

Salat (Prayer): The Mode of Divine Proximity and Recognition

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This text highlights the esoteric reality and importance of the daily prayers.

Category:

Salaat (Ritual Prayer) [4]

Preface

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ يَا وَلِيَّ الْعَصْرِ (عج) أَدْرِكُنَا

Amir al Mu'minin Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a) says,

لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْمُصَلِّي مَا يَغْشَاهُ مِنْ جَلَالِ اللَّهِ، مَا سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَرْفَعَ رَأْسَهُ مِنْ سُجُودِهِ.

“Had the one who prays known how the majesty of Allah encompasses him, he would never have liked to raise his head from prostration.”¹

Respected readers, this booklet in your hands, highlights the reality and importance of *Salat*, which is based on the booklet of “*Ghayat ul Muna wa Mi’raj ul Qurb wal liqa*”, (غاية المُنى و معراج القرب واللقاء) compiled by the great scholar and jurist, Ayatullah al-Uzma Mirza Mahdi Isfahani (d. 1365 A.H.) (Allah’s mercy be on him).

Among the main pillars of the Mashshad Religious School (*Hawz-e-Ilmiyyah*) at Mashshad Muqaddas, Ayatullah Isfahani (Allah’s mercy be on him) did a great service to the Islamic society by striving hard to enliven the knowledge and sciences of the Holy Qur’an and Ahlul Bayt (‘a) and training highly pious and knowledgeable students. May Allah raise him along with his Prophets (peace be upon them) and the infallible Imams (‘a).

It is worth mentioning that the original Arabic text of this booklet was printed along with some other articles, without any editing and proof reading. Recently, our knowledgeable friend, Mr. Afzal Qahermani Miyanji, took the trouble of editing and proof reading the original.

We hope that this humble offering is well received by our readers, and is worthy of acceptance in the service of our beloved master, Imam of the Time (May Allah hasten his re-appearance).

1. Khisal, vol. 2, p. 632.

The Importance of Salat and Meeting Allah

The highest aim and goal of the divine scholars and those who tread the path of worship is the meeting with Allah and vision of the divine, a meeting which can neither be expressed in words nor penned on paper. For, a vision of the divine is the work of Allah Himself. And the work of Allah, like His Being, does not have any method (*kaifiyyah*) like other mortals, and therefore it cannot be expressed.

He introduced Himself to His servants and manifested His Own Self on their hearts. By setting aside the veils of negligence and forgetfulness, ignorance, disobedience, immorality, evil ethics, etc. a person prepares his heart to receive this divine manifestation.

Purity of heart and sincerity in intention illuminates the divine light further and becomes the cause for the servant to achieve great heights in the field of divine recognition and reach his ultimate goal i.e. meeting with Allah.

Imam Zainul Abidin (‘a) invokes,

إِلَهِي، فَاسْأَلُكَ بِنَا سُبُلِ الْوُصُولِ إِلَيْكَ. وَسَيِّرْنَا فِي أَقْرَبِ الطَّرِيقِ لِلْوُقُودِ إِلَيْكَ ...
وَأَلْحَقْنَا بِالْعِبَادِ الَّذِينَ هُمْ بِالْبِدَارِ إِلَيْكَ يُسَارِعُونَ، وَيَابِكَ عَلَى الدَّوَامِ يَطْرُقُونَ،
وَإِيَّاكَ فِي اللَّيْلِ يَعْبُدُونَ... وَقَضَيْتَ لَهُمْ مِنْ وَصْلِكَ الْمَارِبَ، وَمَلَأْتَ لَهُمْ
ضَمَائِرَهُمْ مِنْ حُبِّكَ، وَرَوَيْتَهُمْ مِنْ صَافِي شَرِبِكَ، فَبِكَ إِلَيَّ لَدَيْدُ مُنَاجَاتِكَ وَصَلُّوْا،
وَمِنْكَ أَقْصَى مَقَاصِدِهِمْ حَصَلُوا... فَأَنْتَ لَا غَيْرُكَ مُرَادِي. وَلَكَ لَا لِسِوَاكَ سَهْرِي
وَسُهَادِي، وَلِقَاؤُكَ قُرَّةُ عَيْنِي. وَوَصْلُكَ مِنِّي نَفْسِي ... وَرُؤْيُكَ حَاجَتِي.

“O Allah! Make us tread the path that leads to Your meeting, and make us travel on the road that is nearest to You... attach us with those servants of Yours who are in haste to reach You. Those who incessantly knock on Your door, and worship only You in the night..You have fulfilled their desire by allowing them Your meeting, and You have filled their hearts with Your love, and have quenched their thirst with Your pure drink.

Thus, because of You, they enjoyed the taste of Your supplications (munajat) and have achieved their farthest aims (i.e. Allah)... Then only You, O Allah, are my aim. And my being awake and up in the nights is only because of You and not for anybody else. Your meeting is my love and Your sight, my desire. Your vision is my only need.”¹

In another supplication, the same Imam (‘a) pleads,

وَعُلَّتِي لَا يُبْرِدُهَا إِلَّا وَصْلُكَ. وَلَوْ عَنِي لَا يُطْفِئُهَا إِلَّا لِقَاؤُكَ. وَ شَوْقِي إِلَيْكَ لَا يَبْلُغُهُ إِلَّا
النَّظْرُ إِلَى وَجْهِكَ. وَقَرَارِي لَا يَقْرُدُّونَ دُنُوِي مِنْكَ ... وَغَمِّي لَا يَزِيلُهُ إِلَّا قُرْبُكَ.

Nothing can quench my thirst but Your attachment, and nothing can extinguish my burning desire but Your meeting. And nothing can extinguish my craving for you except seeing Your face (*wajh*), and my restlessness cannot be done away with but by gaining proximity to You...and My sorrow cannot be dispelled except by being near to You.”²

Imam Al-Baqir (‘a) declares,

فَإِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ - بَابُ اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا يُؤْتَى إِلَّا مِنْهُ، سَبِيلُهُ
الَّذِي مَنْ سَلَكَهُ وَصَلَ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ. وَكَذَلِكَ كَانَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ - عَلَيْهِ
السَّلَامُ - مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَ جَرَى لِلْأَيْمَةِ - عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ - وَاحِدًا بَعْدَ وَاحِدٍ...

“Then surely the Messenger of Allah (‘s) is the gate of Allah, without whom He cannot be approached. He (‘s) is the path, if somebody walks on it, will lead to Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He). After him, the same applied for Amir al Mu’minin (‘a) and the Imams (‘a) following him, one after the other...”³

In a Hadith *al Qudsi*, Allah the Almighty declares,

يَا أَحْمَدُ، الْوَرَعُ يُفْتَحُ عَلَى الْعَبْدِ أَبْوَابَ الْعِبَادَةِ فَيُكْرَمُ بِهِ عِنْدَ الْخَلْقِ، وَيَصِلُ بِهِ
إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ.

“O Ahmad! Piety (wara’) opens the doors of worship for a worshipper. Then through it, he is honored in the eyes of the people and gains attachment with Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He).”⁴

The aforementioned traditions have discussed about meeting, uniting and vision of Allah that leads to the contentment and softening of the heart. According to Imam Al-Baqir (‘a), treading the path of the Holy Prophet (‘s) and his Ahlul Bayt (‘a) is the cause of this meeting, uniting and vision.

Therefore, this status cannot be achieved but by following the course charted out by the Messenger of Allah (‘s) and through the mastership of his infallible progeny (‘a). Hence, whoever intends to undertake the journey of the levels and stages of recognition and to reach to its highest grade i.e. meeting and seeing the Truth and finding His Lord, he must fasten on to the Holy Prophet (‘s) and his Ahlul Bayt (‘a).

He should see to it that his deed conform to the divine commands {which are the medium for following the Holy Prophet (‘s) and Ahlul Bayt (‘a)} and should not take a single step without their permission. If he fails to do so, he will never be able to reach to his destination. And if he is steadfast in this path, Allah the Almighty will fulfil His promise and grant him his desire.

Evidently, as the manifestation and recognition of Allah increases, humility, modesty, obedience, gratitude, remembrance, attention, glorification, praising, etc. in the service of his Lord and God also increases. His compliance and submission to the divine laws increases and he performs all his actions sincerely and purely in Allah’s way and none else. Obviously, any act that bears the color of Allah and is performed only for Him, will never be ruined. Allah the Almighty declares,

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ

“Everything will be destroyed save His face.” (Qur’an, 28: 88)

Imam Al-Baqir (‘a) explains this verse thus,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أَنْ يُوصَفَ بِالْوَجْهِ؛ وَلَكِنْ مَعْنَاهُ: كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا دِينَهُ وَ
الْوَجْهَ الَّذِي يُؤْتَى مِنْهُ.

“Allah is greater than to be described with a face. But it (the word ‘face’) means, ‘Everything will be destroyed except His religion and face is by which a thing is approached.’”⁵

In the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (‘a), meeting with Allah has also been implied for death. Allama Majlisi (may Allah be satisfied with him) in his magnum opus, “*Bihar ul Anwar*”, volume 6, page 124, has brought traditions explaining the above concept under the chapter, “The Love of Meeting Allah and In Condemnation of Fleeing from Death”.

In some traditions, ‘meeting with Allah’ has also been interpreted as resurrection and being brought out from the graves on the day of judgement for questioning and examination of one’s deeds in this world.

فَأَمَّا قَوْلُهُ: “بَلْ هُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ كَافِرُونَ” يَعْنِي الْبَعْثَ. فَسَمَّاهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِقَاءَهُ.
وَ ذَكَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ “الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ”. يَعْنِي: يُوقِنُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يَبْعَثُونَ وَ
يُحْشَرُونَ وَ يُجْزَوْنَ بِالثَّوَابِ وَ الْعِقَابِ فَالْلِقَاءُ هَاهُنَا لَيْسَ بِالرُّؤْيَةِ. وَاللِّقَاءُ هُوَ
الْبَعْثُ. فَافْهَمْ جَمِيعَ مَا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مِنْ لِقَائِهِ. فَإِنَّهُ يَعْنِي بِذَلِكَ الْبَعْثَ.

Amir al Mu’minin Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a) explains,

“And His word, ‘Nay! They are unbelievers in the meeting of their Lord’ (Qur’an, 32: 10) implies ‘raising’ (بَعَثَ). Then Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He) has named it as His meeting. And He has remembered the believers “those who expect to meet their Lord,” (Qur’an, 2:46) means ‘they are sure that they will be raised, brought together and rewarded and punished accordingly. Thus, meeting does not suggest physical vision. Meeting indicates raising. And whenever the word ‘meeting (with the Lord)’ has come in the Book of Allah, interpret it as ‘raising’.”⁶

Hence, from the above, we can draw the following conclusion:

The meeting with the Lord can be achieved both in this world as well as the hereafter. The only difference is that as in the hereafter, all the veils will be set aside, people will rise from the sleep of negligence and there won’t remain any room for disbelief and hypocrisy. But as this world is the abode of examination and test, veils and negligence act as a barrier in this meeting with Allah. And in order to achieve this unison, as mentioned earlier, man has to bear tremendous pains and act with utmost steadfastness so that he may succeed in setting aside these coverings. Summing it up, Amir al Mu’minin (‘a) says,

لَوْ كُشِفَ الْغَطَاءُ مَا أَزْدَدْتُ يَقِينًا.

“Even if the curtain is raised, my certainty will not increase.”⁷

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1. Bihar ul Anwar, vol. 94, p. 148.
 2. Bihar ul Anwar, vol. 94, p. 150
 3. Usul al Kafi, vol. 1, p. 198
 4. Bihar ul Anwar, vol. 77, p. 27
 5. Tauhid, p. 149
 6. Tauhid, p. 267
 7. Bihar ul Anwar, vol. 46, p. 134

Meeting Allah in Human Mysticism

In the school of sufism and human mysticism, to reach Allah and meet Him is the last and final of the stages that a mystic treads towards the arch of ascension. According to them, at this stage, the wanderer reaches to the level of self-annihilation, joins with the Absolute existence, i.e. the existence of the Truth and loses his own existence. Now, for him, nothing remains except the existence of the Almighty. It is at this level that claims like ‘I am the Truth’ (*An al-Haqq*), ‘There is none in my robe except Allah’ (*laisa fi jubbatī siwallah*), etc. are achieved.

