

Manifestations of the All-Merciful

Reflections on a Daily Supplication of the Holy Month of Ramadan - Part II (See
Also [Part I](#))

by

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Text of Supplication

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

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

اللَّهُمَّ أَصْلِحْ كُلَّ فَاسِدٍ مِنْ أُمُورِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

اللَّهُمَّ اشْفِ كُلَّ مَرِيضٍ

اللَّهُمَّ سُدِّ فَقْرَنَا بِغِنَاكَ

اللَّهُمَّ غَيِّرْ سَوْءَ حَالِنَا بِحُسْنِ حَالِكَ

اللَّهُمَّ اقْضِ عَنَّا الدَّيْنَ

وَأَغْنِنَا مِنَ الْفَقْرِ

إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

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 ‘azzam 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’šūmah (‘a)-may the Almighty Allāh imbue our hearts with intense love for her, and may He Grace us with her *intercession-Āmīn*

Section 1

O Allah, Reform Every Uneven Affair of the Muslims

اللَّهُمَّ أَصْلِحْ كُلَّ فَاسِدٍ مِنْ أُمُورِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

O Allah, Reform Every Uneven Affair of the Muslims

The Meaning

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

خُرُوجُ الشَّيْءِ عَنِ الْإِعْتِدَالِ

‘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 '*fāsid*' means 'something out of its equilibrium'

And the word '*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 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 الشَّيْءِ لَا يُعْطِيهِ

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.

The Holy Qur’ān says:

﴿ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ
الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

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 يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَن يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّن لَّا يَهْدِي إِلَّا أَن يَهْدَىٰ ..

‘...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:

عَجِبْتُ لِمَن يَتَصَدَّى لِإِصْلَاحِ النَّاسِ وَنَفْسُهُ أَشَدُّ شَيْءٍ فَسَادًا فَلَا يُصْلِحُهَا وَيَتَعَاطَىٰ إِصْلَاحَ 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 سَمَتَ هِمَّتُكَ لِإِصْلَاحِ النَّاسِ فَأَبْدَأْ بِنَفْسِكَ فَإِنَّ تَعَاظِيكَ صِلَاحَ 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-naḥs*’ (self-reform) in its accurate sense? As understood earlier, the word ‘*Iṣlāḥ*’ stands for ‘effecting equilibrium [in an entity]’. Therefore ‘*Iṣlāḥ al-naḥs*’ 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*)
- 3- The Irascible Faculty (*al-quwwat al-ghadabiyyah*)

If the faculty of intellect does not deviate towards the directions of excess (*ifrāt*) or negligence (*tafrīt*) 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 ethicists is the state of ‘*adālah*’ (equilibrium). The esteemed mystic Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī in his excellent commentary of *Du‘ā Jawshan al-Kabīr* called *Sharḥ al-Asmā* says:

إِنَّ لِلْإِنْسَانَ ثَلَاثَ قُوَى : قُوَّةٌ دَرَاكَةٌ، وَقُوَّةٌ شَهْوِيَّةٌ، وَقُوَّةٌ غَضَبِيَّةٌ، فَانْحِرَافُ الْقُوَّةِ الدَّرَاكَةِ مِنْهُ إِلَى جَانِبِي الْإِفْرَاطِ وَالتَّغْرِيطِ يُسَمَّى (جُرْبَةً) وَ(بِلَاهَةً) وَاعْتِدَالُهَا (حِكْمَةٌ)، وَانْحِرَافُ الْقُوَّةِ الشَّهْوِيَّةِ إِلَى طَرَفِي الْإِفْرَاطِ وَالتَّغْرِيطِ يُسَمَّى (شَرِّهَا) وَ(خُمُودًا) وَاعْتِدَالُهَا (عِفَّةٌ)، وَانْحِرَافُ الْقُوَّةِ الْغَضَبِيَّةِ إِلَى حَدِّي الْإِفْرَاطِ وَالتَّغْرِيطِ يُسَمَّى (تَهَوُّرًا) وَ(جُبْنًا) وَاعْتِدَالُهَا شَجَاعَةٌ. وَهَذَا الْإِعْتِدَالُ هُوَ الْمُسَمَّى (بِالْعَدَالَةِ) وَهُوَ الصِّرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيمُ الَّذِي هُوَ أَحَدٌ مِنَ السِّيْفِ وَ أَدَقُّ مِنَ الشَّعْرِ...

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-hikmah* (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-Mahajjat al-Baydā'*:

...أَمَّا قُوَّةُ الْعِلْمِ فَحُسْنُهَا وَصَلَاحُهَا فِي أَنْ تَصِيرَ يَحْبِثُ بِسَهْلٍ لَهَا دَرْكُ الْفَرْقِ بَيْنَ الصِّدْقِ وَالْكَذِبِ فِي الْأَقْوَالِ وَبَيْنَ الْحَقِّ وَالْبَاطِلِ فِي الْإِعْتِقَادَاتِ وَبَيْنَ الْجَمِيلِ وَالْقَبِيحِ فِي الْأَفْعَالِ فَإِذَا تَحَصَّلَتْ هَذِهِ الْقُوَّةُ حَصَلَ مِنْهَا ثَمَرَةٌ الْحِكْمَةِ وَالْحِكْمَةُ رَأْسُ الْأَخْلَاقِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَهِيَ الَّتِي قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فِيهَا: وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَإِنَّمَا قُوَّةُ الْغَضَبِ فَحُسْنُهَا فِي أَنْ يَقْتَصِرَ انْقِبَاضُهَا وَأَنْ يَسْطِطَ عَلَيْهَا عَلَى حَدِّ مَا تَقْتَضِيهِ الْحِكْمَةُ، وَكَذَلِكَ الشَّهْوَةُ حُسْنُهَا وَصَلَاحُهَا فِي أَنْ تَكُونَ تَحْتَ إِشَارَةِ الْحِكْمَةِ أَعْنِي إِشَارَةَ الْعَقْلِ وَالدِّينِ، وَأَمَّا قُوَّةُ الْعَدْلِ فَهِيَ فِي صَبْطِ قُوَّةِ الْغَضَبِ وَالشَّهْوَةِ تَحْتَ إِشَارَةِ الْعَقْلِ وَالشَّرْعِ ...

‘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]

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

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

الْفَضَائِلُ أَرْبَعَةٌ أَجْنَاسٌ: أَحَدُهَا الْحِكْمَةُ وَقَوْمُهَا فِي الْفِكْرَةِ وَالثَّانِي الْعِفَّةُ وَقَوْمُهَا فِي الشَّهْوَةِ، وَالثَّلَاثُ الْقُوَّةُ وَقَوْمُهَا فِي الْغَضَبِ. وَالرَّابِعُ الْعَدْلُ وَقَوْمُهُ فِي إِعْتِدَالِ قُوَى النَّفْسِ.

Virtues are four kinds: First is wisdom (*al-hikmah*) 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-ghadab*), 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 ((مفرد)) یا ((مفرد)) یاد می شود چه این که اینها راه را به تنهایی طی می کنند. گرچه سخت است ولی رفتنی است و گرچه پیشرفت انسان تحت نظر مدیر و مدبر بیشتر است، لکن بتنهایی 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 “*mufriḍ*” or “*mufraḍ*” 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:

وقتی از عارفی پرسیدند : ((ابدال)) چند نفرند؟ فرمود: ((اربعون نفساً)) ابدال چهل تن هستند، و سوال کردند که: چرا نگفتید: ((اربعون رجلاً))، 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 (ﷺ) 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-‘U‘mā Sayyid ‘Alī Qāḍī al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, the spiritual mentor of ‘Allāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī to have said:

قَالَ لِي أَسْتَاذِي الْمَرْحُومُ الْقَاضِي قُدْسَ سِرِّهِ: أَنَّهُ مُحَالٌّ أَنْ يَصِلَ إِنْسَانٌ إِلَى مَقَامِ التَّوْحِيدِ بَدُونِ طَرِيقِ سَيِّدِ الشُّهَدَاءِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ.

My teacher, Marhūm Qāḍī (may his spirit be sanctified) said to me that it is impossible for a human being to attain the station of *tawhīd* [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:

وصول به مقام توحید و سیر صحیح الی الله و عرفان ذات احدیت عز اسمہ بدون ولایت امامان شیعه

و خلفاي به حق از علي بن ابي طالب (ع) و فرزنداناش 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'* (Ḥadrat Fāṭima ('a))[13].

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

آن حضرت (امام الحسين (ع)) را براي رفع حجاب و موانع طريق نسبت به سالکين راه خدا عنايتي عظيم است

That Ḥadrat [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 Qādī Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the spiritual mentor of 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī is reported to have said:

اگر من به جائي رسیده باشم از دو چیز است: (1) قرآن کریم, (2) 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-'U'mā Shahāb al-Dīn al-Najafī al-Mar'ashī as having advised him as follows:

إِذَا أَرَدْتَ التَّوْفِيقَ فِي حَيَاتِكَ الْعِلْمِيَّةِ فَعَلَيْكَ بِثَلَاثَةِ أَعْمَالٍ: الْأُولَى: كُنْ دَوْمًا عَلَى طَهَارَةٍ وَوُضُوءٍ فَإِنَّهُ يُبَيِّرُ الْقَلْبَ وَيُزِيلُ الْهَمَّ. الثَّانِي: شَيِّعِ الْجَنَائِزَ أَيَّ جَنَازَةٍ رَأَيْتَهَا وَلَوْ بِأَقْدَامٍ. الثَّلَاثُ: شَارِكٌ فِي قَضِيَّةِ الْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ بِأَيِّ نَحْوٍ مِنَ الْمُشَارَكَةِ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: كُنْتُ مِنْ مُدْرَسِي الْحَوْزَةِ الْمَعْرُوفِينَ، وَكُنْتُ أَنْذَاكَ أَوْزَعُ الشَّيْءِ عَلَى النَّاسِ فِي الْمَجَالِسِ وَالْمَأْتِمِ الْحُسَيْنِيَّةِ.

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

- Always be in the state of purity and *wudū'*, 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 (ﷺ) is reported to have said:

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فَيْكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا بَعْدِي كِتَابَ اللَّهِ 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.

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 إِنَّمَا أَعْطِيكُمْ بِوَاحِدَةٍ أَنْ تَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ مَتْنِي وَفُرْدِي

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

Khawājah ‘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:

الْقَوْمَةُ لِلَّهِ هِيَ الْيَقَظَةُ مِنْ سِنَةِ الْعَفَلَةِ، وَالنُّهُوضُ عَنْ وَرَطَةِ الْفَتْرَةِ. وَهِيَ أَوْلُ مَا يَسْتَنْبِرُ قَلْبُ الْعَبْدِ بِالْحَيَاةِ لِرُؤْيَةِ نُورِ التَّنْيِيهِ

‘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 (*tanbīh*).[\[18\]](#)

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-‘amālī*) believe that *yaqẓah* is:

‘the first step of wayfaring towards Allāh, and accurately speaking ‘the foundation in the journey to God.’[\[19\]](#)

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 کی می خواهید در خواب غفلت به سر برید، و در فساد و تباهی غوطه ور باشید؟ از خدا بترسید از عواقب امور بپرهیزید از خواب غفلت بیدار شوید. شما هنوز بیدار نشده اید هنوز قدم اول را یقظه « است ولی شما در خواب به سر می برید چشمها باز و آبرنداشته اید. قدم اول در سلوک 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 yaqazah (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:

یقظه « است. و آن بیدار شدن از خواب غفلت و هشیار شدن از سکر طبیعت آ منزل اول انسانیت است، و فهمیدن اینکه انسان مسافر است، و هر مسافر زاد و راحله می خواهد. زاد و راحله انسان خصال خود انسان است

“... The first stage of humanness (*insāniyyat*) is *yaqāh*. 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 که اول منزل از منازل انسانیت منزل یقظه و بیداری است، چنانچه مشایخ اهل سلوک در منازل سالکان بیان فرموده اند. و از برای این منزل، چنانچه شیخ عظیم الشان شاه آبادی، دام ظلّه، بیان فرمودند، ده بیت است که اکنون در مقام تعداد آن نیستیم

“... Remember that the first and foremost step towards authentic humanness is that of awareness and awakening (*yaqāh*), 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 *yaqāh* 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:

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ

Whatever good befalls you is from Allāh

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

وَمَا بِكُمْ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ

Whatever blessing you have is from Allāh...

