

Ethical Discourses: Volume 2

40 Lectures On Islamic Morals, Etiquette And Self Building

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Publisher(s):

The Islamic Publishing House (IPH) [4]

The second of two volumes containing the transcribed lectures of Grand Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi on a range of topics mainly dealing with ethics, morality, and self-building.

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Category:

Ethics [6]

Topic Tags:

Ethics [7]

Morality [8]

Self-building [9]

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Discourse 1: Tawhid In The Actions (Of Allah) And Benefits Of Belief In This

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: مَنْ انْقَطَعَ إِلَى اللَّهِ، كَفَاهُ كُلَّ مَوْوَنَةٍ، وَ مَنْ
انْقَطَعَ إِلَى الدُّنْيَا وَكَلَّهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهَا، وَ مَنْ حَاوَلَ أَمْرًا بِمَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ كَانَ أَبْعَدَ لَهُ
مِمَّا رَجَا وَ أَقْرَبَ مِمَّا اتَّقَى، وَ مَنْ طَلَبَ مَحَامِدَ النَّاسِ بِمَعَاصِيِ اللَّهِ، عَادَ
حَامِدُهُ مِنْهُمْ ذَمًّا، وَ مَنْ أَرْضَى النَّاسَ بِسَخَطِ اللَّهِ وَكَلَّهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِمْ، وَ مَنْ أَرْضَى
اللَّهُ بِسَخَطِ النَّاسِ كَفَاهُ اللَّهُ شَرَّهُمْ، وَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ مَا بَيْنَهُ وَ بَيْنَ اللَّهِ كَفَاهُ اللَّهُ مَا
بَيْنَهُ وَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ، وَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ سَرِيرَتَهُ أَصْلَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَانِيَتَهُ، وَ مَنْ عَمَلَ لِأَخْرَتِهِ
كَفَى اللَّهُ أَمْرَ دُنْيَاهُ.

It has been narrated from Ibne ‘Abbas that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: “One who keeps his hopes solely upon Allah, He will be sufficient for that person in all affairs (of his life); one who keeps his hopes on the material world, Allah will leave him (with the world); one who wishes to reach his goals through disobeying Allah will be the furthest away from that which he wishes (to achieve) and will be the closest to difficulties; one who seeks to please the people through the disobedience of Allah, He will change the pleasure (of the people) towards him to be his disgrace (amongst the people).

One who seeks to please the people while earning the displeasure of Allah, Allah will appoint those people to be above him (to rule him); one who seeks to please Allah while making others displeased with him (through not obeying them), Allah will be sufficient for him from the evil of the people; one who acts properly with that which is between him and Allah, Allah will make sufficient that which is between him and the people; one who makes right that which he performs in secret, Allah will correct that which he performs in the open. Allah will make sufficient the affair of the one who works for his next life in all of his affairs of this world.”¹

One of the important issues in the discussion of Tawhid (monotheism) is in relation to Tawhid-e-Af’ali (belief in the unity of the actions of Allah (SwT)) and if one possesses the correct understanding of this issue, then it would have a profound impact on one's life.

The belief in 'Unity of the actions of Allah (SwT)' informs us that everything and everyone which exists in the entire universe – even the leaves of a tree which move with the passing breeze – originate from Allah (SwT). Nothing can take place without His command – the cutting which the sword performs, the burning which a fire produces and all other actions stem from His order. To sum this belief up in one

sentence, we refer to the tradition mentioned in Bihar al-Anwar that reads:

لَا مُؤَثِّرَ فِي الْوُجُودِ إِلَّا اللَّهُ.

“There is no one effector in the creation except Allah.”²

Even our own freedom and the choices we make in life all originate from Allah (SwT), since if He had not given us the power of choice, then we would not be able to do a single thing! However at the same time, we understand that He has given us freedom in our life and has not compelled us to perform acts.

When one has the deep-rooted belief of 'Unity of the actions of Allah (SwT)' and understands that the only independent power of decision and will belongs to Allah (SwT) and that the power of choice which Allah (SwT) has given us is merely a test (for the life of this world), then one would definitely not submit himself to others merely to seek closeness to them!

One would also realize that the true source of attaining goodness in the material world does not lie in the hands of the people. With this belief in mind, one would not look seek to covet what others have! In addition, with such a belief, one would not obey and try to please others if this meant transgressing the laws of Allah (SwT). Also, one would not appeal to others to help solve his problems since that person knows that the true meaning of “There is no effector in the creation except for Allah” goes against all of these issues!

If we were to have true faith in the verse of the Qur`an which states:

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

“Surely His command when He intends to do something is the mere saying of 'Be' and it is.”³

Then these paths which have the potential of leading us astray would definitely not have any effect on us. It is for this reason that the source of all reformations goes back to a correction of the theological beliefs.

When the various Prophets of Allah (as) were appointed, the first thing they sought to do was instill the correct set of beliefs within the hearts and minds of the people. Once the beliefs and faith are set straight, then the roots and branches (of the faith) will also become correct.

The tradition we quoted at the beginning of the discussion shows us that all of our actions must return back to the issue of 'Unity of the actions of Allah (SwT).'

The meaning of “...keeping one's hopes solely upon Allah” is that we cut off hope from all others and attach ourselves solely to Him; we close our eyes to everyone else and focus only on Allah (SwT). If one were to reach this station, then Allah (SwT) would be sufficient during times of difficulty!

The tradition then mentions that “...however if a person keeps his hopes on the transient world, then Allah leaves him to the world...” Therefore, if a person was to stop relying upon Allah (SwT) and put all of his trust in the material world and assumed that respect and disgrace come directly from the people, or assumed this his sustenance comes from the physical Earth through his hard work alone, then Allah (SwT) would leave this individual to the whims of the material world!

Of course, we are not opposed to the world of cause and effect; however, we must remember that behind the material world lies the hand of the One who induces things to happen (the actual Cause). In order for humanity not to forget that there is a Causer for everything, sometimes people create reasons and rationale for things which happen around them. For example, sometimes people say that, “All the doors (of prosperity) were closed to me, and then all of a sudden, I found a way out!” while sometimes, the exact opposite of this is also said!⁴

If one was to lose the Causer for everything that happens and was to rely solely on the frail spider's web known as the material world, then Allah (SwT) would leave the person alone within this weak web, as it has been stated in the Qur`an:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ اتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ
الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

“The similitude of those who take other than Allah as their guardian is as the example of the spider who takes his (frail) web as a house. And surely the weakest of houses is the house of the spider, if only the people had knowledge of this (fact).”⁵

The intelligent person is one who does not rely upon the frail house of the spider – the material world. Rather, the intelligent one relies solely upon the chief Causer of all actions (Allah (SwT)) and through this, becomes needless of everything else.

It is mentioned in a tradition that:

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَكِلْنِي إِلَى نَفْسِي طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ أَبَدًا.

“O' Allah! Do not ever leave me to myself for even the period of the blinking of the eye!”

This tradition points to the same fact previously stated which is that we must always petition Him that, “O' Allah! I appeal to you to be my Protector; I beg to You that You alone be my Guardian...”

The tradition under discussion continues and we are told that, “...the person who wishes to reach his goals through disobeying Allah...” and in this segment, another aspect of the same issue which was mentioned above has been explained.

Sometimes we see that one wants to reach a specific goal, however to reach his aims, must make use of the forbidden means. Such a person must know that he will never reach his ultimate aim. Rather, that which he fears will actually come back to haunt him! Thus, it must be said to such an individual that, “You very well know that the only will which exists is the will of Allah (SwT) and He (SwT) is the sole Sovereign over all things! Thus, why do you still resort to making use of the impermitted means (to attain the objective) in your life?”

The next line reads “...the person who seeks to earn the pleasure of the people...” and this is an allusion by the Messenger (S) to the act of seeking the support of other than Allah (SwT).

Without doubt, in order for the sacred principles of the faith, society, politics, etc... to advance, it is important to take the opinions of the general public into account. Thus, the people must help one another so that everyone can reach to the desired goals of the society. However, we must not confuse ourselves and think that these issues only concern the people. Granted, we want people to come forward and assist to help fulfill the sacred aims of the building of the society, however they must come forward to help for the sake of Allah (SwT)!

We do not want to please Allah (SwT) for the sake of the people and it should not be that one day we see that in order to attract the people, we end up displeasing Allah (SwT)!

In this part of the tradition, the Messenger of Allah (S) has stated that the outcome of the one who seeks to earn the praise of the people through disobeying and sinning against Allah (SwT) is that the same people who are praising him will one day end up condemning him and instead of this person having any sort of impact or influence on the society, he will end up being detested by the people! This is the absolute truth since the one who tries to please the people by circumventing the pleasure of Allah (SwT) will be left to the whims of the people and will lose the hand of His grace.

At this point, it is important to note that on one's own, the human being is weak, and as long as the assistance of Allah (SwT) is not there, he can not do a thing. Because of this fact, everything we do must be for Allah (SwT) – even if the people are not pleased and become upset with us!

If we act in this manner, then surely Allah (SwT) will prevent the evil of the people from reaching us.

The true believer must pay attention to the verse of the Qur`an which states:

تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ
بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“You bestow the kingdom to whom You desire and You take away the kingdom from whom You desire; You grant honour and dignity to whom You desire and You disgrace whom You desire. In Your hands is all goodness and surely You (Allah) have power over all things.”⁶

In addition, the true believer must state that, “O' Allah! Everything lies in Your hands. Even if we go towards the world of causes, we do so through Your permission and with complete trust and reliance upon You.”

We must never be like those who say, “In the name of Allah and in the name of the heroes of humanity” as this is a form of worship of two entities and we are not people of this type as we are believers who, although want the best for the creations, however we seek this solely from Allah (SwT).

In the Qur`an we read:

إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمُ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ يَخْذِلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَنْصُرْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَ
عَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

“If Allah were to assist you, then there would be none who could overcome you; and if He were to leave you alone, then who is there that could assist you after Him, and upon Allah do the true believers solely rely upon.”⁷

If everyone in the world was to gather together (to do something), but He did not want this to happen, then not a single action could take place! The opposite of this is also true that if the entire world was to gather together to humiliate or attack an individual, but Allah (SwT) did not want that to happen, then it would not be fulfilled!

Thus, we must believe in the 'Unity of the actions of Allah (SwT)' as it has been explained in this discussion and we must be sure to perform our actions with this belief in mind.

One of the important things for the believer to remember is that anytime an issue comes up, he must first ponder upon it and think to himself, “What would Allah (SwT) want from me in this situation?” Truly, once we correct the relationship between ourselves and Allah (SwT), then everything else will fall into place!

We should not be like others who, in order to please the people, end up earning the wrath of Allah (SwT). Therefore, in order to save ourselves from difficulties in life, we must not put forth truth as

falsehood and falsehood as truth since if this is done, then a person's friends (and those whom he is trying to please) would end up becoming his idols of worship! These sort of idols are even worse than the idols which the polytheists worship as atleast they worship their false gods in order to achieve proximity to Allah (SwT)! In the Qur`an we read:

مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَى

“We do not serve them (the idols) except for the desire that they may make us nearer to Allah.”⁸

However, this is not present in relation to the worship of and following of our friends!

The tradition under review continues and we read, “...the person who does right with that which is between him and Allah, Allah will make sufficient that which is between him and the people.” This means that the person who corrects the relationship between himself and Allah (SwT) will see that Allah (SwT) will correct his relationship with the people.

The Prophet (S) then tells us, “...the person who strives to perfect (and purify) his hidden thoughts and beliefs will see that Allah (SwT) will perfect his outer thoughts and beliefs. The person who seeks to work for his next life will see that Allah (SwT) will be sufficient for him for his worldly matters.”

As was previously mentioned, more than all other things, that which the Prophets strived to instill in their followers was the correct set of theological beliefs. If these are not correct, then one can not expect righteous actions to come forth from an individual!

Truthfully, this is the exact situation we see in the world today! Many people today have no affinity to religion and issues of the faith; mankind has made laws which state that people must not perform certain acts nor are they allowed to question how to carry out a specific act (if they wanted to perform it)! However, in regards to the invitation of the Prophets, we see the direct opposite, as they called humanity to both the inner and outer aspects of actions.

There is a very remarkable expression that used to be quoted in regards to the Usul (Principles) and Furu' (Branches) of the faith. This expression stated that complete faith (of Islam) could be compared to a tree made up of three parts: the roots, branches and the fruits. The roots of the tree are the theological beliefs (Usul); the branches (Furu') are the actions of the person while the fruits of the tree are the complete and perfect human being!

Some people think that actions and beliefs can be separated from one another; however, this is not the case. A person is not able to – from the point of view of his inner belief – remain healthy and safe, however have incorrectness in his actions, nor can the opposite of this be true. It is not possible for a person to reach perfection in his level of humanity and ethical traits and attain to the highest pinnacles of

greatness however does not reach to such levels in his theological beliefs.

Keeping this in mind, the meaning of the tradition under discussion is: “When a person's inner self is corrected, at this point in time would Allah (SwT) correct that person's outer being.” Thus we see that Allah (SwT) places a cause and effect between the outer and the inner being of a person.

It is from this belief and because we know that a relationship exists between the cause and effect, that Allah (SwT) is placed “in between” and is attributed with the performance of certain tasks.

For example, we state “أضلّه الله” or “Allah deluded him”, however Allah (SwT) has placed this outcome or effect in the performance of a wicked and despicable act. Thus, it is the performance of that incorrect action which actually led to the misguidance of the individual – not that Allah (SwT) initiated the misguidance!

Therefore, the conclusion which we can draw is that if our actions are not correct, then this will result in our inner-self becoming polluted; we must start by correcting our belief in the Oneness of Allah (SwT) and must destroy all internal idols.

In the Noble Qur`an we read that:

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلًا

“Have you seen the person who takes his lower desires to be his god? Do you have any authority to guide such a person?”⁹

There are people who outwardly worship Allah (SwT), however in reality they are polytheists since their object of worship is not Allah (SwT) – rather it is their own soul and inner desires and from this we can understand that polytheism actually has many branches to it.

In Bihar al-Anwar it has been mentioned that:

الشِّرْكُ أَخْفَى فِي الْعَمَلِ مِنْ دَبِيبِ النَّمْلَةِ السَّوْدَاءِ عَلَى الصَّخْرَةِ الصَّمَاءِ فِي
الَّيْلَةِ الظُّلْمَاءِ.

“Polytheism is more hidden in actions than the footprints of a black ant on a dark rock walking in the dark of the night.”¹⁰

In addition, we see that Allah (SwT) has taken a promise from humanity that they must not worship Satan, and in the Qur`an we read:

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ

“Did I not take a pledge from you, O' children of Adam, that you must not worship Satan?”¹¹

However, it does not seem that those being spoken to in this verse are the (official) Satan worshippers, who are very small in number in the world. Rather, those addressed in this verse are humanity on a whole! From this, it becomes clear that the worship of Satan is a tribulation which a great number of people can fall into.

Some people may read the last line of the tradition under discussion which reads, “Whoever works for the next life, Allah will make the life of this world easy for him” and assume that if a person does not exert any efforts in the life of this world and rather, focuses all of his attention on performing actions for the next life, that the life of this world will be put in order – however this is definitely not the case! Rather, we must also put forth an effort for the life of this world.

The summary of our discussion is this: If we wish to correct our actions and etiquette, we must start with reforming our theological beliefs.

Thus, if everyone was to become a true believer in the Oneness of Allah (SwT) and become Muslims (in the true sense of the word), then all types of atrocities and corruption would be removed from the Earth! If we see that day by day, the world is becoming more and more corrupt, then it is due to a lack of belief in the true religion or little belief in the true faith.

Therefore, in order for our actions to be correct, we must ensure that we have the correct theological beliefs since every action – good or bad – is a mere reflection of our beliefs!

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 178

2. Ibid., vol. 5, pg. 151

3. Surah Yasin (36), verse 82

4. In the words of Mawlana Rumi:

روغن بادام خشکی می نمود
آب آتش را مدد شد همچو نفت

از قضا سر کنگبین صفرا فزود
از هلیله قبض شد اطلاق رفت

5. Surat al-Ankabut (29), verse 41

6. Surat Ale Imran (3), verse 160

7. Ibid., verse 26

8. Surat al-Zumr (39), verse 3

9. Surat al-Furqan (25), verse 43

10. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 61, pg. 244

11. Surat Yasin (36), verse 60

Discourse 2: Characteristics Of The True Believer – Part 11

In continuation of the tradition which noted the characteristics of the true believer, we examine six more qualities the believer must possess:

...إِنَّ سَلَكَ مَعَ أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا كَانَ أَكْيَسَهُمْ، وَإِنْ سَلَكَ مَعَ أَهْلِ الآخِرَةِ كَانَ أَوْرَعَهُمْ
لَا يَرْضَى فِي كَسْبِهِ بِشُبُهَةٍ وَلَا يَعْمَلُ فِي دِينِهِ بِرُخْصَةٍ يَعْطِفُ عَلَى أَخِيهِ بِزَلَّتِهِ وَ
يَرعى مَا مَضَى مِنْ قَدِيمِ صُحْبَتِهِ...

“...if he (the true believer) is in the company of those (attached to the) material world, then he is the most alert and attentive (to the next world); if he is in the company of those (who love the) next life, then he is the one who possesses the most consciousness (of Allah). He does not entertain any form of doubt in relation to his earnings (they are all from the permitted) and he does not allow any leave or departure from his beliefs. If his brother in faith makes a mistake, he forgives it, however he does not forget the good deeds which have been done in the past by his close friends.”¹

The majority – or close to all of the scholars from amongst the Shi’a and Ahlus Sunnah believe that the text of the Noble Qur`an has not been altered (Tahrif) in any way. However, there are a minority of scholars of the Ahlus Sunah and even some Shi’a scholars who accept that there has been alteration of the Qur`an. The logical proofs, narrated proofs and historical evidence pointing to the protection of the Qur`an have been explained in detail in our book, Anwar al-Usul, while a summarized discussion of this has been presented in our work, Tafsir-e-Namuna.

It must be noted that there are some amongst the Ahlus Sunnah (particularly the head-strong Wahhabis) who are adamant that the Shi’a believe in the alteration (of the Qur`an)! However, we see that the Qur`an printed in Iran and those printed in their country are no different from one another, however they still incessantly believe state that, “You Shi’a have a separate Qur`an!”

It is these sorts of people who wish to see the Shi’a taken out of the fold of Islam and thus, are unyielding in their false claims! However, through using their own reference books, we have proven to them that it is actually they who have the belief in the alteration of the Qur`an!

Alteration of the meaning of the verses is one of the branches of tahrif of the Qur`an and this is something alluded to in the Qur`an itself. The alteration of the meaning (of a sacred scripture) is something that has always been present in the faiths of Judaism, Christianity and even Islam and the

most basic form of alteration of the meaning of a scripture is to choose those verses and passages which suit a person and his ideology.

Thus, in such a method of corruption of the text, only one portion of a verse that benefits a person is quoted while the rest of the verses on that topic or section are ignored whereas we know that the verses of the Qur`an explain and elucidate upon one another.

One instance in which an alteration in the meaning of the Qur`an and the traditions has taken place is in relation to the topic of the material world. While discussing this topic, every group has tried to explain the transient world through their own biases and predispositions.

One group of people who are materialistically deprived and do not have the energy to work have chosen a life of asceticism and abstinence from the material world.

Another group of people live by the tradition which states:

الدُّنْيَا مَزْرَعَةٌ الْآخِرَةِ.

“The world is the planting ground for the next life.”

These people have attached themselves firmly to the life of this world and worship the transient world!

However, both of these extremes are unacceptable and therefore, we must refer to the Noble Prophet (S) and see what he has mentioned in relation to the world and how the complete believer should view it.

According to the Prophet (S), the forty–eighth characteristic of the believer is, “If the believer is in a gathering in which people are paying attention to the material world, then he is more aware and alert of Allah (SwT) than the others.”

The forty–ninth characteristic of the believer is that, “He (SwT)s one who, while in the presence of those who are working for the next life, possesses the most consciousness (Taqwa) of Allah (SwT) and does not seek the material world for pleasure, luxury and enjoyment. Rather, he seeks the material world solely for the honour and esteem of the Muslim nation and for its progress.”

Honour and esteem are not manifest through mere slogans and chants; rather they are seen through being independent and needless of others! If the needs are reciprocal, then it is not a problem however if we are in need of what the others have while they have no need for us or our products, then this is of no benefit!

If we do not want to have political relations with other people or countries, then we must also not have economic relations with them; and if we do not want economic relations with them, then we must not have intellectual relations with them! However, if we wish to have relations with others, then no matter

what slogans in defense of freedom and independence we cry out, they will have no impact since within the products which foreign countries produce and sell, we see that they have infused their culture and tradition into them!

The fiftieth characteristic states, "...the believer is one who not only fulfills the obligatory acts which are upon him and refrains from the prohibited, rather, he also stays away from the doubtful issues in life." Thus, the true believer would not participate in vain and useless gatherings, which is one of the areas of doubt.

In the Du'a of Abu Hamza al-Thumali which is recited in the Month of Ramazhan and has been taught to us by Imam 'Ali b. Husayn al-Sajjad (as), we read that:

أَوْ رَأَيْتَنِي فِي مَجَالِسِ الْبَطَّالِينَ فَحَرَمْتَنِي.

"Or maybe You saw me in a gathering of those who were indulging in vain (acts) and thus, you rejected me."

Thus, we have been told that doubtful acts are like the edge of a cliff and if a person falls into negligence in relation to these deeds, then most definitely, he will fall head first into the valley of sins.

The fifty-first characteristic is that "...the true believer is one who does not permit himself any sort of departure or separation from his faith." The meaning of separation of the faith is best summarized in the following saying:

كُلُّ مَكْرُوهٍ جَائِزُ الْعَمَلِ وَكُلُّ مَسْتَحَبٍّ جَائِزُ التَّرْكِ.

"All reprehensible acts are permissible to perform, and all recommended acts are permissible to neglect."

The true believer is one who stays away from doubtful things and anything which serves to separate him from his faith.

The fifty-second characteristic is that the true believer is one who "...forgives the slips and errors of his brother in faith."

Other than the Infallibles (as), who else is there in the world that does not have errors or faults on their record? If we were to remember all the mistakes and faults that others perform, then it would not be possible to live in this world any longer!

The fifth–third characteristic tells us that the true believer is one who, “...does not forget the good things which his friends have done for him in the past.”

We ask Allah (SwT) that He grant us the ability to enliven these characteristics within ourselves!

1. Bihar al–Anwar, vol. 64, pg. 311

Discourse 3: Fulfilling the Needs of Your Enemy

قَالَ الصَّادِقُ: إِنِّي لِأَسَارِعُ إِلَى حَاجَةِ عَدُوِّي خَوْفًا أَنْ أَرُدَّهُ فَيَسْتَغْنَى عَنِّي.

Imam as–Sadiq [Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad] (as) has said, “I make haste in fulfilling the needs of my enemy since I fear that if I were to delay this, he would become needless of me [and my enemy becoming needless of me such that I am not able to fulfill his needs is something which displeases me].”¹

Sociologists have a differing opinion on the following issue: While living within the society, is the human being geared towards societal life or an individual existence? In other words, are we individualistic or communal in spirit?

That which is clear from the point of view of the natural world is that until various elements do not come into existence, one is not complete. Thus, as long as there are no individuals, there can be no society – just as if there are no drops of water, a river cannot exist! Therefore, we see that a community is made up of individuals and in origin, we are individuals.

However, this is not what the sociologists mean, rather, their premise is one of the following:

1. The Essential Nature of Society

When the community and the entire society benefit and prosper, this is where the true blessings lie, where as the benefits and outcomes of the individual are insignificant.

Therefore, when an individual who is independent from others prospers, it is not very important. Rather, any positive effects in the fields of knowledge, advancement of the sciences and civilization, all stem from the community and society.

Thus, the meaning of “the essential nature” is that of a foundation full of blessings which refers to the entire society.

2. The Essential Nature of the Individual

When there is a discrepancy between the benefits of the person and the benefits of society, if one desires that the society benefits, then this would mean that the individual must sacrifice himself and his desires.

Those who support the theory of the 'Essential Nature of the Society' would hold that the benefits of the entire society must take precedence over everything else. The faith of Islam also accepts the 'Essential Nature of the Society' and tells us that:

يَدُ اللَّهِ مَعَ الْجَمَاعَةِ.

“The 'hand' of Allah is with the congregation.”

The religion of Islam also tells us that:

عَلَيْكَ بِأَسْوَادِ الْأَعْظَمِ وَالشَّاذِ مِنَ الْغَنَمِ لِلذُّبِ.

“I advise you to hold firm to the majority as the stray sheep is (food) for the wolf.”

According to the wordings of these two statements, whatever goodness exists does so within the community and at the congregational level! Therefore, in various areas of life, the individual must be ready to sacrifice himself for the good of the society.

The acts of worship are also societal – for example, the official prayers in Islam are the Salatul Jama'at or the congregational prayers; the 'Umrah is an individual act, however the hajj is an act of worship performed in groups and within an assembly of people. Thus, Islam is in favour of the society and therefore, one of the things which Islam gives extra importance to is the help and assistance extended to other people. For this reason, it has been mentioned in the traditions that:

النَّاسُ كُلُّهُمْ عِيَالُ اللَّهِ.

“All of humanity are the dependents of Allah.”

Spending in the way of Allah (SwT) is the same as spending on the servants of Allah (SwT) and in this regards we are told:

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ

“You shall never attain righteous until you spend of that which you love.”

Thus, if we wish to become righteous people, we must spend our wealth in the way of Allah (SwT). As for the rewards given in Islam for various acts, we are told that there is no reward comparable to giving charity in the way of Allah (SwT). In some of the traditions, the reward for doing good deeds is ten-fold while in others, a seventy-fold reward is given to the person. However in relation to spending in the way of Allah (SwT), the minimum reward which is given back is seven-hundred:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ
سُنْبُلَةٍ مِئَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ...

“The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is as the parable of a seed (of corn) which grows seven ears; within each ear is one hundred grains and Allah increases (the reward) for those whom He pleases...”

It should be noted that the word 'يضاعف' mentioned in this verse cannot be translated as 'double the reward' – rather, it means a many-fold or multiple return!²

It is also important to note that the people whom we must help are not only the Muslims – rather, we have been told that:

لِكُلِّ كَبِدٍ حَرَاءٌ.

“There is an emancipator for every person (regardless of his beliefs).”

Thus, the reward for helping and spending in charity in the way of Allah (SwT) would include our friends and enemies, Muslims and non-Muslims and even animals.

The proof of this fact can be seen in the tradition from Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) in which he stated that if a person wanted something from him (the Divinely appointed Imam) and that person was his enemy, the Imam would actually work harder and quicker to provide it since he would not want

his enemy to go to someone else, thus being deprived of helping his enemy!

With such teachings in our faith, how is it possible that our religion can be spoken of as one full of anger? In which other nation or religion can we find such a program or set of actions? It is these sorts of teachings which give Islam its attractive nature and as we know through revenge, enmity is perpetuated.

If this form of life is sustained (one in which revenge becomes common-place), then we would reach to a very dangerous situation! Thus, the only way to put an end to enmity is not to respond to hatred with hatred!

If we want people to become lovers of Imam al-Zaman (as), the A`immah (as) and the Prophet (S), then we must follow these teachings!

1. Ibid., vol. 75, pg. 207

2. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 161

Discourse 4: Good Of This World And The Next Life

قَالَ الصَّادِقُ: حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي عَنْ أَبِيهِ أَنَّ رَجُلًا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكُوفَةِ كَتَبَ إِلَى الْحُسَيْنِ
بْنِ عَلِيٍّ: يَا سَيِّدِي أَخْبِرْنِي بِخَيْرِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ. فَكَتَبَ: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ
الرَّحِيمِ. أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَإِنَّ مَنْ طَلَبَ رِضَى اللَّهِ بِسَخَطِ النَّاسِ كَفَّاهُ اللَّهُ أُمُورَ النَّاسِ وَ
مَنْ طَلَبَ رِضَى النَّاسِ بِسَخَطِ اللَّهِ وَكَلَّهَ اللَّهُ إِلَى النَّاسِ، وَالسَّلَامُ.

Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said, "My father narrated to me from his father (as) that a man from Kufah wrote a letter to Husayn b. 'Ali (as) which stated: "O' my master! Inform me of a program (to follow) which would contain the goodness of the world and the next life." The Imam (as) wrote back to the man, 'In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Whoever seeks to please Allah by displeasing the people, surely Allah will be sufficient for him in his affairs with the people; the person who seeks to please the people through displeasing Allah, Allah will leave him to the whims of the people. And peace (be upon you).'"¹

In many instances, we see that the pleasure of the Creator and the creations are at opposite ends of the

spectrum. If we seek to earn the pleasure of the creations, then we end up distancing ourselves from the pleasure of Allah (SwT); if we seek the pleasure of the Creator, then we must distance ourselves from the pleasure of the creations. In this instance, what must one do?

The Imam has stated that, “Hasten towards the pleasure of Allah and do not sell the anger of Allah for the meagre price of earning the pleasure of the people. If you truly seek His pleasure, then He will pull the hearts of the people towards you and will repair the problems that the people may encounter with you. However, if you seek the pleasure of the creations, then Allah will leave you at the whims of the people such that you will have to ask them for whatever you need. You will need to ask from people who:

لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا...

“They neither possess the ability to bring any profit nor harm to their selves...”²

These are people who do not have the power to do anything in this world or the next.”

The issue mentioned can sometimes be seen within a person's life, and at other times within the countries of the world. For example, sometimes there are two friends and one of them requests the other to lie on his behalf and in this instance, we see that a person is placed in the dilemma of either pleasing the Creator or pleasing the creation. In this instance, we are told that we must place the pleasure of the Creator above all else:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا

“Those who possess true faith and perform righteous deeds, shortly shall the All-Merciful (al-Rahman) place true love amongst them.”³

One of the great sages has stated that when a person's long-time friend requests him to do something which goes against the laws of Allah (SwT), the person should reply, “I am your friend right up until the brink of the pit of Hell, however I am not going to follow you into it!”

When ‘Aqil, the brother of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) requested him for more than his share from the public treasury, we see that since Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) was active in seeking the pleasure of Allah (SwT), he denied his own brother a 'bonus'! This well-known event is a story that has been taught and passed down for generations and is a lesson for all of us to learn from.

Sometimes this act (of trying to please the people) is committed at the level of the society, while at other

times the actual leader of the people is their true faith, meaning that fulfilling the needs of the people is done under the guidance of gaining the pleasure of Allah (SwT). However, the world today does not accept this – rather, they say that the only important thing is that the needs of the people are fulfilled and because of this belief, things such as homosexual relations are now being made legal!

We see that the leadership of the people by the people in the meaning stated above has brought us many wars. The leadership of the American people revolves around the wants and desires of the American nation; in England, the government bases their policy on the needs of their people.

Sometimes we see the desires of these two nations differ from one another since naturally, the material goals of the people differ from one another. Sometimes, the leadership of the people clash and at election time, the interests of 25% of the population would take precedence over 75% of the population – and even in some instances we see that 51% of the population would be on one side while 49% of the population would be on the other side, however the desires and wishes of the 49% of the population are entirely neglected!

However, if mankind permitted religion to lead them, then not only would the needs of the people of the country be met, rather, even the needs of the neighbouring countries would also be maintained!

We are all for leadership of the people by the people, and even in Nahj al-Balagha we read that the masses of people have been encouraged to lead the society and this can be clearly seen in the letter issued to Malik al-Ashtar in which the Imam wrote that the majority of people are supporters of Islam and are his defenders.

Thus if today, the people of the world do not wish to become engulfed in wars, then the leadership of the people by the people of true faith must take control and the pleasure of Allah (SwT) alone must be kept in one's sight.

In the tradition under review, the Imam noticed that the person asking the question was from Kufah – without doubt, they were people who had placed the pleasure of the creations above the pleasure of the Creator and it is for this reason that the Imam said to him (in a part of the tradition) that, “If you had not left the side of ‘Ali (as) and Imam al-Hasan (as), then you would have achieved greatness in this world and the next! However since you did not observe their rights upon you, you are now trapped in the clutches of the Bani Umayyah.”

Therefore anytime we are given advice, we must look it over, ponder over it, and then see what Allah (SwT) would want and expect from us!

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 75, pg. 126

2. Surat al-Raad (13), verse 16

3. Surat Mariam (19), verse 96

Discourse 5: A Noble End

At the end of the Ziyarat of Sayyidah Fatimah Ma'sumah b. Musa al-Kadhim (as) we address Allah (SwT) and pray:

... وَ أَسْأَلُكَ أَنْ تَخْتِمَ لِي بِالسَّعَادَةِ فَلَا تَسْلُبَ مِنِّي مَا أَنَا فِيهِ ...

“O' Allah! I ask you for a noble end (to my life) and do not take away (the true faith, security and Your consciousness) which I possess.”

Based on this line, we would like to discuss a tradition which speaks about having a noble end to this life, as this is a very important issue.

Sometimes, a person may live a very prosperous life, traversing the path of the truth, however something may happen and the end of his life would be filled with disbelief, sins and open rebellion! It is also possible that a person lives a life of sin, however he is then given the opportunity to change before his life ends and turn into a person such as hur b. Yazid al-Riyahi! He may become such a person that within the course of a few hours, he changes and becomes one whom people stand in front of and proclaim:

بِأَبِي أَنْتُمْ وَأُمِّي!

“May my father and mother be sacrificed for you!”

It is not only us, rather, even the Infallibles (as) stand in front of the graves of such martyrs and say this line!

Having a good end to this life can be accomplished in various ways and there is a tradition in Mizan al-hikmah that has been narrated from 'Uyun al-Akhbar al-Riza in which this issue has been alluded to:

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ لِبَعْضِ النَّاسِ: إِنْ أَرَدْتَ أَنْ يَخْتِمَ بِخَيْرٍ عَمَلِكَ حَتَّى تَقْبُضَ وَ أَنْتَ فِي أَفْضَلِ الْأَعْمَالِ فَعِظَمَ اللَّهُ حَقَّهُ أَنْ تُبَدَّلَ نِعَمَائِهِ فِي مَعَاصِيهِ وَ أَنْ تَغْرُبَ بِحِلْمِهِ عَنْكَ وَ أَكْرَمَ كُلِّ مَنْ وَجَدْتَهُ يَذْكُرُ مِنَّا أَوْ يَنْتَحِلُ مُوَدَّتَنَا.

Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said, "If you wish to have a good ending (from the life of this world) and that your soul is taken from you (while you are) in the best of states, then do not use the blessings of Allah to commit transgressions. If you have performed a sin and Allah has not yet punished you for it, then do not be proud at His forbearance. Consider any one who narrates our (the Ahlu'l Bayt's) words as being a noble person and one who accepts us and has intense love for us."¹

In this tradition, the Imam has stated, "You should perform three tasks so that your end (in this life) will be a righteous one. First off, whatever blessings Allah has given to you must not be used to transgress His laws."

In reality, this part of the tradition points to the issue we are told that, "O' you who are incessantly transgressing – wake up! Why are you taking the blessings of Allah and using them in disobedience! Your life, wealth, all of the organs of your body, etc... are all blessings from Allah, and yet you use them to perform sins! Truly this is something despicable!"

The second point mentioned is, "When you commit a sin and Allah, through His patience and forbearance gives you the opportunity to repent and turn back to Him, do not use that occasion to feel proud and arrogant and think to yourself that you have done something good!"

The third point mentioned is, "Those who have a strong affection for the Ahlu'l Bayt (as), are their Shi'a (true followers) and are continuously speaking about them, must be respected."

Definitely, it is through observing these commandments that one will have a righteous end.

A person does not know when he will leave this world, and thus how good it would be were he to die while performing righteous deeds within Masjidul haram or one of the sanctuaries of the A`immah (as)! Conversely, how bad it would be if he were to leave the world in a state of open disobedience to Allah (SwT)!

All of the great scholars feared their end and the actions that they would be performing at the time of death and thus, they always asked Allah (SwT) for a good end to come to them when they die. The reason for this being so crucial is that the most important thing must be the final page of our deed of records and what is written on it.

Thus, we must always entrust ourselves to Allah (SwT), and if we fall prey to sins, we must immediately ask forgiveness for them!

1. Mizan al-hikmah, no. 4621

Discourse 6: Advice Given To Abu Dharr On Sustenance

عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍّ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لِرَجُلٍ وَهُوَ يُوصِيهِ: أَقْلِلْ مِنَ الشَّهَوَاتِ يَسْهَلْ عَلَيْكَ الْفَقْرُ، وَ أَقْلِلْ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ يَسْهَلْ عَلَيْكَ الْمَوْتُ، وَ قَدِّمْ مَا لَكَ أَمَامَكَ يَسْرُكَ اللَّحَاقُ بِهِ، وَ اقْنَعْ بِمَا أُوتِيَتْهُ يَخَفْ عَلَيْكَ الْحِسَابُ، وَ لَا تَتَشَاغَلْ عَمَّا فُرِضَ عَلَيْكَ بِمَا قَدْ ضَمِنَ لَكَ فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ بِفَائِتِكَ مَا قَدْ قُسِمَ لَكَ، وَ لَسْتَ بِلَاحِقٍ مَا قَدْ زُوِيَ عَنْكَ. فَلَا تَكُ جَاهِدًا فِيمَا أَنْصَحَ نَافِدًا، وَاسِعَ لِمُلْكٍ لَا زَوَالَ لَهُ فِي مَنْزِلٍ لِأَنْتَقَالَ عَنْهُ.

It has been narrated from Abu Dharr that he said, “The Messenger of Allah (S) said to a person whom he was advising, 'Reduce the base desires (of your soul) and poverty shall become easy upon you (to bear); lessen the sins so that death shall become easy for you to endure; send things from your own wealth ahead for yourself, so that by seeing this (on the Day of Judgment), you shall become happy; be content with that which is given to you so that your accountability and reckoning is reduced.

Do not busy yourself with the sustenance which is guaranteed to reach you (and do not develop greed to this segment of the provision which is guaranteed to reach you) so that you do not disregard the obligatory acts which are upon you (to perform), since surely that which has been set aside for you will not leave your hand (it shall surely reach you), and that which has left your hand (that sustenance which you have lost) will never come back again. Do not struggle to attain those things that are not pure and will be destroyed; do not put forth a struggle for those things that are temporal. Rather, struggle for those things which are perpetual and which will last forever (in the next life).”¹

In this tradition, the Messenger of Allah (S) has given us various pieces of advice, and at the end of his speech, has spoken about sustenance.

The Prophet (S) first stated that if we were able to reduce our lower desires, then poverty would become something easy to bear!

All of the wealth which exists in the world can be spent in three areas: 1) the necessities of life; 2) own personal welfare; and 3) our lower desires (our wants).

The amount which is spent on the necessities of life is the smallest portion spent (out of all three areas), where as the amount spent on satisfying our lower desires and passions is where the vast amount of our

wealth goes. Therefore, the Noble Prophet (S) has told us that if we reduce our base desires, then poverty will be easy upon us.

Without doubt, a majority of the people who are poor are not deprived in relation to their primary needs and necessities (of life). The state of poverty that people encounter is either in relation to their welfare (need) and well-being, or in areas of the base and lower desires (greed).

A person may, for example, think that his house is too small for him and searches for a bigger house – thus, greed compels him to purchase a larger house.

There are also other things which are “unnecessary expenditures” which are, many times, placed at the top of our list of priorities as necessities and essential requirements. However, in reality we see that this is not the case!

There are many people who go through great pains in order to gain the material pleasures of life which they do not need. They have a house that is acceptable according to their status and requirements, their loans are all paid up, however they stop and ponder for a while and think to themselves:

مِنْ سَعَادَةِ الرَّجُلِ سَعَةُ دَارِهِ...

“One of the ways of happiness for a person is to have a large house...”

In addition they also think that, “Tomorrow, my young children will grow up, my relatives will come over and...” In summary, gradually, such a person would make up excuses for himself, sell his old house, end up taking a loan from the bank just to purchase a new house!

One of the problems with people today is that they are not able to bear the challenges of life – there must be challenges and difficulties within life as these apparent “troubles” are actually no troubles at all!

We do not say that if Allah (SwT) blesses a person (materialistically speaking), that he must throw that thing away! Rather, our discussion focuses on the fact that we must not take these material things as being necessities of life which one needs and that one should spend his entire life chasing them!

Thus, when a person does not have such base desires, then he is definitely not poor!

Of course, we must accept the fact that when it comes to the absolute necessities of life, there are some people who are definitely poor and needy (of the basic needs).

In regards to the second commandment which is that we must reduce the number of sins we commit, we see that there is a direct relationship between the sins we perform and ease at the time of death and it is for this reason that the Prophet (S) has spoken these grand words.

At this point, we ask: why do people fear death? Simply put, people fear death because they feel it is complete annihilation and non-existence and because they think that death is an end to all things. Since they do not see death as a journey through a valley towards perpetual existence and a much more spacious world (compared to this world), they have a hatred and fear of it!

It is natural for a person to fear darkness and annihilation – however, if one was a true believer (Mo`min), then he would definitely not fear death! Truthfully, one of the greatest services which the Prophets (as) assisted mankind with was taking away the fear of death from them.

Of course, it is very well possible that a person is a true believer and has firm conviction in the next life, however since his book of deeds is blackened over with sins, he would fear death. In such a case, there is no way out for this person, except repentance from his sins.

Death is like a coarse, but colorful woolen garment for the believer which he takes off of his body and from which he steps out of this cramped and darkened world, into the presence of the close, intimate friends of Allah (SwT):

الدُّنْيَا سِجْنُ الْمُؤْمِنِ وَ جَنَّةُ الْكَافِرِ.

“The world is the prison for a believer and a paradise for the disbeliever.”

Thus if the door of the prison was to open, and the prisoner was told, “Go ahead, you are free to leave”, would he be upset? Therefore, being freed from this world has no grief or hurt associated with it!

Of course, this sentence can be interpreted another way which is that due to continuously sinning, when the time of death approaches, death becomes very difficult for the person to bear. Since the person had developed a strong affinity and very intense relationship with the material world, at the time of death, when the soul is coming out, death would be extremely painful to bear! However, if one had not committed sins, then it would be very easy for the soul to leave the body.

At this junction, we see that the Prophet (S) focuses his attention on the next life and the fact that one must not exert his efforts to fulfill the affairs of the material world. In more correct terms, he has invited us to refrain from worshipping the transient world!

The tradition tells us that, “Allah will make your sustenance reach you and has guaranteed this. The amount which is destined for you will never slip from you, thus, you should not busy yourself with becoming greedy in terms of seeking wealth as through this, you would end up not performing the obligatory acts which are incumbent upon you.”

This can be summarized in the commonly stated belief that, “Whatever is in your destiny will reach you.”

In continuation, the Prophet (S) stated, “Do not think that by merely working (at your job) that which has been specified (by Allah (SwT)) to reach you will not make its way to you, or that which should not reach you, will be given to you.”

Therefore, we must not put forth intense struggles in regards to those things which are not permanent. Rather, in order to secure the next life, which is perpetual and ever lasting, we must struggle hard!

The following points must be noted:

1. There are some very complex expressions and interpretations given in the verses of the Noble Qur`an and the traditions in relation to one's sustenance which at first glance, may seem contradictory to one another.

From one point of view, we see that the Qur`an and the traditions mention that the sustenance which shall reach us has already been apportioned by Allah (SwT). For example, in one verse of the Qur`an we read that:

مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا

“There is not a single creature upon the Earth, except that upon Allah lies its sustenance.” (11:6)

In addition, it is mentioned in the traditions that as long as a person is alive, his sustenance will continue to reach him.

A person once asked the Prophet of Allah (S), “If a person was locked inside a room and all of the ways out were blocked, how would his sustenance reach him?” The Prophet (S) replied, “His sustenance would reach him from that same channel that death would reach him.”

Thus, according to the verses and tradition quoted, the sustenance that we shall earn (in our life-time) is guaranteed to make its way to us.

The opposite side of the spectrum of this opinion, just as has been mentioned in the traditions, is that we have been invited to strive and struggle and wake up early in the morning to go after our earnings, since the person who is idle and unemployed is removed from the mercy of Allah (SwT). Thus, we must go out and seek our livelihood through business, trade and commerce and other such methods.

In the beginning, it seems as if there is a dissimilarity between the two views. However, we can rationalize the contrasting understandings by stating that the sustenance that has been guaranteed to reach us has conditions related to it – just as there are conditions for our prayers to be accepted. One of the conditions for the guaranteed-form of sustenance to reach us is that we must put forth an effort. With this brief understanding, the confusion between these two issues is removed!

2. Throughout the world, millions of people die due to hunger, and if sustenance was truly divided by Allah (SwT), then why are people dying?

When we see people dying of hunger we should realize that this is a sign of the oppression and tyranny of humanity! If a tyrant is throwing oppressed people into prison and not giving them food, thus causing them to die of hunger, we can not assume that this is the fault of the Creator of the Universe!

The African continent has the largest number of people in the entire world who are dying due to starvation, however at the same time, they hold the large deposits of diamonds and other valuable minerals! We see that there are a group of oppressors who are stealing this wealth while at the same time, we see that excess food is thrown away in the garbage and because of this, the Africans are dying of hunger!

In order for the price of wheat and other commodities to stay stable in the world markets, some countries actually dump truckloads of grain into the ocean, or they end up hoarding it – even if this means paying the price through the deaths of millions of people!

Thus, if there were no oppressors on the Earth, then such tribulations would definitely not occur. Allah (SwT) has given all of us intelligence so that we travel on the right path using our human nature (Fitrah) which we were created with. Through this power, we would strive and struggle and work for the needs of the material life and for even greater output and production. However not all of this goes against the fact that there are groups of people who seek to control and limit this production!

There is another division seen in the traditions in which sustenance has been divided into the following categories:

1. The sustenance that one desires.
2. The sustenance that desires you.

The sustenance too is just like other issues which are related to Qaza and Qadr (decree and portion). The guaranteed and definite sustenance which will reach a person is that which, whether he likes it or not, comes to him; while the other one is that which we must go and seek.

From this division of the sustenance which the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has mentioned in Nahj al-Balagha, it becomes clear that the traditions which tell us that, “The sustenance of a person will definitely reach him, even if he is in a prison” is in reference to that sustenance which has been guaranteed and promised for that person!

Discourse 7: Commentary Of “Keep Us On The Straight Path”

فِي تَفْسِيرِ قَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ (إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ) يَقُولُ الصَّادِقُ: أَرْشَدْنَا إِلَى الطَّرِيقِ الْمُؤَدِّيِّ إِلَى مَحَبَّتِكَ، وَ الْمُبَلِّغِ دِينِكَ، وَ الْمَانِعِ مِنْ أَنْ نَتَّبِعَ أَهْوَاءَنَا فَنُغْتَبَ، أَوْ نَأْخُذَ بِأَرَائِنَا فَنَهْلِكَ.

In the exegesis of the words of Allah, the Noble and Grand, (Keep us on the Straight Path (as-Sirat al-Mustaqim)), [Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad] as-Sadiq (as) said that this means, “Guide us to the path whose result is Your love and which reaches to Your religion (complete code and way of life) and which would prevent us from following our lower desires or in which we would take other views and opinions (over Yours) which would result in our destruction.”¹

In the exegesis of this verse of the Qur'an which we read a minimum of ten times within a 24 hour period, Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has stated the following points:

1. The first sign of the Straight Path is that it leads to the love of Allah (SwT). If day after day, our love for Allah (SwT) increases, then this is a sign that we are on the Straight Path.
2. The Straight Path is that which makes us reach to the religion of Allah (SwT) and the truth of His teachings. If we see that, gradually, we are becoming closer to the truths of the faith, then it should be clear that we are on the Straight Path.
3. The Straight Path is the road that prevents us from following our lower, base desires and our personal opinions and judgements.

Therefore, if we see that we have these three characteristics within ourselves, then we should know that we are definitely on the Straight Path.

On the other hand, if we see that there is no effect of the love of Allah (SwT) in our being or that our sincerity and presence of heart in the Salat is becoming less, then it is clear that we have gone astray from the Straight Path.

In addition, if we see that there is no increase in our knowledge in regards to the Usul (fundamental beliefs) or the Furu' (practical actions) of the religion of Allah (SwT), then it is perfectly clear that we have lost our direction from the Straight Path!

We seek refuge in Allah (SwT) that we, due to our lower desires, destroy the color of the faith and our religious responsibilities as this is something very dangerous!

When we stand for the Salat, we must seek guidance to the Straight Path from Allah (SwT) with our entire presence and must also ask for an increase in love for Him to be instilled within our hearts.²

1. Masnad al-Rida, vol. 1, pg. 314

2. A question may come up that: What is the Straight Path (siratul Mustaqim) and secondly, why is it that we are constantly seeking guidance to the Straight Path from Allah (SwT) – are we currently misguided? Furthermore, supposing that these words of ours are true, then what about the Prophet (S) and the Aa'imma (as) who are examples of perfect human being – what does it mean in relation to them?

First, the Straight Path is the path of purity and goodness; the path of justice and equality and the path of true faith and righteous actions.

Secondly, in response to the question raised, we must state that: While a person is traversing upon the path of guidance, there is a fear that at any moment, he may slip off of the path and become misguided. It is because of this fact that we must resign ourselves to our Lord and ask Him to keep us firm and steady on the Straight Path.

In addition, travelling upon the path of guidance is the path towards perfection upon which, stage by stage, a person passes through the stages of difficulties so that he can reach to a higher level.

We also know this fact that the paths towards perfection are limitless and that they lead to the Limitless Entity. Therefore, there is no room for amazement that even the Prophets and Aa'imma used to ask Allah (SwT) for guidance to the Straight Path (siratul Mustaqim) since it is only Allah (SwT) who is the Purely Perfect Entity and without exception, all others are travelling upon the path to reaching complete perfection. Thus, what harm is there if these personalities also ask Allah (SwT) to reach to a higher level of perfection!?! (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 1, pg. 46)

Discourse 8: Being Spiritually Awake And Ready

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ: يَا مَعْشَرَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، شَمِّرُوا
فَإِنَّ الْأَمْرَ جَدٌّ، وَتَاهَبُوا فَإِنَّ الرَّحِيلَ قَرِيبٌ، وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ السَّفَرَ بَعِيدٌ، وَخَفِّفُوا
أَثْقَالَكُمْ فَإِنَّ وِرَاءَكُمْ عَقَبَةً كَوُودًا، وَ لَا يَقْطَعُهَا إِلَّا الْمُخَفَّفُونَ. أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّ بَيْنَ
يَدَيْ السَّاعَةِ أُمُورًا شَدِيدًا، وَ أَهْوَالَ عِظَامًا،

وَ زَمَانًا صَعْبًا يَتَمَلَّكُ فِيهِ الظُّلْمَةُ، وَ يَتَصَدَّرُ فِيهِ الفَسَقَةُ، وَ يُضَامُ فِيهِ الآمِرُونَ
بِالمَعْرُوفِ، وَ يُضْطَهَدُ فِيهِ النَّاهِينَ عَنِ المُنْكَرِ. فَأَعِدُوا لِذَلِكَ الإِيمَانَ، وَ عَضُّوا
عَلَيْهِ بِالنَّوْاجِدِ، وَ الجَّأُوا إِلَى العَمَلِ الصَّالِحِ، وَ أَكْرَهُوا عَلَيْهِ النُّفُوسَ تُفْضُوا إِلَى
النَّعِيمِ الدَّائِمِ.