Abdur Razzaq al Kashani says:

“Unification (*wasl*) implies returning after going away and ascending after descent. For each one amongst us has descended from the highest of stages and that is the position of *ahadiyyah* and unification with the Eternal since eternity to the lowest of positions and that is the world of elements and matter.

Then, some of us have fallen to the lowest level and remain in the pits. While others, by treading towards Allah, and in Allah, by attachment to His attributes, and through annihilation in His Being, have returned to the state of unification. Thereby, through this real unison, as it was in eternity, we shall continue to remain so in perpetuity.”¹

Explaining the term ‘*sawad al-wajhi fi al-dharain*’, he says, “To annihilate ourselves in Allah with all our existence so much so that any form of existence, apparent or concealed, worldly or of the hereafter, does not remain for the mystic. This is true poverty and returning to real non-existence. Thus, the sufis

say, 'When poverty reaches to perfection, it is Allah.'²

Sayyed Sharif Jurjaani elucidates the three levels of annihilation as follows:

"Mahq is the annihilation of the servant's existence in the Truth. *Mahv* is the annihilation of his actions while *Tams* is the annihilation of his attributes in the Truth."³

Jami, in *Lawa'ih*, seventh *La'iha*, p. 18, writes,

*'In Your Being, make me free of my own existence,
So that I become free of my own existence as well as non-existence,
For annihilation is the method and poverty the ideology,
Neither manifestation, nor certainty, nor recognition nor religion (is right),
He went away from everything, and only God remained,
That is, 'When poverty reaches to perfection, it is Allah.'*

Sadrudin Shirazi says,

"Till the he-ness (ego) of the servant remains, he will continue to remain in the veil of his existence and being. Perfect unison is not possible for him to reach...But when he annihilates his being and destroys the mountain of his I-ness, only then will he realise the Truth with Truth. For his being immersed in Him, he becomes concealed and unknown from everything including himself, his immersion and his observation. For if he looks at his observation and gives preference to his cognition,...his observation will conceal him from the Observed one and his cognition will veil him from the Recognised one. Thus, he will not be able to achieve the desired unison."⁴

Jaami is of the view that annihilation (*fana*) implies that nothing is understood except him, through domination of the apparent being of Truth over the concealed. And annihilation of annihilation (*fana-e-fana*) is that even this understanding ceases to exist. It should be known that *fana-e-fana* is within *fana*. For, if the annihilator understands his own annihilation, then he will no longer be in a state of annihilation because the attribute of annihilation and its described one is other than God, the Glorious. Thus, its comprehension will be contradictory to annihilation."⁵

To sum up, the Sufis are of the view that there is no existence except that of God and He is the Absolute Existence. The existence of the creatures is a display of non-existence. It is only imagination and in reality, being is only the Truth. Apparently, the creatures possess existence but in the concealed form, 'there is none in the house except the owner of the house' (*laisa fi al-dar ghairuhu dayyar*).

These limitations and determinations are sheer imaginary and whimsical that have been imposed on the Absolute Being and conceal the mystic from the Truth. When the mystic does away with these illusory and imaginary determinations and limitations, Truth becomes manifest. Therefore, the unawareness of the mystic from the Truth, is due to the veil of I-ness, determinations and limitations. When these veils

are dispensed with, unawareness turns to recognition, duality to unity and unison with Truth is achieved. Recognition of Truth is achieved with the Truth itself.

In the book *'Muhr e Taban'*, at the end of the interview between the student and Allamah regarding the survival of the stable archetypes (*a'yan e thabithah*) in the annihilation of the being, the former opines:

“Annihilation of people in the Truth takes place in two ways. One is that their natural lives and material existence remains and in this very condition, they get the opportunity of annihilation. This type is achieved before death. In this form, the sincere believers, who have tread the path towards Allah, notwithstanding their worldly lives, attain annihilation. Thus, for them annihilation is one of the various conditions which they undergo.

We can say that Zaid finds himself in a state of annihilation just as we can say that Zaid does not find himself in a state of annihilation. In this form, annihilation and non-annihilation are two distinct states of Zaid. Of course, as we said that Zaid finds himself, it is known that these states are for Zaid and his determinations and limitations. But in this form, the stable archetypes remain. The annihilation of all the creatures from the stones, trees, mountains, skies, earth, stars, etc. in the Truth is from this very category. For, by the survival of the stable archetypes and their own existence, they are in a state of annihilation and of humility and lowliness....

The second type of annihilation is for the one who loses his material life and physical existence. He will inhabit the worlds of Barzakh and Qiyamat after this world, is from the proximate and sincere ones and remains in the Being of the Truth in a state of annihilation. He has freed his body, exists sans physique, has left *barzakh* and *qiyamat*, is without any form or spirit, has entered the Essence of the Almighty and has dispensed with all the limitations and determinations.

Even his stable archetype does not exist anymore. There is no I-ness, limitation, name or form...The change and transformation to this state of annihilation is like the annihilation of a moth in a flame and the dissolution of sugar into water. Thus, this change and transformation is of essence and existential. It belongs to the being just as a dog is transformed into salt in a salt pan and there remains no sign of his being a dog. Similarly, for the one who treads the path of the Almighty, there remains no sign of his existence whatsoever after his death.”⁶

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1. Istihalat al Sufiyyah, p. 52
 2. Istihalat al Sufiyyah, p. 104
 3. al Tarifat, p. 89
 4. Sharh Usul al Kafi, vol. 3, p. 62
 5. Lawa'ih, 8th La'iha, p. 19
 6. Muhr e Taban, p. 200

Meeting with Allah: Divine Cognition vis a vis Human Mysticism

After understanding the meaning of ‘meeting with Allah’ (*liqa Allah*) in the school of divine revelation and human mysticism, we shall proceed to understand the difference between the two. Meeting with Allah in the school of revelation, as stated earlier, is a level higher than divine recognition that is gained by Allah’s introduction and His manifestation on the hearts of His servants. Moreover, this definition is the action of Allah and the servant does not have any role in it except to put himself in the place of this recognition through obedience, obeisance and acting on the obligatory and recommended commands.

Of course, it should be borne in mind that this recognition is gained by preserving the levels of the creature and the Creator (i.e. the creature remains a creature and a distinct entity from the Creator). For, if the creature loses his identity as a creature and merges with the Creator’s existence, there would not remain any duality for which recognition would be called for. Basically, such talks that existence is one and that of the Creator, and the only difference between the Truth and His creatures is that of determination and non-determination, limitations and absoluteness, etc. do not hold water at all in the school of revelation.

The Holy Qur’an and traditions of the infallible Imams (‘a) have clearly refuted such concepts and called for a distinction between the Creator and His creatures and that there exists no similarity whatsoever between the two. The school of revelation considers the existence of creatures bonded to the Creator’s Will (*mashiyah*) and Intention (*iradah*), both of which are the actions of Allah. By His Intention, He initiates a creation that did not have any prior existence and brings it forth from the realm of non-existence. Similarly, whenever He pleases, He destroys this creature which He had granted existence.

But in the school of mysticism, the Creator’s existence has worn the robe of multiplicity. Every moment He takes a form and on losing that form, He returns to His state of Oneness (*Ahadiyah*). That is, first He descends and then He ascends. In reality, Creator and creature, Lord and servant, do not exist. Rather, whatever exists is actually Him. The difference lies in the levels of His Existence which, sometimes is in the level of multiplicity (*Kasrat*) and sometimes in the level of unity (*Wahdat*). In multiplicity, He is One (*Wahdat dar Kasrat*) and in unity, He is many (*Kasrat dar Wahdat*).

Therefore, in the school of revelation, as the recognition of a person increases, he realises even more his own servitude and the Lordship of his Creator. Consequently, his humility, modesty, feeling of lowliness and worship increase; he becomes engrossed in the remembrance of his Lord with his entire existence, fulfils the duties of servitude with all seriousness and earnest and considers the slightest disobedience of Allah as inappropriate. At this level, he considers leaving the abominable (*tark-e-awla*) as a capital crime. For, those who become proximate to the Almighty, regard Allah’s esteem with such

reverence that they strive never to repeat their previous sins and in fact, consider them as highly detestable. ‘*Hasanatul Abrar Sayyi’atul Muqarrabin*’ (The good deeds of the righteous ones are considered as bad by the proximate ones).

But in human version of mysticism, when a mystic reaches to the state of ‘divine meeting’ and annihilation, for him all existence ceases to occur except the Truth. Neither there is any worshipper nor any worshipped one for worship to take place; duality is removed and there remains no existent save the Lord.

In this regard, Qaisari opines, “A person who reaches to the state of unison observes that only Allah is existent. There is neither the one who treads, nor the one whom towards whom the journey is undertaken nor treading itself. The existence of the worshipper and his I-ness, although present in the abstract self (*nafsul amr*), does not observe anything except His existence because the Light of Truth engulfs him. Thus, for him neither the Lord nor the servant holds any meaning.

Only the One Lord exists. At this juncture, if the divine illuminations that dominate the intellects and imagination attract the mystic, and this attraction continues, he joins those enamoured by the Lord’s beauty. And if this attraction does not continue, he will receive the illuminations proportionate to its duration. Prayers, fasting and all other religious obligations cease to become obligatory on receipt of this illumination.”¹

Therefore, the difference between the two schools is basic and fundamental. Here, this discussion will suffice and leaving the details for some other place, we proceed with our main discussion.

The subject of our discussion was the importance, status and significance of *Salat*. And before coming to the main topic, we discussed the importance of meeting with Allah (*leqaullah*) and also stated that for a believer, there is no aim and goal higher and greater than it. Now, let us proceed to the importance and significance of *Salat*.

Salat which has been made obligatory on His servants by Allah the Almighty and has not allowed them to forsake it in the worst of circumstances, is the moment of ‘divine meeting’ and proximity with Allah. It is during *Salat* that a pious and abstemious believer attains great heights of divine recognition. *Salat* is attention towards Allah and His remembrance. He says,

أُذَكِّرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ.

“You remember Me, I will remember you.” (Qur’an, 2:52)

In fact, Allah remembers more those who worship Him than they remember Him. Under the verse

وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

'And Allah's remembrance is the greatest.' (Qur'an, 29: 45),

Imam Al-Baqir ('a) says,

ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ لِأَهْلِ الصَّلَاةِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ إِيَّاهُ.

“Allah’s remembrance of those who worship Him is greater than their remembrance of Him.” 2

If a worshipper turns towards Allah only once, bows in front of His greatness, feels humble and lowly in His presence, Allah the Almighty will attend to him a number of times with grace, mercy and honour. How sweet, important and honourable it is for a lowly, needy and degraded servant that a Lord, High and Mighty that He is, turns to him and casts His merciful glance and also remembers him!

Thus, O servants of Allah! Don't consider your *Salat* as insignificant and do not be negligent in its performance. For *Salat* it is that helps a servant to reach unto his Master and provides satisfaction to him. Amir al Mu'minin, Ali ('a) explains the meaning of 'Indeed the prayers have been established' (*qad qamat al-Salat*) thus:

حَانَ وَقْتُ الزِّيَارَةِ وَالْمُنَاجَاةِ وَقَضَاءِ الْحَوَائِجِ وَدَرَكِ الْمُنَى وَالْوُصُولِ إِلَى اللَّهِ
عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، وَإِلَى كَرَامَتِهِ وَعَفْوِهِ وَرِضْوَانِهِ وَغُفْرَانِهِ.

“The moment of visitation, invocation and fulfillment of needs, achievement of desires, and reaching to Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He) and His honour, pardon, satisfaction and forgiveness has indeed arrived.”3

The Messenger of Allah ('s) has said,

“*Salat* is from the fundamentals of religion and the satisfaction of Allah, the Almighty lies therein. *Salat* is the method and path of the Prophets ('a). The one who prays, for him is the love of the angels, guidance, belief, light of recognition, abundance in sustenance, physical relief, hatred for the devil, conflict against the unbelievers, acceptance of supplications and deeds. *Salat* is the provision of a believer from this world for the hereafter and is an intercessor for him in front of the angel of death. *Salat* is his companion and mate in the grave and his reply for the questions of *nakir* and *munkar*.

