

Part 3.3: Allah and His Glory

It is clear from what we have so far said about 'bismillah' that the 'ba' in it is not for causation, as some grammarians say. In fact in the matter of doings of Allah there is no question of cause and effect. The best way of expressing the relationship between the Creator and the created is that which is found in the Qur'an.

At some places this relationship has been described as glorification: 'Your Lord revealed His glory' and at some others as 'manifestation'. It has been said about Allah that 'He is the First and the Last, the Explicit and the Implicit'.

This relationship is different from that of cause and effect, which implies a sort of tendency that is not appropriate to Allah, and therefore it is not a proper expression of the relationship between Allah and the existing things.

For this purpose we have either to expand the meaning of causation to include glorification and manifestation or to say that the 'ba' in bismillah is not for causation and that 'with the name of Allah' means with His manifestation or with His glorification. Therefore Bismillah al-Hamdu lillah' does not mean that Allah's name is the cause and his praise is the effect.

Anyway, as far as I remember the words, sababiyat or 'illiyat (cause, effect, causation) are not mentioned anywhere in the Qur'an and the sunnah (traditions). These words are merely philosophical terms used by the philosophers. In this sense the Qur'an and the sunnah have used the words of Khalq (creation), Zuhur (manifestation) Tajalli (glorification) etc.

There is another aspect of bismillah. We have a report about the dot under the 'ba'. I wonder whether this report is mentioned in any authentic book. Apparently it is not. Anyway, Imam Ali is reported to have said: 'I am the dot under the 'ba' of bismillah.

If this report is mentioned anywhere, it may be interpreted in the following way: The 'ba' signifies absolute manifestation. The dot signifies its first specification or determination, which lies in the state of wilayat. If this report was true, the Commander of the Faithful might have meant that as the dot

determined the 'ba', similarly the state of universal 'wilayat' is the first determination of the Absolute Manifestation.

The name is synonym with absolute glory. It is primarily determined by the Wilayat of the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali etc.

This fact is true even if it is not mentioned in any authentic book. The first and primary determination of absolute glory is the highest stage of existence and this highest stage of existence is the same as the stage of absolute wilayat. As a matter of fact a divine name is sometimes a symbol of the state of self.

The comprehensive name of this state of self is Allah. Sometimes a divine name is the symbol of the manifestation of some divine attribute such as beneficence, mercy etc. All these names are the reflections of the Exalted Name. Some of these names are the names of the state of self, some of the reflections of the glory of names and some of the reflections of the glory of doings.

The names of the first category are called the state of uniqueness; the names of the second category are called the state of oneness and the names of the third category the state of will. All these are the terms used by the mystics. The last three verses of the Surah al-Hashr (59:22-24) perhaps hint at this division of the divine names:

(i) He is Allah, there is no other deity but He, the Knower of the invisible and the visible. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful.

(ii) He is Allah, there is no other deity but He, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller and the Superb. Glorified be Allah from all that they ascribe as partners to Him.

(iii) He is Allah the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner, His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

Possibly these three verses hint at the three states of the divine names as mentioned above. The first mentions the names appropriate to the state of self. The second verse contains the names appropriate to the reflections of the glory of names. The third verse has the names suitable to the reflection of the glory of doings.

Thus there are three stages of divine glorification: the stage revealing self-glory for self, the stage of revealing glory at the stage of divine names and the stage of revealing glory at the stage of manifestation. He is the First and the Last is perhaps the negation of the existence of any other being. He is the First and the Last, the Explicit and the Implicit. This shows that it is He who is manifestation, not that manifestation is from Him, for 'He is the First and the Last, the Explicit and the Implicit.'

Glory is Not Separate From the Glorious

There are several degrees of the revealing of glory, but in no case glory is separate from the master of glory. It is an idea difficult to conceive, but once you conceive it, it is easy to believe it. It is also possible that Allah is the name of divine glory at the state of divine attributes. In this case 'ism' in bismillah will denote the revealing of overall manifestation of glory.

Even in this case it will not be difficult to apply the two possibilities mentioned by us earlier, for Allah's attributes are not separate from His self or essence. In this connection it is to be pointed out that sometimes we look at an event from the point of view as to what our perception says; sometimes from the point of view as to what our intellect says; sometimes from the point of view as to what impression our heart has formed; and sometimes we witness the event at the stage of its actual reality. This rule applies to all spiritual matters.

The farthest limit of our perception is either intellectual perception or argumentative or semi-argumentative perception. We perceive things according to our intellectual capacity. In spiritual matters the lowest degree of our perception should be that we come to understand that there is Allah and His glory. As a matter of fact whatever method of perception we use, we cannot go beyond this limit.

The utmost limit of our perception is either rational perception or argumentative and semi-argumentative perception. We perceive things according to our intellect only. As far as the questions relating to the knowledge of Allah are concerned, the main stage of knowing Him is just to understand that there is Allah and His glory. In fact whatever method of perceiving Him we employ, our perception cannot go beyond this limit.

His Being And His Glory Are the Real Truth

That is the main question. As for the nature of His glory at the various stages of His essence, His attributes and His actions, the verses we have quoted above indicate only that "He is the First and the Last and He is the Explicit and the Implicit". The real truth is only that there is no existence besides Allah.

In fact it is meaningless to imagine that besides Allah there can be any existence. Sometimes we calculate according to our understanding what our perception is, what our intellect says, whether our rational perception has so firmly been established in our heart that it may be named faith, and whether we have started our spiritual journey in the right direction so that it may be called irfan or gnosis. Anyway, it is all a matter of our perception rather than that of actualities.