It has been narrated by Anas b. Malik that he said, “I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say, “O' assembly of Muslims! Prepare yourselves (and pull up your sleeves), since the issue of the Day of Resurrection is a serious one; prepare for death, since the time for it is near; prepare the provisions for the journey, since it is a long trip; make sure your provisions (for this trip) are light, since the journey ahead of you is a very difficult expedition and except for those who have a light load, no one else shall be able to withstand this trip!

O' people! Surely the events which shall occur near to the Day of Judgment and the end of the world are significant; there are munificent situations (which must be traversed), and there are hard times ahead. During that time, the oppressors will be the rulers and the open sinners will be the ones at the forefront of the running of the world.

Those who command others to good deeds (perform Amr bil Ma'ruf) will be subjugated, and those who prevent others from evil deeds (perform Nahi 'Anil Munkar) will be under extreme pressure. It is through possessing true faith that one must prepare for that day. One must clench his teeth and struggle to perform righteous deeds even if the soul dislikes this and (thus, one must) go towards the perpetual and blessed Paradise.”¹

In this tradition, the Noble Prophet (S) has advised humanity to become spiritually awake, aware and prepare themselves for what is to come.

The First Point: Be prepared!

According to the lexical definition, the word 'شمر' refers to 'getting ready', and it is possible that originally, it was used by the 'Arabs when they used to say:

شَمَّرَ عَنِ سَاقِيهِ.

“He rolled his garments up to his shin (in preparation of some work).”

Traditionally, 'Arab men wear long, flowing robes, however when working, this clothing would not be suitable. Thus, when they wished to do any form of physical labour, they would pull up their clothing and

hold it up with their hands, or would pull the clothing up and tie a long piece of cloth around the waist as a belt. In this way, the long gown would reach halfway up their legs or up to the knees and thus:

شَمَّرَ عَنْ سَاقَيْهِ.

is actually a figure of speech meaning that one should get ready to work and do some laborious task.

The Prophet (S) then said, "...prepare yourselves since this is a very serious issue which concerns the fire of hell and the accountability and reckoning (of your deeds)..."

The Second Point: Prepare the things which you shall need (for this journey)

The word 'أهبة' refers to the provisions (and is similar to the meaning of the word in the first commandment mentioned above).

What is the difference between the words 'شَمَّرُوا' and 'تَأَهَّبُوا' as both are closely related to 'getting ready'?

The difference between these two words is that where as 'شَمَّرُوا' means that the person himself gets ready, the word 'تَأَهَّبُوا' means that one prepares the necessary items which are needed.

We know that for any journey one takes – of which the journey of the Next Life is one of them – one must be prepared. In addition, one must also prepare the necessary items which are needed on the trip...

The Third Point: Provisions for the journey must be gathered

Other than the items needed (for this long journey of the Next Life) such as the steed and baggage, one also needs other things as without doubt, the departure time is close and the trip is a long.

These two statements of the tradition under discussion are not contradictory to one another since the meaning of the departure time refers to when the journey shall start, and the journey shall start very soon. However at same time the journey is also a long one! It is just as the example in which a person would say to those traveling with him, "Get ready as tomorrow we are starting our journey, however the trip we are taking is going to last one year and thus, you need to take everything you need with you."

Thus in summary, there is no divergence between 'close' and 'far' as mentioned in this tradition since one word refers to the beginning of the journey while the other refers to the culmination of the trip. It is very likely that the trip shall start at any time as the time between the life and death of a person is very short.

In the person's throat, there is a very small piece of flesh which can be referred to as the 'tongue of life' that keeps a person between life and death. When one eats something, the tongue covers the wind pipe and seals it tightly shut, guiding the food down the food pipe and into the stomach. After the food has been swallowed, the tongue moves out of the way and the wind pipe is once again opened and the food pipe is then closed.

However if while a person was eating, the tongue was to move a bit late or not move at all and the wind pipe was not covered and even a small portion of food was to go down the wind pipe, this could prove to be fatal! This is how frail life is!

The journey of the next life is a very long trip and according to some verses of the Qur`an, it will last for 1,000 years, while according to other verses, it is a trip of 50,000 years! The way the commentators of the Qur`an have explained this difference (between 1,000 years and 50,000 years) is that on the Day of Judgment, there are fifty stations which one must cross – meaning that there are 50 customs offices which a person must go through.

Each station – if the meaning of these verses is that indeed there are 50 different stops – would take 1,000 years to pass through. However, if we take this number is simply being metaphorical in the meaning of numerous or many, then the review and accountability would take thousands of years to complete!

The Forth Point: Lighten your load!

We must lighten our load since the road in front of us is very difficult to traverse and none except those who are traveling light will be able to make the journey.

When a person wants to take a trip, naturally he would not take heavy things with him and would not place a heavy burden on himself. If a person were to have a very heavy load, then he would definitely not make it past the first station of his trip! However, as for those who have physically prepared and trained, are quick and agile, they shall be able to quickly pass through the stations.

How good it would be if one made sure that his load was light and if he were to develop his asceticism to such a level that he would be able to, just as a swift horse passes through fields, pass through all the stages of the next life!

In the past, people used to travel in caravans and if anyone was left behind then that person would face tremendous difficulties since it was not possible for the entire caravan to stop and wait for one person! Thus, people tried to ensure that they did not separate from the rest of the caravan. With this said, we see that there is a line in the tradition under discussion that states:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! إِنَّ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ السَّاعَةِ أُمُوراً شَدِيداً وَ أَهْوَالاً عَظِماً...

“O' people! Surely the events which shall occur near to the time of the Day of Judgment and the end of the world are great...”

This part of the tradition calls for a lengthy and extensive discussion, however in these condensed discourses, we shall present a very short review of this line.

From the traditions, we can deduce that at the end of the world and just shortly before the advent of Waliul 'Asr (may Allah hasten his return), there are some very difficult events which await the physical world and those in it. Since both of these states will take place at the threshold of the life of this world, we can link them together and as seen here, connect them with one another.

The Messenger of Allah (S) has stated, “At the end of the world, there will be difficult situations and frightful events which shall take place which will turn the entire universe upside down. The mountains shall become as fine wool; the rivers shall come to a boil and the sun will be darkened!

In summary, such a state will come about that humanity will forget everything! Not only this, but also the societal life of the people will also be filled with great, fearful events.”

At this point, we specifically refer to some of the issues of the end of the world.

This will be a time when the oppressors and sinful people will rule over the entire world while those who enjoin others to perform righteous deeds and prevent people from wicked deeds will be placed under extreme pressures.

After this statement, the Prophet (S) has given us certain commandments. However it should be noted that it is not necessary that what is mentioned in this tradition should take over the entire world. Rather, it is possible these signs may only appear in a part of the world and that another part of the world may be governed by righteousness. However without doubt, sooner or later, the entire world will come face to face with these issue and we can see an example of this situation in the time that we are living today.

When the Prophet (S) elucidated upon the corruption which would engulf the world, he pointed to two specific issues:

1. The government.
2. Commanding others to perform righteous deeds and preventing others from enacting wicked deeds.

The Prophet (S) stated that the world would be destroyed since the government or leadership of the world would fall into the hands of oppressive and sinning people.

The topic of government within the Islamic teachings is something very important and we must strive to

establish Islamic Government as if there was no oppressive or corrupt governments then not a single place on the Earth would have corruption in it! In summary, if the government becomes corrupt then everything else will also become corrupt and it is because of this fact that it is said:

النَّاسُ عَلَى دِينِ مُلُوكِهِمْ.

“People follow the religion of their leaders.”

Therefore we see that the Prophet (S) has not relied on anything else in this discussion – rather he put his finger on the issue of the government since this is the foundation of righteousness and corruption.

Another very sensitive issue is that of commanding people to perform righteous deeds and preventing them from performing wicked deeds. As we know, these are two obligatory acts, which if implemented, would see all other obligatory acts maintained and upheld.

It has been mentioned in the traditions that commanding people to perform righteous deeds and preventing people from wicked deeds compared to all other obligatory acts is as the water in the stormy seas to saliva in the mouth!

Fifth Point: What must we do in the face of corruption?

The Prophet (S) has recommended us to take up two weapons:

1. True faith – this is the most important weapon for protection.
2. Perseverance – this characteristic dictates that when a person becomes upset, he becomes firm and resolute on performing a specific task. When this occurs, naturally, he forces his teeth together.

When he applies a great amount of pressure on his jaws and teeth, his back teeth also force together and he gets prepared to carry out his responsibility. It is for this reason that in the tradition under review we are told that:

عَضُوا عَلَيْهِ بِالنَّوْاجِدِ.

“...clench his teeth and struggle to perform righteous deeds...”

This part of the tradition points to the firm decision a person takes which ultimately leads to a gradual progress in what he wishes to perform.

Thus, the meaning of the second weapon (perseverance) means that through being slack, lazy and lethargic, a person will never reach to any rank or station in his life!

If we look at the lives of the great people who lived in the past, we would see how much effort they put forth. It was in the heat of the summer in the city of Najaf, Iraq (which reaches to over 50°C) that the late author of the book Jawahirul Kalam (one of the main books in the Science of Jurisprudence) wrote his masterpiece while sitting at the head of the grave of his son! It is not only limited to this great scholar, rather the lives of many other people is the same...!

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 186

Discourse 9: The Relationship Between Religion And The Material World

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدِ الْخُدْرِيِّ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ عِنْدَ مُنْصَرَفِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ وَ
النَّاسُ يُحَدِّقُونَ بِهِ وَقَدْ أَسْنَدَ ظَهْرَهُ إِلَى طَلْحَةَ: أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، أَقْبِلُوا عَلَى مَا
كُلَّفْتُمُوهُ مِنْ إِصْلَاحِ آخِرَتِكُمْ، وَأَعْرِضُوا عَمَّا ضَمِنَ لَكُمْ مِنْ دُنْيَاكُمْ، وَلَا
تَسْتَعْمِلُوا جَوَارِحَ غُذِيَّتِ بِنِعْمَتِهِ فِي التَّعَرُّضِ لِسَخَطِهِ بِنِقْمَتِهِ، وَاجْعَلُوا شُغْلَكُمْ
فِي التَّمَاسِ مَغْفِرَتِهِ...

It has been narrated by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that he said, "When the Messenger of Allah (S) was returning back from Uhud, (at one point) he was leaning against talhah with throngs of people around both of them.

At this point, I heard him say 'O' people! Engage in those actions which form your primary responsibility for the improvement of your next life; turn away (do not keep yourself busy) from those things which have been guaranteed to you for the life of this world (your sustenance); do not make use of the body parts which have been given to you as a blessing in the way of sins and against the laws (of Allah); make your primary task (in this world) that of seeking the forgiveness (of Allah for your sins)."¹

As we know, any tradition which we read are quotations from statements made at a specific time in history and the depth of the meaning of the traditions differ when we keep in mind the instances in which

they were spoken.

The situation that arose after the Battle of Uhud was particular to that instance in time. The Muslims had lost many dear ones – such as Hamza, the Leader of the Martyrs and the Prophet (S) himself had many injuries on his body and even his teeth had been shattered in this war! According to one tradition from Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as), the Prophet (S) had over ninety injuries on his body!

In summary, the situation at that time was very tense and critical and thus the Prophet (S) not only had to bestow a sense of hope (for the future) upon the people, but he also had to calm them down. In addition to all of this, he also had to strengthen their spiritual foundations and prepare them to accept the loss they had just incurred.

At such a sensitive time, the Prophet (S) gave the Muslims four commandments which would not only act as a source of tranquility for their hearts, but would also make the path to removing the tension for the losses suffered at Uhud clear to them, and would assist them in their future victories.

The essence of the words spoken by the Prophet (S) contained in these commandments are in relation to the religion and material world: “Perform those things which are your primary and principal responsibilities...”

As we know, people have one set of responsibilities which are their primary ones, however they also have others which are their secondary duties. The main responsibility is the reformation of the next life, while the secondary program is the maintenance of one's life in this transient world which has been guaranteed by Allah (SwT).

In relation to this, the Noble Qur`an tells us:

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلٌّ فِي
كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ

“There is no moving creature on Earth but its sustenance depends on Allah and He knows the time and place of its resting and its temporary repository (of goods). All of this is in a manifest book.”²

On the other hand, we do not have a single verse in the Qur`an in relation to the next life which has given us a guarantee that everyone would be assured of entering into Paradise!

From one point of view, Islam tells us that we should not busy ourselves with the life of this world and in reality, we have been commanded to spend most of our time in the remembrance of the next life.

Naturally, within one's self, there is something which pulls him towards the material world while the

various spiritual dimensions seek to pull him towards the next life – however these forces are very weak. Thus, in relation to the material world, people are like robots, chasing things of the temporal world, while in relation to the next life, it is like the machine is moving rapidly around them which they can not catch up with!

Therefore, 'neglecting' the transient world does not mean that Islam wants people to be lazy, poor and not prosper in the economic spheres of life – no this is definitely not the case! The natural instinct of the human being is that he gravitates towards the material world and thus we see that the greatest teacher of humanity, the Noble Prophet of Islam (S), has told us that there must be a balance in both arenas!

After this commandment, the Noble Prophet (S) then makes a statement, seeking to appeal to our sentiments and says, “Are you not ashamed that you are making use of the blessings of Allah (SwT) and are performing sins with the things which He has granted you?” In other words, as they say, you eat the salt but you end up breaking the salt–shaker!

Would it not be considered rude if one went to a person's house, ate his food, and then began to insult the host!?

Without doubt, if a person was only to remember the following line at the time of moving close to sinning, he would definitely stop himself: “All the power and energy lies solely with Allah (SwT).”

In conclusion, the Prophet (S) states that, “Seek forgiveness from Allah (SwT) and struggle to attain closeness to Him through obedience. Expend all of your ambitions in this regards so that you are able to become His servant.” !

1. Ibid., vol. 74, pg. 182

2. Surat Hud (11), verse 6

Discourse 10: Taqwa (Consciousness of Allah)

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ: أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ، وَاسْعَوْا فِي مَرْضَاتِهِ، وَايْقِنُوا مِنَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْفَنَاءِ وَمِنَ الْآخِرَةِ بِالْبَقَاءِ وَاعْمَلُوا لِمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ. فَكَأَنَّكُمْ بِالدُّنْيَا لَمْ تَكُنْ، وَبِالْآخِرَةِ لَمْ تَزَلْ.

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّ مَنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا ضَيْفٌ، وَمَا فِي أَيْدِيهِمْ عَارِيَةٌ، وَإِنَّ الضَّيْفَ
 مُرْتَحِلٌ، وَالْعَارِيَةُ مَرْدُودَةٌ. أَلَا وَإِنَّ الدُّنْيَا عَرْضٌ حَاضِرٌ يَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ الْبَرُّ وَالْ
 الْفَاجِرُ، وَالْآخِرَةُ وَعْدٌ صَادِقٌ، يَحْكُمُ فِيهَا مَلِكٌ عَادِلٌ قَادِرٌ، فَرَحِمَ اللَّهُ أُمَّرَأً
 يَنْظُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَهَّدَ لِرِمْسِهِ مَا دَامَ رَسْنُهُ مُرْخِيًا وَحَبْلُهُ عَلَى غَارِبِهِ مُلْقِيًا قَبْلَ أَنْ
 يَنْفِذَ الْأَجَلَ، وَ يَنْقَطِعَ عَمَلُهُ.

It has been narrated by Anas b. Malik that he said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say, 'O' People! Have Taqwa of Allah as is worthy of Him; strive in gaining His pleasure; have certainty that the world is temporal and that the Next Life is everlasting; strive for the life after death such that it could be said about you that it is as if you were never in this world and so that it could be said about you that it is as if you have been in the next life for time memorial.

O' people! Surely everyone in the world are guests (of this world); all that they possess are simply trusts (given to them) and these guests shall (one day) leave and the trusts that were with them shall return back to their owners. You must know that this world is a merchandise which both the righteous and wicked person make use of, while the next life is the true promise (of Allah) which is ruled by the Just, Powerful One.

So then may the mercy of Allah be upon the person who looks at his soul and prepares his grave before death comes to him during this time that his halters are loosened from around him and before he arrives at his appointed time of death, as then (at that time), the ability to perform (good) actions will be removed from him." 1

This is a tradition in which there is both a summarized and detailed explanation given within the tradition itself. In the beginning, we see that we have been commanded to observe Taqwa and give it its due right, while later on we see that this issue has been explained in greater detail.

Much has been said in regards to the definition of Taqwa, however we can explain this comprehensive trait by saying: 'Taqwa is the inner protection and internal lock which prevents a person from committing sins.'

Of course, Taqwa has various levels to it – sometimes we see that it is at the level of 'Adalah or 'justice' (with others); sometimes Taqwa goes even higher than mere 'justice' such that we reach to the level of 'Ismah or 'infallibility' as 'Ismah is nothing more than the highest level of Taqwa.

Thus, the sense of responsibility (to Allah (SwT)) which is inside the spirit of a person and the state of Wiqayah (inner protection), is nothing other than Taqwa!

The right which is owed to Taqwa is that it is nurtured to its highest level and that one does not become

satisfied with merely the lower forms.

This is best understood by the following example that when a flood is approaching, the person would rush to shut all the doors and windows of his house – whether they are small and weak or powerful and large. Therefore, the more powerful and larger the doors of Taqwa become, the less damage will come about!

The lower desires, passions and following of the lower soul are just like a flood of water, while Taqwa is like the door or gate (which acts as protection) from the tumultuous waves and if one is able to control the flood waters, then he would be able to convert the power and force of the water into electricity (for positive usage)!

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) has stated that we must obey the following commandments. First and foremost, we must struggle to earn the pleasure of Allah (SwT) and as we know, there are three forms of pleasure which are attainable (in this world):

1. The pleasure of Allah (SwT).
2. The pleasure of the people.
3. The pleasure of our own soul.

The person who possesses Taqwa would always place the pleasure of Allah (SwT) above the pleasure of others and while acting in this way, the people around him must be pleased and content with what the person of Taqwa decides.

If others become pleased with that person then what could be better; however if they are not pleased, then at least that person knows that he has done the right thing (and earned Allah's (SwT) pleasure).

If we can reach to this station, then we would have reached to the highest level of Taqwa and when this occurs, anytime anything comes up in our life, we would first seek to gain the pleasure of Allah (SwT) which would result in the creations of Allah (SwT) being pleased with us. This would culminate in our own personal pleasure – and this is the order we must follow in life.

If we want to see how this plays out in the real world, then anytime an issue comes up, we should see if that which we wish to follow would be in our own personal benefit or not and what it is that Allah (SwT) would like for us to do.

However, if we see what Allah (SwT) wants (us to do) and at the same time we see if this is also what the people want from us and what we want for ourselves, then this would be classified as Shirk (polytheism) in our actions as the pure form of Tawhid (monotheism) is something other than this!

Thus, in order to reach to pure Tawhid, anytime anything comes up in our lives, we must first see what it

is that Allah (SwT) would want of us and then after this, we must see what the people and our own soul desires.

It has been mentioned in the tradition that: “The one who corrects the relationship between himself and Allah, Allah will correct the relations between that person and the people.”

Therefore, if we are looking to earn the pleasure of Allah (SwT), then we must be ready to supplicate just as the Du’a of Prophet Ibrahim (as) in relation to his wife Hajar I and son, Isma`il (as):

فَاَجْعَلْ اَفئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوٰى اِلَيْهِمْ وَاَرْزُقْهُمْ مِّنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ

“...therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with blessings...”²

Through this, Allah (SwT) would also make the hearts of the people gravitate towards us!

With complete clarity, the Noble Qur`an states:

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَاَعْمَلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وُدًّا

“Surely (as for) those who possess true faith and perform righteous deeds, the Most Merciful (Allah) will bring about love for them (in the hearts of others).”³

However first off, we must set the record straight between ourselves and Allah (SwT) and then the record of deeds performed by us in relation to others will be cleared and set straight!

The second commandment tells us that we must have certainty that this world will end while the next life is perpetual.

Before we can discuss this issue, we must first see what stage of certainty the tradition is speaking about. Is the meaning of certainty the level of actions or deep pondering and thinking?

From the point of view of our intelligence, we have certainty that this world will end. However, at the level of our actions, we act in the way of a person who believes that this world will last forever while the next life will come to an end!

If we have firm conviction that this world is temporal and will end, then why do we expend all of our efforts for the life of this world rather than the next world!?

We speak the words of one who is an ascetic in relation to this world, however our actions are of the

person who is actively seeking the life of this world:

يَقُولُ فِي الدُّنْيَا بِقَوْلِ الزَّاهِدِينَ وَ يَعْمَلُ فِيهَا عَمَلَ الرَّاْغِبِينَ.

“He speaks about the life of this world as one who is an ascetic, however he acts in this world as if he is actively persuing the material life!”

The third point mentioned in the tradition is actually a look at the state of the transient world. Various phrases are used in the Islamic narrations in relation to the state of the world. In this section of the tradition, we see that humanity is addressed and has been told that in regards to the material world, both the believers and unbelievers are the same and that there is no difference between them!

We read, “O' people! Everyone in this world are merely guests and whatever they possess are things borrowed from others. When they die, these things will return back to their rightful owners!”

Point of Interest: This is a very expressive and eloquent analogy that has been used. If we imagine that we have been invited to a friend's house and when we enter we see his house is full of beautiful, expensive silk carpets and a table full of various types of foods served on dishes of jewels and other such things, however we then realize that all of these things have been lent to the person by someone else to use (and then give back), we would not have even the slightest attraction to them!

Therefore, if we were to have the same feeling for the life of this world (in all of its aspects), then without doubt, we would not have even the slightest attraction to the material world.

Problem: There are some self-proclaimed intellectuals and those who are outright opposed to the faith of Islam who state: “These sorts of teachings are actually a type of drug which lead the people to becoming lazy! Through these sorts of teachings, the Muslim society has been left behind and is a totally backward nation!”

Others state that, “These sorts of traditions have been made up by the rich class of people who would like to see the common people break off all attraction to the material pleasures so that they (the rich) would be able to hoard the luxuries for themselves!”

Answer: Islam has actually commanded all of us to struggle and has warned people about being lazy and reliant upon the society for financial assistance:

مَلْعُونٌ مَّنْ أَلْقَى كَلَّهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ.

“Allah's mercy is removed from the person who becomes a burden upon others.”⁴

Once, a young man was with the Noble Prophet (S) and the Messenger asked some other people, “What does this young man do for a living?” The people replied, “He (SwT)s unemployed.” To this, the Prophet (S) replied:

سَقَطَ مِنْ عَيْنِي.

“He has fallen out of my sight (I have no regard for him)!”

In addition, Islam has brought with it such a set of teachings that even the great Prophet of Islam (S) used kiss the hand of people who would go out and work for a living!

With this said, we see that the Prophet (S) and A`immah (as) spoke about the lowliness of the material world since they wanted to bring a balance in life:

إِنِّي لَا أُوصِيكُمْ بِدَارِ الدُّنْيَا فَإِنَّكُمْ بِهَا مُسْتَوْتِقُونَ...

“I do not advise you towards the life of the material world since without doubt all of you have a strong attraction to it. [Rather, I advise you to prepare yourselves for the life of the next world.]”

Thus, we see that we have not been admonished towards the life of the material world. Rather, we are told to keep the next life in view so that through this, we can strike a balance between the two. Definitely, all of the tragedies that afflict the people of the material world come about due to the worship of this temporal life!

At the end of the tradition, the temporary world and the next life have been compared to one another and we are told that the life of this world is something which has been loaned to us.

One of the other characteristics of the life of this world is that, although from one point of view, it is a place of trial and examination in which both the good and the bad doer profit, however conversely, the next life is that which has been promised to us – and that too a truthful promise. This material world is lowly and shall dissipate, whereas the next life is a trust – a truthful trust.

In that world (the next life), the ruler shall be an authority who is not only Just, but also All-Powerful and there shall not be a single person who will be able to run away from His authority:

وَلَا يُمَكِّنُ الْفِرَارُ مِنْ حُكُومَتِكَ...

“It is not possible to flee from Your authority.” (Du’a Kumayl)

Therefore, we see that we are placed in the presence of three things:

1. The temporal environment (the life of this world);
2. A truthful promise (the life of the Next world);
3. An authority to which there is no way to escape. His is an authority which the Qur`an describes as being:

...وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ

...and though there be the weight of a grain of mustard seed (any deed – good or bad), (yet) We will bring it forth, and sufficient are We to take account.”⁵

In another verse of the Qur`an, we are told:

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ وَ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

“Whoever has done an atom's weight of good shall see it; and whoever has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it.”⁶

Thus, there is not a single thing which is hidden from the sight of Allah (SwT), and all things will be taken account of!

However, in relation to the next life, the Noble Qur`an states:

وَ امْتَازُوا الْيَوْمَ أَيُّهَا الْمَجْرُمُونَ

”(To the group of sinners, it shall be said): Get aside today, O' guilty ones!”⁷

At this time, the masses of people will be divided, and Allah (SwT) will shower His mercy upon those who had prepared themselves for the next life.

In the tradition under discussion, the word 'رَمَسٌ' has been used which refers to the grave as when a person's grave was made smooth and flat, the 'Arabs would use this word.

Thus, when a person has been given the time and his hands are free (just as an animal whose ropes are taken off, permitting it to freely graze in the pasture), he must make use of the opportunity to perform righteous deeds before death comes to him!

There is an important issue that must be mentioned in regards to this tradition which is that this world, with all of its problems and difficulties is actually a great thing, while the next life with all of the good things promised therein has one problem with it. The good thing about the life of this world is that while we are here, our deed of records is open and thus, a person is able to wipe out all of the bad deeds he performs. However with the coming of death (and the next life), the person's deed of records is sealed.

In speech number 230 in Nahj al-Balagha, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has stated:

لَا عَنْ قَبِيحٍ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ إِنْتِقَالَاً وَلَا فِي حَسَنٍ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ إِزْدِيَاداً.

”(In the next life) neither shall you be able to remove the bad deeds and sins, nor shall you have able to add to the good and righteous deeds (on your record).”

Sometimes while in this world, a person would shed one tear or let out a single cry and repent from deep within his soul and through this, would extinguish an entire ocean of fire which he had ignited through his sins!

The belief in Ma'ad – the next life, is an issue which the Noble Qur'an has placed a great deal of emphasis on and we see that there are actually two things which form the fundamentals of the training of a person:

1. Keeping our origin in perspective.
2. The accountability for our actions and the resurrection (our eventual outcome).

If a person was to keep both of these two issues in mind, then without doubt, they would stay on the right course. However, the weaker our faith becomes in these two issues, the more we see our actions becoming corrupt and impure.

Thus, we pray to Allah (SwT) that we are able to keep these two issues in our mind day and night. In addition, we see that in our daily Salat, we repeat the following line a minimum of ten times:

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

“Master of the Day of Judgment.”

As is it commonly known, half of Suratul hamd is reserved for praise and extolling the characteristics of Allah (SwT) while the other half is a description of the Resurrection Day. Therefore, it is with this Surah that a person can spiritually build himself. It is a Surah in which the second half contains the prayer:

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

“Keep us upon the straight path.”

Thus, after attesting to true faith in our beginning (creation) and eventual end (death), we request guidance onto the Straight Path.

The more we pay attention to the contents of this Surah, the better we understand why this Surah has been chosen for the daily prayers and why it **must** be read in each of the daily prayers. In some traditions we are told that one of the main reasons why it must be read in every prayer is due to the secrets related to the beginnings of humanity, our eventual end and the nurturing of humanity.

We must make sure that especially while in the state of Salat, we do not drift towards thinking about the material world as any form of worship in which there is no deep thought and presence of heart is like the outer shell of a fruit with no fruit inside it!

At this point, a question may arise that how we can develop presence of heart in our Salat? The discussion on presence of heart in the Salat is extensive, however in brief we state: A person gives the most importance to that thing which occupies his thoughts the most. Therefore, if the material world is important to him, then during the Salat, he will constantly be thinking about it. However, if the next life is what is most important to him, then even when he is not in a state of Salat, he will be thinking about the next life – let alone while he is in prayer!

In summary, we state that presence of heart follows and is under the direct influence of those things which we are attracted to.

It is for this reason that we must seriously think about those things which we are attracted to and work such that our heart is always being pulled towards Allah (SwT).⁸

2. Surat Ibrahim (14), verse 37

3. Surat Mariam (19), verse 36

4. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 75, pg. 142

5. Surat al-Anbiya (21), verse 47

6. Surat al-Zilzal (99), verses 7 and 8

7. Surat Yasin (36), verse 59

8. In order to achieve presence of the heart in the salat and in other acts of worship, the following points have been recommended to be followed:

1) We must acquire a deep insight (into the faith of Islam) such that through this, one would be able to realize that the material world is something insignificant, while Allah (SwT) is something grand. Through this, the worshipper would be able to reach to a level that not a single act of this material world would be able to distract him while in a state of begging his needs from the One whom he worships.

2) By paying attention to the various scattered things which need to be done in our daily life (and other such thoughts about various issues), a person is usually prevented from being able to focus his thoughts and senses. Thus, the more a person is able to reduce his uneasiness and scattered thoughts, the more this will help him in developing presence of heart.

3) The person must choose a special place to offer his salat and other acts of worship as this has a great impact on the presence of heart. It is because of this fact that to perform our salat in front of certain things and especially in front of those things which would distract a person is discouraged (makruh).

In addition, it has been discouraged to perform our salat in front of the door which is open; anywhere that people are passing by or where there is a lot of activity; in front of a mirror; in front of a picture and other such places. Thus, the simpler the place of worship is for the Muslim and empty of lustre, pizzazz and formalities, the better it is as this also assists one in attaining presence of heart.

4) Keeping away from all sins is also very effective in achieving presence of the heart since sinning makes the heart distanced from Allah (SwT) and destroys any presence of heart.

5) Becoming acquainted with the meanings of the salat, the philosophy of each of the actions in the prayer and the recitations.

6) Performing all of the recommended (mustahab) acts of the salat by following their specific etiquette – both in relation to the preliminary actions which lead up to the salat and the actual salat.

7) In addition to all of the points which have been mentioned, just as in all other acts, one needs to pay close attention and exercise vigilance, practice, continuity and diligence. Many times it has been seen that in the beginning of the struggle, a person would be able to focus all of his thoughts and energies on the salat for a short period of time, however through continuing in this way and through following this pattern and staying firm on it, the soul would be able to develop such a power that at the time of the salat, one's entire presence of thought would be shut off to everything other than the One whom he is worshipping. [Pay attention to this point] (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 14, pg. 204)

Discourse 11: The Description of the Material World and our Responsibility While Living in it

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: أَلَا إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا قَدْ ارْتَحَلَتْ مُدْبِرَةً، وَ الْآخِرَةُ قَدْ احْتَمَلَتْ مُقْبِلَةً. أَلَا
وَ إِنَّكُمْ فِي يَوْمٍ عَمَلٌ لِاحْسَابٍ فِيهِ، وَ يُوشِكُ أَنْ تَكُونُوا فِي يَوْمٍ حِسَابٍ لَيْسَ فِيهِ
عَمَلٌ وَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُعْطِي الدُّنْيَا مَنْ يُحِبُّ وَ يُبْغِضُ، وَ لَا يُعْطِي الْآخِرَةَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ
يُحِبُّ،

وَ إِنَّ لِلدُّنْيَا أَبْنَاءً وَ لِلْآخِرَةِ أَبْنَاءً. فَكُونُوا مِنْ أَبْنَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ، وَ لَا تَكُونُوا مِنْ أَبْنَاءِ
الدُّنْيَا. إِنَّ شَرَّ مَا أَتَخَوَّفُ عَلَيْكُمْ: اتِّبَاعُ الْهَوَى وَ طُولُ الْأَمَلِ. فَاتَّبِعْ الْهَوَى
يَصْرِفُ قُلُوبَكُمْ عَنِ الْحَقِّ وَ طُولُ الْأَمَلِ يَصْرِفُ هِمَمَكُمْ إِلَى الدُّنْيَا، وَ مَا بَعْدَهُمَا
لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَرْجَاهُ فِي دُنْيَا وَ لَا آخِرَةٍ.

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said, “The material world has ceased to exist, has been left aside and is gone while the next life is inexhaustible and is in front (of you). You are living in an age in which there is only the performing of deeds while there is no accountability (for your deeds); however undoubtably in the future, it will be a time in which there will be accountability and no time to perform deeds. Most certainly Allah grants the (benefits) of the material world to those whom He loves and whom He hates.

However, He will not grant the next life to anyone except those whom He loves. Unquestionably this material world has its own offspring and the next life too has its' offspring. However, you should be the offspring of the next life and not the offspring of this life! The most frightful of things which I fear for you is the following of your lower desires and long aspirations.

As for the following of your lower desires, this act shall divert your hearts from the Truth; and the long desires shall divert all of your thoughts to be only about the material world. For the person who possesses these two traits, there is absolutely no good for him from either the transient world or the next life.”¹

The topics of discussion in this tradition have been divided into various sections by the Prophet of Islam (S) and it is in this manner of discussing it section by section that we shall proceed to elucidate upon its meaning.

1. In the introduction to the tradition and its first section, the Prophet (S) made two statements: “The material world has ceased to exist, has been left aside and is now gone, while the next life is inexhaustible and is in front (of you).”

It is possible that the two statements used in this section of the tradition (احتمال and ارتحال) which mean, 'even though the life of this world has not yet passed us by' and 'the life of the next world has not yet come', respectively, may have been mentioned in this fashion since in 'Arabic, anything which is imminent and is bound to occur is occasionally mentioned in the past tense. This is exactly what is mentioned in this tradition that this world is finished and the life of the next world (already) came.

What is meant by such an expression is that the opportunity to perform good deeds in this world is very short, while the coming of the life of the next world is certain.

2. The second part of the tradition states, “We are living in an age which is solely for the performance of deeds while there is no accountability (at this juncture).”

This is a very important issue as the nature of the transient world and the life of the next world are completely different from one another. In this world, we can only perform actions and plant the seeds (of our reward), while it is in the next world that we shall see the fruits of our labour and reap our harvest!

Sometimes a person sees the retribution of his deeds in this world however this is something insignificant, a minor issue and something unique which may not always occur. This is in no way a general rule or a universal issue – and this is the most important difference between this world and the next world.

We know that in this world, there is no accountability or reckoning for the deeds we perform and thus we see that people do not give much attention to the outcome of their actions since they do not see the product of their deeds. However, when they see the outcome in the next life, then they will definitely wish that they could make up for the bad deeds done in the world! Obviously, at that time, they would have lost the opportunity as there is no way to return back to the world!

From the verses of the Noble Qur`an, we can deduce that one of the most regretful states which those who committed sins will find themselves in is when they realize that they had actually done a bad deed and wish that they could offer some recompense for them. At that time, they would let out a scream, however no one would pay any attention to them:

رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ

“O' my Lord! Return me back (to the world)!”

They will ask for the right to return back so that they can make amends for their deeds however the call will come that this is not possible! Once again, their cry shall be:

مَا فَرَّطْتُ فِي جَنْبِ اللَّهِ

“Alas my grief since I was unmindful of Allah!”

Sometimes a teacher may say to a student, “While you are young and have the ability, free time, are not busy with a wife and children and the difficulties of life are not chasing you, focus on your studies!” However, the student may not listen to the advice and later on, when the student's life has passed him by, he would realize that he does not have the physical strength to study, nor is his soul in a state to take in the knowledge.

At this point, he would realize that no matter what profession he wishes to go into, he must be educated. Since he has no education, he would be compelled to a life of either being worthless to society or performing menial labour jobs that are below his status! At that time, would he become regretful and wish to himself that if only when he was young, he had listened to his elders!

He would wish that he was young again such that he would, this time around, study properly! However as we know, it is not possible for his youth to return to him. The relationship between this life and the next life is the same!

It has been recorded in Nahj al-Balagha that the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has stated: “The deceased that you are now carrying upon your shoulders (to the graveyard) and that you carry every day are the best preachers for you!”

فَكَفَىٰ وَاعِظًا بِمَوْتِي...

“Sufficient for you as a preacher are the deceased ones...”

When the deceased are brought to the graveyard, they would think to themselves, “It is as if we were never even living in this world!”

All we need to do is take a cursory glance at the burial ceremony and how the dirt is thrown over the dead person; how the Suratul Fatiha is read over them and then how we say farewell to the deceased. When we look back at the entire episode, it is as if the person had been in that graveyard for the past one hundred years and that the life of the next world has been his abode since the beginning!

As soon as a person dies, others rush to perform the last rites and bury the person so that the smell of the body does not come out and annoy others! They carry the deceased to the graveyard, however when alive, if that same person was told to go and visit the graveyard for even one minute, he would not have gone since he was terrified of that place!

3. The third point in the tradition under review states that, “Surely Allah grants the (benefits) of this world to those whom He loves and those He hates – both the believer and the disbeliever, however, the next life is strictly reserved for the true believers.”

This part of the tradition shows us that in the presence of Allah (SwT), the transient world has absolutely no value to it. If this were not the case, then He (SwT) would have reserved the material world for those He (SwT) loves.

Something similar has been mentioned in other tradition in which we are told that if the material world was worth the wing of a fly, then Allah (SwT) would not have permitted the disbeliever even one drink of water from it!

As we know, the transient world is the testing ground (for the next life) and possessing material bounties from this world is definitely not a sign of a person possessing character, nor is giving it up a sign that a person has no character. However since the next life is the one with value, it will only be given to His (SwT) friends.

The same theme which is contained in the sentence of the tradition under review can more or less be seen in the verses of the Noble Qur`an. In such verses, we are given a general understanding that if we see a person well taken care from the material point of view, then we should realize that sometimes the authority which he yields in the transient world is actually a source of punishment from Allah (SwT):

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا

“Surely Allah only intends to punish them through this.”

Thus, we must not become upset or saddened if one day we see that Allah (SwT) has taken away the bounties of the material world from us and we should not say to ourselves that we have been expelled from the spiritual presence of Allah (SwT)!

At the same time, we should also not be happy at the good fortune and luck that the material world brings us just as how we should not be upset at the adversity and hardships which come to us. If we look at the world with this type of an outlook, then the transient world would look insignificant to us and we would no longer pay attention to these things that possess no value. Thus, one must stand firm on his faith and belief in Allah (SwT) and must not sacrifice these values while traversing the path of the

transient world.

4. The fourth point informs us, “Both the transient world and the next life have children and offspring. Some people are the children of the next life, while others are the offspring of this transient world.”

This is a very remarkable expression since we know that a child inherits certain characteristics and traits from the father. Not only do the rules of inheritance play a part in the over-all order of the universe laid down by the Creator, but even from the point of view of the natural world around us they also have a role. The law of inheritance also plays a role in our children as we know that a child definitely inherits the characteristics and traits of his parents.

The transient world has an apparent aspect and a hidden or inner aspect, and the people of the world are the same. The world can, all of a sudden – either day or night – overturn, and the people of the world are just the same.

The inner aspect of the transient world is that it is empty, ruined and continuously changing and those who are the offspring of the world are the same – they are (spiritually) empty, corrupt and destroyed. Today, they may be your friend and tomorrow your enemy! One day, the person may help and assist you and another day he will come and kick your gravestone!

However, the children of the next life are much better than those of the transient world from all points of view. The children of the next life are those who are faithful, resolute, and are a pleasure to be with – their outer characteristics and inner-self are one.

The tradition under discussion tells us that we must be children of the next life. Of course, this sentence may also point to other issues such as that the relationship and love between a child and his father is one that is very strong as the child is always under the guidance and protection of his or her father.

Similarly, the children of these two (both the material world and the next life) possess a very close relationship and bond with their father (either the material world or the next life).

5. The fifth point is that “Surely the most frightful of things which I am afraid for you all is...”

This phrase and way of speaking can also be seen in many other traditions from the Noble Prophet (S) and the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as). However, the important thing is that which comes after this phrase.

In the tradition under discussion, the Prophet (S) has advised us to be aware of and keep away from two things:

1. Following of our lower desires.
2. Having long wishes or aspirations.

The Noble Prophet (S) then explained both of these points in detail.

1) Following the lower desires leads one to becoming misled from the path of truth. It is possible that the truth would not be what is in the person's benefit. If he comes to such a point in life, then he would place himself and his desires in front of the religion. In this instance, it is clear that he is a one who only wants for himself and does not want what Allah (SwT) wants! Such a person would be a perfect example of:

نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ

“You believe in some of it while you disbelieve in some of it.”

And this is the meaning of showing bias in relation to the religion.

When a person only wants the fulfillment of his personal desires and worships the lower self, this results in veils being placed in front of his sight and the person only desiring things for himself as opposed to that which Allah (SwT) wants for him. Thus, the worshipping of the lower self is actually a barrier to the truth.

The worshipping of the lower soul not only results in not acting properly, rather, it prevents one from having a clear perception of things around him – such a person can no longer comprehend good and bad. Worshipping of the lower soul also takes the intelligence away and prevents one from being able to perceive the realities around him. Through this, he is not able to come to a suitable outcome in his decision making process.

However, in this issue, we see that there is a difference between people who possess knowledge of the faith and people who do not have a deep knowledge of the religion. When it comes to issues which are in agreement with the person's soul and what he wants for himself but contradict what Allah (SwT) has ordered, the common people would say that, “It is true that Allah has said so and so, however, I am a sinner and thus, I will do what I want...”

However, those who (apparently) possess knowledge of Islam but still commit sins would try to rationalize and explain the performance of the bad deed by saying that, “This issue is one of those related to the Hukumul Thanawiyah², or that in this instance, one is compelled to do it out of necessity (thus, it is permissible).”

Such people may also state, “The Islamic proofs which show that this act is prohibited, are weak.” In addition, they may state, “There is absolutely no evidence to support this act as being forbidden.” Thus, such a person would try to bring forth thousands of “religious excuses” so that he could be pardoned from the sin of that particular act!

Therefore, in order to have a complete understanding of the laws of Allah (SwT), we must first purify our soul.

2) The long desires keep a person pre-occupied with the material world and when this occurs, naturally he would forget the next life. When a person possesses long, unattainable desires in relation to the material world, then he has no time for the next life!

In summary, if a person possesses these two characteristics, then he would definitely not have any share of goodness of this world or the next life. He would tirelessly work day and night, however would not see any rest or tranquility!

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 188

2. The term hukm-e-Thanawiyiah is a term used in Islamic Jurisprudence that can be translated as the “secondary ruling” which means the “exception to the rule” or a ruling that can – for various reasons – overrule the primary ruling. In such issues, if the leader of the Islamic nation decides that due to a particular reason such as if the needs of the society dictate that an Islamic legislation is temporarily put on hold, he has the power to do so. (Tr.)

Discourse 12: A Description of The Material World and a Comparison Between its Past and Future

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ فِي خُطْبَتِهِ: لَا تَكُونُوا مِمَّنْ خَدَعَتْهُ الْعَاجِلَةُ، وَغَرَّتْهُ الْأُمْنِيَّةُ
فَاسْتَهْوَتْهُ الْخُدْعَةُ فَرَكَنَ إِلَى دَارِ السُّوءِ سَرِيعَةَ الزَّوَالِ، وَشَيْكَةَ الْإِنْتِقَالِ. إِنَّهُ لَمْ
يَبْقَ مِنْ دُنْيَاكُمْ هَذِهِ فِي جَنْبِ مَا مَضَى إِلَّا كَأَنَّهَا رَاكِبٌ أَوْ صَرٌّ حَالِبٌ، فَعَلَى
مَا تَعْرَجُونَ وَ مَاذَا تَنْتَظِرُونَ؟

The Messenger of Allah (S) said the following in his speech, “Do not be like the one who was fooled by the transient world and was deluded by the long desires which kept him pre-occupied. Thus, he pinned his hopes on the material world that is full of evils and shall pass by quickly.

You should know that all that remains of this world (its time span), in comparison to that which has already passed is like the amount of time which a camel lies down on the ground (when a person goes

to mount it or place some load on it). Its worth is the (monetary) amount of that thing which a person uses to tie the udders of an animal (to prevent the child from taking milk from its mother or so that the milk is not wasted in other ways). Therefore what do you raise yourselves upon (where do you live and build your dwellings upon), and what are you in anticipation of?"¹

In this speech, the Noble Prophet (S) has brought forth some very important issues.²

The first thing he has spoken about is: "The gold and glitter of the material world is an illusion which tricks a person – both from the internal and external aspects of the world."

These things have been referred to in the tradition as being "خدعة" or an imposter and cheater and as "غرور" or delusion and trickery – just as it is stated:

خَدَعَتْهُ الْعَاجِلَةُ وَ غَرَّتْهُ الْأَمْنِيَّةُ...

"The fast ending material world has cheated the person, and the long desires which the material world contains have deluded him."

In reality, the two characteristics of cheating (خدعة) and delusion (غرور) are one and the same and very close in meaning. However, in this tradition, the term 'imposter' or 'cheater' (خدعة) is in relation to the internal illusions of the material world, while 'delusion' or 'trickery' (غرور) is in relation to the outer illusions of the material world.

A person sees the gold, glitter, status and apparent lofty position of the material world and sees one who possesses these bounties and other good things and it is these things which end up keeping him preoccupied and ultimately, negligent of Allah (SwT). Through this, he becomes completely unaware of Allah (SwT), the next life and the spiritual attractions of the faith.

Thus, the Noble Prophet (S) has stated that we must not be like the one who is sometimes cheated by the outer forces of the material world, while at other times is tricked by the inner powers!³

The second point mentioned in the tradition is the instability of the transient world.

In reality, the one who is deluded by either the inner or outer aspects of the material world has placed his trust on "دارالسوء" or "The wicked abode" and that too, a locality which shall very soon be destroyed!

As we know, the person shall move from this abode to the next life and at any time, "...the bell shall toll (and it will be announced) that you lazy people must now move on..."

In this part of the tradition, we see that two words are used – namely "الزوال" and "الإنقال". These two words carry a very important point since "الزوال" means that the person will have to give up whatever he

has in his possession, while “الانتقال” means that a person will be transferred to another area (the next life) in which he must give full account for the actions performed in the world. Thus, the blessings of the material world are not only given to us very quickly, rather they are taken away from us just as fast!

The Qur`an also emphasizes this issue and in regards to the material world, its delusionary tactics have been referred to as the glitter and attraction. Sometimes the attraction is attributed to Allah Himself; sometimes to the person; and in other times to Satan. However, from one point of view, all of these are correct:

1. Attributing the glitter and attraction of the material world to Allah (SwT) is in reference to Him being the “Musababal Asbab” or the “Causer of all Causes” as all things which occur in the universe are through His permission.
2. Attributing this act to Satan is due to the evil whisperings that he is known for which affect a person – both from his outside surroundings and from his inner self.
3. Attributing this act to the person is because of following the lower desires and negative, inner characteristics.

From the point of view of the common people who look at things at a very rudimentary level, the material world is one of gold and glitter. However, the person who has delved deep into the material world knows that there is no beauty to it! The luster of the material world is only there so that the person is able to see these things from far away and then judge (the true worth of the world)! However, when one gets close to it and falls into its trap, then his entire life is engulfed in flames and such a person becomes confused to the realities.

Since a majority of people rely on what they see and perceive (with their other senses) as their only form of knowledge and do not go deeper in issues which come up in their lives, they are caught up in chasing the foolish things of the material world.

With this said, when we look deep into the private lives of those who have achieved status, wealth, position, hold a great rank in the material world and whose entire presence is busy with these things, we see that their lives are not even worth “porridge in the mouth.”

Thus in summary, from afar, the material world is attractive and beautiful, however when a person enters into it, he would then realize that there is nothing of worth present!

There is a very beautiful phrase given by the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) where he says:

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا سَمَاعُهُ أَعْظَمُ مِنْ عِيَانِهِ، وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ عِيَانُهُ أَعْظَمُ

مِنْ سَمَاعِهِ.

“Everything that one hears about the transient world is greater (in the person's estimation) than what it actually is when he sees it; and everything that he sees which is in the next life is greater than what is heard about it.”⁴

The next life is indescribable with words and keeping in mind the words of Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) mentioned above, it is possible that one may state, “The transient world is all a delusion! The material world has announced to us with 100 tongues that it has no loyalty and is not going to last!”

In addition, the Prophet (S) has also stated that, “Are these destroyed graves of your fore-fathers that which has deluded you? Are the remains of those who have passed away that which deludes you? Are these sick people whom you were sitting beside from morning till night and taking care of, that which is deluding you!?”

In summary, if we study this issue carefully, then without doubt we would realize that we are actually trying to delude our selves!

Continuing on, the Noble Prophet (S) then mentioned a phrase which is not commonly used in the Noble Qur`an or the traditions.

The phrases used in regards to the transient world are usually things such as 'disloyalty', or 'lack of foundation' or that the material world is something that cannot be trusted. However in this tradition, another comparison is given. The Prophet (S) tells us that in comparison to that which has already passed us by, whatever remains from the transient world is insignificant. To further elucidate on this, he has given us two parables:

1. The first is the phrase, “إِنَاخَةَ رَاكِبٍ” or 'the camel that is lying down on its stomach.'

In order for a person to sit on top of a camel, the camel must lie down since it is not possible to mount or dismount the camel while it is standing up due to its height!

One of the amazing qualities of the camel is that while it is lying down, if a person was to put some heavy load on top of it or was to sit on it, the camel could still easily stand up. However, when we look at other animals, we see that this is not the case! It is due to this characteristic of the camel that has led some of the commentators of the Noble Qur`an to state that this may be the reason why Allah (SwT) referred to the camel with the following verse:

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ

“What then, do they not look at the camel and how it has been created?”⁵

A great deal of the camel's unique abilities lie in the special characteristics of the head and neck; its head works like a lever or crow bar and it is through the rocking and specific movements it makes that it is able to stand up while carrying heavy loads.

The time which the camel spends lying on the ground is very short and similar to the transient world! Just as the camel does not spend much time lying down, so too is the length of this temporal world short...

2) The second parable given is that of “صر حالب” and this parable refers to the stomach of the animal when it is full of milk. If a person did not want the child of the animal to drink its mothers' milk, then they would cover the udders with a bag; or in order for the milk not to be wasted, they would cover the udders and tie a knot to prevent the bag from opening. That thing used to tie the udders is referred to in 'Arabic as “صرار”.

Thus, without doubt, the choice of these two parables is an interesting way to look at the material world. Therefore, when the Prophet (S) stated “إنّاخرة راکب”, it means that since we are at the end of our journey, we must get down! Comparing the act of the camel to us leaving the transient world is completely in order and can be best understood when one dismounts his ride when he reaches the end of the journey. The camel would be made to lie down and the person would then dismount.

In addition, when it is stated “صر حالب” this means that just as baby of an animal is given the opportunity to drink its mother's milk however after a period of time, the child is prevented from drinking more, in the same way we see that every human being is given a specific length of time to live in this world, and at some point, death will come to cut these roots from this life!

The Prophet (S) then stated, “Your share of the transient world is nothing more than the amount of time which a camel lays down in order for a person to mount or dismount it nor is it worth more than the amount of the string which is used to tie the udders of the animal so that its child can not drink the milk!”

At this point, a question may come up: what is the meaning of, “The time remaining in the life of this world, in relation the time of the world that has already passed, is something short?” Is the life of the entire world like this or is the life of the human being measured in this way?

If the meaning of this statement is the life of the physical world and refers to the time remaining in the life of the Earth in comparison to that which has already passed by as being something short, then this could refer to the fact that millions of years have already gone by in the life of this world. However if this refers to the life of humanity, then it means that mankind has been living on this Earth for countless number of years.