3. In the morning supplication of “*al-Ṣabāḥ*” Imam ‘Alī (‘a) cries:

إِلَهِي إِنْ لَمْ تَبْتَدِئْ بِي الرَّحْمَةَ مِنْكَ بِحُسْنِ التَّوْفِيقِ فَمَنْ السَّالِكُ بِي إِلَيْكَ فِي وَاصِحِ 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:

...ثُمَّ سَلَكَ يَهُمُ طَرِيقَ ارَادَتِهِ 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 Khālīd narrates that Imām Ja’far al-Ṣādiq (‘a) [once] said to him:

يَا سُلَيْمَانَ إِنَّ لَكَ قَلْبًا وَمَسَامِعَ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَهْدِيَ عَبْدًا فَتَحَ مَسَامِعَ قَلْبِهِ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ بِهِ غَيْرَ ذَلِكَ خَتَمَ مَسَامِعَ قَلْبِهِ فَلَا يَصْلُحُ أَبَدًا وَهُوَ قَوْلُ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: (أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَفْعَالُهَا)

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:

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

[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:

إِنَّا كَتَبْنَا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ يُخْرِجُ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ

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 يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْفَرَقَاتِ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا ﴾

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-Husayn(‘a) in his well-known supplication of ‘Arafah cries:

إِلَهِي أَطْلُبُنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ حَتَّى أَصِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَاجْذِبْنِي بِمَنِّكَ حَتَّى أَقْبَلَ إِلَيْكَ

O God, Seek me by Your Mercy until I reach You and attract me by Your Favor until I draw towards You.[25]

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:

إِسْتَدِيمُوا 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-Şādiq (‘a) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ لِلْقُلُوبِ صَدَأَ كَصَدَأِ النُّحَاسِ فَاجْلُوهَا بِالْإِسْتِغْفَارِ

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 (ﷺ) is reported to have said:

لَا تُكثِرُوا الْكَلَامَ بِغَيْرِ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ كَثْرَةَ الْكَلَامِ بِغَيْرِ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تُغْسِي الْقُلُوبَ وَإِنَّ أْبَعَدَ النَّاسِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْقَاسِي الْقَلْبَ

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]

4. Imam ‘Alī (‘a) is reported to have said:

الْبُكَاءُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ يُبِيرُ 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 ‘*hashyah*’ which is translated as fear should not be taken to merely mean ‘the conventional fear’ that we know of. ‘*hashyah*’, 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 *hashyah* as well. Therefore it is incumbent to introduce and inculcate in oneself ground knowledge of the roots of religion, especially *tawhīd*, so that one can naturally experience the fear of Allāh with veneration for His Exalted Essence.

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

لَا تُمَيِّتُوا الْقُلُوبَ بِكَثْرَةِ الطَّعَامِ وَالشَّرَابِ، فَإِنَّ الْقُلُوبَ تَمُوتُ كَالزُّرُوعِ إِذَا كَثَرَ عَلَيْهَا 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:

...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:

إِسْتَجْلِبْ شِدَّةَ التَّبَقُّطِ صِدْقَ 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-ḥudūrī*), when the spirit attains its height.

8. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) in a lengthy tradition says:

... وَمَنْ أَحَبَّ عَلِيًّا بَعَثَ اللَّهُ مَلَكَ الْمَوْتِ إِلَيْهِ يَرْفُقُ وَدَفَعَ اللَّهُ 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 أَهْلُ الْبَيْتِ: قُلْتُ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ مِنْكُمْ؟ قَالَ: مِنَّا وَاللَّهِ، (أَمَا سَمِعْتَ قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (ع): (فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي

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 Ibrāhīm, 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 ‘Ayyād.

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 ءَامَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ...

[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 الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّغْرَقِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ ﴿٣٥﴾ سَرَابِيلُهُمْ مِنْ قَطِرَانٍ وَتَغْشَىٰ وُجُوهُهُمْ
النَّارِ ﴿٣٦﴾﴾

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 اكْتَسَبَتْ ...﴾

...For it (i.e. the soul) is what it has earned, and against it is what it has earned....[37]

Therefore one should struggle to refine his heart and prepare it for the first spark to ignite.

The Ahlu’l-bayt (‘a)- Intermediaries of Allah’s Grace

Seeking the support of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) 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 صَنَائِعُ رَبِّنَا وَالنَّاسُ بَعْدُ صَنَائِعُ لَنَا

We are the handicrafts of our Lord and the people then are our handicrafts.[38]

Imām al-Şādiq (‘a) is reported to have said:

نَحْنُ السَّبَبُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ اللَّهِ 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 (ﷺ) and his infallible progeny (upon whom be peace):

مَنْ أَرَادَ اللَّهَ بَدَأَ بِكُمْ

Whosoever seeks Allāh begins through you

وَمَنْ قَصَدَهُ تَوَجَّهَ بِكُمْ

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-Husayn(‘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 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-Husayn(‘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-Husayn(‘a). If we carefully read the Ziyārah of the martyrs of Karbala we come to realize how exalted was Zuhayr and his likes:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ وَ أَجْبَاءَهُ...

Peace be on you O friends of Allāh and His lovers...

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ دِينِ اللَّهِ

Peace be on you O helpers of the religion of Allāh

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ

Peace be on you O helpers of the Messenger of Allāh

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Peace be on you O helpers of the Commander of the faithful

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ فَاطِمَةَ سَيِّدَةِ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ

Peace be on you O helpers of Fāṭimah,

The Mistress of the Women of the Universe

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَا أَنْصَارَ أَبِي مُحَمَّدٍ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ عَلِيِّ الزَّكِيِّ النَّاصِحِ

Peace be on you O helpers of Abī Muḥammad al-Husayn bin ‘Alī...[\[42\]](#)

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 ‘Alī(‘a), Hadrat Fāṭima(‘a) and Imam al-Husayn(‘a) while they accompanied and supported Imam al-Husayn(‘a)? 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(‘a), they live with Nūḥ(‘a), they live with Ibrāhīm(‘a); they live with Mūsā(‘a), they live with

‘Isā (‘a), 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:

فَيَايَتِنِّي 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 *yaqzah*, there are particular effects that he would experience. Such effects are outlined and expounded in books of practical gnosis. Observing brevity here we would not like to cover their details. Instead, let us briefly look at the second 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.

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’an:

﴿ وَعَلَى الْكُفْرَةِ الَّذِينَ خَلَفُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَن لَّا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّحِيمُ الْكَرِيمُ ﴾

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 (ﷺ) and the Muslims returned to Madīnah, the three went to the Prophet (ﷺ) and expressed their apology, but the Prophet(ﷺ) did not speak to them, and the Muslims likewise, following the Prophet (ﷺ), 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.

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 (ﷺ), the Emigrants and the Anṣār. Thus, apart from Allāh returning in Mercy to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), 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 “*liyātūbū*” (so that they may repent and turn to Allāh): one through the conjunction and the other by the phrase “*thumma tābā*”. 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:

﴿... وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ 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 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 perfection. 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 ‘*tawhīd* 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 يَحْضُرْتِهِ: (أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ) تَكَلَّمْتَ أُمَّكَ أَتَدْرُسِيغْفِيغْفَارُ دَرَجَةَ الْعَلِيِّينَ وَهُوَ اسْمٌ وَاقِعٌ عَلَى سَيِّئَةٍ مَعَانٍ: أَوْلَاهَا النَّدَمُ عَلَى مَا مَضَى. وَالثَّانِي الْعَزْمُ عَلَى تَرْكِ الْعَوْدِ إِلَيْهِ أَبَدًا. وَالثَّلَاثُ أَنْ تُؤَدِّيَ إِلَى الْمَخْلُوقِينَ حُقُوقَهُمْ حَتَّى تَلْقَى اللَّهَ أَمَلَسَ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ تَبَعَةٌ. وَالرَّابِعُ أَنْ تَعْمِدَ إِلَى كُلِّ قَرِيضَةٍ عَلَيْكَ صَيَعْتَهَا فَتُؤَدِّيَ حَقَّهَا. وَالْخَامِسُ أَنْ تَعْمِدَ إِلَى اللَّحْمِ الَّذِي نَبَتَ عَلَى السُّحْتِ فَتَنْزِجِرَانَ حَتَّى تُلصِقَ الْجِلْدَ بِالْعَظْمِ وَبِنَشَأَ بَيْنَهُمَا (لَحْمٌ جَدِيدٌ. وَالسَّادِسُ أَنْ تُذِيقَ الْجِسْمَ أَلْمَ الطَّاعَةِ كَمَا وَهَى الْمَعْصِيَةَ. 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 (*‘illiyīn*); 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. [\[48\]](#)

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 be 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-Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyyah as follows:

(30) لَوْ بَكَيْتُ إِلَيْكَ حَتَّى تَسْقُطَ أَشْفَارُ عَيْنَيْيَ وَأَنْتَحَبْتَ حَتَّى يَنْقَطِعَ صَوْتِي وَقُمْتَ لَكَ حَتَّى تَتَنَشَّرَ قَدَمَايَ وَرَكَعْتَ لَكَ حَتَّى يَنْخَلِجَ صُلْبِي وَسَجَدْتُ لَكَ حَتَّى تَتَفَقَّأَ حَدَقَتَايَ وَأَكَلْتُ تُرَابَ الْأَرْضِ طَوْلَ عُمْرِي وَشَرَبْتُ مَاءَ الرَّمَادِ آخِرَ دَهْرِي وَذَكَرْتُكَ فِي خِلَالِ ذَلِكَ حَتَّى يَكِلَّ لِسَانِي ثُمَّ لَمْ أَرْفَعْ طَرْفِي إِلَى آفَاقِ السَّمَاءِ اسْتِحْيَاءً مِنْكَ مَا اسْتَوْجَبْتُ يَذَلِكَ مَحْوِ سَيِّئَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِي (31) وَأَنْ كُنْتُ تَغْفِرُ لِي حِينَ اسْتَوْجِبُ مَغْفِرَتَكَ وَتَعْفُو عَنِّي حِينَ اسْتَحِقُّ عَفْوَكَ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ غَيْرُ وَاجِبٍ لِي يَا سَيِّدِي حَقِيقًا وَلَا أَنَا أَهْلٌ لَهُ يَا سَيِّدِي إِذْ كَانَ جَزَائِي مِنْكَ فِي أَوَّلِ مَا عَصَيْتَكَ النَّارَ فَإِنْ تُعَذِّبُنِي فَأَنْتَ غَيْرُ ظَالِمٍ 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:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَآقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّا لَا نَضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ﴾

And those who (1) hold fast by the book and (2) keep up prayer; verily We waste not the recompense of the reformers

The above verse informs us that a reformer must:

1) Hold steadfast onto the book

The great Shī'ah commentator of the Qur'ān Shaykh Ṭabrisī in his *Majma' al-Bayān* says:

أَمْسَكَ وَتَمَسَّكَ وَاسْتَمَسَكَ بِالشَّيْءِ يَمَعْنِي وَوَاحِدٌ آيٍ إِعْتَصَمَ بِهِ

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:

إِمْسَاكُ 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.

