Foremost in Faith

Maulana Syed Mohammad Jaffer
Zaidi Shaheed

Translated by
Syeda Batool Shahid Zulfiqar Ali

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Author(s):

Maulana Syed Mohammad Jaffer Zaidi Shaheed [3]

A Collection of Lectures delivered by Maulana Syed Mohammad Jaffer Zaidi Shaheed concerning the high status of the Prophet (S) and his Ahlul Bayt (as) in the Light of Traditions and various Ayat f the Holy Qur'an

Translator(s):

Syeda Batool Shahid Zulfiqar Ali [4]

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For the Lady of Light and Purity, a fountain of
God's abundant Grace, our Holy Prophet's beloved
daughter, mother of Hasan and Hussain,
Lady Fatima al Zehra.

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بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا

"Or dost thou think

That the Companions of the Cave
And of the Inscription
Were wonders among Our Signs"
Al Kahf (***18:9***)

This verse adorns the green cover that drapes the tomb of Imam Hussain , within the gold and silver zarih in Karbala.

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بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ۖ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ۖ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ۚ نُورٌ عَلَىٰ نُورٍ ۗ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.
The parable of His Light is a niche wherein is a lamp—
the lamp is in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star—
lit from a blessed olive tree,
neither eastern nor western,
whose oil almost lights up,
though fire should not touch it.
Light upon light.
Allah guides to His Light whomever He wishes.
Allah draws parables for mankind,
and Allah has knowledge of all things."
Al Nur (***24:35***)

"All Praise to the Almighty who guided us to this path and we would not have been guided if He had not guided us. Indeed the Prophets of God brought the truth". (***7:43***)

Peace be upon our Prophet and his pure Aal. May the eternal Blessings of the most Merciful Lord

surround them till such time that we live and till such time that days and nights continue to exist.

These lectures were originally published in Urdu in 1985 in an effort to share them with as many people as possible. The English translations now aim to reach out to a wider audience including those not familiar with the Urdu language. It is also a genuine effort to transmit this valuable treasure onto our next generations, my children and grandchildren in particular, now globally placed, in a language that is more familiar to them. The earnest desire, then and now, is to reaffirm our love for our Prophet and his Ahlul Bayt and to keep their Zikr alive.

May God grant us the intercession of the Prophet's grandson on the Day of Reckoning. May He keep us steadfast on the path of truth along with Imam Hussain and his worthy companions who laid down their lives before him, in a bid to protect him.

"Praise be to Allah who is the Lord of the Worlds." (***1:1***)

Infinite thanks to Him who granted a humble being the permission to undertake this task.

Deep appreciation and thanks to Shaheed e Lahore, Syed Mohammad Jaffer Zaidi Shaheed, for enriching us generously with love of the Ahlul Bayt by virtue of these lectures.

A special note of thanks to my father, Syed Marghoob Ahmed for sowing the seeds of mawaddat all along the path. He was the architect of the earlier publication in Urdu and is the moving spirit behind this translation too. That Collection was his way of expressing love for the Prophet and his Aal and also paying tribute to his longtime friend and mentor, Syed Mohammad Jaffer Zaidi Shaheed. This translation (of six lectures) is my humble way of paying respect to my father's departed soul and marks a continuity of his untiring efforts to promote and share Zikr e Ahlul Bayt.

I am indebted to Ayatullah Syed Aqeel Al Gharavi for writing a tribute to Maulana Syed Mohammad Jaffer Zaidi Shaheed, for inclusion in this Collection of Lectures.

My gratitude and thanks also to my family and friends for being my perpetual helpline and for their sincere assistance and encouragement all along.

Recitation of Darood (PBUH) is essential when the name of the Last Prophet is mentioned. The names of the Imams are to be coupled with salutations (A.S) too. For the flow of narrative they are not always part of the text, but the reader is trusted to offer these salutations.

A literal translation of the lectures is presented here. It is based on the Urdu text first published in 1985 from Karachi and again from Lahore in 2005. A genuine effort has been made to remain as close to the

text as possible. The Urdu version besides its rich religious content is also a masterpiece of literature. True literary justice however, was not possible while translating from Urdu into English.

Capital ‘P’ or ‘M’ is used for words ‘prophet’ and ‘messenger’ when referring to the Last Prophet directly by name or indirectly and for others only when name is identified. For a general reference to them lower case letters are used.

The Appendix in this Collection shares the translation of the original appendix printed in the Urdu collection and some selected texts from pamphlets published by my late father.

The Glossary at the conclusion will help readers to understand the transliterations of Arabic or Urdu words and phrases used in the text.

Maulana Syed Mohammad Jaffer Zaidi (Shaheed) was born in 1908 in Memon Sadaat, District Bajaur in India. His father, Maulvi Syed Mohammad Abbas, his grandfather Maulvi Syed Mohammad Ali Sagheer, and his great grandfather Syed Inayat Ali, were all religious scholars and eminent Hakims. Thus, he inherited a wealth of knowledge from his ancestors .

He acquired his education in Meerat. He then moved to Bareli where for twenty–two years he remained a prayer leader in a locality known as ‘Kala Imam Bara’. In 1956 he migrated with his family to Pakistan. In 1957 he was offered a permanent position of prayer leader in Jamia Masjid, Krishan Nagar, Lahore. He accepted this offer and settled down in Lahore.

Besides being a renowned scholar of the subcontinent and a speaker par excellance, Maulana Syed Mohammad Jaffer Zaidi Shaheed was a man of great integrity and honour. He possessed a very humble and captivating personality and his heart was the citadel of enormous love for the Last Prophet and his remarkable Aal. It was due to this blend of love, humility, charisma and profound knowledge that his oratory and scholarship had a very specific appeal both for the layman as well as for the intellectual.

On November 3, 1980, Zilhaj 24, Syed Muhammad Jaffer Zaidi was attacked and fatally injured, when he reached m home after concluding the proceedings of the function held to mark Eid Mubahila. He breathed his last on November 7, 1980 and returned to his Maker a true martyr. His untimely shahadat created a great vacuum in the context of meaningful and responsible narrative on the tragedy of Karbala.

تقریظ

از

آیت اللہ عقیل الغروی

بسم اللہ الرحمن الرحیم وبحمدہ

والصلاۃ والسلام علي النبي محمد وآلہ

وعلي المنتجبين من صحبہ

اما بعد

ہر دور میں بعض ایسی شخصیتیں ہوا کرتی ہیں جو اپنی تہذیبی روایتوں کی ایسی مکمل اور بھر پور نمائندگی کرتی ہیں کہ بعد کے تذکرہ نگاروں کے لئے وہ صرف سنگِ میل ہی نہیں بلکہ نشانِ منزل کی حیثیت اختیار کر لیتی ہیں۔ 'شہیدِ لاہور' حجتہ الاسلام علامہ سید محمّد جعفر زیدی طاب ثراہ اپنے دور کی ایسی ہی بزرگوار شخصیتوں میں ایک انتہائی منفرد حیثیت کے مالک تھے۔ وہ خالص اسلامی تہذیب و ثقافت کے انتہائی معتبر امانت دار ہی نہیں تھے بلکہ اس انسان اور مستقبل ساز روایت کو پوری علمی دیانت اور مکمل تربیتی ذمہ داری کے ساتھ بعد میں آنے والی نسلوں تک منتقل کرنے کے تخلیقی اور ثقافتی عمل کے سرگرم لیکن متانت شعار سر رشتہ دار بھی تھے۔ وہ بنیادی طور پر ایک عالم دین تھے۔ لیکن وہ ایک ایسے عالم دین تھے جو 'علم' اور 'دین' دونوں حقیقتوں کی ہمہ جہت و ہمہ

گیر خصوصیات کے حامل تھے۔ وہ بہ یک وقت خالص علمی ثقافت اور خالص دینی تہذیب دونوں کی نمائندگی کرنے والے تاریخ نگاروں اور تاریخ سازوں میں سے تھے۔ وہ محراب عبادت میں ایک خالص روحانی شخصیت کی صورت ایمان جلوہ افروز ہوا کرتے تھے، منبر پر ایک مصلح خطیب کا منصب نبھایا کرتے تھے اور لوح و قلم کے دربار میں مسائل کی تحقیق اور مطالب کی تنقید کے جملہ شرائط کو پیش نظر رکھنے والے ایک حقیقت نگار سفیرِ علم کی حیثیت رکھتے تھے۔

وہ اس مہتم بالشان لقب کی پوری معنویت کے ساتھ واقعاً ایک 'حجتہ الاسلام' تھے!!

'منبر حسینی' وہ عظیم علمی اور ادبی شہ نشین ہے جس کا حق ادا کرنے کے لیے علم و ادب کے مختلف شعبوں پر کامل دسترس حاصل ہونے کے علاوہ خود حضرت سید الشہداء علیہ السلام کی ذات گرامی اور آپ کے عظیم الشان مقصد کے ساتھ سچی نسبت اور حقیقی مناسبت بھی ایک بڑی اور نہایت کڑی شرط ہے، جب تک باطن کا رشتہ بھی حضرت سید الشہداء علیہ السلام سے استوار نہ ہو منبر حسینی پر حقیقی کامیابیاں نصیب نہیں ہو سکتیں۔ یوں تو کوئی بھی کرسی سجا کر بیٹھ جاتا ہے اور خود کو صاحب منبر سمجھ کر زبان کھول دیتا ہے، لیکن خطابت زورآوری و زبان درازی کا نام نہیں بلکہ 'یہ حرمتِ سخن سے حریمِ دل کو مسخر کرنے کا ہنر ہے'__ جو فی الواقع شاعری یا دوسرے مواہبِ فطرت کی طرح دست قدرت ہی سے عطا ہوتا ہے۔ اور دست قدرت سے فطرت کا یہ شائستہ ترین بلکہ بلاشبہ حجتہ الاسلام علامہ سید محمّد جعفر کو عطا ہوا تھا۔

یہ امر یقیناً سچی مسرت کا باعث ہے کہ ان کی مجلسوں کا انگریزی

ترجمہ شایع کرنے کی گرانقدر کوششیں ہو رہی ہیں۔

مجھے اس موقع پر مشہور مترجمِ قرآن عبداللہ یوسف علی کی سطریں یاد آرہی ہیں جو انہوں نے اپنے ترجمہ قرآن کے شروع میں لکھی تھیں:

“I want to make English itself, an Islamic language”

یقیناً اس طرح کی تقریروں کے ترجمے اس مقصد کے حصول میں بھی مدد گار ہوں گے کہ انگریزی زبان سچی اسلامی تہذیب کی ترجمان بن سکے گی۔ وہ سچی اسلامی تہذیب جس کی بنیاد میں محبت ہی محبت ہے، محبتِ اللہ، محبتِ رسول اور محبتِ اہلِ بیتِ رسول اور پھر تمام نیک لوگوں کی محبت اور دنیا کے تمام انسانوں سے سچی ہمدردی!

میں اِنہیں چند کلمات کے ساتھ مولانا مرحوم کی روح کو خراجِ عقیدت پیش کرتے ہوئے اس ترجمہ نگار سیدہ بتول شاہد ذولفقار علی اور اس کتاب کی اشاعت میں کوشاں تمام حضرات کو داد بھی دیتا ہوں اور دلی دعائیں بھی! پروردگار ان کی اس خدمت کی سچی قدردانی کی توفیق عطا فرمائے!

خادم اہلِ بیت

سید عقیل الغروی

باب المراد، لندن، یو کے

تقریظ

از

آیت اللہ عقیل الغروی

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent and the Merciful.
Blessings and Salutations to the Holy Prophet and his pious Progeny and his chosen Companions.

In every era there are personalities who represent their cultural traditions so perfectly and so completely that they not only serve as milestones for the writers and historians of later periods, but also figure as worthy standards of the destination itself. 'The Martyr of Lahore', Hujjatul Islam Allamah Syed Mohammad Jaffer Zaidi (taba saraah) was one such eminent person of his time blessed with a unique perspective and personality.

He was not only an extremely reliable custodian of pure Islamic culture and values but also a harbinger to later generations of these humanistic as well as futuristic traditions with total scientific integrity and complete scholastic responsibility. While pursuing this cultural and creative task actively he maintained the dignity and composure of a solid academic foundation.

Basically Allamah Syed Mohammad Jaffer Zaidi was a religious scholar, but a religious scholar who understood the complexities pertaining to the twin realities of ‘knowledge’ and ‘religion’. He was a representative of the purely academic nature of knowledge and was a purveyor of religious mores: a chronicler and a creator of history at the same time!

He appeared at the place of worship as a purely spiritual personality and at the pulpit he shone as an orator in the role of a reformer. In the hallways of pen and paper he acted as an ambassador who researched problems analytically and evaluated aims and objectives critically.

Allamah Syed Mohammad Jaffer Zaidi was a Hujjatul Islam, worthy of that lofty appellation with all its devotional and connotational significance.

The ‘Husaini’ pulpit (Minbar-e-Hussaini) is veritably that grand threshold of academic and literary pursuit of which a person deserves a niche only if he has complete control of the various departments of

knowledge and literature along with the strict condition of acquaintance with and relevance to the lofty personality of Syed Al-Shuhada (A.S) and his grand objective at Karbala.

Unless the inner relation with Hazrat Syed Al-Shuhada (A.S) is established, success at the 'Husaini' pulpit cannot be destined. Though anyone may decorate a chair for himself and consider himself worthy of the pulpit and regard himself a speaker, yet oratory is not linguistic wrestling or mere word play. It is in all fairness, the art of capturing the realm of the heart with the sanctity of speech. In fact, like poetic acumen or other natural instincts this art too is awarded by divinity. Hujjatul Islam Allamah Syed Mohamed Jaffer Zaidi was no doubt, blessed with this sophisticated gift from God.

It is a matter of real pleasure that valuable efforts are being made to translate his lectures into English. I am reminded of what the most famous translator of the glorious Quran, Abdullah Yusuf Ali said in the preface of his translation of the Quran: 'I want to make English itself an Islamic language.'

The translation of lectures like these shall aid in the furtherance of the above objective and enable English language to become representative of the true Islamic culture--- the culture whose foundation is love and only love. It is the love of Allah, the love of the Holy Messenger of Allah, and the love of his pious Progeny and then stretched to the love of all virtuous people and true sympathy for all human beings!