The *Salat* of every believer is his crown on the day of resurrection, light on his cheeks, robe for his body,

a barrier between him and hell, a help to cross the bridge of *sirat* to reach paradise and is his dowry for the fairies (*hur*) and bounties of paradise. It is through *Salat* that a person attains great heights. For, *Salat* is the purification of Allah the Almighty, confessing ‘there is no god but Allah’, praising the Creator, glorifying Him, respecting Him and honouring Him, conversing with Him and to invoke Him and turn towards Him.”⁴

Explaining the reason for imposing *Salat* as an obligation, Imam Ar-Ridha’ (‘a) said to Ibn Sinan, “*Salat* is the confession of Allah’s Lordship and purifying Him from any similarity or likeness. *Salat* implies standing before Allah, the Powerful, with a feeling of lowliness, poverty, confessing and seeking forgiveness for the past sins.

A worshipper places his forehead five times a day on earth in front of his Lord to express his respect for his Lord so that he does not forget his Master and his Creator lest he becomes ungrateful and unmindful. Moreover, while praying, a servant keeps away from sins and vices and continues with the remembrance of Allah day and night. For, being engrossed in the remembrance of his Lord and standing before Him, keeps him away from the various types of sins and indecencies.”⁵

1. Risalah al-Tauhid wa al-Nabuwah wa al-wilaya, p. 32 narrating from Falsafa e akhlaq, p. 141. Under this discussion, one can refer to Sharh e Gulshan e Raz, p. 304, the fifth daftar of Mathnavi e Maulvi and Al Isharat wa al-tanbihat, p. 394

2. Tafsir, al Qummi, vol. 2, p. 150

3. Ma’ani al akhbar, p. 41

4. Al Khisal, p. 522

5. Ilalush shar’ia, p. 317

Purity (taharah) an Essential Condition

As *Salat* means to stand before the Almighty, seeking closeness by the pious servants towards their Lord and the ascension of the believers, there are some essential conditions in it that should not be ignored or overlooked by the praying one.

One of these conditions, when the slave is being honored by being in the presence of His Master, is that he should purify himself from all sorts of filth and presents himself before His Lord with clean clothes and pure body. More importantly, he should perform either of the ritual cleanliness, viz. *Wudhu* or *Ghusl*. If neither of them is possible, then he must do *Tayammum*. And as there have been special orders from divinity for these three forms of purity, it is obligatory that we perform them by keeping all their essentialities into consideration and apart from the divine orders, we must not include anything from our will in their performance.

The Holy Prophet (‘s) says,

خُلَّتَانِ لَا أُحِبُّ أَنْ يُشَارِكَنِي فِيهِمَا أَحَدٌ: وَضُؤِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنْ صَلَاتِي، وَ صَدَقَتِي.

“There are two things for which I do not like to include anybody in their performance. Wudhu for it is from my prayers and my charity.”¹

Amir al Mu’minin (‘a) while performing *Wudhu*, did not permit anybody to pour water for him. Somebody questioned him regarding this, he (‘a) replied, “I do not like to include anybody in my worship (of Allah). Allah the Almighty says,

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَ لَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

‘Then whosoever desires to meet his Lord, then he must act righteously and not include anybody in the worship of his Lord.’” (18: 110)²

Imam Ar-Ridha’ (‘a) says,

هَا أَنَا أَتَوَضَّأُ لِلصَّلَاةِ وَهِيَ الْعِبَادَةُ فَأَكْرَهُ أَنْ يُشَارِكَنِي فِيهَا أَحَدٌ.

“Here, I am performing Wudhu for Salat. And it is worship which I do not like to share with anybody.”³

We shall talk about worship and sincerity later. Here, we shall suffice to state that by itself, *Wudhu* is not obligatory. Therefore, if somebody performs *Wudhu* with the intention of its being obligatory, without keeping in mind any of the desired acts to be performed with it, then such a *Wudhu* is void and an innovation.

But because *Wudhu* is recommended and an act loved by Allah, therefore, if somebody performs it for gaining nearness to Allah (without the intention of any action), then such a *Wudhu* is correct.

Consequently, he can perform *Salat* and all other actions of worship for which *Wudhu* is a must.

1. Khisal, p. 33

2. Wasai’l al shia, vol. 1, p. 477

3. Usul al Kafi, vol. 1, p. 21

Adhan and Iqamah

Both *Adhan* and *Iqamah* are considered to be highly recommended and emphasized acts in *Salat*. Numerous traditions have underlined their significance and importance. *Adhan* and *Iqamah*, with their profound meanings and concepts, prepare a worshipper to acquire proximity to the Almighty in the way of worship and ascend to great heights. The Holy Prophet (‘s) advised Abu Dharr (Allah be satisfied with him) thus:

“Allah always takes pride and boasts about three individuals to his angels: (Among them is the) One who gets up in the desert without food and water but says his Adhan and Iqamah and only then performs his Salat. Your Lord says to the angels, “Look at My slave how he is worshipping Me when he cannot see anybody other than Me.” Thereafter, seventy thousand angels come forward and perform Salat behind him and seek forgiveness for him till the morrow.

O Abu Dharr! When a person is hungry and thirsty on the earth, and does Wudhu or tayammum and performs Salat after reading the Adhan and Iqamah, Allah orders the angels to pray behind him in rows in such a way that he cannot be spotted. They bow when he bows and prostrate when he prostrates and say ‘Amin’ when he invokes.

O Abu Dharr! If somebody says only the Iqamah but forsakes the Adhan, only two angels perform the Salat with him.”¹

Imam Husain (‘a) narrates,

“We were sitting in the mosque when the caller for prayers (mu’addhin) went on the minaret and cried, ‘Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar’. On hearing this call, Amir al Mu’minin (‘a) wept profusely due to which even we began weeping. When the mu’addhin completed his Adhan, Ali (‘a) said, ‘Do you know what did the mu’addhin say?’ We said, ‘Allah, His Messenger and his successor know the best.’

He said,

‘If you knew what he said, certainly you would have laughed less and cried more. The call of Allahu Akbar bears a few meanings:

One meaning of Allahu Akbar denotes the eternity, everlastingness, knowledge, power, strength, benevolence, endowment, greatness and honor of Allah the Almighty. By saying Allahu Akbar, the mu’addhin implies, ‘Allah is He to Whom belong the creation and the command. He brings everything into creation by His Will. All that the creation possesses is due to Him. Also, its return is unto Him. He is the First, before everything, from eternity. He is the Last, after everything, and is Everlasting. He is Evident, more than anything else, but cannot be comprehended. He is the Hidden, more than anything

else, but is sans limits. (In other words, His being apparent is more evident than the manifestation of anything else and His concealment is more hidden than anything else).

The second meaning of Allahu Akbar is:

He is the All Knowing and All Aware. That is, He knows what has occurred and what will occur before its occurrence.

The third meaning of Allahu Akbar is:

He is the All Powerful and commands authority over everything. His dominion extends over whatever He wishes. He is Strong means that He has power over His creation and rules them. His Strength is His Own and His Power is dominant and established over all things. When He desires to bring something into existence, He just commands 'Be' and it is.

The fourth meaning of Allahu Akbar connotes His Forbearance and Honor. He is so Forbearing as if He does not know (our mistakes) at all. He is so Forgiving as if He has not seen (our sins) at all. He conceals our transgression as if there had been no obedience.

He does not hasten to punish or reprimand because of the aforementioned attributes.

Another meaning of Allahu Akbar is:

He is Generous and Munificent. His endowments are plenty and His actions honorable.

The fifth meaning of Allahu Akbar is:

He can neither be described nor does He possess any how-ness (kaifiyyah). When somebody says Allahu Akbar it is as if he is confessing that Allah is too Great than to be comprehended by the attributes ascribed unto Him by the describers. These so-called describers of attributes do so according to their own whims and imaginations and not in correspondence with His Greatness. Allah is much Higher than that the describers comprehend His attributes.

Yet another connotation of Allahu Akbar is that Allah is the Greatest and Highest. He is Needless and can dispense with the actions (or existence) of His creatures.

The statement 'I witness that there is no god but Allah' is an announcement that testimony without recognition from the heart is impossible. The announcer confesses:

I know that there is no god but Allah and every deity besides Him is false. I hereby make a verbal admission and acknowledge from the depth of my heart that there is no god except Him. I also witness that no other god can provide refuge but Him and there is no asylum from evils, mischief and corruption except in His Holy Being.

And the testimony, 'I witness that there is no god but Allah' for the second time suggests:

I testify that there is no guide except Allah and none can acquire guidance in religion except through Him. I take Allah as Witness that there is no deity but Him. I take the inhabitants of the skies and the earth and everything in between them, among the angels, mankind, mountains, trees, wild animals, reptiles, in short, all existents of the world of creation, as witnesses, that I bear testimony that there is no creator except Allah. Also, there is no sustainer, no deity, none who can harm, none who can benefit, none who can straighten things, none who can grant salvation, no bestower, no restrainer, no adviser, none who can cure, none who can advance matters or postpone them, except Allah the Almighty. Creation and command is only in His authority. All the goodness is only in His hands. Blessed is Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

And the announcement, 'I witness that Muhammad ('s) is the messenger of Allah', means:

I bear witness that certainly there is no god but Allah, Muhammad ('s) is His slave, His messenger and His chosen one. He has sent him ('s) for the guidance of the entire mankind and conveyed him the true religion. He will make his religion dominate all ideologies even if the polytheists detest it. And I take all the messengers and prophets (peace be upon them) as witnesses, so also the angels and the entire mankind, residing in the heavens and the earth, that Muhammad ('s) is the master of the first and the last.

And the announcement, 'I witness that Muhammad ('s) is the messenger of Allah', for the second time implies:

I testify that everybody needs Allah, the One, the Subduer, the Needless from His servants, creatures and entire mankind. I witness that Allah the Almighty sent Muhammad ('s) as a giver of glad tidings, a warner, to invite them towards Allah with His permission and be a shining lamp for them. So, whoever denies or refutes him or does not believe in him ('s), Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He) will throw him in hell fire, which shall be his eternal abode as he will never get respite from it.

The call, 'Hasten for prayers', indicates:

Hurry for your best deed, to the invitation of your Lord, towards forgiveness and pardon of your God, to extinguish the fire that you have kindled and to free your neck from the shackles that you have cast around it. So that Allah may erase your evil deeds, forgive your sins, convert your misdeeds to good actions, for He is the Master, the Honorable, Possessor of the great obligation. And indeed He has permitted us, the Muslim society, to enter in His service and to be in His presence.

And the call, 'Hasten for prayers' for the second time, implies:

Stand up to invoke Allah, your Lord. Present your needs to your Lord, seek from Him through His words, ask for His intercession through them. Increase your remembrance (dhikr), your qunoot (the supplication

in the second unit of prayers), your bowing, your prostration, your humility, your submissiveness, raise your hands to ask Him, for certainly, He has permitted us for all these.

And the call 'Hasten to success', connotes:

Perform and hasten to the act that will last forever and will never be destroyed, a safety that will never be annihilated, a life whose clue can never be found by death, a bounty that will never end, a kingdom that will never finish, a happiness that will never turn to grief, an acquaintance that will never be a stranger, a light that will never see darkness, a salvation that knows no bounds, a ceaseless splendor, self-sufficiency that will never see want, a health that will never know disease, a honor that will never witness disgrace, a strength that will never turn into weakness, a glory that will remain unsurpassed, and hasten to the joys of both this world as well as the hereafter.

And the call, 'Hasten to success', for the second time indicates:

Hasten to all the aforementioned bounties i.e. a great honor, a huge obligation, a lofty bounty, an enormous deliverance, an eternal munificence in the neighborhood of the Holy Prophet ('s) in the abode of truth and righteousness near the All Powerful King.²

Again, the announcement, Allahu Akbar, suggests:

Allah the Almighty is Greater and Higher than that anyone among His creatures can understand the bounties available with Him for His obedient servant. A servant who possessed the following traits—obeyed His commands, worshipped Him, heeded His warnings, was engrossed in His remembrance, loved Him, was contented and satisfied with Him, relied on Him, feared Him, pinned his hopes on Him, and fully submitted and surrendered completely to His decree and destiny.