However it is unknown if this is relation to the children of Adam (as) (or others) since in this case, the life of humanity which has passed, compared to that which is remaining is something very small.

It is possible that the life span of Adam (as) was not much, however humanity is not limited to Prophet Adam (as) alone and we have proof that before Adam (as), there were other human beings on this Earth and that this Earth existed!

It is also possible that the meaning of this phrase is the life of each one of us which has passed and that which remains of our lives with the difference between these two being a very small amount of time.

Therefore, a person should have any certainty in his life, as it is possible that there may be only one hour left in it! Thus, he should remove the thought from his head that he still has a long time to live. If the life of this world is like this, what can we place our trust and reliance upon? What can we use to advance and spiritually ascend in life?

There may not be but a moment left in our lives and thus, even this one moment which remains must be valued. If we wish to turn back to Allah (SwT) in repentance, then we must do so now and must not lose this valuable opportunity!

Today we see that events are occurring in greater quantity and must faster than they used to in the past and thus, we are being put face to face with many challenges. We have to deal with things that people of the past could never have even imagined in their dreams!

Without doubt, the life of today, in relation to the life of the past, has become very untrustworthy!

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 183

2. It is important to mention that between the speeches and the general traditions, there is a great difference (of content), since normally, the speeches were given in a gathering setting. These were delivered in an open gathering or Majlis, in the presence of a large number of people. In addition, the people who were listening to these talks were present as they wanted to hear the principle and foundational issues of the faith being discussed.

3. People are of various groups: There are some people who are so spiritually weak and feeble that merely seeing the gold and glitter of the material world is enough to delude and deceive them. However there are others whose spiritual strength is much stronger and thus, in addition to the gold and glitter of the material world, if they are to be deluded and tricked, they are also in need of the evil whispering of Satan. For such people, the internal and external Satan must both work hand and hand to try and deceive them.

Without doubt, a majority of the apparent aspects of the material life are aimed at deceiving us and throwing us into a state of negligence. Sometimes it can be seen that such a person would even be busy with his family and in this, he would become negligent of everything around him.

It is because of this fact that in the Islamic narrations from the Commander of the Faithful (as) we read that when the Imam was asked:

أَيُّ النَّاسِ أَثْبَتَ رَأْيًا؟

“Which person is the most firm in his thoughts and reflections?”

He replied:

مَنْ لَمْ يَغُرَّهُ النَّاسُ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ وَ لَمْ تَغُرَّهُ الدُّنْيَا بِتَشْوِيقِهَا

“The person who is not deluded by those who seek to delude him, and the one who does not become deluded with the encouragement of the material world.”

However even with this said we see that some of the views of the deluding world speak volumes and through these, we can clearly understand that the material world is (spiritually) hollow and is only an outward and apparent gold and glitter. This itself can spiritually wake up the intelligent person – rather, even the unintelligent people can also be awaked to this aspect of the material world! (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 18, pg. 95)

4. Nahj al-Balagha, Lecture 114

5. Surat al-Ghashiyah (88), verse 18

Discourse 13: How To Gain The Love Of Allah And The People

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدِ الْخُدْرِيِّ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ لِرَجُلٍ يَعِظُهُ: إِرْغَبْ فِيمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ يُحِبُّكَ اللَّهُ، وَ اَزْهَدْ مَا فِي أَيْدِي النَّاسِ يُحِبُّكَ النَّاسُ. إِنَّ الزَّاهِدَ فِي الدُّنْيَا يُرِيحُ، وَ يُرِيحُ قَلْبَهُ وَ بَدَنَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَ الْآخِرَةِ، وَ الرَّاغِبَ فِيهَا يُتْعَبُ قَلْبُهُ وَ بَدَنُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَ الْآخِرَةِ. لَيَجِيئنَ أَقْوَامٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَهُمْ حَسَنَاتٌ كَأَمْثَالِ الْجِبَالِ فَيَأْمُرُ بِهِمْ إِلَى النَّارِ! فَقِيلَ: يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ، أَمْصَلُونَ كَانُوا؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ، كَانُوا يُصَلُّونَ وَ يَصُومُونَ وَ يَأْخُذُونَ وَهَذَا مِنْ اللَّيْلِ، لَكِنَّهُمْ إِذَا لَاحَ لَهُمْ شَيْءٌ مِنْ أَمْرِ الدُّنْيَا وَتَبَّوْا عَلَيْهِ.

It has been narrated from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that he said, “I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say the following to a person whom he was advising: 'Actively seek that which is in the presence of Allah so that Allah will love you; keep away from that which is in the hands of the people so that the people will have love for you.

The one who is an ascetic in the transient world is at ease and his heart and body are at ease, both in the world and the next life. However, the one who seeks that which is in the world (the material pleasures) – his heart and body will be fatigued and put through toil – both in the world and the next life.

On the Day of Resurrection, a nation shall be brought forth whose good deeds shall resemble mountains (in size), however they will be commanded to go to the Hell Fire.' It was said, 'O' Prophet of Allah! Did these people offer the Salat?'

The Prophet replied, 'Yes, they used to offer the Salat and they used to fast and they even used to stay up a portion of the night (in prayer)! However when anything of the material world was brought in front of these people, they followed it (and took it without regarding if it was permissible or impermissible).'¹

In this tradition, the Noble Prophet (S) gave admonition to a man and at the end of his warning, brought forth the issue of the material world and its dangers.

1. If we want Allah (SwT) to love us, then we must seek that which is with Him. If we want the people to love us, then we must not look at what the people have – we must not look at the wealth of the people nor seek it!

What does the phrase, "...that which is with Allah" refer to?

The meaning of "...that which is with Allah" is His Divine Reward; close proximity to Him, and His blessings. Without doubt, if we request these from Him, then Allah (SwT) will definitely love us.

However, we are told that when a person begins to show affection for another person due to the material pleasures which the person has (and that this person wants), then he should not pay any attention to such a person. Without doubt, the stingy person lives his life by being miserly and this negative trait would lead such a person to develop closeness to people who are not interested in the material world (to take what they have).

Without doubt, if a person wishes to protect his position, status and worth, then he must disregard that which the people have in their possession! Throughout the course of history, amazing events have taken place in these regards. We read stories of rulers who killed those close to them and have even heard of people who have killed their own brothers just to protect their reign!

For example when Sultan Muhammad Fatih, one of the 'Uthmani (Ottoman) rulers became the emperor, he ordered all his brothers to be killed since he feared that they would be a threat to his rule! After the reign of Sultan Muhammad Fatih, it became the norm amongst the 'Uthmani rulers to begin their reign by killing all of their brothers!

In relation to one of the Parthian kings, it is mentioned that when he reached to kingship, he first killed his father and thirty of his brothers! He then married his mother and although he spared the progeny that came forth from this union, he ended up killing his mother! This is the way the world is for those who worship it...

2. The person who does not pay attention to the material world will experience peace and comfort for himself, his body and soul, and those around him.

Having an intense attachment to the world will definitely lead to pain, suffering and toils, and as such, a person would, for example, not be able to have a peaceful sleep.

There are many people who, when they reach home in the evening from work, see all of the events which took place in the day and all of the transactions which they carried out marching in front of their very eyes. If they are able to sleep, they do not gain satisfaction from their sleep and if they can not sleep, then it is a night full of grief and sorrow – such people must take sleeping pills just to rest however still, their soul is continuously tormented!

However, one who does not give importance to the world is guaranteed to have a body and soul which are at rest and tranquil.

These Divine commandments are not simply points that have importance in the next life, rather, their rewards and punishments will be physically manifested while in this world as well.

Even if, may Allah (SwT) protect us from such thoughts, there was no after-life, then it still would have been necessary to think about the implementation of these commandments for the life of this world and for the ease and comfort of our body and soul.

It is said that with the advancements in medicine, the number of physical sicknesses has been reduced. However the number of spiritual and psychological ailments are increasing day by day. Perhaps we will reach a day when the world, in our words, will reach to becoming a great big place of “دار المجانين” or the “Abode of the Insane Ones” and across the entire Earth, we may not be able to find one person at ease and free from any spiritual sicknesses!

The mental and psychological illnesses are increasing day by day and are all related to external factors. A person who has a strong affinity to the material world will see his soul being continuously tortured. Therefore, we must keep the following verse of the Qur`an in mind in relation to the issues of this material world:

لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَيْكُمْ

“So that you may not grieve over what has escaped you (from the material world), nor be exultant at what He has given you...”²

We must have firm faith and act according to this verse if we wish to be in spiritual bliss. Truthfully this verse of the Qur`an is the prescription for the health of our soul, and the asceticism which has been mentioned in these two lines of the tradition under review have actually been summarized in the verse of the Qur`an mentioned above.

The material life of the people of true faith is very good since they do not gain tranquility through wealth, nor do they consider status in the society as that which brings them happiness.

As can be seen, there are people who have all of the material possessions of this life, however they are the worst off! They are constantly in anxiety and stress, and hope that no one takes what they have, nor tries to pull the wool over their eyes! Thus, these types of people are continuously in mental punishment and torture.

On the opposite side of the spectrum are those who do not possess much from this material world, however are the richest people in the entire universe! In this, the true meaning of Zuhd or asceticism is shown as this word does not mean that a person do not possess anything, rather, it means that they do not have an attachment to the material world.

After stating all of this, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri then noted that the Noble Prophet (S) said that on the Day of Judgment, a nation shall be brought forth and will be ordered to proceed to the hell fire, where as they had good deeds on their record equivalent to the size of mountains!

The narrator of the tradition asked the Prophet (S), "Did these people offer their Salat?" The Prophet (S) replied, "Yes, they offered their Salat, fasted and in addition, they performed the recommended acts! They even stayed up in the night and performed the night Salat."

Obviously, the companions were shocked as what could have led these people to the fire of hell? Their problem was, as the Prophet (S) put it, when any issues dealing with the transient world came up, they did not pay any attention to the halal and haram (permissible and forbidden), and took whatever came to them!

The phrase used, "وَتَعَبُوا عَلَيْهِ" is a very meaningful expression. This phrase means that they were just like animals! When an animal sees food in front of it, it pounces on top of it, and these people were the same in relation to the affairs of this world!

When a person reads and reflects upon the verses of the Qur`an and the traditions and looks at them from the point of view of his own life and the history of humanity, he would see the truthfulness of the Prophetic tradition which tells us:

حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيئَةٍ.

"Love of the material world is the precursor to all sins."

and through this, he would definitely seek to become better acquainted with this issue.

The phrase "love of the material world" has a very deep meaning as the material world is not just limited to money and wealth! Sometimes for the love of status, love of a woman, and thousands of other "loves", a person would submit himself (to his lower desires)! It is for this reason that the spring of all

pillaging and plundering is the love of this material world.

These days, this issue has become such that we see that people no longer try to hide their bad actions. Rather, when they are asked, “Why are you committing all of these crimes,” the reply comes, “This is where our (material) benefit lies!” Thus, in order to for them to reach to their own personal benefit, they commit thousands of crimes!

However, if we were to ask those who are committing these atrocious acts and are referred to as superficial holy–people, spiritually rock–hard, devoid of Taqwa individuals why they are performing such deeds they would justify it through religious reasonings. However if they were to, just like the others say that, “We too have some benefit in this issue” then they would be much more honourable as in this instance, in addition to having love of the material world, there is also a show of pride and arrogance in them.

However when the self–proclaimed religious and holy people are asked about how a particular person is (who has this love of the world) he would reply to you, “Do not talk about these things, as the Islamic legislations have prevented us from speaking about other people in this way.”

However it would have been better for that person to tell others about the sins of the other person since by hiding this information, a person's imagination would begin to wander and he would begin to think of what kind of sins that person must have performed for it not to be permissible to speak about!

It is at this point that the great teacher of Akhlaq (the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S)) has told us that, “This person thinks that he has not committed a sin, however in addition to backbiting he has also performed the sin of showing off!” !

1. Bihar al–Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 186

2. Surat al–hadid (57), verse 23

Discourse 14: Two Opinions In Regards To The Material World And The Next Life

عَنْ نَافِعٍ عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ: أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، هَذِهِ دَارُ تَرَحٍّ
لَا دَارُ فَرَحٍ، دَارُ التَّوَاهٍ لِأَنَّ دَارَ اسْتِوَاءٍ، فَمَنْ عَرَفَهَا لَمْ يَفْرَحْ لِرَجَاءٍ وَ لَمْ يَحْزَنْ

لِشَقَاءٍ. أَلَّا وَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ الدُّنْيَا دَارَ بَلْوَى وَ الآخِرَةَ دَارَ عُقْبَى، فَجَعَلَ بَلْوَى
الدُّنْيَا لِثَوَابِ الآخِرَةِ سَبَباً...

It has been narrated from Nafi' from Ibne 'Umar that he said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say: 'O' people! This (the world in which we are in) is the abode of grief and is not the adobe of happiness; it is an abode mixed with intricacies and difficulties. The transient world is not one in which things are constant and smooth.

Therefore, the person who has a cognizance of it (the transient world) will not be happy with what it grants him, and will not be saddened by the loss he entails. Surely Allah has created the world as a place of trials and has created the Next Life as the abode of rest and in this way, the difficulties of the transient world are the means through which the rewards of the next life are earned."1

In this tradition, two views in relation to the transient world and the next life have been expressed.

1. The transient world is the abode of sorrow, grief and difficulties and is not a place in which everything is easy.

This is something that we can see with our own eyes as everything is constantly in change and nothing remains stagnant. From the point of view of science, it has been proven that the Earth is going through a (physical) decline and even the Sun, with all of its greatness, will also one day cease to give us light, just as it is mentioned in the Noble Qur`an:

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ

"When the sun is covered over (and darkened)."2

Day by day, the entire universe is going towards decay and erosion and this is something which the scholars refer to as entropy. Therefore, we must not think that the transient world as the abode of happiness and pleasure.

If we were to truly understand the essence of the world just as has been explained, then we would never be happy with our meagre victories, nor would we become grief stricken with our sorrows!

Indeed, this is the correct viewpoint and is the true 'Islamic world view' of the transient world. This is also the essence of the verse of the Noble Qur`an which states:

لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَ لَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَيْكُمْ

“So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you.”³

We know that the Sun rises every day and sets every night – neither do we show our displeasure at the rising of the Sun in the beginning of the day, nor its setting in the evening. If a person was to have certainty that the transient world is also something which is not constant (and will set just as the Sun sets), then he would have been able to instill the following two lessons on nurturing of the soul conveyed by the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) in Nahj al-Balagha. In one of his sermons, the Imam (as) has summarized the entire meaning of Zuhd (asceticism) in one sentence:

الزُّهُدُ كُلُّهُ بَيْنَ كَلِمَتَيْنِ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ قَالَ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ: لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَ
لَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَيْكُمْ -

“The entire essence of Zuhd (asceticism) is contained within two statements from the Qur`an where Allah (SwT) has said, ”(So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you.)”⁴

Thus, asceticism means deliverance and freedom from the binds and shackles of the material, transient world.

2. The second point of view in relation to the transient world is contained in the words of the Noble Prophet (S) where he states, “The material world is the place of trails and tribulations.”

Thus, the transient world is just like the mother's womb which is the preparation ground for the fetus in which it readies itself to come into the life of its 'next world'. Just as the fetus grows in its mother's womb, is fashioned and perfected and is finally ready to come into this world, so too our growth in this world is to prepare ourselves for the next life in the Hereafter.

In summary, the transient world is a school of learning and training (for the next world).

If the fetal and pre-delivery stages are correctly correctly, then after birth in the next life, we will be able to make the best use of the blessings of that existence! However, if the fetus is brought into this or the next world with deformities, then there will be great difficulties and trials to go through – and of course there is no way for it to return back to its original home!

Without doubt, the transient world is the abode of difficulties.

In reality, the nature of the life of this world is such that there is not a single stage which we pass through which is void of difficulties, problems and tribulations, whether these difficulties take the form of physical or spiritual trials or both. In addition, we do not see a single person who is free from experiencing these tests.

In many thought-provoking traditions from Imam ‘Ali b. Husayn as-Sajjad (as) we read statements such as, “Ease does not exist in this world and for those who live in the world. Ease is limited to those in Paradise and the people in Paradise, while difficulties and tribulations have been created for the world and the people of the world.”

Without doubt, if anyone is given a portion of goodness of this world, then he would instantly desire to have double that which he is given! It is for this reason that we are told that the person who is given more in the material world is actually poorer and more needy than others since when he gets more wealth, he then needs someone to help him protect his wealth! Therefore, there is no ease and comfort in possessing wealth while in the material world!

The Imam has then stated:

كَلَّا مَا تَعِبَ أَوْلِيَاءُ اللَّهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا لِلدُّنْيَا، بَلْ تَعَبُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا لِلْآخِرَةِ.

“The intimate friends of Allah would never struggle in the transient for the transient world, rather, they would strive in the transient world for the next life!”⁵

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 187

2. Surat al-Taqwim (81), Verse 1

3. Surat al-hadid (57), verse 23

4. Nahj al-Balagha, Short Saying 439

5. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 27, pg. 203

Discourse 15: The Psychological Effects Of Loving The Transient World

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ: إِنَّهُ مَا سَكَنَ حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا قَلْبَ عَبْدٍ إِلَّا التَّاطُّ فِيهَا بِثَلَاثٍ: شُغْلٌ لَا يَنْفَعُ عَنَاؤُهُ وَفَقْرٌ لَا يُدْرِكُ غِنَاهُ وَآمَلٌ لَا يَنَالُ مُنْتَهَاهُ. أَلَا إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ طَالِبَتَانِ وَمَطْلُوبَتَانِ، فَطَالِبُ الْآخِرَةِ تَطْلُبُهُ الدُّنْيَا حَتَّى يَسْتَكْمَلَ رِزْقَهُ وَطَالِبُ الدُّنْيَا تَطْلُبُهُ الْآخِرَةُ حَتَّى يَأْخُذَهُ الْمَوْتُ

بَغْتَةٌ

It has been narrated from Ibne ‘Abbas that he said: “I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say: ‘The one who is plagued with love of the transient world within his heart will be overcome with three trials: Continuous thoughts about the transient world will tire him and they will never stop; (one will develop a) poverty which will never be satiated; the long desires and wishes (which one possesses) will never be fulfilled.

Be aware! The transient world and the next life are both searchers and things which are being sought after (by others). So then, the person searching for the next life is being sought after by the transient world so that it (the transient world) can complete its granting of sustenance (to that person), and the one searching for the transient world is being sought after by the next life so that it can take him through a sudden death, gratifying itself!”¹

In the traditions, we see that the topic of 'love of the transient world' usually refers to 'worshipping the transient world' and not mere affection for it, governed by a balance. In this regards, there are various expressions used in the traditions such as, 'Love of the material world is the precursor to all sins.'

In addition, there are various sub-divisions within the traditions which explain the effects that love of the material world exert on the psychology of a person.

The traditions tell us, “The person who is plagued with love of the transient world will be overcome with three tribulations and in reality, these are three spiritual inconveniences.”²

Almost the same phrase is mentioned in Nahj al-Balagha where it is mentioned:

مَنْ لَهَجَ قَلْبُهُ بِحُبِّ الدُّنْيَا، إِتَّاطَ قَلْبُهُ مِنْهَا بِثَلَاثٍ...

“The one whose heart is taken over by love of the transient world will have his heart overcome by three things...”³

1. One's mind will continuously be preoccupied and due to this, he will always feel tired and this exhaustion will never go away.
2. One will be plagued with perpetual poverty, which is actually spiritual poverty, from which there is no way to become prosperous! The more “things” which a person attains from the transient world, the more he will feel that he does not have enough as in reality, being needless is not something which is based on the outer, material aspects of a person; rather, it has its roots in the inner recesses of the soul. The one who worships the transient world will always be hungry for more and will never be satiated with what

he has.

3. One will also entertain long desires which have no end to them. The long desires will also not give up enticing the person, and anytime one of the material desires is fulfilled, another desire will take its place – in this way, the desires would have no end to them!

Such a person (who has these continuous desires) would never be able to find tranquility since he has lost control of his soul and whatever tranquility and ease he had would be taken away from him. Even during the state of Salat, one's mind would be focused on the transient world such that he would be oblivious to what he was saying; while eating food, his thoughts would be on the material world, making him unaware of what he has eaten!

At this point, it is necessary to mention the following:

1. People give importance to those things which, in reality, have no value to them – but why is this? The answer to this lies in the fact that people feel it is important to have peace of mind during the short life in the transient world.

However today, we see that even though people's lives are much better and organized, still the various psychological and mental pressures are present – rather, they have increased! In other words, the physical difficulties that existed in the past do not exist today, however the spiritual challenges have increased! A prime example is that long journeys are now made in a short period of time. In the past it used to be said:

السَّفَرُ قِطْعَةٌ مِنَ السَّقَرِ.

“Traveling is a fragment of the hell.”

However with all of the ease in life today, we see spiritual problems on the increase since the mental tranquility of the people has decreased!

Therefore, we must ask ourselves why it is that the people's mental tranquility has decreased. According to the traditions, there are two reasons for this phenomenon:

1. People do not possess true faith.
2. People are busy worshipping the transient world.

We see that worship of the transient world takes place in some of the best centres of worship such as the hajj, and this is merely one place where this issue grabs hold of a person! It is amazing to see what the servants of Allah (SwT) perform at the hajj time! While in Makkah, the people are transported into

another (spiritual) world, however when worship of the transient world takes over a person, then even while in the city of Makkah, such a person would run after the temporal world!

The person performing the hajj would run from here to there trying to acquire the ethereal world, whereas perhaps these same people would not chase after these material things while in their home country!

Various Branches of Worship of the Transient World

The worship of the temporal world is not limited to the worship of money alone. Rather, it is possible that the desire to attain a specific status, position or any sort of other worldly ranking may also make up worship of the temporal world.

For example, when a person enters a gathering and is forced to sit at the back of the hall since there is no other room left, he may not be able to sleep that evening. He would be upset and question why he was insulted in such a way. Slowly, this issue would build up and the negative thoughts he conjures in his head may perhaps be extended and he may begin to level insults against Islam and even against things held sacred in Islam! It is for this reason that we are told in a tradition that:

آخِرُ مَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْ قُلُوبِ الصِّدِّيقِينَ حُبُّ الْجَاهِ.

“The final thing to leave the heart of the truthful people (as-Siddiqin) is the love of status and position.”

In one section of the tradition under review, the Prophet (S) has brought a new phrase in which he has shown the fraudulence of the material world, and what an interesting phrase he has used! The Prophet (S) stated that, “Both the material world and the next life are in search of something and also are things which others are searching for.”

Whatever direction we place ourselves, we see that these two things (the material world and the next life) are at the opposite side! When we aim to seek the next life, we see the material world coming after us and we become that which the material world is looking for!

Allah (SwT) has promised that whatever sustenance He has decreed for us will definitely reach us, thus even though we seek the next life (and seek to distance ourselves from the transient world), the material world still comes after us and is in search of us!

The opposite of this theorem is also applicable that if we go in search of the material world, the next life will come looking for us! It will come in search of us to pull us closer to death. We would be so engulfed in the material world, that death would come upon us and we would not even realize it!

We must not think that if one goes in search of the next world that he must deprive himself of the transient world – not at all! If we struggle to achieve the next life, this does not mean we have deprived ourselves of the material world.

I have thought about this issue numerous times and have come to the conclusion that if we desire the material world, then we must be people of the material world AND people of the next life since if we wish to live in this world then we must faith in both of these realities. If we do not have reliance on both the material world and the next life then it is not possible to live a societal life. If millions of bricks were placed in random order on top of one another, they would never make a building. However if we were to follow a methodical manner, then we would be able to build a great structure!

If we are people of the material world, then we must also be people of the next life and must have faith in the theological beliefs so that we would be able to, by putting them all together in an orderly manner, reach to tranquility and peace in the life of this world.

If the entire society were to become true believers, then humanity would definitely be optimistic and act cheerful with one another. In addition, they would have full trust in one other and through this, an atmosphere of sincerity, intimacy and honesty would be brought about.

In the traditions, we are told that the Prophet (S) was:

طَبِيبٌ دَوَّارٌ بِطَبِّهِ.

“A (spiritual) doctor, treating patients with his medication.”

He knew where our pains were and thus, was able to pinpoint our illnesses and was able to show us the medication to take.

If today, one look at the cases in the court systems, he would notice that none of the arguments are of a spiritual type. All of the cases are in relation to the material, transient world! For a small amount of possessions of the material world, people are fighting with one another; being treacherous with one another; and acting criminally with one another!

It may even reach to an extreme in which two brothers would stand opposite of one another in the court fighting against one another! Without doubt, the source of all these sins is love of the material world. In these regards, the Noble Qur`an has told us that:

زِينَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَ الْبَنِينَ وَ الْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ
وَ الْفِضَّةِ وَ الْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَ الْأَنْعَامِ

“The love of desires, women, sons, hoarded treasures of gold and silver, well bred horses, cattle and tilth is made to seem fair to people...”⁴

Women, children, money, gold – all of these things are simply a beauty for the life of this world!

In this verse, the verb used (زِينَ) is the passive tense and the importance of employing this form of the verb is that the people should realize who it is that has made these things an attraction. Is it Satan who has made these things fair seeming; is it one's friends; is it one's own lower desires and passions or is it Allah (SwT) who has done this to test us??

All of these forms of beauty and attraction prevent us from moving in any spiritual direction and it is for this reason that Islam has repeatedly advised us to abandon these distractions so that we can build a wall of defense around us to protect us from our lower desires.

Without doubt, the things in the material world which try to allure and distract us are many! !

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1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 188
 2. The meaning of heart in this tradition is one's soul.
 3. Nahj al-Balagha, Short saying 228
 4. Surat ale Imran (3), verse 14

Discourse 16: The Qur'an: A Divine Light In The (Spiritually) Dark And Gloomy Nights

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدِ الْخُدْرِيِّ قَالَ: خَطَبَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ قَالَ فِي خُطْبَتِهِ: أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ،
إِنَّكُمْ فِي زَمَانٍ هُدْنَةٍ، وَإِنَّ السَّيْرَ بِكُمْ سَرِيعٌ، وَقَدْ رَأَيْتُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ كَيْفَ
يُبْلِيَانِ كُلَّ جَدِيدٍ، وَيُقَرِّبَانِ كُلَّ بَعِيدٍ، وَيَأْتِيَانِ بِكُلِّ مَوْعُودٍ. فَقَالَ لَهُ الْمُقَدَّادُ: يَا
نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ، وَمَا الْهُدْنَةُ؟ فَقَالَ: دَارُ بَلَاءٍ وَانْقِطَاعٍ، فَإِذَا التَّبَسَّتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْأُمُورُ
كَقِطْعِ اللَّيْلِ الْمُظْلِمِ، فَعَلَيْكُمْ بِالْقُرْآنِ، فَإِنَّهُ شَافِعٌ مُشَفِّعٌ، وَصَادِقٌ مُصَدِّقٌ، وَمَنْ
جَعَلَهُ أَمَامَهُ قَادَهُ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ، وَمَنْ جَعَلَهُ خَلْفَهُ سَاقَهُ إِلَى النَّارِ.

It has been narrated from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that he said, “The Messenger of Allah (S) spoke to us and

said, 'O' People! You are in a period of Hudnah and the journey you are on is a fast moving one. You see how night and day make everything which is new, old; (you also see) how they (night and day) make everything far away, near (to you); (you also see) how (night and day) bring forth all the promises (which have been kept).'

Miqdad said, 'O' Prophet of Allah, and what is al-Hudnah?'

The Messenger (S) replied, 'It is the abode of tests and separation. Thus, when the (difficult) events descend upon you like a segment of the dark night, then I advise you to (hold onto) the Qur`an since it (the Qur`an) is an intercession whose intercession is accepted; it is the one which speaks the truth and confirms others (and the truth which they speak). Whoever places the Qur`an in front of him, it (the Qur`an) will lead him towards Paradise; the person who tosses the Qur`an behind him, it will push him to the Hell.'¹

In this tradition, the Noble Prophet (S) has stated, "O' People! You are in the period of Hudnah [the explanation of this will follow]; you have been left free in the transient world and have been given free reign to do as you please. The transient world is quickly passing away. The night and day are making all new things old and long forgotten. It is also making all things which may be far away, near (to you) and is making every promise which was kept to be fulfilled!"

It is amazing to see that we are living in a time in which there is no peace or tranquility – everything is being overturned and changed at a fast pace. In the words of the late 'Allamah Iqbal:

ما زنده به آنیم که آرام نگیریم موجیم که آسودگی ما عدم ماست

The upsurges of water are in constant motion (on the ocean), however if they were to be stable and calm, then it would cease to be called a wave!

When a person looks at the world stage of humanity, he would see the infants are quickly becoming young adults; young adults are quickly becoming seniors; and seniors are being carried to the graveyard! The regular announcements made within the community of people who have passed away are actually warnings for all human beings!

In continuation of the tradition, Miqdad asked, "O' Prophet of Allah! What is the meaning of al-Hudnah"?

The Prophet (S) replied, "al-Hudnah means that the transient world is a place of test and examination and a period (which one must pass through) and is a time in which you have been left alone. Allah (SwT) will not bother with you, and in the face of the sins which you commit and the actions which you perpetrate, He will not immediately punish you."²

After this, the Prophet (S) then issued the following statement which has been mentioned in various books of tradition as an independent saying:

فَإِذَا التَّبَسَّتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْأُمُورُ كَقَطْعِ اللَّيْلِ الْمُظْلِمِ فَعَلَيْكُمْ بِالْقُرْآنِ...

In this tradition, the Prophet (S) advises us that, “If events come upon you which resemble the darkness of the night (events which are full of terror and fear) then hold on fast to the Qur`an...”

But why?? The Prophet (S) answered this question and said, “Because the Qur`an is an intercessor whose intercession is accepted. It is truthful and it is also the one which has confirmed and acknowledged Allah (SwT). The person who places the Qur`an in front of him (keeps the Qur`an in mind before performing any act) will be guided to Paradise by the Qur`an while the person who throws the Qur`an behind him (and disregards this Book) will be led into the hell fire!”

Placing the Qur`an in front and leaving it behind (us) has two meanings:

1. Paying attention to the Qur`an and neglecting the Qur`an.
2. The Qur`an becomes the teacher of the person and not an instrument for his misuse – the person brings himself to the Qur`an and does not want the Qur`an to 'come to him'.

There are some people who, when they have made their final decision in regards to a particular act, then refer to the Qur`an and seek to find a verse which would conform to their ideologies. These sorts of people stick to the verses of the Qur`an which suit their purpose and leave aside all other verses of the Qur`an. Through this, they have actually become a living example of the verse that states:

نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ

“We believe in part of it and disbelieve in part of it.”³

It is clear that such people have thrown the Qur`an behind their backs!

Many of the misled Madhahib (sects) which have come forth within Islam, such as the Wahhabis, are plagued with this sickness.

When a person's theological beliefs become very exact and precise, we see that they try to gather all of the verses of the Qur`an which are decisive in their understanding and choose the verses which have two sides to their meaning and which serve their purpose.

On the opposite side, there are a people who are students of the Qur`an and they say, “Our final decision is that which the Qur`an tells us.” These types of people take the guidance of the Qur`an when they need to solve any difficulty and are a living example of the verse of the Qur`an that reads:

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ
حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

“But no by your Lord! In actuality, they do not believe until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit (to you) with entire submission.”⁴

We have all heard the saying record in Nahj al-Balagha which states:

الإِسْلَامُ هُوَ التَّسْلِيمُ.

“Islam is Taslim (complete submission).”⁵

Thus, as long as a person does not submit completely in the presence of the Qur`an, he shall not be considered as a true Muslim!

It is not appropriate for a person to impose his own beliefs upon the Qur`an and in actuality, this is a form of egotism since the Qur`an clearly tells us that, “We must submit entirely to it – both its outer content and its inner purport.”

With all of the emphasis that exists in regards to the importance of the Book of Allah (SwT), still the Qur`an does not hold an essential and deserving status within our lives as it should. If only we paid as much attention to the Qur`an and the exegesis of it as we do to the study of rhetoric and expression (of the ‘Arabic language)...

Without doubt, we all believe and accept that:

وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَابِسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ

“There is nothing wet or dry except that it is recorded in the manifest book.”⁶

There are people, such as the Wahhabis, who only give importance to the letters of the Qur`an and

exert much efforts to recite it (properly), however they have nothing to do with its contents! When the recitor of the Qur`an recites many verses of the Qur`an in one breath, they would shout out, “Allah, Allah” (as a form of encouragement to the reciter), however when the moving verses regarding the Day of Judgement are recited, since the recitor did not recite then in one breath, there is no encouragement!

Truly, amongst us, the Qur`an is oppressed!

The Qur`an must be our text book and we must have discussions on the exegesis of this book such that we sit and see what it is that the Qur`an has to say to us – not what we have to say about this book!

The important point is that we must have firm belief that the more work that is done on the Qur`an and its understanding, the more we will be granted a Divine light, purity and a new understanding of this Book as the illumination of a person's mind comes about when he works with the Qur`an.

There are three important responsibilities which must be fulfilled in regards to the Qur`an: recitation; understanding the contents; and more important than all – acting upon the contents!

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 177

2.

There is a long discussion in relation to the tests of Allah (SwT), however we shall allude to just some of its angles at this point.

1. Why does Allah (SwT) need to test people?

Isn't the process of examination enacted so that we can recognize and have a better knowledge of those people or things which are unknown and obscure to us and so that we can judge the level of a person's lack of knowledge? If this is the case, then Allah (SwT), whose Knowledge encompasses all things and who knows all of the inner and outer secrets of everyone and everything in existence is already aware and knows everything – so then why test us? Is there something that is hidden from Him that He must test us to bring it forth?

The answer to this important question must be sought out from the Islamic sources.

When we refer to the books written on this topic, we see that the meaning of examination in relation to Allah (SwT) has a different meaning to the examination which we understand in this physical world. For us, the examination process is so that we develop a better understanding and so that we can remove any sorts of doubts and ignorance. However in relation to the tests of Allah (SwT) it is a form of nurturing.

In reality, the test of Allah (SwT) is similar to the work which a horticulturalist, who has a great deal of experience, carries out in which he would place the ready to grow seed into the ground which has been made ready for sowing. This seed, by making use of the natural gifts of water, light, etc... would start to grow and develop.

During all of its stages of growth, it would fight against the challenges which it comes across and would battle with various things happening around it such as the strong winds, the cold weather and the burning heat of the sun. It would then stand strong until a beautiful flower blooms from its branch or until a huge tree full of fruit is brought forth so that it is now able to

continue its life on its own and put up with all sorts of difficulties which it may come across!

When soldiers want to look strong and powerful in terms of their military prowess, they go forth in military manoeuvres and simulated wars and challenge themselves with thirst, hunger, heat, cold, difficult circumstances and demanding impediments so that they can be conditioned and tempered – and this is the meaning of the examinations of Allah (SwT).

2. The Tests of Allah (SwT) are Universal

Seeing as how the order which is present in the life of the world of existence is one of a spiritual evolution to reach perfection and cultivation of the spirit and all living creatures which exist are traversing this path, and even the trees bring forth their hidden potentiality when they bear fruit, we see that starting with the Prophets and reaching to all other people, according to the general law of spiritual evolution all must face the Divine Tests and must make use of their talents and abilities in order to blossom and bloom and to reach to perfection.

3. The Ways of Testing

The verses of the Quraf1an bring forth many examples of people who have been tested and it clearly mentions their trials which include: fear, hunger, loss of their wealth, death of their children and even death of the Prophets! In addition, the commandments of Allah (SwT), and generally speaking from the point of view of the Quraf1an, even some dreams, are all a part of the testing process of Allah (SwT). In general, all of these things can either be “good or bad” – and all of them are classified as tests of Allah (SwT):

...وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ

“And We shall surely test you with evil and good...” (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 1, pg. 526)

3. Surat al-Nisa (4), verse 105

4. Ibid., verse 65

5. Nahj al-Balagha, Short saying 120

6. Surat al-Anam (6), verse 59

Discourse 17: Making Use Of The Opportunities We Have While In The Transient World

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: لَا تَسُبُّوا الدُّنْيَا، فَنِعِمَّتْ مَطِيَّةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ فَعَلَيْهَا يَبْلُغُ الْخَيْرَ، وَبِهَا يَنْجُو مِنَ الشَّرِّ. إِنَّهُ إِذَا قَالَ الْعَبْدُ: لَعَنَ اللَّهُ الدُّنْيَا، قَالَتِ الدُّنْيَا: لَعَنَ اللَّهُ أَعْصَانَا لِرَبِّهِ.

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said, “Do not condemn the transient world since it is the thing which the true believer rides on to perform good deeds and which saves him from the evil. Any time a servant

says, 'May Allah condemn (when he asks Allah to remove His mercy) from the material world, in reply, the transient world says to him, 'May Allah condemn those of us who disobey our Lord.'”¹

The praise and denunciation of the transient world is mentioned in numerous traditions, however the one under discussion is one in which the transient world has been praised!

If one pays close attention, he will see that people usually speak bad things about the material world. For example, they say things like: “O' you cursed time; O' you evil sky” whereas we see that the Prophet (S) has said, “Do not condemn the material world since the true believer uses it as a steed to ride upon through which he is able to reach to all (good) things...”²

When one condemns the transient world, it replies, “May Allah condemn whichever of us who has sinned more against Allah (SwT)! If I (the material world) have performed more sins, may Allah (SwT) condemn me, and if you have performed more sins, then may Allah (SwT) condemn you!”

The discussion in regards to the transient world is extensive, however in summary we can state that the transient world is a place of business and worship for the true friends of Allah (SwT).³ If used in the correct manner, this world becomes a ladder through which we can ascend into the heavens!

However what is important is how we spend our life in the world, since our existence here is only one proverbial hour and thus, we must see how we make use of the things at our disposal. We must be careful of how we make use of our physical strength; how we make use of our intellect; how we make use of our youth since on the Day of Judgment, we will be asked about certain things: our youth, our span of life, our wealth and other key things.⁴

In this regards, pay attention to the following examples:

1. As it has been narrated, the blow which the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) struck on ‘Umar b. ‘Abduwud either on the day of the Battle of Khandaq or the Battle of Ahzab, was greater than the worship of the Jinn and mankind!

In striking this blow, did Imam ‘Ali (as) make use of something which was not from this material world?

At that specific instant in his life, he made use of his sword and the power of his arms, and Islam – which was up until that point, in a state of lamentation, was saved! At that decisive moment of history, his blow was the secret behind the continuation of Islam!

Thus, the transient world in which a person can perform a deed which would be better than the worship of all the Jinn and mankind is not something bad!

2. ‘Abdul Rahman b. Muljim Muradi and Shimr b. Dhill Jawshan also made use of the same transient world, their swords and the physical power which they possessed.

One of them did his deed in the Masjid of Kufa (and killed the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as)) while the other carried out his act in Karbala (killing Imam Husayn b. ‘Ali (as)). Thus because of their deeds, they became the worst and most unfortunate of people in all of history.

What is the difference between these two examples? The difference lies in the way that these people used the same tool at their disposal – the transient world.

In the short span of a few hours, the martyrs of Kerbala reached to the highest station of nobility possible – both in the transient world and the next life. In addition, we see what Divine blessings were conferred upon them as their actions on that day serve as the foundation for all Islamic movements and revolutions.

Therefore, the transient world is an asset whose worth we must recognize and it would truly be a shame if we did not make use of this great worth and blessing!

If during our youth, we knew and understood the abilities and intelligence which Allah (SwT) had given us, then we would have reached to great heights since the transient world is a collection of various amenities which we can make use of for this world and the next.

In regards to the tradition under discussion, there is a sentence which the late Sayyid al-Razi has narrates:

يَقُولُونَ الزَّمَانَ بِهِ فَسَادٌ فَهُمْ فَسَدُوا وَ مَا فَسَدَ الزَّمَانُ

“They (the people) say that the time period (which they are living in) has become corrupt. Rather, it is they themselves who have become corrupt, as the time has not become corrupt!”

In other words, people are saying that the transient world has become very bad whereas it is not the world itself that has become bad, rather, it is us who have not made good use of it! The sun shines; the moon reflects the sun's light; the rain falls; the Earth continues to produce its bounties; the person's heart continues to work, etc... – these are all not bad things! Rather it is humanity who misuses these things.

Therefore, the reason why the transient world is denounced by people is because they have used in an incorrect manner.

The sword is something bad if it is placed in the hands of Ibne Muljim, however it is good if it is in the hands of Imam ‘Ali (as).

In summary, it is the assets, goals, and outcomes of the material world which are the most important things to keep in mind.⁵

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 187

2. How beautifully has Nasir Khusrow put it, when he said:

کن زسر باد خیره سری را
نشاید نکوهش، ز دانش بری را
مدار از فلک چشم نیک اختری را
به افعال ماننده شو مر پری را
بجوید سر تو همی سروری را
سزا خود همین است مر بی بری را
به زیر آوری چرخ نیلوفری را

نکوهش مکن چرخ نیلوفری را برون
بری دان ز افعال چرخ برین را
چو تو خود کنی اختر خویش را بد
به چهره شدن چون پری کی توانی؟
اگر تو زآموختن سر نتابی
بسوزند چوب درختان بی بر
درخت تو گر بار دانش بگردد

3. In Nahj al-Balagha we read that Imam Ali b. Abi Talib (as) told a person who had dedicated his entire life to worship and had thrown the transient world behind his back that, "You have made an error. For those who are aware and spiritually awake, this material world is a great asset!"

After this, he began to explain this issue in the following manner by saying that the world is a "متجر أولیاء الله" or a place of transactions for the intimate friends of Allah (SwT).

In another tradition, the transient world has been compared to field (of the next life) which crops are grown on. However in the tradition mentioned above, we see that the world has been compared to a place of business transactions in which a person has been given many resources and equity from Allah (SwT) and a place in which he is able to sell his goods for the highest price and in return for this commodity of no worth, he has been given the great blessings of Paradise.

Principally, the phrase of, "this world being a place of business transactions" and that too a business transaction which carries with it a great return, has been used in order to stimulate one of the most important motivations within a person – the motivation towards profit and of the removal of loss from since this Divine Transaction is not only one in which there is profit, rather, it is one which also keeps away the "عذاب أليم" or perpetual punishment from the person. (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 24, pg. 92)

4. In a tradition narrated from Ibne Abbas, we read that the Noble Prophet (S) said:

لا تَزُولُ قَدَمُ الْعَبْدِ حَتَّى يُسْأَلَ عَنْ أَرْبَعَةٍ: عَنْ عُمْرِهِ فِيمَا أُفْنَاهُ؟ وَ عَنْ مَالِهِ مِنْ أَيْنَ جَمَعَهُ وَ فِيمَا أَنْفَقَهُ؟ وَ عَنْ عَمَلِهِ مَاذَا عَمِلَ بِهِ؟ وَ عَنْ حُبِّنَا أَهْلِ الْبَيْتِ؟

"On the Day of Judgment, no servant shall move from where he is until he is asked about four things: his life and how he spent it; his wealth and how he earned it and where he spent it; his actions and what he did and about love for us, the Ahlul Bayt." (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 27, pg. 13)

5. In the words of Mawlawi:

به که آید علم، نادان را به دست
فتنه آرد در کف بد گوهرا

تیغ دادن در کف زنگی مست
علم و مال و منصب و جان و قران

Discourse 18: The Levels Of Certainty

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: إِنَّ مِنْ ضَعْفِ الْيَقِينِ أَنْ تُرْضِيَ النَّاسَ

بَسَخَطِ اللّٰهِ تَعَالَى، وَ أَنْ تَحْمَدَهُمْ عَلَى رِزْقِ اللّٰهِ تَعَالَى وَ أَنْ تَذُمَّهُمْ عَلَى مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِكَ اللّٰهُ ... إِنَّكَ إِنْ تَدَعُ شَيْئًا لِلّٰهِ إِلَّا أَتَاكَ اللّٰهُ خَيْرًا مِنْهُ، وَ إِنْ تَأْتِي شَيْئًا تَقَرُّبًا إِلَى اللّٰهِ تَعَالَى إِلَّا أَجْزَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكَ الثَّوَابَ عَنْهُ. فَاجْعَلُوا هِمَّتَكُمْ الْآخِرَةَ لَا يَنْفَدُ فِيهَا ثَوَابُ الْمَرْضِيِّ عَنْهُ، وَ لَا يَنْقَطِعُ فِيهَا عِقَابُ الْمَسْخُوطِ عَلَيْهِ.

Anas b. Malik has narrated that the Messenger of Allah (S) said, “Surely the weakness in certainty is due to people trading the (seeking of the) pleasure of the people for the anger of Allah, the Most High; praising the people for the sustenance which Allah, the Most High has conferred upon you (instead of praising Him); and for blaming others for that which Allah has not given you ...

You do not refrain from anything only for Allah (and His pleasure) except that Allah will give you even better than that (which you have refrained from); you do not perform anything which would bring you closer to Allah, the Most High, except that Allah gives you a reward greater than what is expected!

So then expend your energies for the next life since the reward is reserved for the servant who has done good deeds and whom Allah is pleased with, while the punishment is for the one that performs bad deeds and earns the anger of Allah, and it shall never end.”¹

In this tradition, the Messenger of Allah (S) has expressed six points, which we shall review one by one.

1. One of the signs of weakness in certainty (Yaqin) is that a person exchanges the pleasure of the people for the anger of Allah (SwT). This means that he considers the people around him to be more effective than Allah (SwT) in regards to that which shall happen to him.

A person must have strong faith in the Lordship of Allah (SwT) and that He alone is the Lord and Maintainer of the Entire Universe and that all which exists comes from Him. In relation to this, the Qur`an has told us:

تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَ تَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَ تَعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَ تُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ

“He gives of (His) Kingdom to whom He pleases and He prevents (His) Kingdom to reach whom He pleases; and He grants honour and respect to whomever He pleases and He abases whomever He pleases.”²

It is for this reason that we must always have the following thought in mind, “Since I know that the One who provides me with sustenance is Allah (SwT) alone, thus, I do not fear anyone other than Him and I will not humiliate myself in front of anyone. If He helps me, and even if the entire universe was to be against me, still they could not do a thing to harm me!”

Therefore when we see people humiliating themselves in front of others, we should know that this stems from a weak sense of certainty which has taken over them.

Certainty has various degrees and levels to it and these various levels have an effect on the way a person acts in his life as actions are a reflection of our inner belief. Therefore, the stronger a person's inner beliefs are, the purer his actions will be.

Most of the time, the spiritual contamination in our actions is due to a contamination of our theological beliefs.

It has been said that, 'All things, even the ethical teachings and the branches of the religion (Furu' ad-Din) must be put in order through our principal beliefs (Usul ad-Din)' and this is because of the reason mentioned above.

Certainty has three levels to it:

1. 'Ilmul Yaqin [The Knowledge of Certainty]
2. 'Ainul Yaqin [The Eye of Certainty]
3. haqqul Yaqin [The Truth of Certainty]

In order to better understand these three levels, think about the following example. Sometimes a person sees smoke bellowing from somewhere and through this, concludes that there must be a fire – this is referred to as 'Ilmul Yaqin (the Knowledge of Certainty); it is possible that he may even see the fire itself – and this is referred to as 'Ainul Yaqin (the Eye of Certainty); and sometimes the person would experience the fire with all of his senses – and this is referred to as haqqul Yaqin (the Truth of Certainty).

In other words, sometimes the proofs are logical; other times, the proofs are that which a person sees with his own eyes (through employing his senses) and sometimes the proofs are through trial and experiment.³

In relation to the wealth of the orphan (and misappropriation of it), we see that there are such levels (of certainty) and thus the Qur'an states:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا

“Surely those who oppressively take the wealth of the orphan are only eating fire in their stomachs...”⁴

If only we were to have true faith that by giving in charity our wealth does not diminish, rather, we have even more wealth at our disposal just as it is mentioned in the Qur'an:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ
مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ

“The example of the person who spends his wealth in the way of Allah is similar to the seed which grows seven ears and in every ear there are one hundred seeds and Allah adds (the blessings) to whomever He pleases.”⁵

If our level of certainty was at this level for all things in our life, then we would never come close to sinning!

The higher level of certainty can be described as such (keeping in mind the verse dealing with orphans that was quoted above) that: even if the best fruits (which were the property of the orphan) were to be placed beside a person, while fire was to be placed on the other side, in a person's estimation, both would be equal to one another. Thus, just as he would keep himself away from the fire which is comparable to the wealth of the orphan, so too he would keep away from the good fruits (which are not his property)!

Thus, we must seek to strengthen the foundations of certainty and some portion of this strengthening must be sought from Allah (SwT) through prayer and supplication. In addition, we must request this supreme level of certainty through showing humility in the middle of the night in the prayer and say:

يَا وَاهِبَ الْيَقِينِ! أَرْزُقْنِي الْيَقِينَ - عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ وَ عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ وَ حَقَّ الْيَقِينِ!

“O' the Granter of Certainty! Grant me certainty – ‘Ilmul Yaqin (the Knowledge of Certainty); ‘Ainul Yaqin (the Eye of Certainty) and haqqul Yaqin (the Truth of Certainty).”

If Allah (SwT) was to grant these levels of certainty to a person and was to take away all of the attractions of the transient world from him, one would be able to lead a very easy life. The opposite is true is also true that if the entire transient world was to be given to a person and he was not blessed to have these levels of certainty, then he would have nothing but pain, suffering and misfortune!

Therefore, the reality of this discussion is that certainty must be achieved through learning and acting according to what one has learnt.

Without doubt, true faith and actions have a reciprocating effect upon one another and it is for this reason that in the Qur`an, along side true faith («man), righteous actions has also been mentioned.

In summary, if a person was to reach to the level of haqqul Yaqin (the Truth of Certainty) then this would be an insurance policy from sinning.

2. Another sign of possessing a weak level of certainty is when the person thinks that those around him are the ones who provide his sustenance and thus, he thanks them and compliments them, forgetting Allah (SwT).

There are some people who say, “If such and such person was not there, I would have been unable to do anything” or “If such and such person was not there, I would have died of hunger.”

Sometimes the words of such people take on the contamination of polytheism when people say things like, “First Allah, then you” where they put another person alongside Allah (SwT) – however the truth is that no comparison can be drawn – where is the servant and where is the Master!?

مَنْ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ الْمَخْلُوقَ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ الْخَالِقَ.

“The one who does not thank the creations has not thanked the Creator.”

However, when a person makes a statement in which he places a person alongside Allah (SwT) in the help he receives, then this is polytheism!

3. The opposite of the second point is also true when a person says, “Such and such a person took my daily sustenance” as this means that someone took something away from you which Allah (SwT) had intended and had given to you! In actuality, Allah (SwT) has taken your sustenance away for His own known reason and this could be done to be the completion of the proof over you or as a punishment! The person who 'took' that thing from you was simply the means through which Allah (SwT) carried this out.

In continuation, the Prophet (S) stated three things:

1. If a person leaves something for the pleasure of Allah (SwT), then He will give that person something better than what he left! God forbid a person thinks that he has suffered a loss due to whatever he has given to Allah (SwT) – not only has he not suffered a loss, rather, he will actually gain a benefit from it.
2. If a person performs all of his actions for Allah (SwT), then He will grant that individual an even greater reward.
3. A person's struggles should be for the next life since the Divine rewards and punishments are ever lasting.