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 اللَّهِ وَالْخُضُوعُ إِلَى مَقَامِهِ الَّذِي هُوَ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الرُّوحِ الْحَيَّةِ فِي هَيْكَلِ الشَّرَائِعِ الدِّينِيَّةِ

And the particular mention of establishing prayer from among the parts of religion is due to its sacred position and that it is the pillar of religion, which protects and ensures the remembrance of 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:

وَأَعْلَمُ أَنَّ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ مِنْ عَمَلِكَ تَبِعَ 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:

إِنْ قُبِلَتْ قَبْلَ 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-khafī* (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 (*iṣlāh*). 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 اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴾

Would He who has created not know? And He is the All-Attentive, the All-Aware.[56]

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 الطَّرْفِ الْاجْتِمَاعِيِّ الَّذِي يَعِيشُ هُوَ فِيهِ، وَمَا أَصْعَبُ أَنْ يَفْلِحَ قَرْدٌ فِي...
مُجْتَمَعٍ فَاسِدٍ أَحَاطَ بِهِ الشَّقَاءُ مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ.
وَلِذَلِكَ إِهْتَمَّ فِي إِصْلَاحِ الْمُجْتَمَعِ إِهْتِمَامًا لَا يُعَادِلُهُ فِيهِ غَيْرُهُ وَبِذَلِكَ الْجُهْدِ الْبَالِغِ فِي جَعْلِ الدَّسَائِرِ وَالتَّعَالِيمِ
الدِّيْنِيَّةِ حَتَّى الْعِبَادَاتِ مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ وَالْحَجِّ وَالصَّوْمِ اجْتِمَاعِيَّةً مَا أَمَكْنَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ، كُلُّ ذَلِكَ لِيَسْتَصْلِحَ الْإِنْسَانُ فِي
نَفْسِهِ وَمِنْ جِهَةِ طَرْفِ 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, *hajj* 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:

﴿ ... لِيُقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ... ﴾

...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 (*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 أَهَلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا
كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

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 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 jurispudent). Its rational definition is that in the absence of the 12th holy Imām ('a), the jurispudent identified as pious and knowledgeable in Islamic laws can govern a collectivity and lead it towards its material as well as spiritual prosperity. Such a person who enjoys sublime traits, is far from selfish interests, and is also well-aware of Islamic Law as well as the circumstances of his time, can 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 Ḥanafīyah, he says:

إِنَّمَا خَرَجْتُ لِطَلْبِ الْإِصْلَاحِ فِي أُمَّةِ جَدِّي (ص) أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَمَرَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَنْهَى عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَسِيرُ بِسِيرَةِ جَدِّي
وَأَبِي عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ (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-Iftitāh*, we pray:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَرْغِبُ إِلَيْكَ فِي دَوْلَةٍ كَرِيمَةٍ تُعِزُّ بِهَا الْإِسْلَامَ وَ أَهْلَهُ وَتَذِلُّ بِهَا النِّفَاقَ وَ أَهْلَهُ وَتَجْعَلُنَا فِيهَا مِنَ الدُّعَاةِ إِلَى طَاعَتِكَ وَ الْقَادَةِ إِلَى سَبِيلِكَ وَتَرْزُقُنَا بِهَا كَرَامَةَ الدُّنْيَا وَ الْآخِرَةِ...

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 *intizār*. 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 *intizār*, 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:

...رَجَالٌ عَرَفُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ مَعْرِفَتِهِ، وَهُمْ أَنْصَارُ الْمَهْدِيِّ (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 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-Mahdī ('a) would be as follows:

وَلَكِنَّ هَذِهِ (الْعِدَّة) الَّتِي يُخْرِجُ اللَّهُ فِيهَا الْقَائِمَ (ع)، وَهُمْ النُّجَبَاءُ، وَالْقُضَاةُ وَالْحُكَّامُ، وَالْعُقَهَاءُ فِي الدِّينِ...

They are:

- Of Noble Descent [*nujabā'*]
- Qualified to Rule [*al-hukkām*]
- Qualified to Judge [*al-quḏāt*]
- 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 area, we should do so. Otherwise our supplication would be mere rhetoric or ignorance.

Notes:

- [1] Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradātu Alfā'i'l Qur'ān*, new ed., p.636
- [2] This is also a proverb in the Arabic language.
- [3] *Holy Qur'an*, 2: 11-12
- [4] Āmādī, *Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim*, tr. 4853, p. 240
- [5] *Ibid.*, tr. 4765, p.237
- [6] *Ibid.*, tr. 4772, p.237
- [7] Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥu'l Asmā' al-Husnā*, p. 213
- [8] Mawlā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al-Mahajjat al-Bayḍā'*, v.5
- [9] ⁶ Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.75, p.81
- [10] Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Zan dar Āineye Jalāl o Jamāl*, p. 233
- [11] Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Zan dar Āineye Jalāl o Jamāl*, p. 233
- [12] Sayyid 'Alī Mūsawī al-Haddād, *'Arifun Fī al-Riḥāb al-Qudsiyya*, p.47
- [13] Āyatullāh Muḥammad Husayn Ṭherānī, *Rūḥe Mujarrad*, p.329
- [14] Hādī Hāshimiyān, *Daryāye 'Irfān*, p.97
- [15] *Ibid.*, p.98
- [16] Sayyid 'Ādil al-'Alawī, *Qabasāt min Hayāti Sayyidina al-Ustādh*, p. 118
- [17] al-Ṭabrasī, *al-Ihtijāj*, v.2, p.380
- Khwāja 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, ch.1 , p.36 [18]
- [19] Ustād Muḥammad Shujā'ī, *Maqālāt- Tarīqe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiyeh (1)*, p. 24
- [20] Imām Khumaynī, *Jihād-e Akbar*, p. 51
- [21] Imām Khumaynī, *Chehel Hadīth*, tr. Four, On Kibr pp. 97-98
- [22] Imām Khumaynī, *Chehel Hadīth*, tr. No.10- On Desire and Hope
- [23] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, Du'ā al-Ṣabāḥ, Arabic ed., p.93-94
- [24] ⁶ Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.5, p.203
- [25] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, Du'ā 'Arafah
- [26] Āmādī, *Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim*, tr. 3654
- [27] *Muntakhab Mīzān al-Hikmah*, p.432, tr. 5357
- [28] *Ibid.*, p.431, tr. 5333
- [29] Āmādī, *Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim*, tr. 3730
- [30] Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, new ed., p.283
- [31] ⁶ Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.63, p. 331
- [32] Hāji Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, v.12, p.173
- [33] ⁶ Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, p. 277
- [34] The Holy Qur'an, 57: 16

- [35] The Holy Qur'ān, 14:, 49 & 50
- [36] Ustād Muḥammad Shujā'ī, *Maqālāt- Tarīqe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiyeh (1)*, p. 29-30
- [37] Holy Qur'ān, 2:286
- [38] Imām 'Alī ('a), *Nahj al-Balāghah*, letter 28. Al-Khuṭī in his *Minhāj al-Barā'ah*, a comprehensive commentary on the *Nahj al-Balāghah* 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 Ḥabībullah al-Hāshimī al-Khūṭī, *Minhāj al-Barā'ah*, vol.9, p. 98)
- [39] Āyatullah Ḥasan Zādeh Āmulī quotes *Bishārat al-Muṣṭafā*, p.90 in his gloss over the *Minhāj al-Barā'ah* of al-Khūṭī
- [40] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Maḥāṭib al-Jinān*, Arabic ed., pp. 620-626
- [41] Ustād Muḥammad Shujā'ī, *Maqālāt- Tarīqe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiye (1)*, p. 37
- [42] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Maḥāṭib al-Jinān*, Arabic ed., p.503
- [43] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Maḥāṭib al-Jinān*, Arabic ed., p.503.
- [44] Holy Qur'ān, 9:118
- [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
- [47] Ustād Shujā'ī, *Maqālāt, Tarīqe 'Amaliyyeye Tazkiye (1)*, pp.86-87
- [48] Sharīf Raḍī, *Nahju'l Balāgha [sermons, letters and sayings of Imām 'Ali ('a)]*, p. 549
- [49] *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah* (The Psalms of Islām, English Translation by William Chittick), Supplication no. 16, pp.59-60.
- [50] 'Allāmah Ṭabṛasī, *Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayān*, v.4, p.762
- [51] Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt*, p.768
- [52] 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, v.8, p. 299
- [53] al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, v.4, p. 161
- [54] Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, v.2, p.239
- [55] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, v.80, p.20
- [56] Holy Qur'ān, 67:14
- [57] 'Allāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīri'l Qur'ān*, v. 12, p. 330
- [58] Holy Qur'ān, 57:25
- [59] Holy Qur'ān, 10:13
- [60] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, v. 44, p. 368
- [61] Āyatullah Ṣāfi Golpaygānī, *Muntakhab al-Athar*, volume 3, p. 177
- [62] Āyatullah Ṣāfi Golpaygānī, *Muntakhab al-Athar*, volume 3, p. 177

Section 2

O Allah, cure every sick person

اللَّهُمَّ اشْفِ كُلَّ مَرِيضٍ

O Allāh, Cure every Sick Person

Meaning

The Arabic word *marīd* literally means ‘one who is sick or disordered’. It originates from its infinitive ‘*marad*’ which means:

الْخُرُوجُ عَنِ الْإِعْتِدَالِ الْخَاصِّ بِالْإِنْسَانِ وَذَلِكَ ضَرْبَانِ : الْأَوَّلُ مَرَضٌ جِسْمِيٌّ...وَالثَّانِي عِبَارَةٌ عَنِ الرَّذَائِلِ...

‘...to exit from the state of the equilibrium particular to the human being[63]; and this is of two kinds: (1) bodily sickness... (2) vices[64]

Therefore, in reality, *marad* 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 “*marad*” (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:

(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-Shāfi*) 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 قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ 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 *marad* is not limited to physical ailments.

3. Prophet 'Īsā, upon whom be peace, is reported to have said:

...مَا مَرَضَ قَلْبٌ بِأَشَدَّ مِنَ الْقَسْوَةِ...

... The heart did not fall sick with [a malady] more severe than the hardness of the heart... [65]

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

لَا مَرَضَ أَضْنَى مِنْ قِلَّةِ الْعَقْلِ

There is no malady more debilitating than the scantiness of intellect [66]

Here the 'silliness' or simplicity of a person is considered to be another kind of sickness. Therefore *marad* can also be employed to denote the dull-wittedness of a person.