The Real Truth Is Nothing But He

If we look into the question deeply, we come to the conclusion that there is nothing but Allah and that His glory is not but He himself. To illustrate this truth we cannot conceive of any example which may exactly fit in with it. The simile of shadow and the thing casting shadow is defective.

The relation between Allah and His glory can best be illustrated by the example of Sea and its waves.

Perhaps this is the closest similitude. As we know, the waves of the sea are not separate from the sea itself, but still the sea is not the waves, although the waves are the sea. When the sea vibrates, the waves rise in it. At that time the sea and its waves appear to us to be separate from each other. But the waves are a temporary phenomenon. They are again merged in the sea. In fact the waves do not exist independently.

This world is also like a wave. Anyhow, even this similitude is not perfect, for no similitude can properly illustrate the relation between Allah and His creation. We talk only as we perceive. There are two aspects of this question. On the one hand there are some general conceptions like the names of Allah, the names of His attributes and His actions and some stages and stations.

These are the conceptions we can perceive. The second stage is that of adducing arguments to prove that Allah and His glory are not separate from each other. To prove this it is said that Allah is pure and absolute existence that can in no way be qualified or limited, for an existence qualified or incomplete in any way cannot be absolute.

The absolute existence must be perfect, unlimited and free from all restrictions and deficiencies. The attributes of Absolute Existence must also be absolute and unspecified. Neither Allah's mercifulness is specified or limited nor His compassionateness nor His divinity.

Lack of Any Excellence Means Limitation

As Allah is absolute light and unqualified existence, He must automatically combine in Himself all excellences, for the lack of any excellence would mean specification and restriction. If there were a slightest deficiency or defect at the stage of His essence, the term absolute would not be applicable to Him. He would be imperfect and as such would not be self-existing, because absolute excellence and absolute perfection are essential for being self-existent.

When we think about Allah according to our imperfect mental capacity, we find that Allah is the name of that Absolute Being who has all beautiful names and attributes and who combines in Himself all excellences, and that everything else is nothing but a reflection of His glory.

He is Absolute and unqualified perfection. If there were slightest deficiency in Him, He would become a possibly existing being instead of being an essentially existing Being, as He is. He combines in Himself

all the excellences and meritorious qualities.

He is pure and unspecified existence. Every existence is His. He is everything but in an unspecified manner and by the way of absolute perfection. As His names are not separate from His Being, the names of His attributes are also the names of His essence.

All the characteristics pertaining to Allah, pertain to Rahman (Merciful) also. Rahman being absolute perfection and absolute mercy, has all the excellences of existence. The Qur'an says:

Call Allah or call Rahman (Surah al-Isra', 17: 110).

In another verse it says:

Call Him by any name, for all the beautiful names are His. (Surah al-A'raf, 7: 180)

Allah, Rahman, Rahim and all other names of Him are good and beautiful. Each of them combines all His attributes. He being Absolute, there is no disparity between Him and His names or between one of His names and another.

Allah's beautiful names are not like the names we give to different things for different considerations. His glory and His manifestation are not two different aspects of Him. His manifestation is exactly His glory and His glory exactly His manifestation.

Even this expression is defective. Absolute existence means Absolute perfection and Absolute perfection must be absolute in every respect. Therefore, all His attributes are absolute. No disparity of any sort can be imagined between His essence and His attributes.

Observation is a Step Further than All Arguments and Proofs

It is often said: "There is no proof of such and such thing" or "Reason says so". A gnostic is reported to have said: "Wherever I went, this blind man also arrived there with his stick. By 'the blind man' this gnostic meant Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna).

What he wanted to say was that the person who perceived truth by means of his arguments and cold reasoning could be compared to a blind man who found out his way by means of his stick. This gnostic meant to say: "Wherever I reached by means of my vision and gnosis, this blind man (Avicenna) also reached there rattling his stick, that is by means of his logical arguments".

People Depending On Arguments Are Blind

The people depending on arguments are blind because they lack the power of vision. Although they have proved unity of Allah and other questions relating to it by means of their arguments and have also proved that the source of Existence is Absolute Perfection, yet what they say is still a matter of

arguments, behind the walls of which these people are unable to see anything.

With a great deal of effort the heart perceives that the Essentially Existing Being is pure existence and that He is everything. Still the heart remains like a child who needs to be spoon-fed at every step. He who perceives the rational questions by means of arguments, need, repetition of these arguments and has to make strenuous struggle before his findings are firmly established in his heart.

Faith Means Cordial Perception

When it is cordially accepted that Allah is pure existence as well as all perfection, this conviction becomes a faith. Prior to that it was only a rational idea obtained by means of arguments. Later it produced a particular conception.

When the heart accepted that conception as a truth either by means of rational arguments or through Qur'anic teachings, it became a faith. Intellect discovers the truth and teaches it to the heart. When as the result of repetition and mental exercise it is firmly established in the heart that there is nothing in this world except Allah, that idea becomes a faith or an implicit belief.

Although the stage referred to in the Qur'an by the words: so that my heart may be at ease", is a stage lower than the vision of the Prophets, yet it is a stage. But the vision of the beauty of Allah is a far higher stage. Glory of Allah was revealed for Prophet Musa. The Qur'an says:

When his Lord revealed His glory to the mountain. (7: 143)

In connection with the story of Prophet Musa the periods of 30 days and 40 days and the subsequent events are significant and worth consideration. When Prophet Musa departed from the house of his father-in-law, Shu'ayb, after traversing a little distance he said to his wife: "I feel that there is a fire". His wife and children did not see at all the fire which he felt. Prophet Musa said: "I am going so that I may bring a live coal from it for you."

