we have no hope in our actions however much we have struggled; our hope is on Your Enveloping Mercy. Therefore deprive us not from the same. Our hope (*rajā'*), which again is entirely by Your Grace, is our capital asset (*ra'sumāl*). Enable us to maintain it so that it can facilitate the Divine spark to glow in our spirits and always inspire us to come closer to You.

It is indeed interesting to note the extent of hope in our infallible Imāms ('a), who enjoyed very exalted stations: Imām 'Alī ('a) whispers in his Sha'bān whisperings (*Munājāt al-Sha'abāniyyah*):

إِنْ أَدْخَلْتَنِي النَّارَ أَعْلَمْتُ أَهْلَهَا أَنِّي أُحِبُّكَ

If you place me in the Hell Fire I will inform its inhabitants that I love You...[193]

And in his well-known Du'ā' al-Kumayl he cries:

أَمْ كَيْفَ أَسْكُنُ فِي النَّارِ وَرَجَائِي عَفْوُكَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ يَا سَيِّدِي وَمَوْلاَيَ أُقْسِمُ صَادِقا لَئِنْ تَرَكْتَنِي نَاطِقا لأَضِجَّنَّ إِلَيْكَ بَيْنَ أَهْلِهَا ضَجِيجَ الآمِلِينَ...وَ لأَبْكِيَنَّ عَلَيْكَ بُكَاءَ الْفَاقِدِينَ

How can I stay in the Hell Fire when I am hopeful of Your forgiveness; for by Your Invincibility, O my Leader and my Master- I swear truthfully, if you do allow me to speak; I would surely cry to You among its inhabitants, the cry of the hopeful... and I would most surely lament for You the lamentation of those who are separate from their dear ones...[194]

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[193] Shaykh 'Abbās al-Qummī, *Mafātih al-Jinān*, v.1, p. 158
[4] *Ibid.*,v.1, p.65

Section 14

وَاَغْنِنَا مِنَ الْفَقْرِ

And make us Needless

وَاَغْنِنَا مِنَ الْفَقْرِ

And make us needless

In the verses '*Allahumma aghnī kulla faqīr*"[195] and "*Allahumma sudda faqranā bighināk*" we spoke about poverty at length. The apparent import of the above verse seems to be an emphasis on the previous verses. Besides, the context of this verse bears a witness to that too. Nevertheless, in order to summarize the main kinds of poverty, I have chosen to discuss the verse from another angle.It should also be noted that this particular supplication reveals the states of the Prophet (ṣ) in his supplication. And appreciating the remoteness of this servant from the lofty station of the supplicant, it would not be easy to accurately define the motive of these verses. Therefore we would suffice ourselves in this chapter with an infinitesimal drop of the ocean.

Considering the article اَلْ "*al*" that accompanies *al-faqr*, the word *al-faqr* can have different meanings. One of these is to denote a specific kind of *faqr (poverty)*.

Briefly, after having gone through the Holy Qur'ān, authentic traditions, and words of wisdom of authorities in philosophy and Islamic theology, we conclude:

There are two general kinds of poverty:

1. *al-faqr al-mamdūh* (the recommended poverty)
2. *al-faqr al-madhmūm* (the abominable poverty)

The Recommended Poverty

Any kind of poverty that is an advantage either for *the path* or *the goal* of human perfection comes under the category of recommended poverty.

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[195] Abū Muḥammad Zaynu'l 'Ābidīn, *Manifestations of the All-Merciful*, v.1, pp. 16-26

Some of Almighty Allāh's servants have been deliberately made to suffer the problems of poverty so that they can attain perfection after they bear the difficult situations with patience and thankfulness. Almighty Allāh knows the state of every servant of His, and thus provides according to His Plan.