The Qur`an tells us:

الشَّيْطَانُ يُعِدُّكُمْ الْفَقْرَ وَ يُؤْمِرُكُمْ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُّكُمْ مَغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ وَ فَضْلًا وَ

اللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“Satan threatens you with poverty and encourages you to be miserly, however Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.”⁶

When a person wants to give something in charity, Satan takes him by the hand and threatens him with poverty – however the opposite of this actually happens as Allah (SwT) gives the promise of forgiveness and more in return for what was given!

In another verse of the Qur`an we read:

يَمْحَقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُزِيهِ الصَّدَقَاتِ

“Allah does not bless usury, however He causes charitable deeds to prosper...”⁷

In addition, in yet another place in the Qur`an we read:

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

“They know the outward aspect of this world's life, but they are completely heedless of the hereafter.”⁸

People always look at the material aspects of the transient world, however Islam looks at the inner aspects and tells us, “Giving in charity does not result in you having less for yourself!”

Even in our own reckoning, the martyrs (Shuhada) are classified as being dead, however the Qur`an tell us, “Greater than your own reckoning is that of others, as they (the martyrs) are actually alive.”

If we weigh our own understanding with that of the Qur`an, the outcome would be the reverse of what we assume to be the reality. Whereas we think that destruction and nothingness exists in relation to the martyrs, we are told that existence and perpetuity is actually there; the place where we think death resides is actually the place of permanent life. However thinking in this mode is not easy and can only be achieved with the vision of true faith.

In the world we live in, the apparent view of some of the benefits that quickly pass us by actually have a detrimental aspect to them that last a long time, while the opposite of this as also true.

Without doubt, any rational person would say, “If a long term gain can only be achieved through a short, yet difficult action, then that action which is accompanied by difficulty must be performed.”

If one was to be completely cured of his sickness, albeit in the future, by going through an operation right now, he would definitely welcome that operation. Sometimes in the face of a tasty but fat-filled food a person would say, "I have a cold right now and thus, I will pass up this good tasting food whose taste shall only last briefly for the betterment of my own health which shall remain for a long time." Thus, why do we not act in such a logical manner in relation to the next life?

Is it that, may Allah (SwT) forbid – we do not have the same level of certainty in regards to the next life as we do for the life of this world? Do we accept what has been mentioned in Du'a Kumayl in regards to the punishment of the next life:

... تَطُولُ مُدَّتُهُ وَيَدُومُ مَقَامُهُ وَلَا يَخْفَفُ عَنْ أَهْلِهِ ...

"The period of punishment in the hell fire is a long and perpetual one and for the people who are in that punishment, there shall never be any reduction in its chastisement..."

Do we accept what has been mentioned in the Qur`an that:

إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ. يَوْمَ تَرَوُنَّهَا تُذْهِلُ كُلُّ مَرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَ
تَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمَلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَ تَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَىٰ وَلَٰكِنَّ
عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ

"Surely the earthquake of the Hour is a grievous thing. On the day when you shall see it, every woman who is nursing her child will stop due to the confusion, and every pregnant woman shall miscarry her child and you shall see the people in a state of intoxication while they are not intoxicated, however the chastisement of Allah shall be severe."9

Thus, why do we not bear the difficulties of a few days of this transient world so that we can enjoy the perpetual and everlasting Divine reward? Why is it that in relation to the next life, we do not use the same logic as is employed for matters of the material world:

أَكُلُهَا دَائِمًا.

When a person sits down to review these issues, he would sometimes become frightened and think to himself that "God forbid that I do not have faith in these things!" !

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 185

2. Surat ale Imran (3), verse 26

3. The late ayatullah Dastghaib has written the following on page 49 of his work, *Amazing Stories*: “A man who was sincere in the wilayah of the Ahlu'l Bayt, Aqa Mirza Abul Qasim Attar Tehrani, has narrated from the great scholar, the Late hajj Shaykh Abdul-Nabi Nuri who was one of the students of the great Divine thinkers – the late hajj Mullah Hadi Sabzwari that in the last years of the life of the late hajj Mullah Hadi Sabzwari, a person once came into one of his classes and informed him that a person, who was alive, was found in the graveyard with half of his body in the grave while the other half of his body was outside of the grave. This man was continuously staring towards the sky and however much the children who were playing around tried to pester him, he would not pay any attention to them.

Hajj Mullah Hadi Sabzwari said, “I myself must go and see what is happening.”

When hajj Sabzwari went to the graveyard and saw the man, he was amazed! He went closer to the person and saw that the man was not even paying attention to him!

Hajj Mullah Hadi Sabzwari says, “Who are you and what are you doing? I don't think you are crazy, however the way you are acting is not the way of an intelligent person.”

In reply, the man said to him, “I do not have knowledge (of Islam and the world) and am a uniformed person, however I have firm belief on two things. The first is that I know that there is a grand Creator who has created me and the entire world of existence and I must not be negligent in recognizing Him and worshipping Him.

The second thing is that I know that I will not remain in the transient world forever and that I must go to the other world however I do not know what my state shall be in that world. O' hajj Mullah! I am in a state of total desolation and confusion such that the people think I have gone insane. Since the people consider you as a scholar for the entire Muslim community and you possess much knowledge, please tell me why do these people not even have an atom's weight of grief in relation to the next life and are negligent of this?”

This admonition felt as an arrow piercing the heart of hajj Mullah Hadi Sabzwari and it has been narrated that hajj Mullah returned back in a completely changed state and whatever amount of his life which remained was spent in the pondering of the travel of the next life and how to acquire the goods needed for that journey which is full of dangers – and he continued in this way until he left this mortal world.”

Therefore, whatever rank a person is at, he is still in need of hearing council and advice. If we know what we are hearing, then the words of wisdom would be a reminder for us – meaning that they would be something to bring back our memories (to that which we knew but had forgotten) since mankind is prone to forget things and is always in need of someone to remind him; and if the person was ignorant of the thing which he is hearing, then this admonition would be a way for him to acquire knowledge and cognizance.

4. Surat al-Nisa (4), verse 10

5. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 261

6. Ibid., verse 268

7. Ibid., verse 276

8. Surat al-Rum (30), verse 7

9. Surat al-Hajj (22), verses 1 and 2

Discourse 19: Showing Thanks For The Divine Blessings

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ مَكْتُوبٌ فِي التَّوْرَةِ: لَأَزْوَالَ لِلنَّعْمَاءِ إِذَا شُكِرَتْ وَلَا بَقَاءَ لَهَا إِذَا كُفِرَتْ.

It has been narrated from [Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad] as-Sadiq (as) that, "It has been written in the Tawrah [Thus, in reality this is what is known as a hadith-e-Qudsi] that, 'There is no end to the Divine blessings if thanks are given (for that blessing) and there is no longevity for it (that blessing) if ingratitude is shown (to it).'"¹

Many of the Divine bounties that a person has at his disposal actually go from hand to hand through a complex series of intermediaries and agents until it reaches the person. Therefore, in reality, we only see the outcome of all of these agents and what part of the Divine plan they are responsible for!

For example, the shirt which a person wears is a blessing from the many (combined) blessings of Allah (SwT). Many people and various items have been put together so that this blessing would reach the person. There is a person who plows the land and grows the cotton; another harvests the cotton; a factory processes the cotton and makes thread and yarn from it; yet another factory takes the thread and makes the cloth; others extract iron from the ground and make the machinery needed to make the shirt and...

Thus, there are thousands and thousands of people who were responsible for making one shirt! In addition to this, there is also the knowledge and experience which has gone in to making all of these factories which has come about through thousands of years of human trial and experiment.

The Theological Seminaries (hawzatul 'Ilmiyyah) which the Muslims have access to is also the result of the struggles of countless people. Many people became martyrs (Shahid) so that this blessing would reach us. If we were to sit and calculate the time it took those who laid the foundation stones for the hawzah and the great scholars who went through great difficulties to expand and develop the hawzah to where it is today, we would see that it is the outcome of more than a thousand years of hard work!

If we think upon this issue mentioned, then the inner feeling of showing thanks would definitely be stimulated within us and we will arrive to the station of being able to thank Him. At the same time, we also ask Allah (SwT) for the Divine success to be conferred upon us. However it must be noted that the preliminary steps to achieving Divinely granted success are in our hands.

Showing thanks is not merely a verbal declaration – rather we must show thanks through our actions and the way to do this is to use the bounties given to us in the correct way.

Throughout history, we see people who were not thankful for the blessings which they were given and ended up wasting away their life. In the end, the Divinely granted blessings was taken away from them and they were plagued with problems, not being able to reach to any station in life.

Therefore, we must show thanks for the Divine blessings such that we can be considered as soldiers of Imam al-Zaman (as) and be defenders of Islam!

1. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 94

Discourse 20: Attaching Worth To One's Self

قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ: مَنْ هَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ فَلَا تَأْمَنَ شَرَّهُ.

It has been narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) that, “Do not consider yourself safe from the evil of one who does not consider himself as having any worth.”¹

One of the important issues in life is that of the worth or value of people within the society as has been mentioned in the Divinely revealed teachings.

In the material and spiritual world, everything has a value to it. There are things that are cheap and things that are valuable, and naturally, if something has little value then one would give it up easily. However, something that is valuable would not be given up with ease!

For example, a small child who has a very expensive jewel in his hand would use it as a toy as in his opinion, it has no value, and he would easily give this thing up when the time comes. The valuable jewels that we have this world all have particular names and worths to them and it is possible that if a group of children were playing with one of them saw a person passing by, they would give it to him as in their estimation, it has no material value! The character of a person is the same – if he considers himself as having worth, then he would not sell himself so easily.

In relation to this fact, the Qur'an tells us that in the world of existence, after the pure essence of Allah (SwT), there is nothing worth more than the human being and the proof of this is that all things which

exist in the universe have been created for mankind. Allah (SwT) has said:

خَلَقْتُ الْأَشْيَاءَ لِأَجْلِكَ وَ خَلَقْتُكَ لِأَجْلِي.

“I created all the things in the universe for you and I created you for Me.”

In addition, we see that the highest creations of Allah (SwT) – the Angels – were ordered to prostrate towards Adam:

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ...

“So then the Angels bowed down in prostration to him (Adam) – all of them...”

From this, the value of the human being is clear.

In addition, everything in the universe has been placed at the disposal of the human being. Therefore, everything in creation works for and is subservient to the human being, and this too shows the status of humanity!

Thus, if we were to understand the worth of our soul then we would definitely not sell it for the lower desires that shall quickly pass, nor for the worthless positions of the transient world.

However, if we do not recognize our self-worth, then we will definitely sell ourselves cheap.

In addition, we must be cautious of the person who does not know his own worth since he could even resort to killing another human beings for a meagre price since he does not consider himself to be worth anything!

However what about the one who considers himself to be worth something? The answer to this question has been provided by our master, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) in three sentences where he has said:

مَنْ كَرَمَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ لَمْ يُهْنَهَا بِالشَّهَوَاتِ...

“The one who considers himself to be worth something will not weaken himself through his lower desires...”

مَنْ كَرَمَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ هَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ شَهْوَتُهُ...

“The one who considers himself to be worth something will consider his lower desires as something of no value...”

مَنْ كَرَمَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ صَغُرَتْ الدُّنْيَا فِي عَيْنِهِ.

“The one who considers himself to be worth something will consider the transient world as something insignificant.”²

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 75, pg. 365

2. Mizan al-hikmah, Under the letters of “نفس”

Discourse 21: Modesty

قَالَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ: مَا الْمُجَاهِدُ الشَّهِيدُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَعْظَمِ أَجْرًا مِمَّنْ قَدَرَ فَعَفَّ لَكَادَ الْعَفِيفُ أَنْ يَكُونَ مَلِكًا مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ.

It has been narrated that the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) said, “The reward given to the Mujahid (soldier) who dies in the way of Allah is no less than the one who has the ability to perform a sin, however does not perform it. It is close (to being that) the person who has modesty is (actually) an Angel from amongst the Angels.”¹

In Islam, the status of the martyrs (Shuhada) is something very high and there is no status greater than this. In addition, the verses of the Qur`an present a visage of the martyrs which has not been presented for any other person:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

“Do not consider those who have been killed in the way of Allah as being dead; rather, they are alive in the presence of their Lord receiving sustenance (from Him).”²

The one being addressed in this verse is the Prophet (S) and we see that the wording used in this verse has not been mentioned for any other person in the Qur`an!

The martyrs are also given great importance in the traditions. The late Shaykh Kulayni has narrated that the Prophet (S) has said:

فَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي بَرٍّ بَرٌّ حَتَّى يُقْتَلَ الرَّجُلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ. فَإِذَا قُتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَيْسَ
فَوْقَهُ بَرٌّ.

“Above every goodness is (another) goodness, until that time that a person is killed in the way of Allah. So then when he is killed in the way of Allah, then there is no other goodness greater than this.”³

There is also a statement given by our master ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) in the letter he wrote to Malik al-Ashtar in which he stated:

وَ أَنَا أَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ بِسَعَةِ رَحْمَتِهِ وَ بِعَظِيمِ قُدْرَتِهِ أَنْ يَخْتِمَ لِي وَ لَكَ بِالسَّعَادَةِ وَ
الشَّهَادَةِ.

“And I ask Allah by the great expanse of His Mercy and by the greatness of His power that he makes my and your end felicitous and (to be blessed with) martyrdom.”

In addition, there are numerous other verses and traditions which show us the great status of the martyrs.

We know that the meaning of martyrdom (Shahadat) is very wide. The standard meaning is that a person dies in the way of Allah (SwT) by being killed in the battlefield. Such a person has a specific set of rules (Ahkam) related to him such that if he dies outside of the battlefield, some of the practical rules do not apply to him, however he is still considered a martyr.

However, there is another meaning to this term and according to this definition, we get a much wider and general understanding of the word. Any time a person dies while fulfilling his responsibility, he is considered as a martyr. For example:

مَنْ قُتِلَ دُونَ مَالِهِ فَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ.

“The person who dies without his wealth is a martyr.”

مَنْ مَاتَ فِي طَلَبِ الْعِلْمِ مَاتَ شَهِيداً.

“The person who dies in the state of seeking knowledge dies a martyr.”

مَنْ مَاتَ عَلَى فِرَاشِهِ وَهُوَ عَلَى مَعْرِفَةِ حَقِّ مَنْ رَبِّهِ وَحَقِّ رَسُولِهِ مَاتَ شَهِيداً.

“The person who dies on his bed while having cognizance of the truth which has come from his Lord and the truth of His Messenger, dies a martyr.”

In addition, women who die while pregnant are classified as:

...مَاتَتْ شَهِيدَةً.

“...she has died as a martyr.”

The traditions also tell us that:

مَنْ مَاتَ عَلَى حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ مَاتَ شَهِيداً.

“The person who dies with the love of the family of Muhammad (S) dies a martyr.”

Without doubt, such a person has died while on the path of fulfilling his responsibility – meaning that his death is joined with his actions and thus, he is a martyr!

Thus, the meaning of martyrdom is very wide and has a comprehensive meaning to it.

With this said, according to the statement from Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) under review, he has told us that the person who spills his blood and dies in the way of Allah (SwT) is not greater than the person who has the ability to perform sins, however due to the intense love of Allah (SwT), stops himself from doing so.

The meaning of modesty in this tradition is not merely limited to lowering one's eyes from the impermissible sexual pleasures (which take place between a man and woman who are not married to one another). Rather, it has a very wide meaning and as such, modesty has been used to refer to 'preventing any sin from taking place.' According to this explanation, a person can gain the reward of being a martyr every single day!

In regards to Prophet Yusuf (as), we see that all of the necessary requirements for sinning were at his disposal, however he renounced sins and said:

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

“He said: 'My Lord! The prison is dearer to me than that which they (the women) invite me towards and if You do not turn their wicked plots away from me, I will yearn towards them and become (one) of the ignorant (sinners).”⁴

From this, we learn that Prophet Yusuf (as) believed that:

1. I know that if I renounce sinning, I will be thrown into prison, however the prison is much better for me than that which these women are calling me to do.
2. O' Allah! I resign myself completely to Your will.

In addition, Asiyah, the wife of the Pharaoh, had all of the material needs at her disposal and was able to become a polytheist and live along side her husband in comfort, however she too renounced sinning:

قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِّنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَوَعْدِهِ...

“My Lord! Build for me a house with You in the garden and deliver me from Pharaoh and his doings...”

People such as these are granted the status of a martyr! The proof of this statement is that since the greatest Jihad is the Jihad with the soul and the person who is in the battlefield of the major Jihad is just like the person who is in the battlefield of the minor Jihad – rather, he is greater than them – thus he too must be a martyr just as the one who takes part in the minor Jihad!

The path of Allah (SwT), reaching to closeness to Allah (SwT), attaining the rank of the righteous people and the status of witnessing (Shuhud) is a clear path, however it is very difficult to traverse.

We must resign ourselves entirely to Allah (SwT), especially while living in this day and age in which the ways to sin are many and close within reach. We must strive to ensure that ourselves, our families and our society are all protected from this evil!

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1. Nahj al-Balagha, Short Saying 474
 2. Surat ale Imran (3), verse 169
 3. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 348
 4. Surat Yusuf (12), verse 33

Discourse 22: Misguidedness

قِيلَ لَهُ الْإِمَامُ السَّجَّادُ يَوْمًا: إِنَّ الْحَسَنَ الْبَصْرِيَّ قَالَ: لَيْسَ الْعَجَبُ مِمَّنْ هَلَكَ
كَيْفَ هَلَكَ؟ وَإِنَّمَا الْعَجَبُ مِمَّنْ نَجَا كَيْفَ نَجَا. فَقَالَ: أَنَا أَقُولُ: لَيْسَ الْعَجَبُ مِمَّنْ
نَجَا كَيْفَ نَجَا وَ أَمَّا الْعَجَبُ مِمَّنْ هَلَكَ كَيْفَ هَلَكَ مَعَ سَعَةِ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ! S

One day, it was said to Imam as-Sajjad (as): 'Hasan al-Basri has said, 'I am not amazed how the person who is destroyed (by Allah) is destroyed; rather what is truly amazing to me is the one who is saved (by Allah) and how he is saved!

[I am not surprised how a person deviates from the straight path (as this is quite easy); rather, I am surprised how a person attains true guidance]. The Imam (as) retorted, 'Rather, I say that it is not amazing how the one who is saved (by Allah) is saved, rather that which is amazing for me is the one who is destroyed (by Allah) and how he is destroyed with the vast mercy of Allah being present!'¹

This tradition points to a very important topic as there are some people who have developed a habit of pessimism and negativity in their lives. In today's terminology, they see everything as being dark and gloomy. They state that by keeping in mind the ever presence of Satan – the one who is seeking to misguide everyone – and the lower desires, passions and the corruption of the time we are living in, it is an amazing feat for a person to be saved from all of these things. In essence they are saying that our original state is that of corruption and pollution by sins and that true guidance is that which goes against the 'natural state' of life and if this develops, then it is something amazing!

In our opinion, people who think in this way actually have Satanic thoughts running through them, and thus Hasan al-Basri is also one of those people who had Satanic thoughts in his mind!

The story of him and his encounters with Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) are well known. On one occasion, Imam 'Ali (as) had said to him: "Why did you not take part in the Battle of Jamal?"

Hasan al-Basri replied, "I went forth to take part in the Battle of Jamal, however I saw a person yelling that both the killer and the one who is killed will be in the hell fire."

In reply, the Imam told him, "Definitely it is Satan, your brother, who made this claim so as to misguide you!"

During the time of Imam 'Ali (as), one of the things which led to others being misled was Hasan al-Basri himself – a man whom the Ahlul Sunnah consider as one of the Jurisprudents and commentators of the Qur'an!

The intimate friends of Allah (SwT) do not think in this way and without doubt, the Muslim scholars too must not think that people are destined for perdition! Rather, they must let everyone know that all people are worthy and deserving of salvation since the grand and expansive Mercy of Allah (SwT) is that which led to 124,000 Prophets being sent and was the reason for the Divine Heavenly Books coming to us – especially the Qur'an. In addition to this, Allah (SwT) has given humanity, brains and if they were to use this asset, then they would definitely take control over their soul.

Humanity has also been granted the pure nature (Fitrah) which is something else that contributes to one's guidance. The person has also been granted a conscience which is the best authority and judge over himself. In addition to all of this, Allah (SwT) has also given humanity lessons to learn from which everyone can see and understand. The signs of Monotheism and the greatness of the Heavens and the Earth are full of His Signs. With all of this, what else is needed for guidance?

If we were to put a single hair under the lens of a microscope and analyze it in, we would see that one strand of hair is enough to recognize Allah (SwT) – thus, what can we say about the eye, heart and brain and the great way in which they have been designed! In addition, what about the plants and the over 15,000 different types of animals which live in the oceans, rivers and seas – all of these things point to Allah (SwT) and are a way for us to gain guidance.

Imam Musa b. Ja'far al-Kadhim (as) once told Harun al-Rashid:

كُلُّ مَا تَرَاهُ فَهُوَ لَكَ عِظَةٌ

"Everything that you see around you is a lesson (which you can learn from)."

The mercy of Allah (SwT) dictates that the signs of guidance must be present in the world for everyone. Therefore, it should not be a surprise that one attains salvation, as our original state is that of salvation

and not destruction!

One of the forms of the evil whispering of Satan that affects young and old and even affects some of the religious scholars is when one says that this present time has become corrupt. Such people give up all hope and feel that they have no responsibility left as they cannot do anything to change the time they are in. In reality, thinking in this way is merely the act of 'passing the buck' – removing the responsibility from one's own shoulders and placing it on someone else's and looking at the world in the eyes of Hasan al-Basri by stating that it is not possible for mankind to attain salvation which is incorrect!

The true believer must be just like Imam 'Ali b. al-Husayn as-Sajjad (as) and must say that it should be no surprise that people are saved (from destruction), rather the true surprise is when a person becomes misled. Therefore, we must always be looking forward to salvation and work hard for this.

We should think about the period of the Bani Umayyah since their era was actually better than the period in which we are living today. It was a period full of spiritual darkness, however at the same time, the Imam still said that it should not be surprising if one attains salvation (even in such a difficult time).

We pray that we are able to understand this lesson from Imam 'Ali b. al-Husayn as-Sajjad (as) and that we do not seek to remove ourselves from the responsibility which Allah (SwT) has placed over us!

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 75, pg. 153

Discourse 23: Jihad Against The Soul

قَالَ الصَّادِقُ: إِحْذَرُوا أَهْوَاءَكُمْ كَمَا تَحْذَرُونَ أَعْدَاءَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَعْدَى لِلرِّجَالِ
مِنْ إِتِّبَاعِ أَهْوَاءِهِمْ وَحَصَائِدِ أَلْسِنَتِهِمْ.

Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said: "Be aware of your lower desires just as you keep aware of your enemies since there is nothing which is a greater enemy to a person than following his lower desires and that which the tongue reaps."¹

The month of Ramazan has many specific programs contained within it – one of which is the fasting. Some people think that if they are sick or traveling and are not permitted to fast, then there is nothing left to the Month of Ramazan, however there are other aspects to this month other than fasting! One such

program is the combat against the lower desires, and this responsibility shines greater than all other acts contained within this month.

The tradition quoted is in relation to this fact and it tells us that we must be aware of our lower desires just as we keep aware and distance ourselves from our (physical) enemies. One's greatest enemy is to listen to and follow the lower desires and to speak inappropriate things.

The lower passions, having desires and the act of rebellion are some of the aspects that make up a person's character. If the lower passions are placed under the control of the intellect, then there is no danger; however if they are left without control and parameters to work within and are left to the whims of the desires of the heart, then without doubt the laws of Allah (SwT) and the ethical conscience will not be recognized. Thus, this rebellious character that resides within the person is his lower passions – and this is the greatest enemy a person has.

When a person realizes he is in the presence of his enemy, then he would definitely make sure he is not in the vicinity of his strike and would ensure that he does not fall prey to his plots.

Unfortunately however, many people do not put up a fight in the face of their enemies, and in the same way, are actually friends of their lower passions and desires! What is even more amazing than this is when people take their lower passions to be their leader!

Definitely, there are many people who take their lower passions to be their object of worship:

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ

“Have you seen the person who takes his lower desires as his lord?”²

Therefore, sometimes it is possible that a person would humble himself in front of his own lower desires!

One of the branches of monotheism (Tawhid) is Tawhid in obedience to Allah (SwT). The person who is a Muwahhid (believer in Monotheism) is the one who obeys none other than Allah (SwT) (the obedience to the Prophet (S), the Imam (as), one's father and mother and Marja' Taqlid are all done through the command of Allah (SwT)). Thus, if we obey others along side Allah (SwT), then we have transformed our actions into polytheism (shirk) in worship.

Sometimes, the lower desires actually transform our heart into the house of idol worship! The heart in which only Allah (SwT) must be present is sometimes contaminated with various idols such as the love of wealth, status, our children and other things:

بت ساخته ای در دل و خندیدی بر کیش بد برهمن و بودا را

One of the poets stated that sometimes, people sit and talk about others who worship idols in the traditional houses of idol worship whereas if they were to look within their own souls, they would see that it is the house of idols and that numerous false gods of worship reside in it!

مَنْ أَصْغَىٰ إِلَىٰ نَاطِقٍ فَقَدْ عَبَدَهُ.

A tradition tells us that the person who listens to one who tells him something has actually worshipped that person! If the person speaking is extolling the words of Allah (SwT) then in essence, he has ended up worshipping Allah (SwT); however if the person speaking extols the words of Satan, then he has ended up worshipping Satan! Thus, if we listen to what our lower desire tells us to do, then in reality, we have worshipped it.

The actions during the Month of Ramazan are in place for this reason – so that we are able to recognize our enemies (and remove them) and to purify the society.

The number of sins we commit should come down significantly during the Month of Ramazan even if we can not fast, since fasting is only one way to fight against the lower passions and desires.

At this point, there are some issues mentioned in the tradition which must be noted:

1. The tradition uses the phrase “إِحْزُوا” or “to be aware” and does not say, “do not obey (the lower desires).” When one is aware of something, it means that he is always alert and conscious of what he is doing such that he does not fall prey to the lower desires, and this is a much higher level than just saying not to follow something.
2. The tradition also uses the phrase “أعداء للرجال” or “...an even greater enemy to a person...” and in our opinion this 'person' refers to the one who possesses character and true faith. Thus, this part of the tradition means that the greatest enemy for the true believer is his lower desires and passions and he must fear this enemy more than all others.

There is a well-known tradition which may also relate to this tradition under discussion which states:

النَّاسُ كُلُّهُمْ هَالِكُونَ إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ وَالْعَالِمُونَ كُلُّهُمْ هَالِكُونَ إِلَّا الْعَامِلُونَ وَالْعَامِلُونَ كُلُّهُمْ هَالِكُونَ إِلَّا الْمُخْلِصُونَ وَالْمُخْلِصُونَ فِي خَطَرٍ عَظِيمٍ.

“All people shall be destroyed except for those with knowledge; and all of those who are endowed with knowledge shall be destroyed except for the ones who act according to their knowledge; and all of those who act according to their knowledge shall also be destroyed except the ones with sincerity and the ones who possess sincerity are in the greatest danger.”

and it is possible that this refers to the following of the lower desires.

3. The word “حصائد” is the plural of the word “حصيدة” and refers to something used to reap crops (such as a sickle that is used in the field to clear the crops). In the tradition under discussion, the tongue is compared to a sickle that is used to reap the crops. The sins which the tongue performs fall under the category of following the lower desires, however why it is that they have been mentioned separately in this tradition? This has been done so as to show the importance of this issue.

The sins which the tongue performs do not require any special tool to perform them, can be done night and day and in any state a person is in. Thus, the dangers which come from the tongue are much greater than any other organ of the body. In addition, the scholars have stated that there are approximately thirty major sins which can be done by the tongue!

There is no sin greater in the eyes of the people than those which the tongue performs as these are the most dangerous. In addition, the tongue is always at the disposal of the person (ready to work) and is ready to show its indecency when instructed to do so! This is the reason why Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has mentioned the sin performed by the tongue in this way.

The Noble Prophet (S) was once speaking to a desert 'Arab and was describing the spiritual effects of the tongue and the dangers associated with speaking. The 'Arab asked the Prophet (S):

أَفَنُؤَاخِذُ بِمَا نَقُولُ؟

“Shall we be taken to account for what we say?”

The Noble Prophet (S) replied:

وَهَلْ تَكُوبُ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَنَاخِرِهِمْ فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا حَصَائِدِ أَلْسِنَتِهِمْ؟

“Shall mankind be thrown into the hell fire for any reason other than that which their tongues have earned?”

Therefore, the proof of the gravity of the sins committed by the tongue can be summarized as follows:

1. The number of sins committed with this organ is greater than any other part of the body, and according to the scholars, there are approximately thirty major sins that the tongue can perform!
2. The tongue, which everyone has access to is the easiest of means of committing these sins.
3. The despicability of the sins of the tongue is known to all!

1. Ibid., vol. 67, pg. 82

2. Suratul Furqan (25), Verse 43

Discourse 24: The True Followers (Shi'a) Of 'Ali

B. Abi Talib

لَمَّا جَعَلَ الْمَأْمُونُ إِلَى عَلِيِّ بْنِ مُوسَى الرَّضَا وَلايَةَ الْعَهْدِ دَخَلَ عَلَيْهِ آذَنُهُ فَقَالَ
إِنَّ قَوْمًا بِالْبَابِ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَ عَلَيْكَ يَقُولُونَ نَحْنُ مِنْ شِيعَةِ عَلِيٍّ. فَقَالَ أَنَا مَشْغُولٌ
فَأَصْرَفْتُهُمْ فَصَرَفْتُهُمْ إِلَى أَنْ جَاءُوا هَكَذَا يَقُولُونَ وَ يَصْرَفْتُهُمْ شَهْرَيْنِ ثُمَّ أَيَّسُوا مِنْ
الْوُصُولِ. فَقَالُوا قُلْ لِمَوْلَانَا إِنَّا شِيعَةُ أَبِيكَ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ قَدْ شَمَتَ بِنَا
أَعْدَاؤُنَا فِي حِجَابِكَ لَنَا وَ نَحْنُ نَنْصَرِفُ عَنْ هَذِهِ الْكُرَّةِ وَ نَهْرَبُ مِنْ بِلَادِنَا خَجَلًا
وَ أَنْفَةً مِمَّا لَحِقْنَا وَ عُجْزًا عَنْ إِحْتِمَالِ مَضْضِ مَا يَلْحَقُنَا مِنْ أَعْدَائِنَا. فَقَالَ عَلِيُّ
بْنُ مُوسَى أَتَدْنُ لَهُمْ لِيَدْخُلُوا فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَسَلَّمُوا عَلَيْهِ فَلَمْ يَرِدْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لَمْ يَأْذِنْ
لَهُمْ بِالْجُلُوسِ فَبَقُوا قِيَامًا فَقَالُوا

يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ مَا هَذَا الْجَفَاءِ الْعَظِيمِ وَ الإِسْتِخْفَافِ بَعْدَ هَذَا الْحِجَابِ الصَّعْبِ
أَيِّ بَاقِيَةٍ تَبْقَى مِنَّا بَعْدَ هَذَا. فَقَالَ الرَّضَا إِقْرَعُوا) وَ مَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا
كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَ يَعْفُوا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ (وَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَدَيْتُ إِلَّا بِرَبِّي عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ وَ بِرَسُولِهِ
وَ بِأَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ آبَائِي الطَّاهِرِينَ عَتَوْا عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَقْتَدَيْتُ بِهِمْ. قَالُوا
لَمَّا ذَا يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ لِدَعْوَاكُمْ أَنْكُمْ شِيعَةُ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ يَحْكُمُ إِنَّ
شِيعَتَهُ الْحَسَنَ وَ الْحُسَيْنَ وَ سَلْمَانَ وَ أَبُو ذَرَّ وَ الْمُقَدَّادَ وَ عَمَّارَ وَ مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ أَبِي

بَكَرَ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُخَالِفُوا شَيْئًا مِنْ أَوْامِرِهِ

وَ أَنْتُمْ فِي أَكْثَرِ أَعْمَالِكُمْ لَهُ مُخَالِفُونَ وَ تُقْصِرُونَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِنَ الْفَرَائِضِ وَ تَتَهَاوَنُونَ بِعَظِيمِ حُقُوقِ إِخْوَانِكُمْ فِي اللَّهِ وَ تَتَّقُونَ حَيْثُ لَا تَجِبُ التَّقِيَّةَ وَ تَتْرَكُونَ التَّقِيَّةَ حَيْثُ لَا بُدَّ مِنَ التَّقِيَّةِ لَوْ قُلْتُمْ إِنَّكُمْ مَوَالِيهِ وَ مُحَبُّوهِ وَ الْمَوَالُونَ لِأَوْلِيَائِهِ وَ الْمُعَادُونَ لِأَعْدَائِهِ لَمْ أَنْكَرْهُ مِنْ قَوْلِكُمْ وَ لَكِنْ هَذِهِ مَرْتَبَةٌ شَرِيفَةٌ إِذْ عَيْتُمُوهَا إِنْ لَمْ تَصَدَّقُوا قَوْلَكُمْ بِفِعْلِكُمْ هَلَكْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَدَارَكَكُمْ رَحْمَةٌ رَّبِّكُمْ. قَالُوا يَا ابْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ فَإِذَا نَسْتَعْفِرُ اللَّهَ وَ نَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ قَوْلِنَا بَلْ نَقُولُ كَمَا عَلَّمَنَا مَوْلَانَا نَحْنُ مُحَبُّوكُمْ وَ مُحَبُّو أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ وَ مُعَادُو أَعْدَائِكُمْ. قَالَ الرِّضَا فَمَرْحَبًا بِكُمْ إِخْوَانِي وَ أَهْلَ وَدْي.

When Imam 'Ali b. Musa al-Riza (as) was requested to make his way to the city of tus (present day Mashad) and was ordered to be the heir-apparent of Ma'mun al-Rashid, a group of the Shi'a came to see him and requested permission to enter into his presence.

The Imam asked his servant who the people at the door were to which the servant replied that, 'They claim that they are the Shi'a of 'Ali.'

The Imam told his servant to tell them that he was busy and that they should leave – not granting them permission to enter into his presence. This same scene continued for a second day, third day and went on for a period of two months. Every day they would come, ask for permission to see the Imam, however he did not grant them an audience. This continued until the people gave up all hope of meeting the Imam.

On the final day this group of people told the servant that, 'Tell the Imam that we are the Shi'a of his father, 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) and that the plots of our enemies will intensify at hearing about the separation of the Imam from us. If we are to return back to our home town after being in tus for two months and the people ask us if we had a chance to visit the Imam and we tell them that he did not give us the permission to meet him then none shall respect us.'

The servant went to the Imam and told him what these people said and at this point, the Imam permitted them to meet him.

After they entered into the presence of the Imam and greeted him, however he did not reply their greting. They desired to sit down however the Imam did not give them the permission to do so. The people began to cry and while standing said, 'O' Son of the Messenger of Allah! What have we done to you that

you are acting in this way towards us??

The Imam replied, 'You claim that you are the Shi'a of 'Ali whereas the true Shi'a of 'Ali are people like Hasan, Husayn, Abu Dharr, Salman, Miqdad and Muhammad b. Abu Bakr.'

These people replied, 'We ask forgiveness, what else can we say?'

The Imam replied to them, "Say that you are the lovers of 'Ali.'

When the people said this, then the Imam ordered his servant to show these people kindness.¹

Truly, this tradition is one which should spiritually move us.

We normally state that we (Iran) are the country of the true followers (Shi'a) of 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as), where as those who met and had close contact with the Imam are much better than we are! Thus, it is clear that the claim of being a Shi'a is something very high.

In relation to the characteristics of the Shi'a, Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has stated that:

إِنَّمَا أَصْحَابِي مَنْ لَهُ أَشَدُّ الْوَرَعِ وَ خَافَ مِنْ عِقَابِ اللَّهِ وَ رَجَاءَ ثَوَابِ اللَّهِ –
هُؤُلَاءِ أَصْحَابِي.

"Truly my companions are only those who are the strongest in Wara', fear the punishment of Allah and are hopeful of the reward of Allah – these are my companions."

As we know, Taqwa is a lower level of Wara', as Taqwa means that we keep away from sins, whereas Wara' means that we keep away from doubtful things.

Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said that, "My companions are those who are the strongest in Wara'; fearful of Allah; are hopeful of His reward and surround themselves with the commandments of Allah."

We have taken the issue of being a Shi'a as something very simple to attain such that through the mere performance of the Tawassul, Ziyarat and Du'a, we consider ourselves as Shi'a! We do not wish to lower the worth and value of Tawassul and Ziyarat, however there are many other things which must be performed – and this is what it means to be a Shi'a.

To be a Shi'a means to be self-sacrificing; show altruism; possess cognizance of Allah; be a person of Taqwa, and other such ethical traits. Our entire life, our house, our market place, our religious programs, our travels, our entire presence must all take on the aroma of Wilayah of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as).

Thus, we must first start with ourselves and families and must implement the Wilayah which Imam 'Ali b. Musa al-Riza (as) has spoken of in the tradition under discussion.

Therefore, those of us who make the claim of being a Shi'a must first ask repentance for lying! We must first start with ourselves and our own purification and attainment of the rank of being a Shi'a, and must realize that to be a Shi'a of 'Ali (as) does not only mean the performance of the mere acts of Tawassul, Ziyarat, and Du'a.

We pray that Allah (SwT) gives us the ability to truly be the lovers of Allah (SwT) in place of just claiming this station such that when we claim that 'We are the Shi'a of 'Ali" we are in that form of a Shi'a that would be pleasing to Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) and to Imam 'Ali b. Musa al-Riza (as)!

1. Ibid., vol. 65, pg. 157

Discourse 25: The Muslims Are of Three Types

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ: يَكُونُ أُمَّتِي فِي الدُّنْيَا عَلَى ثَلَاثَةِ أَطْبَاقٍ. أَمَّا الطَّبَقُ الْأَوَّلُ: فَلَا يُحِبُّونَ جَمْعَ الْمَالِ وَادِّخَارَهُ وَ لَا يَسْعَوْنَ فِي إِقْتِنَائِهِ وَ إِحْتِكَارِهِ، وَ إِنَّمَا رِضَاهُمْ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا سَدُّ جَوْعَةٍ وَ سِتْرُ عَوْرَةٍ وَ غِنَاهُمْ فِيهَا مَا بَلَغَ بِهِمُ الْآخِرَةَ، فَأُولَئِكَ الْأَمْنُونَ الَّذِينَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ. وَ أَمَّا الطَّبَقُ الثَّانِي: فَإِنَّهُمْ يُحِبُّونَ جَمْعَ الْمَالِ مِنْ أَطْيَبِ وُجُوهِهِ،

وَ أَحْسَنَ سَبِيلِهِ، يَصِلُونَ بِهِ أَرْحَامَهُمْ وَ يَبْرُونَ بِهِ إِخْوَانَهُمْ وَ يُوَأْسُونَ بِهِ فُقَرَاءَهُمْ، وَ لَعَضُّ أَحَدِهِمْ عَلَى الرَّضِيفِ أَيْسَرُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَنْ يَكْتَسِبَ دِرْهَمًا مِنْ غَيْرِ حِلِّهِ، أَوْ يَمْنَعَهُ مِنْ حَقِّهِ، أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ خَازِنًا إِلَى حِينِ مَوْتِهِ، فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ إِنْ نُوقِشُوا عَذَّبُوا، وَ إِنْ عَفِيَ عَنْهُمْ سَلِمُوا. وَ أَمَّا الطَّبَقُ الثَّلَاثُ: فَإِنَّهُمْ يُحِبُّونَ جَمْعَ الْمَالِ مِمَّا حَلَّ وَ حَرَّمَ، وَ مَنَعَهُ مِمَّا افْتَرَضَ وَ وَجَبَ، إِنْ أَنْفَقُوهُ، أَنْفَقُوهُ إِسْرَافًا وَ بِدَارًا، وَ إِنْ أَمْسَكُوهُ أَمْسَكُوهُ بُخْلًا وَ إِحْتِكَارًا، أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ مَلَكَتِ الدُّنْيَا زِمَامَ قُلُوبِهِمْ حَتَّى أَوْرَدَتْهُمْ النَّارَ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ.

'Abdullah b. 'Umar said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say, 'My nation will be divided into three

categories in the transient world. The first group are those who do not like to gather (and save) wealth and (also) do not bother in hoarding it. These people are content with the transient world in that amount which will remove the hunger and clothe the nakedness (the bare necessities of life). Their (true) wealth lies in that which makes them reach the next life. These people shall be protected and upon whom (...shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.)

As for the second group, they love to gather wealth from the purest of sources and best of ways (of earning it). They strive to ensure that they maintain family ties, do good deeds to their brothers in faith and that they show consideration to the poor. It is easier for this group of people to chew on hard rocks than it would be to earn even one dirham from prohibited channels or to refrain from paying the obligatory (taxes) from that wealth and to not spend the money in the proper way, and until the time of their death, they hold on to this wealth. Therefore, these are the people who, if He (Allah (SwT)) was to be very strict with (in their accountability), then they would be in torment, and if they were to be pardoned (by Him), then they would remain in a state of security.

The third group are those who love to gather wealth – whether it is from the permissible or the impermissible. They love to withhold it in those areas where it is obligatory to spend. If they spend their wealth, they do so through being extravagant and wasteful and if they withhold their wealth, then they do so through miserliness and hoarding (of their wealth). Surely it is these whose hearts have been taken over by the transient world until the time when they enter into the hell fire due to their sins.”¹

In this tradition, the Noble Prophet (S) has stated that, his nation would be divided into three groups in the transient world:

1. There is one group who have no love for wealth and do not permit themselves to hoard it. They are content with that amount of wealth which alleviates their hunger and covers their body while their wants (anything above and beyond this), are reserved for the next life. Thus, they come into the world with a light load and leave the world with a light load. These people have no grief or fear of the past or the future.

2. The second group are those who love to collect wealth, however do so from the permissible means. They use the wealth which they earn to strengthen the family bonds and in assisting their brothers in faith. They are vigilant when it comes to the poor and deal with them in the proper manner. It would be easier for this group of people to sink their teeth into a hard rock than to earn one dirham of wealth in a prohibited way. They pay all of their religious dues while the remainder of the wealth is kept with them. If Allah (SwT) was to be strict with them in the accountability of their wealth, then they would be in torment, and if they are pardoned by Allah (SwT), then they will remain in a state of security.

Question: If this group of believers were truly going after the permissible ways of earning wealth and spending it in the right way, then surely their status and rank must be greater than the first group of people who have not earned anything!?

For example, it has been mentioned that Imam 'Ali (as) freed one thousand slaves with money that he himself earned – is this something bad? Is there any virtue in refraining from earning wealth or does the virtue lie in the fact that one seeks the permissible livelihood and then spends the wealth in the way of Allah (SwT)?

Answer: This is a conclusion drawn from an incorrect understanding of the tradition under discussion. If we properly understood the tradition, then this sort of question would never come up!

If a person was to gather wealth in order to spend it in the way of Allah (SwT), then obviously, such a thing is very good. However, the second group of people love the act of gathering and collecting wealth – meaning that their actual aim is to gain wealth and thus, they end up destroying the outcome of their efforts!

If we were to understand all of the commandments of Islam, then we would definitely conclude that Islam prefers that a person work and then sacrifices the wealth he earns in the way of Allah (SwT). If a person acts in this way and spends any wealth he gains in the way of Allah (SwT) and does not keep it for himself, he would have a rank higher than a Zahid (ascetic)!

3. The third group of people are those who love to collect wealth. For them, it makes no difference if they earn it from the permissible means or the forbidden channels. Both the act of spending the wealth and the way in which they earn it are wrong!

If they spend some of their wealth in the way of Allah (SwT), then they do so in an extravagant manner and with no regard to how much they are spending – meaning that they spend without keeping in mind their needs and also of those who are truly deprived and could use the wealth.

On the other hand, if they do not spend their wealth, then they employ the most extreme forms of miserliness – these are people whose hearts have been enchanted by the transient world and due to their sins, shall enter into the hell fire.

The true meaning of asceticism (Zuhd) is that one does not have an attachment to the transient world – it does not mean that one does not possess anything from the world! If one was to possess the entire world however was not emotionally attached to it, he would be the most ascetic person in the entire world!

When Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) was at the head of the government of the entire Muslim world he used to say, “This position is worth less to me than this old pair of patched up shoes.” He was the commander (Amir) of the transient world – not captive (Asir) of it!

Even if a person has so much as a shirt, however has an attachment to it, then that person is considered as one who is inclined to this world!²

1. Ibid., vol. 74, pg. 184

2. There are various opinions which have been offered in regards to the two extremes of extravagance and miserliness with respect to wealth.

There are some people who give such importance to this issue that they feel that wealth is the key to solving all of the troubles! It is amazing to see people who believe that they must gather wealth! For them, it is impossible to sit still and in the pursuit of wealth, they do not believe in following any conditions or rules – the permissible and impermissible are equal!

Contrary to such people are others who do not pay even the least importance to money. They seek poverty and believe that there is esteem and honour in poverty! These people even believe that wealth is an obstruction to attaining Taqwa (consciousness of Allah (SwT)) and closeness to Him!

However in the face of these two beliefs there is a belief which resides inbetween extravagance (Ifraṭ) and miserliness (Tafriṭ) which is promulgated by a group of people who make use of the Noble Qurān and the Islamic traditions. They deduce that wealth is good to have, however with the following conditions:

1. It should be used as the means and not the goal;
2. Wealth should not make a person an Asir or a captive; rather, it should make a person an Amir or leader.
3. In addition, it must be gained through the permitted means and must also be spent in the pleasure of Allah (SwT).

When one has love and an attachment to such wealth, not only is this NOT considered as having love of the transient world, rather, this is actually proof for one having love and attraction to the next life! (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 27, pg. 219)

Discourse 26: The Angel Of Death Visits Every House Five Times A Day

عَنْ الزُّهْرِيِّ عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ : مَا مِنْ بَيْتٍ إِلَّا وَ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ يَقِفُ عَلَى بَابِهِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ خَمْسَ مَرَّاتٍ. فَإِذَا وَجَدَ الْإِنْسَانَ قَدْ نَفَدَ أَجْلَهُ، وَ انْقَطَعَ أَكْلُهُ أَلْقَى عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ فَعَشِيَّتَهُ كُرْبَاتِهِ وَ غَمْرَتَهُ غَمْرَاتِهِ. فَمِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ النَّاشِرَةُ شَعْرَهَا، وَ الضَّارِبَةُ وَجْهَهَا، الصَّارِخَةُ بِوَيْلِهَا، الْبَاكِئَةُ بِسَجْوِهَا فَيَقُولُ مَلِكُ الْمَوْتِ: وَيْلَكُمْ! مِمَّ الْجَزَعُ؟

وَ فِيمَ الْجَزَعُ؟ وَ اللَّهُ مَا أَذْهَبَتْ لِأَحَدٍ مِنْكُمْ مَالًا، وَ لَا قَرَبَتْ لَهُ أَجَلًا، وَ لَا أَتَيْتُهُ حَتَّى أَمَرْتُ، وَ لَا قَبَضْتُ رُوحَهُ حَتَّى اسْتَأْمَرْتُ. وَ إِنْ لِي إِلَيْكُمْ عَوْدَةٌ، ثُمَّ عَوْدَةٌ،

حَتَّى لَا أَبْقِيَ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدًا. ثُمَّ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ، لَوْ يَرُونَ مَكَانَهُ
وَيَسْمَعُونَ كَلَامَهُ، لَذَهَلُوا عَنْ مَيِّتِهِمْ، وَبَكَوْا عَلَى نَفْسِهِمْ، حَتَّى إِذَا حُمِلَ الْمَيِّتُ
عَلَى نَعْشِهِ، رَفَرَفَ رُوحُهُ فَوْقَ النَّعْشِ وَهُوَ يَنَادِي: يَا أَهْلِي وَوُلْدِي، لَا تَلْعَبَنَّ
بِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا كَمَا لَعَبْتُ بِي. جَمَعْتُهُ مِنْ حِلِّهِ وَ مِنْ غَيْرِ حِلِّهِ وَ خَلَّفْتُهُ لِغَيْرِي، وَ
الْمُهَنَّا لَهُ وَ التَّبَعَاتُ عَلَيَّ، فَاحْذَرُوا مِنْ مِثْلِ مَا نُزِّلَ.

Zuhri has narrated from Anas b. Malik that he said “I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say, 'There is not a single house which exists except that the Angel of Death visits it five times a day. If the lives of any of the people who live in the house or those who are within the house are written to come to an end, then he brings death upon that person.

When the agonies and tribulations of death clothe the entire presence of the person; the screams of the people of the house increase; the people start to pull their hair and start to hit their head and face, and cry, it is at this time that the Angel of Death says, 'Fie be upon you! Why are you showing anger and fear?

I swear by Allah! I have not taken anyone's wealth; I have not brought the appointed time (of death) any closer and I have not come towards you without permission (from Allah). Rather, I am taking the soul by the permission of someone else (Allah). I will continue to come to this house until not a single person remains.”

At this point the Prophet (S) said, “I swear by the One who holds my life and soul in His hands, if you were to see the station where the Angel of Death is standing in the house and were to hear his words, you would surely forget the one who has passed away! Rather, you would shed tears for yourself!

As the deceased is being carried in his casket, his spirit stays above the casket, crying out, 'O' my family! O' my children! Do not let the transient world play with you as it played with me in which I collected the wealth both from the permissible and impermissible means and then left it for others behind me (to inherit). May felicity and delight be for those who have inherited that wealth, however, a responsibility remains on my shoulders. Be careful since that which has come upon me shall also come upon you.” 1 and 2

In this tradition, the advice given by the Angel of Death and the words of guidance given by the deceased to those who remain after him has been mentioned.

Truly, the most fortunate and the one with intelligence is he who constantly remembers death and if we were to keep death in mind, a majority of our troubles would be alleviated, since 99% of our grief is related to issues of the transient world.

We never show grief when we do not wake up for Salat al-Lail, when we are not successful in following the laws of Allah (SwT) or when we performed sins! We never have grief over things such as this!

However, when one remembers death, he realizes that everyone's eventual outcome is the same – death – and that thing whose eventual outcome is death should have absolutely no grief attached to it!

We must study the last days of those who came before us. Sometimes when we pass by the alleys and walk through the markets, we see weak, old men and old women walking with a cane. Some are on their own walking with great difficulty; others are holding on to someone and walking around.

This will also be our eventual end! There was once a time when these people were young and full of energy, however look at them now and see how they are – see what the new day has brought them!

When I first moved to Qum, I remember seeing one of the great scholars of Yazd who had migrated here. Even in those days, he was a very well known scholar of the hawzah. Just recently, I met him again in one of the alleyways in Qum and asked him how he was doing. His reply was amazing, “What can I do – I am neither dead and out of this world, nor am I alive and in this world. I am stuck between this world and the next. My intellectual capacity is drained and it is even difficult for me to move on my own. I am waiting for death to come and take me away!”

Of course, he was not always like this, and truthfully, this sort of an outcome is not limited to this individual! Rather death is as a beast, lying in wait at the door of every house.

There are some people who die in their old age; others leave this world in their youth, however it is through remembering death that a person can become spiritually trained. If there was no death, then it would be very difficult to live. Thus, death is actually one of the grand Divine Blessings from Allah (SwT).