When he approached the fire, he heard a call saying: "Surely I am Allah." He heard this voice from the fire which was ablaze in a tree. This sort of vision was acquired by the blind man by means of his stick and the gnostic by means of his heart. But Prophet Musa had that vision with his eyes.

The Truth is Higher than What We Say and Hear

We speak about the truths, but they are higher than what we can say about them. "Surely I am Allah". Nobody except Prophet Musa could see the Light of the divine glory that was revealed to the tree.

Similarly nobody could know the nature of the revelation that was received by the Holy Prophet, Muhammad. The whole Qur'an used to be revealed to his heart at one time. How? Who knows? If the Qur'an is what we have, consisting of 30 parts, then it cannot be revealed all at once to an ordinary

heart.

Heart Also Means Something Quite Different from What We Understand

In this content heart is different from what we ordinarily understand. The Qur'an is a truth and this truth is revealed to the heart. The Qur'an is a secret – a guarded secret. It must descend from its high position so that it might be revealed to the heart of the Holy Prophet.

Then it must come down further so that it could be understood by others also. The same is true of man. Man is also a closed secret. From what we can see man appears to be an animal and for that matter, an animal lower than many other animals.

But the distinguishing feature of this animal is that it can attain humanity and by traversing various stages of perfection can reach the stage of absolute perfection. Man before his death can become what is difficult even to imagine.

What We Feel Are Qualities and Forms

The whole man is a secret. It is difficult to say what we apparently see in this world, for we cannot perceive bodies or substances. All that we perceive are forms and qualities only. For example, our eyes see a color. Our ears hear a sound. Our tongue feels a sensation of taste. Our hands feel the things by touching them.

All these are forms and qualities. But the actual body is nowhere. When we describe a thing, we mention its length, breadth and depth. Length, breadth and depth are all forms only. We say that such and such thing has attraction. But attraction is also a quality only. Whatever qualities of a thing we may describe, they are all mere forms.

Then where is the body? The body is a secret – a shadow of the divine secret. What we know is only names and qualities, otherwise everything in this world is unknown. Perhaps it is this conception a degree of which has been described by the gnostics as "invisible though apparently visible", for in this world things are visible and invisible at one and the same time.

Only those things are invisible which we can neither see nor can we perceive. If we want to describe a thing we can do no more than mentioning its name, qualities and characteristics. Man cannot perceive a thing which is a shadow of the Absolute Secret, for human perception is defective.

Only that man can perceive things fully who through his 'Wilayat' has attained that position where glory of Allah is fully revealed to his heart. The question of visibility and invisibility is present everywhere. That is why such expressions as the invisible world, the angelic world and the world of the intellects are on the

lips of everybody.

The Holy Prophet is the Exalted Name of Allah

All the names of Allah are a secret as well as a known thing. They are implicit and explicit. That is what the following Qur'anic verse means: "He is Explicit and Implicit." What is explicit is implicit as well and what is implicit is explicit as well.

That is how all the names of Allah imply all the grades of existence. Every name covers the concepts of all other names. It is not that Rahman is a name or an attribute different from Rahim. The same is true of all other names of Allah. For example Muntaqim (Avenger) is not the opposite of Rahman (Merciful).

The Qur'an says: Call Him by any name for He has all the beautiful names. All these beautiful names are of Rahman as well as of Rahim. It is not that one name means something and some other name signifies something else. Had it been so Rahman would have signified one aspect of Allah and Rahim another aspect of Him, while the Absolute Existence cannot have many aspects.

The Absolute Existence as such is Rahman as well as Rahim, Nur (Light) and Allah. His being Rahman is not different from His being Rahim. A person occupying that highest position of gnosis in which his heart is enlightened by Allah Himself, not by His glory, will himself be an 'exalted name' of Allah and at the same time will be enlightened by the light of the 'exalted name'.

Such a person could only be he to whose heart the Qur'an was revealed and to whom Gabriel used to come. The glory revealed to his heart comprised all glories. This person was the Holy Prophet who personally was the most exalted name of Allah. The Imams are also reported to have said: "We are the beautiful names of Allah."

Even Our Existence is A Revelation of the Glory of Allah

The topics we have discussed today included the question of causation. We said that it was wrong to raise the question of causation in respect of Allah. In our authentic texts we do not find any mention of it. Some far-fetched examples do not serve any purpose.

Another question we mentioned was that of a dot under the letter 'ba'. I explained the meaning of this tradition in case it was really reported anywhere. Furthermore, some such questions were also discussed as the name at the stage of divine essence, the name at the stage of attributes, the name at the stage of the revelation of glory of action, revelation of the glory of essence to essence, revelation of the glory of essence to attributes, and revelation of the glory of essence to all existing things.

When we talk of the revelation of divine glory, we say that even our existence is the revelation of glory. To illustrate this fact it may be said that if you put 100 mirrors in a place all reflecting the light of the sun, it may be said that there are one hundred lights, but actually there would be only one light reflected in all

mirrors. But the light of the sun being limited, even this example is far-fetched.

All Existing Things Are the Result of Divine Glory

It is the light of Allah's glory that is being reflected in all existing things. It is the same light that is reflected everywhere. For each and every thing there is no separate light. All the existing things are the concomitant result of the same one light. As such in 'bismillah' the 'ism' or the name means the name of divine essence and Allah is the glory of divine essence which includes all glories.

It is this comprehensive glory the name of which is Allah, as well as Rahman, Rahim etc. It is wrong to say that Rahman is the name of one divine attribute and Rahim is the name of another attribute. In fact Allah, Rahman and Rahim are the names of the same divine glory. The whole of that glory is Allah as well as Rahman and Rahim. That is the only possibility. Otherwise Allah will become a limited being, and a limited being is a possibly existing being, not an essentially existing one.