Realization Of Absolute Poverty

The poverty that is achieved at the end of the journey to Allāh is highly praised in our traditions. It is the state of being utterly poor to Allāh. Some authorities, in order to be more accurate, say that we are not poor (*faqīr*) in this sense, but rather 'poverty itself' (*'ayn al-faqr*). This is because we do not have any independent essence that is needy. In other words, it is incorrect to say that we are independent beings who are needy. No one has any share of independence whatsoever. Our beings that we conjecture to be independent entirely exist and subsist by the permission of Allāh. Therefore our beings are not poor, but poverty itself. In terms of philosophy, there are no three entities when it comes to causing a creation. We do not have the Conferrer of grace (*mufiḍ*) and the object of grace (*mufāḍ 'alayh*) and the grace itself (*fayḍ*). Rather, we only have the Conferrer of Grace and His Grace- which we, due to our limited comprehension or remoteness from the Beloved, consider as an independent entity. Therefore the 'creation' or 'creatures' are grace (*fayḍ*) itself[196].

Imām Khumaynī in his *Chehel Ḥadīth* (40 Traditions), alluding to the reality that the dependent existents are sheer poverty, says:

...و هيچ موجودي را از خود استقلالي نيست و صرف تعلق و ربط و عين فقر و تدلّي به ذات مقدس حقّ علي الاطلاق است...

› being has any independence of its own and everything is sheer dependence, on, ***poverty***, and attachment to the sacred being of the Absolute Real...[197]

And getting deeper we come to realize that in reality we only have One Being and His Actions, which form His Creation and manifest His Most Beautiful Names

[197] Imām Khumaynī, *Forty Traditions*, p.578

Although such poverty always exists in every being, only one who "realizes the same" through the vision of the heart, after self-purification, can be qualified to be known as poor in this sense. In his commentary on the *Du'ā' al-Ṣabāḥ*, Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī says:

وَالْفَقِيرُ الْحَقِيقِي مَنْ لاَ يَمْلِكُ فِعْلاً وَلاَ صِفَةً وَلاَ وُجُوداً وَيَشْهَدُ أَنَّ الْمُلْكَ لِلّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ...

And the really poor is one who does not own any action, attribute, or existence, *and witnesses* that the *kingdom is solely Allāh's, the All-Paramount.*[198]

The Holy Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) is reported to have said:

الفَقْرُ فَخْرِي وَبِهِ أَفْتَخِرُ

The poverty is my pride and I am proud of it[199]

Imām al-Sajjād ('a) in his supplication of seeking asylum with Allāh says:

يَا غَنِيَّ الأَغْنِياءِ ها نَحْنُ عِبادُكَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْكَ وَأَنَا افْقَرُ الْفُقَراءِ إِلَيْكَ

O the Affluent of the affluent ones, here we are, your slaves, before You... and we are the neediest of the needy toward Thee...[200]

Therefore this kind of poverty is highly recommended and thus we do not seek emancipation from the same in this verse. Rather, we eagerly ask for it and although it is known as 'poverty', no affluence and self-sufficiency can be compared to it. In other words, although near Allāh, the All-Affluent, this state is absolute poverty, it is the state of being 'All-affluent *by Allāh's permission*'.

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[198] Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ Du'ā' al-Ṣabāḥ*, p. 137
[199] Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī, *'Uddat al-Dā'ī wa Najāḥ al-Sā'ī*, v.1, p.123
[200] *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, Sup. 10, p. 41

There is a beautiful allusion in the well-known *Du'ā' Jawshan al-Kabīr* about this. We pray:

يَا غِنَائِي عِنْدَ افْتِقَارِي

O my Affluence in my poverty...[201]

The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is also reported to have prayed:

اَللّٰهُمَّ أَغْنِنِي بِالافْتِقَارِ إِلَيْكَ،وَلاَ تُفْقِرْنِي بِالاسْتِغْنَاءِ عَنْكَ

O Allāh make me needless by becoming needy to You, and do not make me poor by being needless of You[202]

THE ABOMINABLE POVERTY

This is the poverty whose release we direly seek. If poverty hampers us to avail ourselves with the basic necessities of a life that can enable us attain nearness to God, it is indeed something that we detest. If poverty makes us forget the Hereafter instead of making us alert about the Creator, then it is something that we should seek refuge from. Any poverty that separates us from *the path* or the *goal* is abominable. It is from such poverty that we should seek emancipation. Following are allusions to such kinds of poverty:

1. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said to Imām 'Alī ('a):

يَا عَلِيُّ لاَ فَقْرَ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْجَهْلِ

...O 'Alī, there is no poverty more severe than ignorance...[203]

.. Ṣafwān bin Mihrān al-Jammāl is reported to have narrated from Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) that he said:

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[201] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, v.1, p. 88
[202] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 96, p. 31
[203] al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, v.1, p.25

...لاَ فَقْرَ أَحَطُّ مِنَ الْحُمْقِ...