Having said these few words, I pay my tribute to the departed soul of the Allamah and I offer congratulations and my sincere duas to the translator Syeda Batool Shahid Zulfiqar Ali and to all those who assisted her in the publication of this book. May Allah grant acceptance to their endeavor and may He enable people to truly appreciate this selfless service.

In the service of the Prophet's pious Progeny
Syed Aqeel Algharavi
Babul Murad, London,UK

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بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا

عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا

إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا

فَوَقَاهُمُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَٰلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا

وَجَزَاهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا

“Verily, the Righteous shall drink of a cup tempered with Kafur,
From a spring where the servants of Allah shall drink and make it flow in abundance;
They fulfill their vows, and fear the day whose evil shall spread far and wide,
And they give food for love of Him, to the poor and the orphan and the captive,
(***saying***) ***‘We feed you only for the sake of Allah; we do not seek any recompense from you, nor thanks.***
Verily, we fear from our lord a stern day of distress.’

So Allah will guard them from the evil of that day and help them to find cheerfulness and happiness,
And reward them, for that which they endured with patience, with Garden and silk ……
Surah Dahr (***76:5–12***)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا

عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّىٰ سَلْسَبِيلًا

And they shall be given to drink there of a cup tempered with Zanjabil,
From a spring by the name of Salsabil .....
Surah Dahr (***76:17-18***)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

إِنَّ هَٰذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُمْ مَشْكُورًا

(***Allah will say to them***), ***'Verily , this is a recompense for you, and your endeavor is accepted and appreciated'."***

Surah Dahr (***76:22***)

[Translation by Ali Quli Qara'i]

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

قَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰہِ نُوۡرٌ وَّ كِتٰبٌ مُّبِیۡنٌ

"Indeed there has come to you from Allah Light and a manifesting Book." (***5:15***)

For the ultimate supremacy and the enormous sanctity of this gathering today, it suffices to say that this assembly is dedicated to the reference of a sublime being in whose honour God decorated the canvas of the whole world. Our intention today is to talk about the chosen one who is the very reason for the

creation of this colossal universe.

First of all let me say that considering something easy as difficult is cowardice, but to treat something difficult as easy is not being brave either. In fact, it betrays total lack of comprehension. Praise of Syed-ul-Anbia, the greatest of all Prophets, and for us to consider it easy! Supremacy of a being so elevated, that in the realm of possibilities loftier heights cannot be imagined, and our efforts to pay tribute to this extraordinary being with tongues that are so ordinary and imaginations that are so grounded!

I wish to say that in order to highlight the eminence of such an inspirational being, the least that one can hope for is the eloquence of a prophet. For a befitting tribute to the Supreme Prophet, the Leader of all Prophets, the minimum we may expect is the proclamation of a nabi, or that of a wali or perhaps that of Ali. How can we ordinary humans, ever think of doing justice to the praise of a Prophet who is so superior with the limitation of our language that is so inferior!

In my humble opinion, if this task is not considered difficult, then one has not grasped the true eminence of this great Prophet. If anyone has done justice to this narrative of praise for the Prophet, it is the proud Creator of the Prophet, God Almighty Himself. Also if anyone has done justice to submission and reposing trust in the Prophet, it is Ali, the Commander of the faithful.

At the very beginning let me highlight another important point. If you wish to talk about the very best of human beings without a significant foreword or a credible reference, then this approach certainly lacks depth. A narrative of praise will only be commendable if it is supplemented by a worthy introduction. If you refer directly to the person you wish to honour, then what literary grace have you summoned and what imaginative skill have you employed?

Now tell me, how can we ever extol the virtues of the Supreme Prophet when we are not even suitably qualified to praise the children that he reared and nurtured? We are not even competent to fathom the wisdom and knowledge of those he tutored, nor in any way glorify those privileged ones who imbibed the characteristics of Prophethood from him. When our eyes cannot even glimpse the fortunate ones who were enriched by the Prophet's Noor (radiance) or those who were resplendent with his brilliance, then how can our sight rest on him who is Nur e moazzam, the supreme light?

As a mark of protest I wish to point out that people assume it is easy to pay tribute to the Holy Prophet. They have simplistically adopted a direct pattern of approach. Let me tell them plainly that this is not being fair to the spirit of expression and this approach is neither eloquent nor stylish.

Please reflect on what I have to say next. Is it only todays gathering that aims to honour our Prophet? I say it with authority that all gatherings organised within the realm of Islam, regardless of the name assigned to them, each one of them guarantees a reference to the Supreme Prophet. The gathering may be associated with any personality, but the basis of their selection is purely their connection to the Holy Prophet. It is based on the fact that they were privileged to play and grow in his lap, of being nurtured and reared by the Prophet, and were fortunate to acquire wisdom from him directly.

Besides the Prophet, whoever else the Muslims believed in, it was by virtue of the Prophet's recommendation. Going to the other extreme in our search for the truth, we believe in God only because our Prophet guided us to this belief. When did God come and say to us, 'I am your God'? When did He say to us, 'believe in Me'? When did we see Him?

We saw our Prophet and we discovered God. We believed our Prophet and thus accepted God. The Prophet urged us to believe, hence we declared our faith in God. If our Prophet had not been around who would have believed in God? We accept God by virtue of the Prophet. We believe in Prophet Adam due to him. We acknowledge Prophets Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and Isa because of him. We believe in Torah, Zabur, Injeel and finally in the Quran because of him. We accept all this because our Prophet instructed us to do so.

By the Grace of God we accepted and accepted whole-heartedly. Whoever our Prophet wishes us to believe in, we will do so without any hesitation and without any ifs and buts. We will not question why we are being asked to place faith in a stone, or why we are required to believe in a non-living and immovable house? For once we affirm faith in the Prophet, then challenging or putting conditions on acceptance of this or that is akin to following in the footsteps of Shaytan, the Devil.

Open-hearted acceptance means we follow whatever the leader wants us to follow. We accept whatever our mentor wants us to accept, be it a stone, a static one, and even then we are not concerned whether the stone is black or white. Our black and white is in the hands of our leader. Why will we not believe that which he asks us to believe, and why will we put our trust in that which he disproves?

In the context of acceptance, there is no specification that allows us to contest the Prophet's recommendation for those who came before him, or those who were to come after him. There is no choice. On his request we will accept those that came before him and on his advice we will repose trust in those whom he nominates for the times ahead. In short, we accept the past, and we will accept the future because of him. Whatever we believe, it is solely because of him!

It is worth paying a great deal of attention to this fact that we trust only those people proposed by the Prophet and we openly claim that if the Prophet had not asked we would not go along with them. This assertion is verified on the grounds that we do not accept those who are not recommended by the Prophet. This may be perceived by some as our shortcoming or our weakness. But God is a witness that we only desire to follow in the Prophet's footsteps. We are keen to do whatever he says, to obey his orders, to follow his directions and to respect his choice and selection.

Here I will make a statement that will perhaps serve to simplify and explain my chain of thought. By the grace of God all those present here in front of me are followers of Aal e Mohammad (next of kin of Prophet). Can any Muslim ever claim not to be a follower of the Prophet's Aal? But I say to the audience, you followers of Aal e Mohammad, no doubt you are proud to be the followers of the Ahlul Bayt, proud to be believers of Prophet's Aal, yet this claim needs to be corrected. Talking of myself first,

although we are believers of Aal e Mohammad, in reality we are not truly followers of this Aal. And why not? This would be true only if we accepted them on their asking us to do so, accepted them on their request.

This is a very complex thought I am sharing with you. The claim of following Ali would be correct only if followers had accepted Ali on his personal request. Acceptance of Khatoon e Jannat (Bibi Fatima), Shabab e Ahle Jannat (Hasnain) or of the Ahlul Bayt would have been their acceptance had we accepted them on their demand or request. But it is strange that a lot has been accepted and will be accepted but on who's asking? They were not accepted on their personal request. They were accepted on the recommendation of someone else.

Now transport your imagination to the plains of Ghadeer. You will hear virtually every voice over there. God obviously said something, in response to which the Prophet said something. Angel Jibrail too communicated some message to the Prophet and he relayed this message to the people. From the elevation of the pulpit the Prophet addressed the gathering. The people listening to the sermon gave their comments. God said what was befitting of the Creator to say. The Angel performed his task as instructed. The Prophet did justice to what he was inspired and ordained to say.

Yet another thought is crossing my mind. I can visualize a Messenger of God who pleaded for his son and he was warned not to repeat that request. Further insistence would not save his son but it would eliminate his name from the list of Messengers. He is warned that if he repeats this prayer he may risk disqualification. Keep this juncture in mind when a Prophet's saying something threatens his Prophethood. And there is that other stage where the Prophet's not saying something threatens his Prophethood.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوۡلُ بَلِّغۡ مَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَيۡكَ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ ؕ

وَ اِنۡ لَّمۡ تَفۡعَلۡ فَمَا بَلَّغۡتَ رِسَالَتَهٗ ؕ

"(O Mohammad) Deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord; and if you do not do it, then, (it will be as if) you have not delivered His Prophethood (at all)" **(*5:67*)**

Reference to not delivering the Message in this verse suggests that the Prophet no longer acts as a Messenger. So there conveying a plea endangers Prophethood and here not conveying a message endangers Prophethood. Thus leading us to observe the height of ineligibility in the earlier case and the pinnacle of eligibility in the latter!

Anyhow, I was saying in the plains of Ghadeer everybody seems to be saying something. God said something; the Angel said something; the Prophet said something and the audience said something. Now turn the pages of history and move ahead. Everybody seems to be saying something. History has recorded a sentence or two from all present, but is there any evidence that where everyone from Heaven to Earth and from Earth to Heaven was vocal, in that enormous gathering did Ali say anything? Any word? Any sentence uttered by him that was recorded, that you are informed about?

The crowd is congratulating Ali. The crowd is chanting 'bala' (yes) in acceptance. The Prophet is delivering a message. God and the Angel are both saying something. Everyone is communicating and Ali, as the embodiment of the Quran, is quiet. He did not utter a word. Not a word is uttered by him. Not a sentence is forthcoming from him. He is silent, although he is Quran e Nataq (Speaking Quran), yet at this moment he chooses to remain quiet. Only because the one tasked to show is showing and the viewers are watching.

It follows as a logical outcome, or a combination of logic and law, that if 'viewing' something is akin to worship, then 'showing' that thing is also a form of worship. The crowd is looking at the person, whose reverence is such that even casting a glance on his face is considered 'ibadat'. The one exhibiting this face is our own Prophet who is informing the audience by his action and implied words, 'View Ali's face, and enter the domain of worship. I am showing his face to you and also engaging in worship'. All along not a word was uttered by Ali.

Have you ever reflected on this aspect that whatever was said that day, our Prophet was the speaker and the crowd heard and accepted it? I am not interested in the argument whether there were people present who did not accept the Prophets command. Acceptance or non-acceptance is their personal choice. Ali did not say anything. Whatever was said came from the Prophet. Our lives be sacrificed for that silent face. By not saying anything that day Ali said everything!

Had Ali said something in that gathering, this would have given an excuse to some in the crowd to say that Ali himself pleaded to be acknowledged. By remaining silent, Ali conveyed the message that, 'personally I am not seeking recognition. God has asked you or the Prophet of God has asked you. I did not ask you. So those of you who accept me, you are not doing so on my asking, rather you do so because God asked you or the Prophet of God asked you'. Thus it is downright simplicity trying to see who was recognised. What is worth consideration is on whose asking was he recognised and accepted.

A salient fact is evident now. Which prophet are you not a believer of? Is there any prophet whose prophethood you refuse to accept? From Prophet Adam to our Last Prophet there were thousands of prophets whom we acknowledge by name, and there were others we accept even without knowledge of their names. But you are not labeled followers (ummat) of Musa or Ibrahim or followers of Isa. Why not? When you believe in them, why are you not their ummat?

Just as we acknowledge and justify the Prophethood of our Messenger, so we justify the Prophethood of

Musa. Just as we accept Quran as our righteous Book so we accept Torah as a Book of God too. So why are we referred to as trustees or people of the Quran? Why are we referred to as ummat e Mustafa (pbuh)? Why not of Ibrahim or Musa or Isa when we accept all of them as genuine Prophets?

The reason for this is that we do not believe in them because they asked us to do so, rather we do so, on our Prophet's request. We are Prophet Mohammad's (pbuh) ummat, for besides him, we accept all others only on his recommendation. Had we accepted Prophets Musa or Isa on their request we would have belonged to their ummat. But since we follow each one of the other prophets on our Prophet's behest, hence it is not their acceptance, rather acceptance of our Prophet.

Using the same logic, keep in mind that if we repose trust in the Ahlul Bayt, we do so because our Prophet asked us to, and not on the Ahlul Bayt's request. Thus, it is only by way of simplification that we refer to ourselves as followers of Ahlul Bayt. Ali did not say, 'I am maula to all those for whom the Prophet is maula'. Ali himself did not say, 'Prophet is the city of knowledge and I am its door'. Ahlul Bayt did not declare that God had purified them. Whatever was said with regard to them was either said by God or by the Prophet of God. Hence it is clear we believe in the Ahlul Bayt because God and the Prophet asked us to. Now tell me honestly, if we follow this line, then are we followers of God and His Prophet, or are we followers of the Ahlul Bayt?

Now if perchance, we do not accept them, despite the request of God and the Prophet, then the world will merely say we did not accept the Ahlul Bayt. But in reality it is non-acceptance of God and His Prophet's recommendation. This would have been rejection of the Ahlul Bayt had they asked us to believe. The believers do not accept them on their request and neither do the non-believers disbelieve on their demand. So those who believe do so because God and His Prophet asked them to, and those who disbelieve actually disobey God and His Prophet. Essentially, this is disobedience of the authority that wished us to love and follow the Ahlul Bayt.

I was saying earlier, that every gathering arranged in the context of Islam, be it milad e Nabi, or milad e Ali or milad e Hussain, or a gathering to celebrate the birth or commiserate the death of any Imam, the focal point of all these gatherings is truly the person of our Prophet. Since, we accept the imamat (leadership) of each one of them on the Prophet's request, hence reference to any Imam is actually a reference to our Prophet himself.