The announcement, Allahu Akbar for the second time indicates:

Allah is Greater, Higher and Majestic than that anybody can fathom the extent of His honor towards His servants. Or understand His chastisement for His enemies, the level of His pardon, forgiveness and bounties to the one who answers His call and that of His messenger ('s), and the level of His punishment, wrath and reprimand for those who deny and refute Him.

Then the call 'There is no god except Allah' means:

For Allah is the clear proof against the people through His messenger ('s), His message, His explanation and His call. And He is Majestic than for anybody to possess any argument against Him. So whoever answers Him, for him is light and honor. And one who denies Him, then indeed Allah is Needless of the universe and He is the quickest in accounting.

And the call, 'Indeed the prayer has been established', in the Iqamah, suggests:

The time for visitation, whispering, fulfillment of needs, reaching the desire, uniting with Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He) and His honor, forgiveness, satisfaction and forgiveness, has indeed arrived.”³

If one pays a little attention to the above tradition and deliberates over its various aspects, he will understand the importance and significance of *Salat*, to a considerable extent, the pillar of religion.

Whoever utters the sentences of the *Adhan* and *Iqamah* in the light of their aforementioned interpretation, will find his heart full of divine grace and honor and Allah’s manifestation in his heart will intensify with every passing moment. Saying the *Adhan* and *Iqamah* is in fact the remembrance of Allah.

And we have already stated that Allah the Almighty assures, “You remember Me, I will remember You.” It is evident that when the Almighty remembers His servant, His Power, Greatness and Kingdom encompass him. Consequently, all his thoughts are focussed only on Him, and for the sake of his heart’s contentment, he prepares himself for *Salat*, quiet conversation with his Lord, and the fulfillment of his needs.

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Know! Only with the remembrance of Allah do the hearts gain contentment.” (Qur’an, 13:28)

1. Wasa’il al shi’a, vol.5, p. 383

2. Shaykh al Saduq (ara) after narrating this tradition says, ‘The narrator of this tradition has not mentioned the virtues of the statement, ‘Hasten to the best of deeds’, on account of dissimulation (taqiya)

3. Ma’ani al akhbar, p. 38–41

Takbirat ul Ihram and the Invocation of Attention

When the worshipper finishes with his purification, *Adhan* and *Iqamah* and prepares himself for the adoration of his Lord, by saying “*Allahu Akbar*” – an element of *Salat*, he imposes on himself its prohibitions. That is, till he does not terminate his prayers with the *salam*, he prohibits certain things for himself, among them being turning away his attention from Allah the Almighty.

And as *Takbirat ul Ihram* marks the commencement of prayers, the worshipper while reciting it, should at least intend that whatever he will do during the performance of this action, will be only and only for the obedience of Allah.

Insofar as he continues with this intention in his prayers and does not divert his concentration from it, he will find the reality of prayers and realise the worship of Allah the Almighty in himself. In fact, this only is the spirit and substance of prayers.

Before uttering the *Takbirat ul Ihram*, it is worthy that he recites the invocation of attention (*doa-e-tawajjoh*) which, in the narration of Abdullah Ibn Jafar Himyari (received in the *tawqee'* of Imam of the Time (May God hasten his re-appearance) is as follows:

وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا عَلَىٰ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَ
دِينِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَهُدًى أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ. وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ. إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَ
مَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ. لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ. وَبِذَلِكَ أَمَرْتُ. وَأَنَا مِنَ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ. اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ.

“I turn my face towards the One Who has created the heavens and the earth, being upright and submissive, on the nation of Ibrahim and the nation of Muhammad and the guidance of Amir al Mu'minin. And I am not of the polytheists. Surely, my prayers, my sacrifice, my life and my death are (only) for Allah, the Lord of the worlds. There is no partner unto Him. And thus have I been commanded. And I am from those who submit. O Allah! Make me from those who submit.”¹

How great it is if somebody utters these words, synchronizes his heart with his tongue, and gives his words a practical shape in its truest sense, really turns his heart towards Allah, and removes all other thoughts from his mind.

Yes! How good indeed is the servant who, at any given moment of his life, does not do anything or commit any deed against the wishes of his Master and Lord and even goes to the extent of dying in His cause. If at all he does commit some sin or transgression, he immediately begs Him for forgiveness and seeks His refuge.

May Allah make us, and all the friends of the Ahlul Bayt ('a), from those who submit to His wishes and may He not turn His attention away from us even for a moment.

1. al Ihtijaj, vol. 2, p.7; Wasa'il al shia, vol. 6, p.25

Humility, Modesty and Concentration in Salat

After reading the *Takbirat ul Ihram* and *Dua e tawajjuh* and turning your attention towards Allah, if you so desire, continue the *Salat* by reciting the *Istighatha* – (أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ) I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed *Shaitan*) that you may seek protection from the whisperings of the devil in Allah and dominate him through His grace.

Thereafter, you can proceed with the recitation of Surah Hamd, the second surah, bowing, prostration, *qunoot*, *tasbihat*, *tashahud* and *salam*, in the order prescribed. While performing the aforementioned actions, strive to synchronize your limbs with your heart so that just as the latter has become humble and modest, each part of the body feels lowly, meek and submissive in the presence of the Almighty Creator.

Therefore, it is necessary that you gather all your attention, do not pay attention to what is going around you, and distance yourself from anything that diverts your attention. To achieve success in this, endeavor to find a lonely, simple and unattractive place. Fix such a time for your *Salat* when your thoughts are soothed and relaxed, and there remains no room for laziness, physically as well as psychologically.

It is also necessary that you obey the instructions of the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) concerning the methods of *qiy'am*, bowing, prostration, *tashhud* and *salam*. For, these instructions are indeed very effective for concentration and humility. Moreover, recite the wordings slowly and try to pay utmost attention to their meanings and concepts unfailingly. Allah the Almighty says,

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ.

“Surely the believers are successful; those who are humble in their prayers.” (Qur’an, 23: 1-2)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ

“O ye who believe! Do not go near prayers while you are in an intoxicated condition till you know what you are saying.” (Qur’an, 4:43)

Imam Al-Baqir (‘a) explains,

لَا تَقُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ مُتَكَاسِلًا وَ لَا مُتَنَاعِسًا وَ لَا مُتَثَقِلًا. فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ خَلَلِ النَّفَاقِ. وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ نَهَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْ يَقُومُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَ هُمْ سُكَارَى. يَعْنِي مِنَ النَّوْمِ.

“Do not stand for prayers lazily, yawning or feeling heavy (i.e. considering it to be a burden). For all these are from the traits of hypocrisy. Allah has prohibited the believers from standing for prayers while they are intoxicated i.e. (intoxicated) from sleep.”¹

Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) elaborates,

إِذَا كُنْتَ فِي صَلَاتِكَ، فَعَلَيْكَ بِالتَّخَشُّعِ وَ الإِقْبَالِ عَلَى صَلَاتِكَ. فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يَقُولُ: “الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ.”

“When you are in your prayers, then it is obligatory for you to be humble and welcome your prayers. For Allah the Almighty (while describing the believers) says, ‘those who are humble in their prayers.’”²

The same Imam (‘a) says,

“Certainly, I love the believer among you who while standing for the obligatory prayers, turns his full attention towards Allah and cleanses his heart from all worldly inclinations. His turns his face with his entire heart towards Allah, Who in turn, turns towards him and makes his heart overflow with His love and affection and Himself loves him tremendously.”³

Again, Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) says,

مَنْ صَلَّى رَكَعَتَيْنِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَقُولُ فِيهِمَا، أَنْصَرَفَ وَ لَيْسَ بَيْنَهُ وَ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ ذَنْبٌ إِلَّا غَفَرَهُ لَهُ.

“One who prays two units (rak’ats) of prayers knowing fully what he is saying in it, he does not turn away from it (after completion), but there remains no sin between him and Allah, that He does not forgive.”⁴

Imam Al-Baqir (‘a) says,

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيُرْفَعُ لَهُ مِنْ صَلَاتِهِ نِصْفُهَا أَوْ ثُلُثُهَا أَوْ رُبُعُهَا أَوْ خُمْسُهَا. فَمَا يُرْفَعُ لَهُ إِلَّا مَا أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْهَا بِقَلْبِهِ. وَإِنَّمَا أَمَرْنَا بِالنَّافِلَةِ لِيَتِمَّ لَهُمْ بِهَا مَا نَقَّصُوا مِنَ الْفَرِيضَةِ.

“Indeed, from the prayers of the believers, 1/2 or 1/3rd or 1/4th or 1/5 th only is accepted. Thus, only that part of the prayers is admitted which is performed with complete attention. And we have ordered the recommended prayers (naafilah) only to cover the deficiencies of the obligatory (prayers).”⁵

Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) exhorts,

إِذَا صَلَّيْتَ صَلَاةَ فَرِيضَةٍ فَصَلِّهَا لَوَقْتِهَا صَلَاةَ مُودَعٍ يَخَافُ أَنْ لَا يَعُودَ إِلَيْهَا أَبَدًا.
ثُمَّ اصْرَفْ بِبَصْرِكَ إِلَى مَوْضِعِ سُجُودِكَ. فَلَوْ تَعَلَّمْ مَنْ عَنْ يَمِينِكَ وَ شِمَالِكَ
لَأَحْسَنْتَ صَلَاتَكَ. وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّكَ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ مَنْ يَرَاكَ وَ لَا تَرَاهُ.

“When you perform your obligatory prayers, pray in its time as if it is your last prayers and is never going to return to you ever again. Then look at the place of your prostration. If you knew who is on your right and left, you would have performed your prayers well. And know that you are in front of the One Who sees you although you cannot see Him.”⁶

In his famous Treatise of Rights, Imam Zain al Abidin(‘a) discusses the rights of the prayers thus:

فَأَمَّا حَقُّ الصَّلَاةِ فَأَنْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّهَا وَفَادَةٌ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَ أَنَّكَ قَائِمٌ بِهَا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ. فَإِذَا
عَلِمْتَ ذَلِكَ كُنْتَ خَلِيقًا أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهَا مَقَامَ الذَّلِيلِ الرَّاعِبِ الرَّاهِبِ الْخَائِفِ
الرَّاجِي الْمَسْكِينِ الْمُتَضَرِّعِ الْمُعْظَمِ مَنْ قَامَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِالسُّكُونِ وَ الْإِطْرَاقِ وَ
خُشُوعِ الْأَطْرَافِ وَ لِينِ الْجَنَاحِ وَ حُسْنِ الْمُنَاجَاةِ لَهُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَ الطَّلْبِ إِلَيْهِ فِي
فِكَارِ رَقَبَتِكَ الَّتِي أَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُكَ وَ اسْتَهْلَكَتْهَا ذُنُوبُكَ. وَ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

“As for the rights of the prayers, you should know that it is a means of reaching towards Allah. And you are standing before Allah when you are praying. When you are aware of this, then it is desirable that you stand during prayers like the one who is disgraced, desirous (of rewards), fearful, scared, hopeful, pauper, crying, respectful of the One Who is before Him. Maintain a dignified calm, head down, limbs humble, tender heart, praying with the best of invocations within yourself, seeking the freedom of your neck from Him, an imprisonment caused on account of your sins and a destruction caused by your misdeeds. There is no strength except Allah’s.”⁷

Therefore, it is necessary that one who prays, considering the position and status of *Salat*, should pay full attention towards it with his heart and soul, which is worthy of the praying ones. He should derive benefits of both this world as well as the hereafter, from it and the greatest reward of them all, that is, meeting with Allah, comes his way.

It does not befit him to become heedless of Allah, his creator, during his prayers, and instead become engaged in himself. Although apparently this may seem difficult, rather impossible – which is why it is accompanied with such great rewards and compensation – but one should never despair of it.

Perhaps, with Allah’s grace, and our efforts, belief and piety, the difficulties will become easy and problems will be solved. For, if you take one step towards Allah, He will pull you a hundred paces towards Himself. Then, turn towards Him with your entire heart and soul. Don’t allow laziness and indolence to dominate you and keep Shaitan away from you. Abstain from ignorance and heedlessness that the path is paved and the goal is near.