According to the details we mentioned earlier, praise (hamd) will be of Allah and Allah is the name of the Comprehensive divine glory or divine manifestation. Rahman and Rahim are also the names of exactly the same glory. Hamd means either every praise or praise in general. There are three possibilities about the name, Allah.

It can either be the name of the comprehensive divine glory at the stage of essence or at the stage of attributes (This is the stage of will. Every thing is produced by it) or at the stage of action. When we apply these possibilities to the verse of 'bismillah,' a different style of expression emerges in every case.

We talked about Allah on this very basis and said that it is the Comprehensive name at the stage of essence as well as at the stage of attributes and at the stage of the revelation of divine glory producing action. While discussing 'bismillah' we said a few things briefly about the letter 'ba' its dot and the names of Allah, Rahman and Rahim.

The Belief Is Essential

We hope that it will be admitted that the discussion of such problems is necessary. Some people totally deny their importance. Not only that, there are some people who do not believe in gnostic questions at all. Those who are at the stage of animals cannot understand that there is something beyond what they know.

We must have belief in spiritual matters. This is the first step. The foremost thing is that man should not deny everything he does not know. Shaykh Abu Ali Sina says that anybody who denies a thing without any reason, behaves against human nature.

Belief Must Be Based On Reason

As there must be a valid reason to prove a thing, there must also be a valid reason to deny a thing. If you do not have a reason in favor or against a thing, then simply say: "I don't know". But there are some obstinate people who deny everything. As these people do not understand, they behave inhumanly.

Whatever you hear you should normally admit that at least there is some possibility of its being correct. Do not reject anything outright without any reason. We do not have access to what is beyond this world. Even about this world our knowledge is defective and limited. At present we have a certain amount of knowledge. In future we will know much more. So many things which we now know, about this world, were totally unknown till a hundred years ago. In future many more discoveries will be made.

When man is still unable to know and perceive this world fully, how does he dare to deny what the saints (Awliya') of Allah know and see. A man denies the spiritual truths, because his heart lacks the spiritual light. He says that spiritual truths do not exist, but does not admit that he is unaware of them. He alleges that what the believers in spiritual truths say are all fables.

He dares to say so because he is ignorant. He does not know that the things he rejects as fables have been mentioned in the Qur'an too. What the Muslim gnostics say has been derived from the Qur'an and sunnah (traditions). Then how can he deny what the Qur'an confirms?

To Deny What One Does Not Know Is Unbelief

If not legally unbelief, at least it is a sort of unfaithfulness. The root-cause of man's misfortune is that he denies the truths he does not perceive. He rejects these truths because he has not reached the stage that has been reached by the 'Saints of Allah'. This is the worst kind of negationistness.

The foremost thing is that one must not deny what is contained in the Qur'an and sunnah, what is acknowledged by the Imams and what is admitted by the philosophers. If somebody has not perceived the truth himself, he should frankly admit that he does not know. But it is all humbug if some idiot says that he would not believe in Allah unless he himself has dissected Him with his sharp knife.

The most important thing is that we must not deny what we have been told by the Prophets and the Imams. This is the first step. We cannot take the next step if we deny the things in the very beginning. If anybody wants to go forward he should as a first step admit that the spiritual things he does not know, may possibly be correct. Then he should pray to Allah to open for him a way that might lead him to the place where he should reach.

We Must Not Deny the Qur'an and Sunnah

If a man will not deny the Divine things and will pray to Allah, Allah will certainly help him and will

gradually open the way for him.

I hope that we will not deny what is in the Qur'an and sunnah. It often happens that a man believes in the Qur'an and sunnah, and does not deny even when he does not understand what is in them, but when somebody else tells him that the Qur'an and sunnah say so, he instead of admitting his lack of knowledge, rejects that outright as nonsense.

Total Denial is a Stumbling Block

Total denial deprives man from acknowledging many truths and prevents him from proceeding on the right path. The veracity of the facts which have been affirmed by the saints of Allah should be acknowledged at least tacitly if not expressly. A man who denies them totally and describes them as nonsense, can never succeed in proceeding further.

We Must Do Away With Negative Attitude

I hope that we will give up the negative attitude and will pray to Allah to make us familiar with the diction of the Qur'an which is of a special type. Like man the Qur'an also has many potentialities. It is a large table on which many dishes of various tastes have been placed by Allah. From it everybody can have food of his choice, provided he has not lost his appetite, which happens in the case of heart patients.

The Qur'an like this world is a vast dining table. This world is also used by different people differently according to their requirements and taste. Man utilizes it in one way, animals in another and the men who are on the same level as the animals in a third way. As the level goes up, the way of utilization improves. The same is true of the Qur'an. It is for all. Everybody can be benefited by it according to his taste and choice.

Its highest beneficiary is he who is its first addressee and to whom it was revealed. "Only he knows the Qur'an to whom it was addressed."

Denial of Prophethood

We need not be disappointed. Instead we must try to be benefited by the Qur'an. For this purpose it is essential that first of all we remove from our mind the idea that there exists nothing besides physical and material problems and that the Qur'an also has been revealed only to deal with these problems and is exclusively concerned with this worldly life.

This way of thinking amounts to total denial of Prophethood. In fact the Qur'an has come to make man a real human being and all this is a means to an end.

Supplications and Worship Are Means

Worship is a means. Supplications are a means. They are a means to develop real human qualities and to awaken dormant human potentialities so that man becomes a real human being, a godly man, able to see what is right and understand what is right.

Prophets have come for this very purpose. Prophets are also a means. They did not come merely to set up a government. The government has its own place, but the Prophets did not come only for the sake of obtaining power and administering worldly affairs. This is what the animals also do. They also have their own world and they administer the affairs of it.