Now I ask you all to keep in mind that often references to personalities are made without establishing a proper introduction. For instance, you may praise a scholar by saying, 'by the grace of God your knowledge is so vast, your abilities are phenomenal, your prose is wonderful and your speech is remarkable'. You can praise him all you like, but remember this praise is not credible since it is without an authentic backing. If you wish to create an impact, or if the scholar deserves a better share then do not restrict yourself to mere mention of his knowledge or his qualification. Rather, narrate the merit of those tutored by this scholar. Praise those who have been nurtured and enlightened by him or those who have acquired valuable guidance from him.

Let us suppose some itar (perfume) is sprinkled on an object. Then one way to detect it would be to sniff at that particular object. But if you truly wish to appreciate the fragrance, then sense the air that caresses that scented object and reaches out to you. To appreciate sunlight, do not ask the sun about its rays. Experience the expanse of the environment illuminated by that light and then assess the richness of the source. If a lamp is lit somewhere then move your gaze away from the wick and the flame. Focus on the surroundings illuminated by the flame and then determine the range and quality of this light.

At dusk, marvel at the luminosity of the setting sun which keeps the horizon aglow for extended daylight. It is only when this radiance fades away that night creeps in. Likewise, at dawn the source of light is miles away, but even when the sun is not yet visible, morning has already been heralded in. This is purely a matter of estimation. Actual emphasis should be on observing how intensely an object illuminates its surroundings or how deeply its fragrance enriches the environment. If these aspects are under constant review then the true magnificence of the source is readily felt.

Do you have any idea of the true eminence of the Prophet? Can you possibly pay tribute to his exalted status beyond just presenting the black locks of his hair or refer to his glowing countenance or even describe his radiant robe? This might be the aesthetic path you select for his praise, but frankly these words will not reflect the real greatness of the Prophet, nor be representative of the true glory of his esteemed being.

Let me present an issue here that may perhaps surprise you. The Holy Quran informs us of the various titles bestowed by God on His prophets. Prophet Adam was blessed with the title Safiullah. You know that, and a Quranic verse exists as evidence. Prophet Ibrahim earned the title of Khalilullah. Is that a part of a verse or not? Is it mentioned in the Quran or not? Prophet Musa has the title of Kaleemullah. This title too exists in the Quran. Prophet Isa is referred to as Roohullah. Now fellow Muslims, does your Prophet have a title, or is the leader of all prophets without one?

Indeed, his title is so popular that every child refers to him as Habibullah. You do agree that our Prophet has this title? However, you might be momentarily surprised by the following disclosure. The Quran itself was revealed to our beloved Prophet. The Last Book of Revelation was bestowed on him. Now in this Quran several prophets are granted titles but has our Prophet, who was the recipient of this Quran, earned a title or not?

This is a remarkably strange situation that those prophets who did not receive the Book earned various titles and the Prophet for whom this Book came, and who is superior to all other prophets, he is not conferred any title. Have you read any such verse where the Prophet is designated Habib? May be you have come across something but I certainly have not.

The Prophet's title 'Habibullah' is extremely popular. Imam Ali has said, 'Mohammad (pbuh) is chosen as the loved one'. In various duas where reference is made to the titles of Prophets Musa and Isa the title of the last Prophet has also been reaffirmed. So his entitlement is popular amongst the aulia (learned

leaders) and it is well known amongst the general public and is frequently used but it is not to be found in the Quranic verses. Its omission can be confusing but trying to understand the reason for its absence is not easy either.

Actually, God did not wish to use a fixed title for His beloved Prophet, for had He wished who could have stopped Him? He truly loved the Prophet but did not elect to specify any title. Infinite love and no mention of it whatsoever! God deemed it appropriate to directly confer titles on the earlier Prophets. He is my Safi, he is my Khalil, he is my Kaleem, he is my Rooh. But when it came to saying, he is my Habib, God decided that this term alone would not do justice to the depth of His love. This word did not have the capacity to encompass or lift the weight of love the Creator felt for His chosen Prophet.

God did not fancy directly acknowledging the Prophet as His loved one so He adopted the technique of indirect praise for expressing this affection. Mind you, the technique of indirect referral was my topic today, and I wish to say a few words in this context.

A king once summoned a renowned scholar and, pointing to his two sons, who were seated beside him, asked: “Are these two princes more dear to you than Hassan and Hussain?” Now let my audience tell me what could the reply possibly be. The scholar could not have said: “Your sons are dearer to me”. Mind you, there is a certain direction in which I am trying to guide you and inshallah you will easily follow the lead.

If you ask the truth, he could neither have said that Hasnain were dearer to him than the two princes. Why? This reply would not have been polite. Hence, this answer too was ruled out. All credit to the scholar’s presence of mind and remarkable wisdom! He realizes that clouds of death loom ominously on his head and an unfavourable answer could spell doom but wants to leave behind a reply that will stand out for posterity.

He can neither say the princes are dearer to him than Hasnain, nor is it polite to say that Hasnain are dearer to him. He makes the reply powerful by using an indirect approach. He says: “Qambar, who works for Amir ul Mu’mineen, is dearer to me than your sons”. He did not name Hasan or Hussain. He further added: “Not only is he dearer than your sons, in fact he is dearer than you too”. This additional remark implies that the position at one end is being raised and the standard at the other end is being lowered. There is no mention of Imam Ali or of his children. The helper of their house is not only dearer than the king’s sons but dearer than the king too! This is an indirect but powerful mode of praise!

Now reflect. If the scholar had simply replied that Hassan and Hussain were dearer to him, then this would have been a clear response but not a powerful one. Having understood this point, now it will be easy for you to understand why God called Ibrahim His Khalil, Musa His Kaleem, but when it came to saying My Habib, He did not say it directly. Instead He chose an indirect approach,

قُلۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ تُحِبُّوۡنَ اللّٰهَ فَاتَّبِعُوۡنِىۡ يُحۡبِبۡكُمُ اللّٰهُ

"(O Prophet) Say, if you claim to love God then follow me. God will love you." **(*3:31*)**

God wishes to convey that, 'I do not wish to understate your eminence by addressing you as My mehboob (dearly loved one). Your eminence cannot be highlighted by merely referring to you as My loved one. Rather, My mehboob is one who follows and obeys you, whosoever he may be. Let all mankind hear this, that the Prophet whose simple follower is so dear to Me, how deeply and how richly loved that Prophet would be' ! In short, God did not directly address the Prophet as His Habib.

There is another verse in the Quran:

لَاۤ اُقۡسِمُ بِهٰذَا الۡبَلَدِ

وَ اَنۡتَ حِلٌّۢ بِهٰذَا الۡبَلَدِ

"Nay, I swear by this city
While you (O Mohammad) are a free citizen in this city" **(*90: 1, 2*)**

I swear by the city of Mecca. (But when?) When you (O Prophet) are present there!

God is not inclined to swear by the Prophet for this will not highlight the supremacy of the Prophet. Instead, He swears by the city when the Prophet is present there. So what is being sworn by? It is not the city, and mind you this is a remarkable example of indirect referral. If you pay attention, a lot of hidden facts are being revealed in this verse.

This is a reference to the city which hosts Kaaba, the House of God. A house is not something that exists one day and is not there the next day. It is there during day and at night. Present now and in future. It is not going to migrate or leave this city and settle in another one. The city in which the House of God dwells is being sworn by, but God does not make His House the focal point or standard for swearing by. Rather, this vow is valid only till such time that the Prophet is present in this city. It implies swearing by a place where the Prophet is. It further means that 'if you are not there, regardless of the presence of My House, the city is not worthy of being sworn by. The real link is to those worthy of the House (Ahl al Bait) and not the House itself. I like the house where you dwell. I like the place where you live. I like it to the extent that it is worthy of being sworn by'!

Thus, praise that is backed by indirect references is always strong. I will give you another example. A

person once asked the Prophet if he was superior in rank and status to Prophet Musa or was it the other way round. Please notice that the question is being asked directly. If the Prophet does not respond than how will guidance take place? What should the answer be? He cannot say Prophet Musa is superior to me for that would be incorrect and if he says he himself is superior than it will be a response but not a suitable or modest one. Allah o Akbar! This difficulty was resolved by the Prophet. He told the man, 'I will not talk about myself so kindly change your question to, Is Prophet Musa superior to your Ali? And I will answer this question'.
God asked Prophet Musa to

اِذۡهَبۡ اِلٰى فِرۡعَوۡنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى

"Go to Firawn! Verily he has transgressed all bounds" (***20:24***)

اِذۡهَبَاۡ اِلٰى فِرۡعَوۡنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى

"Go both of you to Firawn; verily he has transgressed all bounds" (***20:43***)

God asked Musa to go for guidance of Firawn for he had rebelled. Keep in mind what I say: Go towards Firawn. Take Haroon along with you. Do not go alone. Take him along. Go together. When you go do not talk to him in harsh terms.

فَقُوۡلَا لَهٗ قَوۡلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهٗ يَتَذَكَّرُ اَوۡ يَخۡشٰى

"Speak to him, both of you, a gentle word, haply he may be admonished; or may fear." (***20:44***)

Thus, Musa and Haroon are instructed to go together and talk to Firawn in soft tones. The reply Musa gave is recorded in the Quran,

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّىۡ قَتَلۡتُ مِنۡهُمۡ نَفۡسًا فَاَخَافُ اَنۡ يَّقۡتُلُوۡنِ

"I have killed one of them and I fear they will kill me" (***28:33***)

The Prophet informs the people that all this is described in the Quran. He further reminds them of the occasion of the revelation of the first ten verses of Surah Bara'at (9: 1–10) in which the disbelievers are

severely reprimanded. These verses are so fearsome that they do not even begin in the name of the Beneficent, the Most Merciful. There is no hint of any kindness or mercy in these verses, only description of punishment and severe chastisement. When these verses were revealed to the Prophet, he summoned Ali, “O Ali, take these ten verses and recite them to the infidels (kafir) of Mecca”.

There, two were being sent together, here Ali is sent alone. There, instructions were for gentle communication, here the tone is extremely aggressive. Musa had killed only one of them, and here the person being sent has killed countless disbelievers of Mecca. Ever so many homes had grievances on account of Ali’s sword. He who had killed thousands was being sent alone to deliver the ominous verses. Ali went alone to deliver the extremely stern message,

فَاقۡتُلُوا الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ حَيۡثُ وَجَدۡتُّمُوۡهُمۡ

وَ خُذُوۡهُمۡ وَ احۡصُرُوۡهُمۡ وَ اقۡعُدُوۡا لَهُمۡ كُلَّ مَرۡصَدٍ

“Slay the idolaters wherever you find them and seize them and besiege them and lie in wait for them at every ambush” (***9:5***)

God sent the command and Ali went to deliver the verses. Musa had lamented, “I have killed one of them thus I am afraid”. The Prophet said, “When I asked Ali to go, did he say I have killed thousands of them? He went without any fear or apprehension to deliver these verses of Surah Baraat”. He further added, “If a Prophet’s Ali is like this than you decide what this Ali’s Prophet would be like! When Ali accepts a person as his Prophet and when Ali recites the Kalima of his Prophethood, what should the grandeur of his Prophethood be like”?

The truth is that we do not possess the potential to praise or highlight the attributes of this great Prophet without credible mediation. Neither do we have the courage to consider paying a direct tribute to the Supreme Prophet who was honoured with sublime Ascension, the magnificent Meraj !

We are conscious of our shortcomings. Thus, when the desire to praise the Prophet surges in our hearts, we resolve this difficulty by trying to remember the children of fhis household, and by trying to picture the splendour of the environment that was set aglow by the brilliance of his spirituality, his purity and his Nur!

We wonder how privileged those few must be who had directly imbibed traces of energy from the Prophet’s Nur. How luminous those faces must be! How fragrant their beings might be! Then we reflect. If mere association with the Prophet’s Nur and his fragrance can enrich others so generously, then how

absolutely radiant and sweetly fragrant the Prophet himself must be!

The End

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِنَّمَا وَلِیُّکُمُ اللّٰہُ وَ رَسُوۡلُہٗ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِیۡنَ

یُقِیۡمُوۡنَ الصَّلٰوۃَ وَ یُؤۡتُوۡنَ الزَّکٰوۃَ وَ ہُمۡ رٰکِعُوۡنَ

"Verily your guardian is Allah and His Messenger and those who accept faith and establish prayer and give zakat while they are bowing down." (***5:55***)

Before beginning any discussion on this ayat (verse), it is essential that I remind you of some basic facts. Quran is the name of the final Message and the last Communication from God. Since this Book is the last and final Revelation, hence whatever has been said is to last till the Day of Judgement. The orders therein remain valid till that Day and those cancelled will remain null and void till the Day of Judgement.

Similarly, if one is praised, that praise will continue, and if one is rebuked or admonished that too will persist till the Day of Judgement. After the Final Revelation, God has chosen not to say anything, nor send any fresh message. Every ayat in the Quran thus serves as the Last Word in its respective domain.

I wish to draw your attention to the fact that even though the Quran appears to be a modest sized Book, yet it is extremely comprehensive. The Sender of this Book has packed infinite data within its contents, such that we can neither count (***la ta`uddu***) nor fathom (***la tuh`soo***) (14:34) its depth. This Book offers a solution for every conceivable problem or issue that may arise till the Day of Judgment. There is no subject, be it '***ratb***' (soft or good) or '***yabis***' (dry or evil) (6:59) which is not detailed in this Book. God Himself informs us in Surah An-Aam (chapter 6),

مَا فَرَّطۡنَا فِی الۡکِتٰبِ مِنۡ شَیۡءٍ

"We have not left out anything in the Book" **(*6:38*)**

This verse clearly implies that within its finite text, the Book of God encompasses an infinite depth of meaning. For this to be true it is essential that what appears, as a single statement, must actually possess the potential to unfurl a thousand meanings that are wrapped around this one statement!

For this very reason the Prophet of God has told us that, 'the Quran has a zahir (obvious) aspect and it has a batin (hidden) aspect. In every hidden aspect there is yet another hidden aspect, rather seven of them; in fact, to each there could be seventy hidden aspects'. Our Prophet further tells us that, 'there is not a single word in the Quran that does not have at least seventy thousand meanings associated with it'.

With our simplistic outlook, we may wonder how it is possible for a single word to generate seventy thousand meanings. The most we can boast of is the use of double meaning words where one word conveys two meanings. That is the limit of our accomplishment. What comparison can there possibly be between our work and the work of the Creator of the Universe! Our weakness on one extreme and His strength on the other. The height of helplessness on this side and the pinnacle of empowerment on His side. So what audacious estimates or comparisons can we mortals form between our efforts and His work!