...There is no poverty more degenerate than silliness (*ḥumq*)...[204]

One reason for this may be that '*silliness*' is such that it deprives one from both material as well as spiritual progress.

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

أَفْقَرُ النَّاسِ الطَّمَّاعُ

The poorest among the people is the most greedy.[205]

This is because such a person never gets satisfied, and instead of employing the means of livelihood for the main aim behind his creation he engages in the world and forgets the Hereafter. It is from such an attitude that we always seek refuge after our *ẓuhr* prayers when we say:

اللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ نَفْسٍ لا تَشْبَعُ

O Allāh, I seek refuge with You from the soul that does not get satisfied.[206]

4. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

رُبَّ غَنِيٍّ أَفْقَرُ مِنْ فَقِيرٍ

Many a time there is a rich person who is poorer than a poor person.[207]

5. Emphasizing the poverty that is really abominable, The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said:

الْفَقْرُ فَقْرُ الْقَلْبِ

Poverty is the poverty of the heart

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[204] *Ibid.*, v.1, p. 29
[205] al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, v.12, p.68
[206] Shaykh 'Abbās al-Qummī, *Mafātiḥ al-Jinān*, v.1, p.17
[207] al-Āmadi, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, p.370

The Holy Qur'ān also alludes to this reality when it describes the Judgment Day as:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى ٱللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ﴿٨٩﴾

...the day when neither wealth nor children will avail, except him who comes to God with a sound heart...[208]

Hence those who are spiritually affluent are really rich, for they cannot separate from their noble traits and pure heart, and thus would come with real provisions in the Hereafter.

A WORD ON MATERIAL POVERTY

We cannot ignore the great disadvantage of material poverty, however, for every human being would like to live a life independent of other than Allāh. At times, as we understood in the earlier verses of the supplication, it is the human being himself who creates impediments for his sustenance and thus is deprived of the same. Sometimes however, Almighty Allāh, out of His Abundant Mercy limits the sustenance of His servant only to test and elevate him more. In such a situation, one cannot blame the poor believer for his misdeeds. Following are some traditions that shed light on this issue:

1. Imām Abu al-Ḥasan al-Kāẓim ('a) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَقُولُ إِنِّي لَمْ أُغْنِ الْغَنِيَّ لِكَرَامَةٍ بِهِ عَلَيَّ وَلَمْ أُفْقِرِ الْفَقِيرَ لِهَوَانٍ بِهِ عَلَيَّ وَهُوَ مِمَّا ابْتَلَيْتُ بِهِ الْأَغْنِيَاءَ بِالْفُقَرَاءِ وَلَوْ لَا الْفُقَرَاءُ لَمْ يَسْتَوْجِبِ الْأَغْنِيَاءُ الْجَنَّةَ

Surely Allāh says: Indeed I did not enrich the affluent one due to a nobility in him, nor did I make the poor needy due to his insignificance; [Rather] I tried the affluent ones with the destitute; and were there no poor people, the rich ones would not deserve Paradise.[209]

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[208] Holy Qur'ān, 26: 88-89
[209] al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, v.2, p.265

2. In his noble ascent to the heavens (*al-mi'rāj*), it is reported that Almighty Allāh addressing the Prophet (ṣ) at one point said:

...وَإِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لاَ يُصْلِحُهُ إِلاَّ الْغِنَى وَلَوْ صَرَفْتُهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ ذَلِكَ لَهَلَكَ وَإِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لاَ يُصْلِحُهُ إِلاَّ الْفَقْرُ وَلَوْ صَرَفْتُهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ ذَلِكَ لَهَلَكَ...

Surely among My believing servants there are believers whom nothing save affluence (*al-ghinā*) can reform, and were I to change their state to other than that, they would perish; and surely from among my believing servants there are those whom nothing save poverty can reform, and were I to change their state to other than that they would perish.