In these few days that we live in the transient world, we see what kinds of tumult and clamour people raise! Imagine if a person was to live for eternity, what state this world would be in?!!

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 188

2. It has been related that during the time of the Children of Israel (Bani Israa'fil), one of the Prophets passed by a graveyard. His companions said to him, “O' Prophet of Allah! We want Allah (SwT) to raise one of these dead people back to life so that we can ask him about how his life was taken and also to inform us of the questions asked by the two Angels – Nakir and Munkar.”

The Prophet of Allah rose his hands up in supplication and after his prayer, his entire body turned black (as if he had been burnt)! A person came out of the grave and in a clear and eloquent voice said, “O' people of this transient world! I died 90 years ago and still the bitterness of the experience of death has not left me!

Therefore you who are still alive, do not fall into a state of negligence and keep aware of the permissible and the impermissible; know the truth and the falsehood since at this point (when you are dead), having grief (over these things) will be of no benefit to you! Work day and night for your next life and prepare your supplies for the next life since no one will come after you to give these things to you. You should know that all of you shall taste the drink of death.”

The Prophet of Allah said to this man, “O' dead man! How were your actions while in this world?”

The man replied, “O' Messenger of Allah! I was a person of the transient world (I worshipped this world), had love for the world and was voraciously busy in amassing wealth although I also heard that in the next life that there will be such and such punishments. Satan the accursed, took me away from the right path and made the material world beautiful in my eyes.

Whatever I managed to collect, I left for those who inherited from me and thus, I came into this next world with empty hands! The wealth which I had in the world, became a source of trouble now while today, my inheritors are enjoying the wealth and do not remembering me at all. Thus since today you still have the opportunity, you should not fall into a state of negligence, ask forgiveness for your sins and remove the love of station and rank of the transient world from your hearts, since when you reach to that life (the next life), the remorse and regret will be of no value.

The Angel of Death takes the life of those people who have a love for this transient world in such a way that it feels as if all of the veins of the body become disconnected from one another and this pain is felt in all parts of the body. At this point in time, the sinner will cry out from the depths of his soul and will say:

يَا حَسْرَتِي عَلَى مَا فَرَّطْتُ فِي جَنْبِ اللَّهِ

“O woe to me! for what I fell short of my duty to Allah...”[85] (Kuliyat-e-Jami al-Tamthil, pg. 222)

Discourse27: Warnings And Preparedness

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ فِي بَعْضِ خُطْبِهِ أَوْ مَوَاعِظِهِ: أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، لَا يَشْغَلَنَّكُمْ دُنْيَاكُمْ عَنْ آخِرَتِكُمْ، فَلَا تُؤَثِّرُوا هَوَاكُمْ عَلَى طَاعَةِ رَبِّكُمْ، وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا إِيمَانَكُمْ ذَرِيعَةً إِلَى مَعَاصِيكُمْ، وَحَاسِبُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُحَاسَبُوا، وَمَهْدُوا لَهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ تُعَذَّبُوا، وَتَزَوَّدُوا لِلرَّحِيلِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُزَعَجُوا...

It has been narrated from Ibne ‘Abbas that he said, “The Messenger of Allah (S) said the following in one of his speeches or words of admonition, 'O people! Do not let this, your transient world keep you busy from your next life; do not let your lower desires and passions take control over you over the obedience to your Lord; do not let your faith be that which leads you to committing sins; take account of yourself before your actions are taken to account (by someone else); prepare yourself before you end up punishing (yourself); prepare yourself for the journey (of the next life) before you are forced to make the journey...”¹

In this tradition, the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) has told the people to be careful that the transient world does not keep them pre-occupied and negligent of the next life. This is a warning from the greatest leader of humanity – the Prophet Muhammad b. ‘Abdullah (S) – who understood the transient world and its true nature.

It is mentioned in Suratul Hadid (57), verse 20, that:

إِعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَ لَهْوٌ وَ زِينَةٌ وَ تَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَ تَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ
وَ الْأَوْلَادِ...

“Know that surely the life of this world is (nothing but) a plaything and game and an ornament of beauty and a means of competition between yourselves and the (competition) in the multiplication in wealth and children...”

Around us, there are people whose intellectual level is like that of a child. They are always busy playing in the sand-box of life and have hearts which are attracted to the transient world. However, the one whose intellect is complete would never fall for the temptations and the gold and glitter of the world.

We see that young children sometimes play “house” – one child is the police officer, another child plays the head of the house while the other children play other roles. Even older people enjoy watching these children play this game, laugh at them and lovingly say to themselves, “What are these young children doing!?”

At the same time, other people look at us and what we do and laugh at us! What do they say in regards to us: “What, do these people think they are doing?! Do they think that they are going to live in this world forever [that they are carrying on in this fashion]?”

After this warning, the Noble Prophet (S) presents five commandments, each of which he has mentioned at other occasions. In reality, each of these sayings forms an independent plan of action for our life:

1. The first part of the tradition tells us, “Do not prefer your lower desires over the obedience to your Lord.”

The vigilant and spiritually awake person is one who places the obedience of Allah (SwT) over the obedience of the passions of his soul. When such a person is at the crossroads of life, it is made clear who is the Muslim and who is not, just as it has been mentioned in verse 20 of Suratul Nisa in which we read:

وَ يَقُولُونَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَ نَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ

“And they say, we believe in a part of it, and we disbelieve in a part of it...”

In regards to these types of people, it is clear that they have not yet become Muslims – those who have

truly submitted!

The true believer (Mo`min) and one who has truly submitted (Muslim) do not place their lower desires and wishes above the wishes of Allah (SwT). The true believer (Mo`min) and one who has truly submitted (Muslim) are not the sort of people who would do whatever their lower desires and wishes want them to do, throwing the rulings of Allah (SwT) under their feet and trampling upon them!

Those who follow their lower desires instead of Allah (SwT) state, “Whenever I want something and realize that it is according to what my lower self desires, however at the same time it is also exactly the same as the rulings and commandments of Allah (SwT), I say to myself, ‘That which Allah (SwT) wants is contained in this ruling, and thus, I will follow it. However when it comes to the rulings of Allah (SwT) which go against my own lower desires and passions, then I state, ‘This ruling of His is difficult to follow’ and this action is a matter of necessity (to perform) and since it is stated that:

الضَّرُورَاتُ تُبِيحُ الْمَحْذُورَاتِ.

Thus, it is not a problem if I perform this act.”

2. The second part of the tradition tells us, “Do not make your faith as the spring-board to perform sins.”

How do people use their faith to commit sins? They say things like: “If we are already corrupt and polluted with sins, then Allah (SwT) is the All-Generous (al-Karim). With faith in the generosity of Allah (SwT), we will commit sins, as He will forgive us.”

There is a sentence which is commonly heard amongst the people that, “We are all drowning in our sins, however we have Husayn.” It is here that such people use the Wilayah of the Ahlul Bait (as) as the means through which they can sin even more! In reality, this is not faith, rather, this is a precursor to the disobedience of Allah (SwT)!

One who speaks like this is actually lying to himself as if he had complete reliance (Tawakkul) upon Allah (SwT), then he would obey Him and he would not use his supposed belief in complete reliance to commit more sins!

This discussion has also been mentioned in relation to intercession (Shafa’at) in our commentary of the Qur’an, Tafsir-e-Namuna.

A poet once uttered the following poem in “praise” of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as):

حاجب، اگر معامله حشر با علی است من ضامنم که هرچه بخواهی گناه کن

“O' hajib (Gatekeeper of Paradise), if the negotiation on the plain of Resurrection (in regards to one's sins and good deeds) is done with 'Ali; then I am guaranteed that I can do whatever I want to do, even sin!”

That night in his sleep, he saw the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) who said to him, “You has composed a very bad poem and must change it.”

The man said, “What should I change it to?” The Imam (as) replied to him: “Say the following:

حاجب، اگر معامله حشر با علی است شرم از رخ علی کن و کمتر گناه کن

“O' hajib (Gatekeeper of Paradise), if the negotiation on the plain of Resurrection (in regards to one's sins and good deeds) is done with 'Ali; then (I must) have modesty in the face of Allah, and sin less.”

The person who has firm belief in the Wilayah or guardianship of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as) knows that atleast once or twice every week, all of his actions are presented to Imam Sahibul Zaman (as).

In the 105th verse of Suratul Tawbah we read:

قُلْ اَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ

And say: Work! Allah will surely see your actions and so will His Messenger and the true believers.”

Since Allah (SwT), the Prophet (S) and the Imam (as) see our actions, we should have some humility in their presence – especially the Imam of our time (as), and not perform any sins. If the record of our actions was to be given to the Imam of our time, would he see anything other than sins in it?! Sins such as lying, false accusations, backbiting, cursing, using foul language, and many other actions...

If we are true believers, then we must not do anything that would hurt our Imam nor anything which would earn the condemnation of the Imam of our time! In addition to our own personal issues, there are also many societal issues which we are plagued with and which lead to the discomfort and torture of Imam al-Hujjah (as).

3. The third point mentioned is that we must take account of own souls before are actions are taken to account (by someone else).

How spiritually awake a person truly is who takes account of his actions before someone else does this

for him!

If we truly believe in the Day of Resurrection and the accountability for all of our deeds, then why do we not sit and account for our actions?

If on the Day of Judgment, we were told to judge ourselves and were instructed, “Each one of you come forward and judge your own actions instead of having Allah (SwT) or anyone else sit in judgment over you, this is your deed of actions which lists everything which you performed in the world and now it is up to you to judge for yourselves whether you should be of the people of Paradise or of the Hell fire”, what would we say? Did we actually perform pure and sincere actions in the world? Really, what positive actions have we done that Allah (SwT) would find us worthy of Paradise?

4. The fourth point mentioned in this tradition is that we must prepare ourselves for the next life before we end up punishing ourselves.

Before one prepares his own punishment (in the hell) and is plagued with having to put up with that, one must prepare the tools necessary for prosperity and happiness through obedience and worship of Allah (SwT) and by purchasing the happiness of both worlds.

5. The fifth point mentioned in this tradition is that we must prepare ourselves for the journey before we are forced to make the trip.

For this (final) trip, one must prepare the goods needed before he is forcefully taken, as the transient world is like a temporary stop upon which the traveler dismounts and gather some provisions for the long journey ahead.

At this temporary stop, if one becomes busy with playing games and all of a sudden the call is made that the next part of the journey is underway and that one must get up and continue on with the rest of the trip, however the person has not prepared anything for the rest of the journey, then it shall be his own loss! !

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 181

Discourse 28: The True Shi'a

دَخَلَ رَجُلٌ عَلَى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ الرِّضَا وَهُوَ مَسْرُورٌ فَقَالَ: مَا لِي أَرَاكَ مَسْرُورًا؟

قَالَ: يَا بْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ سَمِعْتُ أَبَاكَ يَقُولُ: أَحَقُّ يَوْمَ بَأْنِ يَسْرِ الْعَبْدِ فِيهِ يَوْمٌ: يَرْزُقُهُ اللَّهُ صَدَقَاتٍ وَ مَبْرَاتٍ وَ مَدْخَلَاتٍ مِنْ إِخْوَانٍ لَهُ مُؤْمِنِينَ فَإِنَّهُ قَصَدَنِي الْيَوْمَ عَشْرَةَ مِنْ إِخْوَانِي الْفُقَرَاءِ لَهُمْ عِيَالَاتٌ فَقَصَدُونِي مِنْ بَلَدٍ كَذَا وَ كَذَا فَأَعْطَيْتُ كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمْ فَلِهَذَا سُرُورِي.

فَقَالَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ لِعُمْرِي إِنَّكَ حَقِيقٌ بِأَنْ تَسِرَّ إِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ أَحْبَبْتَهُ أَوْ لَمْ تَحْبَطْهُ فِيمَا بَعْدَ. فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ: فَكَيْفَ أَحْبَبْتَهُ وَ أَنَا مِنْ شِيعَتِكَ الْمُخْلِصِ؟ قَالَ: هَاهُ قَدْ أَبْطَلْتُ بَرِّكَ بِإِخْوَانِكَ وَ صَدَقَاتِكَ. قَالَ: وَ كَيْفَ ذَاكَ يَا بْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ لَهُ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ: إِقْرَأْ قَوْلَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَ الْأَذَى. قَالَ يَا بْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ مَا مَنَنْتَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ تَصَدَّقْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ! قَالَ لَهُ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِنَّمَا قَالَ لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَ الْأَذَى وَلَمْ يَقُلْ بِالْمَنِّ عَلَى مَنْ تَتَصَدَّقُونَ عَلَيْهِ وَ بِالْأَذَى لِمَنْ تَتَصَدَّقُونَ عَلَيْهِ وَ هُوَ كُلُّ أَذَى إِفْتَرَى أَذَاكَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ تَصَدَّقْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَعْظَمُ أَمْ أَذَاكَ لِحِفْظَتِكَ وَ مَلَائِكَةُ اللَّهِ الْمُقْرَبِينَ مَوَالِيكَ أَمْ أَذَاكَ لَنَا؟ فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ: بَلْ هَذَا يَا بْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ. فَقَالَ: لَقَدْ آذَيْتَنِي وَ آذَيْتَهُمْ وَ أَبْطَلْتَ صَدَقَتِكَ قَالَ: لِمَاذَا؟

قَالَ: وَ كَيْفَ أَحْبَبْتَهُ وَ أَنَا مِنْ شِيعَتِكَ الْخَلِّصِ؟ ثُمَّ قَالَ: وَيْحَكَ أَتَدْرِي مَنْ شِيعَتُنَا الْخَلِّصِ؟ قَالَ: لَا. قَالَ: فَإِنَّ شِيعَتَنَا الْخَلِّصِ حَزْبِيلُ الْمُؤْمِنِ مُؤْمِنُ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَ صَاحِبُ يَسِ الَّذِي قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى وَ جَاءَ مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى وَ سَلْمَانَ وَ أَبُو ذَرَّ وَ الْمِقْدَادَ وَ عَمَّارَ سَوَيْتَ نَفْسِكَ بِهِؤُلَاءِ أَمَا آذَيْتَ بِهَذَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَ آذَيْتَنَا؟ فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ: أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ وَ أَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ وَ كَيْفَ أَقُولُ؟ قَالَ قُلْ: أَنَا مِنْ مَوَالِيكَ وَ مُحِبِّبِكَ وَ مُعَادِي أَعْدَائِكَ وَ مَوَالِي أَوْلِيَائِكَ. قَالَ: فَكَذَلِكَ أَقُولُ فَكَذَلِكَ أَنَا يَا بْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَ قَدْ تَبَّتْ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ الَّذِي أَنْكَرْتَهُ وَ أَنْكَرْتَهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ فَمَا أَنْكَرْتُمْ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا لِإِنْكَارِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ. فَقَالَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ: الْآنَ قَدْ عَادَتْ إِلَيْكَ مَثُوبَاتُ صَدَقَاتِكَ وَ زَالَ عَنْهَا الْأَحْبَاطُ.

The text of this tradition itself is a lesson for us and it shows us that in Islam, physically helping others is something very important. This is something which we too must give importance to and encourage other

people towards. This is also one of the things which removes the adversities in people's lives and if done while on the spiritual path, would permit one to reach Allah (SwT).

However in this tradition, the Imam wishes to spiritually awaken his students and point them to an even more important issue. It is for this reason that he told his companion that they should not make their charity null and void through laying an obligation upon and harassing those whom they have helped.

The companion told the Imam that he neither lays an obligation nor does he harass the person whom he helps to which the Imam replied, "Harassing the person (whom you have helped) does not only relate to the person whom you have assisted (materially). Rather you have actually harassed the Angels of Allah (SwT) and us (the Ahlu'l Bayt) as well."

This companion asked, "How is it that I have harassed you (the Ahlu'l Bayt) and the Angels of Allah (SwT) where as I am one of your sincere Shi'a (followers)?"

The Imam replied, "This claim of yours that you are one of our sincere Shi'a has made all of your actions void since the true, sincere Shi'a are only the true believer from amongst the people of Pharaoh (as mentioned in the Qur'an), the true believer mentioned in Surat Yasin, Salman, Abu Dharr, Miqdad and 'Ammar. The true believer from amongst the people of Pharaoh had true faith in Musa (as) however was forced to hide it [and this is one of the proofs for the permissibility of Taqiyyah.

In this verse of the Qur'an, the man spoke to the oppressors and said to them, "Why are you dealing with Musa in such a harsh manner? Maybe he is speaking the truth. If he is lying, then his lies are on his own record of deeds and if he is speaking the truth, then why do you need to deal with him such? According to the principal of deflecting danger (from yourselves), deal with him in the way of 'probability' (that he may be truthful in his words)."

Since these people of Fir'awn did not pay any attention to these words from this man, he said, (Surely I entrust all of our affairs to Allah.)" At this point, these oppressors drew up plans to kill this believer, however Allah (SwT) protected him – (So then Allah protected him from their evil plots...)]

At this point, the Imam (as) said, "This is our Shi'a (true follower) who was alone and isolated amongst the enemies however stood firm as a mountain.

The other true believer was the one mentioned in Surat Yasin: (And came a man to them from the furthest part of the city, running to them...) [The history of revelation of this verse is in relation to two individuals from amongst the Messengers of Allah (SwT) whose names were Shim'awn and Yuhna who lived in the city of Antakiyah (the country previously known as Shamat which is present day Turkey) and who began their propagation work there.

The Surah continues on and says, (When We sent to them two (Messengers)) and these Messengers

were ordered to guide the people towards Allah (SwT) and to command them to refrain from idol worship, however they were not triumphant in this endeavour of theirs (since the people did not listen to them). The verse continues and says, (So then We strengthened them with a third (Messenger).) ¹

Even with this third person sent, they still were not able to dissuade their people from the worship of the idols. At this point, we read that, (And came a man to them from the furthest part of the city, running to them...) ² Thus, it was at this point that Allah (SwT) send habib Najjar, however he was stoned to death and became a martyr in the way of Allah (SwT).]

In continuation of the tradition, the Imam said, “Do you compare yourself to people like this?”

Obviously the goal of the Imam in saying this was to train the person and it is for this reason that when this companion heard these words, he said, “I ask forgiveness (for the claims I have made).” and then said to the Imam, “Please tell me, now what should I do?”

The Imam replied to him, “Say: I am from amongst your friends and lovers and of those who has hatred for your enemies and...”

The Imam then said, “Now, your reward (for your previous acts) has returned back to you and you have been compensated.” [It should be noted that amongst the traditions, it is something very rare to see a tradition in which one’s Divinely granted rewards are given back after they have been considered null and void.]

This tradition shows us that to claim to be a follower (a Shi’a) is an easy thing and to truly be a Shi’a is something very difficult.

We pray that we are able to spiritually build ourselves and that we are also able to guide others to this path.³

1. Surat Yasin (36), verse 14

2. Ibid., verse 20

3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 65, pg. 159

Discourse 29: The Sincere Shi’a

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ الصَّادِقُ: إِنَّ شِيعَتَنَا هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ آثَارَنَا وَ
يُطِيعُونَا فِي جَمِيعِ أَوْامِرِنَا وَنَوَاهِينَا فَأَوْلِيكَ شِيعَتَنَا. فَأَمَّا مَنْ خَالَفَنَا فِي كَثِيرٍ
مِمَّا فَرَضَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَلَيْسُوا مِن شِيعَتِنَا.

Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said: "Surely our Shi'a (true followers) are those who follow our virtues (those who follow all of the good and noble practices which we have established and left behind – our Sunnah) and who obey us in all of the things which we command towards and which we prohibit – surely these people are our Shi'a. However, as for those who go against us in most of the things which Allah has made obligatory upon him, they are not our Shi'a." 1

The word "أثار" mentioned in this tradition refers to the customs that remain even after a person has left this world. Sometimes these are good customs and practices while other times, they are corrupt and immoral practices.

In this tradition, the Imam has said that, "Our Shi'a not only uphold and protect the obligatory and refrain from the prohibited, rather, they also protect the (good) customs and practices."

One of the established customs of the A`immah (as) is that they used to help people in need through direct means. Historical narrations mention that in the middle of the night, they would go to a needy person's house and give them whatever they needed.

Another custom of the A`immah (as) was the humility which they displayed.

Yet another of their habits was that when they came face to face with the anger and rage of another person, they restrained themselves and would repel evil with goodness – not with evil!

Therefore, according to the directives given in the tradition under review, the person who keeps their traditions (Sunnah) alive, acts according to all of the permissible things and refrains from the impermissible, are the true Shi'a of the A`immah!

We should note that in this tradition, the Imam has used the term, 'all of the commandments and prohibitions'. Therefore, if a person was to go against even one of their commandments or perform even one prohibited act, he would no longer be classified as a Shi'a!

However at the end of the tradition, the Imam has said that if a person does not follow a great number of their commandments, then and only then is he classified as not being from amongst their Shi'a. Is there some discrepancy between the beginning and end of this tradition?

In our opinion, the meaning of "not following some of our commandments" is the same as "not following all of our commandments" and is similar to the phrase used in the Qur'an which states:

وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا

“And then they sell it (the communications of Allah) for a miserable and low price...”

This sort of phrase has been repeated in the Qur’an in many times. However, does this verse mean that if a person was to take a large amount of money as a bribe for the act of alteration and distortion of the verses of the Tawrat, then this would be permissible – thus relegating the meaning of this verse to be that it is no permissible to take a small amount of money? The answer is that obviously, a “large amount” is equal to a “small amount” and that even if a person was to give the entire transient world in exchange for the distortion of the verses of Allah (SwT), that would still be a little amount!

Therefore, sometimes we see that 'a little' is actually 'a lot'.

With this said, in the tradition under discussion and as it has been mentioned by the infallible A`immah (as), even one ounce or an atom's weight of opposition to their teachings is too much! If the meaning of this tradition was anything other than this, then we could definitely say that there is a disparity between the beginning and end of the tradition.

Therefore the correct meaning of the tradition is that if a person goes against the dictates of the A`immah (as) in even a small amount, it is the same as going against many of their commandments and thus, such a person would cease to be a Shi'a.

The tradition goes on to speak about a very frightful and moving event that was previously mentioned in two other traditions. In those other discussions we mentioned that once, a person was plagued with difficulties and was in need of help and thus, introduced himself (to the Imam) as a Shi'a of the Ahlu'l Bayt.

Another person asked the Imam if that person was truly a Shi'a and follower of the Ahlu'l Bayt to which the Imam replied that he was not a Shi'a! Some time later, the person was relieved from his difficulties and asked the Imam why he said that he was not a Shi'a?

The Imam replied, “I did so since in this issue which you were engulfed in, you were not under a great deal of pressure and now that you are freed from your difficulties you should know that you are our lover, you are not our Shi'a – thus, this statement of yours is nothing more than a false claim. Therefore, you must say that you are a lover of the Ahlu'l Bayt.”

However, we should not become discouraged from these sorts of traditions. Rather, they should instil a feeling of hope within us and we should realize that being a Shi'a is something extremely difficult! It is easy to love someone, however it is difficult to be a follower (Shi'a) of that person.

We are merely at the beginning of the journey of becoming true Shi'a, and therefore, we must seek

assistance to complete this journey so that we can truly become and be counted as the Shi'a.

The tradition under review also shows us that if the claim of being a follower (Shi'a) is made, however there are no characteristics of being a Shi'a present within the person, then not only is this a false and void claim, rather, it also has retributions associated with it (as we mentioned in our previous two discussions).

We pray that through the divine blessings of the A`immah (as), we are able to stay on the path of being the true Shi'a!

1. Ibid., vol. 65, pg. 162

Discourse 30: The Signs of a Person With Character

عَنِ الصَّادِقِ: ثَلَاثَةٌ تَدُلُّ عَلَى كَرَمِ الْمَرْءِ: حُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ وَ كَظْمُ الْغَيْظِ وَ غَضُّ
الْبَصَرِ.

[Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad] as-Sadiq (as) has said: "There are three things which show the character of a person: good etiquette; swallowing one's anger and lowering the eyes [to that which one is not permitted to look at]."¹

The word "كرم" in sometimes used in the 'Arabic language to refer to the traits of munificence, charity, and generosity. In the verses of the Qur'an and the traditions, it refers to the character or temperament and the spiritual worth of a person. For example it has been mentioned in the Qur'an that:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَى

"Surely the one with the most character, worth, noblest of traits and ethical values amongst you in the sight of Allah is the one who is the most Allah-Conscious (one with Taqwa)."

According to the tradition we started our discussion with, the person with character is the one who possesses the following three traits:

1. A good demeanour: Having pleasant encounters with others, enjoyable to be around and observing the proper etiquette are all things that come under the heading of a good demeanour. In addition, these are things which have been emphasized in the verses of the Qur`an and the traditions, and one of the miracles of the Prophet (S) was his good demeanour and etiquette.

If a person with character is given something or has something taken away from him, he does not let this get to him and is able to control himself. However, as can be seen in a person who has no character or has a negative disposition, even if a small amount of difficulties abound him, he becomes childlike and immature and begins to argue with everyone!

2. Swallowing the Anger: The word “كظم” refers to closing the mouth, as anger is like a fire raging inside a person which is manifest when one speaks. It engulfs the one who is in his presence and is at the receiving end of the anger and it is for this reason that the word “كظم” has been used for 'anger' and the act of swallowing one's anger is one of the traits of a person with character. Of course there is also a form of 'sacred anger' and this is necessary to have.

3. Lowering the Eyes [to that which a person should not be looking at]. The word “غمص” refers to closing one's eyes, however the word “غض” is in the meaning of lowering the gaze and look.

What must we lower our eyes from? The meaning of lower one's eyes or refraining from looking at certain things has a very wide meaning to it:

1. Refraining from staring at people whom one is not related to by blood or marriage (Maharim);
2. Turning a blind eye to the shortcomings of the people;
3. Turning a blind eye to the minor mistakes of the people;
4. Abd refraining from staring and desiring the gold and glitter of the transient world.

We pray that we can all struggle to enliven these characteristics within ourselves and pray that Allah (SwT) gives us the Divine providence to be able to possess these traits!

Discourse 31: The Effects of Sins

عَنْ الْبَاقِرِ: مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ يَمْتَنِعُ مِنْ مَعُونَةِ أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ وَالسَّعَى لَهُ فِي حَاجَتِهِ
قُضِيَتْ أَوْلَمَ تَقْضَى إِلَّا أَبْتَلَى بِالسَّعَى فِي حَاجَةٍ فِيمَا يَأْتُمُّ عَلَيْهِ وَلَا يُؤْجَرُ. وَمَا
مِنْ عَبْدٍ يَبْخُلُ بِنَفَقَةٍ يَنْفِقُهَا فِيمَا يَرْضَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَبْتَلَى بِأَنْ يَنْفِقُ أضعافها فِيمَا
أَسْخَطَ اللَّهُ.

[Imam Muhammad b. ‘Ali] al-Baqir (as) has said: “There is no servant who sees his Muslim brother in need, however does not help him or tries to alleviate his difficulties, except that he will face a tribulation in that his energies will be expended in an area in which there is no reward for the next life and no reward for the transient world.

There is not a single servant (of Allah) who is miserly in spending his wealth in that which pleases Allah except that his wealth will end up being spent in the forbidden and prohibited channels where in lies Allah's anger.”¹

Both the acts of obedience and sinning against Allah (SwT) have two effects to them:

1. Effects within the physical world;
2. Effects within the spiritual world.

Taking interest (from the banks or other institutions) has a spiritual effect which is the punishment on the Day of Resurrection and the squeezing in the grave; as for the effects in the physical world, the person who takes interest will be accursed and hated by others!

The effects within the physical world are broken up into two categories:

1. Some of them have a logical reasoning which we can understand with logical proofs. For example, we read in the Qur’an that:

وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ

“...and do not quarrel with one another for then you will be weak, and your power will depart...”²

Thus, the effects in the physical world include arguments and differences amongst the people. We are

able to understand the logic of this outcome since when there is an argument between people, naturally their power is dissipated. Instead of fighting the enemy, one would end up fighting with those of the same faith and close to the person!

In addition, the Qur`an also tells us (as another example of this phenomena):

إِدْفَعْ بِالتِّي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

“...repel (evil) with what is best. [If you do so,] behold, between you and the person for which there was enmity will be as though he were a sympathetic friend.”³

Therefore, we must respond in a nice way to one who says something bad as this goodness would lead to the stubborn enemy having a change of heart and inclining such that he would become a close, loving friend! The A`immah (as) and the Noble Prophet (S) were the embodiment of this verse and it is through their love that they were able to humble the enemies.

2. Another effect in the physical world is a relationship which, although may not be exactly clear to us and which we cannot understand, nonetheless does exist. For example, it is mentioned in the traditions that:

صِلَّةُ الرَّحْمِ تُعَمِّرُ الدِّيَارَ وَتَزِيدُ فِي الْأَعْمَارِ.

“Silatul Rahm (the act of the keeping the family bonds strong) enable the cities to be fortified and increases the life span.”

This is another physical act related to the world, however it is not clear how the life span increases through maintaining family ties.

In addition we read in the Qur`an:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

“...and whoever is careful of (his duty to) Allah, He will make for him a means out (of his difficulties) and will grant him sustenance from where he imagines not (that it would come)...”⁴

What is the relationship between Taqwa of Allah (SwT) and sustenance coming from places where one cannot even imagine? Truly, this is something we cannot understand!

It is important to keep in mind that all types of worship and acts of transgression carry these forms of effects with them.

It is possible that after committing a sin, a person would repent and Allah (SwT) would accept his forgiveness, however the effect of that sin remains with the person in the physical world. Thus, the repentance for a sin merely takes away the effect of the act in the spiritual realm, however its spiritual effects remain for a time period. This is similar to poison which enters into a person's body and is not immediately taken out of the body forcing the person to ingest an antibody so that the effects of the poison do not stay with the person.

In the tradition quoted, we see that it refers to two effects of one's actions in the physical realm. If the society were to pay attention to these effects, then they would definitely correct themselves much quicker than the current pace of reformation.

We pray that Allah (SwT) grants all of us the opportunity to be able to pay close attention to the various educational programs and injunctions that Islam has blessed us with!

1. Tuhafatul Uqul under the short sayings of the 5th Imam and also Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 75, pg. 173

2. Surat al-Anfal (8), verse 46

3. Surat al-Fussilat (41), verse 34

4. Surat al-talaq (65), verses 2 and 3

Discourse 32: Swallowing The Anger

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ يَا عَلِيُّ أَوْصِيكَ بِوَصِيَّةٍ فَأَحْفَظْهَا فَلَا تَزَالُ بِخَيْرٍ مَا حَفَظْتَ
وَصِيَّتِي. يَا عَلِيُّ مَنْ كَظَمَ غَيْظًا وَهُوَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَى امْضَائِهِ أَعَقَبَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
أَمْنًا وَإِيمَانًا يَجِدُ طَعْمَهُ.

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said, “O ‘Ali! I advise you (in regards to something) with a piece of advice, so then safe-guard this as you shall never be devoid of goodness as long as you have safe-guarded my recommendation. O ‘Ali! Allah will grant the one who swallows his anger – while he is able to act out his rage – with protection and faith on the Day of Judgment whose pleasure the person will taste.”¹

In this piece of advice from the Messenger of Allah (S), there is only one thing which he advised us. In this tradition, he stated that if a person has the ability to do something (take revenge) and refrains from it, Allah (SwT) will grant that person a blessing in the transient world and the next life. The blessing of the next life is the protection from the hell-fire, while the blessing in this world is that of true faith which the person shall be able to taste.

The word “كظم” which has been mentioned in this tradition has numerous meanings, however its original meaning is to tightly seal the top of a flask. It is also used in the meaning of swallowing one's anger since when a person becomes upset, it is said that his anger 'spills out of him.'

At this point, we must explain some issues:

1. Anger is one of the things which leads to sin

The sins that one commits in a state of anger are many, for example: insulting and harming a fellow believer; polluting the tongue with speaking impermissible things, and many other sins. In addition, sometimes a person performs such a sin that he is not able to control himself, or due to his anger, performs something that he would never be able to compensate for during the course of his entire life!

It is for this reason that most of the decisions which are taken in a state of anger are always followed by regret and remorse.

Thus, a person must remind himself that he should only make decisions in his life after coming out of the state of anger since while angry, a person's thoughts are not balanced and do not work properly. In addition, in such a state, one does not have the ability to discern his best interests and it is for this reason that the scholars have stated that, “While in a state of anger, no decision can be made, nothing can be ordered (to be done), nor can any punishment given.” In other words, in such a mental state, no important action can be undertaken.

Rather, what is important is that a person does not make any decision and in this time period, tries to control himself. Of course, to control ones' self while in a state of anger is also difficult to do, however one of the things which is beneficial is to bring about the agents within the self which would result in a change in the mental state.

For example, the person should leave that area where he is, in order to control his emotions; if he has become upset while inside his house, then he should step outside. It has even been stated that if a person is standing then he should sit down or if he is sitting down then he should stand up or even drink some water to change his mood and control himself!

Thus in whatever way possible, one must change the state one is in and even if one is able to change the state for a brief period of time, this too would be beneficial. To accomplish this, one could for example, sprinkle some water on one's face or recite a Surah from the Qur`an.

Sometimes a person goes into such a fit of anger that in order for it to subside, he has no other choice but to punch the wall so as to remove the pressure building up in him, thus preventing his anger from manifesting itself on others!

Truthfully, anger is a flame from the fire of Satan and is one of the most important tools which he makes use of.

The key point to note is that anger takes a person out of his natural state of mind. We have seen people who, while in their 'regular mental state', are very good and down to earth people. However, when they enter into a state of anger, then everything around them begins to fly around the house (whatever they see they begin to throw!)

In this state, they can not be considered as a normal human being since many changes come about within them. The most important thing which can be stated in regards to the person in such a state is that he does not have any religious excuse which he can use such that he could, for example, say that "I was in a state of anger and thus I did so and so..."

We also see that, perhaps a majority of people murdered, are killed when the killer was in a fit of anger and rage since no one would take a knife and slit someone's throat when he is cool and collected!

2. Anger is one of the most dangerous tools as Satan is able to use it to make people commit sins

Anger is one of the gifts from Allah (SwT) which can also be used in incorrect and inappropriate places. As we know, the power of anger actually refers to the gathering of a person's physical energy in the face of a difficulty. Therefore, Allah (SwT) is the one who has created the power of anger so that a person would be able to defend himself from an attack, as if a person was to remain indifferent in such situations and did not gather his inner-energy, then he would not be able to defend himself.

There are some people who have stated that when a person is in his regular state, he has approximately 1/10th of his power ready to use. However, when he gets into a state of anger, then his power becomes ten fold – meaning that all of their energy is mustered!

With this point in mind, we see that in a regular state, some people are very relaxed, however when they enter into a stage of anger, then even five people would not be able to take charge over them and control them as all of their inner energy and power has been gathered together!

Therefore, the power of anger which Allah (SwT) has created within everyone is actually one of His blessings, however it must be used in the proper way.

With this said, we understand that anger is of two types: the unbecoming form of anger and the praiseworthy and obligatory anger.

In the face of those who openly perform sins and transgress the laws of Allah (SwT), the true believer must show his Islamic zeal and enthusiasm in opposing the impermissible acts and must not be indifferent to sins happening around him.

There is a well-known tradition which states that once, Allah (SwT) sent a group of Angels to destroy a particular nation, however they did not fulfill the responsibility given to them by Allah (SwT) and returned back, appealing to Him, saying: "O' Allah! Within this group (whom we are commanded to destroy) we saw a very old man who worships You in the darkness of the night. He was awake in Your worship and we did not want to destroy this nation since this man was amongst them."

It was revealed to this group of Angels that, "Return back to that nation and destroy the entire community as well as the old man!" Once they were given this command, they were told the reason why this was to be done:

لَمْ يَحْمَرَّ وَجْهَهُ لِغَضَبِ قَطُّ.

"The same old man you see awake in the dark hours of the night in worship is the same person whose face never turned red in anger at seeing the sins being committed around him!"

Therefore, when a person must command others to righteous deeds and forbid them from the evil (Amr bil Ma'ruf and Nahi 'anil Munkar), become angry at sins being committed, leaving that area where sins are being performed and in summary, fulfilling his responsibility in these regards, he must do this.

Again, it is this form of anger which is praiseworthy and is actually obligatory!

From the point of view of the faith of Islam, the person who is indifferent to sins and sinning has absolutely no value!

Of course it goes without saying that anger which is not warranted is something which is not liked by Allah (SwT).

3. The Reward for those who swallow their Anger

a) The first reward granted to those who swallow their anger is that they shall have protection on the Day of Resurrection.

If Allah (SwT) was to grant a person protection on the Day of Resurrection, which is also the day known as: The Day of Grief; The Day of Everything in the Open; The Day of Trepidation; The Day of the Great Fear; and The Day of the Distress, then is there any greater blessing or gift?!

In the same way, if a person was to possess the entire transient world, however did not possess tranquility and peace in his heart, then all of his material possessions would mean nothing! Thus, if one has peace of heart and mind, however has nothing from the material aspect of this world, then in reality, he has everything!

b) The second reward is that such a person shall be granted true faith in Allah (SwT) while in this world.

It has been mentioned that if a person was to refrain from certain sins, then Allah (SwT) would grant that person true faith that he could “taste” – this means that his faith would not be something dry and monotonous in theory. Rather, there would be a sweetness in his faith which he could actually sense! This is not something granted to all people – it is only bestowed upon those who stand firm in the face of their lower desires.

In the introductory chapter on 'Looking at others' in the compilation of traditions, Wasa'il ash-Shi'a, we have traditions which state if a person's eyes fall upon a beautiful woman who is not his mahram and he immediately turns his eyes away from her, then Allah (SwT) would grant that person such a level of faith that the person would actually be able to taste it (the true faith)!

Anger in the Islamic Narrations

1. Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has stated that “Anger spoils faith just as vinegar spoils honey.”²

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ الصَّادِقُ الْغَضَبُ يُفْسِدُ الْإِيمَانَ كَمَا يُفْسِدُ الْخَلُّ الْعَسَل.

2. Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said, “I advise you in regards to anger since the beginning stage of it is insanity while the final stage of it is remorse.”

قَالَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ: إِيَّاكَ وَالْغَضَبَ، فَأَوَّلُهُ جُنُونٌ وَآخِرُهُ نَدَمٌ.

3. The Prophet of Islam (S) has said, “The strong person is not the one who can lift heavy weights. Rather, the strong person is the one who is in control of his soul while in a state of anger.”³

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرْعَةِ، إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ.

4. Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said, "Anger is a fire which is burning away. The one who is able to swallow it is the one who has extinguished it, while the person who permits his anger to be free is the first person who shall be burnt by it."⁴

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ: أَلْغَضَبُ نَارٌ مُوقَدَةٌ. مَنْ كَظَمَهُ أَطْفَأَهَا، وَ مَنْ أَطْلَقَهُ كَانَ أَوَّلَ مُحْتَرَقٍ بِهَا.

5. Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as): "Anger is the key to all evil."⁵

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ الصَّادِقِ: أَلْغَضَبُ مِفْتَاحُ كُلِّ شَرٍّ.

6. Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said, "A strong feeling of anger changes the way a person speaks; destroys the pillars of logic and makes a person's comprehension scattered and disturbed."⁶

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ: شِدَّةُ الْغَضَبِ تُغَيِّرُ الْمَنْطِقَ، وَ تَقْطَعُ مَادَّةَ الْحُجَّةِ، وَ تُفَرِّقُ الْفَهْمَ.

7. Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said, "The staunchest of enemies for a person are his anger and lower desires. The person who is able to take control of these two shall have the greatest rank and shall be able to reach to the pinnacles of humanity."⁷

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ: أَعْدَى عَدُوِّ الْمَرْءِ غَضَبُهُ وَ شَهْوَتُهُ، فَمَنْ مَلَكَهُمَا عَظُمَتْ دَرَجَتُهُ وَ بَلَّتْ غَايَتُهُ.

8. The Prophet of Allah (S) has said, "Anytime you get angry, keep quiet."⁸

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: إِذَا غَضِبْتَ فَاسْكُتْ.

9. Imam Musa b. Ja'far al-Kadhim (as) said, "The one who controls his anger over the people, Allah shall control His anger over that person on the Day of Judgement."⁹

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ مُوسَى بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ الْكَاظِمُ: مَنْ كَفَّ غَضَبَهُ عَنِ النَّاسِ، كَفَّ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ
غَضَبَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.

10. The Noble Prophet (S) has said, "Anytime one of you gets angry, he should wash his face with cold water since surely anger is from the hell fire."¹⁰

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: إِذَا غَضِبَ أَحَدُكُمْ، فَيَتَوَضَّأُ بِالْمَاءِ الْبَارِدِ، فَإِنَّ الْغَضَبَ مِنَ
النَّارِ.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 46

2. Ibid., vol. 73, pg. 267

3. Majmuatul Warram, vol. 2, pg. 122

4. Ghurur al-hikm, pg. 292

5. Ibid., pg. 49

6. Safinat al-Bihar, vol., pg. 220

7. Ghurur al-hikm, pg. 498

8. al-Mahajjat al-Baydaaf1, vol. 5, pg. 308

9. Wasail al-Shia, vol. 11, pg. 298

10. al-Mahajjat al-Baydaaf1, vol. 5, pg. 305

Discourse 33: The Worst Of People

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: يَا عَلِيُّ، مَنْ خَافَ النَّاسَ لِسَانَهُ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ. يَا عَلِيُّ، شَرُّ
النَّاسِ مَنْ أَكْرَمَهُ النَّاسُ إِتْقَاءَ شَرِّهِ. يَا عَلِيُّ، شَرُّ النَّاسِ مَنْ بَاعَ آخِرَتَهُ بِدُنْيَاهُ،

وَشَرُّ مَنْ ذَاكَ مَنْ بَاعَ آخِرَتَهُ بِدُنْيَا غَيْرِهِ.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) has said, “O’ ‘Ali! The person whom, others are scared of his tongue (what he says), shall be of the people of the hell fire. O’ ‘Ali! The worst of people is the one whom others show respect to out of fear of his wickedness.

O’ ‘Ali! The worst of people is the one who sells his next life for his life of the transient world and one who is even worse than this is the one who sells his next life for the life of the transient world of other people!”¹

Without doubt, the points mentioned in this tradition are very moving and if we did not have even a single proof for the truthfulness of the status (of Prophethood) of the Prophet Muhammad (S), then this saying would be sufficient for an individual to realize the great status and rank of this individual!

As the historians narrate, the Prophet Muhammad (S) grew up within a society steeped in ignorance, never went to school and never wrote anything, however such words which grant wisdom to others have been heard flowing from his blessed lips! All of this points to his greatness and station of Prophethood and through such sayings, a person is guided to understand that everything he has spoken are indeed miracles.

In the saying quoted above, we see that he has explained the transient world in great detail.

In the first sentence, he has pointed us to issues in regards to a person's tongue and what he says with it.

The scholars of etiquette tell us that whatever is said about the tongue and the sins and evils which stem from is never enough. A great number of difficulties, tribulations, bad states – and even good states we find ourselves in, our victories and defeats all come through reforming our tongue and what we speak – and how difficult it is to reform the tongue!

The Noble Prophet (S) has stated, “O’ ‘Ali! The person whom others are scared of his tongue and what he says shall definitely be of the people of the hell fire.”

The following example best illustrates this line of the tradition. Sometimes, we see a person enter into a gathering and immediately, everyone present falls into a state of fear lest the person should begin to speak, since they have all felt the bite of his tongue and his harsh words.

The tongue is something very dangerous – of course however, we must realize that the importance of the pen and what it writes is no less than what the tongue speaks, and it actually may even be more dangerous!²

In the second sentence, the Prophet (S) stated, “O’ ‘Ali! The worst of people is the one whom people

show respect to out of fear of his evilness.”

As we know, people generally show respect to people for two reasons:

- 1) The individual's moral character and worthy traits and since they benefit from being in the company of such people.
- 2) They want to repel the dangers and threats which these people can cause. Truthfully, others are scared that if they do not show respect to a particular person, then that person shall do something bad to them!

There is a story which has been related about a person who had stated, “I will give the wealth in the public treasury to two groups of people: one group are those who follow and respect me only because they benefit materialistically from me, while the other group are those who respect me since they want to repel the evil which I can cause them!”

Question: Why is such a person as mentioned in the tradition the worst person?

Answer: His sins are actually much greater in number compared to others since he is harming others by compelling them to act contrary to their own desires by forcing them to show respect.

If such a person was to gain wealth from his actions, then without doubt, this wealth would be forbidden and he would not be permitted to use of it! If such a person was to give an amount of money from the public treasury to a person so that he would not embarrass him in public (out of fear) then that money would be similar to eating the flesh of the swine!

In the third sentence in the tradition, the Prophet (S) has stated, “O ‘Ali! The worst of people is the one who sells his next life for his life of the transient world...”

In this part of the saying, the Prophet (S) means to say that such a person sells the true life which is in the next world for the transient and short-lived life on Earth, even though:

وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانِ

“And the life of the next world that is the (true) life...”³

In reality, the transient world which we are in is a form of slow death and how bad it is that one would trade the ever-lasting life of the next world for the temporary, fleeting, base pleasures of the life of this transient world – which is, as mentioned, a life of slow death!

A person who does this is one who, from the point of view of his intellect, is a bad person since he

himself is thinking bad thoughts (of the life of this world). From the point of view of his actions, he is also a bad person since he does bad deeds for the life of this world. In addition, from the point of view of his ambitions and aspirations, he is also bad since he has degraded his ambitions and goals!

Even worse than the one mentioned is the person who sells the life of the next world for the life of the transient world – however for other people! These sorts of people are not few in number and are people who say, “I am ready to sell my life of this world and the next world and everything which I possess (both materialistically and spiritually) in order to ensure that another person is comfortable in this life.” Truly, this is the pinnacle of stupidity and is the greatest loss for a person!

Sometimes a person will fall into the trap (mentioned in this tradition) and will open his eyes and see that he is now the physical manifestation of the first part of this tradition (that he has sold the life of the next life for the pleasures of this world).

Slowly, he would realize that he has also become a manifestation of the second part of the tradition (that he has also sold the life of the next world for others around him and for them to be comfortable in this world)! Do not think that a person is forewarned of this or that some signs are given to a person to make him aware of this – no this is not the case! All of a sudden he would notice what has occurred and at that time, he would realize that he is drowning and his hands and feet are tied and that he has no way to get out!

The Dangers of the Tongue in the Islamic Narrations

1. The Noble Prophet of Islam (S) has said:

نَجَاتُ الْمُؤْمِنِ حَفْظُ لِسَانِهِ.

“The salvation of the true believer lies in protecting his tongue.”⁴

2. Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said, “Luqman said to his son:

يَا بُنَيَّ إِنْ كُنْتَ زَعَمْتَ أَنَّ الْكَلَامَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ، فَإِنَّ السُّكُوتَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ.

“O’ my son! If you think that speaking is silver, then you must know that silence is golden.”⁵

3. The Noble Prophet of Islam (S) has said:

بَلَاءُ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنَ اللِّسَانِ، وَ سَلَامَةُ الْإِنْسَانِ فِي حِفْظِ اللِّسَانِ.

“The tribulation of a person lies in his tongue and the protection of a person is in safe-guarding his tongue.”⁶

4. The final Prophet of Allah (S) said to Ibne Mas'ud:

عَلَيْكَ بِحِفْظِ لِسَانِكَ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يَقُولُ الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَى أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

“I advise you to protect your tongue since surely Allah, the Most High has said, (On that day, We shall seal their mouths and their hands will speak to us and their feet shall bear witness as to what they had earned.)”⁷

5. The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said:

طُوبَى لِمَنْ أَنْفَقَ الْفَضْلَ مِنْ مَالِهِ وَ أَمْسَكَ الْفَضْلَ مِنْ كَلَامِهِ.

“Glad tidings to that person who gives out goodness from his excess wealth and prevents himself from speaking excess words.”⁸

6. It has been narrated from Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) from his fore-fathers (as) that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

زِينَةُ الْحَدِيثِ الصِّدْقُ.

“The beauty of speaking is truthfulness (in speech).”⁹

7. The Messenger of Allah (S) has said:

فِتْنَةُ اللِّسَانِ أَشَدُّ مِنْ ضَرْبِ السِّيفِ.

“The tribulation of the tongue (what is spoken) is greater than the striking of the sword.”¹⁰

8. It has been narrated from ‘Abdullah b. Sanan from Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as–Sadiq (as) that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

أَلَا أُنبِئُكُمْ بِشِرَارِكُمْ؟ قَالَ الْمَشَاوُونَ بِالنَّمِيمَةِ، الْمُفْرِقُونَ بَيْنَ الْأَحِبَّةِ، الْبَاغُونَ
لِلْبِرَاءِ الْمَعَايِبِ.

“Shall I not inform you of the worst amongst you?” The people replied, “O Prophet of Allah! Go ahead!” The Prophet said, “It is those who: go forth as tale-bearers (those who indulge in gossip); cause separation amongst people who love one another; and make excuses for sins (which they commit).”¹¹

9. Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as–Sadiq (as) has said:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْمِزَاحَ فَإِنَّهُ يَذْهَبُ بِمَاءِ الْوَجْهِ وَمَهَابَةِ الرَّجَالِ.

“I advise you to stay away from joking with others since this act removes a persons's worth and honour.”¹²

10. Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as–Sadiq (as) has said:

إِنَّ أَبْغَضَ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ عَبْدٌ اتَّقَى النَّاسَ لِسَانَهُ.

“Surely the worst of creations of Allah is the servant whom other people are afraid of his tongue (what he says).”¹³

1. Bihar al–Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 46

2. A short discussion about the pen and its importance – The role of the pen in the life of human beings:

The movement of the pen on paper records the outcomes of humanity. The victories and defeats of the society of humanity is contained and preserved in the tips of the pens; the pen is the protector and safe-guarder of the sciences and knowledge; it is the assistant to the thoughts of the scholars and researchers; it is the link of the thoughts of the scholars and the bridge for humanity which links the past to the present; even the heavens and the earth are linked through the Divine Tablet and the Pen!

The pen is the instrument which unites people who have been separated by time and space and just as it is said that all of the great scholars and thinkers of the world of humanity throughout the entire course of history and in all areas around the world are gathered in one large library (their thoughts and beliefs which have been preserved on paper and then published

in books which are then gathered and collected in libraries)!

The pen is the confidant of a person; it is the treasurer of the sciences and the collector of all the experiments and research of the centuries and ages. If we see that the Quran has taken an oath by the pen, then it is for all of these reasons since the Quran only swears and takes an oath by things which are very great and valuable!

The leaders of the faith of Islam, in various traditions (Wasaaifil ash-Shia, vol. 18, pg. 56, no. 14 to 20) have emphasized to their companions and close associates to not rely upon their memory. Rather, they were always instructed to write down and record the Islamic narrations and Divine sciences and teachings and to preserve these for the future generations.

In Tafsir Majma al-Bayan (vol. 1, pg. 332) it has been mentioned that some of the scholars have stated:

أَلْبَيَانُ بَيَانَانِ: بَيَانُ اللِّسَانِ، وَبَيَانُ البَّنَانِ وَبَيَانُ اللِّسَانِ تَدْرُسُهُ الأَعْوَامُ، وَبَيَانُ الأَقْلَامِ بَاقٍ عَلَى مَرِّ الأَيَّامِ.