5. And he ('a) is also reported to have said:

الْحِقْدُ خُلُقٌ دَنِيٌّ وَ مَرَضٌ مُرْدِيٌّ

Resentment (*al-hiqd*) is a degenerate characteristic and a destructive illness [67]

Therefore, in short, *marad* 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-Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyyah* prays:

فَمَا أَدْرِي يَا إِلَهِي أَيُّ الْحَالَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالشُّكْرِ لَكَ
 وَأَيُّ الْوَقْتَيْنِ أَوْلَى بِالْحَمْدِ لَكَ
 أَوْفَتْ الصِّحَّةَ الَّتِي هَنَأْتَنِي فِيهَا طَيِّبَاتِ رِزْقِكَ
 وَنَشِطَّتَنِي بِهَا لِابْتِغَاءِ مَرْضَاتِكَ وَفَضْلِكَ
 وَقَوَّيْتَنِي مَعَهَا عَلَى مَا وَقَفْتَنِي 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 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 marqātika*) 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 اللَّهِ جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ بِهِ وَ يَقْدَمُ إِرَادَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَى إِرَادَةِ نَفْسِهِ وَ مِثَالُهُ إِذَا مَرَضَ لَا يَكُونُ قَصْدُهُ مِنَ الدُّعَاءِ عَافِيَتَهُ مُجَرَّدَ بَقَاءِهِ لِشَهْوَتِهِ وَ عَاجِلَتِهِ وَدُنْيَاهُ الشَّاعِلَةَ عَنْ آخِرَتِهِ بَلْ لِيَبْقَى عَلَى مُرَادِ اللَّهِ 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 than to merely search for the immediate causes. Physicians categorize "illness prevention" into four stages:

1. Primordial prevention

The Holy Qur'ān says:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

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 (ﷺ):

During the Holy Prophet (ﷺ)'s time, the king of Egypt sent a skilled doctor to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). He lived one year with the Arabs but found no one approaching him to get cured. He therefore came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and complained about the situation. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) 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 (ﷺ) and applied his well-known saying:

كُلْ وَأَنْتَ تَشْتَهِي وَأَمْسِكْ وَأَنْتَ تَشْتَهِي

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 التَّهْلُكَةِ...﴾

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, 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:

المَعْدَةُ بَيْتُ الْأَدْوَاءِ وَالْحِمْيَةُ رَأْسُ الدَّوَاءِ لَا 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:

صَلَاحُ الْبَدَنِ الْحِمْيَةُ

In denial is the equilibrium of the body.[75]

iii) Imam Abū Ibrāhīm al-Kāzīm ('a) is reported to have said:

لَيْسَ الْحِمْيَةُ أَنْ تَدَعَ الشَّيْءَ أَصْلًا وَلَكِنَّ الْحِمْيَةَ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ مِنْ 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 Hasan al-Riḍā ('a) is reported to have said:

رَأْسُ الْحِمْيَةِ الرَّفْقُ 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. 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:

فَالطَّبُّ مَجْمُوعٌ يَنْظُمُ كَلَامِي
مَاءَ الْحَيَاةِ تَصُبُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ

إِسْمَعُ جَمِيعَ وَصِيَّتِي وَاعْمَلْ بِهَا
أَفَلِيلُ جَمَاعِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتَ فَإِنَّهُ

وَ احْذَرُ طَعَامًا قَبْلَ هَضْمِ طَعَامٍ

وَ اجْعَلْ غَدَاكَ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ مَرَّةً

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 مَرَضَ فَقَالَ لَا أَتَدَاوَى حَتَّى يَكُونَ الَّذِي أَمْرَضَنِي هُوَ الَّذِي يَشْفِينِي فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى إِلَيْهِ لَا
أَشْفِيكَ 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.

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-Şādiq ('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 عَلَىٰ وَجْهِ شَتَّىٰ مَرَضٌ بُلُوكِ وَمَرَضٌ الْعُقُوبَةِ وَمَرَضٌ جُعِلَ عَلَيْهِ الْفَنَاءُ وَأَنْتَ تَزْعُمُ أَنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَغْذِيَةِ رَدِيئَةٍ وَأَشْرَبَةٍ وَبَيْنَةٍ أَوْ مِنْ عِلَّةٍ كَانَتْ يَأْمَهُ وَتَزْعُمُ أَنَّ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ السِّيَاسَةَ لِبَدَنِهِ وَأَجْمَلَ النَّظَرَ فِي أَحْوَالِ نَفْسِهِ وَعَرَفَ الضَّارَّ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ مِنَ النَّافِعِ لَمْ يَمْرَضْ وَتَمِيلُ فِي قَوْلِكَ إِلَىٰ مَنْ يَزْعُمُ أَنَّهُ لَا يَكُونُ الْمَرَضُ وَالْمَوْتُ إِلَّا مِنَ الْمَطْعَمِ وَالْمَشْرَبِ قَدْ مَاتَ أَرْسَطَاطَالِيْسُ مُعَلِّمُ الْأَطِبَّاءِ وَأَفْلَاطُونُ رَئِيسُ الْحُكَمَاءِ وَجَالِينُوسُ شَاحَ وَدَقَّ بَصْرَهُ وَمَا دَقَّ الْمَوْتُ حِينَ نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِ

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 (ﷺ) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَكُونُ لَهُ الدَّرَجَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ لَا يَبْلُغُهَا بِعَمَلِهِ يَبْتَلَىٰ بِبَلَاءٍ فِي جِسْمِهِ فَيَبْلُغُهَا بِذَلِكَ

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 اللَّهُ 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:

صَدَاعُ لَيْلَةٍ تَحُطُّ كُلَّ خَطِيئَةٍ إِلَّا 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:

وَإِذْ خَلَقْنَا مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِي فَتَنفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِي ۗ وَتُزَيِّدُ آلَ كِهْمَةَ
وَالْأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِي ۗ وَإِذْ أَخْرَجُ الْمَوْتَى بِإِذْنِي ۗ

...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 leprosy by *My permission*; and when you brought forth the dead *by My permission*.... [84]

In all the abovementioned wonders that Prophet 'Īsā ('a) 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'l-bayt ('a), 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 Hunayf how he managed to uproot the heavy door of Khaybar, Imām ('a) said:

وَاللَّهِ مَا فَلَعْتُ بَابَ خَيْبَرَ وَقَدَفْتُ بِهِ وَرَائِي أَرْبَعِينَ ذِرَاعًا لَمْ تَحْسُ أَعْضَائِي، يَقْوَةٌ جَسَدِيَّةٍ وَحَرَكَةٌ غَرِيبَةٌ بَشَرِيَّةٌ

وَلَكِنِّي أَيْدْتُ يَقُوِّ مَلَكُوتِيَّةٍ وَنَفْسِي يُنُورُ رَبِّهَا مُضِيَّةً

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]

2. History tells us that once in the gathering of the Abbasid Caliph Ma'mūn, Hamīd 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 Mahrān and ate him up and then turned toward Ma'mūn 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 الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ فَلَمَّا رآه مُنْتَفِئًا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا مِن فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَتْلُوَنَ ءَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ ۚ وَمَن شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَفْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌّ 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 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 Bilqīs within the twinkling of an eye. He was known to possess knowledge of *al-Isim al-A'zam* (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-Isim al-A'zam* (Great Name) actually consist of letters and words, nor is the knowledge of the Great Name the conceptual or mental knowledge of a certain word or specific letters as have a majority of the laity conjectured and believed so far. The knowledge of *al-Isim al-A'zam* 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 (ﷺ) 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:

لَا تَقُولُوا سَلْمَانَ الْفَارِسِيَّ وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا سَلْمَانَ الْمُحَمَّدِيَّ ذَلِكَ 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]

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:

وَاللَّهِ 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 يَطْبُخُ فِدْرًا لَهُ فَبَيْنَمَا هُمَا يَتَحَادَثَانِ إِذَا انْكَبَتِ الْقِدْرُ عَلَى وَجْهِهَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ فَلَمْ يَسْقُطْ مِنْ مَرَقِهَا وَلَا مِنْ وَدَكِهَا شَيْءٌ فَعَجِبَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ عَجَبًا شَدِيدًا وَأَخَذَ سَلْمَانَ الْقِدْرَ فَوَضَعَهَا عَلَى حَالِهَا الْأَوَّلِ عَلَى النَّارِ تَانِيَةً وَأَقْبَلَا يَتَحَدَّثَانِ فَبَيْنَمَا هُمَا يَتَحَدَّثَانِ إِذَا انْكَبَتِ الْقِدْرُ عَلَى وَجْهِهَا فَلَمْ يَسْقُطْ مِنْهَا شَيْءٌ مِنْ مَرَقِهَا وَلَا 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 دَعَرَكَ؟ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَبُو ذَرٍّ: يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَأَيْتُ سَلْمَانَ صَنَعَ كَذَا وَكَذَا فَعَجِبْتُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَقَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (ع) يَا بَا ذَرٍّ إِنْ سَلْمَانَ لَوْ حَدَّثَكَ يَمَا يَعْلَمُ لَقُلْتَ رَحِمَ اللَّهُ 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 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-Muḥammadī. Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir

(‘a) is also reported to have said:

سَلْمَانَ بَحْرُ الْعِلْمِ لَا يُقَدَّرُ عَلَى تَزْجِهِ

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 الْإِسْمَ الْأَعْظَمَ

Surely Salmān knew the Greatest Name of God (*al-ism al-a’zam*)

And as we said, this name is not a word to be memorized but an exalted spiritual state. Men of gnosis describe it as the state of exemplifying in oneself the beautiful attributes of Almighty 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.

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 than 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 عَيْسَى 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 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 Ahululbayt ('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):

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

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 Tawhīd.

The Holy Qur'ān says:

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

"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 (ﷺ), 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:

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

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 أولاً أن ثبوت التأثير سواء كان مادياً 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 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 يُعِيرُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبَادِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَقُولُ عَبْدِي مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذَا مَرَضْتُ أَنْ تَعُودِنِي يَقُولُ سُبْحَانَكَ سُبْحَانَكَ أَنْتَ رَبُّ الْعِبَادِ لَا تَأَلَمُ وَلَا تَمْرَضُ يَقُولُ مَرَضَ أَخُوكَ الْمُؤْمِنَ فَلَمْ تَعُدَّهُ وَعِزَّتِي وَجَلَالِي لَوْ عُدْتَهُ لَوَجَدْتَنِي عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ لَتَكَفَلْتُ بِحَوَائِجِكَ فَقَضَيْتَهَا 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 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 رَبُّ مَا بَلَغَ مِنْ عِيَادَةِ الْمَرِيضِ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ فَقَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَوْكَلُ بِهِ مَلَكًا 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 مَرِيضًا شَيْعَهُ 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 *Bihār al-Anwār* of Allamah Majlisi.

"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 (ﷺ) 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 *sadaqah* 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 النَّوَابِ لِأَحَبِّ أَنْ لَا يَزَالَ سَقِيمًا حَتَّى يَلْقَى رَبَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

While we were in the presence of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), 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 (ﷺ) is reported to have said:

مَنْ مَرَضَ يَوْمًا وَلَيْلَةً فَلَمْ يَشْكُ إِلَى عَوَادِهِ بَعَثَ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَعَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلِ الرَّحْمَنِ حَتَّى يَجُوزَ الصِّرَاطَ كَالْبَرْقِ اللَّامِعِ

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), the Friend of the All-Merciful, so that he would pass the path like radiant lightning. [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 يُكْتِرُ مِنْ قَوْلِ آه فَقُلْتُ لَهُ يَا أَخِي اذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ وَاسْتَعِثْ بِهِ فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) آه اسْمٌ مِنْ أَسْمَاءِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى فَمَنْ قَالَ آه اسْتَعَاثَ بِاللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

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-Shāfi*) can relieve the ailing patient.

Prophet Ibrāhīm (‘a) says:

وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِي

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-Shāfi*’ (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 أزدَدْتُ يُقِينَا

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:

وَعَيْكَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ فَأَتَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ أَبَا ذَرٍّ قَدْ وَعَيْكَ فَقَالَ (ص) امْضِ بِنَا إِلَيْهِ نَعُودُهُ فَمَضَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعًا فَلَمَّا جَلَسْنَا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) كَيْفَ أَصْبَحْتَ يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ قَالَ أَصْبَحْتُ وَعَيْكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ (ص) أَصْبَحْتَ فِي رَوْضَةٍ مِنْ رِيَاضِ الْجَنَّةِ ...