Justice is a Quality Appropriate to Allah

Those who have an insight look at the discussion of justice as the discussion of a characteristic of Allah. The administration of divine justice is one of the functions of the Prophets. They set up a government as a means of leading man to that position which is the real aim of the Prophets' coming. May Allah help us in all affairs!

Before dealing with the remaining points perhaps it is necessary and useful to point out that the scholars often disagree because they do not understand the language of each other properly. The reason is that each group of scholars has its own language.

A Dispute About Grapes Between An Iranian, A Turk And An Arab

I wonder whether you have ever heard this story. There were three men. One of them was an Iranian; another was a Turk and the third was an Arab. They were discussing what they should have for lunch. The Iranian said that angur would be quite suitable. The Arab said: "No, we would have inab." The Turk said: "No, I don't like either. We would have uzum." As they did not understand the language of each other, they differed. At last someone of them went out and brought grapes. Then they realized that all of them wanted the same thing.

To express the same thing there are different words in different languages. For example, the philosophers have a particular diction. They have their own terminology. Similarly the sufis have their own language. The jurists have their own terms. The poets have their own poetic diction. The Imams have their own separate style.

Now we have to find out which one out of these three or four groups has a language closer to the language of those who are infallible and to the language of revelation. I do not think that any sensible person will deny that Allah exists and that He is the source and cause of all that exists. Nobody believes

that you with your coat and pants are God, nor can any sensible person imagine that any man with a turban, a beard and a staff is Allah. Everybody knows that all men are creatures.

Anyhow the way in which the cause and effect are described and the impression that such description creates, often gives rise to disagreement. We should find out what those who belonged to the gnostic class actually wanted to say and what induced them to use questionable words and a vague style.

How To Reconcile Different Groups And Their Ways Of Expression?

Now I want to reconcile these different groups for they all say the same thing. I do not want to condone all philosophers or to defend all gnostics or all jurists. That is not my intention. I know that many of them are shopkeepers. They say only that which may promote their business. What I mean to say is that in all these groups there are people who are pious.

The differences which exist between them are due to the scholars of to which they belong. Their differences may be compared to the difference existing between the Usulis and the Akhbaris (traditionalists). Sometimes some Akhbaris condemn the Usulis as infidels and unbelievers, and Usulis condemn the Akhbaris as ignorant. They do so despite the fact that the objective of both the groups is the same.

Now the main point of our discourse is that a group of philosophers uses such terms as the primary cause, first effect, second effect, causativeness etc. Such terms as causativeness, source and consequence are some of the favorite terms of the ancient philosophers.

Even our jurists do not refrain from using terms like causativeness and effectiveness nor have they any objection against using such words as creatorness and createdness. There is a class of the Muslim gnostics, who because of difference they have with other classes, use quite different expressions, such as manifest, manifestations, glory etc.

In addition, they use certain other words to which the literalists take exception. Now let us see why they use such words and why some of these words have been used by the Imams also. I do not remember to have seen such words as illiyat, ma'luliyyat, sababiyat and musabbibiyat (causativeness and effectiveness) being used by the Imams, but other such words as khallaqiyyat (creatoriness) makhluqiyyat (createdness) tajalli (revelation of glory) zahir (manifest) and mazhar (manifestation) are found in what they have said.

Now let us see why the Muslim gnostics and sufis have refrained from using the terminology of the philosophers as well as the language of the common people. They have invented a style of their own to which the literalists usually object. Let us know the reason.

Cause and Effect

On the basis of causation one thing is considered to be the cause and another to be the effect. As a rule the cause should be on the one side and the effect on the other. In other words they should be in two different places. Take the example of the sun and the sunlight.

There is light in the sun, but it also emits light. The sun and its light have two separate identities and are located at two different places. As the sun emits its light, the sun is the cause and its light is its effect. But the question is whether it is possible in the case of the self-existing being also to imagine such relationship of cause and effect as is found in nature.

For example, fire is the cause of heat and the sun is the cause of light. In nature the effect is a consequence of the cause and the cause and effect are usually found in two separate places.

In nature the cause and the effect are also usually located at two different places. But we cannot say about the Creator and the created that they are in two separate places or exist at two different times. Even it is difficult to say how Allah exists, because He is Absolute and His existence is abstract.

Whatever the way of expression you may adopt, it is impossible to say how Allah exercises His eternal and ceaseless power of creating and sustaining every thing. The Qur'an says:

He is with you wherever you are. (57:4)

What does "with you" mean in this verse? Is Allah by the side of every man?

Meaning of "with you"

This way of expression has been chosen because it is impossible to express the truth exactly. Therefore, words as close to the reality as possible, have to be chosen. It is very difficult to understand where the Creator is and how He is with the created. Is the relation between the Creator and the created the same as between fire and its effect? Or is the relation between them similar to the relation between soul and eyes, ears, nose and other organs?

The second similitude may be closer to the reality. Anyhow it also cannot express the meaning clearly. The Creator is encompassing the whole creation and this encompassing is related to His eternal attributes of creation and sustenance. It is difficult to say anything more. All that may be added is that this encompassing is such that there is no place where Allah may not be.

A tradition says: "If you were dropped to the lowest earth by means of a rope, you would find Allah even there." This is only a way of expression. For example if it is said: "All that exists is Allah". This does not mean that any particular man wearing a gown and a turban is Allah. No man who is mentally normal would ever say so. We can only use words which may be as close to the reality as possible. Only to

draw the attention of a man not conversant with the reality, to the relation between the Creator and the created it is said that it is true that "All that exists is Allah".