JUDGING OURSELVES

In order to determine which boat are we sailing in and to which category among the two kinds of poverty do we belong it is important for us to have a yardstick of distinction. How can we determine whether we suffer from the abominable poverty or the recommended one? There is a tradition narrated from Imām 'Alī ('a) as follows:

لله تَعَالى فِي خَلْقِه مَثُوبَاتُ فَقْرٍ وَعُقُوبَاتُ فَقْرٍ، فَمِنْ عَلاَمَةِ الْفَقْرِ إِذَا كَانَ مَثُوبَةً أَنْ يَحْسُنَ عَلَيْهِ خُلُقُهُ، وَيُطِيعَ رَبَّهُ، وَلاَ يَشْكُو حَالَهُ، وَيَشْكُرَ اللَّهَ تَعَالى عَلى فَقْرِهِ. وَمِنْ عَلاَمَةِ الْفَقْرِ إِذَا كَانَ عُقُوبَةً أَنْ يَسُوءَ عَلَيْهِ خُلُقُهُ، وَيَعْصِيَ فِيهِ رَبَّهُ، وَيُكْثِرَ الشِّكَايَةَ، وَيَتَسَخَّطَ الْقَضَاءَ، وَهَذَا النَّوْعُ مِنَ الْفَقْرِ هُوَ الَّذِي اسْتَعَاذَ مِنْهُ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِه

Allāh, the Exalted, has rewards and punishments of poverty in his creation. Among the signs of poverty when it is a reward is when one has a beautiful character, obeys His Lord, does not complain about his poor state, and thanks Allāh for his poverty; and among the signs of poverty when it is a punishment is when one is of unpleasant character, is disobedient of his Lord, frequently complains about his situation, and is not happy with what Allāh has ordained for him. And this is the kind of the poverty that the Holy Prophet (ṣ) sought refuge from.[210]

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[210] Sayyid 'Alī Khān al-Ḥusaynī, *Riyāḍ al-Sālikin*, v.2, p.390

THE BLESSED STATE OF RIDHA

Although we have many traditions indicating how the pious believers would undergo poverty and face difficulties in life, one should not consider 'the state of poverty' always as a distinction for them. The criteria to judge what is good for whom is Allāh's decision and approval. Therefore even if one was able to bear the difficulties of poverty, he should not consider it always recommended for him. Consider the following tradition:

وقد ورد: ان الامام محمد بن علي الباقر - عليهما السلام - قال لجابر ابن عبد الله الأنصاري - و قد اكتنفته علل واسقام، وغلبه ضعف الهرم -: (كيف تجد حالك؟) قال: أنا في حال الفقر أحب إليّ من الغنى، والمرض أحب اليّ من الصحة، والموت أحب إلي من الحياة. فقال الامام(ع): (أما نحن أهل البيت، فما يرد علينا من الله من الفقر والغنى والمرض والصحة والموت والحياة، فهو أحب إلينا). فقام جابر، وقبل بين عينيه، وقال: صدق رسول الله (ص) حيث قال لي: (يا جابر ستدرك واحدا من أولادي اسمه اسمي، يبقر العلوم بقرا).

Once Imām al-Bāqir ('a) is reported to have asked Jābir bin 'Abdillāh al-Anṣārī while the latter was not well and the weakness of old age had overtaken him: 'How do you find your state? Jābir said: 'Poverty is more lovable to me than affluence, illness is more lovable to me than well-being, and death is more lovable to me than life. Thereupon Imām al-Bāqir ('a) said: 'As for us, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), however, we love whatever comes to us from Allāh, whether poverty, affluence, sickness, well-being, death or life. Jābir thereupon stood and kissed between the two eyes of the Imām ('a) and said: The Messenger of Allāh said the truth when he said to me: 'O Jābir, you will soon meet one of my offsprings, his name is my name, he would split the knowledge a splitting.[211]

SO MANY SHI'AS?