God, our Creator, has granted us the power of speech. If it is true that we humans are nothing but a collection of dust particles, and we certainly are, then as a rule whatever our origins be, we must eventually return to those origins. Fashioned from clay, eventually we perish and disintegrate back into dust particles. This very process is confirming our physical composition. Nature gathered these particles together and gave them identifying characteristics. When separated these particles could not speak. God combined them in a form that was granted the power of speech. So the One who is empowered enough to give voice to mere dust particles, who will teach Him how to speak? Who can compete with His work?

Where in this world can we find an example of such absolute literary empowerment? God uses one word and hides seventy thousand meanings in that one word! These are hidden from our sight but if one is blessed with nur (spiritual insight), then these barriers are removed. Imam Ali has claimed,

'If all the veiled barriers are removed from my sight it would not serve to increase my faith'. (Nahjul Balagha)

Do remember, increase is only relevant to a situation where there is some shortage! This prelude was necessary, for if the depth and expanse of the Quran is such that one word can suggest seventy thousand meanings, then a single word of praise bestowed by God translates into seventy thousand words of praise! A complete sentence in praise of someone thus highlights multitudes of virtues. In fact, some sentences may contribute a million meanings and hence a million virtues. Now if a complete verse comes in praise, then how much praise is included here? And if thirty verses of a Surah come in praise

of someone in the form of "***Hal Ata***" (76:1) then who has the stamina to enumerate the virtues of this person?

Here I am reminded of some verses of a senior poet by the name of Ahsan Jaisi. I have great respect for the work of people, who may belong to any sect of Islam, but are neither prejudiced nor inclined to a particular outlook. Ahsan Jaisi expresses his liberal thoughts in the following verse:

منم سنی لیکن از تعصب الاماں گویم

پسند خاطرم انصاف از دنیا و مفیها

I am a sunni but I refrain from prejudice
I wish for justice in this world and the hereafter

What a pious thought! He further says:

سخن سنجیده مگویم۔ مضا میں چیده می گویم

کتب رادیده می گویم۔ چه باک از طعنئه اعدا

نه بیم طاعنه دارم که حق را در زبان دارم

خدائے دو جهاں دارم نه دارم با کسےپرواه

I speak serious words and I choose selected topics
I write what I see even though it annoys my enemies
I fear no reaction, for my tongue speaks the truth
I fear no one but the Lord of this world and the next

Jaisi sahib said all this. Now if I had presented these verses to you, knowing that you share my outlook and with this earnest belief that many of you trust me to be an honest man and if I presented his thoughts without reference to him and claim them to be my thoughts, then it is very likely that my community would brand these thoughts to be highly exaggerated. Or they might be inclined to label them as such.

Jaisi sahib says,

زتفسیر کلام الله چومی پرسی شود ناطق

که سه صد آیه نازل شد بشان شوہر زہرا

A logical and detailed study of the Book of Allah reveals that
Three hundred verses came in honour of Zehra's husband.

According to this verse, Jaisi sahib says that three hundred ayaat came in honour of Zehra's husband!

We know that the Quran is the Last Word and the Last Message. Everything said therein serves as the final text. Let me add that the Quran is not a Book that aims to praise or degrade someone. The sole purpose of this Book is to guide mankind. Quran is a Book of Guidance.

Quran is a Book that clearly spells out the laws laid down by God Almighty for our guidance. What has law got to do with praise or humiliation of anyone? Laws are formulated by the lawmaker to inform the people about what they should do and what they should not do. Law is a collection of do's and don'ts. Its function is to tell us whom to follow and whom to avoid, whom to trust and whom not to trust; when to say 'yes' and when to say 'no', what to accept and what to reject; which activity is permissible and which is to be avoided. This is precisely what law means.

Quran itself explains the aims and objectives of this holy Book,

ذٰلِکَ الۡکِتٰبُ لَا رَیۡبَ ۛۚ فِیۡہِ ۛۚ ہُدًی لِّلۡمُتَّقِیۡنَ

"This is the Book; there is no doubt in it,* (*it is*) *a guidance for 'muttaqeen'* (*those who fear Allah*)*".* (2:2***)

This Book came to guide us. Each surah came for that purpose. The verses in the chapters came for

guidance. The entire Quran is for guidance. Each component is for guidance and divine help. If a component is not performing this role then it is not a part of this Book. Without any doubt this is a Book of Guidance for those who fear Allah. This assertion holds for the whole Book and it is only possible if neither the chapters nor the verses are devoid of the basic purpose of guidance. In short, whatever it contains is for the purpose of guidance. Surahs are for guidance, the parts are for guidance and the whole is for guidance. All of the Quran came for the specific purpose of guidance.

Kindly remain attentive. The whole Quran is for guidance. Now if three hundred verses came in honour of Zehra's husband, as the verse by Jaisi suggests, and they are all in praise of Ali and highlight his virtues then the question arises that are these three hundred verses serving as a source of guidance for us or not? If not then they are not a part of the Quran. However, we know for sure that they are a part of the Quran, so we have to accept that these verses of praise are a source of guidance for us.

This clearly establishes that without praise of Ali we cannot do justice to the function of guidance. The purpose of these verses is not to praise the person of Ali. This praise is for the purpose of guidance. Without these verses of praise for Ali, justice could not have been done to the objectives of guidance. Hence, this praise is for the purpose of our guidance. If I can put it in simple words, God wanted us to acknowledge Ali, and by virtue of these verses wanted us to recognize him.

Both praise and rebuke are effective and essential tools for the purpose of guidance. You very well know that Surah Al Hamd is the summary of the whole Quran. The entire Quran has shrunk into its seven verses and the essence of whatever is in the Quran is found in this Surah. Now since Al Hamd is representative of the Quran in its own right, hence God ordained that there is no prayer (namaz or salat) without this Surah. This is a convenience granted to us. Recitation of just these seven verses makes us the readers of the entire Quran. For what is in the whole Quran is to be found in Al Hamd, and prayers cannot be said without this Surah.

The saying that 'there is no prayer (namaz or salat) without the opening Surah Al Hamd', is well known. The daily five time prayers, Friday prayers, Eid prayers, prayer (namaz or salat) e Ayaat, or consider any other prayer; is any devoid of Al Hamd? Prayers can be offered without other Quranic surahs. Surah Ikhlas is not an essential component of the prayer (namaz or salat) and any other surah can be used as a replacement, but there is no alternative for Al Hamd. If instead of this Surah we wish to read another one or a part of another one, this is not permissible. In fact, the question of 'instead' does not arise for there is no replacement for this Surah, and there is no prayer without it.

It is obvious that there is no prayer without rukuh (bending) and there is no prayer without sujood (prostration). Also there is no prayer without Surah Al Hamd. These are some essentials of prayer in the absence of which a prayer ceases to be a prayer. Thus for any kind of prayer, Sura Al Hamd, rukuh and sujood are vital and necessary components.

However, there is one specific prayer that has neither Al Hamd nor rukuh nor sujood. It is a prayer

(namaz or salat) but has none of the essential components. Today we are saying this prayer for others and tomorrow we will be requiring others to say this prayer for us. This is a prayer for the deceased (salat e janaza). Is there Sura Al Hamd in it? Or rukuh or sujood? None of the essential elements of prayer are present here but can you say that in the absence of these basic elements this prayer is not a proper prayer? Who can make this claim when the Quran itself terms it prayer?

So there is a prayer which has no Al Hamd but it is a prayer; no bending or prostration, yet it is a prayer. By the grace of God, the prayer that is valid even without Al Hamd, which is valid without rukuh and valid without sujood, is not valid without offering darood (blessings) on the Prophet and his Aal .

It is important that you stay focused on this issue that in every prayer along with Surah Al Hamd and bending and prostration, sending blessings on Prophet Muhammad and his Aal is an absolutely essential requirement. In other words, without this round of blessings for these pious persons no prayer is complete. Darood is that magnificent component of prayer which cannot be ignored. Thus, we realize that God does not like the prayers where no blessings are showered and where no praise is lavished on our Prophet and his Aal.

I was telling you that the essence of the entire Quran is accommodated in these seven verses. They are termed the summary of the whole Quran. Now, if they represent the summary of the entire Quran then how remarkable each of these verses of Surah Al Hamd must be!

However, if we want the narrative of Prophet Ibrahim, or any other prophet to be a part of this summary, then it will hardly remain a summary. The term summary implies that only the most important things are retained and the less important ones are left out. Do you find the tales of the prophets in Al Hamd? Where are most of the do's and don'ts of the Quran in this Surah? The ones that are included are wrapped around the term "***sirat al-mustaqeem***" (the Straight Path) and are not noticeably visible.

So all those valuable items that abound in the Quran are not visibly present here. Now if you wish to include Surah An-Aam (chapter 6), or Surah Ankabut (chapter 29) in this summary, then is it possible to accommodate them in a seven-verse Surah? Only the very important items can find their place in Surah Al Hamd. Thus, the essentials will be selected and others will be left out.

Let me say now that from the point of view of the Quran both praise and rebuke are necessary elements of the process of guidance. True guidance cannot be justified without praise or without admonishment. There can be no guidance without praising those worthy of praise and reproaching those deserving rebuke. So Surah Al Hamd can neither let go nor lose the purpose of guidance.

The entire Quran is condensed into these seven verses and these contain both praise and rebuke,

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ اَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِم

"The path of those upon whom You have bestowed Your bounties" (***1:7***)

clearly indicates those who are worthy of praise and in the sentence

غَيۡرِ الۡمَغۡضُوۡبِ عَلَيۡهِمۡ

"not (***the path***) ***of those inflicted with your wrath"*** (***1:7***)

except for the first word all other words signal rebuke . The words

وَ لَا الضَّآلِّيۡنَ

"gone astray" (***1:7***)

also highlight those deserving reprimand. Hence both praise and reproach are highlighted in this Surah. During prayer each person asks God to keep him or her on the right path. The path of those upon whom He has bestowed His bounties and to save him or her from the path of those who have earned His wrath in the past, are presently facing it, or are likely to face it in the future. So there is praise and there is rebuke.

The subject of praise is strange indeed! So is the subject of reproach. Normal sight will not spot the detail that praise is rendered in the past tense. "***Anamta***" (bestowed bounties) signifies the past tense, informing us that bounties have been bestowed. This task has concluded and is not pending or to be performed at a later stage. There is no reference to the present or the future tense here.

Now, if along with this it had been said, 'save me from the path of those on whom you inflicted your wrath', then those who had earned the wrath in the past would be included but those likely to face such consequences ahead would escape the net. Besides, those likely to go astray in the present or future would also not be included in the influence of this dua (prayer). Thus, if this prayer cannot include all those in the range of "***maghzub***" (inflicted with wrath) and "***zaaleen***" (gone astray) then this is hardly a comprehensive dua for one's protection.

Our limited vision cannot fathom the amazing eloquence of the Quran. Past tense has been used for those rewarded with bounties; and when mentioning those who earn God's wrath and those gone astray, no verb has been used. A noun clause is used that applies equally to past, present as well as future. Thus, no verb is used. For if the past tense is used then those in the present or future would be excluded. If the present tense were used then those in the past or in the future would be excluded. Likewise, if the future tense were used then both the past and the present lot would face exclusion.

Therefore no verb is used to mention "***zaaleen***" and "***maghzub***" in Surah Al Hamd. Had a verb been used then some time frame would be ascertained, and one or the other group would have escaped the net of admonishment. In the region of rebuke, God only uses nouns, for a noun indicates stability and continuity. Keep us away from the path of those who earn wrath, be they in the past, present or in the future. Save us from the path of those gone astray in the earlier times, in the present, or in times to come. But bounty has already been distributed to those who deserved it. Reward has been granted and the ceremony is over. The deserving have blissfully received their prize!

Now let us return to the three hundred verses coming in honour of Zehra's husband of which every word has the potential of seventy thousand meanings. This is the reason the Prophet claimed, and there is consensus with regard to this hadith (tradition) between both sunni and shia people, that the Prophet had said:

'All men and jin, using total resources of pen and ink, cannot enumerate the virtues of Ali ibn Abi Talib'. (Hadith al– nabvi)

So virtues of Ali cannot be counted. This explains the need for three hundred verses to highlight the virtues of Ali. What a splendid collection! When asleep admiration for his sleep, "***man yashri***" (2:207)! When awake applause for his wakefulness! When at home the gift of "***hal Ata***"(76:1)! On the battlefield the prize of 'la fatah'! Inside the mosque the tribute of "***innama***"(5:55)! Praise for his travel, praise for his stay; praise for the day, praise for the night; praise for the morning and praise for the evening. At certain locations praise for his silence, at others praise for his speech; praise of his activity and also praise of his inactivity! I am rendering ayaat in my language. When he stands there is praise for that posture, when he sits there is praise for his sitting posture. When he reclines there is praise for his changing positions too!

الَّذِيۡنَ يَذۡكُرُوۡنَ اللّٰهَ قِيٰمًا وَّ قُعُوۡدًا وَّ عَلٰى جُنُوۡبِهِمۡ

وَ يَتَفَكَّرُوۡنَ فِىۡ خَلۡقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ

"Those who remember Allah, standing, sitting and reclining, and reflect and contemplate on the creation of the Heavens and the Earth" (***3:191***)

Whatever he does there is praise for it and whatever he says there is praise for that too. His words are appreciated and his actions are approved. The Quran keeps a watchful eye on him. In fact, it is on the lookout to narrate what he says and relate what he does. Ali keeps performing and the Quran keeps informing. He keeps articulating and the Quran keeps reporting. His words keep transforming into ayaat!

Sublime elevation! Remarkable Meraj! His words scaled the heights where God selected them for His own words. His conversation attained the status where God adopted it as His own version. When Ali said something, they were his words, but when God set His approval on them, He sent them to us as His words!

This is not an occasion for me to go into detail or explain this point in depth. Nevertheless, scholars have written that the sentence 'to God we belong and to God we return',

اِنَّا لِلّٰہِ وَ اِنَّاۤ اِلَیۡہِ رٰجِعُوۡنَ

"Verily, we are Allah's and verily to Him we shall return" (***2:156***)

was earlier not in the Quran or hadith and it was not in use by the people. When Ali got news of the death of Jafar al-Tayyar, this sentence was spontaneously uttered. The moment he rendered this elegy, the verse,

وَ بَشِّرِ الصّٰبِرِیۡنَ

الَّذِیۡنَ اِذَاۤ اَصَابَتۡہُمۡ مُّصِیۡبَۃٌ ۙ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا لِلّٰہِ وَ اِنَّاۤ اِلَیۡہِ رٰجِعُوۡنَ

"Give glad tidings to the patient ones, Who when misfortune befalls them, say, 'Verily, we are Allah's and verily to Him we shall return' " (***2:155, 156***)

came as Quranic inspiration! These were Ali's words but having received Divine appreciation they became Holy text. God transferred ownership of these words to His Being.