“Communcation is of two types: communication with the tongue and communication with the pen. The communication carried out with the tongue becomes old with the passing of time and are eventually removed from memory, however the communication carried out with the pen (that which is written and recorded) remains for eternity.” Tafsir-e-Namuna (summarized), vol. 24, pg. 373–376

3. Surat al-Ankabut (29), verse 64
4. Wasail ash-Shia, vol. 8, pg. 533
5. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, pg. 297
6. Ibid, vol. 71, pg. 286
7. Ibid., vol. 77, pg. 109
8. Ibid., vol. 71, pg. 238
9. Ibid., vol. 71, pg. 17
10. Ibid., vol. 71, pg. 286
11. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 369
12. Ibid., vol. 2, pg. 665
13. Ibid., vol. 2, pg. 323

Discourse 34: An Unpleasant Demeanor

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: يَا عَلِيُّ! لِكُلِّ ذَنْبٍ تَوْبَةٌ إِلَّا سُوءَ الخُلُقِ فَإِنَّ صَاحِبَهُ كَلَّمَا خَرَجَ مِنْ ذَنْبٍ دَخَلَ فِي ذَنْبٍ.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) has said, “O ‘Ali! There is repentance for every sin except for having a bad demeanor, since every time a person who has an unpleasant demeanor leaves one sin, he will enter into (another) sin.”¹

In this tradition, the Noble Prophet (S) has pointed to the dangerous effect of having an unpleasant

demeanor and has stated that, "People are able to ask repentance for all sins, however the person who has the characteristic and sin of an unpleasant demeanor will not be able to repent for this act as this trait never leaves a person."

It is important to note that a person can repent for his sins and bad deeds, however the trait of having an unpleasant demeanor is not in itself an action that one can repent for.

The Effects of Having an Unpleasant Demeanor

1) Having an unpleasant demeanor is itself the source of many sins. A person who has this trait wishes to repent for his sin, however he ends up falling into another sin and thus, as the Prophet (S) himself has said, "This person can not ask for repentance."

Thus, one of the effects of having an unpleasant demeanor is that a person would have multiple sins on his record such as annoying other people, lying, back-biting, oppression, etc...

2) Another effect of having an unpleasant demeanor is the societal effects. Thus, along with this trait, a person would gain the resentment of the people. Due to having a negative attitude, a person would end up losing his composure thus also losing his friends, support of the society and any influence he may have in society.

For example, a business man who possesses this trait may end up losing his clientele; a leader of the community may end up losing his followers!

In summary, having a negative disposition would lead to a person losing his friends and associates and it is even possible that such a person would lose his spouse and children!

What do we mean by a person "losing" certain individuals? This means that these people would become strangers in his life and it may even reach a point that one's own children would not even like to see the face of their father since they know that their father has very bad etiquette! Thus, a separation would be created between the father and his children.

Therefore, another effect of having bad demeanor is other's disgust of the person and distancing themselves from one who has such negative traits.

3) The third effect this trait brings is the punishment of the soul and this would affect the person himself!

The person who has a negative demeanor actually ends up first off, annoying himself and then others!

Woe upon the fire of bad etiquette since it first ends up burning the inside of the one who who this trait and then burns those around the person! In addition, this trait would also produce physical illnesses and diseases and one would end up having a short life.

Reasons Why People Have A Bad Character

1) Great Expectations:

When a person has many expectations, then naturally, times would come when there would be a divergence in what he wants to happen and what actually transpires and due to this, he becomes angry.

However if a person's expectations – even in relation to his family and those close to him was not so high, then he would definitely not become angry with things going on around him. Such a person would be ready to deal with such situations and would say, “I did not expect that to happen” or, “...anything can happen.” Thus, if one was to develop such a spirit within himself, then he would not become confused in the face of difficulties.

2) Pride and Conceit:

Those who have pride would naturally like to position themselves above others and due to their innate disposition, other people do not get along with such individuals (who have pride and conceit) and try not to pay attention to them. Thus, when those who have pride and conceit see that what they want is not carried out, they become upset and display their bad character.

3) Inability to Forgive:

There are some people who only forgive some things done to them and thus, they become aggravated very easily. However, we must ensure that we are able to forgive and forget everything that has occurred since if a one was to forget things which have happened to him, then he would develop a positive demeanor. The opposite of this statement is also true as if one did not practice the tradition of forgive and forget and was to always recall what happened to him in the past, then he would definitely get upset and in the end would develop the trait of having a negative demeanor!

4) Bad-Tempered and Irritable:

A person who is bad tempered or irritable would not be able to deal with issues that come up in life. There is a famous proverb in Farsi which says: “He finds bitter raisins to be sweet and sweet raisins to be sour.” By this we mean that tranquility in his house is actually like a storm. Such people always possess a negative demeanor, bad ethical traits and are constantly grumpy. However, if a person was to be even-tempered and laidback, then he would be able to bear anything which comes up in life.

These are four spiritual or psychological traits which come about from a bad demeanor, however at this point we turn our attention towards the societal impact and the effects on the physical body.

The Societal Effects and the Outcome on the Physical Body

1) One who possesses a short temper would sometimes also develop a bad demeanor.

Have you noticed how sometimes, those who are physically sick also become very ill-mannered – why is this? It is because they are not able to withstand their sickness!

Thus, one must keep such a person's mental state in mind and refrain from yelling while in their presence as this would only serve to further aggravate them. The people who are taking care of such people must also be lenient with them and their attitude since the person who is physically sick is in such a state that his bad demeanor is actually natural and a part of being physically sick!

In the afternoons in the blessed Month of Ramazan, some people become extremely upset and display very bad etiquette and manners. Due to the effects of the hunger and thirst, their blood has become thick and is not able to reach to their brain. Their nerves become tired and their brain cells are not fed and thus, naturally, they become angry and are not able to control themselves.

Thus, in these sorts of situations, it is better for a person who is fasting to be in a place in which those who are in a state of anger are less as a person is able to prevent himself from going to such places where people who are full of rage and anger are not and to also limit his interaction with such people at that time of day. Thus, he would seek to ensure that he is not in a place where the presence of people who possess a crooked demeanor would be manifest.

2) Sometimes if a person is refused something or treated in a bad way in one place, this may lead him to have a negative demeanor in another place. For example, if a person had some troubles in the shopping centre, when he steps into his house, he may begin to mentally torture his wife and children and may even physically beat them!

Therefore, having a negative demeanor is something very bad especially for those who are working around other people. Thus, in order to be able to have more a greater impact on the hearts of the people, we must not be the manifestation of the verse, which reads:

لَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ

“Had you (O' Muhammad) been very harsh, then surely the people would have dispersed from around you...”²

Rather, we must be the manifestation of the portion of the verse which reads:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ

“So then it is from the mercy of Allah that you are lenient with them...”³

However as we know, those people who do not have continuous dealings with other people usually do not show bad etiquette and demeanor as they are not around people of various characters.

Thus in summary, we see that sometimes possessing a bad demeanor would destroy a person's entire life!

However, we should know that in addition to seeking to remove all of the things which result in this bad demeanor, we ourselves must also struggle and work to gain righteous etiquette.

It is interesting to note that Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) was an individual with such a good demeanor that his enemies used to accuse him of one who jokes around too much!

In order for a person not to gravitate towards bad etiquette and morals, one must seek to instill good etiquette in all aspects of his life. He must work to have these noble traits mature within himself and must give importance to this aspect of his life.

In order to better understand how important having good morals is in the eyes of the great leaders of Islam, we present the following traditions from the Infallibles (as).

A Summary of the Exemplary Morals of the Prophet (S)

Even though the Prophet's (S) victory was through the assistance of Allah (SwT), however from the apparent aspect, it took shape due to various circumstances. One such reason, which is perhaps the most important is the attractive ethical traits he possessed. The lofty humanistic traits and noble ethics were embodied in him such that even the staunchest of enemies was influenced by him and was forced to submit to him, while his friends were intensely attracted to him!

Truthfully, if we refer to the Prophet's (S) etiquette and morals as one of his miracles, we would definitely not have overstated the fact! An example of this ethical miracle can be seen in the victory of Makkah.

When the blood-thirsty and revenge-seeking polytheists who were constantly working crimes and transgressions against the Muslims, and who for many years were working against the faith of Islam and the Prophet (S) were put face to face with the Muslims, we see that the Noble Prophet (S), going against what all of his friends and enemies thought he would do, ordered the Muslims to forgive all of the polytheists of Makkah and all of their crimes were forgotten! Through this act of his, the following verse of the Qur'an became manifest:

... وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا

“...and you see people entering into the faith of Allah in groups...”

The books of commentary, history and even children's story books are full of events in relation to the good demeanor, forgiveness, mercy, altruism, self-sacrifice and consciousness of Allah (SwT) which the Prophet (S) showed.

However, it is enough to state that in the tradition from Husayn b. 'Ali (as) it has been mentioned that he said, “I asked my father, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) about the characteristics of the life of the Prophet (S) and his etiquette and my father, in a very detailed manner, explained to me by stating...”

It has been mentioned in this long tradition that, “The Prophet (S) was always cheerful and smiling with those whom he was in the company with, and was always found to be gentle and soft-spoken. Never was he seen angry, hard-hearted, rude, foul speaking, picking the faults of other nor excessively praising anyone. Not a single person was ever made to feel hopeless by him and anyone who entered his house did not leave disparaged.

There are three things which he kept away from in regards to his self: arguing with others, speaking too much and entering into things which were none of his business; there are two things which he kept away from in relation to the people: he never ridiculed or rebuked anyone and he never went forth to find the hidden mistakes and errors of the people. It is only in relation to that area in which the Divine reward of Allah (SwT) was possible did he speak.

When he used to speak, his words had such an impact on the hearts of the people that everyone present would remain quiet and would not move an inch. It is only when he stopped speaking and was silent did they begin to speak.

However it was also seen that while in his presence, those around him did not indulge in arguments or wrangling. Anytime a stranger or un-aware person began to speak with anger and asked him for something, he would bear that person's attitude with patience and would tell his companions, 'Anytime you see a person who has some need, ensure that you fulfill it.' He never cut anyone's speech short and rather, waited for the person to finish what he wanted to say.”

Yes! If these noble ethical traits and the Divinely granted persona of the Prophet (S) was not there, then the backwards, ignorant 'Arab nation and the angry, hard-lined 'Arabs would not have entered into the faith of Islam and would have been the manifestation of the verse which reads:

لَا نَفْضُوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ

“...they would have dispersed from around you...”

How good it would be that such Islamic etiquette is brought back to life today and that within the life of every single Muslim, the greatness which was exemplified in the morals and etiquette of the Prophet (S) are seen!

The Importance of Having a Good Demeanor According to the Islamic Narrations

The Islamic narrations, whether in regards to the Prophet (S) or in regards to the general responsibilities of all of Muslims are replete with words of guidance. At this point, we review some of these traditions.

1. The Prophet of Islam (S) has said:

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ.

“I was raised up (as a Prophet) to perfect the ethical traits.”

Thus, one of the main goals behind the appointment of the Prophet (S) was to perfect the noble ethical traits.

2. In another tradition from the Prophet (S), it is mentioned that:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُ لِيُدْرِكَ بِحُسْنِ خُلُقِهِ دَرَجَةَ قَائِمِ اللَّيْلِ وَصَائِمِ النَّهَارِ.

“The true believer who possesses a good demeanor shall reach to the level of the person who stands up all night in the worship and fasts during the entire day.”⁴

3. In another tradition from the Prophet of Islam (S), he said:

مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَثْقَلَ فِي الْمِيزَانِ مِنْ خُلُقٍ حَسَنٍ.

“Nothing is heavier in the scale (of good deeds) than having a good demeanor.”⁵

4. It has also been narrated from the Prophet (S) that he said:

أَحَبُّكُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَحْسَنُكُمْ أَخْلَاقًا أَمْوَطُونَ أَكْنَافًا، الَّذِينَ يَأْلِفُونَ وَيُؤْلَفُونَ. وَ
أَبْغَضُكُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَشَاوُونَ بِالنَّمِيمَةِ، الْمُفْرَقُونَ بَيْنَ الْإِخْوَانِ، الْمُتَمَسِّسُونَ لِلْبِرَاءِ
الْعَثَرَاتِ.

“The most beloved of you to Allah is the one who has the best etiquette; the one who is the most humble and modest; that person who is spiritually attracted to other people and whom others are also attracted to. The worst of you with Allah is the person who indulges in gossiping; the one who causes differences and divisions between brothers; and the person who tries to find faults in those who are free of error.”⁶

5. In another tradition from the Prophet (S) it has been mentioned that he said:

أَكْثَرُ مَا يَدْخُلُ النَّاسَ الْجَنَّةَ تَقْوَى اللَّهِ وَ حُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ.

“The greatest of things which will permit a person to enter into Paradise will be his Consciousness of Allah (Taqwa) and his good demeanor.”⁷

6. In a tradition from Imam Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Baqir (as) we read that:

إِنَّ أَكْمَلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا.

“Surely the most perfect of believers in true faith is the one whose demeanor and etiquette is the best.”⁸

7. In a tradition from Imam ‘Ali b. Musa al-Riza (as) we read that the Prophet (S) said:

عَلَيْكُمْ بِحُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ، فَإِنَّ حُسْنَ الْخُلُقِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ لَا مَحَالَةَ، وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَ سُوءَ
الْخُلُقِ، فَإِنَّ سُوءَ الْخُلُقِ فِي النَّارِ لَا مَحَالَةَ.

“I advise you all to have a good demeanor since the outcome of having a good demeanor is Paradise, and I warn you to keep away from having bad morals and etiquette since surely the outcome of this is nothing but the hell-fire.”⁹

From these traditions we can clearly see that having good etiquette and morals is the key to paradise; the way to attain the pleasure of Allah (SwT); a sign of the power of faith and is equivalent to the worship of Allah (SwT) day and night and the traditions which speak in this light are many!

On the other hand, a bad demeanor has also been mentioned in the Islamic narrations:

1. The Messenger of Allah (S) has said:

الْخُلُقُ السَّيِّئُ يُفْسِدُ الْعَمَلَ كَمَا يُفْسِدُ الْخَلُّ الْعَسَلَ.

“A bad demeanour spoils good deeds just as vinegar spoils honey.”¹⁰

2. The Messenger of Allah (S) has also said:

سُوءُ الْخُلُقِ ذَنْبٌ لَا يُغْفَرُ، وَ سُوءُ الظَّنِّ خَطِيئَةٌ تَفُوحُ.

“Bad etiquette and morals is a sin which will not be forgiven and having bad thoughts about another person is an error which spreads (to other people).”¹¹

3. The Messenger of Allah (S) has also said:

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيَبْلُغُ مِنْ سُوءِ خُلُقِهِ أَسْفَلَ دَرَكِ جَهَنَّمَ.

“Surely the servant (of Allah), due to his bad etiquette and demeanor, will reach to the lowest levels of Hell.”¹²

4. The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said:

رُبَّ عَزِيزٍ أَذَلَّهُ خُلُقُهُ، وَ ذَلِيلٍ أَعَزَّهُ خُلُقُهُ.

“How many times is it seen that a noble person is debased due to his demeanor while a low and humbled person is magnified due to his demeanor and etiquette.”¹³

5. The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said:

مَنْ سَاءَ خُلُقُهُ فَأَذِنُوا فِي أُذُنِهِ.

“One whose etiquette is bad should have the Adhan proclaimed in his ear.”¹⁴

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1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 46
 2. Surat ale Imran (3), verse 159
 3. Ibid.
 4. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, pg. 373
 5. Ibid., vol. 71, pg. 382
 6. al-Kafi, vol. 8, pg. 68
 7. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, pg. 288
 8. Ibid., vol. 71, pg. 382
 9. Ibid., vol. 10, pg. 369
 10. Ibid., vol. 73, pg. 297
 11. al-Mahajjatul Bayda, vol. 5, pg. 93
 12. Ibid.
 13. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, pg. 396
 14. Ibid., vol. 62, pg. 277

Discourse 35: Apologizing to Others and Accepting an Apology

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: يَا عَلِيُّ مَنْ لَمْ يَقْبَلِ الْعُذْرَ مِنْ مُتَنَصِّلٍ صَادِقًا كَانَ أَوْ كَاذِبًا لَمْ
يَنْلُ شَفَاعَتِي.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) has said, “O' ‘Ali! My intercession shall not reach the person who does not accept the apology from another person – whether the apology is truthful or untruthful.”

Asking forgiveness and also accepting the apology of a person who has come to you are both ethical and Islamic values.

There are many people who perform wrong actions, however in their eyes, it is shameful to ask for forgiveness and they actually consider this as being a defect in their character! However, at the same time, they will be the first one to order others for the same thing and this is a major flaw in a person's character.

If a person was to do something inappropriate, what is wrong in him that, just as he feels grief inside him and also asks forgiveness and turns back to Allah (SwT), that he also seek pardon from the creations of Allah (SwT) as well?

If people truly had a spiritually expansive heart, and possessed bravery and valor to ask for forgiveness

when they err, without doubt, many problems would be solved at the first stage (without having to take issues further).

Sometimes discussions, debates and arguments which serve no purpose come up in regards to some trivial issue and thus, the smallest issue becomes a major event.

For example, something may happen on the road while driving and all of a sudden, the driver of one car may – either intentionally or out of his own negligence – swerve on the road. However, he would signal to the other driver, apologizing to him, and the other driver would accept his apology.

However, if the person who was cut off while driving became upset and screamed out, “What is wrong with you – are you not paying attention? Do you think you own the road?” at this time, the drivers of both cars may stop and get out of their cars. One person may grab the other and then who knows what would happen – sometimes a person may even be killed over this type of minor incident!

We know that it is very easy to kill someone and sometimes this act happens over trivial and unimportant issues. However if you say something and then you also ask for forgiveness for that and if in asking forgiveness, you show your bravery and courage, then definitely a minor mistake would not be transformed into a major issue and as it is said that you would have immediately put out the flames with that (small) glass of water.

However if that same fire was to spread to all other areas then even a large number of firemen would not be able to come and put out the fire and calm the situation!

This is the same within families as if an inappropriate action is done, if either side was to ask forgiveness for what had happened, then the incident would end right there. If this was not to happen, then the smallest things would turn into a major issue which may end up destroying the family!

Does the person who is not ready to ask forgiveness think himself to be infallible? Without doubt, everyone (with the exception of those who have been kept free from sins – the Prophets and the Ahlu'l Bayt) make mistakes. Therefore, if a person commits an error, then his asking pardon and forgiveness for his acts is actually proof of his greatness and excellence!

Asking for Pardon is a Sign of the Spiritual Expanse of one's Heart

Do those who have little patience, a spiritual constriction in their hearts and do not possess the trait of a spiritually expansive heart assume that by asking pardon and seeking forgiveness that they are lowering their status!? Obviously, they are negligent of the fact that asking pardon actually proves the greatness in their character and personality and grants them a high nature!

My belief is that if we are truly impartial and equitable in regards to an issue – even in trivial things, and if

in the face of the other person, no matter who he is – either a common person (who does not know the teachings of the faith) or one with knowledge – if we were to ask forgiveness (when we make a mistake), then this would be the key to a healthy life. Therefore, this act of apologizing is actually one of the valuable ethical traits.

As for the second issue – and this is something which also takes greatness of character and a spiritually expansive heart to carry out – it is to accept the apology of another person.

If a person comes to you and asks to be forgiven, then one must accept the apology.

In the tradition under review, it is stated that even if a person had intentionally done something and then comes and wishes to place himself under the covering of your forgiveness, you must show your greatness of character and not let your ego get the best of you.

In addition, one must even accept the apology of a liar – of course there are certain times and circumstances which are an exception to this rule and are separate from this discussion (which we will not discuss). However if one was not to accept the apology of another person, then slowly the veils of inhibition and shame would be removed from all people!

If someone comes and apologizes and one was to reply, “No, you are lying, you are not sorry for what you did” then that person may actually begin to act even worse and may reply, “It is my heart which wanted me to lie (to you and to try and fool you that I was sorry...)” At this point, what road would you take to stop this person's obstinacy?

In the Du'a of Abu hamza ath-Thumali we read:

أَمَرْتَنَا أَنْ تَعْفُوَ عَمَّنْ ظَلَمْنَا وَ أَنْتَ أَوْلَى بِالْعَفْوِ وَ قَدْ ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا...

“You have ordered us to forgive the person who oppresses us, however You are much more worthy to forgive us who have been oppressive to our own selves...”

In reality, the meaning of this line of the Du'a is that whereas we are not ready and prepared to forgive others for the sins and misdeeds which they have done to us, however we expect Allah (SwT) to forgive the great number of our sins! Therefore, in order for us to earn the pardon of Allah (SwT), we must be ready to forgive at least one sin from another person and accept their apology.

In addition, in the Du'a of the month of Rajab we say:

يُعْطِي مَنْ سَأَلَ...

“You give to the person who asks You...”

However in addition to this, we see that later on in this Du’a, Allah (SwT) not only gives to those who ask Him, but also those who have not recognized Allah (SwT) for their entire lifetime! These people are still covered and included in the mercy of Allah (SwT) (see the rest of the Du’a of the Month of Rajab).

It is Allah's i mercy that is such an All-Encompassing Mercy that it does not deprive a single person, not even the one who do not ask Him for a single thing – He even gives to them!

The word used in the end of the tradition under review is “منتصل” which means a person who wishes to exonerate or absolve himself of something which he has done – meaning that he wishes to apologize for his actions.

In relation to this, the Prophet (S) has said, “The person who does not accept the apology of the individual who has come to him asking forgiveness – whether the apology is truthful or untruthful – shall never have the benefit of my intercession since my intercession is specifically reserved for those who make mistakes and errors.

You (who will not accept the apology of another person) – see how you have acted with this person who has made a mistake and has then come to you with the hopes that you shall forgive him of his error where as you too would like to be forgiven for your mistakes and errors! Is it not a fact that the rewards of Allah (SwT) are commensurate to the actions which a person performs!? Even if I make a mistake I expect to be forgiven, so that I too am interceded for from my mistakes.”

In any case, apologizing after making a mistake and accepting the apology is the key to happiness, the key to penetrating into the thoughts, minds and hearts of the people and is one of the things that leads to spiritual progress in life.

At this point of the tradition, we see the topic of discussion between the Prophet (S) and Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) switches to intercession. Therefore, we present a brief portion of our discussion on intercession which has been mentioned in Tafsir-e-Namuna for those who wish to know more about this issue.¹

The Qur’an and Intercession

Without doubt, the punishments of Allah (SwT) – whether they are in this world or the next, do not take on the form of revenge. Rather, all punishments are in place to safeguard the continuation of obedience to Allah (SwT) and the following of His rules and regulations.

These punishments are actually in place to advance the civilization and to permit humanity to reach perfection. Therefore, anything done to weaken the beliefs in the punishment of Allah (SwT) must be stopped so that the people do not gain the impudence to perform sins.

From another point of view, the doors of turning back to Allah (SwT) and correcting ones' self must not be closed to those who sin. Rather, people must be given the opportunity to correct themselves and the chance to make their way back towards Allah (SwT), a consciousness of Him and to cleanse their soul.

Intercession, in its correct understanding is the act of protecting the balance between the act of unintentionally sinning and not losing hope in the forgiveness of Allah (SwT). It is the means through which the sinners and those who have polluted their souls can return back to Allah (SwT). However, in its incorrect understanding and interpretation, it actually leads to an encouragement and the overconfidence in a person to commit more sins!

The person who has not correctly understood the various dimensions of intercession and its true meaning may become completely opposed to it and may actually go forth to explain it as a form of patronage as is carried out by the kings and oppressive rulers! Sometimes, just like the Wahhabis believe, people may take the following verse which reads:

لَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ

“His intercession shall not be accepted.”²

and without paying attention to other verses on this issue, will deny all forms of intercession!

In any case, the arguments that the opponents of intercession bring up are as follows:

1. The belief in intercession makes the spirit of struggle and striving (for Paradise) weak in a person;
2. The belief in intercession is actually a principle which stems from the backwards feudalistic and tribal societies of the past.
3. The belief in intercession actually encourages people to commit sins and strips them of any sort of responsibility.
4. The belief in intercession is a form of polytheism and the worship of more than one God and goes against the teachings of the Qur`an.
5. The belief in intercession means that the rules of Allah (SwT) are overturned and that His (SwT) intentions and wishes are altered by His creations.

However as we will see, all of the objections which people bring up in regards to intercession stem from the fact that the meaning of intercession given in the Qur`an has been confused with the corrupt meanings of intercession which are common amongst the general public!

Intercession has its own particular importance associated with both the act and understanding of it and thus, we must clearly explain the meaning of intercession, the philosophy of intercession, intercession as mentioned in the Qur'an and the traditions and other areas so that through this discussion, all of the ambiguities are removed from the minds of the people.³

The True Meaning of Intercession

The word intercession (الشفاعة) comes from the root “شفع” which means “to pair” and “merge one thing with something like it”. The opposite of this word is “وتر” which means solitary and single. Thus, the word intercession means, 'one thing that is greater or more powerful accompanying something which is weaker or lower in status.'

This word has two meanings associated with it amongst the common people and the religious legislations in the meaning of intercession.

Definition of Intercession in the General Usage of the Word

In the general use of the word, it means that a person makes use of his own position, character and influence in interceding for another person.

In our daily life, this definition of the word can be best seen when a powerful or strong person intervenes to stop the torture of people who are not as powerful as him.

Sometimes a person in a high position may make use of his influence or the fear which he may be able to instil in other people, to influence them. Sometimes this intervention takes on the form of raising empathetic issues and by influencing the other side through compassionate and sympathetic grounds, while at other times it takes the form of changing the way the other side thinks and sees the sins of the guilty person and his worth.

In summary, according to this interpretation, intercession does not bring forth any type of change in the temperament and thought pattern of the guilty person (the thought of remorse or grief over what he has done). The effect and change (in the heart) is related to that person who has the power and ability to forgive and pardon the guilty person. (Pay attention to this point.)

In the religious discussions, this form of intercession has absolutely no basis or meaning to it since neither does Allah (SwT) make a mistake such that He would need to change His opinion, nor is the meaning of influencing Allah's emotions in the same meaning as that of another human being such that it could be said that He has become emotionally charged. In addition, there is no influence from another party whom He (SwT) is scared or frightened from, nor is there any issue of a reward or punishment which revolves around anything other than Justice.

Another Meaning of Intercession

This meaning revolves around the individual who will be interceding for another to alter his position (in regards to that person). By this we mean that the person who is going to intercede brings forth the necessary prerequisites so that the individual who is coming to him in a bad state and is facing punishment would, through having a connection and link to the one who is interceding for him, be placed in a good state such that he would be worthy and deserving of forgiveness.

Just as will be seen, faith in this form of intercession is the noblest form of training (of a person) and is the way in which a sinful, polluted person may correct himself and wake up from his negligence and become spiritually aware.

In the logic of Islam, intercession is of this type and just as we will see, all of the complaints, attacks and accusations that are brought forth are in relation to the first form of intercession and not the second definition, as it is completely in line with the logical and intellectual understanding of this philosophy.

Intercession in the Physical World

That which we mentioned in regards to intercession and the correct and logical interpretation of it can be seen in many instances in the physical world around us (in addition to being present in the World of Legislation).

We see that forces that are more powerful within the world assist the weaker forces and help to guide them to the goals which they have been created for. The sun shines, the rain falls down and the seeds planted deep within the ground are assisted so that they may be able to make use of their own internal energies. Through this help, they may be able to show the first growth of life. The covering around the seed tears apart and the seed makes its way out from the darkness of the dirt, progressing towards the heavens from where it acquired its power and energy...

The Credentials Needed for Intercession

At this point, we introduce the main credentials needed for one to intercede.

In the Noble Qur'an, the issue of intercession in the way which we have described in this section in its correct and true understanding and definition has been mentioned approximately thirty times. Of course it can be seen that other discussions and allusions to this topic have been given in the Qur'an without the use of the word, 'intercession'.

These verses are divided into the following categories:

The First Group: Verses which completely deny the issue of intercession of any sort:

أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعُ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا شَفَاعَةٌ

“...spend out of what We have given you before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, friendship nor intercession...”⁴

وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ

“...neither shall intercession on its behalf be accepted...”⁵

In these verses, there is no path that can be conceived for salvation for the guilty people, except true faith and the performance of righteous deeds – not even by giving up their material wealth, through having a previous affinity with another person or through the power of intercession!

In relation to some sinful, guilty people, we read the following:

فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ

“So the intercession of intercessors shall not avail them.”⁶

The Second Group: These are verses in which intercession is limited to only Allah (SwT):

مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

“Other than Him you have no protector, nor any assistant...”⁷

In another verse we are told:

قُلْ لِلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعاً

“Say with Allah alone is the intercession...”⁸

The Third Group: These are verses which mention that intercession is only possible by the permission of Allah (SwT):

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

“Who is there that can intercede in His presence except by His permission?”⁹

وَلَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ

“And intercession will not avail aught with Him save of him whom He permits.”¹⁰

The Forth Group: These verses that list the conditions necessary for the person who is going to intercede. Sometimes these conditions are mentioned as being the tacit approval and pleasure of Allah (SwT):

وَلَا تَنْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَرْضَىٰ

“...and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves...”¹¹

According to these verses, the intercession of the intercessors is only limited to those who have reached the status of being the ones whom He (SwT) approves of.

Sometimes, the condition for the intercession is the one who has acquired a promise or covenant from Allah (SwT) as mentioned in the verse of the Qur`an:

لَا يَمْلِكُونَ الشَّفَاعَةَ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا

“They shall not control intercession, save he who has made a covenant with the Beneficent Allah.”

Sometimes, the authority to intercede for a person who is a sinner is taken away such as in the instance in which the impermissibility of intercession of those who are oppressors:

مَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ يُطَاعُ

“...the unjust shall not have any compassionate friend nor any intercessor who should be obeyed (in his intercession – meaning that his intercession shall not be accepted).”¹²

In this way we see that having a promise or pact with Allah (SwT) – meaning that one possessing true faith and reaching to the level of one who has earned the pleasure of Allah (SwT) and who himself has kept away from sins such as oppression and tyranny, are some of the necessary prerequisites to being able to intercede.

Various Other Conditions for Intercession

In summary, the verses of the Qur`an which speak about intercession clearly show us that from the point of view of the logic of Islam, intercession is not without its limits, restrictions and conditions. Rather, there are conditions and restrictions attached to it applicable both upon the criminal and also the person who wants to perform the intercession and this is the perimeter with which the true face of intercession and its' philosophy is made clear.

For example, sins such as oppression are completely out of the scope and view of intercession and the Qur`an clearly tells us that, “Those who are oppressors shall not be able to benefit from those intercessors whose intercession is accepted (for other things).”

If we take the word oppression in its widest definition, just as we will shortly see in some of the traditions, then intercession would only be limited to those guilty sinners who have felt grief at their own actions, repented, and then have tried to make up their negative actions and correct themselves! It is at this time that the intercession will have credit to it from the repentance and grief of the sin.

As for some people who believe that by simply repenting and having grief for the sin performed that there is no need for intercession, they are severely wrong and the reply to such a belief shall be mentioned shortly.

From another point of view, according to the 28th verse of Suratul Anbiya (21) we read, “The only people who shall be forgiven through the act of intercession is the one who has reached to the level of one who has gained the pleasure of his Lord” and according to verse 87 from Surat Mariam (19), is a person who has a “pledge or contract with Allah (SwT)” will be the one who can intercede.

Thus, these two issues, just as has been understood from the lexical meaning of the word and also from the meaning given to us in the traditions which explain these verses of the Qur`an, show us that true faith in Allah (SwT), the accountability and the scale of deeds, the rewards and punishments, the confession of good deeds and bad deeds (the goodness of good deeds and the badness of bad deeds) and the bearing witness to all of the issues of the faith which have been sent down by Allah (SwT).

A type of faith which is first infused in the mind and thoughts of the person and are then manifest in the life of the individual and are a sign, reverberation and expression of such faith, are characteristics which are not present in the oppressive tyrants (those who are oppressive to themselves and others) who do not officially recognize any of these sacred principles. Thus, these sorts of individuals are removed from

the scope of intercession and by reviewing their own life and activities, continue on their own path...

In regards to the forgiveness of sins in the shade of intercession, the Qur`an mentions:

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولَ لَوَجَدُوا
اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا

“And only if those people who had wronged their own souls had come to you (Muhammad) and had asked Allah for forgiveness and the Messenger too (Muhammad) had asked forgiveness for them surely you would have found Allah to be oft-turning back (in forgiveness), Merciful.”¹³

In this verse, turning back to Allah (SwT) and repentance of the guilty sinners is considered as the precursor to the intercession of the Prophet (S) while in another verse of the Qur`an we read:

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِسْتَغْفِرْنَا ذُنُوبَنَا أَنَا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ. قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُكُمْ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ
هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

“They said: 'O our father! ask forgiveness of our faults for us, surely we were sinners.' He said: 'I will soon ask for you forgiveness from my Lord; surely He (SwT)s the Forgiving, the Merciful.'”¹⁴

In these verses as well, we see the effects of remorse and grief for the sins in the way that the brothers of Yusuf (as) requested their father to forgive them.

In relation to the intercession of the Angels, we read in the Qur`an that their forgiveness and intercession is only for those of true faith, those who follow the path of Allah (SwT) and the followers of the truth:

وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا
وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ

”(Those who bear the power and those around Him celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him) and ask protection for those who believe: 'Our Lord! You embrace all things in mercy and knowledge, therefore grant protection to those who turn (to You) and follow Your way, and save them from the punishment of the hell.'”¹⁵

At this point, the following question comes up: with the existence of turning back to Allah (SwT) in

repentance and the following the path of Allah (SwT) and traversing the path of the truth, what need is there for intercession? The answer to this question will be given in the discussion of the “Reality of Intercession”.

In regards to those who will be performing the intercession, the Qur`an has also mentioned that the person must be a witness to the truth:

إِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ

“...except for he who bears witness of the truth...”¹⁶

Thus, the person who wishes to receive the intercession must have a connection and affinity with the one who is permitted to interced – an affinity through his connection with the truth and bearing witness to the truth through his actions and his words. This is another of the ways to formulate and gather together one's energy to traverse the path of the truth.

The Islamic Traditions in Regards to Intercession

In the Islamic narrations, there are various phrases which complete the understanding given in the above mentioned verses of the Qur`an and sometimes even much more straightforwardly discuss this issue. Of these traditions, we mention the following:

1. In Tafsir al-Burhan, it has been narrated from Imam Musa b. Ja'far al-Kazim (as) that Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) said, “I heard the Prophet (S) say:

شَفَاعَتِي لِأَهْلِ الْكِبَائِرِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي...

“My intercession if for the people from my nation who perform the major sins...”¹⁷

The narrator of the tradition, Ibne Abi 'Umair says, “I asked Imam al-Kazim (as) how it is possible that the people who perform the major sins will gain intercession where as Allah (SwT) has stated:

وَلَا تَنْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَرْتَضَى

“...and they do not intercede except for him (the sinner) whom He approves...”¹⁸

Ibne Abi 'Umair continued and said, "It is clear that whoever performs the major sins would not be one with whom Allah (SwT) is happy and pleased with?"

The Imam replied, "Anyone who has true faith however performs a sin, would definitely have grief and remorse for his act and as the Prophet (S) has said that, 'Feeling remorse after committing a sin is a form of repentance.' In addition, the person who does not feel grief and remorse is not a true believer and thus, he shall never have intercession. His actions will be an act of oppression and as Allah (SwT) Himself has said that 'The oppressors shall have no friend nor intercessor.'" 19

The main theme in this tradition is that intercession shall reach those who perform the major sins, however the sub-theme of this tradition is clear that the first condition for the acceptance of the intercession is that the person who needs the intercession is one who has true faith which would lead the guilty person towards the stage of grief, remorse and the correcting of his own self and his actions and to refrain from oppression, revolt and the breaking of the laws of Allah (SwT). (Pay attention to this point)

2. In the book, al-Kafi, it has been narrated that Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) wrote a letter to his companions in regards to gathering of their wealth and stated:

مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَنْفَعَهُ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ، فَلْيَطْلُبْ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يَرْضَى عَنْهُ.

"One who wants to benefit from the intercession of those who are permitted to intercede in the presence of Allah must petition Allah that he is one of those whom He (SwT)s pleased with." 20

The tone of this tradition shows us that in order to correct the errors in the understanding of the issue of intercession which some of the companions of the Imam may have had and which the general Muslim community also had, he wrote this letter and clearly stated and nullified the belief of intercession for those people who continue on performing sins.

3. In a powerful tradition from Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) it is stated:

إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ، بَعَثَ اللَّهُ الْعَالِمَ وَالْعَابِدَ، فَإِذَا وَقَفَا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قِيلَ لِلْعَابِدِ: ائْتِ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَقِيلَ لِلْعَالِمِ: قِفْ، تَشْفَعُ لِلنَّاسِ بِحُسْنِ تَأْدِيبِكَ لَهُمْ.

"When the Day of Judgement comes about, Allah will raise up a Scholar ('Alim) and a Worshipper ('Abid). Both of these people will stand in the presence of Allah, the Noble and Grand and it will be said to the Worshipper, "Go towards Paradise" and it will be said to the Scholar, "Stop and intercede for the

people whom you trained and brought up.”²¹

In this tradition, we see the relationship between the task of training which the Scholar carried out and his ability to intercede for his students – those people who were present in his classes and lessons! This tradition casts light upon many ambiguous issues in the discussion of intercession.

In addition, limiting the status of intercession to the scholar and denying this to the worshipper is another sign that the ability to intercede for others in the logic of the faith of Islam, is not something which has been appointed and prearranged or is a patronage appointment to specific, named individuals. Rather, it belongs to the status of training and upbringing others in this world that will have a manifestation in the next world as well!

The Philosophy of Intercession

Now that we have been acquainted with the meaning of intercession and its evidences – which made clear its meaning, we see that it is not difficult to realize the various philosophies of this act – both the societal philosophy and the individual's spiritual state.

In general, by paying attention to the general principle of intercession we are able to develop the following effects within ourselves.

Struggle against the Feeling of Despair

A person who has perpetrated major crimes and sins is, from one point of view, overcome with a feeling of grief and remorse within his conscience. From another point of view, he is also struck with the feeling of despair and hopelessness in the forgiveness of Allah (SwT).

Since such a person feels that the path of turning back to Allah (SwT) has been shut, from a practical point of view, he is not ready to accept any change in his beliefs and opinions. By him viewing his future as being bleak, it is possible that he may actually stretch forth his hand to perform even more acts of rebellion and revolt against the laws of Allah (SwT)!

Through this, he may actually feel that he now has complete freedom in his actions and that there is no need to follow the rules and regulations of Allah (SwT). Thus, such a person would resemble one who is sick and has lost all hope in his recovering from his sickness and may actually transgress the boundary of keeping away from things which may make him even more sick since he thinks that he is going to die anyways and there is no need to refrain from harmful things.

Sometimes, mental uneasiness that stems from these sorts of crimes and sins leads to mental dysfunctions, or may lead to the need to seek revenge from the society which has “polluted” the person. In this way, the sinner actually becomes a dangerous ingredient and the focal point of irritation for the entire society.

Thus, the firm belief in intercession opens the doors to a brighter future for the person and to hope in forgiveness for one's sins.

This belief also helps control a person and allows one to change his opinion of the world around him and even encourages one to be able to make up for past mistakes.

The feeling of revenge is also not stirred up and thus the mental ease and tranquility that he gains permits him to change himself into a stable and righteous part of the society.

Therefore, if we say that the correct understanding of intercession is actually the force behind causing a positive shift in one's actions and keeping one away from the impermissible and is that thing which would permit a sinner to turn into a righteous individual, then we have not been extravagant in our speech!

It is for this reason that we see people who are serving life sentences in prison, however since there is the light of intercession and forgiveness in the various laws of the transient world still open to them, they do not accept that there is no hope. If this was the case, then it would lead to a very dangerous mental complex within the prisoners and therefore, it is the laws of the transient world that cause them to not fall victim to mental dysfunctions...!

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1. Refer to vol. 1, pg. 2, vol. 4, 17, 22, and 25
 2. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 48
 3. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 1, pg. 223 to 224
 4. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 253
 5. Ibid., verse 48
 6. Surat al-Mudatthir (74), verse 48
 7. Surat al-Sajdah (23), verse 4
 8. Surat al-Zumr (39), verse 44
 9. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 255
 10. Surat Saba (34), verse 23
 11. Surat al-Anbiya (21), verse 28
 12. Surat al-Ghafir (40), verse 18
 13. Surat al-Nisa (4), verse 64
 14. Surat Yusuf (12), verses 98 and 99
 15. Surat al-Ghafir (40), verse 7
 16. Surat al-Zukhruf (43), verse 86
 17. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 8, pg. 30
 18. Surat al-Anbiya (21), verse 28
 19. Ibid.
 20. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 8, pg. 53
 21. Ibid., vol. 2, pg. 16

Discourse 36: The Spiritual Life and Death of The Heart

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: يَا عَلِيُّ ثَلَاثٌ مُجَالَسَتُهُمْ تُمِيتُ الْقَلْبَ: مُجَالَسَةُ الْأَنْدَالِ وَمُجَالَسَةُ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ وَالْحَدِيثُ مَعَ النِّسَاءِ.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) has said, “O ‘Ali! Associating with three (groups) of people kills the heart: low people, rich people and (frivolous) talk with women.”

The points which we can benefit from in this tradition which is an excerpt from the testament of the Noble Prophet (S) addressed to the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) include the following:

1. We can draw a conclusion in regards to the life and death of the heart.

In this tradition, the word heart has been used as an allusion to the spirit and soul of the person. In addition to the physical body having the states of life and death, the spiritual heart and soul also have both life and death and this has been referred to as the “spiritual life and death”.

إِلٰهِي اَلْبَسْتَنِي الْخَطَايَا ثَوْبَ مَذَلَّتِي، وَجَلَّلَنِي التَّبَاعُدُ مِنْكَ لِباسَ مَسْكَنتِي،
وَأَمَاتَ قَلْبِي عَظِيمُ جِنَايَتِي...

“O’ Allah! Surely my many errors have covered over my true essence and my spiritual distance from You has clothed me in the separation from You and my major crimes and sins have killed my heart...”¹

This supplication clearly proves the point mentioned in the tradition that the heart too possesses the states of life and death and in principle, this whispered prayer of those who turn to Allah in repentance is proof of the reasons of the death and life of the heart.

In this prayer, the Imam is in essence saying, “O’ Allah! Enliven my heart through turning back to You in repentance!” Thus, this means that it is through turning back in repentance to Allah (SwT) that give us life while sinning against Allah (SwT) is what causes our true death!

There are some people who have thousands of things happen to them in their life that should act as lessons for them. In addition, there are others who hear thousands of verses of the Qur’an and traditions

which contain points of admonition, however these things do not have even the slightest effect on them and they do not waver in the least since their hearts have died.

As we know, there are two ways that we normally judge life: one is through the feelings and emotions and the other is the physical movement. Therefore, if a creature has no feelings or emotions or is an entity which is not moving, it is likely that that creature is dead. This can be seen in the Qur'an in which in its detailed discussions on the spiritual life and death that it, for example, speaks about some 'dead' people as actually being at the level of those who are alive when it states:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

“And do not consider those people who have been killed in the way of Allah as being dead, rather, they are alive in the presence of their Lord receiving sustenance.”²

In another place in the Qur'an, a group of people who are (apparently) alive are classified as being dead when we are told:

إِنَّكَ لَا تَسْمَعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا تَسْمَعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاءِ

“And surely you can not make the dead hear and you can not make the deaf hear (your call).”³

In another place in the Qur'an we are told:

لِيُنذِرَ مَنْ كَانَ حَيًّا

“So that you may warn those who are (spiritually) alive...”⁴

Thus, those who receive admonition from the Qur'an (and act according to it) are considered alive in the view of the Qur'an.

The Life and Death of the Hearts

Humanity Possess many Examples of Life and Death!

1. The first example of life and death is seen in the plants in the form of their growing and development, their nourishment and their reproduction – and all plants are the same in these regards.

2. Another form of life and death is seen in the animal world. This too is a clear example of the feelings, emotions, movement and action (of a life form) and in these regards, all animals are the same.

3. However, the third form of life and death which is limited to humanity and is what separates them from plants and animals is the life which can be divided into “physical” and “spiritual” life.

This is what which has been mentioned in the Islamic traditions and is referred to as the “spiritually alive heart” in which the meaning of heart in this definition is the soul, intellect and emotional capacity of the person.

In the words of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) in his speeches and short sayings narrated in Nahj al-Balagha, we see a great emphasis placed on this issue. In speech 110, he says the following in regards to the Qur`an:

تَفَقَّهُوا فِيهِ فَإِنَّهُ رَيْعُ الْقُلُوبِ.

“Ponder upon it (the Qur'an) since this is the spring of the hearts (it enlivens the hearts just as the spring season brings the trees to life).”

In speech 133, in regards to wisdom and knowledge, he has stated:

هِيَ حَيَاةٌ لِلْقَلْبِ الْمَيِّتِ.

”(Wisdom and knowledge) are life for the dead heart.”

At other times, he places the sickness of the heart at the same level as the sickness of the body. For example, in short saying 388, he has stated:

وَأَشَدُّ مِنْ مَرَضِ الْبَدَنِ مَرَضُ الْقَلْبِ.

“Even worse than the sickness of the body is the sickness of the (spiritual) heart.”

In addition, in short saying 349, he has stated:

مَنْ قَلَّ وَرَعَهُ مَاتَ قَلْبُهُ.

“The one whose level of precaution (Wara’ – a level higher than that of Taqwa) is low, his heart is dead.”

There are many more such phrases used by the Imam in this regards.

From another point of view, the Noble Qur'an believes in a particular form of seeing, hearing, understanding and comprehending other than the apparent understanding of these powers just as it is said in regards to the open disbelievers:

صَمُّكُمْ عُمِّي فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

“Deaf, dumb, and blind, they do not understand anything.”⁵

In another place in the Qur'an, the hypocrites are referred to as having a sick heart and since they do not want to change, Allah (SwT) adds to their sickness:

فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا

“In their hearts is a disease (and due to their obstinacy) Allah has added to their sickness.”⁶

Those who do not have the fear of Allah (SwT) within themselves are introduced as people possessing hearts of stone – rather, their hearts are even harder and firmer than stones:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً

“Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness;”⁷

In relation to a group of disbelievers, there is a phrase that is used in the Qur'an in which they have been referred to as being impure:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُطَهِّرْ قُلُوبَهُمْ

“Surely those are the people whose hearts are not purified by Allah.”⁸

In another place in the Qur'an we read that the only ones who shall hear and respond to the call of the Prophet (S) are those who are spiritually alive and possess the ears to hear such a call:

إِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ وَالْمَوْتَى يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ

“The only people who shall accept and answer (your call) are the people who (spiritually) hear you and as for the (spiritually) dead, Allah will raise them, then to Him they shall be returned.”⁹

From these different phrases and indeed many other similar phrases in the Qur`an, we can clearly see the angle which the Qur`an takes on life and death and that it is the humanistic and logical angle of the discussion since all of the worth of a person is contained and based on this aspect of his life (his spiritual traits and worth and not his physical existence).

The factors that determine a spiritual death and life are very many, however undoubtedly things such as hypocrisy, pride, prejudice and nationalism, ignorance and the performance of the major sins are things which kill the heart.

Thus, going back to the tradition we started out with, the Noble Prophet (S) has stated, “Sitting and associating with three groups of people kill the heart: sitting with people who themselves are polluted with sins kills the heart and by a person interacting with such people, he will spiritually descend to such a level that he himself shall become an instrument through which others will be able to learn a lesson from (in how not to act).”

The word used in this tradition for “people who themselves are polluted with sins” is “نذل” which means a low or despicable individual from the point of view of his morals and etiquette, faith, thoughts, etc...

There are many ways in which a person can acquire status and character, of which there are four principle ways:

1. The training and upbringing from the mother and father;
2. The society and his interactions with the people and which is common within the society and environment;
3. His teachers at school;
4. His friends and acquaintances, and this is, perhaps the most influential of all ways which affect a person's status and character. Thus, if one's friends are corrupt, then the one who associates with them will also become corrupt. However if they have upright morals, then the person who is around them will be the same.

Within a person, there is a psychological trait of “involuntary following” in which anything a person sees others do, he would also automatically perform. For example, if a person was to yawn then almost instantly, others who are in the same vicinity would also inadvertently begin to yawn!

Many of the actions which people perform are the same and one of these is the effects of the surroundings which a person is in and the effects of the morals and etiquette which friends have upon one another.

It has been stated that if you see a person who has an ego however is reserved, and if (due to his being reserved) you are not able to determine his morals and character in your first and second encounter with him, then you must look towards his friends and those who associate with him to gauge his character:

فَانظُرُوا إِلَىٰ خُلَفَائِهِ وَجُلَسَائِهِ.

“Look towards those who are his friends (lit. followers) and those who associate with him.”¹⁰

If you see that a group of spiritually low people are always gathered around him, then do not be tricked and fooled by seeing his heavily used and worn out prayer mat, since:

إِنَّ الْمَرْءَ عَلَىٰ دِينِ خَلِيلِهِ وَجَلِيلِهِ.

“A person follows the faith of his friend and those who are in his company.”¹¹

Therefore, sitting with those people who have negative ethical traits kills the heart.

2. Sitting with rich people also kills the heart of a person. Of course, the meaning of rich people is a specific type of rich person. This tradition does not mean that any person who happens to be rich is bad since, how many times have we seen that sitting with rich people actually increase our prosperity and happiness due to their character!

It is mentioned that Prophet Ibrahim (as) was a very rich person, however when an individual remembered Allah (SwT) and said:

سُبُّوحٌ وَتَقْدُوسٌ...

he gave half of his wealth to that person for the sake of Allah (SwT)!

Thus, the meaning of the tradition under review and the mentioning of rich people refers to something else. These words refer to those who are not devoted to the faith. Rather, they are devoted to their money!

However since usually a majority of those who are extremely affluent do not face any difficulties in their life (due to their wealth), are always pleased with themselves (at their enormous amounts of wealth and their status), show self-importance and have drowned themselves in the vanity and pride, it can be seen that when a person sits in their company or speaks to them, their discussion would always be in regards to their income or expenses and you never hear anything from them about Allah (SwT), the Prophet (S) and any other spiritual issues or very little...

When such people speak, one may observe that they could easily list seventy different types of food which they have eaten! Their knowledge and facts on the various types of food, nonsensical things and instruments of fun and pleasure of this world is great, however when a discussion on ethics and morality comes up, these same people would remain quiet – it is as if the dirt of the grave has covered them!

Thus, it is due to gatherings and sitting with rich people who possess these traits that kills a person's heart. 12

3. Speaking with women also kills the heart. Of course this does not refer to women of true faith who follow the teachings of the religion. Rather, this refers to all other women since a majority of the discussion which (other) women indulge in are in regards to their own personal beautification and the beauties of the world. More often than not, their discussions are in regards to material pleasures or in picking the defects and faults of others.

In summary, any time a discussion takes place in regards to the transient world and the ornaments, beauties and beatifications, such talks will always lead to the spiritual death of the heart. Just as we know the word “tradition” (hadith) refers to speaking and this necessitates the act of gathering together to discuss things.

