

Nourishment and Perfection of Self (Tahliyah)

Having cleaned and refined the self a wayfarer is ready for the next stage known as training and perfection of self (*Tahliyah*). The logical sciences have confirmed that the human self is in the state of motion and growth gradually manifesting his hidden potentials. In the beginning the self is not complete and perfect, rather gradually develops his essence.

If, he travels on the straight path gradually becomes perfect, eventually attaining his ultimate-perfection. But if deviates and selects the wrong course gradually takes distance from the ultimate human perfection, thus, eventually crashing into dark valleys of ignorance and brutality.

1. God's Nearness

It should be understood that human movement is a real one and is not a figurative thing; this movement is related to his Celestial Spirit and not to his body. Also, this movement takes place within his inner essence and is not an external phenomenon. In this movement his precious jewel of human essence moves and becomes metamorphosed.

Therefore, the axis of human movement is also a real axis and is not something metaphorical, but the axis of movement is not separate from the mover's essence, rather the mover moves within his inner essence carrying the axis of movement along with him.

Now the question arises that every movement carries some goal. Therefore, the human beings in the world are moving towards which objective and what is going to be their eventual fate? The traditions and Qur'anic verses reveal that the ultimate objective or goal destined for human beings is God's Nearness, but all human beings do not travel on the straight path and do not attain the exalted position of God's-Nearness. The Holy Qur'an said:

وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً فَأَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ وَأَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ

مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ أُولَئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ

“And ye will be three kinds: (First) those on the right hand; what of those on the right hand? And those on the left hand, what of those on the left hand ? And the foremost in the race, the foremost in the race: Those are they who will be brought nigh, in gardens of delight. (56: 7-12)

The people on the right hand side are the ones who have received eternal salvation, the people on the left are the ones who have received adversity and the people foremost in the race are the ones who distinguished themselves in their journeying on the straight path and attained the exalted position of God's Nearness. This verse clearly indicates that the objective or goal behind human movement must be God's Nearness. And the following verse:

فَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ فَرَوْحٌ وَرَيْحَانٌ وَجَنَّتُ نَعِيمٌ وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ
الْيَمِينِ فَسَلَامٌ لَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ فَنُزُلٌ
مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَتَصْلِيَةٌ جَهِيمٍ

“Thus, if he is of those brought nigh. Then breath of life, and plenty and a Garden of delight. And if he is of those on the right hand, {then the greeting) “Peace be unto thee “ from those on the right hand. But if he is of the rejecters, the erring. Then the welcome will be boiling water and roasting at Hell fire.” (56: 88-94)

Further, God-Almighty said in the following verse:

كَلَّا إِنْ كِتَابَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِي عِلِّيِّينَ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا عِلِّيُّونَ كِتَابٌ مَّرْقُومٌ يَشْهَدُهُ
الْمُقَرَّبُونَ

“It is not so (as understood by unbelievers), Nay but the record of the righteous is in Illiyin. Ah, what will convey unto thee what Illiyin is! A written record. Attested by those who are brought near (unto their Lord). (83: 18-21)

From the above verse it may be concluded that the exalted position of God's Nearness and attainment of absolute perfection is the ultimate goal of people's journeying and movement. Therefore, God's favorite servants are the most distinguished group among the people who have been bestowed eternal bliss.

The Holy Qur'an said:

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

“And remember when the angels said: O Mary! Lo! God–Almighty giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him, Son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near (unto God–Almighty). (3: 45)

It can be inferred from traditions and Qur’anic verses that distinguished and deserving God’s servants who have surpassed others in belief, faith, and righteous deeds shall be blessed with the most privileged and exalted position of God’s Countenance, and in accordance to the interpretation of some verses has been also named “the Place of Nearness to the Most Magnificent King” (*Malik Muqtadar*). Also, the martyrs will be assigned this special position. The Holy Qur’an said:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا ۗ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يَرْزُقُونَ

“Think not of those who are slain in the way of God–Almighty, as dead. Nay, they are living with their Lord they have provision. (3: 169)

Therefore, ultimate human perfection and the final destination of the wayfarers is Nearness of God–Almighty.

2. Meanings of God's Nearness

Now let us see what is meant by God’s Nearness? And how could it be imagined that a person may reach closer to God–Almighty. The nearness means being close and could be defined as follows:

1. Nearness Relative to Place

The two existence which are closer physically are called near to each other .

2. Nearness Relative to Time

When two things are closer to each other relative to time are called near to each other.

Of course, it is evident that nearness of (God’s) servants with Him could not belong to the above mentioned two categories, because, God–Almighty is beyond the limits of time and place rather is the creator of them, therefore, it is not possible for any thing to have nearness with Him relative to time and place.

3. Metaphorical Nearness

Sometimes it is said that Mr. X is very close and intimate with Mr. Y, which means that Mr. Y Respects, likes, and accepts Mr. X's recommendations and suggestions. This sort of nearness is called metaphorical, figurative, and ceremonial but is not real.

Could this kind of nearness be possible between a servant and God? Of course, it is true God loves His deserving servants and accepts their prayers but still this kind of nearness could not be possible between a servant and God–Almighty, because as was pointed out earlier, that this has been proved by the logical sciences and Qur'anic verses, and traditions also support that the wayfarer, his direction, and straight path all are real things and are not figurative and ceremonial.