Anyway, the Quran kept collecting the words of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and his Ahlul Bayt and it kept recording their deeds. It kept an eye on them and it reviewed their lives so that each and every event was transcribed onto the pages of its heart. These events adorned the Quran and they formed a necessary narrative of the Book.

So the ones whose days and nights were monitored by The Quran, the ones for whom it pledged to preserve and transmit everything they said, the Quran chose to eternalize their lives. It kept compiling whatever they said or did. This suggests that the Book that is commonly known as the Quran, is in fact a Book that documents the biographical details of the Prophet and his Ahlul Bayt, and Quran is the name given to this amazing collection of biographies!

Let me also say here that the way yours, mine and everybody's account of deeds is being written in an unseen book, the doings of the Prophet and his Ahlul Bayt are also being chronicled in the Quran. It is their record of deeds. Mind you, there is a vast difference between our record of deeds and theirs. The most trivial of these differences is that you cannot access or view my record and I cannot view yours. What to talk of seeing yours, I cannot even see mine own.

So there is no question of gaining access to the record of others. No doubt, it is being written but it is concealed from us. If it were not hidden, why would we refer to God as Sattar, the Concealer? All records are secured from our eyes. As a matter of fact, if my record of deeds were available to you, would you have respected me as you do? If these records were on display would children respect their fathers? Would students respect their teachers? Would young people uphold the dignity of elders?

It is indeed an act of great kindness and an enormous favour to us that God has concealed our records. If one wants to peep into another's account, it is simply not possible for He protects it. We are pleased with this situation. Why are we pleased? It is so because there are shortcomings in our account, hence it cannot be brought to the forefront. It cannot be displayed publicly.

God ordained all deeds to be recorded but He also ensured their privacy. But why should the record book of the Prophet and his near ones, that goes by the name of Quran, be hidden or concealed? In fact, we are asked to read it: "***fa`aqraoo***" (73:20).

Why procrastinate? We are being urged to read it. Why? For the simple reason that these people are virtuous and free of all wrongdoings. Their records are vivid testimony to their reverence and absolute submission to the Will of God. How remarkable is the worshipper whose single stroke of sword is termed better than the worship of '***saqlain***' (both the worlds)! Rather let me say, how exalted their standard of devotion, by virtue of which they are elevated to the ranks where even looking at them is equivalent to worship! Allama Jaisi, whom I mentioned earlier, says:

عبادت دیدن سہ شے بارشاد نبی آمد

یکے کعبہ، دوئم قران، سوئم روئے شہ والا

Our Prophet has informed us that looking at these three things is akin to Worship: The first is Kaaba , the second is Quran and the third is the face of Shah e wala (*King of the Sublime*)*!*

Now if casting a glance at his face is akin to worship, then what will be the level of excellence of this worshiper himself! In the light of the Prophet's instructions, consider this particular aspect. You are

looking at Ali but you are worshipping God. The person you are looking at is not the one you are worshiping; and the one you are worshiping you cannot see. No doubt desire to look at God can be termed worship, yet how strange that you are looking at Kaaba but you are worshipping God! Beholding Ali but worshiping God! Reviewing the Quran and worshiping God! Apparently this seems illogical but it is resolving an issue.

Please note what is being said is not illogical. In fact it has an amazing logic. You need to put a condition on how you look. What style of glance can be termed worship? It is obvious that all glances are not worthy of this equivalence.

Looking at Kaaba with the intention of destroying it cannot be termed worship. Remind yourself of the incidence of Abraha. A lot of people looked at the Quran with the intention of rejecting it. This cannot be termed an act of worship. When Marhab came to challenge Ali, he surely looked at him; but can this glance be termed reverential? Obviously not. Hence, we conclude that all views are not for the purpose of worship. In fact, a view or a sight itself guides how and with what kind of reverence it should be viewed.

Looking at something in relation to oneself is not worship. Reviewing it in the context of the world is not worship. If you look at Kaaba as one of the many houses in this world then the intent of worship is missing. However, it will be an act of worship if you look at it with recognition that it is the House of God. When you review it with connection to God and when you associate it with God then it will surely be regarded as worship. When you look at Kaaba, you must do so with the firm belief that it is the House of God. When you look at the Quran do so with certainty that it is the Word of God. When you look at Ali do so with conviction that you look at 'wajh Allah' (face of God) or 'wali Allah' (friend of God)!

Now I draw your attention to Ayat al-Wilayat,

اِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوۡلُهٗ وَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيۡنَ

يُقِيۡمُوۡنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَ يُؤۡتُوۡنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ هُمۡ رٰكِعُوۡنَ

"Verily, your guardian is Allah and His Messenger (***Muhammad***) ***and those who believe and establish the prayer and give zakat*** (***the poor-rate***) ***while they are in the state of rukuh*** (***bowing down***)***".*** (***5:55***)

This ayat came in honour of Amir ul Mu'mineen. What a magnificent verse! The Creator of this world selects a word, a title that is equally suitable both for Himself and for His best of creation!

Technically, the words used for God are not the words used for the Messenger of God, and the words used for the Messenger are not used for Ali. The term Rasool Allah, Prophet of God, cannot include God or Ali. Now consider the words Wasi e Rasool, Heir of the Prophet. This term is suitable for Ali, but it certainly cannot be used for the Prophet or for God. There is a separate word for the Prophet and an exclusive word for God. So the specific identities are for differentiating and not for grouping together. There is a particular word for each being and this word can neither be used here nor there. It is exclusively reserved for this designated being.

The All Mighty wished to hold a congregation where He would be addressed by a title, which along with Him could also be used to refer to the Prophet, as well as to remember Ali. Each has a separate identity, but God wished to share a common name that would bind the three together. The shortlisted word is 'wali'. Selecting this word, He first used it for Himself, then He referred to the Prophet as wali and next He highlighted traits of Ali and granted him the title of wali.

What trait was highlighted? The act of giving zakat during prayers in the bending posture (rukuh). Who are the owners of this trait? They are wali. What is the Prophet? He is wali. What about God Himself? HE is a Wali. So in the word 'wali' God detected this enormous capacity to accommodate His own reference, and the reference of both Ali and the Prophet. God is Wali, the Prophet is wali and Ali is wali.

It is appropriate for me to point out something here. I may declare someone to be a wali but any intelligent person will first check my credentials and authority. Am I suitably qualified to grant this title? If the conferring person has no degree himself then how worthy will his recommendation be? Can an uneducated person confirm the scholarship of another? If it is true that you are uneducated, it is highly likely that whatever you say is based on ignorance. The fact is that only a learned can confirm the scholarship of another educated person. A brave person is one whom a known brave person certifies. A poet can only be acknowledged by another poet, a writer by another writer and a speaker by a reputed speaker.

There is a famous saying, 'a wali can only be recognized by one who is a wali himself '. If I declare or introduce someone to be a wali, my declaration is without proof. Such an introduction is valid only if a wali introduces a wali. Here Ali is being bestowed the title of wali by one who is referring to Himself as Wali. Who can be a better wali than God Himself? Thus if the Most Authentic Wali confirms another as wali, then that person truly deserves this honour.

Here, I am reminded of a verse in Surah Kahf (Chapter 18). God says:

اَفَتَتَّخِذُونَهٗ وَ ذُرِّيَّتَهٗۤ اَوۡلِيَآءَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِىۡ

وَ ہُم؟ لَکُم؟ عَدُوٌّ ؟ بِئ؟س لِلظّٰلِمِی؟نَ بَدَلًا

"What! Will you then take him **(*shaytan*)** ***and his progeny as wali*** **(*friends*)** ***instead of Me? They are your enemies. Evil would be the exchange for the unjust"*** **(*18:50*)**

God questions mankind whether they want to accept Shaytan (the Devil) and his progeny as their wali, even though they are known enemies. Accepting an enemy for a friend is a poor trade off made by the unjust. The very next sentence admonishes those who are willing to accept Shaytan as their wali and grant him the status of a friend. Listen to this verse,

مَا؟ اَشہَد؟تُّہُم؟ خَل؟قَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الا؟اَر؟ضِ وَ لَا

خَل؟قَ اَن؟فُسِہِم؟ ؟ وَ مَا کُن؟تُ مُتَّخِذَ الا؟مُضِلِّی؟نَ عَضُدًا

"I did not call them to witness the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, nor **(*even*)** ***their own creation; nor am I one to take those who lead*** **(*people*)** ***astray as helpers."*****(*18:51*)**

They cannot be wali for they did not witness the creation of the Heavens; they did not witness the creation of the Earth and they did not witness the birth of man. Besides, they cannot be wali for God did not select them to be His helpers.

A result can be drawn from this. Is there a 'yes' concealed in this 'no'? Is there an affirmation hidden in this 'rejection' or not? If I were to say to a person, 'How can you address a majlis (gathering) when you have never done this before, when you have not traversed this path; when you have never delivered a speech and when you are not duly qualified or competent'? This actually means that the gathering will be addressed by one who is a practiced speaker and who is capable and qualified to do so. So the 'no' is actually suggesting the presence of a 'yes' here. They are not wali for they have not witnessed the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This clearly means that wali are those who have witnessed the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. They are those who have seen the birth of mankind!

The sentence that God did not select helpers from amidst the Shaytan is also revealing. By referring to the negative traits of the Devil's clan, their claim to Wilayat is rejected. But this sentence also reveals the presence of some beings that God selected to be His helpers, selected to be His helping hands. If they are not 'yad Allah' (God's hands) then who are they? If they cannot be addressed as 'yad Allah' then how should we address them?

These specifications and conditions for Wilayat are impossible to achieve now. For who can witness the creation of the Heavens and the Earth and qualify to be a wali? Who can witness the birth of mankind to qualify for the title of 'wali Allah' (friend of God)? A witness to the creation of the Earth can only be one who was present before the creation of the Earth. A witness to the creation of the Heavens has to be present before the Heavens came into being.

Similarly, the creation of the species of mankind can be testified by one who existed before them. Hence, if someone is prior to all this, then he can be a wali. God refers to such a one as His Helping Hand. So if God calls someone the power of His Hand and if the Quran bestows the honour of:

يَدُ اللّٰهِ فَوۡقَ اَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ

"The hand of Allah is above their hands" (***48:10***)

then that person qualifies to be a wali. With these conditions God accepts him as His wali.

If the world wishes to accept a wali without these conditions then they are welcome to do so, but this will be their selection. God accepts a wali with these stated conditions. Where these conditions were not met, He drew a protective boundary of "innama". The use of "innama" means 'no one else' except God, His Prophet, and one who gives zakat while bending down in prayers. God did not have to witness the creation of the Heavens and the Earth for HE created them!

We now find that the Prophet and one who gave zakat while bending in prayers were created from the Noor or Light that is deemed the very First Creation. There was this Light when there were no Heavens, and this Light was present when there was no Earth. The Prophet said,

'Me and Ali are part of one single Light (Nur)'
(Hadith al– nabvi).

hence, the protective boundary around them.

Asad ibn Ibraheem was a great scholar of our faith. In his first book he narrates an incidence related to Jabir ibn Abdullah Ansari. One day Jabir was present in Masjid e Nabvi along with others. A few people were asking the Prophet some questions while some were doing ablutions or saying prayers, when a man entered the mosque. He described the situation, that this man's clothes were torn and soiled as though he had rolled in dust. Looking disturbed he expressed his need to the Prophet in verse.

اَتَيتُكُم وَالعَذر التَبكِي بِرِقَّةٍ

وَقَد زَحلَت أُمّ صَبِيٍ عَنِ الطِّفلِي

وأُختً وَبِنتَانِ وَأُمّ كَبِيرَةٍ

لَقَد كِدتُ مِن فَقرِي وَزَالَت فِي عَقلِي

‘My daughter is crying with the agony of starvation and my wife is unable to help this infant as she herself is starving. I am so helpless that I fear losing my senses,

لَقَد مَسَّنِي عُريٌ وَفَقرٌ وَفَاقَةٌ

وَلَيسَ لَنَا مَالٌ يُمِرُّ وَلَا يُحلِي

وَمَل مُنتَهَى اِلَّا اِلَيكَ مَفَرَّنَا

وَلَيسَ الفِرَارَ اِلَّا اِلَي الرُّسُلِي

Poverty, hunger and deprivation of clothes are the three enemies that surround me and I am willing to swear that I do not own even a small amount of money. But for you, my Leader, I have no protector to turn to. Where shall a man seek refuge except at the doorsteps of the Prophet?’

He recited these four verses to the Prophet. Please listen carefully. The Prophet cried when he heard this poetic rendering.

The narrative of pain moved the Prophet’s heart and tears rolled down his eyes. He cried. Then he asked the people who were present, “Is there anyone here who can redress his needs and help him overcome his pain and affliction? O mankind God has rounded His Great Mercy into this mosque. Is

there anyone who will avail this good fortune? At this moment God has placed piles of good fortune in the compound of this mosque. Is there anyone ready to pick up this bounty?" Now the writer says, when the Prophet said these words,

عَلِيٌّ يصَلِّي فِي نَاحِيَة المَسجِدِ

Ali was offering prayer in one corner of the mosque and at that moment was in the posture of 'rukuh'. He gestured to the man in need. The man noticed this gesture and went forward and removed the ring from Ali's finger. After his need was addressed by this precious token, he moved away. Here Ali donated his ring and the next instance Ayat al-Wilayat was revealed to the Prophet, honouring this gesture of Ali.

The narrator says that after Ali's donation four hundred people gave their rings to the needy man but this man kept saying,

"هذا من بركات علي ابن ابي طالب"

"This surplus charity is due to the gracious blessings of Ali ibn abi Talib."

Anyway the rings were donated, but that chapter of acknowledgement was closed for Ayat al-Wilayat had been revealed after Ali's donation. Later when four hundred rings were donated, no further revelation came. Thus, the revealed verse was purely to honour the one who took the initiative and not for those who followed this example after the revelation.