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 (ﷺ) thereupon said: Surely you have confronted the morning while you are in a garden among the gardens of Paradise...[113]

Here the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) 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 *wahy* (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-Şādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

دَاوُوا مَرْضَاكُمْ بِالصَّدَقَةِ

Treat your sick by giving *sadaqah*[114]

2. He ('a) is also reported to have said:

ذَكَرْنَا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ شِفَاءً مِنَ الْوَعَكِ وَالْأَسْقَامِ وَوَسْوَاسِ الرَّبِّبِ

Remembering us the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) is a cure from illness and diseases as well as the insinuation of doubt.[115]

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 يَدِهِ وَيَأْمُرَ السَّائِلَ أَنْ يَدْعُو 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، وروح وبدن ولاكل منهما منافيات وملائمات، وآلام ولذات، ومهلكات ومنجيات.

ومنافيات البدن وآلامه هي الأمراض الجسمانية. وملائماته هي الصحة والذات الجسمانية. والمتكفل لبيان تفاصيل هذه الأمراض ومعالجاتها هو علم الطب. ومنافيات الروح وآلامه هي رذائل الأخلاق التي تهلكه وتشقيه، وصحته رجوعه إلى فضائلها التي تسعده وتنجيّه وتوصله 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 أبداً، وإن اتصف برذائلها كان في العذاب والشقاوة مخلداً...

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 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 (ﷺ) in the following manner in one of his sermons compiled in the *Nahj al-Balāghah*:

طَيْبٌ دَوَّارٌ يَطْبُهُ قَدْ أَحْكَمَ مَرَاهِمَهُ وَ أَحْمَى مَوَاسِمَهُ يَضَعُ ذَلِكَ حَيْثُ الْحَاجَةُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ قُلُوبِ عُمَمِي وَ آذَانِ صُمَّ وَ
الْأَسِنَّةِ بَكُمْ مُتَّبِعٌ يَدَوَاتِهِ مَوَاضِعَ الْغَفْلَةِ وَ مَوَاطِنَ الْحَيْرَةِ

The Prophet (ﷺ) 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 *ṭabībun dawārun biṭibbih-* A traveling physician. (‘Alī ('a) calls the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) 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-Nabawīyyah* of Ibn Hishām, where the practical import of Imām 'Alī ('a)'s statement is brilliantly reflected. Ibn Hishām quotes Ibn Ishāq to have

said:

فكان رسول الله (ص) يَعرِضُ نَفْسَهُ فِي المَوَاسِمِ، إِذَا كَانَتْ عَلَى قَبَائِلِ العَرَبِ يَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الله، وَيُخِيرُهُمْ أَنَّهُ نَبِيٌّ مَرْسَلٌ، وَيَسْتَلْهُمُ أَنْ يَصَدِّقُوهُ ...

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) 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 Ishāq is reported to have said:

وَحَدَّثَنِي حُسَيْنُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَبِيعَةَ بْنَ عَبَادٍ، يُحَدِّثُهُ أَبِي: قَالَ إِنِّي لَعُلَّامٌ شَابٌّ مَعَ أَبِي بِمَنَى، وَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) يَقِفُ عَلَى مَنَازِلِ القَبَائِلِ مِنَ العَرَبِ، فَيَقُولُ: يَا بَنِي فُلَانٍ، إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ، يَا مَرْكُمُ أَنْ تَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تَشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا، وَأَنْ تَخْلَعُوا مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ هَذِهِ الأَنْدَادِ، وَأَنْ تَأْمِنُوا بِي، وَتَصَدِّقُوا بِي، وَتَمْنَعُونِي حَتَّى أَبِينُ عَنِ اللَّهِ مَا بَعَنِي 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 (ﷺ) 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 (ﷺ) 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 (ﷺ) 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 (ﷺ) said:

الأمر إلى الله يضع حيث يشاء...

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 (ﷺ) and remained adamant to their disbelief.

Our *muballighūn* should emulate this highly important tradition of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) within their own limitations. There is a law, we must understand, which prevails all the verses of this supplication:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا...

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:

وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى

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 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.

Notes:

[63] Some have also translated the word 'marīḍ' as 'disordered' [See *E.W.Lane Arabic-English Lexicon*]

[64] Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāzī'l Qur'ān*, p. 765

[65] Ḥājī Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, v. 12, p. 94

[66] Āmadī, *Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim*, p. 55

[67] Āmadī, *Ghuraru'l Hikam wa Duraru'l Kalim*, p. 55

[68] Imām al-Sajjād ('a), Sup. 15, *al-Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyya*, p.54, [His supplication when Sick or Visited by Distress or an Affliction]

- [69] Sayyid Raḡī al-Dīn bin Ṭawūs, *Falāh al-Sā'il wa Najāh al-Masā'il*, pp. 102-103.
- [70] Holy Qur'ān, 13:11
- [71] 'Abdu'l Karīm Bī Āzār Shīrāzī, *Masā'il-e-Darmānī*, v.2, p. 73.
- [72] Al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, v.16, p.540
- [73] Holy Qur'ān, 2:195
- [74] Ḥājī Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, v. 16, p. 452
- [75] Āmādī, *Ghuraru'l Hikam*, p. 320
- [76] al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, v. 25, p. 229
- [77] Imām al-Riḡā, *Fiqh al-Riḡā*, p. 340
- [78] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḡār al-Anwār*, v. 59, p. 66
- [79] al-Ṭabrasī, *al-Ihtijāj*, v.2, p. 225
- [80] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḡār al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 174
- [81] *Ibid.*, v. 81, p. 176
- [82] *Ibid.*
- [83] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḡār al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 200
- [84] Holy Qur'ān, ch. Al-Mā'idah (5), v. 110
- [85] Āyatullāh Ḥasan Zādeh Āmolī, *Sarḡ al-'Uyūn Fī Sharḡ al-'Uyūn*, p. 730
- [86] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḡār al-Anwār*, v. 49, p. 184
- [87] Holy Qur'an, 27:39
- [88] 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān*, v.55, p.370.
- [89] *Ibid.*, v.7 pp. 354-355
- [90] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḡār al-Anwār*, v.22, p. 349
- [91] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḡār al-Anwār*, v. 22, p. 343
- [92] 'Allāmah al-Tustarī, *Bahj al-Sabāghah Fī Sharḡ Nahj al-Balāghah*, v.3, p. 402
- [93] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḡār al-Anwār*, v.22, p. 347
- [94] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḡār al-Anwār*, v.22, p. 343
- [95] Mawlā Fayḡ al-Kāshānī, *al-Mahajjat al-Bayḡā'*, v.1, p.65
- [96] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḡār al-Anwār*, v.22, p. 243
- [97] *Ibid.*, v.22, p. 243
- [98] Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* (Ibn Sina and Mysticism), tr. by Shams Inati, p.104
- [99] Holy Qur'ān, 2:252
- [100] Mullā Ḥādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḡ al-Asmā'*, p. 363
- [101] Holy Qur'ān, 37:96
- [102] Holy Qur'ān, 2:255
- [103] 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzan Fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān*, v. 10, p.295
- [104] al-Ḥurr al-Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, v. 2, p. 417
- [105] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḡār al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 218

- [106] al-Rayy Shahrī, *Mizān al-Hikmah*, v.4, p. 2888
- [107] ‘Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 208
- [108] *Ibid.*, v. 81, p. 206
- [109] *Ibid.*, v.81, p. 203
- [110] ‘Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 202
- [111] Holy Qur’ān, 26:80
- [112] ‘Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 40, p. 153
- [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
- [116] ‘Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v. 81, p. 209
- [117] Mawlā Muḥammad Narrāqī, *Jāmi’ al-Sa’ādāt*, v.1, p. 5
- [118] Sharīf Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 108
- [119] Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, v.2, pp. 35-36
- [120] Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, v.2, p. 36
- [121] *Ibid.*, v.2, p. 38
- [122] Holy Qur’ān, 2:286
- [123] Holy Qur’ān, 53:39

Section 3

O Allah, fill our poverty with Your Needlessness

اللَّهُمَّ سُدِّ 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:

يَتَأْتِي النَّاسُ أَشْعُرَ الْفَقْرَاءِ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Allāh, and Allāh—He is the All-Sufficient, the All-Laudable. [125]

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۗ وَابْنُ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

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-Husayn(‘a) humbly cries:

إِلٰهِي اَنَا الْفَقِيرُ فِي غِنَايَ فَكَيْفَ لَا اَكُونُ فَقِيرًا فِي فَقْرِي

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:

مَوْلَايَ يَا مَوْلَايَ اَنْتَ الْغَنِيُّ وَاَنَا الْفَقِيرُ وَهَلْ يَرْحَمُ الْفَقِيرَ اِلَّا 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:

... لَا يَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِيهِ نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا وَلَا مَوْتًا وَلَا حَيَاةً وَلَا نُشُورًا...

...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’ (*zuhūr*). 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 اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ

Say, ‘God is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-paramount.’

It should be noted that ‘*Khāliq*’ 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 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:

أَفَعْيَبْنَا بِأَلْحَلِيِّ الْأَوَّلِ بَلْ هُمْ فِي لَبْسٍ مِّنْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ

Were We exhausted by the first creation? Rather they are in doubt about a new creation.[129]

وَنَرَىٰ أَجْبَالَهَا تُجَابِدُ مَا يُوحَىٰ وَأَخْبَلَ أَجْمَلُهَا

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 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 (*lawāzīm*) 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:

الصَّمَدُ الَّذِي لَا 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:

فإنّه لما كان بسيط الحقيقة واجدا للكمالات والخيرات لا يسلب عنه خير، كان كالمصمت الذي لا جوف له - تعالى عن الشبيهة و النظير علواً كبيراً - فهو بخلاف الممكن الذي هو الأجوف الناقص الجائع الفاقد لكل كمال، في مرتبة ذاته بذاته...

Because His reality is Simple[133] and Non-composite [*Basīṭ al-Ḥaqīqa*] and He possesses all the perfections and virtues, and does not lack any goodness (*khayr*), He is like a compact entity (*al-muṣammad*) 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 لَا أَفْتَقِرُ أَطْعَمَنِي فِيمَا أَمَرْتُكَ أَجْعَلُكَ غَنِيًّا لَا تَفْتَقِرُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ أَنَا حَيٌّ لَا أَمُوتُ أَطْعَمَنِي فِيمَا أَمَرْتُكَ أَجْعَلُكَ حَيًّا لَا تَمُوتُ يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ أَنَا أَقُولُ لِلشَّيْءِ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ أَطْعَمَنِي فِيمَا أَمَرْتُكَ أَجْعَلُكَ 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]

In order to attain this fundamental level of proximity (*qurb*), which is the highest point of the first spiritual one must undergo the way-stations of human perfection, which are expounded by (السير الى الله) journey the experts of gnosis in their manuals of direction. The fundamental stages, however, as we discussed earlier, are *yaqzah* and *tawbah*. It should also be understood that for one to maintain himself/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-Bahrānī, in his *Sharḥu Mi'at Kalimah* quoting the mystical scholars says:

السَّفَرُ سَفَرَانِ، سَفَرٌ إِلَى اللَّهِ، وَسَفَرٌ فِي اللَّهِ، وَالْأَوَّلُ إِشَارَةٌ إِلَى إِنْتِقَالَاتِ النَّفْسِ فِي مَرَاتِبِ السُّلُوكِ، وَالثَّانِي إِشَارَةٌ إِلَى إِنْتِقَالِهَا 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]

Journey towards Allāh) which culminates with the state of *tawḥīd* when) *السير إلى الله* *Al-sayr ilā Allāh* .1 .one does not see anything save Allah

Journey in Allāh) which never culminates, for it has no end. When we say) *السير في الله* *Al-sayr fī Allāh* .2 “in God”, one should not conjecture that God is a vessel (*ẓarf*) in which the human being travels. Far is He from any kind of limitation and imperfection whatsoever. *Al-sayr fī 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

أَهْ مِنْ قَلَّةِ الزَّادِ، وَطُولِ الطَّرِيقِ، وَبُعْدِ السَّفَرِ...