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1. Tafsir, Ayyashi, vol. 1, p. 242
 2. Usul al Kafi, vol. 3, p. 300
 3. Thawwab al ‘amal: 163
 4. Thawwab al ‘amal, p. 67
 5. Usul al Kafi, vol. 3, p. 363
 6. Thawwab al ‘amal, p. 57
 7. Tuhaf al Uqul, p. 258

Invocation in Prayers

Previously, we have quoted on the authority of Amir al Mu’minin (‘a) that *Salat* is the occasion of fulfilling the desires and achieving one’s aims. The *qunoot* in *Salat* has been ordained to enable the worshipper to place his desires and needs in front of his Lord. Also, for prostration, specific supplications have been recommended. Moreover, after the prayers, great emphasis has been laid to invoke and express our needs in front of the Almighty. Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) exhorts,

عَلَيْكُمْ بِالدُّعَاءِ فِي أَدْبَارِ الصَّلَاةِ. فَإِنَّهُ مُسْتَجَابٌ.

“It is obligatory for you to supplicate after Salat, for such supplications are answered.”¹

Therefore, invocation is the expression of the need and paucity of our own selves as well as of others along with the confession of the self-sufficiency, generosity, honour, grace, affection and benevolence of the Almighty. Anyone who desires something from others, turns and pays attention towards him. As he finds himself in need and impoverished, he strives to present his wants through pleas and persistence, thereby attempting to attract the attention of the invoked one. Traditions have stated that Allah loves

importunity and persistence in invocations. Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir ('a) assures,

وَاللَّهِ لَا يُلِحُّ عَبْدٌ مُؤْمِنٌ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فِي حَاجَتِهِ إِلَّا قَضَاهَا لَهُ.

“By Allah, no believer persists with Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He) in his needs but that He fulfils it.”²

Imam As-Sadiq ('a) informs,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ كَرِهَ إِحْحَاحَ النَّاسِ بَعْضِهِمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الْمَسْأَلَةِ، وَأَحَبَّ ذَلِكَ لِنَفْسِهِ. إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يُحِبُّ أَنْ يُسْأَلَ وَ يُطْلَبَ مَا عِنْدَهُ.

“Surely Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He) detests that people should be importune and persistent while asking each other for some need but loves the same for Himself. Certainly Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He) likes that He is asked and sought for what is with Him.”³

On the other hand, anyone who refuses to invoke Allah or express his needs before Him, subjects himself to His wrath. For, he has considered himself to be needless, great and haughty. Allah the Almighty warns,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

“Surely those who are arrogant regarding My worship (invoking Me), will soon enter hell in a degraded state.” (Qur’an, 23:60)

Imam Al-Baqir ('a) interprets the word ‘worship’ in this verse as ‘supplication’ and then proceeds to say,

وَأَفْضَلُ الْعِبَادَةِ الدُّعَاءُ.

“And supplication is the most superior form of worship.”⁴

Hannan Bin Sudair relates from his father, who asked Imam Al-Baqir ('a), ‘What is the best form of worship?’ Imam ('a) replied,

مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَفْضَلُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِنْ أَنْ يُسْأَلَ وَيُطْلَبَ مِمَّا عِنْدَهُ. وَمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبْغَضُ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِمَّنْ يَسْتَكْبِرُ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَ لَا يَسْأَلُ مَا عِنْدَهُ.

“There is nothing better near Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He) than that He is asked and sought for what is with Him. And the most hateful and detestable person for Allah is he who is arrogant in His worship and does not ask Him for what is with Him.”⁵

Hence, we should not claim that Allah the Almighty knows our needs and wants and thus there is no need for us to ask Him further, if as He deems it proper, He will grant it. For, invocation and supplication is this very attention towards Allah and reaching out to His wealth, generosity, and grant.

At the same time, it is an expression of our being in His slavery and bondage and confessing to His Lordship and Mastership. And this will be the best form of Allah’s worship. Therefore, we must implore and beseech Allah. Since apparent pleas without heartily attention is fruitless, we must make efforts to ask Him from the depth of our hearts, even if we don’t utter our demands orally.

So, invocation is loved and desirable in all states and at all times but that invocation is more acceptable which is accompanied with its etiquette and conditions of time and place. As said earlier, one of the best times for supplications, is during prayers and after it, because it is that time when a believer rises to converse with his Lord, attains the elevated position of divine recognition and proximity, and his focus and concentration towards his Master is increased.

We hope that Allah the Almighty makes our prayers as a channel towards His nearness a means for the acceptance of our supplications and needs.

1. Khisal, p. 488

2. Usul al Kafi, vol. 2, p. 475

3. Usul al Kafi, vol. 2, p. 475

4. Usul al Kafi, vol.2, p. 466

5. Usul al Kafi, vol. 2, p. 466

Reality of Salat

It is evident that the Holy Qur’an has been revealed in eloquent Arabic. The Holy Prophet (‘s) and the infallible Imams (‘a) conveyed their views and opinions to the people in the customary language prevalent in those times. And there is no evidence or document in support of change in the meanings of

terms used by these holy personalities.

Therefore, it is obligatory that every term that has come in the Qur'an or used by the Holy Prophet ('s) and the infallible Imams ('a), must be used in that very literal meaning as was prevalent in their times. This premise is applicable to all the terms and phrases used by them including the words that mean worship. But for the limitations and conditions set by them on the literal applications, especially of the words used to imply worship, we must apply the apparent meanings to achieve our aim.

The word '*Salat*' is among the Arabic words which is used in abundance in Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet ('s) and the infallible Imams ('a). Thus, to know its actual meaning, first and foremost, we must search for its literal meaning and then strive to look for its conditions and definitions in the words of the infallibles ('a).

In *Lesaanul Arab*, vol. 14, p. 464, Ibn Manzoor writes: *As-Salat* means *al-dua* (invocation) and *al-istighfar* (seeking forgiveness)... And Zujjaaj has said: The root in the word *al-Salat* is necessity. It is said, 'when a thing becomes obligatory (i.e. when it does not become separate or separates a thing). And among the meanings of a *musalli* is the horse that comes second in the race, i.e. it trails behind the first horse. Yet another meaning of *sal'ya* is roasted meat and other roasted items. Also, *Salat* means to warm one's hands...*Salat* also means to whirl or spin a staff to soften it or to make it straight.

Ibn Athir, in *al-Nihayah*, vol. 2, p. 50, writes: *Salat* means a special form of worship. Its literal root implies invocation....Also it is said that its literal meaning indicates respect.

The meaning that has been accepted by all Arab litterateurs is 'invocation'. This translation is also universally accepted among the jurists. But considering the fact that the word invocation is always used in the transitive form, while *Salat* is non-transitive, it becomes clear that these are not synonyms or equivalents of each other. The reality of invocation is not only calling out or supplicating, rather it is only one of its facets. Invocation, in reality, suggests the calling out the invoked one by the one who invokes to attract the attention of the former.

And when it is coupled with calling out, it is termed as '*dua*' (supplication). But as the word '*Salat*' is non-transitive, i.e. it is not in need of an object, it connotes sheer attention of one to another, without him expecting that person to pay attention to him. Therefore, the literal meanings of this expression indicate that *Salat* is an attention that is accompanied with softness, respect and following.

The word '*Salat*' has been used in this very meaning in the Holy Qur'an and tradition. Like in the verse,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ

"Surely Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet." (Qur'an, 33:56)

where the blessings of Allah upon the Prophet (‘s) have been supplemented with the blessings of the angels.

Similarly, in another verse,

وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ إِلَّا مُكَاءً وَتَصْدِيَةً

“Their (polytheists) prayers in the Ka’ba was nothing but whistling and clapping of hands.”
(*Qur’an, 8:35*)

In still another verse, the Holy Qur’an declares,

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

“He is the One who turns towards you and so do His angels that He may bring you out from the darkness to light.” (*Qur’an, 33:43*)

Yet another verse commands the Holy Prophet (‘s),

وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ.

“And turn your attention towards them. Certainly your attention provides them comfort.” (*Qur’an, 9: 103*)

The *salawat* sent by the Muslims on the Prophet (‘s) and his progeny (‘a), which incidentally is the most oft-uttered *dhikr* in Islam, is another evidence to support our view. Therefore, it is clear that the *Salat* of Allah, His angels and the Muslims on the Holy Prophet (‘s) and his pure progeny (‘a), and similarly the *Salat* of the polytheists in the Ka’ba and the *Salat* of Allah’s Messenger on the Muslims while taking charity from them, none comprised of prostration, bowing or other essential elements of the daily ritual prayers in them.

Another proof is this famous slogan that was used in the early period of Islam to call the society towards Allah’s religion, “الصَّلَاةُ جَامِعَةٌ” which is the Arabic equivalent of ‘your attention please,’ when you want to draw the attention of others to a very important matter.

Yet another proof is that traditions have talked about the *Salat* of Iblis, Hazrat Adam (‘a), Hazrat Nuh

(‘a), Hazrat Sulaiman (‘a), Hazrat Musa (‘a) and Hazrat Isa (‘a). Therefore, it is evident that the literal aspect, root and reality of *Salat*, was present in all the Prophets (‘a). Moreover, there were many Arabs who practiced Christianity and Judaism yet used this term for their form of worship.

And if the word *Salat* bore any other meaning than attention in their vocabulary, it would have been used in that very sense. In that case, the unanimity of the litterateurs on the meaning of this word would not hold water.

This itself is a proof for the fact that the word *Salat* has been used in Islamic ideology in its literal sense and nobody used it in its new sense in the initial era of Islam. And only after applying the requisite definitions and conditions to it, they have excepted and limited its literal meaning and concept.

More important than all these is the basic and fundamental difference in the types of *Salat* – obligatory (*wajib*), recommended (*mustahab*), types of obligatory and types of recommended. Also, the differences in *Salat* prescribed for different individuals – traveler, sick, drowning and dumb.

Obviously, no other meaning can take in its fold all the above applications, except the literal meaning on which everybody agrees – the only difference being in the definitions and conditions attached to them. E.g. the daily prayers are the same as the Friday prayers but each of them possesses certain conditions peculiar only to itself. In the tradition of ascension (*mi’raj*) it has been narrated from the Holy Prophet (‘s):

“Hazrat Musa (‘a), in one of his munajat (whispering supplications) to Allah prayed, ‘O Allah! Grant me Your recognition.’ Allah retorted, ‘Testify that there is no god but Allah.’ Hazrat Musa (‘a) asked, ‘O Allah! How is Salat?’ Allah the Almighty replied, ‘Say, ‘There is no god but Allah’ and till the day of judgement, My servants will utter this statement.”¹

A little attention on this tradition reveals the fact that the literal aspect of the word *Salat* covers all types of remembrance and attention towards the Almighty. The only difference being among them is that while one is perfect, the other is more perfect, one is obligatory and the other, recommended. To imply that the application of the word *Salat* is true only for the obligatory while for others it is just metaphorical, is definitely wrong and incorrect.

For, the most complete *Salat* is that which includes the recitation of the Holy Qur’an, its invocations and other conditions that are available in the traditions of the Holy Prophet (‘s) and his infallible progeny (‘a). As the Qur’an itself descended in stages and the traditions of the infallible were narrated sequentially, proves that *Salat* of the Prophets (‘a) prior to the Holy Prophet (‘s) and that of the Muslims in early Islam, was only in its metaphorical sense (and not as used today).

Then it will not be incorrect if we say: The literal meaning of *Salat* is applicable everywhere, except that for each occasion some conditions and restrictions have been imposed. In the conversation between Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) and Mansur, the Abbaside Caliph, the same meaning can be derived:

“On a Friday, Mansur emerged from his palace while leaning on the shoulders of Imam As–Sadiq (‘a). On seeing this, a person called ‘Razaam’ remarked, ‘Who is this man who enjoys such a status that the chief of the believers (Mansur) is leaning on him?’ He was told that he is Abu Abdillah, Jafar Ibn Muhammad al–As–Sadiq (‘a). He cried (with the intention of insulting the Imam), ‘How I wish that the face of Abu Abdillah would become the shoe of Mansur!’