But that does not mean that any particular man or a particular thing may be called Allah. That is why the Muslim philosophers say that Allah is pure existence, and He is all things, but not anything particular out of them. This statement may appear to be somewhat contradictory. But what is meant is that Allah is free from every shortcoming. He is pure existence and has no deficiency or defect. He is characterized with every perfection, whereas all other things are defective.

Therefore He 'is not anything particular out of them'. As Allah is free from every defect and deficiency, He consequently enjoys every perfection. Any perfection found in any creation of His is a reflection of His own perfection. As every perfection is a revelation of His glory, He Himself is all perfection. In the above quoted tradition "all things" means all kinds of perfection and "not anything particular out of them" means that He is free from every defect and deficiency. "All things" does not mean that you are also Allah.

That is why it is said that "He is not any thing particular out of them." In other words He is all perfection while no one else is characterized with every perfection. There is another example of this kind. There is a well-known Persian poetical line that means: 'Because non-attachment became confined to attachment.' This line has nothing to do with any question of divinity.

But those who are not conversant with this topic, often confuse its meaning. This line in fact is concerned with the hostility between two persons. But those who do not understand its meaning say that it amounts to infidelity. In fact it has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. It actually deals with quite a different question, which is why the wars occur in the world.

Why Do the Wars Occur?

Why are the wars fought? What is the basis of the wars? In the above mentioned line and in Persian the word, 'rung' (color) is used in the sense of attachment and 'berungi' (colourlessness) in the sense of non-attachment. Some other poets have also used these words in this sense.

If one is not attached to any thing, there can be no quarrel. All quarrels are caused by somebody's attachment to some thing, which he wants to obtain for himself. The poet who wrote the above mentioned line wants to say that attachment to any particular thing or things is not a part of real human nature and if this attachment to worldly things is done away with there will no longer be any quarrel.

In the story of Prophet Musa and Fir'awn, if Fir'awn had been as indifferent to worldly things as Prophet Musa was, there would have been no trouble. If all the Prophets gathered together at a place there would be no dispute at all, for all disputes and quarrels are due to attachment.

Nature was unattached, but when it became a captive of attachment, quarrels arose. Even Prophet Musa and Fir'awn would make friends, if the sting of attachment was removed. This topic has no

concern with divinity. It did not occur to him who objected to this line, that it related to two men quarreling between themselves.

Words in Imam's Supplications

You are already familiar with the words used in Imams' supplications. Now let us see whether the words and phrases used by Muslim gnostics for which they have been charged with unbelief by those who are unaware of reality, are similar to those used by the Imams or the gnostics have a different vocabulary. This topic relates to spiritual journey.

The following words have come in the Sha'baniyah supplication:

"O my Lord! Grant me complete withdrawal to You and enlighten the eyes of our heart with the light of looking towards You so that the eyes of heart may tear off the curtains of light and reach the source of grandeur and our souls get suspended in the honorable chamber of your sanctity."

Further the text says: "O my Lord! Grant me that I may be one of those whom you called and they responded, and at whom You looked and they were dumb-founded."

What do these words signify? Now what do the critics of the gnostics say? The gnostics have not said anything different from what the Imams have said. Why did all our Imams use to recite this supplication? What does "complete withdrawal" mean?

Imams pray for complete withdrawal

The Imams ask Allah to grant them complete withdrawal to Him, while it was up to them to undertake the spiritual journey themselves, but still they prayed to Allah for it. Why so? They asked Allah to enlighten the eyes of their hearts. What did they mean by the eyes of the hearts with which they wished to see Allah? What does heart mean in this context, and what is the meaning of the eye of the heart?

Thereafter, the aim of all this has been stated in these words: "So that the eyes of our heart may tear off the curtains of light and may reach the source of majesty and our souls may become suspended in the honorable chamber of Your sanctity". Here the question arises what is meant by becoming suspended? The next prayer is:

"O my Lord! Make me one of those whom you called and who responded to You and who were dumbfounded by Your majesty." The Qur'an also has said about Prophet Musa that he fell down senseless. Are these expressions different from what is called fana' or passing away in the terminology of the Muslim gnostics. Thus climbing up higher and higher the spiritual traveler reaches the stage where the eyes of his heart tearing off all curtains reach the source of majesty.

What is this source of majesty and what does reaching this source mean? Does this not mean gaining

that proximity to Allah of which the gnostics talk? Can anything other than Allah be the source of majesty? Only that can be this source of majesty from whom all the favors and blessings can be contained. Only after reaching this source of majesty "our souls will become suspended in the honorable chamber of Your sanctity".

Anybody who looks over the relationship between Allah and His creation will never use the words, cause and effect for this relationship. The use of these words, wherever it has been made, shows only that this relationship is such that it cannot be expressed in exact terms.

The use of the words Creator and creation is nothing but following the taste of the common people. A far better expression is revealing the glory. The Qur'an says:

Then his Lord revealed His glory to the mountain. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:143)

This is also only a way of using the closest words to state a relationship that cannot be expressed exactly.

A Question Difficult To Conceive, But Easy to Believe

The relationship between Allah and His creation is a question that is difficult to conceive but after having been conceived, is easy to be believed. The difficulty is how to conceive a Being who is everywhere, but still it cannot be said that He is at such and such place.

He is outside of everything as well as the inside of everything. Everything is caused by Him. Nothing is devoid of Him. Now where can we find appropriate words to express these concepts? Whatever words we choose, they will be inadequate. All that can be done is that those who are fit to do so pray to Allah and pray in the style of the Shabaniyah Supplication that He may enlighten them on this subject.