When the needy man complained to the Prophet of his hunger, poverty and clothes deprivation, his children were not with him. The Prophet did not see their state; he merely listened. Our Prophet, the leader of the world, in fact the pulse of the world, nursed a tender heart. He was visibly moved and wept mournfully and asked the people in the mosque to help the needy man.

Now our Prophet was aware of the times when Imam Hussain, his children and his companions would be subjected to periods of starvation. This needy man had complained of hunger but he did not say his children were dying of thirst. True he had complained of food deprivation, but his children were not denied water and were not thirsty. His infants were not dying of thirst.

Our lives be sacrificed for the sufferings of the relatives and companions of Imam Hussain in Karbala. Our Prophet surely knew that these sufferings and many more would be inflicted on his children. He knew they would be denied water for three days in grueling heat and that an infant would starve in his cradle.

The camps of Karbala, where the Prophet's family were set up, were resounding with the children's cries of thirst and the companions of the Imam agonized for them. The ladies were patient and uncomplaining but the children in the camps were wailing 'al atash' from thirst. The companions must have cried out in helplessness, 'We are alive and the Prophets daughters are thirsty; the household children are thirsty and we live to hear them cry'. How severe the intensity of this thirst must have been!

I am reminded of a particular time, which my audience too cannot forget. Use your imagination. On the tenth of Moharram, day of Ashur, our thirsty Imam is without an army, or soldiers or any supporters.

نہ لشکرے نہ سپاہے نہ کثرت الناسے

نہ قاسمے نہ علی اکبرے نہ عباسے

He is without Qasim and Ali Akbar and Abbas. The entire household is gone; the garden is deserted. Eighteen funerals from one household! Imam Hussain is alone yet he has to keep a promise. Imam readied himself for the last journey where he was to sacrifice his life. He came to the door of the camp and offered his final salutations to his sisters and wives,

"يَا زَينَبُ وَيَا أُمِّ كُلثُومُ وَيَا رُقَيَّه وَيَا رُبَابُ عَلَيكُنَّ مِنِّي السَّلامُ"

"Dear Zainab and Umme Kulsoom and Ruqayya and Rubab, I offer my salaam".

When his sisters heard the farewell call they came to the door and asked him how a brother could think of leaving his sisters in such a difficult situation.

Bibi Umme Kulsum stepped forward and she held her brother and reminded him that he was the incumbent Imam and the dispenser of law. Now according to the law, preparation of a journey requires delegation of a guardian for the family and the children. "You are leaving on a journey from where there is no return, so who have you entrusted us to?" Imam bowed his head and God alone knows with what difficulty he replied, "My dear sister, who should I name? Is there any survivor that I can nominate? I entrust you all to the care of Allah."

"اَستَودِعكُنَّ الله"

After this he called his dear sister Zainab to help him say farewell to his ailing son. She went along and alerted Ali Zain ul Abideen to receive his father. The son opened his eyes, glanced at his father and tried to get up but was unable to even sit up. He lamented, “Phuppi (aunt), look at my condition. I can see the Prophet’s son and I cannot even give due respect. Please help me to sit by supporting my back”. Bibi Zainab propped him up with her body support.

Imam Hussain inquired of his son’s health to which he replied that by the Grace of God he was doing well. Then the son asked the Imam how he was dealing with the enemy. Bibi Zainab looked at her brother in anticipation of a response. Imam replied, “My son what shall I tell you? The Devil has complete sway over them and they will just not be guided to the truth. The blood of the martyrs has painted the sand of Karbala red and I am here to bid my last farewell to you.” In just two sentences the Imam wrapped up the entire story.

When Zain ul Abideen heard the words ‘last farewell’ he asked in disbelief:

اَينَ اَينَ عمي اَبوالفضل العباس

“Where is my uncle Abbas?” In other words how was this farewell possible in the presence of Abbas? Imam Hussain replied, “He lies on the banks of the river with his arms severed. Abbas has been martyred”. The shocked son then inquired of each and every one. “Where is Habib ibn Mazahir? Where is Muslim ibn Ausaja? Where is Zuhair ibn Qain?” When the entire list was exhausted he asked in deep agony:

اَينَ اَينَ اَخِي عَليٌّ الاَكبَر

“What about my brother Ali Akbar, my brother who resembles the Holy Prophet?” Probably our Imam could not use the word ‘killed’ for Akbar so he said, “Son, you and I are the only surviving male members right now”.

On hearing this grim tale Zain ul Abideen asked for his sword and a staff. When Imam asked why he needed these, the son replied the staff was for support and the sword to wage war with. “I too will sacrifice my life for you”. Imam counseled his son, “If you too are martyred then who will take my family and the Prophet’s daughters back to the Prophet’s grave? Who will be the custodian of the Prophet’s grave? Who will be the guardian of the whole household”?

The ailing son uttered in despair, “Am I destined to sit in the camp while the Prophet’s son is martyred?” Imam Hussain consoled his son, “You are my finest child. After me, you will be the next imam. Your

tribulations are more severe than mine and your patience will be exemplary". Then the Imam imparted the final instructions. Let my audience listen intently. He said, "My son, you will be imprisoned. Be patient. Your neck will be bound with a restrictive collar. Wear it. Your feet will be chained. Wear the chains".

Imam Hussain further instructed his son, "At some stage you will be released. When you go back to Medina and when my friends inquire about me, convey my greetings to them. Also tell them whenever they drink water they should remember the thirst of those who were with me in Karbala. Say to them I wish my mourners from amongst them and the subsequent mourners till the Day of Judgement, were there with me on the day of Ashura. I wish that all of them were there and had seen me that day when I was holding my infant son Asghar, and pleading for a few drops of water for him".

"كَيفَ اَستَسقِى لِطِفلِي فَاَبُوا اَن يَّرحَمُونِي"

"Wish you could see how I pleaded for water, and how ruthless
was the response of the transgressors".

God's wrath be on the transgressors.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

قُلۡ لَّاۤ اَسۡـَٔلُکُمۡ عَلَیۡہِ اَجۡرًا اِلَّا الۡمَوَدَّۃَ فِی الۡقُرۡبٰی

***"Say* (*O' Mohammad*)*, I do not ask of you any recompense for it, save love of* (*my*) *relatives* (*near of kin*)*"* (*42:23*)

اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَیَجۡعَلُ لَہُمُ الرَّحۡمٰنُ وُدًّا

"Verily those who believe and do good deeds Ar Rahman will appoint for them love" (*19:96*)

You have gathered here today to hear about ajar-e-risalat (the recompense for the task of Prophethood), or to give it another name, "***mawaddat fil qurba***", the love for the Ahlul Bayt. In the

second verse quoted, God tells us that He has made a commitment to those who believe, "***aamanu***" and do good deeds "***amal us salehat***" that soon He, their Merciful God, will appoint love for them.

Now this is an open verse that expresses a clear commitment with regard to some instruction that is to follow later. Let us look at the words used in making this commitment once again. Those who believe and do good deeds, the Most Merciful will soon pass an edict of love for them. He will send instructions for others to love them.

One thing is clear right away, that ordinary issues are often stated without a preliminary note of introduction. It is as much a folly to issue a preparatory reference for an insignificant thing, as it is to ignore one for an important issue. The speaker is in the best position to know what is of consequence and what is not.

There are instructions in the Quran for prayers (namaz or salat) and for fasting (roza or saum). Instructions for whatever God wished to convey were given directly by the Instructor. Why should He warn of these in advance? Why should people be made to wait anxiously for this ruling? Why should they be informed that a tremendous ruling is coming in the context of prayer (namaz or salat) or zakat or mandatory fast? Instructions came without a preamble, for these subjects did not require one.

On the other hand, within the Quran, there are certain commands that required a preparatory base. People had to be informed of the impending orders through preliminary directives from the Almighty. Once this was done and the curiosity to learn of the actual command was aroused, then the real order was revealed. The Quranic ayat where God addresses Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) is before you,

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ بَلِّغْ مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ

"(O' Mohammad) deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord" **(*5:67*)**

We notice at once that instructions had been disclosed prior to the revelation of this verse and those instructions had to be conveyed now. So the rulings came before the implementation was undertaken. That is why the word used in 5:67 is "***unzila***" and that is why "***ma unzila***" is referring to the already communicated ruling. Orders were to convey it. What came earlier was the preparatory command and the fresh order was for announcement of that command. In the context of the verse quoted, ***"deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord"*** **(*5:67*),** when we deliberate on the initial information then this ayat comes to mind,

فَاِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانْصَبْ

وَ اِلٰی رَبِّکَ فَارۡغَبۡ

"So when you have completed **(*the duties*)*, then establish*** **(*your successor*)*; And return to your Lord with fervour".*** **(*94:7, 8*)**

If the sentence "***when you have completed***" were addressed to us then there would have been instructions telling us what to establish after which task. But this verse is addressed to the Prophet and he very well knew what God wanted. The word "***fargab***" clearly reminded him what task had to be completed and the word "***fansab***" spelt out who had to be established. The instructions had already come in this regard. The Prophet had been informed who was to be established on completion of which task. He also knew he was to return to the Maker after concluding this mission.

Now on the basis of the earlier ruling our Prophet was asked to ***"Deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord"*** (***5:67***). He was asked to convey on that particular day, what had been revealed to him earlier. The earlier communiqué was the preparatory one. The one revealed later required communication of the real intention.

Returning to our title verses, in the pattern of the example just quoted, I wish to submit that first God revealed "Verily those who believe and do good deeds Ar Rahman will appoint for them love" in the form of a pledge. It was addressed to the believers engaged in good deeds, that soon the Most Merciful would send instructions of love for them.

Remember that just as hub and muhabbat are synonyms for love, so are wud and muwaddat. In the verse making the pledge the word used is "wud" and the word "muwaddat" is likely to be used when it is time to honour the pledge. Both words are one and the same thing. God made a commitment, and I wish to add that having made this commitment, He made it mandatory upon Himself to uphold it. Once a pledge is made, Kareem honours it.

In other words when our Kind and Generous Lord promises something He certainly always fulfills it. If an ordinary pledge requires fulfillment then what about those made by Him, who is the essence of Kindness and the most Generous of Givers. Definitely, His commitments will be honoured.

Hurdles often crop up in the fulfillment of promises made by us. We may not be able to uphold them. Sickness may prevent us, circumstances may impede our task or our shortcomings may cause hindrance. This pledge, however, is made by the One who is in absolute Command and is totally Empowered. The One who is never visited by weakness, where absence of control is not a possibility and where hurdles and preventives simply do not exist. When this God pledges, I feel compelled to recite this ayat,

وَ مَن اَوفٰی بِعَهدِهٖ مِنَ اللّٰهِ

"Who can be keep promises better than God"? **(*9:111*)**

In the context of promises and commitments, we will not find one that the Prophet of God made and which was not upheld. Likewise, we will not find a pledge made by any of our Imams that they did not honour. Leave alone these pure beings (masumeen), we are not likely to find a commitment made by their companions, those enriched by their nearness and coloured by their virtues, which was not honoured. Whenever a sadiq (truthful) makes a pledge, he ensures it is fulfilled. So I draw your attention back to the words used by God in making His pledge,

اِنَّ الَّذِینَ اٰمَنُوا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَیَجعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحمٰنُ وُدًّا

"Verily those who believe and do good deeds, Ar Rahman will appoint for them love." **(*19:96*)**

At this point I am almost compelled to admit that some words have lost their true meaning due to everyday usage. The significance of such words is reduced to an extent that we cannot even imagine what their real potential may be.

Words like those who believe or the believers or mu'mineen, when these words are used for people like us, or if I begin to use them for people like myself, then what value can we attach to the word Iman (belief) and what standard can we assign to the word mu'min (the believer)? Whenever a speaker addresses a gathering, he refers to his audience as mu'mineen. Now if they are mu'mineen then how do we ascertain who a mu'min is? Then how can we picture the incidence of Prophet Younis (Jonah) chanting hymns as detailed in the Quran?

لَّا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اَنتَ سُبحٰنَکَ * اِنِّی کُنتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِینَ

"There is no God but You. Glory be to You. Verily, I was of the unjust."**(*21:87*)**

Prophet Younis was busy with this 'tasbeeh' (praise) when God says:

فَاستَجَبنَا لَهٗ

"Then We responded to him" **(*21:88*)**

and accepted the prayers of Younis

وَ نَجَّيۡنٰهُ مِنَ الۡغَمِّ

"And delivered him from grief" **(*21:88*)**

relieved him from distress

وَ كَذٰلِكَ نُـ ۚ جِى الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ

"Thus do We deliver the believers" **(*21:88*)**

this is how we help the believers (mu'mineen).

If you paid attention you would have understood for which eminent personalities the word "mu'mineen" is used in this ayat. It has been used for Prophet Younis and his helpers. Please mark that the words used are not 'this is how we help out the prophets'.

Now review this:

اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الۡبَلٰٓـؤُا الۡمُبِيۡنُ

"Verily, that was an open trial" **(*37:106*)**

We wished to test you, we did and then ransomed it with a great sacrifice (zibh azeem).

كَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِى الۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ

"Thus we recompense those who do good" **(*37:110*)**

This is how we reward those who do good (mohsineen). Here the group, that includes Prophet Ibrahim, is being referred to as "mohsineen". Now try to understand how exalted the group of mohsineen is and how elevated their ranks are! These words have really lost their true essence due to excessive usage in everyday matters.

We claim to be believers in possession of Iman, but what is our stature and what is the standard of our belief? When we hear the word Iman we configure it to be a kind of faith that we are in possession of. When God refers to a 'mu'min' in an ayat, our imagination usually wander off in the direction of people whom we too classify as mu'min. But, is there any comparison between a person acknowledged a mu'min by God and one who is labeled a mu'min by man himself?

The power of a narrative is essentially determined by the proficiency of the author. The higher the expertise of the author the richer the text is likely to be. There is this word mu'min used by God and there is the word mu'min uttered by me. Can the two be alike? Why should I not say that we have designated some people believers and there are others who have labeled themselves as such. Whoever is in this gathering today is a mu'min and together you all are classified as mu'mineen.

So on the one hand every person in my gathering today is a mu'min and this very word when it surfaces in Surah Hashr, God is "Al Mu'min",

الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ

"the Bestower of conviction, the Guardian, the Ever Prevalent, the Supreme, the Great Absolute" (***59:23***)

Now reflect on the word mu'min that is assigned to the likes of me and you, and deliberate on the word Mu'min that God uses for His own Self!