There are numerous traditions that outline the criteria of deciphering a true follower of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and his infallible household. Due to the limited scope of this work, all this cannot be analyzed here. However,

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[211] al-Narāqī, *Jāmi' al-Sa'ādāt*, v.2, p. 21

due to the relevance of the subject, we would like to quote one such tradition that clearly reveals what kind of relation a true Shī'ah has with regard to his believing brethren. Al-Kāfī narrates[212] a tradition from Abū Ismā'īl who is reported to have said:

وعَنْ أَبِي إِسْمَاعِيلَ قَالَ قُلْتُ لأَبِي جَعْفَرٍ(ع) جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ إِنَّ الشِّيعَةَ عِنْدَنَا كَثِيرٌ فَقَالَ فَهَلْ يَعْطِفُ الْغَنِيُّ عَلَى الْفَقِيرِ وَ هَلْ يَتَجَاوَزُ الْمُحْسِنُ عَنِ الْمُسِيءِ وَيَتَوَاسَوْنَ فَقُلْتُ لاَ فَقَالَ لَيْسَ هَؤُلَاءِ شِيعَةُ الشِّيعَةُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ هَذَا

I said to Abū Ja'far ('a): may I be made your ransom; surely there are many Shī'ahs among us. He said: 'And do the rich among them have a soft heart for the poor, and the good doer forgive the faults of the bad doer, and do they have concern for one another? I said: No. Thereupon he ('a) said: These are not our Shī'ahs; our Shi'ahs are those who do all that.

[212] al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, v.2, p.173

Section 15

انَّکَ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ

Surely you Are All-Powerful
over every thing

إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Surely you are All-Powerful over every thing

"*Al-Qadīr*" is one of the most beautiful names (*al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*) of Almighty Allāh. Theologians (*mutakallimūn*) define it as:

...هُوَ الْفَاعِلُ لِمَا يَشَاءُ عَلَى قَدْرِ مَا تَقْتَضِي الْحِكْمَةُ لاَ زَائِداً عَلَيْهِ وَلا نَاقِصاً عَنْهُ...

...One who does whatever He wants according to Wisdom, nothing more or less than that...[213]

And the form (*wazn*) of the word "*Qadīr*" which is *fa'īl* فعيل denotes permanence. Therefore He is permanently Able and Powerful.

Not only is He Powerful, but he is *the* Powerful, such that none other than Him has any kind of independent power. If any power is found with anyone it is by the permission of Allāh. No one can claim to have a power 'other than His Power'. Every conceivable power exists and subsists by His Power. The following dictum, which appears in a number of supplications, refers to this very subtle issue:

لاَ حَوْلَ وَلاَ قُوَّةَ إِلاَّ بِاللهِ

There is no strength or power save by Allāh.[214]

The Holy Qur'ān, emphasizing the fact that every kind of power belongs to Allāh, says:

وَلَوْ يَرَى ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوٓاْ إِذْ يَرَوْنَ ٱلْعَذَابَ أَنَّ ٱلْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ شَدِيدُ ٱلْعَذَابِ

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[213] Thuis should not be mistaken to mean that He is unable to do what is not according to His Wisdom. Rather whatever He does is always wise.

[214] It is reported in *al-Kāfi* that Imām al-Bāqir ('a) would recite the following whenever he left his house: *Bismillāhi kharajtu wa 'ala Allāhi tawakkaltu lā ḥawlā wa lā quwwata illā billāh* [In the Name of Allāh I leave and on Allāh do I trust, and there is no strength or power save by Allāh [al-Kulayni, *al-Kāfi*, v.2, p. 543].

...though the wrongdoers will see, when they sight the punishment, that power, altogether, belongs to God, and that God is severe in punishment...[215]

Realizing this, we conclude that only He can fulfill all our aforementioned requests. It is therefore important to seek His assistance solely. In saying '*Innaka 'alā kulli shay'in Qadir*' we mean 'Since You are All-Powerful, we ask all the aforementioned needs from You.'