Anyhow, it is not a thing for which one group may declare another group infidel or ignorant, for it is not possible for anyone to express himself clearly on this subject. Try to understand the sentiments of others and what they want to say. Sometimes it happens that as light surges in the heart of somebody, he involuntarily exclaims that he is everything.

Imam Ali is the Eye of Allah, He is the Light of Allah's Eye

You read in the supplications that Imam Ali is the eye of Allah. What does that signify? Imam Ali is often described as the eye of Allah, light of Allah and the hand of Allah. What does the Hand of Allah mean? Such words are used by the Muslim gnostics also. It is reported in our traditions that the alms given to a poor-man reaches the Hand of Allah. The Qur'an says:

You did not throw the pebbles, when you threw them, but Allah threw. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:17)

What does this mean? This is what you all repeat, but you do not allow the gnostics to mention the Hand of Allah. When these poor people cannot say expressly, they say the same thing in a roundabout way. But such expressions are common even in the Qur'an and especially in the Imams' supplications.

Therefore there is no reason why we should suspect the gnostics especially. Try to understand what they mean and why they do not use the diction commonly used by other people. Although they have not used the familiar words and phrases, they have not sacrificed the truth, but have sacrificed themselves for the sake of truth. If we could understand that truth, we might have used the same diction.

The Qur'an has used the same way of expression. The Imams also have used similar words. If somebody says: "This is the truth", no sensible person will think that he means that this is Allah. Now just see how manifestation of Allah can be interpreted?

In regard to the Imams in a supplication the following words have been used: "There is no difference between You and them, except that they are your bondsmen; their creation is in Your Hand and their restoration is in Your Hand." This sentence also shows the inadequacy of expression. That is why the Imams use the words which are closer to the Qur'an than to the words used by others.

About gnostics anyone could say that they were nobody. But there were some other people whom we knew intimately and knew that they had a thorough knowledge of all Islamic sciences. They also used similar words. For example they used to say: "That reveals Allah's glory". In the 'Samat' Supplication there is a word, 'tal'atuka'. This word also means glory. Similarly there is another word nur (light) in the phrase, 'binuri wajhika' (by the light of Your Countenance).

That is why I say: Make peace with the gnostics. I do not mean to say that all of them are good. What I mean is that all of them must not be rejected. When I support the scholars and jurists, I do not intend to support all kinds of scholars and what I mean is that all of them should not be rejected. The same is the case with the gnostics. Do not think that whosoever talks in gnostic terms is an infidel.

Every Thing Must Be Investigated

First of all it must be understood what the other man is saying. If that is understood, perhaps there will be no need of rejecting him. Everywhere it is the same story of grapes – 'inab, angur and uzum.'

One man states a thing in one way; another man uses the terms of cause and effect while saying the same thing; the third man uses the word, mover and consequence; while the fourth man says manifest and manifestation. At some time or other all of them reach a stage where they realize how to describe the Being who is everywhere but is not any of the things we perceive. That is why sometimes someone ever says:

"Ali is Allah's hand; Ali is Allah's eye."

The Qur'an says:

You did not throw when you threw, but Allah threw. It also says: ***Surely those who pledge their allegiance to you, really pledge their allegiance to Allah. Allah's hand is above their hands.***
(Surah al-Fath, 48: 10)

Does this verse mean that Allah's Hand is literally placed on their hands? Obviously it does not. 'Above' here means at a higher point spiritually. Actually we lack words to express this position properly.

As Allah is far above that he may be mingled with anything or that he may be related to anything in a general sense, similarly he is above that we may be able to understand the nature of His glory. His glory is unknown to us. But we believe that there is certainly something of this sort. We cannot deny its existence.

When we believe that such things exist, we have to admit that they are mentioned in one way or another in the Qur'an and Sunnah. In the Qur'an wherever there is a mention of the glory of Allah, the words revealing or manifesting have been used. In the Surah al-Hadid a verse says: He is Explicit and Implicit.

A report says that the last six verses of the Surah al-Hadid are for the people who will appear "in the last era." Only they will be able to understand these verses which give some account of creation etc. It is in these verses that Allah says:

He is the First and the Last and the Explicit and the Implicit and He is with you wherever you are.
(Surah al-Hadid, 57:3-4)

Nobody can easily understand what is meant by 'the last era'. Only one or two persons in the world may be able to understand the significance of this phrase.

Misunderstandings Must Be Removed

The main point which I want to emphasize is that misunderstanding must be removed and there should be an end to the differences between the pedagogues and the scholars. The way to gnosis must not be blocked. Islam is not the name of the rules of law only. The basis of these rules is something else.

The basis should not be considered to be superfluous, nor should it be sacrificed for the sake of derivatives. We must not say that gnosis is not required or has no importance. Someone told me that a person was mentioned before the late Shaykh Muhammad Bahari. He says: "That man is a righteous infidel."

'How can that be' we said: 'Is he righteous and at the same time an infidel?' Shaykh Muhammad Bahari said: 'Yes, he is righteous because he acts according to the law of Islam and does not commit any sin. And he is an infidel because the god which he worships is not true God.'

Even the Ant Loves Itself

According to our traditions perhaps the ant thinks that Allah has two horns. This is due to self-love which an ant also apparently harbors. The ant is a very funny creature. It thinks that it is a mark of grandeur to have horns. When we think about our virtues and merits, we also think almost in the same way. It is the same ant which thought that Prophet Sulayman (Soloman) and his troop could not understand anything. The Qur'an says:

An ant exclaimed: 'O ants: Enter your dwellings lest Sulayman and his troops crush you because they do not understand.' And he (Sulayman) smiled laughing at her speech. (Surah an-Naml, 27: 17-19)

The case of the ant is not a solitary one. Everybody thinks the same way. Even the hoopoe, according to the Qur'an, said:

I know what you do not. (Surah an-Naml, 27:22).