Likewise, return towards God–Almighty which has been so much emphasized in plenty of Qur'anic verses and traditions is a real thing and cannot be metaphorical or figurative. For example: God–Almighty said in the Holy Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

“O Thou soul at piece! Return unto thy Lord, content in his good pleasure. (89:27–28)

And said:

تُرْجَعُونَ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ

“Whoso doth right, it is for his soul, and whoso doth wrong, it is against it. And afterward unto your Lord ye will be brought back. (45: 15)

And said:

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

“Who say, when a misfortune striketh them: Lo! We are God's and Lo! unto Him we are returning.”(2: 156)

Anyway, return to God–Almighty, straight path, way of God, and attaining self–perfection are real things and are not metaphorical. A human being's movement is an aware and optional act whose result will

become manifested after his death.

Since the very beginning of Human existence this movement begins and continues until death. The nearness to God is real thing and God's decent servants really become closer to Him and impious and sinner indeed take distance from God–Almighty.

Therefore, let us see what is meant by nearness to God–Almighty. God's Nearness is not comparable to other types of nearness, rather it is a special kind of nearness which might be called nearness relative to perfection or relative to the rank of exaltedness of that particular existence. In order to further clarify let us refer to the following preface.

The books of wisdom and Islamic philosophy have confirmed that existence is real and consists of various rank and degrees. It may be compared to the analogy of illumination which consists of various degrees of lights varying from low to very high.

The lowest degree of a lighting lamp could be one watt which is also illumination till the lamp with infinite brightness which is nothing other than illumination. In between the lowest and highest limits of illumination there exist various intermediate degrees of light differing relative to extreme limits in proportion to their weakness and strength.

Existence too consists of various ranks and positions differing in proportion to their weakness and strength. The lowest degree being the existence of nature and matter till the highest rank of existence the essence of God–Almighty which from the point of view of perfection is infinite and absolute. In between these two extremities there also exists intermediate degrees of existence varying in proportion to their weakness and strength.

Here it becomes clear that as much as an existence is stronger and holder of higher rank, in perfection would be closer relative to the most supreme existence and the source of absolute perfection –the Essence of God–Almighty, and opposite to that the weaker an existence would be, the farther it will be relative to the Essence of Self Existent (*Wajib al-Wajoud*).

Now in the light of above explanation the meaning of nearness of servants to God and distance from Him could be imagined. As for as the Celestial spirit is concerned, a human being is an abstract reality, which from the point of view of manifestation is related to matter, and because of that is capable to grow, becoming perfect until attaining the ultimate degree of his existence.

From the beginning of his movement until arriving at the final destination he is not more than one person and one reality, but as much as he achieves perfection and ascension in his journeying with in his essence, in the same proportion becomes nearer to the source of all Creation, the Absolute and Infinite Perfection –the Holy Essence of God–Almighty.

A human being through belief and righteous deeds can make his existence complete and perfect so that

he could attain God's Nearness, thus, being able to utilize divine blessings and favors to his maximum advantage and therefore, making his own essence a source of further benevolence and goodness.

Faith, the Foundation of Spiritual Perfection

Faith and enlightenment are the basis for self's perfection and journeying towards God–Almighty. Before starting this journey a wayfarer must decide about his final destination, must know where is he going, and which path he must select, otherwise he would get lost and would never reach to his final destination.

Faith in God–Almighty induces courage for movement, search and endeavor, as well as clearly demarcates his path and final destination. Those who lack faith are helpless to walk upon the straight path of perfection. The Holy Qur'an said:

وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنَاكِبُونَ

“And Lo! those who believe not in the Hereafter are indeed astray from the path. (23: 74)

And said:

بَلِ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ فِي الْعَذَابِ وَالضَّلَالِ الْبَعِيدِ

“Nay, but those who disbelieve in the Hereafter are in torment and for error. (34:8)

An unbeliever who does not believe in the existence of God–Almighty and Hereafter becomes absolutely cut off from the world of perfection and his activities are limited to follow his material and animalistic requirements. Therefore, his arms and objectives for movement could not be any thing else other than material world.

He is not journeying on the straight path of perfection and therefore, can never attain God's Nearness .The direction of his movement is world and therefore, continuously becomes farther away from the straight path of human exaltation.

Even if an unbeliever performs a righteous deed it would not become a means for his self–perfection; because, he has not done it with the intention for God and his Nearness (*Taqarrub*), so that it becomes

beneficial for him, rather has done it for the sake of this world and, therefore, will see the result in this world but nothing will be left for him in the Hereafter. God–Almighty said in Holy Qur’an:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ ۖ أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادٍ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ ۚ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ

“A similitude of those who disbelieve in their Lord: their works are ashes which the wind bloweth hard upon a stormy day. They have no control of aught that they have earned. That is the extreme failure. (14: 18)

Anyway, faith is the foundation of deeds and bestows upon them merit. If, a believer’s soul gets intermingled with faith (*Iman*) and the phrase of Monotheism (*Kalma al-Tawhid*) would become illuminated and would ascend towards God–Almighty. Of course, righteous deeds too helps him in this ascent. The Holy Qur’an said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ

“Whoso desireth power (should know that) all power belongeth to God–Almighty. Unto Him good words ascend and the pious deed doth He exalt. (35: 10)

The righteous deeds carry a human soul upward enabling him to attain the exalted position of God’s Nearness and providing him a sacred and beautiful existence subjected to his possessed with the faith (*Iman*). An unbeliever’s soul is dark and does not have the decency of possessing God’s Nearness and delightful existence. The Holy Qur’an said:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً

“Whosoever doth right, whether male or female and is a believer, him verily we shall quicken with good life. (16:97)

Therefore, a wayfarer from the very beginning must strive and endeavor to strengthen his faith because the stronger and superior will be his faith the higher will be his ascent and rank. Holy Qur’an said:

يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

“God-Almighty will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge, to high ranks, God is informed of what you do. (58:11)

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