If we ponder over the Holy Qur'ān we find that many of the verses are concluded with Names of Almighty Allāh. Exegetes say that in order to understand such verses properly, we should try to reflect on these Divine Names, for they form the reason behind the verses. For example in verse 1 of chapter al-Fāṭir we read:

ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ ٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُو۟لِىٓ أَجْنِحَةٍ مَّثْنَىٰ وَثُلَٰثَ وَرُبَٰعَ ۚ يَزِيدُ فِى ٱلْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَآءُ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

All praise belongs to God, originator of the heavens and the earth, maker of the Angels [His] messengers, possessing wings, two, three or four [of them]. He adds to the creation whatever He wishes. *Indeed God has power over all things.*[216]

Commenting on the last clause of this verse,'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī says:

وَقَوْلُهُ (إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيرٌ) تَعْلِيلٌ لِجَمِيعِ مَا تَقَدَّمَهُ أَوِ الْجُمْلَةِ الأَخِيرَةِ وَالأَوَّلُ أَظْهَرُ

The clause '*Indeed God has power over all things*' of the verse is a reason for all the forementioned [i.e. originating the Heavens and the earth, making the angels...etc.] or a reason for the last clause [i.e. He adds to the creation whatever He wishes]. But the former is more apparent [i.e. it is a reason for all the aforementioned][217]

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[215] Holy Qur'ān, 2:165
[216] *Ibid.*, 35:1
[217] 'Allāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān fi Tafsir al-Qur'ān*, v.17, p.7

Likewise is the case with many of our supplications[218], including the supplication under discussion. If we look at the supplication as a whole, we would realize that the last verse is the reason behind all the aforementioned verses. In other words:

- Since only Allāh is the All-Powerful, only He Can do whatever He Wants
- Therefore we seek all the aforementioned requests from Him.

In the previous verses we came to realize that God has a universal law: to get things done by their causes. Hence we should also seek the causes of what we aspire. However, we emphasized that the Principal Cause is Almighty Allāh alone. Therefore we should not look at the agent of grace as an independent provider. The only independent provider is Allāh. To Him Alone belongs every thing in all the stages of its existence and subsistence. Therefore to rely on the causes stems from ignorance and is a manifestation of practical polytheism.

WAS IT WAS NOT FOR HIM I WOULD HAVE PERISHED?

There is an ignorant tendency among some people when it comes to appreciating the help they receive from their friends. A well-wisher may support a person and his family, and thereby emancipate him from many obstacles in life. Then, having attained the state of affluence, the person would say I thank Allāh first and then so and so, for had it not been for his assistance I would not have reached where I am. Such kind of thinking in our traditions is termed as practical polytheism. This is because the helper is just an intermediary of grace (*wāsiṭah*) and has no independence whatsoever, and thus cannot be taken as a second independent helper.

The great saint Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī in his well-known prayer manual '*Uddat al-Dā'ī* narrates the following tradition:

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[218] Refer to the supplications of *Saḥīfat al-Sajjādiyyah* and you will notice that Imām al-Sajjād ('a) concludes a number of his supplications with the Sublime Names of Almighty Allāh. (Author.)

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللهِ(ع)فِي قَوْلِ اللهِ تَعَالَى: (وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللهِ إِلا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ) قَالَ هُوَ قَوْلُ الرَّجُلِ: لَوْ لاَ فُلاَنٌ لَهَلَكْتُ وَلَوْلاَ فُلاَنٌ لَمَا أَصَبْتُ كَذَا وَكَذَا وَلَوْلاَ فُلاَنٌ لَضَاعَ عِيَالِي أَلاَ تَرَى أَنَّهُ قَدْ جَعَلَ لِلَّهِ شَرِيكًا فِي مُلْكِهِ يَرْزُقُهُ وَيَدْفَعُ عَنْهُ؟ قُلْتُ: فَيَقُولُ لَوْلاَ أَنَّ اللهَ مَنَّ عَلَيَّ بِفُلاَنٍ لَهَلَكْتُ؟ قَالَ نَعَمْ لاَ بَأْسَ بِهَذَا وَنَحْوِهِ

Imām Abū 'Abdillāh (al-Ṣādiq ('a)) is reported to have said about the verse '*And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others (with Him)' (12:106)'* that it refers to when a man says: 'Was it not for so and so, I would have perished, and was it not for so and so I would not have got such and such a thing, and was it not for so and so, my family would perish. Don't you see that he has made a partner for Allāh in His Kingdom, who sustains him and averts [evil from him]? [The narrator says:] I said: 'What if he were to say if Allāh would not have Blessed me with so and so I would have perished. The Imām ('a) said: Yes, there is no problem in this and the like.[219]

The above however should not lead one to overlook the traditions of expressing gratitude and thanks to whosoever has done good. Such traditions emphasize the 'nobility' of the agent of Allāh's Grace. But gratitude should never be mingled with polytheism and words of ignorance. In fact the good doer is required to express gratitude to Almighty Allāh for having given him the succor (*tawfīq*) to do all the good, and hence be availed with the Godly spirit.