The hoopoe said so to Prophet Sulayman who was a Prophet and who had a companion who brought to him the throne of Bilqis in the twinkling of an eye. How could he do that, is not known. Was there any electric system of transportation, or was it a case of annihilating a thing and then bringing it back into existence, or was the throne of Bilqis transported after having been converted into electric waves?

According to a report one of the companions of Prophet Sulayman knew a letter of Allah's Exalted Name and by virtue of it could bring anything desired to Prophet Sulayman before the twinkling of an eye. To such a prophet the hoopoe said: 'I know what you do not.'

Anyway, what Shaykh Muhammad Bahari meant to say was that that particular scholar said what he understood and he acted also accordingly.

It Is Bad Luck To Be Unaware of Some Important Questions

I think that it is unfortunate that a group of scholars which includes some very good and pious persons, is unaware of some important questions. When I came to Qum, Mirza Ali Akbar Hakim was there. He had established an Islamic Academy at his house.

The scholars used to receive education there. Such outstanding persons as the late Agha Khawansari and the late Agha Ishraqi used to attend Mirza Ali Akbar's lectures. On that occasion a pious and prominent personality, who is no longer amongst us, remarked: 'Look, to what level has the condition of Islam gone down?

Now the business of Islam is being transacted at the house of Mirza Ali Akbar.' He made this remark despite the fact that personally he was a pious man. Even after his death one of his representatives said

on the pulpit: 'I have myself seen Mirza Ali Akbar reciting the Qur'an.' The late Agha Shah Abadi was very much offended by this remark. Such misunderstandings are regrettable, and keeping oneself aloof from good work is also deplorable.

What a pity that this scholar did not take part in the meritorious act of setting up a learned academy! Philosophy is a common place thing, but some people object to it also. In fact these people do not understand each other and that is why all the disputes arise. A scholar declares another scholar infidel simply because he does not understand what the other man says.

The fault of the other man is that he uses such terms as cause, effect etc., which in the eyes of the former are contrary to the facts. I said earlier that divine name is not separate from the named. The name is a manifestation and a sign, but not such a sign as a milestone is. Therefore it is difficult to say that such and such thing is a sign of Allah. The words used in the Qur'an are closest to the reality but still do not represent it fully. The difficulty is that better words do not exist.

I said earlier that the Qur'an was like a dining table with many dishes placed on it. Everybody can have food according to his choice. No group has a monopoly of the Qur'an. All have a right to be benefited by it equally. The supplications of the Imams are full of spiritual knowledge. But some individuals try to deprive the people of these supplications which impart knowledge and convey the views of the Qur'an. Imams' supplications interpret the Qur'an and explain the questions to which others do not have access.

It is Wrong To Persuade People To Give Up Supplications

It is wrong to say that as we want to concentrate on the Qur'an, the supplications are not required. People should cultivate a liking for the supplications so that they may develop an attachment to Allah. Those who do so, give no importance to worldly things.

They are not self-conceited, and keep themselves busy with the tasks liked by Allah. Such people include those who used to fight for the sake of Allah, and at the same time used to recite the supplications.

Their circumstances were not different from ours, but still they managed to wield the sword and pray at the same time. Just as the Holy Prophet and the Holy Qur'an are not separate from each other, similarly the Holy Qur'an and the supplications are also not separate from each other.

We cannot say that as we have the Qur'an, we do not need the Holy Prophet. The Qur'an and the Holy Prophet go together. "They will always remain together till they arrive together at the Fountain of Kawthar." There is no question of their parting.

If some of us take them separately and want the Qur'an to be separate, the Imams to be separate and the supplications to be separate; or if some of us say that the books of supplication are not required, and as such they may be set on fire; or if some of us want the books of the gnostics to be burnt, the reason

is simply that the people who say and do such thing are ignorant. A man who exceeds his limit always falls into error.

Kasrawi And Hafiz

Kasrawi was an historian. His knowledge of history was good. He was a fine writer also. But he was self conceited. In the end he began to claim to be a prophet. He, however, believed in the Qur'an, but he was totally against supplications. He lowered Prophethood and brought it down to his own level. As he himself could not rise up, he lowered Prophethood.

The supplications and the Qur'an all go together. The gnostics, the sufi poets and the philosophers all say the same thing. Their points of view are not different. The difference is only that of their diction and the style of expression. Hafiz Shirazi (the Celebrated Persian Poet) has his own individual style. He mentions the same points as others do, but in a different manner.

Their choice of words may be different, but the people should not be deprived of the blessings of the subject matter. It is essential to call people to the vast treasure of knowledge contained in the Qur'an, sunnah and supplications so that everybody may be benefited by them according to his capacity.

This was a prelude to the points I intend to put forward later. If I am spared and mention any expression used by the gnostics as a possibility, it should not be said that I was trying to revive their expressions. In fact their expressions are worth being popularized.

Some craftsmen used to call on the late Agha Shah Abadi, who used to narrate gnostic problems in front of them as in front of others. One day I said: 'Do you narrate these things in front of these people also?' He said: 'Never mind! Let these heresies be heard by them too'.

We also had some such people. I cannot say who they were. It will be wrong to mention anybody by name. Now the topic of discussion is that "***Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim***" has al-Rahman al-Rahim and "***Al-hamdu lillahi Rabbil 'alamin***" is also followed by the same words, viz. al-Rahman al-Rahim.

The words al-Rahman and al-Rahim may in bismillah either relate to ism or Allah. Both the possibilities are there. God-willing we will see later which of these two possibilities appears to be more reasonable.

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