The Qur`an brings forth a very interesting phrase in relation to certain women and says:

أَوْ مَنْ يُنْشِيءُ فِي الْحَلِيَّةِ وَهُوَ فِي الْخِصَامِ غَيْرُ مُبِينٍ

“Is the one who has been brought up among trinkets (of beautification) and is inconspicuous in contests (should be associated with Allah)?” 13

This is the case since these sorts of women are brought up with an attachment to the adornments of the world – the fabric of their thinking is the fabric of beautification and that is all.

An important point which must be mentioned is that the things which lead to the life and death of the heart are numerous and thus, a person must be careful that he does not relegate his soul and essence to just anyone.

Without doubt, a person acquires a good part of his thoughts and ethical traits from his friends. From the logic of Islam, this form of influence (one's friends) is at such a level that in the traditions which have come to us from the Prophet Sulayman (as), he has stated:

لَا تَحْكُمُوا عَلَى رَجُلٍ بِشَيْءٍ حَتَّى تَنْظُرُوا إِلَى مَنْ يُصَاحِبُ. فَإِنَّمَا يَعْرِفُ الرَّجُلَ
بِأَشْكَالِهِ وَأَقْرَانِهِ، وَيَنْسَبُ إِلَى أَصْحَابِهِ وَأَخْذَنِهِ.

“Do not judge a person until you see whom he associates with since a person can be known by the friends and associates he keeps with and he is affiliated to his companions and friends.”

The Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has stated:

وَمَنْ إِشْتَبَهَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَمْرَهُ، وَ لَمْ تَعْرِفُوا دِينَهُ، فَانظُرُوا إِلَى خُلَافَائِهِ. فَإِنْ كَانُوا أَهْلَ
دِينِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ عَلَى دِينِ اللَّهِ، وَإِنْ كَانُوا عَلَى غَيْرِ دِينِ اللَّهِ فَلَا حِزْبَ لَهُ مِنْ دِينِ اللَّهِ.

“Anytime the state of a person is not known to you and you do not know his faith, look towards his friends. If they are people of the faith of Allah then he too shall be on the faith of Allah, and if they are on other than the faith of Allah then he too shall not be on the faith of Allah.”

Without a doubt, the role that a friend plays in the felicity and adversity of a person is more important than any other thing. Such a friend will drag a person to the ultimate level of spiritual destruction and annihilation – however it is also possible that he may pull him towards the loftiest levels of greatness and spiritual worth! !

1. The Whispered Prayers of Those Who Turn in Repentance, as-sahifatul Kamilatul Sajjadiyah, Prayer 1

2. Surat ale Imran (3), verse 169

3. Surat al-Naml (27), verse 80

4. Surat Yasin (36), verse 70

5. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 171

6. Ibid., verse 10

7. Ibid., verse 74

8. Surat al-Maidah (5), verse 41

9. Surat al-Anam (6), verse 37

10. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 197

11. Ibid.

12. It is possible that one of the reasons why associating with rich people leads to the spiritual death of a person's heart is that the source of a majority of the corruption and perversion within the society also stems from the rich people who are

completely unaware of Allah (SwT) and are completely drowned in the vanities, glories, fun and pleasure of this transient world!

Most often, any voice of reason which would lead to their moral refinement, return of human qualities and ethical traits seems strange to their ears! It is for this reason that such people always stood in the first line against the Prophets of Allah (SwT) and their message, which the rich always assumed was against them directly, was one of justice and equality and the assistance of those who are downtrodden. (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 12, pg. 60)

13. Surat al-Zukhruf (43), verse 18

Discourse 37: Three Things Which The Muslim Nation Does Not Have The Strength To Bear

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: يَا عَلِيُّ، ثَلَاثٌ لَا تُطِيقُهَا هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةُ: الْمُوَاسَاةُ لِلأَخِ فِي مَالِهِ وَ
إِنصَافُ النَّاسِ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ وَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالِهِ وَ لَيْسَ هُوَ: «سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ» وَلَكِنْ إِذَا وَرَدَ عَلَى مَا يَحْرُمُ عَلَيْهِ خَافَ اللَّهُ
عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عِنْدَهُ وَ تَرَكَهُ.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) has said, “O ‘Ali! There are three things which this nation shall not be able to bear: equality with their brother in regards to their wealth; giving people their rights; and remembering Allah (SwT) in any state – and this does not mean saying “Glory be to Allah and all Praise belongs to Allah and there is no creature worthy of worship except for Allah.” Rather, whenever they encounter something which they are prohibited from, they fear Allah, the Noble and Grand, in regards to that thing and refrain from it.”

This is one of the well-known and very meaningful traditions from the Prophet (S).

According to this tradition, there are three things which this nation (the Muslim nation) does not have the strength to bear – in other words, these are difficult things which not everyone will be able to perform.

1) “Equality” with their brother (or sister)

A person may be able to help others by giving some of their wealth in the way of Allah (SwT); they may offer Sadaqah; they may give another person a loan, etc. however to show true equality means that a person divides his wealth with others, and this is definitely something difficult!

From this sentence we can deduce that sometimes a person should give out a portion of his wealth, food, and clothing to others around him in the way and for the pleasure of Allah (SwT).

One must not be conceited and think that by giving to others, he has done something very great and important! Rather, even after giving we must still consider ourselves as being culpable since the station of “equality and fairness with our brother” is a much higher station and even higher than self-sacrifice («thar) which we have yet to reach to !

If we have not reached to the level of “equality with our brother/sister” then at least this theory should have some impact on us and whatever we are currently offering in help to others should continue. However still after this, we should feel some sense of culpability.

In addition, we must not expect anything in return since this form of help is the smallest action we can do for another Muslim!

The Self-Sacrifice for a Guest

The following tradition has been narrated in Majma' al-Bayan¹ that: “A person came to the Prophet (S) and said to him, 'I am hungry.' The Prophet (S) asked a companion to go to his house and bring the man some food. However, upon checking, those in the house of the Prophet (S) informed the person that there was no food in the Prophet's house.

The Prophet (S) asked, 'Which of you will keep this man as a guest in his house (and thus, feed him)?' A man from amongst the Ansar (those who had welcomed the Prophet (S) and the companions into Madinah) stood up and said that he would take care of the man. Thus, the hungry man made his way to the companion's house.

Upon arriving home, the companion realized that he too had no food except for a few paltry things that were only enough for his young children to eat. The companion asked his wife to bring him the food which they had reserved for their guest and to turn off the oil-lamp. The man quietly told his wife that, 'Keep the children busy with something until they go to sleep (keep their mind off of the food and thus, let them go to sleep without any food).'

The woman and her husband then sat down on the floor with their guest and pretended to eat by moving their mouth, however, they actually did not eat any of the food! The guest thought that they too were eating (from what he could see and the sound of them chewing food) and thus, he ate whatever he needed and became satiated.

The family went to bed hungry that night, however the next morning, the husband and wife came to the Prophet (S). The Prophet (S) looked at them and without saying a word, smiled and read the following verse of the Qur`an (from Suratul Hashr, verse 80):

وَيُؤْتُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

“And they (the Ansar) prefer them (the Muhajirun) over themselves even if they are in an state of abject poverty!”²

Division of One's Wealth in the Islamic Narrations

1. It has been narrated from Abu Dharr that he has said, “I heard the Prophet (S) say:

إِنَّمَا هُمْ إِخْوَانُكُمْ فَاكْسُوهُمْ مِمَّا تَكْسُونَ، وَ أَطْعِمُوهُمْ مِمَّا تَطْعَمُونَ، فَمَا رَوَى
عَبْدَهُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا وَرِدَائِهِ رِدَائِهِ، وَإِزَارُهُ إِزَارُهُ، مِنْ غَيْرِ تَفَاوُتٍ.

2. In the Tafsir of ‘Ali b. Ibrahim we read a tradition in regards to verses 70 to 72 of Suratul Nahl (16):

لَا يَجُوزُ لِلرَّجُلِ أَنْ يَخْصَّ نَفْسَهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْمَأْكُولِ دُونَ عِيَالِهِ.

“It is not permissible for a person to prefer some food for himself (and eat that) and not to feed the same thing to his family.”³

2) Giving People their Rights

In our previous discussions, we had mentioned the fact that the Islamic society is one in which rights are given to others, however they are not taken from others.

By this we mean that if a person owes another person money, then the one who has taken the loan should go in search of the person whom he owes the money to (to pay him back). Anytime he finds the person whom he owes something to, he should fulfill his obligation to that person and thank Allah (SwT) that He has freed him from being under the obligation of another human being (through paying back the debt, he has cleared up his responsibility).

3) The Dhikr of Allah (SwT) in All States

Of the things which all people are responsible for enacting, however not all are able to, is to remember Allah (SwT) in all states. The remembering of Allah (SwT) should only be done for one reason which is to remember Allah (SwT) and this act should have no other incentives associated with it.

The word Dhikr has three meanings to it: verbal, spiritual and the applied or practical Dhikr.

The verbal Dhikr is something easy; the Dhikr in the heart which makes up the spiritual Dhikr is somewhat more difficult; while the Dhikr which is manifest in one's actions is the most difficult of all!

The Dhikr in one's actions means that in a person's actions in his life, he recognizes that Allah (SwT) is present and watching – his actions truly show that he realizes that Allah (SwT) is present all the time.

The Prophet (S) has then said, “And this Dhikr is not in the meaning of...”

Seeing as how this form of remembrance of Allah (SwT) is the most important verbal declaration mentioned in the various traditions and has been emphasized a great deal, the Prophet (S) has stated, “The Dhikr is not limited to only this (the verbal remembrance of Allah (SwT)). Rather, the reality of Dhikr is that when a person enters into a situation where he has the ability to perform a forbidden act, he fears Allah (SwT) to such an extent that he immediately refrains from performing the deed that would be transformed into a sin in his records.”

Therefore, the Dhikr of Allah (SwT) is actually a very valuable treasure! No matter how much we speak about it, it is still not enough and in principle, the spirit of the Salat and worship is all contained within the Dhikr of Allah (SwT)!

By this we mean that in that amount that our attention and focus is in the Salat and in that amount that we have the presence of heart (hudhur al-qalb), only that amount is considered as the Salat while the rest of the prayers (where there is no presence of heart) is just like the skin of the fruit without the actual fruit!

The main purpose of all forms of worship ('Ibadat) is the remembrance of Allah (SwT) as this is the most important factor in protecting the person who is put face to face with sins.

One who has soiled himself with crimes, transgressions and errors against his soul and brings disgrace onto himself (through these acts) is definitely not of those who remembers Allah (SwT).

Truthfully, if he was a person of remembrance of Allah (SwT), then at the time of coming face to face with a sin, he would fall into the remembrance of Allah (SwT). Through this remembrance, he would not become such a person of disgrace and he would not fall into such misfortunes and these states of dishonour would have been a lesson for him.

Therefore, if we wish to protect ourselves in the face of committing sins, then we must constantly be in a state of Dhikr of Allah (SwT) – we must be one who has developed the habit of ensuring that we do not forget Allah (SwT).

When one enters into a gathering, he must be sure to remember Allah (SwT) and this Dhikr of Allah (SwT) would actually be the source of tranquility and serenity of the person in this world as:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Now surely with the remembrance (Dhikr) of Allah are the hearts put at rest and ease.”⁴

Short Discussion Regarding Dhikr

1. What is the Dhikr of Allah and how does it materialize?

Just as Raghīb has mentioned in his book, al-Mufradat, the word Dhikr may sometimes refer to memorizing some information and facts with this stark difference that the word “حفظ” or hifz (which is also used in the meaning of memorization) refers to the beginning period of memorization of something while the word “ذكر” or dhikr is used in reference to the continuation of this act.

Sometimes, this word is used in the meaning of remembering something – either a verbal recollection or a remembrance in the heart.

We read in the traditions⁵ that Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said:

الذِّكْرُ ذِكْرَانِ: ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عِنْدَ الْمُصِيبَةِ وَأَفْضَلُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ عِنْدَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ فَيَكُونُ حَاجِزًا.

“Dhikr is of two types: the remembrance of Allah, the Noble and Grand, at the time of tribulations and even greater than this is the remembrance of Allah (SwT) in regards to that thing which Allah has made prohibited for you so then this (this form of Dhikr) acts as a barrier (between the person and that forbidden act).”⁶

It is because of this reason that in some of the traditions the remembrance of Allah (SwT) is referred to as the shield and means of protection (from sins)!

In a tradition from Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) we read that one day the Prophet (S) turned towards his companions and said:

إِتَّخِذُوا جُنُودًا! فَقَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَمِنْ عَدُوِّ قَدْ أَظَلَّنَا؟ قَالَ لَا، وَلَكِنَّ مِنَ النَّارِ! قُولُوا سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ.

“Take a shield for yourselves.” The companions said, “O Messenger of Allah! (Should we take up this

shield) in the face of our enemies who have surrounded us and who are looking over us (to attack us at any time?)“ The Prophet replied, “No. Rather, take this shield as a protection from the hell fire – say: ‘Glory be to Allah and all praise belongs to Allah and there is no creature worthy of worship except for Allah and Allah is greater than can be described.’”⁷

A Person who was Constantly in the Dhikr of Allah (SwT)

The following example of Prophet Musa (as) is one which we must pay extra careful attention to, as he was one who was constantly in the remembrance of Allah (SwT). He had focused his entire attention on His Presence and called upon Him alone to remove all difficulties and challenges.

When this Prophet of Allah killed a Coptic man – which was an act referred to as a “Tark-e-Awla” (leaving a more preferable option) – we see that he immediately asked Allah (SwT) forgiveness and pardon and said:

قَالَ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي

“He (Musa) said: Surely I have wronged myself, so forgive me.”⁸

In addition, when he was leaving Egypt, he stated:

قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

“He (Musa) said: My Lord save me from the oppressive people.”⁹

When he reached the city of Madyan, he said:

قَالَ عَسَى رَبِّي أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

“He (Musa) said: Perhaps my Lord may guide me to the straight path...”

When the sheep of (Prophet) Shu’aib (as) were fed, became satiated and made their way towards the shade, Musa (as) he stated:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ

“He (Musa) said: O' my Lord! I am in need of whatever goodness you can send to me.”¹⁰

Most notably in this last supplication which was read in one of the most critical junctions in the life of this Prophet, we see that with great reverence and manners, tempered with tranquility and serenity, he did not say “O' Allah! I am in need of You removing my difficulties...” Rather, all he asked Allah (SwT) was, “I am in need of Your goodness and kindness.” [He did not ask for something in specific, rather, he left it to Allah (SwT) to fulfill whatever He destined for His servant.]

Of course, we should not assume that Prophet Musa (as) only remembered Allah (SwT) during times of difficulty, as it has been mentioned in the Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalain¹¹ that, “Even when he lived in the palace of the Pharaoh and was surrounded by all of the material treasures and blessings, he still did not forget Allah (SwT).”

Thus, in the traditions we read that, “One day, Musa (as) sneezed while in the presence of the Pharaoh and immediately said, 'All Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Universe' [أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ].”

When the Pharaoh heard these words, he became extremely upset and slapped Musa (as)! Musa (as) grabbed the Pharaoh by his hair and pulled it at which time, the Pharaoh became even more upset and decided to kill him, however the wife of Pharaoh convinced Pharaoh that Musa (as) was only a young child and did not know what he was doing and thus, she was able to save him from death.¹²

Remembering Allah (SwT) in All States

Whenever the name of Allah (SwT) is taken, an entire universe of greatness, power, knowledge, and wisdom becomes manifest in the heart of the human being since He (SwT) is the holder of all of the most beautiful Names, the highest characteristics, the possessor of all of perfections and is free from any sort of defect or imperfection.

The constant focus and attention on such a reality (of Allah (SwT)) who possesses such characteristics and traits guides the soul of a person towards goodness and purity and helps him keep away from all despicable acts. In other words, His characteristics seek to become manifest within the life of the person.

Focusing one's attention on such a worthy Creator brings a sense of awareness of constantly being within His presence. With this feeling, the distance between a person and the sins and spiritual pollution is made great.

Remembering Him (SwT) is a remembrance of vigilance; remembering Him (SwT) is the remembrance of accountability and reward/retribution; remembering Him (SwT) is to remember His court of Justice, Paradise and Hell Fire and such a remembrance is what gives purity to the life and graces the soul with the Celestial Illumination of Allah (SwT) and existence.

It is due to this fact that within the Islamic traditions it has mentioned that everything has a limit to it –

except the remembrance of Allah (SwT) as there is no limit to it!

According to the tradition mentioned in Usul al-Kafi, Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said:

مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا وَلَهُ حَدٌّ يُنْتَهَى إِلَيْهِ، إِلَّا الذِّكْرُ، فَلَيْسَ لَهُ حَدٌّ يُنْتَهَى إِلَيْهِ.

“There is not a single thing (in the faith of Islam) except that there is a limit set for it so then when that limit is met, then that act is complete except for the Dhikr (of Allah) since for this there is no limit and no end to it.”¹³

The Imam then said:

فَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ الْفَرَائِضَ، فَمَنْ أَدَّاهُنَّ فَهُوَ حَدُّهُنَّ، وَشَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ فَمَنْ صَامَهُ فَهُوَ حَدُّهُ، وَالْحَجُّ فَمَنْ حَجَّ حَدُّهُ، إِلَّا الذِّكْرَ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَمْ يَرْضَ مِنْهُ بِالْقَلِيلِ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ حَدًّا يُنْتَهَى إِلَيْهِ، ثُمَّ تَلَا: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا

“Allah, the Glorious and Noble, has obligated the Salat, so then whoever fulfills this act has fulfilled it to its prescribed amount; the month of Ramazan too (has a limit) so then whoever fasts the month has fulfilled the limit; hajj too (has a limit) so then whoever performs the hajj has fulfilled its limit; however there is no limit set for the remembrance (dhikr) of Allah.

Surely Allah, the Glorious and Noble, is not content with a small amount of Dhikr and has not set an end limit for it.” Then, the Imam (as) read the verse of the Qur'an which states, {O' you who possess true faith! Remember Allah an abundantly remembrance (Dhikran Kathiran) and glorify Him in the morning and at night.}”¹⁴

In this same tradition, Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) narrates from his father, Imam Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Baqir (as) that he (the 5th Imam) was one who performed much Dhikr of Allah (SwT) and that anytime he walked with him, he would be in the Dhikr of Allah (SwT); when he ate, he would remember Allah (SwT); even when he was speaking to people, he would not be negligent of the Dhikr of Allah (SwT)...

The 6th Imam ends this tradition by stating the following very meaningful sentence:

وَالْبَيْتُ الَّذِي يَقْرَأُ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنَ، وَيَذْكُرُ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فِيهِ تَكْثُرُ بَرَكَتُهُ، وَتَحْضُرُهُ

الْمَلَائِكَةُ، وَتَهَرُّ مِنْهُ الشَّيَاطِينُ، وَيُضِيءُ لِأَهْلِ السَّمَاءِ كَمَا يُضِيءُ الْكَوْكَبُ الدُّرِّيُّ
لِأَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ.

“The house in which the Qur’an is read and in which Allah, the Glorious and Noble, is remembered will have its blessings multiplied, the Angels will be present in that house, the Satans will flee from that house and that house will shine for the people of the heavens just as the stars sparkle for the people on Earth.”¹⁵

This issue is of such importance that in the tradition, the remembrance of Allah (SwT) has been equated with the collection of all goodness of this life and the next life just as the Prophet of Allah (S) has stated:

مَنْ أُعْطِيَ لِسَانًا ذَاكِرًا فَقَدْ أُعْطِيَ خَيْرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ.

“The person who has been given (by Allah) a remembering tongue (to extol His greatness) has been given goodness of both this life and the next.”¹⁶

The traditions in regards to the importance of the remembrance of Allah (SwT) are such in number that if we wish to bring them all forth here in this discussion, it would call for an independent book to be written!

Thus, we close this part of the discussion with a short tradition from Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) as narrated in Usul al-Kafi:

مَنْ أَكْثَرَ ذِكْرَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَحَبَّهُ اللَّهُ فِي جَنَّتِهِ.

“The person who remembers Allah, the Glorious and Noble much, Allah will cover Him with the grace of His shadow in His Paradise.”¹⁷

It goes without saying that all of the blessings and goodness which are accompanied by the remembrance of Allah (SwT) are not related to the mere verbal attestation and remembrance of Allah (SwT) and the empty movements of the tongue with no thought, pondering (upon what is being said) and action (to what is being said). Rather, the purpose of this remembrance should be to stir the springs of thought and contemplation – that same thought which would become manifest within the actions of the person. This has clearly been mentioned in the meaningful tradition (on this topic).¹⁸

The Stages to Traverse in the Dhikr of Allah (SwT)

In regards to the stages which one must traverse in the Dhikr of Allah (SwT), one of the commentators of the Qur`an¹⁹ has stated:

1. The first stage is the Dhikr of His name, just as has been mentioned in the Qur`an in the verse of Suratul Muzammil:

وَ اذْكُرْ اِسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَ تَبَتَّلْ اِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلاً

“And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself completely to Him.”²⁰

2. The second stage is that of remembering the Sacred Essence of Allah (SwT) in the heart, just as we are told:

وَ اذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعاً وَ خِيفَةً

“And remember your Lord within yourself humbly and fearing...”²¹

3. The third stage – which is the ultimate level – is one in which a person ascends higher than just performing the Dhikr of Allah (SwT) and remembering the status of Lordship which He possesses. Rather, the person arrives at the state of the Dhikr of all of the characteristics of Beauty and Munificence of Allah (SwT) which are all present in His essence, just as we are told:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْراً كَثِيراً

“O' you who have true faith, remember Allah, a great deal of remembering...”²²

Thus, we see that the Dhikr of Allah (SwT) continues, traversing one stage after the other and through this, the person performing this Dhikr of Allah (SwT) would reach to the pinnacles of perfection.²³

The Various Forms of Dhikr

Dhikr is divided up into the Dhikr of the tongue (verbal); Dhikr of the heart (spiritual); and the Dhikr through one's actions. Thus, whenever we speak about the Dhikr of Allah (SwT) – which is such a great act – we must never think that it simply refers to the Dhikr of the tongue (the verbal form).

Rather, in the Islamic narrations, it has been clearly mentioned that in addition to the verbal Dhikr, there is also the Dhikr in the heart and the Dhikr through one's actions. Thus, when a person is about to perform a forbidden act, he must fall into the remembrance of Allah (SwT) and through this, refrain from that act which he is not permitted to perform.

The ultimate purpose of what we have mentioned is that Allah (SwT) must be present in all aspects of a person's life and the Celestial Illumination of Allah (SwT) must take over and encompass a person's entire life; he must think and reason with this Celestial Illumination and must put into practice all of His commandments.

A gathering of remembering Allah (SwT) is not a gathering in which a group of unaware people sit around in a circle and go forth in a mode of pleasure and recreation while at the same time recite some made-up incantations and make such an innovation (Bid'ah) in gatherings famous and well-known (amongst the people). If we read in the traditions that the Prophet (S) said:

بَادِرُوا إِلَى رِيَاضِ الْجَنَّةِ.

“Make your way towards the gardens of Paradise.”

When he was asked:

وَمَا رِيَاضُ الْجَنَّةِ؟

“And what are the gardens of Paradise?”

The Prophet (S) replied:

حَلَقُ الذِّكْرِ.

“Gatherings of the remembrance (of Allah).”²⁴

His meaning of 'gatherings of remembrance (of Allah (SwT))' [lit. a gathering where people sit in a circle to remember Allah (SwT)] are those in which the teachings of Islam are kept alive and ones in which the instructive discussions and lessons of training (of the person) are mentioned and talked about in.

In such a gathering, a human is transformed into the true sense of the word a human and those people who are sinners are purified of their sins and are put back onto the path of Allah (SwT).²⁵

The Best Forms of Remembrance

1. The Dhikr of the Morning and Evening

In Tafsir Qurtubi²⁶ and the Tafsir of Abu'l Futuh Razi²⁷ in regards to verse 64 of Suratul Zumur, there is a tradition from the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) in which he asked the Prophet (S) in regards to the meaning of “keys” mentioned in this verse to which the Prophet (S) replied:

يَا عَلِيُّ! لَقَدْ سَأَلْتَ عَنْ عَظِيمِ الْمَقَالِيدِ، هُوَ أَنْ تَقُولَ عَشْرًا إِذَا أَصْبَحْتَ، وَعَشْرًا إِذَا أَمْسَيْتَ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ (هُوَ) الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ (يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ) بِيَدِهِ الْخَيْرُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ. مَنْ كَرَّرَ هَذِهِ الْكَلِمَاتِ كُلَّ صَبَاحٍ وَ مَسَاءٍ عَشْرَ مَرَّاتٍ أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ سِتًّا، أَحَدَهَا أَنْ يَحْفَظَهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَرِّ الشَّيْطَانِ وَ أَتْبَاعِهِ حَتَّى لَا يُسَلِّطَ عَلَيْهِ.

“O' 'Ali! Surely you have asked about the greatest of keys! This great key which you have asked about is that even morning and evening you say the following ten times: 'There is no creature worthy of worship except for Allah; Allah is greater than anything which can describe him; all Glory belongs to Allah and all Praise belongs to Allah and I seek forgiveness from Allah and there is no power except with Allah and He is the First and the Last and the Apparent and the Hidden.

To Him is the Dominion and to Him belongs the Praise (He gives life and death) in His hands is all goodness and He has power over all things.' The Prophet continued and said, 'Whoever reads this every morning and night, Allah will grant this person six rewards, one of which is that Allah will protect him from Satan and the army of Satan so that he (Satan) is not able to rule over him.”

It goes without saying that merely saying these words and paying lip service to them is not what will gain the reward. Rather, true faith in its contents and applying this sentence to one's life is necessary!

It is possible that this tradition may be a subtle reference to some of the words which make up the most beautiful names of Allah (SwT) and which make up the Sovereignty and Dominion of Allah (SwT) above the entire world of creation. [Pay attention to this point]²⁸

2. The Dhikr of Allah – “Ya Fattah” [يَا فَتَّاحُ]

In some of the traditions, there has been emphasis placed on the remembrance through the recitation of “Ya Fattah” to alleviate difficulties. This great characteristic of Allah (SwT) which is the 'exaggerative

form¹ of the word “فتح” refers to the power of Allah (SwT) to remove any difficulty and the ability of Allah (SwT) to remove the grief and sorrow which a person may have.

In addition, this name also conveys the power of Allah (SwT) to put forth the means through which victory and success are achieved.

In reality, there is no other who can be referred to as “الفتاح” and the Key (مفتاح) of all closed doors are in His hands and Power!

Raghib has mentioned the following in his work al-Mufradat in regards to the word “فتح” that: “Originally, this word meant to remove any sort of difficulty and tribulation and this is of two types: sometimes it refers to difficulties which are seen by the eyes such as opening a lock, and sometimes these difficulties are perceived by the mind such as opening (and alleviating) the difficulties of grief and sorrow or opening and discovering the secrets of various forms of science.

In addition, it refers to the arbitration between two individuals and removing the difficulties of strife and anger which may be between two individuals.”²⁹

3. Dhikr-e-Yunusiyyah (The Dhikr of Prophet Yunus (as))

Prophet Yunus (as) became aware of the situation he was in very quickly and with his entire presence, turned towards the presence of Allah (SwT) and sought repentance and asked forgiveness from his “Tark-e-Awla”, in the presence of the Most Sacred.

At this point, the well-known and meaningful dhikr from the mouth of Yunus (as) was stated which has been narrated in the Qur`an in Suratul Anbiya, Verse 87. Amongst the people of ‘Irfan, it is well known as the 'Dhikr-e-Yunusiyyah':

فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

“So then he cried out in the darkness that 'There is no creature worthy of worship except for You, glory be to You, surely I was of the oppressors and unjust to my own self.'”

This sincere confession tempered with his glorification, along with grief and remorse was accepted and just as we read in verse 88 of Suratul Anbiya that:

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“So then We answered him (Yunus) and We saved him from the grief and thus do We always rescue the

true believers.”³⁰

4. The Dhikr of “There is no power or strength save with Allah” (لا حول و لا قوة إلا بالله)

In the Tafsir, Majma’ al-Bayan³¹, it has been mentioned that the son one of the companions of the Prophet (S) – ‘Awf b. Malik – was captured by the enemies of Islam. The companion went to see the Prophet (S) and informed him of what had happened and also of his abject state of poverty and destitution.

The Prophet (S) said to him, “Exhibit your Taqwa (consciousness of Allah (SwT)), be patient and recite the Dhikr of “لَا حَوْلَ وَ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ” frequently.”

The companion did as he was told and one day, while he was sitting in his house, his son came to the door – surprising his father!

The son proceeded to tell his father how at one point, the enemies forgot about him and thus, he was able to make the best of the opportunity and run away – not only this, but he was even able to bring one of the camels of the enemy with him!³²

The Status of the Dhikr in the Words of Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as)

Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has stated the following in regards to Dhikr:

مَنْ كَانَ ذَاكِرًا لِلَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَى الْحَقِيقَةِ فَهُوَ مُطِيعٌ وَ مَنْ كَانَ غَافِلًا عَنْهُ فَهُوَ
عَاصٍ، وَ الطَّاعَةُ عَلَامَةُ الْهُدَايَةِ، وَ الْمَعْصِيَةُ عَلَامَةُ الضَّلَالَةِ، وَ أَصْلُهُمَا مِنْ
الذِّكْرِ وَ الْغَفْلَةِ.

“The person who remembers Allah, the Most High in the true sense (of the word), is (truly) His obedient servant and the one who is negligent of Him is a sinner. Obedience (to Allah) is a sign of guidance and disobedience (to Allah) is a sign of misguidance and the source of these two (states) is the remembrance and negligence (of Allah).”

فَاجْعَلْ قَلْبَكَ قِبْلَةَ لِسَانِكَ، لَا تُحَرِّكْهُ إِلَّا بِإِشَارَةِ الْقَلْبِ وَ مَوَافَقَةِ الْعَقْلِ وَ رَضَى
الْإِيمَانَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَالِمٌ بِسِرِّكَ وَ جَهْرِكَ وَ كُنْ كَالنَّازِعِ رُوحَهُ أَوْ كَالْوَاقِفِ فِي
الْعَرْضِ الْأَكْبَرِ، غَيْرَ شَاغِلٍ نَفْسِكَ عَمَّا عَنَّكَ مِمَّا كَلَّفَكَ بِهِ رَبُّكَ فِي أَمْرِهِ وَ نَهْيِهِ وَ
وَعْدِهِ وَ وَعِيدِهِ.

“So then make your heart the focus of your tongue – do not move it except at the suggestion of your heart and (do not move it except) with the approval of your intellect and that pleasure of your faith since surely Allah is the Knower of that which you hide and that which you manifest.

Thus, be as the person who is on his death bed and one whose soul is about to come out of him or like the person who is waiting on the wide plains (of the Day of Resurrection) for the account of all of his deeds. Waver between what Allah the High has obligated you to perform from the commands and the prohibitions and the promises (of reward) and the warnings (of retribution).”

وَلَا تَشْغَلْهَا بِدُونِ مَا كَلَّفَكَ، وَ اغْسِلْ قَلْبَكَ بِمَاءِ الْحُزْنِ، وَ اجْعَلْ ذِكْرَ اللَّهِ مِنْ
أَجَلِ ذِكْرِهِ لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ وَ هُوَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكَ.

“And do not busy yourselves with things other than what He has ordered you to perform and wash your heart with the (spiritual) water of grief and make the remembrance of Allah just like His remembrance of you while He has no need for you.”

فَذِكْرُهُ لَكَ أَجَلٌ وَ أَشْهَى وَ أَتَمٌّ مِنْ ذِكْرِكَ لَهُ وَ أَسْبَقُ، وَ مَعْرِفَتِكَ بِذِكْرِهِ لَكَ يُورِثُكَ
الْخُضُوعَ وَ الْإِسْتِحْيَاءَ وَ الْإِنْكَسَارَ، وَ يَتَوَلَّدُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ رُؤْيِيَّةٌ كَرَمِهِ وَ فَضْلِهِ السَّابِقِ،
وَ تَصْغُرُ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ طَاعَاتِكَ، وَ إِنْ كَثُرَتْ فِي جَنْبِ مَنْنِهِ، فَتُخَلِّصُ لَوَجْهِهِ.

“Thus, His Dhikr of you is much more important, greater, more perfect, clearer and more needed for you than You remembering Him, and it also has a precedence to it. In addition, your cognizance of His remembrance of You would grant you humility, shame and humbleness.

Through this knowledge, you would be able to see His previous greatness and magnitude over you and at this time, all of your worship of Him would seem trivial and insignificant in the face of the bounties and greatness of Him over you even if your obedience to Him (up until this point) was great and even if your actions for Him (up until this point) were done with sincerity.”

وَ رُؤْيِيَّتِكَ ذِكْرَكَ لَهُ تُورِثُكَ: الرِّيَاءَ وَ الْعُجْبَ وَ السَّفَةَ وَ الْغُلْظَةَ فِي خَلْقِهِ، وَ
إِسْتِكْتَارُ الطَّاعَةِ، وَ نِسْيَانُ فَضْلِهِ وَ كَرَمِهِ، وَ مَا يَزِيدُكَ بِذَلِكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا بُعْدًا وَ لَا
تَسْتَجْلِبُ بِهِ عَلَى مَضِيِّ الْأَيَّامِ إِلَّا وَ حُضَّةً.

“However as for your turning your attention to your Dhikr of Him (Allah), this will lead you to developing the traits of: pride, conceit, arrogance and harshness amongst His creations and you would consider (your) obedience to Him to be great in amount (even though it is nothing) and would lead you to forget His grace (over you) and His munificence upon you and this would not increase anything within you except for (spiritual) distancing from Allah and you would not gain anything with the passing of time from this except the fear and terror.”

وَالذِّكْرُ ذِكْرَانِ: ذِكْرٌ خَالِصٌ يُوَافِقُهُ الْقَلْبُ، وَ ذِكْرٌ صَارِفٌ لَكَ يَنْفَى ذِكْرَ غَيْرِهِ،
كَمَا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: إِنِّي لَا أَحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ، أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ.

“The Dhikr is of two types: the sincere Dhikr of Allah the Most High which takes place through the approval of the heart and the Dhikr which flows from you which negates all other forms of Remembrance of other than Him, just as the Noble Messenger (S) has said that, 'I am not able to speak Your praise (in the way which You deserve), rather, You are praised just as You Yourself have praised Yourself.'”

فَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَمْ يَجْعَلْ لِذِكْرِهِ لِلَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِقْدَاراً، عِنْدَ عِلْمِهِ بِحَقِيقَةِ سَابِقَةِ ذِكْرِ
اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلِ ذِكْرِهِ لَهُ، فَمِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلَى، فَمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَذْكُرَ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى
فَلْيَعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ عَالِمٌ يَذْكُرُ اللَّهَ الْعَبْدَ بِالتَّوْفِيقِ لِذِكْرِهِ، لَا يَقْدِرُ الْعَبْدُ عَلَى ذِكْرِهِ.

“So then the Messenger of Allah (S) did not think that his sincere Dhikr of Allah was of any worth due to his knowledge of the past reality of the remembrance of Allah, the Noble and Grand, for him (the Prophet) which took form before his (the Prophet's) remembrance of Him (Allah (SwT)). Therefore, in those areas where the Messenger of Allah has negated his own Dhikr of Allah and confirms the Dhikr which has been carried out by Allah, he is referring to supremacy of the Dhikr.

Thus, whosoever then desires to remember Allah, the Most High, should truly know that Surely He is the All-Knowing and that Allah remembers the servants through the Divinely granted success of them remembering Him and had it not been for this, the servant would never have been able to remember Him.”³³

Explanation: The person who has been in the state of remembrance of Allah (SwT) and who, in his day to day affairs, does not forget Allah (SwT), will gradually, become firm and unwavering on the path of true guidance, obedience and servitude of Allah (SwT) and will keep away from going against the laws of Allah (SwT).

The minimum level which this remembrance will take form is that the person's tongue will move and

recite the name of Allah (SwT); at the second stage of the Dhikr of Allah (SwT), the person would protect his tongue and without the permission of his heart, intellect and faith, would not speak anything.

رخت بر بندد برون آید

ذکر حق پاکست و چون پاکی رسید
پلید

شب گریزد چون بر افروزد

می گریزد ضدّها از ضدّها
ضیاء

The Reality of Dhikr

The true meaning of Dhikr is to remember Allah (SwT) and in one's steps, movements and actions, to endlessly be in a state of remembrance of Allah (SwT). The eventual outcome of this form of Dhikr is obedience to the Lord and to not digress from the path of the intellect and faith.

Another effect is that one fulfills the Divine Responsibilities which rest upon himself in relation to the commanded and prohibited actions. The person also keeps in mind the promises and punishments, the rewards and chastisements of Allah (SwT). Such a person would also keep away from sinning and taking the path of rebellion against Allah (SwT)!

Yes, the responsibility of the person who is spiritually travelling towards Allah (SwT) is that he must always be aware of his mistakes, transgressions, bad acts and all of the things which result in his own spiritual weakness and shortcomings. In summary, this can be accomplished through the two following ways:

One: By paying attention to the particularities and distinctiveness of one's actions and deeds in the presence of Allah (SwT) and by paying attention to one's responsibilities. If this is enacted, then the person would see that all of his actions are actually deficient and imperfect when compared to the perfect qualities of Allah (SwT).

Two: By paying attention to the grace, kindness, generosity, love, compassion, blessing and forgiveness of Allah (SwT) since in the face of these never-ending traits, we see that whatever we bring forth and perform is still imperfect and with little to no value to it.

طاعت خود گر چه بنماید

و اندرین صورت شماری بس حقیر

كثير

در بر الطاف وفضل ذو

کی بود لایق زما کار حسن

المنن

Yes, it is through a person being mindful of these two ways that his humility, love, modesty, servitude, cognizance, shame, and humbleness would all increase.

The meaning of Allah, the Most High speaking the praise refers to His Divine Lordship over the Universe and thus the Dhikr – whether it be the Divine Lordship over the Universe, a verbal declaration and verbal praise and other than this, fall into this same category (His Divine Lordship over the Universe).

Thus, praise which Allah (SwT) makes refers to the: creation, maintenance, organization, regulation, mercy and all of His other actions – each of which is a perfect denotation of His great status and of which the verbal praise of His servants can never reach to.

Thus, in this sentence, the Noble Prophet (S) has even negated his own Dhikr of Allah (SwT) (لا أحصى) (ثناء) which is a pure and sincere remembrance! He only believes in the worth and value and truthfulness of the remembrance which Allah (SwT) Himself performs (أثبتت على نفسك).

Yes, even though this form of remembrance, at the first stage is manifest in the Divine Lordship of Allah (SwT) over the entire Universe and this is the most complete form of remembrance which comes forth from Allah, the Most High which He himself has introduced as taking shape through His characteristics of His actions, however at the next level (of this Dhikr), it is one in which the servants of Allah (SwT) realize the station which He has and develop knowledge of this. Thus, this then takes on the form of the remembrance of the heart and by turning their inner focus to Him and His actions or through the verbal attestation.³⁴

1. As narrated in Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 9, pg. 260

2. Ibid., vol. 23, pg. 519

3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 9, pg. 221

4. Surat al-Rad (13), verse 28

5. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 1, pg. 484

6. Ibid.

7. Tafsir-e-Namuna (Summarized), vol. 1, pg. 216-217

8. Surat al-Qasas (28), verse 16

9. Ibid., verse 21

10. Ibid., verse 24

11. vol. 4, pg. 117
12. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 16, pg. 61 to 62
13. Vol. 2, Book of Supplication, Section on the Dhikr of Allah.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 82, pg. 145
17. Ibid., vol. 66, pg. 324
18. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 18, pg. 355 to 358
19. Fakhrud Din al-Razi, vol. 3, pg. 177
20. Surat al-Muzammil (73), verse 8
21. Surat al-Araf (7), verse 205
22. Surat al-Ahzab (33), verse 41
23. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 25, pg. 177 to 188
24. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 1, pg. 486
25. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 17, pg. 266 to 267
26. Ibid., vol. 8, pg. 571
27. Ibid., vol. 9, pg. 417
28. Ibid., vol. 19, pg. 424 to 425
29. Ibid., vol. 18, pg. 85
30. Ibid., vol. 19, pg. 156 to 157
31. Ibid., vol. 10, pg. 306
32. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 24, pg. 237
33. Mustadrak al-Wasaaf1il, vol. 5, pg. 397, no. 43
34. Misbahul Shariah wa Miftahul haqiqah, (The Lantern on the Path), pp. 20 to 25

Discourse 38: The Best Of People

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: يَا عَلِيُّ، ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ لَقِيَ اللَّهَ بِهِنَّ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَفْضَلِ النَّاسِ: مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِمَا افْتَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَعْبَدِ النَّاسِ، وَمَنْ وَرَعَ عَنْ مَحَارِمِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَوْرَعِ النَّاسِ وَ مَنْ قَنَعَ بِمَا رَزَقَهُ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ مِنْ أَغْنَى النَّاسِ.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) said, “O ‘Ali! If a person meets Allah with three traits, he will be considered as being from the greatest of people: the person who comes to Allah with that which He has made obligatory upon him will be of the most worshipping of people; the person who kept away from the prohibited of Allah will be of the most safeguarded of people; the person who is content with that which Allah provided to him for sustenance will be the richest of people.”

The phrase, 'لقاء الله' as has been mentioned in this tradition, is a reference to the level of 'witnessing'

which people will be given on the Resurrection. On that Day, the effects of the actions of Allah (SwT) will be shown to everyone to such an extent that not a single person shall have any doubts in regards to Allah (SwT):

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْعُيُونُ فِي مُشَاهِدَةِ الْأَبْصَارِ وَ لَكِنْ رَأَتْهُ الْقُلُوبُ بِحَقَائِقِ الْإِيمَانِ.

“The physical eyes do not see Allah, rather the heart sees Him through the true faith (which it possesses).”²

Thus on that Day, everyone shall accept Allah (SwT) with true faith.

If we wish to present this belief in an, albeit imperfect and partial analogy, it can be compared to Prophet Yusuf (as). As we know, he had a special distinction over his brothers. However they refused to humble themselves in the face of the status which he possessed. Actually, a group of them outright denied his excellence and were surprised why their father, Prophet Ya'qub (as), would actually grant Yusuf (as) a higher merit than what they possessed!

Nonetheless, when Prophet Yusuf (as), who possessed the strategy and wisdom which he had, reached to the status of the 'Aziz' of Egypt and was blessed by the many graces of Allah (SwT), at this point when his brothers saw what their actions had produced, they all spoke out and said:

فَاللَّهُ لَقَدْ أَثَرَكَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا

“I swear by Allah! Allah has made him superior over all of us!”

This shall also be the exact state of the disbelievers – both in the life of this world and the next life as well! While in the transient world, they had veils over their sight which blocked their vision and thus, did not submit to the Truth. However in the next life, the affair shall be clear and easy to see that just as the brothers of Yusuf (as) were forced to concede, the disbelievers too shall have to concede to the reality of Allah (SwT)!

In summary, on the Day of Resurrection, Allah (SwT) will be manifest everywhere and thus, one of the reasons why the Day of Resurrection is referred to as “يوم لقاء الله” or “The Day of Meeting Allah” is that on that Day, the effects of His greatness will be manifest such that there shall be no room for error in comprehending Him!

In addition, this phrase “لقاء الله” means that each person shall see himself in the presence of Allah (SwT). This point is very important to keep in mind since the worst form of punishment for the servants

on that Day shall be the state of embarrassment which they will feel due to their despicable actions. It is this embarrassment that will actually burn them more than the fire of hell since that Day is also known as “يوم تبلى السرائر” or “The Day when all of the actions of all individuals will be plain and manifest to see (for everyone).”

The Prophet (S) has thus told us that, “On that Day, if a person was to be one who does not possess three characteristics, then he has truly given up a great capital.”

1. The first part of the tradition reads: “...the person who comes to Allah with that which Allah had made obligatory upon him will be of the most worshipping of people...”

It is amazing to see people run after the recommended actions (mustahabat), however they leave aside the obligatory actions (wajibat) and such people are numerous in number!

For example, they will stay up until the middle of the night beating their chests in mourning (‘Azadari) or will spend the night in recommended worship and studying, however when the time for Salatul Fajr comes, they are fast asleep and thus, end up missing their Salat!

It is important to mention that we must know that not a single person – whether in the life of this world or the next life – shall ever be successful, except if he wakes up in the morning (for his Salat).

Everyone whom I have seen who has been a victorious in life has been so due to his waking in the morning for the prayers.

The narrators of the traditions have given us numerous accounts from the infallible A`immah (as) in regards to the greatness of the morning time and have referred to that time as “ساعة غفلة” or the time of negligence (for those who do not wake at that time and engage in worship).

Thus, it is highly meritorious that at that time of the day, the servant of Allah (SwT) makes the choice leave his slumber and get up and protect himself from sleeping which would only lead to remorse and grief!

Congratulations to that lucky person who, during the time when others are deep in negligence, is awake and observant and cognizant of that sleep which is punished so that he shall be considered as one of those who is, as the Qur’an puts it, (أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ) – ‘Surely it is they who are the successful ones...’ and is one of those fortunate people.

How beautifully the poet has stated it when he said:

عاشقان را ناله های

چشم صاحب دولتان هوشیار باشد صبحدم
زار باشد صبحدم

The chief of the narrators of traditions, Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Babawayiah (Shaykh Saduq), in his work, Man La Yahdhurul Faqih, has related from the inner and outer Imam, Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Baqir (as) a tradition in which the Imam has offered the following lofty words:

نَوْمُ الْغَدَاةِ يَمْنَعُ الرِّزْقَ، وَيَصْفَرُّ اللَّوْنَ وَتَغْيِيرُهُ وَتَقْبَحُهُ وَهُوَ نَوْمٌ كُلُّ مَشْوُومٍ، إِنَّ
اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى يُقَسِّمُ الْأَرْزَاقَ مَا بَيْنَ طُلُوعِ الْفَجْرِ إِلَى طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ، فَأَيَّاكُمْ
وَتِلْكَ النَّوْمَةَ.

“Sleeping at the time of Fajr prevents the sustenance (from reaching the person); makes the color of the face, yellow; changes the appearance of the person and makes his face unattractive and this is the sleep of every of every unfortunate and ill person. Allah, Blessed and the Most High divides the sustenance between the time of Fajr and the rising of the sun. Thus, I advise you to keep aware of that time and not to sleep during that time.”³

In addition, Shaykh Saduq has also narrated from the 8th Imam Abul Hasan 'Ali b. Musa al-Riza (as) in regards to the commentary of the verse which reads:

فَالْمُقَسَّمَاتِ أَمْرًا

“I swear by those (Angels who) distribute blessings by Our command”⁴

that:

إِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تُقَسِّمُ أَرْزَاقَ بَنِي آدَمَ مَا بَيْنَ طُلُوعِ الْفَجْرِ إِلَى طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ فَمَنْ
نَامَ مَا بَيْنَهُمَا نَامَ عَنْ رِزْقِهِ.

“Surely the Angels distribute the sustenance of the progeny of Adam between the time of the Fajr and the sunrise. Thus, the person who is asleep during this time period has actually slept on his own sustenance (meaning that he has prevented himself from attaining the sustenance which was guaranteed for him.)”⁵

Therefore, the successful person is the one who wakes up at Fajr time, as the sleep at Fajr time is one of the greatest disasters for a person and leads to him being left behind in life.

Just imagine if the person was to go to sleep one hour earlier and instead of wasting those worthless

hours of the night light in which one's mind does not work and in which that one hour of work (at night) in which he might not even benefit ten minutes, is transformed into one hour of benefit and profit through sleeping early. Through this, rather than waking up one hour later from his sleep and missing his prayers or praying them late, the believer would be able to wake up on time for his Salat!

Thus, with this said, we see that one must not perform the recommended actions if this would cause any danger to the obligatory deeds!

Even the act of performing the hajj to the House of Allah (SwT) with all the greatness that it has should not lead a person to neglect an obligatory act which would be much more important than the performance of a recommended hajj (any hajj performed after the person has performed his first and obligatory pilgrimage to the House of Allah (SwT)).

There are people who work hard to perform all the recommended actions, however become lazy when it comes to the obligatory deeds! Such people are those whom we can refer to as 'ostensibly holy' people and nothing more!

2. The second point mentioned in the tradition is that "...the person who keeps away from the prohibited of Allah will be of the most spiritually safeguarded of people..."

The level of Wara' is even higher than Taqwa as the first spiritual level which a person can reach to is that of Taqwa. Once that level has been perfected, the next is that of Wara'. In summary, the reality of Wara' is that a person reaches to such a station that he refrains from all sorts of sins.

There are some people who are very punctual when it comes to refraining from the discouraged acts (Makruhat) of Islam and make sure that they perform the recommended (Mustahabat). However, they do not pay any attention when it comes to refraining from the prohibited (Muharramat) such as back-biting, jealousy, showing off, etc...

Sometimes a mere inappropriate and mistaken look at a person of the opposite sex may lead to disbelief (Kufr) and the destruction of a person. This can be seen in what happened to Barsisa, the famous worshipper ('Abid) who, after a lifetime spent in the worship of Allah (SwT) made one inappropriate glance at one whom he was not permitted to look at! Through this act, he ended up following Satan and in the end, this small act of his led to a life of sin and disbelief and he ended up leaving the world in this state!

The story of Barsisa, the Worshipper ('Abid)

Amongst the Children of Israel, there was a devout worshipper named Barsisa. He had been engaged in worship for a very long period of time and through this, reached to such a close spiritual proximity to Allah (SwT) that anytime a person who had a psychological illness was brought to him, through his prayers and supplications, they were immediately cured.

One day, a young woman who came from a very noble and well-known family was brought to him by her brothers. After speaking with him, Barsisa agreed that he would try and cure her illness. The family of the young woman went home and Barsisa was left alone with her. At this point, Satan began his act of evil-whispers into the worshippers heart and was able to get the 'Abid to have illicit sexual relations with the young woman!

After a short time, it was noted that the young woman was become pregnant and since it has always been the case that one sin (such as having illicit relations as in this case) always leads to a much greater sin, she was killed and buried on the side of the road.

Some time later, her brothers realized that it was Barsisa who was responsible for having illicit relations with their sister. The news of this spread through the city and eventually, found its way to the governor.

Along with a group of his associates, the Governor made his way to the city centre to find out exactly what had transpired.

When the crimes of the 'Abid were confirmed and it was proven that he was indeed guilty of fornication, he was immediately removed from the house of worship in which he was residing.

Once he himself attested to committing the sin, he was tied to gallows to be hung to death.

When he was taken up on the gallows, Satan manifested himself in front of the 'Abid and said to him, "It is I who was responsible for leading you to the state which you see yourself in. However, if you listen to me, I will save you and get you out of this predicament!"

The 'Abid said, "What do you want me to do?"

Satan said, "Just one Sajdah is enough for me!"

The 'Abid retorted, "I can't prostrate while I am hanging on the gallows!"

To this, Satan replied, "Even if you make a gesture that you are performing prostration, that too is enough for me."

The 'Abid made a sign out of the corner of his eyes or with his hands that he was prostrating and through this act, submitted himself and prostrated to Satan. Through this, he ended up becoming a disbeliever and left the world as such!⁶

There are many such examples seen in the course of history that with the mere look of the eyes, a person's entire outcome changes – we seek refuge in Allah (SwT) from such a bad outcome!

If a person's eyes happen to fall upon a non-Mahram and one sees something which brings pleasure, however lowers the eyes from that, we are told that at that exact moment in time, that believer's heart becomes filled with true faith!

