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4. Remembrance

Being engrossed in the remembrance of Imams (a.s.)

Another effect and sign of Imams' (a.s.) recognition is remembering them on different occasions. In fact this remembrance should be perpetual as this is the effect of the love of Imams (a.s.). When a person is attached to someone intensely, he is not oblivious to him and remembers him constantly. The more intense the attachment, the harder it is for him to forget the person, till such a time that the remembrance of the person becomes etched in his heart and an inseparable part of his existence. Therefore those who have faith and recognition of Imam (a.t.f.s.) in occultation, wherein they are deprived of seeing him (a.t.f.s.), they must never forget him in their hearts.

A person asked Imam Moosa Kazim (a.s.) about the Quranic verse,

'And apparent and hidden bounties are completed upon you. (31 : 20)

Imam (a.s.) said,

'Apparent bounty is the apparent Imam and the hidden bounty is the hidden Imam.'

Then the narrator asked, 'Do the Imams (a.s.) go into occultation?'

Imam (a.s.) declared:

'Yes he gets concealed from the eyes of the people, however his remembrance does not disappear from the hearts of the believers and he will be the twelfth from us.'

It is possible that the unbelievers may forget Imam (a.s.), because they don't know him. But the one who knows him and recognizes him and has his Mastership cannot forget him. In occultation, the attachment of the believer with his Imam should be so strong, that nothing should make him oblivious of his presence and nothing should hinder him from Imam's (a.s.) remembrance.

To quote Ayatullah Syed Muhammad Taqi Musavi Isfahani (r.a.), author of Mikyalul Makarim fi favaaedu

dua lil Qaim (a.t.f.s.):

"The believers are in various grades and levels in the remembrance of their master. Their grade is in direct proportion to their level of faith, recognition and certitude. The condition of some of the believers in remembering their master is such, as the poet declares,

'Allah knows that I don't remember you

Because how can I remember you, when I never forget you?'¹

Then the author elaborates on how we can enliven the remembrance of Imam (a.t.f.s.) day and night. We have translated below the relevant passage.

'When you mourn, remember that this life that Allah has gifted you is with the blessing and mediation of Imam (a.t.f.s.). So, thank Allah and Imam (a.t.f.s.) for it. And be careful not to employ this bounty in actions for other than Allah's satisfaction, because by earning Allah's displeasure, you are aggrieved and burdened. Then when you are in a place of sin and disobedience, remember that your master is observing you in that condition (of sin). Then out of his respect and honour, abandon the sin.

Similarly if you come across a good action, then take precedence in acting upon it, and understand that it is a bounty from Allah's side that He has bestowed out of our attachment with our Imam (a.t.f.s.). Thank Allah for it and gift it to Imam (a.t.f.s.) by performing it in a manner befitting it. Thus, request Imam (a.t.f.s.) like the brothers of Yusuf (a.s.), pleading,

يا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَّا الضُّرَّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُزْجَاةٍ فَأَوْفِ لَنَا
الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ.

***'O chief! Distress has afflicted us and our family and we have brought scanty measure (funds). So give us full measure and be charitable towards us. Surely Allah rewards the charitable.'* (12 : 88)**

And be humble and fearful of him, like a slave who lowers his head before his master. Every morning and evening salutes him with the salutation of a slave who is eager to see his master and who melts in pain due to his separation. Salute him with the sincerity of one who is so moved with this separation that tears flow down his cheeks, as he is aware that he is standing in the presence of his master.

When the time of namaz draws near, remember the condition of your master (a.t.f.s.) as he stands in front of His Lord. Follow your master (a.t.f.s.) with presence of heart and a humble gait, closing your eyes to everything except Allah and understand that the taufiq for this has come only with the blessings of your master (a.t.f.s.). This worship is not accepted from you except with your master's (a.t.f.s.) consent, after you have obeyed him and acquired his recognition. As your recognition of Imam (a.t.f.s.)

increases, Allah will enhance your status, reward and rank near Himself.

When you are finished with namaz make Imam (a.t.f.s.) a mediator between Allah and yourself, so that He accepts that namaz out of your love and attachment towards him. And when you raise your hands for supplication begin by asking for his relief, before your own, because he has the highest authority over you and his favours upon you are boundless. And when you are confronted with a seemingly impossible situation with no way out, plead your case in front of him and wail before him, so that he may mediate with Allah for the solution of your problem. He is after all a means towards Allah's satisfaction and a door towards His Mercy. We have been commanded to enter the house only from its door:

وَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا

***'Enter the house from its door.'* (2 : 189)²**

If someone has even a little recognition of Imam (a.t.f.s.), he knows that remembering Imam (a.t.f.s.) is among the highest form of worship. And it is due to its importance that we have been commanded to beseech Allah thus:

وَلَا تُنْسِنَا ذِكْرَهُ...