Thereafter, he came in front of Mansur and said, ‘O Chief of the believers! Permit me to pose a query. Mansur answered, ‘Ask him (Imam (‘a)).’ He insisted, ‘I want to ask you.’ Mansur was obstinate, ‘Ask him’. On this, Razam stood before Imam As–Sadiq (‘a) and demanded, ‘Define for me Salat and its conditions and restrictions. Imam (‘a) replied, ‘Salat has four thousand definitions and you do not deserve to be informed of all of them.’

He said, ‘Inform me only of those conditions that cannot be forsaken and without which Salat will not remain a Salat.’ Imam (‘a) explained, ‘Salat will not be complete till a person performs the ablutions (Wudhu) completely and prays without any shortcomings. Unawareness, hypocrisy and deviation should be totally discarded. He should recognise Allah and stand before Him with total cognition. A feeling of humility and modesty should encompass him. He should find himself between complete hope and absolute despair, patient as well as anxious.

That is, he should stand as if Allah’ promises will be fulfilled for him and that His threats will be actualised against him. He should put aside his own honour and dignity. His aim and goal should be right in front of his eyes. He must submit his heart to the Almighty and tread on His path. He should not be distanced with his prayers to such an extent that his relationship with his Lord is totally severed. Remember, he is standing before Him who is his aim and brought for Him his own gift, and at the same time, hoping for His Help, Assistance and Grace.

The Salat that is ordered and revealed (in Qur’an) is this very Salat. And it is this Salat which keeps a person away from evils and indecencies.’When Imam As–Sadiq (‘a) completed his reply, Mansur turned to him (‘a) and said,

‘O Abu Abdillah! We always quench our thirst from the ocean of your knowledge and come nearer to you. You have extricated us from deviation and have dispelled our darkness with your light. We will always float in the brilliance of your holiness and the oceans of your greatness.’²

Therefore, the reality of the term ‘*Salat*’, its subject and application, is the very attention towards Allah the Almighty but this meaning has been subjected to some definitions, restrictions and conditions in the Quranic verses and traditions of the infallible (‘a). For instance, the condition of timings, facing the Qiblah, saying ‘Allah–o–Akbar’, recitation of Qur’an, glorification, praise, saying ‘there is no god but Allah’, witnessing monotheism and prophethood, praying for the Prophet (‘s), bowing in respect, prostration, etc. Hence, the various actions and utterances in the obligatory and recommended prayers and the numerous types of prayers, are not the reality of the term ‘*Salat*’. Rather, these have been

connected to it through the medium of other proofs.

1. Bihar ul Anwar, vol. 93, p. 202

2. Bihar ul Anwar, vol. 84, p. 250

Innate Recognition of Allah and Its Role in Salat

According to the verses of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt ('a), any person who steps into this world, bears the recognition of Allah. This introduction was in a world prior to this and was firmly ingrained in his heart. Imam As-Sadiq ('a) says,

ثَبَّتَتِ الْمَعْرِفَةُ وَ نَسُوا الْوَقْتَ. وَسَيَذْكُرُونَهُ يَوْمًا. وَ لَوْلَا ذَلِكَ لَمْ يَدْرِ أَحَدٌ مَنْ خَالَقَهُ وَ لَا مَنْ رَازَقَهُ.

“Recognition (of Allah) was established and they forgot the occasion. Soon, they will remember it on a day. If this (recognition) was not there, none would have followed who is his Creator and who is his sustainer.”¹

Allah the Almighty orders,

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“Then turn your face towards the religion, being upright. The nature of Allah on which He has created man. There is no change in Allah’s creation. This is the strong religion but most people know not.” (Qur’an, 30:30)

Explaining the above verse, Imam As-Sadiq ('a) says,

فَطَرَ هُمْ عَلَى التَّوْحِيدِ عِنْدَ الْمِيثَاقِ عَلَى مَعْرِفَتِهِ أَنَّهُ رَبُّهُمْ...

“He created them on monotheism at the covenant (meethaaq) on His recognition that He is their Lord...”²

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (‘a), elucidates the term uprightness (*hanifiyah*) in the verse,

حُنَفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ.

“...being upright for Allah, and not among those who associate with Him.” (Qur’an, 22:31)

هِيَ الْفِطْرَةُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا. لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ.

“It is the nature (*fitrat*) on which Allah has created mankind. There is no change in Allah’s creation.”

Imam (‘a) reiterates,

فَطَرَ هُمْ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمَعْرِفَةِ.

“Allah has created them on recognition.”³

Thus, Allah the Almighty has placed His recognition in the soil (*tenat*) of every creature, mixed it with his essence and ruled out the possibility of change in this form. This is the covenant that Allah has taken from all His creatures before their arrival in this world and is attached with them in this world as well to complete His argument upon them. Allah the Almighty informs,

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ. أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

“And (remember) when your Lord removed from the backs of the progeny of Adam (‘a), their off-springs and made them witness against themselves, ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They all said, ‘Yes. We testify.’ (This was) so that you may not say on the day of Judgement, ‘Surely we were unaware of this.’ Or that you say, ‘Our forefathers were polytheists from before and we are only their off-springs. Will you destroy us for what the wrong-doers did?’” (Qur’an, 7:172–173)

So, all the humans have been created on the nature of Allah’s recognition (*ma’arifatullah*) and hence the question of doubt and ambiguity concerning the Almighty. Prophets of Allah (peace be upon them) who came to invite the people towards Him, used to say,

أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.

“Are you in doubt about Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth?” (Qur’an, 14:10)

Imam Al-Baqir (‘a) says that the Holy Prophet (‘s) said,

كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُوَلَّدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ. يَعْنِي: عَلَى الْمَعْرِفَةِ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَالِقُهُ. فَذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُ: وَ لَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَيَقُولَنَّ اللَّهُ.

“Every child is born on fitrat (God-knowing nature). That is, on the recognition that surely Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He) is his Creator. And this is His saying, ‘And if you ask them who has created the heavens and the earth, they would certainly say, Allah.’”⁴

Therefore, all the human beings, at the time of their birth, possess the recognition of Allah, His Unity, (*Tauhid*) His being their Creator and Sustainer in their nature. But this recognition is simple (*baset*). That is, it is present in their nature but they are not aware of its existence. Had they continued to live in this very way, and there did not come any reminder in their entire lives, they would be neither believers nor unbelievers or polytheists. Someone asked Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) concerning the verse,

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ

“People were one nation. Then Allah raised the Prophets as givers of glad tidings and as warners.” (Qur’an, 2:213)

He (‘a) replied,

لَمْ يَكُونُوا عَلَى هُدًى. كَانُوا عَلَى فِطْرَةِ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا. لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ. وَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا لِيَهْتَدُوا حَتَّى يَهْدِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ. أَمَا تَسْمَعُ يَقُولُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ: لَئِنْ لَمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ. ” أَي: نَاسِيَا لِلْمِيثَاقِ.

“They were not on guidance. They were on Allah’s nature on which He created them. There is no change in Allah’s creation. And they could not be guided till Allah guided them. Have you not heard Ibrahim saying, ‘Had my Lord not guided me, I would definitely have been among the deviated ones.’ (Qur’an, 7:77), i.e. I would have been among those who forgot the covenant.”⁵

When Hazrat Ibrahim (‘a), among the greatest monotheists and those who have recognised Allah, confesses in this manner, then how is it possible that others can acquire the cognition of Allah through their intellects and understanding?! How can they recognise a thing that is beyond their intellects and remote from their understanding?

Allah the Almighty says to the Holy Prophet (‘s),

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ

“Their guidance is not on you but Allah guides whosoever He pleases.” (Qur’an, 2:272)

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

“Allah does not place responsibility on a soul but within its capacity.” (Qur’an, 2:286)

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا

“Allah does not place responsibility on a soul but what has been given to it.” (Qur’an, 65:7)

Abdul A’laa says I asked Imam As–Sadiq (‘a): ‘Has Allah provided man any faculty by which he can acquire the recognition of Allah?’ He (‘a) replied in the negative. He questioned again, ‘Has he imposed on them a responsibility to acquire His recognition?’ Once again Imam (‘a) answered, ‘No. Explanation is only from Allah’s side.’ Thereafter, he (‘a) recited the last two verses quoted above.’

Imam As–Sadiq (‘a) says,

لَيْسَ لِلَّهِ عَلَى خَلْقِهِ أَنْ يَعْرِفُوا. وَلِلْخَلْقِ عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يَعْرِفَهُمْ. وَاللَّهُ عَلَى الْخَلْقِ إِذَا عَرَفَهُمْ أَنْ يَقْبَلُوا.

“Allah has not imposed any responsibility on His creatures that they recognise Him. It is upon Allah alone to introduce Himself to His creatures. And it is the duty of the creatures that when Allah introduces Himself, they should accept His recognition.”⁶

In yet another tradition, he (‘a) said,

لَمْ يُكَلِّفِ اللَّهُ الْعِبَادَ الْمَعْرِفَةَ. وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُمْ إِلَيْهَا سَبِيلًا.

“Allah has not placed any responsibility on His creatures vis-à-vis recognition. Nor has he provided them any path for it.”⁷

Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that Allah, on account of His grace and nobility, has instilled His recognition in the creatures, but for His munificence, none would be able to realise and find Him in the concealed depths of their essence.

Here, another question crops up and that is: What is the use of prior world’s introduction in this life? The answer is that firstly, it is not necessary that this innate recognition be only for this world. Rather, it is quite possible that it might be simply for the sake of completing the argument. Secondly, if prior recognition was not available– as the traditions have stated explicitly– none would be able to recognise their Lord, their Creator and their Sustainer.

Therefore, Allah has not only introduced Himself in the previous world by instilling this cognition in the essence of the people, in fact, even in this world, which is a place of examination and tribulations, it is He Who has lifted the veils of negligence and forgetfulness from the hidden recognition in their nature and guided them towards it. Evidently, the tradition of Allah is that this guidance can be achieved only through the media of causes like sending of the Prophets (‘a), His signs, placing man in difficulties and problems, etc.

Amir al Mu’minin (‘a) considers guiding the people to the innate recognition and reminding them of their covenant to their Lord, as the important aims of sending the Prophets (peace on them):

فَبَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولَهُ، وَوَاتَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْبِيَاءَهُ لِيَسْتَأْذُوهُمْ مِيثَاقَ فِطْرَتِهِ وَ يُذَكِّرُوهُمْ مَنْسِيَّ
نِعْمَتِهِ...

“Then He raised among them His messengers, and sent successively to them His Prophets, to make them fulfill the covenant of their nature, and remind them of His forgotten bounties...”⁸

And Allah the Almighty addresses His messenger (‘s) thus:

فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ. لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ.

“Then remind; for you are only a reminder. You are not dominant over them.” (Qur’an, 88:21-22)

Divine emissaries were sent so that they could draw the attention of mankind to the concealed recognition in their nature. They performed this task in various ways and adopting numerous methods. Similarly, their successors (*awsiyaa*) too followed in the footsteps of the Prophets (‘a) and invited the people towards their Lord.

A man came to Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) and requested, “O son of Allah’s messenger! Guide me to Allah as to who is He. For indeed the disputants have argued with me a lot in this regard and have even confused me.”

Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) replied,

“O slave of Allah! Have you ever boarded an ark?”

He replied in the affirmative. Imam (‘a) questioned him further,

“Has it ever happened that the ark was wrecked and there was no other ship which could rescue you? Nor did you know swimming by which you could reach to the shore?” When he replied in the affirmative again, Imam (‘a) questioned,

“At this juncture (when all your hopes have been severed), did you not rely on **some-one** who could save you from this difficulty?” He exclaimed, “Of course.” Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) confirmed,

“The One who was your hope in that moment of calamity and from whom you expected salvation when there was no other saviour, a refuge when there was no other refuge...is Allah”⁹

Therefore, it is clear that philosophical discussions and theological arguments did not bring this man nearer to Allah. But, Imam As-Sadiq (‘a), in his simple and lucid style, reminded him of his Lord, introduced in his (*fitrat*) nature. Of course, this is one of the methods to guide a man towards the recognition of his Lord.