If a person turns away from the scene of a sin, then he shall definitely be able to feel his heart filled with the Celestial Illumination and he shall be able to actually perceive and feel this within himself!

Thus, this is something of great importance, since on one side we have Paradise while on the other side, there is the Hellfire...

3. The third part of the tradition tells us that, "...the one who is content with what Allah has provided him from His sustenance is the richest of people."

Being content is the opposite end of the spectrum of gluttony and greed and the trait of greed is one of the greatest disasters for a person to have!

It is not due to the material needs of life which cause the difficulties in life to come about. Although there are difficulties in attaining the material needs and there are untold inconveniences which people must face, however providing the necessities of life is not that important that it would cause these difficulties to come about – rather, what is important to watch over are the traits of greed and gluttony. It is these two traits which lead a person to adversity and misfortune and the more that he runs towards fulfilling his greed, the more that this trait grows within him!

There are many dishonorable traits which stem from greed of wealth including the acts of bribery, indulging in acts of corruption to gain more money, embezzlement and other things and none of these stem from the need to fulfill one's needs and requirements in life – rather they all stem from the traits of greed, gluttony and wanting more!

All of this can be summarized in the fact that a person who has this greed is actually not happy with the sustenance of Allah (SwT).

Embezzlement and theft which take place and the other acts of greed which we see written about in the newspapers show us that some people, due to their greed, take possession of such large amounts of wealth and money that even if they themselves, their children and their grandchildren were to use that amount of money that it still would not run out. Thus, is there any other reason for all of this other than greed?

In regards to money and wealth, there are various views which exist which range from showing extravagance to being extremely miserly.

There are some people who give so much importance to wealth that they consider wealth to be the key to solving all of their difficulties! It is not a surprise to see these people incessantly run after gathering more wealth and can not sit peacefully in one spot! It is these same people who do not believe in any limits or restrictions when it comes to gaining wealth and for such people, the permissible and forbidden are one and the same.

The opposite of these people are individuals who do not give the slightest importance to money. They

actually look for poverty and consider it to be the true worth of a person and assume that money is an obstacle in attaining Taqwa and closeness to Allah (SwT)!

In the face of these two beliefs of extravagance and miserliness, that which the Noble Qur'an and the Islamic traditions show us is that wealth is good to have, however with the following conditions:

1. It should be a means (to something much more noble and sacred) and not the goal of life;
2. It should not make a person a captive and slave, rather, the person should be the leader (Amir) of his wealth and not the captive (Asir) of it;
3. It must be gained through the permitted means and spent in the ways which would earn the pleasure of Allah (SwT).

Having an attraction to such forms of wealth is not only not considered as worship of the transient world, rather, it is actually proof of an attraction and pull towards the next life!

It is for this reason that we read in a tradition from Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) that when the Imam 'apparently' sent his curse upon gold and silver, one of his companions became surprised and in reply to this companion, the Imam (as) said:

لَيْسَ حَيْثُ تَذْهَبُ إِلَيْهِ إِنَّمَا الذَّهَبَ الَّتِي زَهَبَ بِالِدِينِ وَالْفِضَّةُ الَّتِي أَفَاضَتْ
الْكُفْرَ...

“The meaning of gold is that thing which removes the religion (which a person has) while the meaning of silver is that thing which is source of disbelief and lack of faith.”⁷

In addition, in a tradition narrated in Bihar al-Anwar from the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) we read that:

السُّكْرُ أَرْبَعُ سَكْرَاتٍ: سَكْرُ الشَّرَابِ، وَسَكْرُ الْمَالِ، وَسَكْرُ النَّوْمِ، وَسَكْرُ الْمَلِكِ.

“Intoxication is of four types: intoxication of alcohol, intoxication of wealth, intoxication of sleep and intoxication of power.”⁸

There are many people who, up until the end of their life are busy gathering wealth and end up leaving it for other people through the rules of inheritance. However the deceased must give account and be answerable to Allah (SwT) for the wealth which they had, while those who inherit it are the ones who will

make use of it!

It is for this reason that we read in the traditions that the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) was once asked:

مَنْ أَعْظَمَ النَّاسِ حَسْرَةً؟

“Who will show the greatest remorse?”

He then answered his own question and stated:

مَنْ رَأَى مَالَهُ فِي مِيزَانٍ غَيْرِهِ، وَأَدْخَلَهُ اللَّهُ بِهِ النَّارَ، وَأَدْخَلَ وَارِثُهُ بِهِ الْجَنَّةَ.

“The person (who shall show the greatest remorse) is the one who will see his wealth (and the good which it brought) in the scales of someone other than himself, while Allah will make him enter into the hell-fire and will cause his inheritors to enter into Paradise!”⁹

In a tradition from Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) in regards to the commentary of the verse which reads:

كَذَلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسْرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

“Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them...”¹⁰

he stated:

هُوَ الرَّجُلُ يَدْعُ الْمَالَ لَا يَنْفَقُهُ فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ بُخْلًا، ثُمَّ يَمُوتُ فَيَدَعُهُ لِمَنْ يَعْمَلُ بِهِ فِي طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ فِي مَعْصِيَتِهِ.

“This is in regards to the person who saved his wealth and due to his stinginess, did not spend it in the obedience of Allah and then dies and leaves that wealth behind (for his heirs) who may spend it either in the obedience of Allah or in His disobedience and transgression.”¹¹

The Imam continued and said:

فَإِذَا صَرَفَهُ فِي طَرِيقِ إِطَاعَةِ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى فَسَيَرَاهُ صَاحِبُهُ فِي مِيزَانِ
أَعْمَالٍ غَيْرِهِ وَيَتَحَسَّرُ عَلَيْهِ لِأَنَّ الْمَالَ كَانَ مَالَهُ، وَإِذَا صَرَفَهُ فِي مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ
فَسَيَكُونُ سَبَبًا لِتَقْوِيَتِهِ عَلَى الذَّنْبِ وَتَكُونُ الْعُقُوبَةُ وَالْحَسْرَةُ نَصِيبَهُ أَيْضًا.

“If the person (who inherits the wealth) spends it in the way of obedience of Allah, Glory and Greatness be to Him, then the person whose wealth it was (who died and left it for inheritance) shall see the reward of that in the scales of another person. He will show remorse since that wealth was his wealth (which he gave up to his inheritors who have done good with it).

However if he (the person who inherits the money) spends that wealth in disobedience to Allah and that wealth gave the person (who inherited it) the ability and strength to sin, then that person (who died and left the money in inheritance to others) will also show remorse and it will also be a punishment for him (since in this instance the person who left the money behind in inheritance will be punished as it was his to start out with and through leaving it for others, he helped them perform sins).”¹²

Contentment in the Islamic Narrations

1. It has been narrated that Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said:

الْقَنَاعَةُ مَالٌ لَا يَنْفَدُ.

“Contentment is a wealth which shall not diminish”¹³

2. It has been narrated that Imam ‘Ali b. Husayn al-Sajjad (as) said:

مَنْ قَنَعَ شَبَعَ وَ مَنْ لَمْ يَقْنَعْ لَا يَشْبَعُ.

“Whoever shows contentment will be satiated and whoever does not show contentment (with what he has) will never become satiated (no matter how much he gets).”¹⁴

3. Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has stated the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

طُوبَى لِمَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَكَانَ عَيْشُهُ كَفَافًا.

“Congratulations be upon the person who submits himself and who leads his life according to his needs (and is not extravagant).”¹⁵

4. The final Messenger of Allah (S) has said:

فَقِيرٌ كُلٌّ وَمَنْ يَطْمَعُ، غَنِيٌّ كُلٌّ وَمَنْ يَقْنَعُ.

“The person who always desires more is (truly) the neediest of people while the person who is content (with what he has) is (truly) the richest of people.”¹⁶

1. Summary in regards to “Meeting with Allah” (لقاء الله): This phrase which has been mentioned in the Noble Qur’an is usually in regards to the Resurrection, however since there is no meaning associated with witnessing Allah (SwT) with the (five) senses due to the fact that He has no body or physical presence, thus what does this mean?

Some of the commentators of the Quran have been forced to state that this phrase actually has something appended to it however it is taken as being understood and not expressly mentioned. Thus, they claim that this phrase actually means 'لقاء' لِقَاءُ اللَّهِ or 'Meeting (or attaining) the reward of Allah' or 'Meeting the Angels of Allah'.

However, we can take the word “لقاء” in this tradition to refer to the true meaning of 'meeting', however with the eyes of the heart since on the Resurrection, all of the veils (which exist between a person and His creator) shall be removed and the greatness of Allah (SwT) and His signs shall be made manifest and clearer than at all other times for the people to see.

Mankind shall reach to the status of an 'inner witnessing' and 'sight with the heart' and each person's cognizance and righteous actions shall permit him to reach to higher stations of this 'inner witnessing' on the plain of Resurrection.

In his Tafsir of the Quran under verse 44 of Surat al-Ahzab, Fakhruddin Razi, has a very interesting explanation which can be combined with our explanation given. He states, “Due to being drowned in the material and physical affairs of the transient world and the struggles to provide for his life, the human being is usually negligent of Allah (SwT).

However, on the Resurrection when all of the mental diversions are removed from the person, he will go towards the Lord of the Universe with all of his presence and composure – and this is the meaning of “لقاء الله.” (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 17, pg. 358 to 359)

2. Usulul Kafi, vol. 1 pg. 97

3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 13, pg. 182

4. Surat al-Dharyat (51), verse 4

5. Shaykh Bahai, Mitahul Falah, Translated by Ali b. taifur Bastami, pp. 11 to 13.

6. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 23, pg. 544 to 545 as related in Majma al-Bayan, vol. 9, pg. 265.

7. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, pg. 141, no. 17. [It should be noted that the meaning of 'ذهب' is gold while the verb 'ذهب' in Arabic means to go or leave and similarly, the word 'فضة' is silver while the verb 'فاض' refers to an overflow or an abundance and thus, the Imam has actually done a play on words and used these two words in a very interesting and yet truthful manner. – Tr.]

8. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, pg. 182

9. Ibid., vol. 73, pg. 20

10. Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 176

11. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, pg. 142
12. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 27, pp. 319 to 322
13. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, pg. 344
14. Ibid., vol. 8, pg. 135
15. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 140
16. Jami al-Akhbar, pg. 126

Discourse 39: The Best of Actions

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: يَا عَلِيُّ، سَيِّدُ الْأَعْمَالِ ثَلَاثُ خِصَالٍ عِظَامٍ: إِنْصَافُكَ النَّاسَ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ وَ مُوَاسَاةُكَ الْأَخِ فِي اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَذِكْرُكَ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) has said, “O ‘Ali! The greatest of actions are the following three: Your acting in fairness with people more than with your own self; showing equality with your brother for Allah the Noble and Grand; remembering Allah, Glory and Greatness be to Him, in all states.”

In this tradition, the Prophet (S) has explained the greatest of actions in which the issues of fairness, equality and self-sacrifice and their relationship with Allah (SwT) have been elucidated upon. Of course, in regards to the first and second issue, the relationship is between the people and the person performing the action.

1. “Acting in fairness with people more than with your own self...” can be better understood from the saying which tell us, “Like for yourself that which you would like for others...”

This means that the rights which are on your neck in regards to other people must be fulfilled just as you would like others to fulfill the rights which you have upon them.

The word 'إنصاف' comes from the root 'نصف' and means that a person divides something equally in two, and then half of it is kept for himself while the other portion is given to others. Thus the term “dividing one's wealth” is actually an allusion to showing justice with one's wealth – a person keeps half of what he has for himself and gives the other half to someone else.

In regards to this issue, it makes no difference if we speak in regards to societal rights or individual rights, just as the word 'قسط' refers to the act of dealing or spreading something and giving a return or profit (of course this word too refers to a person having a share of the profit while giving half of it to

another person.)

Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said:

الْإِنصَافُ أَفْضَلُ الْفَضَائِلِ.

“Equity is the greatest of eminent deeds.”¹

With this said and in order to make this issue clearer, we present the following example. If we study the source of a majority of the troubles within society, we see that all of them return back to one thing which is 'love of self'. This characteristic leads a person to want everything for himself, assuming that others have no right to have a share in anything. Thus in the end, the 'love of self' would actually be a source for encroachment upon the rights and possessions of others, pride and jealousy. Truly, 'love of self' is the source of all corruption and is the mother of all calamities.

Question: If 'love of self' does not manifest in a person and an individual ends up not 'loving his self' then he will definitely not strive to attain anything in this life. For example, obeying Allah (SwT) is for the salvation of the self; attaining knowledge is for a person to become a scholar. Thus in summary, all struggles and endeavors stem from the 'love of self'. If this trait of 'love of self' cannot exist, then no one would put forth efforts in life! Therefore, in summary we can state that the 'love of self' is actually the driving force for a person. Hence, how can you claim that 'love of self' is the source of all sins!?

Answer: The 'love of self', when taken to an extreme is the mother of all calamities. Sometimes a person develops such a love of his self that he forgets about other people, and this is what is the source of corruption, pride, miserliness, etc... and becomes the greatest of spiritual veils for a person while on the path towards Allah (SwT).

In summary, if a person pays excess attention to himself then he will definitely not be able to (spiritually) see Allah (SwT) since the trait of individualism is the opposite of keeping Allah (SwT) in mind and heart.

Thus, the outcome of this extreme and excessive form of 'love of self' manifests itself in the trait of not showing equity to others and this is the greatest impediment in the advancement of a person.

Therefore, if we wish to be the complete manifestation of these words of the Prophet (S), then we must, even when it comes to discussions of knowledge, show equity and fairness. For example, if something comes into my mind and the theory or belief is something which I strongly believe in – even if the proofs for that thought or belief are weak however another person says something different and proofs which he brings forth to prove his point are very strong, if I was not to show equity in regards to this discussion of knowledge, then I would definitely not pay any attention to what this other person is saying to me! Thus in this example, I have shown that there is no justice present in my discussions and studies...

Within scholarly discussions, the only time that a person is able to reach to the truth contained of an issue is when he shows equity.

When we sit down to review the proofs of those who offer statements opposed to what we believe, we realize that the person who has brought forth these beliefs has the same passion for his theories just as we have for our own. That other person has also examined his beliefs and theories from all angles before reaching his conclusion.

Some of the great scholars, and even our own teachers, showed great equity and fairness in their scholarly disputes, arguments and debates. In regards to the life of the late Shaykh 'Abdul Karim hairi, the founder of the Sacred Theological Seminary of Qum it has been narrated that one day he brought up a scholarly discussion and began to defend his belief in such a way that all of his students were completely in agreement and believed in it.

In his next session, he brought forth an opinion that was diametrically opposed to what he had mentioned the previous day and again, carried his discussion in such a manner that it convinced all of his students thus, the discussion of the previous day was made weak and insubstantial. On the third day, he came with another angle on the discussion and...

The purpose of us citing this example is to show the way he acted in relating the opinions of other people.

Therefore, when it comes to the various beliefs which people have, one must show justice to the varying opinions such that it could be stated that he is actually bringing forth his own words and thoughts (and not that of others) and this is something which can not be accomplished merely through words. Rather, it must be done through one's deeds and actions!

Thus, equity means that all differences are removed and this can be done in regards to scholarly discussions, and also in regards to societal issues.

If people displayed equity and fairness, then we would not see all of the cases in the court system as most, if not all of the lawsuits, stem from the fact that each person is simply looking out for what is best for himself and is not considering what is in the best interest of others. It is for this reason that fights and disputes break out between people.

However if the spirit of fairness and equity ruled supreme, then these conflicts would not be there! If fairness and equity existed amongst people, then all forms of disagreement would be removed and the intellectual and societal relations between people would be made firm.

There is a point which should be mentioned here which is that before the issue of ethics possesses a scholarly side to it, it has a practical and applied aspect. By this we mean that scholarly discussions are read and then understood while ethical issues and injunctions are not topics which are merely

comprehended – rather, they are practical and are things which must be enacted and practiced in life.

The rules of driving a car can be taken as an example. Even if hundreds of books are studied on this topic, it will have no impact and a person will still not get his driver's licence as he must practice driving a real car before he can get his license. Islamic akhlaq and morals are the same – they must be practiced and put into motion such that they become ingrained in the spirit of the person and become second nature.

For example, if this issue of equity is put into practice and at one instance we see that one of our friends is speaking the truth on a particular issue, we should not remain quiet – rather, we should speak up and confirm that he is indeed speaking the truth. If we were to repeat this ten times and every time, were to tell him that he is speaking the truth, then it is only in this instance that this issue (which he is speaking about and about which others may be arguing with him about) may see closure.

Therefore, it makes sense to see why the Prophet (S) has considered equity and fairness as being one of the best actions of a person!

Another point which must also be mentioned is that within an Islamic society, opposite to that which is seen and is common amongst the people which is the taking of their rights (from others), we must be ready to give others their rights.

By this we mean that rather than the person who is owed something grabbing the person who owes him something by the neck and forcing him to give him what is owed, when the time comes to repay back the person whom one borrowed something from, the one who has indebted should actually go running in search of that person to give him back his right!

The act of forcefully taking one's property or thing which has been borrowed is not some great attainment or source of pride for the person!

Therefore in summary, within the Islamic society, it is not the duty for the person who has loaned or given something out to search for his right to be given back, rather, it is the duty of the person who is indebted to go and find the one who he is indebted to and give his rights back to him.

2. The tradition continues and we then read, “...your showing equality with your brother for Allah the Noble and Grand...” and this is nothing other than the distribution and division of blessings conferred upon a person.

In this sentence, we see that the word “أخ” or 'brother' has been used and as we know, one of the minimum conditions for brotherhood is that of equality and the maximum level of brotherhood is self-sacrifice. The Qur`an tells us that:

وَيُؤْتُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

“...and they prefer (other) before themselves though poverty may afflict them.”²

Thus, showing equality to other people; dividing the Divinely conferred bounties and gifts to others; taking the less-fortunate and deprived people under your care and including them within your care, are all considered as the greatest of actions.

The phrase “في الله عز وجل” or “...for Allah, the Noble and Grand...” is a very important phrase since it shows us that brotherhood is of various types:

1. True brotherhood (through birth rites);
2. Close friends and fellowship with another person;
3. Brotherhood in which the relationship of a person with another is a Divinely and Celestially designed relationship. By this we mean that it is through a religious linkage, a faith link and a Taqwa-based relationship that brotherhood is established between individuals.

It is the third form of brotherhood which the tradition under review refers to when it gives us the second action to be carried out that such a brotherhood and equality must exist.

Of course, in regards to equity and self-sacrifice (of what one has) there is much which can be said, however it is enough to state that just as has been mentioned as an ethical admonition as has been referred to in this saying, it is the leader (Sayyid) of all other actions!

In regards to self-sacrifice, there are various discussions which have been mentioned of which we shall discuss the following.

1. What is 'self-sacrifice'?

Self-sacrifice simply means that a person wants others to also be granted bounties and blessings – even if this means that he is prevented from these same bounties. Such a person is even ready and willing to give whatever he has to other people and to not make use of the bounties which he has. This grand station is referred to as 'self-sacrifice' and happens to be one of the most important humanistic characteristics.³

Examples of Self-Sacrifice as seen within the Family of the

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Ibne 'Abbas has stated, "One day, Hasan (as) and Husayn (as) had become sick. The Prophet (S), along with a group of his companions came to see them and said to 'Ali (as), 'O' Abul Hasan! It would be good if you made an oath to Allah (SwT) in regards to your two sons being cured of their illness.'

'Ali (as), Fatima (as) and Fiddha (as) who was their assistant, made an oath to Allah (SwT) that if the two boys were cured, then they would fast for three days (according to some of the traditions, Hasan (as) and Husayn (as) also said that they made the same oath to Allah (SwT) and that they too would fast if they were cured).

Not even a short time passed when these two children became cured of their sickness and thus, the entire family was then obligated to fast for the three days to fulfill their oath. However, upon looking in the house, it was found that there was very little food to be eaten.

'Ali (as) took a loan of some barley and gave it to his wife Fatima (as) who took one third of it, and on the first day of fasting, made it into flour and baked bread from it.

At the time of breaking their fast on the first day, a beggar came to the door of the house and said, 'Peace be upon you O' Ahlu'l Bayt of Muhammad (S). I am a poor person from amongst the poor Muslims. Please give me some food. May Allah grant you the foods of Paradise in return for this noble deed!'

The entire family put the call of this beggar in front of their own needs and each one gave their portion of bread to him and thus ended up breaking their fast that night with only water.

On the second night at the time of breaking their fast – which was with that same barley bread made by Fatima (as), an orphan came to their door. On the second night too, the family of the Prophet (S) showed their self-sacrifice and gave whatever food they had to the orphan and once again, broke their fast with water.

The following day they also kept the fast. On this night, a war captive came to their door at the time of sunset and requested food and thus, the Ahlu'l Bayt also gave them whatever food they had at home – that same barley bread.

When the morning of the fourth day came, 'Ali (as) took Hasan (as) and Husayn (as) to see the Prophet (S). When the Prophet (S) saw the state they were in and their intense shaking due to their intense hunger pains he said to them, 'This state which I see you in is something very hard for me to bear.'

He then got up and all of them went to the house of Fatima (as). The entire family saw her in the prayer niche (mihrab), engaged in worship while, due to the pains of hunger, her stomach had gone in and her eyes were deeply set. At seeing this, the Prophet (S) became deeply troubled.

It was at this moment that Jibra'il (as) came down and said, 'O' Muhammad! Allah greets you over having such a family.' At this point, the chapter of the Qur'an known as "Suratul Insan" was revealed!4

3. Continuing on in the tradition under review, the Prophet (S) has then said, "...and your remembrance of Allah, Glory and Greatness be to him in all states."

In this part of the tradition, we must point out that the phrase which reads "...in all states" is one which carries a lot of meaning to it just as the word 'ذِكْرُ' or 'remembrance of Allah' is also very meaningful.

The remembrance (of Allah (SwT)) has three segments to it: the tongue (verbal), heart (spiritual) and the body parts (practical and physical). Thus, when a person wants to do something, he must be vigilant and must see where the pleasure of Allah (SwT) resides. Thus, he must consider that Allah (SwT) is watching him at all times and in all states.

In some of the traditions, it has been mentioned that:

وَلَيْسَ هُوَ قَوْلٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ.

"(The meaning of the remembrance of Allah) is other than the mere saying of 'There is no creature worthy of worship except for Allah and Allah is greater than what can be compared to Him.'"

Rather, the meaning of the remembrance of Allah (SwT) is that a person is constantly in His remembrance.

Thus, the meaning of "(remembering Allah) ... in every state..." means that one keeps Him in mind whether at times of victory or defeat; safety or danger; sickness and health. It does not mean that when one is in a state of happiness and jubilation that he forgets Allah (SwT) and only at times of need that he remembers Him and runs after Him since this is something which even the polytheistic 'Arabs used to do:

وَإِذَا رَكَبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

"And when they board the ship then they call upon Allah, sincere to Him in their faith..."5

Thus we see that these people are sincere in their faith, however this is nothing to be proud of! Therefore, the meaning of the remembrance of Allah (SwT) is the actual remembrance of Allah (SwT) in all states.

In summary it can be stated that the state of forgetfulness should not lead a person to fall into neglect in

regards to the Creator of the Universe and the remembrance should not be such that it is only a verbal remembrance at times of needs and necessities of one's daily life.

The remembrance of Allah (SwT) is the greatest alchemy and the spring of life; it is that which enlivens the heart of a person; it is the thing which protects one from spiritual slips; it is the tree of true faith; it satiates a person's inner being and gives him glory! The remembrance of Allah (SwT) is the food of the soul of the person and is the thing which repulses the Satan!

Truly, this is something which we have taken lightly whereas it is actually a valuable treasure which carries great importance to it and is available for everyone to make use of. However, we have all fallen into neglect in regards to His remembrance, just as the Qur`an states that:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبِ

“Now surely with the remembrance of Allah are the hearts put at rest.”⁶

Thus, the tranquility and serenity which comes in the heart and soul of a person is due to the remembrance of Allah.

Of course, the reasons for a person turning away from the remembrance of Allah (SwT) are many and just as we see, in every step which he takes in this life and with everything that he comes across, his mind becomes preoccupied with other than Allah (SwT).

Thus, we must practice the act of remembrance of Allah (SwT) to such an extent that we are able to continuously be in a state of remembrance of Allah (SwT) – even when we are busy with other acts in the world. Even in this state of working in the transient world, we must remember Allah (SwT) and actually in principal, we must start out all of our actions with the remembrance of Allah (SwT) as this actually grants us the ability to constantly be in His remembrance.

It is not necessary that one shows off in this act of remembering Allah (SwT) – just the heart repeating 'O' Allah' is more than enough; when a person goes to sit down in a gathering he should say 'O' Allah'; when he stands up to leave he should say:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ

“Glory be to Your Lord the Lord of Greatness from that which others ignorantly attribute to Him...”⁷

When a person goes into his car or any other form of transportation, he should say:

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا مُقْرِنِينَ...

“All praise belongs to Allah who has made this means of transportation subservient to us and had it not been for Him, we would never have been able to have such a thing...”⁸

When the person reaches to his destination, he should say:

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى السَّلَامَةِ.

“All Praise belongs to Allah for safety (and reaching our destination unharmed).”

When we start to eat, we must remember the name of Allah (SwT) and say:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ

'In the name of Allah'; when we finish out food we must thank Him and say:

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

'Thanks be to Allah (for this)'.¹

Thus in summary, in every state that we find ourselves in, we must remember Allah (SwT) such that this act becomes a part of ourselves and an intrinsic habit. This is truly a very important issue as the remembrance of Allah (SwT) actually acts as insurance for a person.

There are some people who state that, “We have yet to develop a state of presence of the heart in the Salat and to be able to remember Him.” However we state that “There is no difference between being in the state of Salat and being outside the state of Salat.” Rather, we must always be in the remembrance of Allah (SwT) and must realize that as much as we remember Allah (SwT), in that same amount shall we be closer to success. Conversely, the further we are from the remembrance of Allah (SwT) and negligent of this issue, the more we shall feel the lure of the devils.

Question: How does the heart attain tranquility through the remembrance of Allah (SwT)?

Answer: The states of anxiety and insecurity have always been and will always be the greatest sources

of tribulation in the life of humanity and the things which these traits stem from in the individual and societal life of a person are completely observable.

The state of tranquility has always been one of the lost, important traits for human society. The person will knock on every door until he is able to find this all-important characteristic. If the struggles and endeavors of humanity throughout the ages were gathered together in their search for tranquility – from both the correct and permitted and false means which they have sought out – they would definitely fill up a large book!

There are some scholars who have stated that, “At the beginning of an outbreak (of a disease), some sick people who had a contagious disease – out of every ten people who had this disease and 'apparently' ended up dying due to it, it was noticed that a majority of them actually died due to the fear and uneasiness they felt. Thus in reality, only a small number of these people truly died due to the sickness which they had!”

Truly, the two states of tranquility and apprehension play a very important role in the health and sickness of a person and the entire society and in the success and failure of the individual. In addition, there is not a single thing which can cool this state within a person and it is for this reason that numerous books have been written whose main topic has been on fear and the ways to combat this and the way to acquire tranquility of the heart!

Human history is full of sorrowful scenes in which people have run after all sorts of things in order to attain tranquility. However, in whichever valley they have stepped into, they have taken to various addictions to help them cope with their sorrow.

However the Qur'an, in one short, yet meaningful sentence has told us that the most assured and closest path: “Know that through the remembrance of Allah shall your hearts and minds be put at rest and ease.”

In order for this Qur'anic reality to be made clear, please pay attention to the following explanation.

The Causes of Worry and Anxiety

1. Sometimes, distress and anxiety are related to a dark and uncertain future which lie ahead of a person and manifest itself to him. The possibility of blessings leaving a person, falling into the grip of the enemies, weakness, sickness, inability to work, desperation and his need of others all result in a person being put through mental trauma.

However, true faith in Allah (SwT) the All-Able and High, the Merciful and Compassionate, the Creator who has taken it upon Himself to be sufficient for all of His servants is able to remove all forms of worry and anxiety and grant a person tranquility since we are helpless in regards to the future events, however Allah has the power, ability and mercy (to help us).

2. Sometimes the bleak past would make an individual busy within himself and this would cause him anxiety. Showing grief over sins that were committed in the past, feeling remorse from one's inabilities and past slips would cause a person worry.

However, paying attention to Allah (SwT) the All-Forgiving, the One who accepts repentance and is the Merciful would grant tranquility to a person!

In reality, these traits of Allah (SwT) would convey the following thoughts to the person that, "Take your appeals of culpability to Him, seek forgiveness for your past acts and make amends for what you did in the past since He is the Forgiving and the One who will make accept the amends for your misdeeds."

3. Weakness and an inability in the face of natural occurrences and sometimes even in the face of enemies – both internal and external, makes a person upset and insecure such that he may think to himself, "What am I able to do in the war against all of these powerful opponents? What can I do in the face of other challenges and struggles?"

However when one remembers Allah (SwT) and begins to rely upon His power and mercy – the Power which is the greatest of all powers such that there is not a single other thing which has the potential to stand up to Him, then the person's heart would become at ease and he would say to himself, "Yes, I am not alone. I am under the shadow of the Mercy and Assistance of Allah (SwT) – the never ending Source of Power."

4. Sometimes the source of grief, insecurity and that which pains a person is his feeling that his life is worthless and that the goals which he has set for himself are insignificant.

However, the one who has true faith in Allah (SwT) and has accepted that traversing the path of perfection is the greatest goal and knows everything which transpires in life must be experienced while on the path of perfection, would not feel that his life is worthless, that he is without goals, nor that he is an uncertain wanderer, filled with distress.

5. Another reason for grief and insecurity is that sometimes in order for one to reach his a goal, a person may need to bear difficulties. However at the same time, he does not see a single person who encourages or appreciates the troubles and difficulties which he has gone through. This feeling of ingratitude would cause him great stress and would cause him to sink into a deeper state of anguish and insecurity.

However when he senses that other people are aware of his struggle, value his efforts and are ready to reward him, then there would not be any room for grief and insecurity.

6. Having bad thoughts of others and empty delusions is another reason which leads to insecurity and grief and this is one of the things which a large number of people see in their life. However, how is it possible for us to deny that focusing our attention on Allah (SwT) and His never ending grace, His

commandment to us of maintaining good thoughts and suppositions of other people – which is the responsibility for every single person who claims to possess true faith, would not remove this state of grief and trepidation which is inside a person and would cause him to have tranquility and certainty in his life!?

7. Worship of the transient world and infatuation with the gold and glitter of the life of the material world we are living in is one of the greatest reasons why a person faces distress and insecurity in his life.

This point is apparent to such an extent that sometimes if a person is not able to find a particular color of clothing or a color of shoes, hat or some other item of apparel in the shopping centres or any other item which he uses in his daily life, that the thoughts of such a person who worships this transient world may become so engulfed and enraptured that he would spend hours, days or even weeks in a state of insecurity and anxiousness until he can find what he wants!

However, true faith in Allah (SwT) and constant focus on the spiritual freedom which a true believer possesses – in which he is constantly enraptured in austerity and devotion to Allah (SwT) and is not bound by the clutches of the gold and glitter which accompany the material world, would bring an end to such feelings of insecurity and anxiety.

When the soul of a person reaches to that level of spiritual expanse that just like ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) can say:

إِنَّ دُنْيَاكُمْ لَأَهْوَنُ عِنْدِي مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ فِي فَمِ جَرَادَةٍ تَقْضُمُهَا.

“Surely your world has as much value to me as the leaf of a tree which is in the mouth of a locust who is chewing upon it.”⁹

then at that point how is it possible that having grief or fear due to the material world or losing it from one's grip would cause one's soul to be affected and to cause a sense of grief and insecurity in his heart and mind!?

8. Another important factor which leads to grief and insecurity is the fear of death as this is something which always causes a person's soul trouble. Since death is something which can strike a person at any age especially at the times of sickness, wars, insecurity in a country and other such things, thus this sense of insecurity and grief is a general trait and is seen by all people.

However, in the Islamic world–outlook, if death meant annihilation, inexistence and the end of all things – just as the materialists of the world believe, then this grief and anxiety would be completely in place for us to experience! In addition, it would be completely inline for a Muslim to be frightened of such a death which is the end of all things and brings closure of all of his desires and wishes.

However, anytime a person comes under the shade of true faith in Allah (SwT), then at this point, he would consider death as being a bridge to a wider, more spacious, and spiritually higher world. Passing through the stage of “death” would be just as passing from the jail cell into the free society.

At this point, there would be no meaning to grief and anxiety! Rather, when such a death comes while on the path of fulfilling one's responsibilities, then at this time, death is something that is liked and anticipated!

Of course, the reasons for grief and anxiety are not limited to only these. Rather, we can list many more reasons why people feel grief and stress in their lives. However we must accept the fact that a majority of the cause of this grief and anxiety are related to one of the eight reasons listed above.

When we see the reasons for anxiety actually melting away and being removed when one brings about true faith in Allah (SwT), then we will definitely confirm the fact that the remembrance of Allah (SwT) is that which brings tranquility to the hearts:

أَلَا بَدِكْرَ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Now surely with the remembrance of Allah are the hearts put at ease.” !

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1. Ghurur al-hikm, Saying 28
 2. Surat al-Hashr (59), verse 9
 3. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 9, pg. 326
 4. Ibid., vol. 25, pp. 343 to 344
 5. Surat al-Ankabut, verse 65
 6. Surat al-Rad, verse 28
 7. Surat al-Saffat, verse 257
 8. Surat al-Zukhruf, verse 13
 9. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 75, pg. 359

Discourse 40: Three Important and Fate Deciding Traits in the Life of a Person

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: يَا عَلِيُّ، ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ لَمْ يَتَمَّ عَمَلُهُ: وَرَعٌ يَحْجُزُهُ عَنْ مَعَاصِي اللَّهِ عَزَّ

وَجَلَّ وَ خُلُقٌ يُدَارِي بِهِ النَّاسِ وَ حِلْمٌ يَرُدُّ بِهِ جَهْلَ الْجَاهِلِ.

The Prophet Muhammad (S) has said, “O ‘Ali! If the following three traits are not found within a person, then his actions shall not be complete: Wara’ which prevents him from committing transgressions against Allah, the Noble and Grand; noble moral traits through which he acts with tolerance with the people; and forbearance through which he repels the ignorance of the ignorant person.”

This tradition is specifically geared towards those who work alongside others and have regular contact with people in their day to day activities.

In the beginning of the tradition, the Prophet (S) has stated that, “If these three characteristics are not present in a person, then there shall be no prosperity in his actions, he shall not have any positive outcome in his dealings, and his entire program (of life) shall be destroyed.”

In reality, these three characteristics are issues that need to be reviewed and studied in detail – a person's relationship with Allah (SwT); His relationship with his friends; and his relationship with his enemies.

Part 1: The relationship between a person and Allah (SwT) is summarized in: “...Wara’ which prevents him from committing transgressions against Allah, the Noble and Grand...”

There are some scholars who have gone through great troubles to define the word Wara’ and its scope, however to keep this discussion brief we state that Wara’ is a state which results in a person keeping himself away from performing sins and this is the same state which we refer to as being 'just' (possessing the state of ‘Adalat). The habit or second-nature of Wara’ does not guarantee 100% protection (from sins), since if it was a 100% guarantee, then that would result in complete ‘Ismah – immunity from all sins.

We can better explain this issue by presenting the following example. For some people, the road to performing sins is a smooth and paved route which which they are able to traverse with no difficulty. However, there are others who find obstacles while traveling on the road – things such as barbed wire, deep valleys, rough rocks and other such things which make it difficult for them to travel the road of sins and actually prevent them from moving on this path.

The state of Wara’ are the obstacles which prevent a person from committing sins. In other words, the path of sins is one which the people of Wara’ find very difficulty to travel upon and they find themselves faced with numerous impediments as their inner strength seeks to pull them away from this road – the state of being of Wara’ and ‘Adalah.

Question: How does a person know if he possesses the habit and second-nature of ‘Adalah – justice?

Answer: It is actually very easy to recognize this trait since:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ بِصِيرَةٍ وَ لَوْ أَلْقَىٰ مَعَاذِيرَهُ.

“Surely mankind is witness over his own self even if he puts up excuses.”¹

If in the face of being able and needing to lie, backbite, earn wealth from forbidden sources, etc... a person sees that there is a force which is preventing him from these things, then he should know that this hidden force is nothing other than Wara' and Taqwa.

However if he is free in his actions and if his eyes, ears, tongue and all other parts of his body are without limits and restraints, then it is clear that he has no Wara' and Taqwa! Without doubt, the person who does not possess Taqwa will not see fruition in any of his endeavours.

Although it is possible that such a person may temporarily be successful in some of his endeavors, however in the end, he will fall flat on his face in shame! Thus, in addition to having knowledge, we must also seek to acquire Taqwa and this is the first responsibility which all of us have.

In his work, Mustamsik al-'Urwatul Wuthqa, the late Ayatullah al-hakim stated that, “The level of Taqwa which a Marja' Taqlid must possess is different than the Taqwa which the 'common people' must have. The 'Adalah which he (the Marja') possesses must be at a very high level and if not, then he will fall prey to sins, since the more the knowledge and status a person acquires within the society, the more the danger of him committing sins.

Thus in summary, in the same proportion that the pull towards sins becomes stronger (through a higher status in the society), the more the power of refraining from these sins must become stronger in the person.”

Part 2: The relationship between a person and his friends: “...noble moral traits through which he acts with tolerance with the people...”

As we know, everyone has his or her own taste and style, and normally they can be grouped under the following thought:

صَاحِبُ الْحَاجَةِ لَا يُرَىٰ إِلَّا حَاجَتَهُ.

“The person who has a need will not see anything other than the need which he has (and having that fulfilled).”

Thus, when a difficulty arises, a person would not see the difficulties of anyone other than himself and would actually expect that everyone should focus their attention on him and his problems!

The person who wants to be considered as one of the leaders of the society has a Divinely-granted calling which can not be fulfilled except through his noble ethical traits. In other words, such a person must be lenient with the people and must be ready to bear his friends, their expectations and their harassment of him since in this situation, he must observe patience and must bear the difficulties.

The person who is granted a higher status in the society would realize that such an issue would be seen more in his life and it is just like that person who grabs the hand of the scholars and leaders of the society to kiss it. However when he is told not to grab the hand, he would say, "I simply want to kiss his hand (out of respect for him)." When they are further told that if they grab the person's hand in that fashion that they may break it, they would retort and state, 'It doesn't matter if it breaks! It is he who wanted to reach to this station (and thus, he must be ready to put up with these inconveniences!'

We must learn how to be lenient and this can best be seen in the lives of the true servants of Allah – the Infallibles (as). It was they, who in the face of evil, showed goodness to the opposing party and treated them with a good demeanor resulting in their opponents being humbled and submissive!

With this said, we must learn how to interact with people – and what better way than through the conduct of the Noble Prophet of Islam (S).

An Example of the Etiquette of the Prophet (S)

Even though the victory of the Prophet of Islam (S) was through the help and assistance of the Divine, however there are many apparent factors that were also at play – one of the most important of these being the ethical traits of the Prophet (S) that attracted others to him.

He possessed such lofty humanistic characteristics and noble ethical traits that even the hard-headed enemies were captivated by his morals and were forced to submit to him! In addition, those close to him were also attracted to him. If we refer to the etiquette and morals of the Prophet (S) as being his miracle, then we would definitely not have overstated the fact!

An example of this ethical miracle can be seen in the victory (fath) of Makkah. When the blood-thirsty and revenge-seeking polytheists were working crimes and transgressions (against the Muslims) and had been fighting against the faith of Islam and even the Prophet (S) himself for many years, were put face to face with the Muslims and were finally thrown in the grips of the believers, we see that the Noble Prophet (S), going against what all of his friends and enemies thought he would do, ordered the Muslims to forgive all of the polytheists of Makkah – thus, all of their crimes were forgotten! It is due to this fact that this verse of the Qur'an became manifest during the lifetime of the Prophet (S):

يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا

“And you see people entering into the faith of Allah inn groups...”

The books of tafsir, history and even the story books are full of events in relation to the good demeanor, forgiveness, mercy, altruism, self-sacrifice and consciousness of Allah (SwT) which the Prophet (S) displayed. However it is enough for us to state that in the tradition from Husayn b. ‘Ali B it has been mentioned that he said, “I asked my father the Commander of the Faithful ‘Ali b. Abi Talib B about the characteristics of the Prophet (S) and his etiquette and my father, in a very detailed manner, explained to me by stating...”

In this long tradition, it has been mentioned that, “The Prophet (S) was always cheerful and smiling with those whom he was in the company with, and was always found to be gentle and soft-spoken. He was never seen to be angry, hard-hearted, rude, foul speaking, picking faults of others, nor excessively praising anyone. Not a single person was ever made to feel hopeless by him and anyone who entered his house did not leave disparaged.

There are three things that he kept away from himself: arguing with others, speaking too much and entering into things which were none of his business.

There are two things which he kept away from in relation to the people: he never ridiculed or rebuked people and he never went forth to seek out the slips, hidden mistakes and errors of the people.

It is only in relation to that area in which the Divine reward of Allah (SwT) was possible did he speak. When he spoke, his words had such an impact on the hearts of the people that everyone present would remain quiet and did not move an inch and it is only when he stopped speaking and remained quiet did they begin to speak.

However it is also seen that while in his presence, those around him did not indulge in arguments or wrangling... Anytime a stranger or un-aware person began to speak with anger and asked him for something, he would bear that person's attitude with patience and would tell his companions, 'Anytime you see a person who has some need, ensure that you fulfill it for him.' He never cut anyone's speech short and waited for the person to finish what he wanted to say.”

Yes! If the noble ethical traits and Divinely granted persona of the Prophet (S) was not there, then the backwards, ignorant ‘Arab nation and the angry, hard-lined ‘Arabs would not have come into the faith of Islam and would have been the manifestation of the verse which reads:

لَا نَفْضُوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ

“...they would have dispersed from around you (Muhammad)...”

How good it would be that this Islamic etiquette is today, brought back to life and instilled within the life of every single Muslim, the greatness which is exemplified in the morals and etiquette of the Prophet (S)!

In this regards, the narrations – whether in regards to the Prophet (S) or the general responsibilities of all Muslims – are replete with words of guidance. In this section, we shall narrate some of these traditions as have been mentioned in Majma’ al-Bayan:

1. It has been narrated that the Prophet (S) said:

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ.

“Surely I was appointed (to a Prophet) only to perfect the noble ethical traits.”

In this tradition we see that one of the main goals of the appointment of the Prophet (S) was to perfect and complete the great ethical values.

2. In another tradition from the same individual we read:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُ لِيُدْرِكَ بِحُسْنِ خُلُقِهِ دَرَجَةَ قَائِمِ اللَّيْلِ وَ صَائِمِ النَّهَارِ.

“Surely the true believer, through his noble ethical traits, shall reach to the stage similar to those who stand up in the night (in prayer) and fast during the day.”

3. The Prophet (S) has also stated that:

مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَثْقَلَ فِي الْمِيزَانِ مِنْ حُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ.

“There is not a single thing which is heavier in the scale of (goods) deeds than a good demeanor.”

4. The Prophet (S) has also told us that:

أَحَبُّكُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَحْسَنُكُمْ أَخْلَاقًا أَلْمَوْطُونَ أَكْنَافًا، الَّذِينَ يَأْلِفُونَ وَيُولِفُونَ. وَ
أَبْغَضُكُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَلْمَشَاوُونَ بِالنَّمِيمَةِ، أَلْمُفْرَقُونَ بَيْنَ الْإِخْوَانِ، أَلْمُلْتَمِسُونَ لِلْبِرَاءِ
الْعَثْرَاتِ.

“The most beloved of you to Allah is the one who has the best etiquette, the most humble and modest, is attracted to other people (due to the morals) and whom other people are also attracted to (due to his morals). The worst of you to Allah is the person who indulges in gossiping, makes divisions between brothers, and tries to find faults in those people who are free of error.”

5. The Messenger of Allah (S) has said:

إِنَّكُمْ لَنْ تَسْعُوا النَّاسَ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ فَسَعَوْهُمْ بِبَسْطِ الْوُجُوهِ وَحُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ.

“Surely you can never answer the needs of the people with your wealth, thus, answer them through your cheeriness and good demeanor.”²

6. It has been narrated from Imam Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) from his forefathers that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

عَلَيْكُمْ بِحُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ، فَإِنَّ حُسْنَ الْخُلُقِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ لَا مَحَالَةَ، وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَسُوءَ الْخُلُقِ، فَإِنَّ سُوءَ الْخُلُقِ فِي النَّارِ لَا مَحَالَةَ.

“I advise you to have a good demeanor since surely the person with a good demeanor shall necessarily be in Paradise and I advise you to refrain from having a negative demeanor since surely the person with negative ethical traits will necessarily be in the Hell-fire.”

7. Jabir b. ‘Abdullah al-Ansari has narrated from Imam Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Baqir (as) that he said:

تَبَسُّمُ الرَّجُلِ فِي وَجْهِ أَخِيهِ حَسَنَةٌ.

“A person smiling in the face of his brother is a good deed.”³

8. Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) has said:

أَلْتَبَسُّمُ فِي وَجْهِ الْمُؤْمِنِ الْغَرِيبِ مِنْ كَفَّارَةِ الذُّنُوبِ.

“Smiling in the face of the true believer who is a stranger (in a land which is not his home) is a penitence for one’s sins.”⁴

9. It has also been related from Imam ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) that:

بِشَاشَةِ الْوَجْهِ عَطِيَّةٌ ثَانِيَةٌ.

“A cheery face is a second gift.”⁵

3. The relationship between a person and his enemies: “...and forbearance through which he repels the ignorance of the ignorant person.”

Even in the face of ignorant people, a person must not show anger and rage since in Islam, anger and rage are limited to certain instances.

We must learn from the Qur’an as there are 114 chapters and all of them, with the exception of one (Suratul Tawbah) start with the words “al-Rahman” or the Most Merciful and “al-Rahim” or the Most Compassionate. Thus, in the face of our enemies, as much as we are able to do and without them taking unfair advantage of us, causing us difficulties and overpowering us, must show patience and forbearance.

Who is the Forbearing (halim) one?

In regards to the explanation of one who is halim, we are told that: “This is a person who, even though is able to do something, does not go forth to perform it before its time and does not make haste in regards to punishing a guilty person for his crime. He (SwT)s one who has a spiritually large soul and is in complete control over his emotions.”

In his work al-Mufradat, Raghib has stated that, “hilm means to maintain one's composure during a period of anger. Since this state of being comes forth through a person's intellect and cognizance, sometimes this trait (of forbearance) is referred to as a person's intellect and cognizance.”⁶

The halim and Forbearing Person in the Islamic Narrations

1. The Noble Prophet (S) was once passing by a group of people, amongst who was a very strong person who was able to lift large stones. Those around this man referred to him as a very strong person and were amazed at his weight lifting abilities.

The Noble Prophet (S) asked these people, “What is this gathering for?” The people replied that they were watching a very strong and powerful weightlifter. The Prophet said to them, “Should I not tell you of the one who is even stronger than this person?” The Prophet (S) then said:

رَجُلٌ سَبَّهُ فَحَلَّمَ عَنْهُ، فَغَلَبَ نَفْسَهُ، وَ غَلَبَ شَيْطَانَهُ وَ شَيْطَانَ صَاحِبِهِ.

“The person who is even stronger than this weightlifter is the one who when is cursed or sworn at, is able to show forbearance and is victorious over his own soul (and desires) and is victorious over his Satan while the Satan is alongside him.”

2. Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) has said:

لَا تُمَارِينَ حَلِيمًا وَ لَا سَفِيهًا فَإِنَّ الْحَلِيمَ يُقَلِّبُكَ وَ السَّفِيهَ يُؤْذِيكَ.

“Never argue with a person who has forbearance nor with a foolish person since surely the forbearing person shall take in whatever you tell him (and bear it), while the foolish person shall bug you for arguing with him.”⁷

Hilm (an extreme form of patience) and the Halim in the words of Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as)]

الْحَلِيمُ سِرَاجُ اللَّهِ يَسْتَضِيءُ بِهِ صَاحِبُهُ إِلَى جَوَارِهِ، وَ لَا يَكُونُ حَلِيمًا إِلَّا الْمُوَيْدُ
بِأَنْوَارِ الْمَعْرِفَةِ وَ التَّوْحِيدِ وَ الْحَلِيمُ يَدُورُ عَلَى خَمْسِ أَوْجُهٍ: أَنْ يَكُونَ عَزِيزًا فَيَنْزِلُ،
أَوْ يَكُونَ صَادِقًا فَيَتَّهَمُ، أَوْ يَدْعُوا إِلَى الْحَقِّ فَيَسْتَخَفُّ بِهِ ، أَوْ أَنْ يُؤْذَى بِالْجُرْمِ،
أَوْ أَنْ يُطَالَبَ بِالْحَقِّ فَيُخَالِفُوهُ، فَإِذَا أَتَيْتَ كُلًّا مِنْهَا حَقَّهُ فَقَدْ أَصَبْتَ. وَ قَابِلُ
السَّفِيَةِ بِالْإِعْرَاضِ عَنْهُ وَ تَرَكَ الْجَوَابَ يَكُنُّ النَّاسُ أَنْصَارَكَ، لِأَنَّ مَنْ جَاوَبَ
السَّفِيَةَ: فَكَأَنَّهُ قَدْ وَضَعَ عَلَى النَّارِ.

“Forbearance is the torch of Allah and through the light of it, the person is brought closer to His presence. A person can never become a halim (one with forbearance) except through assistance with the Celestial Illumination of Monotheism and Cognizance (of Allah).

Forbearance comes about through the following five conditions: in that instance in which a person has the ability to show greatness however he humbles himself; when he is speaking the truth however he is charged with lying; when he invites others to the Truth however the people ridicule him; the time when others accuse of him sinning while he is innocent; the time when he asks other people for his right, however they oppose him.

If you give all of those (five points mentioned) their right, then you have done the right thing. Respond to the foolish person by paying no attention to him and by not answering him. Thus, by doing so, people will be your supporters, because the person who answers the fool as the like one who has placed himself in the fire.”

Summary

The trait of forbearance is the opposite of anger and it is through patience, humility and humbleness that a person is able to gain forbearance.

The traits of humility and humbleness can not be achieved except through realizing the truth of Monotheism and cognizance of the greatness, magnitude and power of Allah, the High. Since the person recognizes Allah (SwT) the all-Powerful as the only cause (of all effects in the Universe) and all-Encompassing and the Sole Assistant and True Ruler over all creations, then naturally he would keep the traits of pride, self-conceit and arrogance far from himself and would seek to show his servitude, humility, humbleness, obedience, lowness, submission, leaving everything up to Allah's will, with complete contentment and patience.

This is what is meant in the noble traditions about the status of knowledge coupled with forbearance – meaning that level and form of knowledge with is coupled with humility and humbleness and which keeps the traits of pride, self-conceit and arrogance far away from a person.

هر یکی حلمی از آنها چو کوه

صد هزاران حلم دارند این گروه

زیرک صد چشم را گمره کند

حلمشان بیدار را ابله کند

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1. Surat al-Qiyamat (75), verse 15
 2. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, pg. 394
 3. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 188
 4. Jami al-Akhbar, pg. 107
 5. al-Ithna al-Ashariyyah, pg. 20
 6. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 19, pg. 110
 7. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 301

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