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.

Notes:

[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

[127] Shaykh Bahā'ī, *Miftāh al-Falāh*, v.1, p.198

[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-Manzūmah*, volume 4, p. 288.

[129] Holy Qur'ān, 50:15

[130] *Ibid.*, 27:88

[131] al-Hamadānī, *Zubdat al-Haqā'iq*, p.62

[132] 'Allāma Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabṭabā'ī, *Tafsīr al-Mizān*, v.20, p.391

[133] Here 'simplicity' denotes the non-compositeness of God. (Author)

[134] Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-Asmā'*, p.365

[135] Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī, *'Uddat al-Dā'ir*, p.310

[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 Ṣadrū'l Muta'allihīn 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

[138] Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmolī alludes to this point in his lessons on Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. See also *'Buḥuth Fī 'Ilm al-Nafs'* [Transcripts of the notes of Sayyid Kamāl al-Ḥaydarī on the section about the human soul from Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī's philosophical poetry *al-Manzūmah*], page 298.]

[139] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, v.34, p.284

Section 4

O Allah, change our unpleasant state into Your Beautiful State

اللَّهُمَّ غَيِّرْ سُوءَ حَالِنَا بِحُسْنِ حَالِكَ

O Allah, change our unpleasant State into Your Beautiful State

In order to properly understand the above verse, it is imperative to know the meaning of the word "*husn*" in the phrase '*bi husni Hālik*'. According to *Rāghib al-Iṣfahāni*, the word *husn* means:

الحُسْنُ: عِبَارَةٌ عَنْ كُلِّ مَبْهُجٍ مَرْغُوبٍ فِيهِ، وَذَلِكَ ثَلَاثَةٌ أَضْرِبِي: مُسْتَحْسَنٌ مِنْ جِهَةِ الْعَقْلِ، مُسْتَحْسَنٌ مِنْ جِهَةِ الْهَوَى، مُسْتَحْسَنٌ مِنْ جِهَةِ الْحِسِّ وَالْحَسَنَةُ يُعْبَرُ عَنْهَا عَنْ كُلِّ مَا يَسُرُّ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تَنَالُ الْإِنْسَانَ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَبَدَنِهِ وَأَحْوَالِهِ وَالسَّيِّئَةُ تَضَادُّهَا...

'*Husn* is every pleasant and desirable thing. And it is of three kinds:

- Pleasant according to the intellect
- Pleasant according to worldly inclination
- Pleasant according to sense perception

And the word *al-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]

The personal pronoun "*kāf*" here implies that we are after the utter Beauty of Almighty Allāh, بِحُسْنِ حَالِكَ who is the Most Pleasant and Beloved[141]. We can therefore not limit the extensions of *husn* to what *al-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 *Husnu'l Hāl* (the .pleasant state) possessed by Almighty Allāh is beyond intellectual and sensory perception

It should be noted that the main components of *husn* are '*mubhij*' (pleasant, delightful, etc.) and *marghūb fīh* (desirable). This is one key to understanding the various extensions of beautiful entities.

The particle "*bi*" in the phrase '*bi husni Hālik*' here can have two probable meanings:

ilā). Therefore the prayer would read: "O Allāh اِلهِ! It can mean into[142] (the same as the particle (1) 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

...حَوَّلَ حَالِنَا إِلَى أَحْسَنِ الْحَالِ...

...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".

denotes 'a changing state'. Due to his imperfect nature, the human being undergoes *Hāl* حَالٌ a movement of perfection and thus "*hāl*" can be correctly attributed to him/her. But is it correct to employ it for 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 supplication narrated in the prayer manual *Balad al-Amīn*[145], we glorify
:Almighty Allāh saying

يَا مَنْ لَا يَتَغَيَّرُ مِنْ حَالٍ إِلَى حَالٍ

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:

...الَّذِي لَا يَحُولُ وَلَا يَزُولُ وَلَا يَجُوزُ عَلَيْهِ الْأَقُولُ...

One Who neither changes nor ceases to exist, nor is He transitory[146]

In expounding the meaning of "*lā yahūlu*" 'Allāmah Majlisī[147] in his remarks says: *lā yahūlu ay lā yataghayyaru* [*lā yahūlu* means 'He does not change']

Then what does '*bi husni Hālika*' 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 '*hāl*' 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 "*Hāl*" for Almighty Allāh, which of course does not depict "a changing state". He says:

...لَآ يَكُونُ أَنْ يُحَدِّثَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَا يَتَغَيَّرُ عَنْ حَالِهِ، تَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَنْ ذَلِكَ...

... 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 Husni Hālika*" 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'an 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 تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَةَ حَتَّىٰ تُؤْمِنَ ۚ وَلَا مُمِئَةً مُّؤْمِنَةً حَتَّىٰ تُؤْمِنَ ۚ وَلَا مُشْرِكَةً وَلَا أَصْحَابَتَكُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا ۚ وَلَعَنَ الْمُؤْمِنُ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَا أَصْحَابُكُمْ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُوا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ وَيَسِّرُ مَا يَشَاءُ 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 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 Hasan (*al-Ridā*) ('a) is reported to have said:

ثَلَاثَةٌ يَجْلُونَ الْبَصَرَ: النَّظْرُ إِلَى الْخُضْرَةِ، وَالنَّظْرُ إِلَى الْمَاءِ الْجَارِي، وَالنَّظْرُ 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-hasan*).[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-Şādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

قَامَ النَّبِيُّ خَطِيبًا فَقَالَ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي أَكُمُّ وَخَضْرَاءُ الدَّمَنِ فَيَل: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ص) وَمَا خَضْرَاءُ الدَّمَنِ؟ قَالَ: الْمَرْأَةُ الْحَسَنَاءُ فِي مَنَبَتِ السُّوءِ

The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) 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 (ﷺ) said: 'A beautiful woman (*al-hasnā*) 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 brilliance of the heart which is manifest on the face'. Imām al-Şādiq ('a) is reported to have said that the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) said:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) أَفْضَلُ نِسَاءِ أُمَّتِي أَصْبَحُهُنَّ وَجْهًا وَأَقْلَهُنَّ مَهْرًا

The best of the women of my Nation are the most radiant in complexion and seek the least of dowry.[153]

"*ajmalahunna*" is employed in the above tradition and not "*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:

اللَّهُ 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-nizām al-aḥsan* (The most beautiful system). The holy Qur'ān terms the entire creation of Allāh as beautiful. Observe the following verse:

الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ...

One Who Made Beautiful every thing that He Created[154]

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:

سعی کن تا به آب برسی با اینکه از آب بریده نیستی. و چون به آب رسیده‌ای آن وقت است که حسن حال داری و ابتهاج تو به وصف نمی آید. در دعای مأثور آمده است که: (اللَّهُمَّ غَيْرِ سَوْءٍ حَالِنَا بِحُسْنِ حَالِكَ). پس خدای تعالی حسن حال دارد، آری این حسن حال همانست که شیخ در فصل أجل مبتهج بشیء هو الاول بذاته». فافهم آ: اشارات» فرمود آ هجدهم نمط بهجت و سرور

Try to reach the water, although you are not cut off from water. And when you reach the water, you would have *husnu'l hāl*

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 *Husnu'l Hāl*. Yes, this State of Joy (*Husnu'l Hāl*) 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 مُبْتَهَجٍ بِشَيْءٍ هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ بِذَاتِهِ

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 *Ridā* 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:

الْعَارِفُ هَشٌّ بِشَيْءٍ بَسَامٌ، يُبْجَلُ الصَّغِيرَ مِنْ تَوَاضِعِهِ مِثْلَ مَا يُبْجَلُ الْكَبِيرَ، وَبِنَبَسِطٍ مِنَ النَّيِّبِ. وَكَيْفَ لَا يَهْشُّ، وَهُوَ فَرَحَانٌ يَا لِحَقِّ وَ يَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ - فَإِنَّهُ يَرَى فِيهِ الْحَقَّ؟! وَكَيْفَ لَا يُسَوِّي وَالْجَمْعُ عِنْدَهُ سَوَاسِيَّةٌ أَهْلُ الرَّحْمَةِ قَدْ شَعَلُوا يَا لِبَاطِلٍ!؟

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 (ﷺ), and the Holy Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

مَا رَأَيْتُ شَيْئًا إِلَّا وَرَأَيْتُ اللَّهَ 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-Akhhār* reports Imām al-Sajjād ('a) to have said:

لَمَّا اشْتَدَّ الْأَمْرُ بِالْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِمَا الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ نَظَرَ إِلَيْهِ مَنْ كَانَ مَعَهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ بِخِلَافِهِمْ لِأَنَّهُمْ كَلِمًا اشْتَدَّ الْأَمْرُ تَغَيَّرَ أَلْوَانُهُمْ، وَارْتَعَدَتْ فَرَانِصُهُمْ، وَوَجَلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ، وَكَانَ الْحُسَيْنُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَبَعْضُ مَنْ مَعَهُ مِنْ خَوَاصِهِ تَشْرَقُ أَلْوَانُهُمْ، وَتَهْدَأُ جَوَارِحُهُمْ، وَتَسْكُنُ نَفُوسُهُمْ.

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 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:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمَطْمَئِنَّةُ أَزْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ۖ فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي ۖ ﴿١٥٩﴾
 وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي ﴿١٦٠﴾

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 Haddād al-Mūsawī, a great mystic and contemporary of the late 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, is reported to have said. His disciple, the late Ayatullāh Muḥammad Husayn al-Tehrānī in his *Rūh-e-Mujarrad* quotes him as saying:

صحنه عاشوراء عالیترین مناظر عشقبازی است و زیباترین مواطن جمال و جلال الهی و نیکوترین اسماء رحمت و غضب و برای اهل بیت جز عبور از درجات و مراتب و وصول به اعلی ذروة حیات جاویدان و منسلخ شدن از مظاهر و تحقق به اصل ظاهر و فناي مطلق در ذات احدیت چیزی 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[\[160\]](#):

تحقیقا روز شادی و مسرت اهل بیت است زیرا روز کامیابی و ظفر و قبولی ورود در حریم خدا و حرم امن و امان او است. روز عبور از جزئیت و دخول در عالم کلیت است. روز پیروزی و نجات 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 Ṭehrānī 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[\[162\]](#):

اما 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 کثیره مستفیضه ما را امر به عزاداري نموده اند تا بدین وسیله جان خود را پاک کنیم و با آن سروران در طی این سیل هم آهنگ گردیم

But those who are still captives within the realm of multiplicity and have not emerged from the domain of the self, they should definitely engage in lamentation and mourning, in beating their breasts and reciting elegies so that thereby they may traverse the way and reach the high goal...Accordingly in 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-Husayn ('a) and his sincere followers he can reach the *husnu'l hāl* that he/she eagerly asks from Almighty Allah from this noble supplication.