God promises those who believe and do good deeds, that soon He will send a commandment for them to be loved. So, we immediately realize that faith and belief of these fortunate ones is perfect belief and their good deeds signify the ultimate degree of practical goodness. The ones referred to here, are not those who do good at times and indulge in wrongdoing at other times. In fact, God refers to those whose actions are never devoid of goodness; for whom each and every act is an act of virtue and on the basis of these good deeds some may be gifted the title of 'saleh al mu'mineen', the most virtuous of the pious people!

This is a promise. Why is it being made in advance? People are to wait in anticipation and hence a preparatory discourse is being initiated. The truth is that God wishes to convey that the promise is being made on the condition that when He honours it, the people must instantly recognize that the commitment was made for this particular occasion. The promise was for this place and the language and words of the promise were relevant to this situation. The word "***aamanu***" in the ayat (19:96) is used for these virtuous people and the reference to "amal us salehat" is also pointing to them.

Now just as the promise is clearly evident to you, the fulfillment of the promise must also figure noticeably. There was a time when God made the promise, and there had to be a time of fulfillment of

this promise. The commandment of love that was due must have been issued, and it must have come in a Quranic ayat. Which verse appears to fulfill the pledge? The verse is,

قُل لَّا اَسـَٔلُكُم عَلَيهِ اَجرًا اِلَّا المَوَدَّةَ فِى القُربٰى

"I do not ask of you any recompense for it save love of (***my***) ***relatives*** (***near of kin***)***"*** (***42:23***)

At this stage I wish to highlight a very subtle point and I request you to remain absolutely attentive. The words used in the ayat (19:96) that makes the promise are "***aamanu*** and ***amal us salehat***". Orders of love are still awaited. For whom are these instructions coming? They are for those who believe and do good deeds. The order of love is due to come for them, and when the order came, what did it say? The Prophet expects no recompense for his task, save love of the near ones, the Ahlul Bayt.

In Ayat al-Mawaddat (42:23) the Ahlul Bayt are mentioned as "***qurba***", and in the earlier ayat of promise (19:96) the words "***aamanu*** and ***amal us salehat***" distinguish these privileged ones. Technically, the word used in the verse of promise should also have been used in the verse fulfilling the pledge, or else the word to be used in the later verse should have been used in the earlier one as well, but the fact is that the promise is made for those who believe and those who do good perpetually, while the verse fulfilling the pledge came for the relatives of the Prophet. I request full attention at this point.

I wish to highlight one thing here. There are two aspects associated with every task. One that will set a standard or criteria for that task; and the second one that will spell out its identity or describe its characteristics. Standard is one thing and identity is a totally different thing.

The person who is addressing you at the moment has a cap on his head, a cloak on his body, a ring on his finger, his face looks like this, his voice sounds like this, this is his age and he sports a beard of this type. This very person is the speaker in front of you. However, this description has no bearing on the standard of the speech. In fact, it merely identifies the speaker. If this cap was not on my head I could still make a speech. I can take off my cloak and still speak; if my beard was not like this I could continue speaking and if I was not wearing this dress I could easily make a speech in another dress. To tell you the truth, even my name is not the basis of this speech. If I had another name even then it was possible to make this speech!

So the criteria or standard of speech is the fundamental requirement for enabling the speech. If this set of criteria did not exist then it is not possible to make a speech. Hence, the criteria are those requirements without which a speech cannot be made.

The description of the speaker that his dress is like this, his hair or his cap is like that is used to identify the speaker. Even, the name given in the newspaper is for the purpose of identification and not as a measure or criteria of the speech. You select a different name and even that person can make a speech.

So, if a name were to be criteria for a speech, then absence of a name would imply no speech.

The standard of speech then is the ability to make a speech, to be worthy of speaking, to have the potential to speak and also the desire or motivation to speak. If this potential did not exist then there is no possibility of a speech. If the intention or desire was missing then too speech was not possible. All those aspects in the absence of which speech is not possible serve as criteria for speech. On the other hand we have indicators in the form of names, clothes, appearances and these serve as identities.

If you can stay focused now, you will appreciate and remember this moment all your life. When the promise was made God did not say that soon He was going to send orders of love for the Prophet's near of kin. These words are not found in the earlier verse, which means that the command to love that was to come would not be based on closeness or linkage to the Prophet. This linkage is not the criteria and their association with the Prophet is not the reason for this command.

In fact God is likely to say 'I have remained neutral and unbiased in this matter. Nuh's son was his close relation and he even pleaded for him, but did I give him any concession? Azar was a relative of a Prophet and this Prophet had also prayed for his forgiveness. I listened and I stopped him from repeating whatever he had already said. Lut's wife also qualified as a near relative but did I make any concessions for her? And if you want to observe my neutrality then open My Book and see. Abu Jahal was the enemy of the Prophet and so was Abu Safyan, but I did not name either of them. If I have named any enemy, it is a relation of the Prophet,

تَبَّتۡ يَدَاۤ اَبِىۡ لَهَبٍ وَّ تَبَّ

"May the hands of Abu Lahb perish" (***111:1***)

This verse suggests that even if someone is related to the Prophet and if a state of rebellion exists then others may be shown some leniency, but not these relatives.

I was telling you earlier that when God promised to send orders of love He did not say He was about to send instructions for the Prophet's family members or near of kin. In fact, He said He was about to issue orders for those who possessed the highest standards of belief and excelled in doing good deeds. This command was not based on their closeness to the Prophet but on the basis of their faith and their good deeds. This order of love for the near ones was being given to acknowledge their sublime faith and their remarkable deeds. On grounds of these merits God wanted the entire universe to love them and for them to be the cherished ones of the universe!

It would be timely to suggest here that the very origin of the universe is love and attraction. The reason for the creation of the Heavens and the Earth too is love.

كُنتُ كَنزاً مَخضِيّاً فَاَحبَبتُ اَن اُعرِفَ

'I was a hidden treasure. I wished to be recognized. Thus I brought forth a specific creation.' (*Hadith-e-Qudsi*)

Now this creation is here on the basis of the Creator's wish. It follows that the universe was created for the purpose of love and God wishes that the love that marked the beginning of the universe should also figure at its end. Love of God marked the beginning and now love of His human beings should mark its end. From start to finish it is love and only love. This love is expected from human beings and the basis of this love is indeed the love of God!

Anyway, the promise was made using the words ***"those who believe and do good deeds"***(***42:23***) and the promise was upheld with the words ***"save love of*** (***my***) ***near of kin"*** (***19:96***). We immediately realize that the criteria for making this love for the Ahlul Bayt mandatory is their sublime faith and their good deeds, while the reference of relation is their introduction, their identity, a standard of acquaintance. In other words it is glitter on gold. To possess absolute faith and excel in good deeds and on top of that to be the privileged near ones of the Prophet. It is certainly glitter on gold!

By the grace of God, minds are awakening and imagination is lighting up! Let me ask a few questions here. The morning prayer that I offer, will you be rewarded for it? Will my family or my children be rewarded for it? The sins I am guilty of, will my neighbours or my acquaintances or my near ones be punished for them? Can they be included in the range of punishment? It is ordained,

اَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزۡرَ اُخۡرٰی

"That no bearer of a burden shall bear the burden of another" (***53:38***)

One will not carry the load of another. One will not be blamed for another's fault. The one who prays will earn its reward and the one who sins will face the consequences. The reward of one person's endeavours cannot be drawn by another, just as the punishment for a person's sins cannot be shared by another. To be a partner in prayer is one thing. Two can sit and pray together. A congregation can stand for prayer collectively, but when there is no partnership in performance or in deeds, how can there be partnership in reward or punishment?

For this reason the Quran has clearly stated,

مَنۡ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفۡسِہٖ وَ مَنۡ اَسَآءَ فَعَلَیۡہَا

"Whoever does good, it is for his soul, and whoever sins, is unjust to himself" (***41:46***)

Now that you have heard this I want to ask you a question. Thousands of good deeds have been done in this world and thousands more will continue to be done, but the merit of the good deeds depends on the potential of the good person. Surely, a good deed is associated with a good person. Now what is the weight or measure of this good deed and what is the capacity of the responsibility that this person can take on? There is a prayer that I offer; there is one that an Imam offered and another that a Prophet offered. The name given to all three will be salaat, but is my prayer of the same value as the one offered by the Imam or the Prophet?

I wish to repeat here that the merit of a good deed depends on the qualitative potential of the person undertaking it. It will correspond to the value and goodness of that person. Now tell me can anybody be more pious than Syed ul Anbia, the most revered of all Prophets? No, it is not possible. Can any act be more valuable than the propagation of God's Message? What can one say of the Prophet's prayer? It is the imam of all prayers! What can one say of the Prophet's fasts? They are the benchmark for all fasts!

All of the Prophet's good deeds like prayers and fasting and remembrance (zikr) of Allah are on one side and the single task of transmission of God's message is on the other hand. This is the one task for which our Prophet came into being. This was the function that defined the purpose of his existence; the reason for his nomination for Prophethood. He was selected and chosen for rendering this specific task.

Now let us resolve this logically. The Prophet's good deeds are far superior to your good deeds. From amongst the Prophet's good deeds the particular task of transmission of Message is the foremost. This deed is better than any other and crowns all his achievements. There is no comparison to it. So the task named 'transmission of Message' is the most formidable assignment and no parallels can be drawn to it. If the Prophet's good deeds tower all human deeds, and if from amongst his best practices the most sublime one is transmission of the Message, then I wish to submit a query.

For our two rikat prayer (namaz or salat) that is full of shortcomings, which is full of doubt and one that is devoid of humility or fear, God reserves a reward for this kind of insignificant prayer. He informs us that the reward is only for the person concerned and no one else. God is taking full responsibility for our reward, but in the case of our Prophet, he hardly seems to be recompensed for delivering the entire Message of God. This cannot be understood. To top it a verse is revealed asking the Prophet to announce,

قُل لَّا اَسـَٔلُكُم عَلَيهِ اَجرًا اِلَّا المَوَدَّةَ فِى القُربٰى

"I do not ask of you any recompense for it save love of (***my***) ***relatives*** (***near of kin***)***"*** (***42:23***)

According to the rules, our Prophet should be rewarded directly because transmission of Message was

his best deed, but the compensation being asked of us is not love for the Prophet, but love for his near of kin. It is not clear why the rules changed for the Prophet. God had just informed us,

مَن عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفسِهٖ وَ مَن اَسَآءَ فَعَلَيهَا

"Whoever does good, does it for his own soul; and whoever sins, does injustice to himself." **(*41:46*)**

God is likely to counsel us that we have not read the verse carefully, especially the part about doing good for the soul (nafs). Had we deliberated, our doubts would have been dispelled. For surely, the Ahlul Bayt deserve to be referred to as the soul of the Prophet! In this context, let me also remind you that the term "***anfusana***" in Ayat al-Mubahila (3:61) clearly fits the description of Imam Ali.

If you have not entirely grasped the significance of the term 'nearness', let me emphasize that the nearness projected by the term ***"qurba"***(42:23) is not referring to their close relationship with the Prophet, but with his Prophethood. After all, the recompense is for the task of delivering God's Message. All those who value and sustain this task, then they are associated with the Prophethood, and they are closely linked to the Divine Mission. If such a linkage exists, then this is truly valuable. No doubt, it is very appropriate. It is extremely relevant.

Let me draw your attention to the words used by Prophet Musa in this prayer,

وَ اَشرِكهُ فِی اَمرِی

"And make him share my task." **(*20:32*)**

Our Prophet too has said,

أنت مني بمنزلة هارون من موسى

'You [*Ali*] *enjoy the same link to me as Haroon did to Musa'* (*Hadith-e-Nabvi*)

You will remember Prophet Musa prayed to God to appoint his brother Haroon as his vizier and allow him to share the task of prophethood with him. Our Prophet informs us that he shares the same link with Ali that Prophet Musa did to Prophet Haroon. In fact some verses in the Quran shed light on this relationship. Consider the verse,

وَ وَضَعۡنَا عَنۡکَ وِزۡرَکَ

"And taken off from you your burden". **(*94:2*)**

If this suggests that the burden has been shared and the task is over, then who will bear the burden? Who will share the burden of transmission of the Message? Will another prophet come? Will there be another messenger?

Taking off the Prophet's load implies that the burden is distributed such that the Prophet gets to carry some of it and his near of kin shoulder some of it. Together they propagate the Message. Collectively they share the burden of transmission of the Message and the task of Prophethood.

What an amazing family, whose burden is the burden of the Messenger and whose task is the task of Prophethood. And shouldering this responsibility is their family undertaking! This task was delegated to the near of kin and they became helpers in the Prophet's mission. This distribution allows them to share the burden and this sharing entitles them to become the beneficiaries of compensation (ajr e risalat)!

It is easily ascertained that people offered to pay whatever recompense the Prophet desired for the toils of Prophethood. The Quran gives us this information. Other prophets too were made this offer, but whenever people drew attention of their prophet towards this compensation, we are informed in the Quran that each one of them replied,

وَ مَا اَسۡـَٔلُکُمۡ عَلَیۡہِ مِنۡ اَجۡرٍ ۚ اِنۡ اَجۡرِیَ اِلَّا عَلٰی رَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ

"I ask of no recompense from you; I expect recompense from none other than God."
(*26 : 109, 127, 145, 164, 180*)

Now if our Prophet had said something what could he have said? People urged him to say something in this context, but his stance was that he would not say anything till he got guidance from Allah. Then Ayat al-Mawaddat was revealed,

قُلۡ لَّاۤ اَسۡـَٔلُکُمۡ عَلَیۡہِ اَجۡرًا اِلَّا الۡمَوَدَّۃَ فِی الۡقُرۡبٰی

***"Say* (*O' Mohammad*)*, I do not ask of you any recompense for it save love of* (*my*) *relatives* (*near of kin*)*"* (*42:23*)**

Allow me to say, up to this stage of revelation Ayat al-Mawaddat was incomplete. Every prophet had

said,

وَ مَا؟ اَسـ؟ـَلُكُم؟ عَلَيـ؟ـهِ مِن؟ اَجـ؟ـرٍ

"I ask of no recompense" (***26:109***)

None could go beyond that. So we realize that the second part of the verse (42:23) was concealed; it was preserved for a later time. Hence, the earlier prophets could not have articulated this second part and they restricted themselves to just saying,

وَ مَا؟ اَسـ؟ـَلُكُم؟ عَلَيـ؟ـهِ مِن؟ اَجـ؟ـرٍ

"I ask of no recompense from you" (***26:109, 127, 145, 164, 180***)

Had any prophet wished to ask for recompense before the arrival of the last Prophet, then our Prophet too could have wished for it prior to God's instruction. He did not. But now at this stage since God wishes that the Prophet ask for compensation how can our Prophet not wish for it too? The previous prophets did not ask for recompense because they were constrained by God. There were orders forbidding them to do so.