***'O Allah, don't make us forget his remembrance.'*³**

Remembrance of Imam (a.t.f.s.) means immersing oneself in his remembrance as well as constantly discussing and reflecting on his condition. The first condition is spiritual in nature while the second is external. The first condition is for man himself, while the other is for those around him. Man should always be in search of reasons to enliven Imam's (a.t.f.s.) remembrance for himself and his friends.

Attending gatherings in the remembrance of Imams (a.s.)

Our Imams (a.s.) have encouraged organising of and participating in gatherings for the remembrance of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says to Dawood b. Sarhan,

'O Dawood, convey my salaam to my friends and give them my message – May Allah have mercy upon a servant who when is with some other person mentions about our affair (mastership). In such a situation, the third among them is an angel who seeks forgiveness for them. No two persons gather for remembering us expect that Allah takes pride in them over His angels. Then whenever you gather, proceed with our remembrance. Because your gathering and your remembering is to enliven our affair.

And the best after us, are those who discuss about our affairs and invite towards our remembrance.'⁴

It is indeed noteworthy that how much blessing and good fortune exits in organising gatherings for the remembrance of Ahlul Bait (a.s.). Thus, if a gathering is organised and due to negligence and inattention, the remembrance of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) is overlooked, then one can only imagine the misfortune and remorse of those participating in that gathering.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said:

'Every gathering that is organised in which Allah's remembrance and our remembrance is missing, that gathering will be a cause of regret to its organizers.'⁵

Remembrance of Imams (a.s.) is enlivened by discussing their limitless virtues and indescribable calamities and that too in their own words and traditions. That is why it is highly recommended that believers should visit each other frequently to discuss the extra-ordinary traits and life sketches of the Imams (a.s.). The aim behind this recommendation is that they should be engaged in the narration of the excellence and tribulations of the Imams (a.s.). Imam Sadiq (a.s.) exhorts:

'Visit each other because that enlivens the heart and is the medium of remembering our traditions because our traditions make you merciful towards each other. Therefore, if you act on it, you will get guidance and find success. And if you leave it you will be deviated and get destroyed. Therefore take benefit from our traditions and I guarantee that you will find success.'⁶

Surely acting on the traditions of the Imams (a.s.) is not possible without Allah's guidance and good fortune. Gatherings and assemblies organised for the remembrance of the Imams (a.s.) is one medium to achieve this guidance and good fortune. In reality remembrance of the Imams (a.s.) is food for the heart and soul. For, Allah has made Mastership and love of the Imams (a.s.) a foundation for the enlivening of hearts. Hence, one who wishes to keep his heart alive should keep Mastership alive in his heart.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) asked Fuzail:

تَجْلُسُونَ وَ تَتَحَدَّثُونَ؟

'Do you sit and narrate traditions for each other?

Fuzail replied: Yes.'⁷ Imam Sadiq (a.s.)

إن تلك المجالس أحبها فأحيو أمرنا يا فضيل ! فرحم الله من أحيأ أمرنا.

'I like such gatherings. Then O Fuzail, keep our affairs alive. May Allah have mercy on the one who keeps our affairs alive?'

يافضيل من ذكرنا أو ذكرنا عنده فخرج من عينه مثل جناح الذباب غفر الله له
ذنوبه ولو كانت أكثر من زبد البحر.

'O Fuzail, one who remembers us or our mention is made in his presence, then if tears flow from his eyes even to the extent of the wing of a fly, then Allah will erase all his sins even if they are to the extent of the foam of the ocean.'⁷

This crying may be due to intense love and restlessness of the heart or due to severe grief at separation from Imam al-Ghaib (a.t.f.s.) or due to strong attachment to, and Mastership of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). Regardless of the reason, crying purifies the heart and washes away the sins, no matter how sinful he may be.

Imam Ridha' (a.s.) says

ومن ذكر بمصابنا فبكى وأبكى لم تبك عينه يوم تبكي العيون، ومن جلس
مجلسا يحيى فيه أمرنا لم يمت قلبه يوم تموت القلوب.

'One who remembers our calamities, then cries and makes others cry, his eyes will not cry on the day, when other eyes will be crying. Anyone who sits in the gathering wherein our affairs are enlivened, his heart will not die on the day when other hearts will die.'⁸

1. Mikyalul Makarim, Vol. 2, Pg. 358

2. Mikyalul Makarim, Vol. 2, Pg. 443-444

3. Kamaluddin, Chap. 45, Tradition 43

4. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 1, Pg. 200

5. Usul al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wal Kufr, Chap. of 'Necessity of Allah's remembrance in all gatherings', Tradition 2

6. Usul al-Kafi, Kitabul Imaan wal Kufr, Chap. of 'Discussion with brothers', Tradition 2

7. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 44, Pg. 282, Tradition 14

8. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 44, Pg. 278, Tradition 1