Notes:

[140] Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradātu Alfāzī'l Qur'ān*, p. 235

ilāh'. He reports different origins for the same. ¹ إله In his *Mufradāt* al-Iṣfahānī has extensively discussed about the etymology of the word [141] was changed into the (و) *wilāh*' (passionate love). At the onset it was pronounced as *wilāh*; thereafter the letter *wāw* ' و لا ه One of these, he says, is :and it became *ilāh*. And God was named *wilāh* because every created being has passionate love for Him. *Al-Iṣfahānī* says (|) letter *hamza*

قال بعض الحكماء: "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-Iṣfahānī, Mufradātu Alfāzī'l Qur'ān*, p. 83]

[142] Dr. Rāmīl Badī' Ya'qūb, *Mawsū 'at al-Nahw wa al-Ṣarf wa al-I'rāb*, p. 186

[143] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān*, v.1, p. 299

[144] *Ibid.*

[145] Kaf'amī, *Balad al-Amīn*, v.1, p.60

[146] 'Allāma Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, v. 4, p. 254

[147] *Ibid.*, v.4, p. 257

[148] *Ibid.*, v.10, p. 334

[149] Holy Qur'ān, 56:22

[150] *Ibid.*, 56:17

[151] Holy Qur'ān, 2:221

[152] al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, v.5, p. 340

[153] al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, v.5, p.324

[154] Holy Qur'ān, 32:7

[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 Inatī, p.78 – Translation]

[157] Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, p.364 [trans. By Shams Inatī, p.89 – Translation]

[158] Shaykh Ṣadūq, *Ma'āni al-Akhhbār*, p.288

[159] Holy Qur'ān, 89: 27-30

[160] Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭehrānī, *Rūḥ-e-Mujarrad*, p.84

[161] Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭehrānī, *Spirit Immaterial*, translated by Sayyid 'Alī Qūlī Qarā'ī, *Al-Tawḥīd Quarterly Journal*, v.12, no.3, pp. 42-43

[162] Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭehrānī, *Rūḥ-e-Mujarrad*, p.91

[163] Āyatullāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭehrānī, *Spirit Immaterial*, translated by Sayyid 'Alī Qūlī Qarā'ī, *Al-Tawḥīd Quarterly Journal*, v.12, no.3, pp. 52

Section 5

O Allah, Facilitate the Payment of Our Debt

اللَّهُمَّ 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 aqdi 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 (ﷺ) is narrated to have taught his beloved daughter Fāṭimah (‘a) for sustenance, we find the following:

اللَّهُ رَبَّنَا وَرَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ، مُنْزِلُ التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالزَّبُورِ وَالْفُرْقَانِ... اقْضِ عَنِّي الدَّيْنَ وَأَعِينِي مِنَ الْغَرِّ...

Allāh is our Lord and the Lord of all things; He is the Revealer of Torah, Injil, Zabūr and Furqān...*facilitate the payment of my debt and make me needless...*[\[164\]](#)

2. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said to his noble companion Salmān:

يَا سَلْمَانَ أَكْثَرُ أَنْ تَقُولَ رَبِّي اقْضِ عَنِّي الدَّيْنَ وَأَعِينِي مِنَ الْغَرِّ

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:

... وَتَقْضِي عَنِّي دَيْنِي وَتُجِيرَنِي مِنَ الْغَرِّ 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 Ramadān we say:

أَنْتَ الْأَوَّلُ فَلَيْسَ قَبْلَكَ شَيْءٌ، وَأَنْتَ الْآخِرُ فَلَيْسَ بَعْدَكَ شَيْءٌ، وَأَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ فَلَيْسَ دُونَكَ شَيْءٌ فَصَلِّ عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَأَقْضِ عَنِّي الدَّيْنَ وَأَعِينِي مِنَ الْغَرِّ

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. 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

اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ غَرِيمٌ لَا 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:

...وَلَا يُؤَدِّي حَقَّهُ الْمُجْتَهِدُونَ....

...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 Ḥabībullah al-Khuṭī expounds the above statement of Imām ‘Alī (‘a) as follows:

وَالْمُرَادُ بِالْحَقِّ اللَّازِمُ هُوَ الْغِيَامُ عَلَى شُكْرِ النِّعْمَاءِ، وَحَمْدِ الْآلَاءِ، فَأَشَارَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ إِلَى أَنَّهُ لَا يُمَكِّنُ الْغِيَامَ بَوَاطِيفِ حَمْدِهِ، لِأَنَّ الْحَمْدَ مِنْ جُمْلَةِ نِعَمِهِ، فَيَسْتَجِيقُ عَلَيْهِ حَمْدًا وَشُكْرًا، فَلَا يَنْقُضِي مَا يَسْتَحِقُّهُ مِنَ الْمَحَامِدِ، لِعَدَمِ تَنَاهِي نِعَمِهِ، قَالِ الْأُولَى حِينَئِذٍ الْإِعْتِرَافُ بِالْعَجْزِ وَالْقُصُورِ.

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:

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا

...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:

(1) اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ أَحَدًا لَا يَبْلُغُ مِنْ شُكْرِكَ غَايَةَ إِلَّا حَصَلَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ إِحْسَانِكَ مَا يُلْزِمُهُ شُكْرًا (2) وَلَا يَبْلُغُ مَبْلَغًا مِنْ طَاعَتِكَ وَإِنْ اجْتَهَدَ إِلَّا كَانَ مُقْصِرًا دُونَ اسْتِحْقَاقِكَ يَفْضُلِكَ (3) فَأَشْكُرُ عِبَادِكَ عَاجِزٌ عَنْ شُكْرِكَ، وَاعْبُدُهُمْ مُقْصِرٌ 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:

وَاللَّهِ لَوْ أَنْمَأْتِ قُلُوبُكُمْ أَنْمِيَانًا-وَسَأَلْتُمْ عِيُونُكُمْ مِنْ رَغْبَةٍ إِلَيْهِ أَوْ رَهْبَةٍ مِنْهُ دَمًا-ثُمَّ عُمِّرْتُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا-مَا الدُّنْيَا بِأَفِيَّةٍ مَا جَزَتْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَلَوْ لَمْ تُبْقُوا شَيْئًا مِنْ جُهْدِكُمْ-أَنْعَمَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ الْعِظَامَ-وَهَدَاهُ إِيَّاكُمْ إِلَى الْإِيمَانِ

By Allāh, if your hearts melt down thoroughly and your eyes shed tears of blood either in hope for Him or for fear from Him and you are also allowed to live in this world 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 اللَّهُ تَعَالَى إِلَى مُوسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَا مُوسَى اشْكُرْنِي حَقَّ شُكْرِي فَقَالَ يَا رَبِّ كَيْفَ أَشْكُرُكَ حَقَّ شُكْرِكَ وَلَيْسَ مِنْ شُكْرٍ أَشْكُرُكَ بِهِ إِلَّا 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:

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

And Allāh has Created you and whatever you do [176]

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-Şādiq (‘a) is reported to have said:

مِنْ حَقِّ الشُّكْرِ لِلَّهِ 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 اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

Whosoever does not thank the giver of the blessing from among the creatures, would not thank Allāh, the Invincible and Majestic. [178]

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 Hāmidin wa Maḥmūd...’ says:

(يَا خَيْرَ ذَاكِرٍ وَمَذْكُورٍ، يَا خَيْرَ شَاكِرٍ وَمَشْكُورٍ، يَا خَيْرَ حَامِدٍ وَمَحْمُودٍ): قَدْ ذَكَّرْنَا سَابِقًا أَنَّهُ إِذَا قِيلَ: (لَهُ الْحَمْدُ) لَا يُقْصَدُ أَنَّ الْمَحْمُودِيَّةَ فَقَطْ أَيْتَمًا وَقَعَتْ طَرًّا وَكَلًّا لَهُ تَعَالَى، بَلْ الْمَقْصُودُ أَنَّ الْحَامِدِيَّةَ أَيْضًا لَهُ وَبِهِ تَعَالَى، فَالذَّاكِرِيَّةُ وَالشَّاكِرِيَّةُ وَالْحَامِدِيَّةُ وَنظَائِرُهَا لَهُ وَبِهِ تَعَالَى. وَالْعِبَارَةُ الْأُولَى 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 (*shākirīyyah*), remembrance (*dhākirīyyah*), praise (*hāmidīyyah*) 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 subtly that even before we try to remember Him, He remembers us. He attracts us; He pulls us; He encourages us to thank and praise and remember Him. If we were to free ourselves from the spatial limitations, we can understand a subtler meaning to such precedence: Not only does He Remember us before we remember Him, but Causally it is essential for Him to Remember us so that we Remember Him. Rather, our remembrance is entirely by Him. Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a) says:

...أَنْتَ الذَّاكِرُ قَبْلَ الذَّاكِرِينَ...

...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:

...قَالَوْكَ جَمَّةٌ ضَعْفَ لِسَانِي عَنْ إِحْصَائِهَا وَتَعْمَاؤُكَ كَثِيرَةٌ قَصَرَ فَهْمِي عَنْ إِدْرَاكِهَا فَضَلَا عَنْ 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. 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-hudūrī*).

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:

يَسْمُ اللّٰهُ الرَّحْمٰنَ الرَّحِيْمَ اِلٰهِيْ لَوْ لَا الْوٰجِبُ مِنْ قَبُوْلِ اَمْرِكَ لَنَزَهْتُمْ مِنْ قِنِّ [ذِكْرِيْ اِيَّاكَ عَلٰى اَنْ ذِكْرِيْ لَكَ
يَقْدَرِيْ لَا يَقْدَرُكَ ...

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:

اِنَّ قَوْمًا عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ رَغْبَةً فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ التُّجَّارِ، وَاِنَّ قَوْمًا عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ رَهْبَةً فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْعَبِيْدِ وَاِنَّ قَوْمًا عَبَدُوا اللّٰهَ
شُكْرًا فَتِلْكَ عِبَادَةُ الْاَحْرَارِ

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 (*ahrār*).[\[183\]](#)

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 بِكُمْ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ

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 ‘openhandedness (*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 ذَرٍّ إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَلَائِكَةً قِيَامًا مِنْ خِيفَةِ اللَّهِ مَا رَفَعُوا رُءُوسَهُمْ حَتَّى يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ النَّفْخَةُ الْآخِرَةَ فَيَقُولُونَ جَمِيعًا سُبْحَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَبِحَمْدِكَ مَا عَبَدْنَاكَ كَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَكَ أَنْ تُعْبَدَ

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:

سُبْحَانَكَ مَا عَبَدْنَاكَ حَقَّ عِبَادَتِكَ

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...

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 Hadrat 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]

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 whispermings (*Munājāt al-Sha'abāniyyah*):

إِنْ أَدْخَلْتَنِي النَّارَ أَعْلَمْتُ أَهْلَهَا أَنِّي أَحِبُّكَ

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 عَفْوِكَ فَيَعِزَّتِكَ يَا سَيِّدِي وَمَوْلَايَ أَقْسِمُ صَادِقًا لَئِنْ تَرَكَتَنِي نَاطِقًا لِأَضْحَنَ إِلَيْكَ
بَيْنَ أَهْلِهَا ضَحِيحَ الْأَمَلِينَ.. وَوَلَابِكِينَ 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]

Notes:

[164] 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, v.29, p. 297

[165] al-Ṭabṛānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, p. 233

[166] Shaykh 'Abbās al-Qummī, *Maḥāṭib al-Jinān*, v.1, p. 459

[167] This supplication reveals the Pre-eternity & Necessity of the Non-Composite Creator.