This method which is called as that of difficulties and calamities (*basa wa zarra*) has been used extensively in Qur’an. Allah the Almighty reminds,

رَبُّكُمْ الَّذِي يُزْجِي لَكُمْ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا.
وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمْ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُونَ إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا نَجَّكُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ
أَعْرَضْتُمْ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا.

“Your Lord is He Who speeds the ships for you in the sea that you may seek of His grace; surely He is ever Merciful to you. And when distress afflicts you in the sea, away go those whom you call except He; but when He brings you safe to the land, you turn aside; and man is ever ungrateful.” (Qur’an, 17:66–67)

Another method which has been extensively relied upon by the Qur’an and the traditions of the infallible Imams (‘a), is to remind man of the bounties of Allah. Ranging from man himself, to the smallest dust particle, not only the existence of every creature, but even their survival is bonded with Allah’s Power and Grace.

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (‘a) reveals,

أَوْحَى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مُوسَى - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام - : أَحْبَبْنِي وَحَبَّبْنِي إِلَى خَلْقِي. قَالَ مُوسَى: يَا رَبِّ إِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ أَحَدٌ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِنْكَ. فَكَيْفَ لِي بِقُلُوبِ الْعِبَادِ؟ فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ: فَذَكِّرْهُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَآيَاتِي. فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَذْكُرُونَ مِنِّي إِلَّا خَيْرًا.

“Allah, the High, revealed to Musa (‘a), ‘Love Me and make My creatures love Me.’ Hazrat Musa (‘a) said, ‘O Lord! You know that nobody is dearer to me than You. But how can I change the hearts of the servants?’ On this, Allah revealed to him, ‘Remind them of My bounties and endowments. Then certainly they will not remember anything but good about Me.’¹⁰

The late Ayatullah Mirza Mahdi Isfahaani (may Allah’s mercy be on him) opines in this regard, “The aim of rationalization through the signs is to prevent the denial of Allah’s existence (*hadd e nafi o ta’til*). For, the existence of a creature is impossible without a Creator...Moreover, the conclusion of this reasoning in divine science, is perplexity and confusion in the recognition of His Being, the Most High, –and it is obligatory that it should be thus– and therefore, He is called as ‘Allah’.”¹¹

Thus, it is clear that the natural recognition of Allah implies that He on account of His grace and nobility has bestowed His recognition to the entire mankind and ingrained it in their essence and created them on it. But as this recognition is simple (baseet), they are unaware of its existence in their essence and whenever Allah the Almighty so desires, He will remind them about it and draw their attention.

Of course, their reminder and attention has different levels and grades. Some reminders are very severe and intense while others are weak and yet others are moderate. We have already stated that it is a divine tradition that He usually makes His slave attentive towards Himself and reminds them about this recognition on different occasions, of which we have mentioned a few. One of these instances is Salat.

In Salat, Allah the Almighty remembers His servants and this remembrance is much more than what the servants remember of their Lord. In Salat, the slaves, feeling their need, paucity, degradation and

dependence, raise their hands to beg their Lord, the Self-Sufficient, the Needless. Allah the Almighty fulfils their needs and helps them achieve their desires.

It is known that the most important and greatest desire of a cognizant servant is to attain proximity with His Lord, meeting Allah and rising to the highest levels of recognition. Allah the Almighty on His part, according to His promise, helps him reach to the unprecedented degrees. As a result, when he finds himself in the presence of the Almighty, he realises His greatness and might to such an extent that he is completely oblivious of everything else around him.

Previously, we have narrated the statement of Amir al Mu'minin ('a) that he said,

وَمَعْنَى “قَدَقَامَتِ الصَّلَاةُ” فِيءِ الْإِقَامَةِ أَي: حَانَ وَقْتُ الزِّيَارَةِ وَ الْمُنَاجَاةِ وَقَضَاءِ
الْحَوَائِجِ وَدَرَكِ الْمُنَى وَالْوُصُولِ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَإِلَى كَرَامَتِهِ وَعَفْوِهِ وَرِضْوَانِهِ
وَعُفْرَانِهِ.

“And the meaning of ‘surely the prayers have been established’ in Iqamah is that: ‘The time of visitation, conversation, fulfillment of needs, comprehending the desires and reaching to Allah (Mighty and Glorified be He), His nobility, pardon, satisfaction and forgiveness has arrived.’ Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir ('a) says that Allah the Almighty has said, *“The best thing by which My servants can gain proximity to Me are the obligatory acts who performance has been imposed upon them. And certainly, My servant comes so close to Me by performing the recommended acts that I love him. And when I love him, I become his ear by which he listens, his eyes by which he sees, his tongue by which he speaks and his hand by which he takes. When he calls Me, I answer him and if he asks Me for something, I grant him.”*¹²

The Late Ayatullah Mirza Mahdi Isfahani (may Allah’s mercy be on him) says: True divine recognition cannot be gained except through Him and the reins of this recognition are in His hands. It is upon Him to introduce Himself to His servants. Thus, seeing Him, meeting Him and recognising Him is entirely dependent on Him. Hence, He has made some houses on the earth for His vision and recognition and named them as ‘mosques’.

The timings of Salat are the timings of meeting and recognising Him. To announce the timings of this ascension, He has ordained the Adhan. To attend to His presence, He has imposed some conditions like cleanliness of the body and clothes and the mode of dressing.

The basis of this recognition is to stand before Him with respect and attention and this is done through announcing His greatness (Allahu Akbar), praising Him (Alhamdulillah), purifying Him (Subbuhun Qudus), invoking, modesty, humility, a sense of degradation and lowliness, etc.

As there is no limit for the recognition of Allah and even the levels of this recognition are infinite, hence

Salat has been made obligatory for everybody till their last breath. Anyone who tastes the sweetness of prayers and achieves its aim, will realise that his advent in this world and his imprisonment in this abode, is only for recognition.

For, a person's recognition is incomplete till he enters the house of deprivation and realisation and his changing from one condition to another so that he attains the levels of recognition which cannot be achieved but in such a house.

Therefore, he will know the reason for his arrival in this house of examination and test. Because if man does not witness the conditions of degradation, poverty and helplessness, he will never know might, needlessness and perfection. Consequently, he will never know who is the source of this might and needlessness. And one who is not aware of the pains of veil and ignorance, will never recognise the value of recognition, knowledge and vision.”¹³

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1. Ilalush shar'ia, p. 118
 2. Tauhid, p.330
 3. Tauhid, p.330
 4. Tauhid, p.331
 5. Tafsir, Ayyashi, vol. 1, p. 104
 6. Usul al Kafi, vol. 1, p. 164
 7. Bihar ul Anwar, vol. 5, p. 222
 8. Nahj al Balagha, Sermon 1
 9. Tauhid, p. 230
 10. Bihar ul Anwar, vol. 70, p. 22
 11. Abwab al huda, p. 17
 12. Usul al Kafi, vol. 2, p. 352
 13. Abwab al huda, p. 125–127

Worship and Submission

Allah the Almighty declares,

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“I have not created the Jinns and mankind except to worship Me.” (Qur'an, 51:56)

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ

“And your Lord has decreed that you will not worship anybody but Him.” (Qur’an, 17:23)

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

“And indeed We sent in every nation a Prophet saying, ‘worship Allah and keep away from the rebellious ones.’” (Qur’an, 16:36)

Explaining the first verse, Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) says,

“He created them so that they follow His command, i.e. they worship Him.”¹

Similarly, in another exegesis of the above verse, he (‘a) says,

خَلَقَهُمْ لِلْعِبَادَةِ.

“He created them for worship.”²

Amir al Mu’minin (‘a), in the sermon of *Dhi-qar* elucidates,

...فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَىٰ بَعَثَ مُحَمَّدًا – صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ – بِالْحَقِّ لِيُخْرِجَ عِبَادَهُ مِنْ
عِبَادَةِ عِبَادِهِ إِلَىٰ عِبَادَتِهِ، وَمِنْ عُهُودِ عِبَادِهِ إِلَىٰ عُهُودِهِ، وَمِنْ طَاعَةِ عِبَادِهِ إِلَىٰ
طَاعَتِهِ، وَمِنْ وِلَايَةِ عِبَادِهِ إِلَىٰ وِلَايَتِهِ.

“Then surely Allah the Almighty raised Muhammad (‘s) with truth to bring out His servants from the worship of His servants to His worship, from the binding of His servants to His Own binding, from the obedience of His servants to His Own obedience and from the mastership of His servants to His Own mastership.”³

To be a slave implies a sense of smallness and slavery. Vice-versa, to be a master means to feel great and lordly. One who is king, is master and the one who is a subject, is a slave. Allah, Who enjoys absolute lordship dominates all affairs, possesses mastership and power of governance over one and all, and His mastership entails commands and prohibitions for everybody without exception. It is

necessary that the servants should feel a sense of slavery, submission and humility in His presence.

Imam As-Sadiq ('a) says,

لَيْسَ الْعِلْمُ بِالتَّعَلُّمِ. إِنَّمَا هُوَ نُورٌ يَقَعُ فِي قَلْبِ مَنْ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ.
فَإِنْ أَرَدْتَ الْعِلْمَ فَاطْلُبْ أَوَّلًا فِي نَفْسِكَ حَقِيقَةَ الْعُبُودِيَّةِ. وَاطْلُبِ الْعِلْمَ بِاسْتِعْمَالِهِ.
وَاسْتَفْهِمِ اللَّهَ يُفْهِمَكَ.

“Knowledge is not acquired by learning. It is only a light which Allah (Blessed and High is He) penetrates in the heart of one whom He intends to guide. So, if you desire knowledge, then first seek in yourself the reality of servitude. Then seek knowledge for its application. Ask Allah for its understanding, He will make you understand it.” The narrator says I enquired, ‘What is the reality of servitude?’ He ('a) replied,

“It comprises of three things: Firstly, a person should never consider himself to be the master of things endowed to him by Allah the Almighty. He should consider every bounty and wealth to be Allah’s trust and utilize it as Allah wishes.

Secondly, a person should not have any plan opposed to that of his Lord.

Thirdly, all his efforts should be focused on His commands and prohibitions.

Thus, if a person does not consider himself as the master of the bounties granted to him by Allah the Almighty, it is easier for him to use them where Allah has commanded. And if a person does not plan against the planning of Allah, it becomes much easier for him to face the calamities and afflictions of this world. And if he uses all his efforts to act on His commands and prohibitions, he will not have any time left for disputing with the people or lording over them.

Hence, if Allah grants somebody these three things, the world, Iblis and all the creatures will not hold any significance in his eyes. He will not seek this world for lording over the people, he will not seek wealth for the sake of power and superiority and will not forfeit this world of a few days due to his laziness.

All these are from the first degree of piety. Allah the Almighty warns,

تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ
لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

“This is the house of the hereafter. We have made it for those who do not seek any loftiness in the earth nor mischief.” (Qur’an, 28:83)

Therefore, a slave is one who feels that his self and all his possession, is under the dominion of his Master. Considering that everything has come and will come into existence only on account of the will (*mashi'at*) of Allah and nothing is independent of it, it will not be incorrect to say that only Allah is the Master and rest everything else is but His creation. For, the existence and survival of every creature in this universe depends on His will and intention.

Imam As-Sadiq ('a) declares,

لَا يَكُونُ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ إِلَّا بِهَذِهِ الْخِصَالِ السَّبْعِ: بِمَشِيئَةٍ وَإِرَادَةٍ
وَقَدَرٍ وَقَضَاءٍ وَإِذْنٍ وَكِتَابٍ وَأَجَلٍ. فَمَنْ زَعَمَ أَنَّهُ يَقْدِرُ عَلَى نَقْضِ وَاحِدَةٍ، فَقَدْ
كَفَرَ.

“Nothing occurs in this earth and in the heaven except with the following seven stages: Will, intention, destiny, decree, permission, book and implementation. Then whoever thinks that he can reduce any of these stages, then indeed he has disbelieved.”⁴

Therefore, in the first instance, nobody has got any right of mastership and superiority over the other and the real master and the true king of one and all is only Allah. All are His subjects and it is obligatory on them to fulfill the right of servitude. They must obey only Him and subject themselves with utmost humility, modesty and lowliness in front of Him. Considering anybody else as the master is a great sin and is tantamount to denying Him and polytheism. Acknowledging anybody to be at the same level or at par with Him is sheer polytheism.

