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## 13. What is the philosophy behind Du'a and Invocations?

Those, who have not comprehended the reality of du'a, and its educative and psychological effects, have levelled various objections against it:

At times they say: Du'a brings about a state of narcosis within people for, instead of exhorting them towards effort and utilization of advanced means, it directs them towards supplications and teaches them that they should pray, rather than exert themselves!

And occasionally they say: Basically, is supplicating not interference in Allah's (s.w.t.) work? Allah (s.w.t.) performs whatever He deems to be the best; He loves us and knows better than us what is best for us and so, why should we seek things from Him at times as we please?

At other times they say: Apart from all these, does du'a not conflict with the attribute of *ridha*<sup>1</sup> and *taslim*<sup>2</sup>?

Those who propound these objections are oblivious of the psychological, social, educative and spiritual effects of supplication. This is because man, in order to strengthen his determination, and eliminate his distresses, is occasionally in need of a support, and it is the du'a that lights up the lamp of hope within him.

People, who neglect du'a and supplication, shall eventually face undesirable social and psychological effects in the long run.

In the words of a well-known psychologist: "Absence of invocations amongst a nation is equivalent to the collapse of that nation! A society that has strangulated within itself the need for invocations is usually not safeguarded from degradation and degeneration. Of course, it should not be forgotten that invoking only in the mornings while passing the entire day akin to barbarians, is futile; supplications ought to be performed continuously and in every state, and care should be taken to ensure that its profound

influence upon man is not lost.”<sup>3</sup>

Those, who claim that du'a possesses a narcotic effect, have failed to comprehend the meaning of du'a. Supplicating to Allah (s.w.t.) does not mean that we withdraw ourselves from all the natural means that lie at our disposal and instead, raise our hands and set about praying; rather, it means that after utilizing all the means available before us to the best of our abilities and if we fall short, we resort to du'a and, by turning towards and leaning on Allah (s.w.t.), we invigorate within ourselves the spirit of hope, seeking succour from the unfailing assistance of the Great Origin.

Accordingly du'a is confined to inadequacies and dead-ends, and not a means that acts as a substitute for natural factors.

Although invocations induce serenity, at the same time, they also stimulate a kind of amazement and internal expansion with respect to cerebral activities, and occasionally also inspire a spirit of courageousness and heroism within man. Invocations make manifest our excellences with unique indications – pure look, composed behaviour, internal expansion and happiness, firm conviction, ability to accept guidance and confront the adversities.

These are the things that indicate upon the existence of a concealed treasure deep within us, and by means of this strength, even those who are backward and less capable can better utilize their mental and ethical abilities, and derive greater benefits. However, it is rather unfortunate that in our present world, those who can comprehend (the concept of) supplication correctly are very few indeed.<sup>4</sup>

From what we have stated above, the answer to the objection that the concept of du'a is inconsistent with ridha and taslim also becomes clear. This is because du'a, as has been explained above, is a kind of quest for the ability to acquire a greater share of the infinite grace and blessings of Allah (s.w.t.).

In other words man, by means of du'a, develops within himself a great worthiness for acquiring increased blessings of Allah (s.w.t.), and it is self-evident that exertion towards perfection is, in reality, taslim in the face of the laws of creation and not something in contrast to it.

Additionally, du'a is a kind of worship, (and an exhibition of) servitude, and by means of it man achieves a fresh attentiveness towards Allah (s.w.t.). Therefore, just as all the other acts of worship possess an educative influence, du'a too possesses such an influence.

And when they say that du'a is interference in Allah's (s.w.t.) work! Allah (s.w.t.) does whatever is advisable and prudent, they have overlooked the fact that distribution of Allah's (s.w.t.) bounties is dictated by capability – the greater the capacity, the greater shall be the share of the Divine gifts that shall come a person's way.

And it is for this reason that Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) has said:

## إِنَّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَنْزِلَةً لَا تُنَالُ إِلَّا بِمَسْأَلَةٍ.

“Allah (s.w.t.) has ordained ranks, which cannot be achieved except by means of supplication.”<sup>5</sup>

A scholar has stated: “When we supplicate, we link and associate ourselves to the infinite Power, Who has interconnected the entire universe.”<sup>6</sup>

He also states: “Today, the most recent science, i.e. psychiatry, teaches the same things that the prophets used to teach. Why? The reason being that psychiatrists have discovered that du'a, prayers and possessing a firm conviction with respect to religion eliminates worries, anxieties, agitations and fear – factors that are cause for more than half of our inconveniences.”<sup>7</sup> and <sup>8</sup>

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1. Satisfaction and pleasure over divine decree. (Tr.)
  2. Submission to Allah (s.w.t.). (Tr.)
  3. Niyayish – a Persian translation of a book written by the well-known doctor and psychologist Alexis Carrol.
  4. As written by Alexis Carrol.
  5. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 338, Chapter Fadhl al-Du'a Wa al-Haththu 'Alaihi, no. 3
  6. Aain-e-Zindagi, pg. 156
  7. Ibid., pg. 152
  8. Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 1, pg. 639

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