[168] Sayyid Raḍī al-Dīn 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-Mizān* [See *Tafsīr al-Mizān*, v.1, p. 27]. In his anthology of questions (*Dar Maḥḍare Ustād*) that he had asked the grand 'Allāmah during his life time, Hujjat al-Islām Rukhshād quotes this dictum as a ḥadīth and attributes 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 Ḥabībullah al-Khū'ī, *Minhāj al-Barā'ah fi Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, v.1, p. 247

[172] Holy Qur'ān, 14:34

[173] *al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyyah* (The Psalms of Islām, English Translation by William Chittick), Supplication no. 37, pp. 123-124

[174] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 52, p. 72

- [175] ‘Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.13, p.351
- [176] Holy Qur’ān, 37:96
- [177] al-‘Āmilī, *Wasā’il al-Shī’ah*, v. 16, p. 311
- [178] *Ibid.*, v. 16, p. 313
- [179] Mullā Ḥādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-Asmā’*, pp. 759-760
- [180] Shaykh ‘Abbās Qummī, *Du ‘ā’ al-‘Arafah, Maḥāṭih 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.
- [182] *Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyyah*, p. 255
- [183] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, wisdom no. 237
- [184] Holy Qur’ān, 16:53
- [185] ‘Allāmah Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, v.16, p.264
- [186] al-Ṭabrisī, *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, v.1, p.464
- [187] *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, sup. no.3
- [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 amplexness 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, *Maḥāṭih 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, *Mizān 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.
- [193] Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummī, *Maḥāṭih al-Jinān*, v.1, p. 158
- [194] *Ibid.*,v.1, p.65

Section 6

And make us Needless

وَأَعِينَا 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 (ﷺ) 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.

al" that accompanies *al-faqr*, the word *al-faqr* can have different meanings. One" ُ َ Considering the article .(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. 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 (*mufīd*) and the object of grace (*mufād* 'alayh) and the grace itself (*fayd*). 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 (*fayd*) itself[196].

Imām Khumaynī in his *Chehel Ḥadīth* (40 Traditions), alluding to the reality that the dependent existents are sheer poverty, says:

و هیچ موجودی را از خود استقلال نیست و صرف تعلق و ربط و عین فقر و تدلی به ذات...
...مقدس حقّ علی الاطلاق است

...No being has any independence of its own and everything is sheer dependence, relation, **poverty**, and attachment to the sacred being of the Absolute Real...[197]

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 الْحَقِيقِيُّ مَنْ لَا يَمْلِكُ فِعْلًا وَلَا صِفَةً وَلَا وُجُودًا **وَيَشْهَدُ أَنَّ الْمُلْكَ لِلَّهِ 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:

الْفَقْرُ 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 الْأَغْنِيَاءِ هَا نَحْنُ عِبَادُكَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْكَ وَإِنَّا أَفْقَرُ الْفُقَرَاءِ 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’.

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 (ﷺ) is also reported to have prayed:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْنِنِي بِالْإِفْتِقَارِ إِلَيْكَ، وَلَا تُفَقِّرْنِي بِالِاسْتِغْنَاءِ 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 (ﷺ) is reported to have said to Imām ‘Alī (‘a):

يَا عَلِيُّ لَا فَقْرَ أَشَدَّ مِنَ الْجَهْلِ

...O ‘Alī, there is no poverty more severe than ignorance...[203]

2. Şafwān bin Mihrān al-Jammāl is reported to have narrated from Imām al-Şādiq (‘a) that he said:

...لَا فَقْرَ أَحَطُّ مِنَ الْحُمُقِ...

...There is no poverty more degenerate than silliness (*humq*)...[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 (ﷺ) is reported to have said:

أَفْقَرُ النَّاسِ الطَّمَاعُ

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 *zuhr* prayers when we say:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ نَفْسٍ لَا 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 (ﷺ) is reported to have said:

الْفَقْرُ فَقْرُ الْقَلْبِ

Poverty is the poverty of the heart

The Holy Qur’ān also alludes to this reality when it describes the Judgment Day as:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ﴿١٠٥﴾

...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-Kāzīm (‘a) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَقُولُ إِنِّي لَمْ أُغْنِ الْعَنِيَّ لِكِرَامَةِ يَهْ عَلَيَّ وَلَمْ أُفْقِرِ الْفَقِيرَ لِهَوَانِ يَهْ عَلَيَّ وَهُوَ مِمَّا ابْتَلَيْتُ يَهْ الْأَغْنِيَاءَ بِالْفُقَرَاءِ وَكَوَلَا الْفُقَرَاءَ 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]

2. In his noble ascent to the heavens (*al-mi'raj*), it is reported that Almighty Allāh addressing the Prophet (ﷺ) at one point said:

...وَأَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لَا يُصْلِحُهُ إِلَّا الْغِنَى وَلَوْ صَرَفْتُهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ ذَلِكَ لَهَلَكَ وَأَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لَا يُصْلِحُهُ إِلَّا 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:

لِلَّهِ تَعَالَى فِي خَلْقِهِ مَثُوبَاتٌ فَقْرٌ وَعُقُوبَاتٌ فَقْرٌ، فَمِنْ عَلَامَةِ الْفَقْرِ إِذَا كَانَ مَثُوبَةً أَنْ يَحْسُنَ عَلَيْهِ خُلُقُهُ، وَيُطِيعَ رَبَّهُ، وَلَا يَشْكُو حَالَهُ، وَيَشْكُرُ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى عَلَى فَقْرِهِ. وَمِنْ عَلَامَةِ الْفَقْرِ إِذَا كَانَ عِقُوبَةً أَنْ يَسُوءَ عَلَيْهِ خُلُقُهُ، وَيَعْصِي فِيهِ رَبَّهُ، وَيَكْثُرُ الشُّكَايَةُ، وَيَتَسَخَّطُ الْقَضَاءَ، وَهَذَا النَّوعُ مِنَ الْفَقْرِ هُوَ الَّذِي اسْتَعَاذَ مِنْهُ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ

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 (ﷺ) sought refuge from.[210]

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 إليّ من الصحة، والموت أحب إليّ من الحياة. فقال الامام(ع): (أما نحن أهل البيت، فما يرد علينا من

اللّٰه من الفقر والغنى والمرض والصحة والموت والحياة، فهو أحب إلينا). فقام جابر، وقبل بين عينيه، وقال: صدق رسول اللّٰه (ص) حيث قال لي: (يا جابر ستدرك واحدا من أولادي اسمه اسمي، يقرر 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 (ﷺ) and his infallible household. Due to the limited scope of this work, all this cannot be analyzed here. However, 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:

وَعَنْ أَبِي إِسْمَاعِيلَ قَالَ قُلْتُ لِأَبِي جَعْفَرٍ (ع) جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ إِنَّ الشَّيْعَةَ عِنْدَنَا كَثِيرٌ فَقَالَ فَهَلْ بَعْطِفُ الْغَنِيِّ عَلَى الْفَقِيرِ وَهَلْ يَتَجَاوَزُ الْمُحْسِنُ عَنِ الْمُسِيءِ وَيَتَوَاسَوْنَ فَقُلْتُ لَا فَقَالَ لَيْسَ هَؤُلَاءِ شَيْعَةَ الشَّيْعَةِ 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.

Notes:

[195] Abū Muḥammad Zaynu'l 'Ābidīn, *Manifestations of the All-Merciful*, v.1, pp. 16-26

[196] 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

[198] Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ Du'ā' al-Ṣabāḥ*, p. 137

[199] Ibn Fahd al-Ḥillī, *'Uddat al-Dā'ir wa Najāḥ al-Sā'ir*, v.1, p.123

[200] *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyyah*, Sup. 10, p. 41

[201] Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, *Mafāṭīḥ 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

[204] *Ibid.*, v.1, p. 29

[205] al-Nūrī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, v.12, p.68

[206] Shaykh 'Abbās al-Qummī, *Mafāṭīḥ al-Jinān*, v.1, p.17

[207] al-Āmadī, *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, p.370

[208] Holy Qur'ān, 26: 88-89

[209] al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, v.2, p.265

[210] Sayyid 'Alī Khān al-Ḥusaynī, *Riyād al-Sālikīn*, v.2, p.390

[211] al-Narāqī, *Jāmi' al-Sa'ādāt*, v.2, p. 21

[212] al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, v.2, p.173

Section 7

Surely you Are All-Powerful over every thing

إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Surely you are All-Powerful over every thing

"Al-Qadīr" is one of the most beautiful names (*al-Asmā' al-Husnā*) of Almighty Allāh. Theologians (*mutakallimūn*) define it as:

...هُوَ الْفَاعِلُ لِمَا يَشَاءُ عَلَىٰ قَدْرٍ مَا تَقْتَضِي الْحِكْمَةُ لَا زَائِدًا عَلَيْهِ وَلَا نَاقِصًا عَنْهُ...

...One who does whatever He wants according to Wisdom, nothing more or less than that...[213]

denotes permanence. Therefore He is *فَاعِلٌ* And the form (*wazn*) of the word "Qadīr" which is *fa'īl* .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:

لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

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 الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرُونَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ

...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 Qadīr*' 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

أَحْمَدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أجنِحَةٍ مثنى وثلاث ورباع
 يَرِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢١٦﴾

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 Ṭabātabā’ī says:

وَقَوْلُهُ (إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ) تَعْلِيلٌ لِجَمِيعِ مَا تَقَدَّمَهُ أَوْ الْجُمْلَةَ الْأَخِيرَةَ وَالْأَوَّلُ أَظْهَرُ

The clause ‘*Indeed God has power over all things*’ of the verse is a reason for all the aforementioned [i.e. originating the Heavens and the earth, making the angels...etc.] or a reason for the last clause [i.e. He adds to the creation whatever He wishes]. But the former is more apparent [i.e. it is a reason for all the aforementioned][217].

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-Hillī in his well-known prayer manual ‘*Uddat al-Dā’ī*’ narrates the following tradition:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) فِي قَوْلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى: (وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ) قَالَ هُوَ قَوْلُ الرَّجُلِ: لَوْلَا فَلَانٌ لَهْلَكْتُ وَلَوْلَا فَلَانٌ لَمَا أَصَبْتُ كَذَا وَكَذَا وَلَوْلَا فَلَانٌ لَضَاعَ عِيَالِي أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّهُ قَدْ جَعَلَ لِلَّهِ شَرِيكًا فِي

مَلِكِهِ يَرْزُقُهُ وَيَدْفَعُ عَنْهُ؟ قُلْتُ: فَيَقُولُ لَوْلَا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَنَّ عَلَيَّ بِغُلَانٍ لَهَلَكْتُ؟ قَالَ نَعَمْ لَا 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 (*tawfiq*) 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 *Ṣūrat al-Ra'd*:

أَنْزَلَ مِنْ سِيبِ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا ...

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:

الْمَيِّتَ لِيَفْرَحَ بِالرَّحْمِ عَلَيْهِ وَالْإِسْتِغْفَارَ...

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 قُلُوبَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً

Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness...[222]

And in verses 6-7 of chapter al-Baqarah Almighty Allāh informs us about the disbelievers that:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أُنذِرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾ حَتَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ
وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشْوَةً 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 sealed their hearts and they had no volition to select a better path. However eagerly were we to aspire for the salvation of such people, there is no room for change, because the receptacle is deficient.

Perhaps the following verse draws our attention to the same situation:

أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ
كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿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 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.

Notes:

[213] This should not be mistaken to mean that He is unable to do what is not according to His Wisdom. Rather whatever He does is always wise.

[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 hawlā 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-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, v.2, p. 543].

[215] Holy Qur'ān, 2:165

[216] *Ibid.*, 35:1

[217] 'Allāmah al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān*, v.17, p.7

[218] Refer to the supplications of *Sahīfat 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.)

[219] Ibn Fahd al-Hillī, ‘*Uddat al-Dā’ir*, p.99

[220] Holy Qur’ān, 13:17

[221] Mawlā Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al-Mahajjat al-Bayḍā’*, v.8. p.292

[222] Holy Qur’ān, 2:74

[223] Holy Qur’ān, 9:80

Section 8

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Section 9
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