The Imperfection of the Receptacle

Some times although the agent of grace is infinitely able, but the receptacle of grace is imperfect. Therefore, if the receptacle due to its narrowness cannot attain more than its capacity, the fault is not with the Provider of Grace, Who is *al-Jawād*, and always wishes to give more and more. To explain this law, Almighty Allāh cites a very beautiful a parable is *Sūrat al-Ra'd*:

أَنزَلَ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌۢ بِقَدَرِهَا ...

[219] Ibn Fahd al-Ḥilli, *'Uddat al-Dā'ī*, p.99

He sent down water from the sky, and the channels flowed, each according to its measure...[220]

Hence, water is poured down in abundance, but not all receptacles receive equally. Those receptacles, which are narrow receive less, whereas those with greater capacity receive more. Therefore, it is not the fault of the provider, but the recipient and receptacle.

If this law is correctly understood, we will be able to realize the reason why many of the aforementioned requests are not accomplished. Consider the first two verses of this noble supplication and apply the same law in the other verses:

O Allah instill happiness in the hearts of the inhabitants of the grave.

We said that one of the means of instilling happiness in the grave is seeking forgiveness for the deceased:

الْمَيِّتُ لَيَفْرَحُ بِالتَّرَحُّمِ عَلَيْهِ وَالإِسْتِغْفَارِ...

Surely a dead person rejoices when he is pitied upon and forgiveness is sought for him....[221]

But such forgiveness can only benefit one who has not extinguished the light of his innate nature (*al-fiṭrah*) and left this world in the state of belief (*īmān*). For the Kuffār (those disbelievers who despite knowing the truth of Islām, rejected the same) seeking forgiveness would not instill any kind of happiness. Here the receptacle is deficient and not Allāh's Grace. The Holy Qur'ān citing examples of such hard-hearted people says:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُم مِّنۢ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ فَهِيَ كَٱلْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً

Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness...[222]

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[220] Holy Qur'ān, 13:17
[221] Mawlā Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al- Maḥajjat al-Bayḍā'*, v.8. p.292
[222] Holy Qur'ān, 2:74

And in verses 6-7 of chapter al-Baqarah Almighty Allāh informs us about the disbelievers that:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾ خَتَمَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ ۖ وَعَلَىٰٓ أَبْصَٰرِهِمْ غِشَٰوَةٌ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

As for the disbelievers, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. Allāh has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight, and there is a great punishment for them.

It should be noted that these disbelievers earned the causes that lead to the sealing of the hearts themselves. One should therefore not misconceive and think that Allāh (swt) forcefully scaled their hearts and they had no volition to select a better path. However eagerly were we to aspire for the salvation of such people, there is no room for change, because the receptacle is deficient.

Perhaps the following verse draws our attention to the same situation:

ٱسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِن تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَن يَغْفِرَ ٱللَّهُ لَهُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِى ٱلْقَوْمَ ٱلْفَٰسِقِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾

Whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, God shall never forgive them because they defied God and His Apostle; and God does not guide the transgressing lot.[223]

O Allāh enrich every poor person

Those poor people who continue doing acts that hamper their sustenance, should never dream to be rich. Negative poverty both in the material as well as spiritual sense is a deficiency that comes about due to the receptacle of sustenance. Persistence in extravagant spending, indiscipline, etc. are a practical expression of saying 'I do not want to be self-sufficient. Therefore the individual as well as the society in order to

[223] Holy Qur'ān, 9:80

attain affluence should eradicate the impediment hampering their receptacle of grace.

In short, not being availed with our needs, even if they serve as means for our spiritual upliftment, is due to the impediments that we create and bring about.

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