Allah the Almighty says,

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً لِيَكُونُوا لَهُمْ عِزًّا. كَلَّا سَيَكْفُرُونَ بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ وَيَكُونُونَ
عَلَيْهِمْ ضِدًّا

“And they take gods other than Allah so that they become the cause of might for them. Nay! Soon they will deny them and will turn into their enemies.” (Qur’an, 19:81-82)

Explaining the above verse, Imam As-Sadiq ('a) says,

“Those who have taken to gods other than Allah the Almighty, on the day of judgement their gods will be raised to oppose them and their worship.” Then Imam ('a) said, “Worship and servitude does not imply prostration and bowing. In fact, worship means obedience and submission. Whoever obeys a creature to disobey Allah, has in fact worshipped him.”⁵

Imam Al-Baqir ('a) says,

“You (Shias) are that group who have refused to worship the rebels. Whoever obeys an oppressor, has indeed worshipped him.”⁶

Amir al Mu'minin ('a) says,

“Allah deputed Muhammad ('s) with Truth so that he may take out His people from the worship of idols towards His worship and from obeying Satan towards obeying Him.”⁷

Anybody who thinks himself to be the master and ruler other than Allah the Almighty, he deserves to be left to himself. And anyone who takes a deity and lord besides Allah, He will hand him over to that deity and lord. The Holy Prophet ('s) says that Allah the Almighty has warned,

أَيَّمَا عَبْدٍ أَطَاعَنِي، لَمْ أَكِلْهُ إِلَىٰ غَيْرِي. وَأَيَّمَا عَبْدٍ عَصَانِي، وَكَلَّتُهُ إِلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ، ثُمَّ لَمْ
أَبَالِ فِي أَيِّ وَادٍ هَلَكَ.

“Whoever obeys Me, I will not hand him over to other than Myself. And whoever disobeys Me, I will leave him unto himself. Then I won't bother in which valley he is destroyed.”⁸

Imam As-Sadiq ('a) said to Abbad Ibn Kathir Basri,

وَيْلَكَ يَا عَبَّادُ! إِيَّاكَ وَالرِّيَاءَ! فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ، وَكَلَّهُ اللَّهُ إِلَىٰ مَنْ عَمِلَ لَهُ.

“Woe unto you O Abbad! Keep away from ostentation. For, whoever works for other than Allah, Allah will hand him over to the one for whom he worked.”⁹

Hence, considering that His slaves and whatever is in their possession, all are the creatures and possession of Allah, the limbs and organs of this body and the entire existence is His property. Deriving benefit from them depends on His permission and satisfaction. Thus, any utilization which is not in conformity with His satisfaction and order, will be deemed as prohibited (*haraam*).

So Allah the Almighty has given power and authority to everybody over their selves and wealth but has outlined their limitations through divine laws and regulations. Consequently, none possesses authority and domination over the other except that it has been granted by Allah the Almighty. He declares in the Holy Qur'an,

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ
تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“Say O Allah! You are the King of the kingdom. You give the kingdom to whomsoever You please and snatch it away from whomsoever You please. You give respect to whomsoever You please and You degrade whomsoever You please. In Your hand is goodness. Surely You have power over all things.” (Qur’an, 3:26)

It should be borne in mind that all perfection, power and authority that has been endowed by Allah the Almighty to his servants is not because they deserved it and it was not Allah’s duty to bestow these bounties upon them. But it was His obligation and grace on them that He granted these favors. Of course, this obligation too is not devoid of wisdom.

Allah the Almighty brought the servants to the realm of existence from non-existence and granted them the lights of intellect, knowledge, power, authority and freedom. Now, if they derive benefit from these great bounties, lower their necks for His obedience and submission, act with modesty and humility in front of Him, fulfil the duties of worship diligently and express their gratitude for His bounties, they will draw themselves nearer to their real Master and attain great heights and perfection from His side.

But if they adopt the path of disobedience and transgression while He intends to oblige them, He will snatch away the bounties from them so that they may be attentive towards their poverty and dependence on Him. And if He wants, He will increase their bounties and power so that their disobedience is augmented, thereby becoming eligible for a very severe chastisement in the hereafter.

Therefore, if somebody acts with sins and vices with the bounties that he has received from his benevolent Lord, he should not think that these gifts are due to his transgressions. Rather, these are for preparing him for a great calamity in the next world. Allah the Almighty warns,

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ مَالَهُمْ نُصْرَةَ رَبِّهِمْ خَيْرٌ لَّأَنفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُمَلِّي لَهُمْ لِيُزَادُوا إِثْمًا
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ

“Let not those who disbelieve think that the respite that We have given them, is good for them. We have given them respite so that they increase in sins and for them is a debasing chastisement.” (Qur’an, 3: 178)

So, it should be borne in mind that all the powers and authorities are not in line with the power and authority of Allah. Only that power and authority is in line with that of Allah’s which denotes obedience, servitude, humility and modesty in front of Him.

And this government and authority is that of the divine Prophets (‘a), their successors (‘a), those who have been permitted by them to take care of the affairs of the people and do not violate the regulations formulated by them.

Among all these divine luminaries, the persona with the maximum power and authority is that of the Holy Prophet (‘s). All the Imams (‘a), all the chiefs of the armies, governors of cities, judges, scholars, guardians, etc. have all derived their mastership and authority from Allah’s last messenger (‘s). Imam Al-Baqir and Imam As-Sadiq (‘a) say,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَوَّضَ إِلَى نَبِيِّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ - أَمْرَ خَلْقِهِ لِيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ طَاعَتْهُمْ.
ثُمَّ تَلَا هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ: مَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا.

“Surely Allah has delegated to His Prophet (‘s) the affairs of His creation so that he overlooks as to how they obey Him. Then he (‘a) recited the verse, ‘**Whatever the Prophet gives, take it and whatever he prohibits, refrain from it.**’ (Qur’an, 59:7)¹⁰

Imam Ar-Ridha’ (‘a) says,

“Certainly Allah delegated the matters of His creation to His Prophet (‘s) and said,

مَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا.

‘**Whatever the Prophet gives you, take it and whatever he prohibits, refrain from it.** But He has not delegated to him the affairs of creation and providing sustenance...Indeed, the Creator of everything is Allah as He says, ‘

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ مِنْ
ذَلِكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ.

‘Allah is He Who created you, then provided you sustenance, then caused you to die, then He brings to life (once) again. Is there anyone from your partners who can do any of these things? **Glory be to Him and High is He from what they associate.**’(Qur’an, 30:40)¹¹

Imam Al-Baqir (‘a) says,

فَمَا حَرَّمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ - فَهُوَ بِمَنْزِلَةِ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ.

“Whatever the Messenger of Allah (‘s) has prohibited, then it is as if Allah has prohibited it.”¹²

The same status is enjoyed by the Holy Imams (‘a) who were from the progeny of the Holy Prophet (‘s) and were his successors barring the fact that making a thing permissible (*halal*) or prohibited (*haram*) was beyond their domain. Under the verse

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ.

‘Obey Allah and obey His messenger and those in authority among you’, (Qur’an, 4:59)

Imam Al-Baqir (‘a) explains,

هِيَ فِيَّ عَلِيٍّ وَفِي الْأئِمَّةِ. جَعَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَوَاضِعَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ، غَيْرَ أَنَّهُمْ لَا يُحِلُّونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَهُ.

“This is about Ali and the Imams (‘a). Allah has placed them in the position of the Prophets (‘a) except that they don’t make a thing permissible or prohibited.”¹³

Thus, it is evident that obeying any one of them is equal to worshipping Him. Again, it is known that all power, authority and mastership returns to Allah and they all ultimately belong to Him. So, if any one enjoys any authority and mastership with Allah’s permission and order, then his mastership and authority is considered as that of Allah’s and subservience to such mastership will be considered as His worship.

Now, if anyone accepts his command and obeys him, then he has accepted Allah’s command and obeyed Him and consequently, worshipped Him. But if someone assumes authority and power without His permission and command, then he has indeed usurped a position, placed himself as an opponent of Allah and claimed a status in front of Him.

For, he will expect others to obey him and carry out his commands. Needless to say, those who obey him will only obey him and this obedience and obeisance has got nothing to do with Allah.

The same applies for the mastership, authority and control of a man over his own self and his wealth. If he views them from this angle that they are the endowments of Allah and their utilisation should be in conformity with His commands and prohibitions, then this very thought will be the obedience and worship of Allah the Almighty.

But if it used according to the satisfaction of Allah, unwittingly and unintentionally, then it will not be considered as Allah's worship. Rather, all his expenditures and efforts will be for someone else and thereby illegal (*haraam*).

Describing the different aspects of mastership (*Wilaayah*), Imam As-Sadiq ('a) says,

“Mastership is from two aspects: One is the mastership of the rightful and just rulers who have been appointed as guardians of the people by Allah the Almighty. The same goes for those appointed by them as masters and this sequence till the lowest form of mastership. (i.e. all these are rightful masters as they bear divine endorsement).

The second aspect of mastership is that of the oppressors and tyrants and those appointed by them till the lowest form of mastership due to whom people are misguided and deviated.

The legal of these two forms of mastership is obviously that of the just masters whose recognition and mastership has been made obligatory and enjoined by Allah. Obeying the sequence of these masters, down the line, without reducing or adding anything from our side, or distorting his statements, is compulsory and strengthening his position, a recommended act.

For, under the shadow of the just master and those appointed by him, rights are enlivened, justice is established and falsehood and oppression are destroyed. Therefore, one who looks out for such a master and helps him in his efforts is like the one who has made efforts to strengthen the religion of Allah.

But the mastership of the tyrant masters, right from the top to the last one appointed by them, has been condemned and following or assisting them is prohibited because they are the cause of misguidance and deviation of the people. Working with them and accepting their mastership is totally illegal and non-permissible. Whoever does so, becomes liable for a painful chastisement, even if his work is insignificant.

For, any act which is done with the intention of helping and assisting them, is in fact, direct disobedience of Allah and consequently, a great sin. This is because under the shadow of a tyrant master, truth is trampled and falsehood is enlivened. Oppression, tyranny and destruction engulf the entire society, divine Prophets ('a), their books and the believers are thrown to the winds, mosques are destroyed, the traditions of Allah and His laws are subject to distortion.

Therefore, to work with them or to assist them is prohibited (*haraam*) except in a state of helplessness and coercion just as the occasion when man is forced to drink blood or eat corpse.”¹⁴

So, it is evident that the reality of servitude is submission. And the reality of worship is humility, modesty and lowliness. The obedience of someone is tantamount to being humble and lowly in front of him, thereby resulting in his worship. Therefore, anyone who performs an action with the intention of obeying

his master has indeed worshipped him. And if somebody has done something for the satisfaction of his self, then he has worshipped his self.

So, those actions which are performed to gain paradise or for fear of hell, cannot be said to be Allah's worship, although Allah has ordered the same. Because these actions have been performed out of the love of one's self.

But Allah, on account of His grace and nobility, has permitted His servants to perform their actions with both these reasons and has promised them rewards of worship for the same. But it should be borne in mind that the right of worship is that it should be performed with the intention of Allah's love and proximity. Imam As-Sadiq ('a) says,

“Surely the people worship Allah for three reasons: One group worships Him to acquire His rewards and this worship is of the greedy. The second group worships Him for fear of His hell and this is the worship of the slaves. But I worship Him because of my love and affection for Him and this is the worship of the liberals.”¹⁵

Let us strive to worship our Lord for His love and affection and not for the sake of the love of the self, or out of craving for the bounties of paradise or out of fear for the punishment of hell, although Allah can be worshipped even by these two approaches.

All praise is for Allah the Lord of the worlds as He is worthy and blessings of Allah be on Muhammad ('s) and his pure, immaculate off-springs.

O Allah! For the sake of Muhammad ('s) and the Holy Imams ('a), hasten the reappearance of our beloved Imam of the Time (May Allah hasten his re-appearance).

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