If I say anything at this point it will be that had the earlier prophets wished to ask for recompense they would not have remained prophets, and if our Prophet had not wished for it, he would not have remained a Prophet. So when he says, "I ask of no recompense" why should he not add, ***"save love of*** (***my***) ***near of kin"***(***42:23***) for now God wants him to demand ajr e risalat in the form of love of near ones. When God issues a commandment, how can the Prophet delay or hesitate in carrying out the orders?

Thus, we gather that the Almighty desired compensation at this final stage only, and the earlier prophets were not instructed to seek it. They complied with what they were asked to do and the last Prophet carried out what he was commanded to do.

The question then arises, why were the earlier prophets not asked and why was our Prophet asked to seek recompense? The response to this would be that their prophethood was at an intermediary stage. Each prophet before departing informed and introduced the people to his successor, such that people eagerly awaited the arrival of the next prophet.

Till such time that one came after another, this process was continuing, and they did not ask for compensation as the task had not yet been completed. Transmission of message had not yet reached its concluding stage. Had these prophets asked for compensation it would have been premature and much

before it was due.

However, our Prophet came proclaiming,

لا نبي بعدي

'There will be no prophet after me'

He was the last Prophet of God. The previous prophets did not seek reward on grounds of assurance that other prophets were to follow. Each departed knowing fully well that a successor was to follow, but our Prophet arrived with this knowledge that no prophet was to come after him. Now if he also does not ask for compensation, who will?

I sometimes wonder why people who argue and furnish proof for the Last Prophethood, do not use this verse as evidence. For surely, seeking recompense is itself solid proof of the closing chapter. No prophet was allowed a reward till this mission was on going. Recompense is only due at the conclusion of a task and hence this demand was put forth at the completion stage.

Now that you have come this far with me, I am sure your spirit will absorb the essence, that when recompense is sought for in the capacity of the Last Prophet, it will not be compensation for this single Prophethood. It will not be reward for the task of one prophet only. It will in fact be recompense for the efforts starting from Prophet Adam and finishing with the efforts of the Last Prophet. It is recompense for the efforts of all the prophets. Names of prophets or the nature of their duties is of no consequence or concern here. The real issue is reward for the toils of collective Prophethood.

At this stage your mind must reflect on the difference between the reverential status of Aal e Mohammad and of the previous prophets. After all God has termed the love of the Prophet's family as compensation for the toils of the entire Prophethood.

I have raised a point in this regard in some earlier gatherings and I barely have time to go into details today, but certainly I marvel at the Almighty's scheme of testing mankind in all periods of time! The criteria of these tests vary, but no matter how simple the criteria, in the context of outcome, that criteria appears so difficult that only the righteous succeed while the rest cannot measure up to it.

On one such occasion God made a single 'sajda' (prostration) the criteria of tribulation. Those who bowed down did not enhance the prestige of Adam. They could not enter Adam's domain and they could not surpass his eminence. If my practice or your efforts can raise the prestige of a prophet; if his prestige is at our mercy and can be raised or lowered whenever we feel like, then there has to be a serious shortcoming in the prophet. We may send thousands of blessings for the prophets, but this will not elevate their status and we may use millions of derogatory words for them but this will not lower their

stature in any way.

Besides think about it, if God loves someone then will that being ever be dependent on love of others? The one accepted and approved by God, will he dwell on acceptance by others? When all provisions to the prophet are from 'Ghani' (one who is Absolutely and Totally Enriched), then the prophet himself is self-sufficient and needs no acceptance or sustenance from others.

Anyway, returning to our discussion, the 'sajda', a single act of prostration was established as the criteria for judgment. This was selected on the basis of knowledge. God knew Shaytan (the Devil) could do anything but he would never bow down. Our souls are indeed infested with strange weaknesses. Each soul has its inherent shortcomings and these vary from one to another. God knew that Shaytan was weak in this area of bowing down and that he would not agree to prostrate before Adam.

True enough, he proved so weak that this one 'sajda' became a colossal hurdle for him. In fact, it became impossible for him, and he decided that any other order could be obeyed but he would never bow down to Adam. He made this decision despite the fact that he had received a direct command. No intermediary courier or narrator was involved. God had Himself given a command to the Devil so the question of poor communication did not arise. The authenticity of the command could not be challenged. He was hearing the voice of God from close by and without intercession, yet he decided that he could not obey.

Bowing down should not have been difficult for the Devil. He was used to doing that. He was in the habit of performing prostrations day and night. It was his daily routine. His lifetime was spent in prostration but God knew he would not bow in front of any of His creation even if He commanded him to. Here we can easily set apart those who act in accordance with God's wishes.

How easy it was! The word 'sajda' itself tells us how easy this standard of the test was. It did not involve going anywhere. It did not require giving anything or exposing oneself to any danger. All it required was bowing down and by one who was so used to it. For a regular practitioner this was not something new. Anyway, the Devil suffered from this perpetual weakness that he refused to bow to anyone besides God, even on His instructions.

In the same way, for Prophet Nuh's disobedient son, the trial was boarding the Ark. This was a task that was easily possible and yet it proved so difficult. The level of water was rising rapidly. It gushed out of the earth and it rained from the skies. Mountains were submerged in this deluge and in such a situation it should not have been difficult for the son to listen to his father and take refuge in the Ark. However, he chose to drown and terminate his life. He decided to disobey Nuh and deny himself a seat on board.

I wish to say that all these trials and tribulations took place and the criteria for judgment varied from time to time. So should not a standard be established in the time of the Last Prophet such that it would last till the Day of Judgment? On the face of it this criteria appears very simple but it is adjudged difficult on the basis of God's knowledge, such that only a believer can qualify and a non-believer cannot even attempt

it.

No doubt the criteria of stability on the battlefield is a great criteria but jihad (fighting in the way of God) is not required in each era, or at all times and in each century. So should there be no criteria for judging us? We live and there is no standard to test us? It was essential that a criteria be established by God to distinguish right from wrong and for it to last till the Day of Judgment.

Now what is this criteria? It is love for the Ahlul Bayt. You will ask, how is this criteria difficult? It appears to be very ordinary, yet I tell you this is a difficult one. What do you know about difficulties? Was bowing down difficult? For those drowning how was accepting a seat in the Ark difficult? Was sitting in the Ark difficult or was not sitting in it difficult?

You may say this criteria of love is no great challenge but in actual life this is a tremendous challenge. People are capable of offering prayers and they are capable of observing fasts and reciting the Quran. They are able to offer non mandatory 'nawafil' (additional prayer) and to perform Haj (Pilgrimage to Mecca). In short they can do anything, but despite all this they seem incapable of loving the Ahlul Bayt.

Loving the Ahlul Bayt can be an elusive task. People will do everything else and yet fail to join the ranks of those who love the Ahlul Bayt. This is regardless of the fact that love of the Ahlul Bayt is the basis of our well–being and guidance. This love would be love for those who are known to give and not take. It would be love for those who are forbidden charity and are not dependent on others for anything. In fact, they are appointed to help us overcome our difficulties, to resolve our issues and to address our needs. Is it difficult to love such people?

They deserve to be loved for they are the nuclei wherein reside the qualities of God! I stress that they deserve to be loved whether or not God wanted us to do so. If their love was not made mandatory even then it was necessary to love them. Please remember that the need to love them was not dependent on any command.

If someone asks, 'is there a Quranic verse directly asking us to love the Prophet's children, or is there a verse that commands us to love the Prophet's sacred hair?' The answer to this is that love is not based on instructions. If it is mandatory to love the Prophet then everything related or associated with the Prophet is to be revered. In this sense the Prophet's staff or his hair all command respect. You cannot expect a separate commandment for each and every thing.

On the basis of this, am I wrong in saying that just as there is no separate command in the Quran for the Prophet's hair, or a command to respect and revere his shrine; and just as there is no instruction for the Prophet's staff, so in the same way even if there were no specific instructions to love the Prophet's near ones, then too we were bound to love them. But once the orders came to love the Ahlul Bayt then this act of compliance no longer remained an essential requirement (farz). It became a part of our belief (Iman).

Why did I say that? There is a difference between farz and Iman. Mandatory prayer is the best essential practice but when? The question of time arises. A time has to be ascertained. Not all the time. Is any prayer due right now? Even though the real purpose of life is worship, and the foremost worship is prayer, but after offering morning prayers (Fajr) is any prayer essential before mid-day (Zohr)? After Zohr and Asr (evening) is any prayer due before Magrib (sunset)? After offering Magrib and Isha (early night) is any prayer compulsory throughout the night?

Farz is that practice which is essential at some time and not essential at other times. Keep this in your mind. Fasting is essential. Is it necessary to fast in the (lunar) month of Shaban or Shawal or during the nights of month of Ramadan? Of the twelve months they are essential during one month only and that too during the daytime. In addition it is not essential for those who are sick or are traveling. In short, there is no requirement of fasting for eleven months.

Thus, fasting is essential at some time and not essential at other times. It is essential for a minimum period and not essential for a maximum period. Haj is compulsory only once in a lifetime. Rest of the age is free. No fasting for eleven months and half of the twelfth month (night time) is free too. Besides, if you fall sick then the time is further reduced. We conclude that farz is to be practiced at specific times only.

What is faith (Iman)? It is not something that is present at a particular time and absent at another. There is no restriction of time for faith. At what specific time is the acceptance of God as our God, the Prophet as our righteous Prophet or acceptance of imamat of the Imams and justice of the just person essential? There is no question of time. Rather, it should be asked, what time is faith not essential? What name can we give to time, when it exists and faith is not essential!

There is another difference between farz and Iman. During sickness even the essentials can be excused or wavered, but faith can never be deferred or dropped. In fact, as the sickness progresses, faith grows stronger for there is a chance that this may lead to death. During ill health, faith must be consolidated and revitalized, for sickness, being one of the possible causes of death, is right in front of us. Anyway, farz is something that has a replacement. If wuzu (ablution with water) is not possible then it can be substituted with tayammum (ablution with dust).

I ask you now, if you are unable to accept God as our Creator, then can you substitute another one for Him? Can we reject the Prophet and accept one who is not? In matters of faith replacement is not allowed. Old men who cannot fast are allowed to give a certain amount of food to others as compensation. For fasting there is a substitute. You can be excused from fasting or their numbers may be reduced. Is there a margin of reduction (qasr) in prayer? Yes, it can be reduced by half. But is reduction in the Unity of God possible? Or in the Prophethood? Belief in six out of the twelve Imams? Is this shortening allowed?

Thus, you see there are many differences between farz and Iman. Farz is essential at one stage and not essential at another but faith is imperative at all times. It is for this reason that our Prophet did not

decree the love of his ‘Aal’ as an essential practice. Rather he said, ‘their love is Iman, their enmity is kufr’

حبهم إيمان وبغضهم كفر

(*their love is a matter of faith and enmity for them is a reflection of disbelief*)

People with insight know that love of the Prophet’s Aal has been designated as recompense for toils of prophethood. However, a particular aspect of Ayat al-Mawaddat has gone un-noticed by the world even though the words,

اِلَّا الۡمَوَدَّةَ فِی الۡقُرۡبٰی

have drawn the sketch showing the Prophet on a pulpit saying “***la asalokum***” (42:23). There is a group in front, whom the Prophet is addressing. The “***kum***” in the “***asalokum***” in the first part of the verse is for this gathering in sight. They are being addressed,

قُلۡ لَّاۤ اَسۡـَٔلُکُمۡ عَلَیۡہِ اَجۡرًا اِلَّا الۡمَوَدَّةَ فِی الۡقُرۡبٰی

“I ask of no recompense, save love of my near ones” (***42:23***)

Seated before the Prophet are those to whom he is communicating “***la asalokum***” (I am not asking you) and also in his view are those he is referring to “***qurba***” (my near ones). This clearly indicates that “***kum***” is not addressed to these “***qurba***” and also that their company is not for those included in “***kum***”. Stay focused to see that the Ayat is addressing one set of people and requirement of love is for another group of people.

The foremost question now is with regard to compensation. Grown-ups and young ones, women in view and those not in view; men who are present and those not present; the seen and the unseen; in short this verse is addressed to all humanity past and present and all those who may enter the folds of Islam till the Day of Judgement,

قُلۡ لَّاۤ اَسۡـَٔلُکُمۡ عَلَیۡہِ اَجۡرًا اِلَّا الۡمَوَدَّةَ فِی الۡقُرۡبٰی

"I ask of no recompense, save love of the near ones" (***42:23***)

This means that the entire ummat (mankind) is responsible for paying compensation to the Prophet. And what is this compensation? It is love of Prophet's dear ones. A strange result can be drawn from this. Compensation is expected from everyone and in what form? As love for the near ones. Now since love of "***qurba***" is sought as compensation and the address of "kum" is for entire humanity, then it means the verse is not demanding compensation from these near ones. God has not commanded the Prophet to seek love from them. Thus, everyone is responsible for the compensation except for the Ahlul Bayt.

It is a separate issue what the compensation is, and that too is their love, but what is being highlighted here is the identity of people not addressed by this ayat. The fact, that the Ahlul Bayt are not being asked to pay compensation, is evidence that they were helpers in the task of Prophethood, and asking them for "ajr" would be akin to Prophet Musa asking his brother Haroon for compensation. The Ahlul Bayt are partners in the task of Prophethood, they are functionaries in the mission of the Prophet ;

قُلۡ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيۡدًا بَيۡنِىۡ وَ بَيۡنَكُمۡ ۙ وَ مَنۡ عِنۡدَهٗ عِلۡمُ الۡكِتٰبِ

"Allah is sufficient as witness between me and you, and he who has knowledge of the book" (***13:43***)

God has appointed the Ahlul Bayt as a witness to the Prophethood. Now if they are a witness then does one give to a witness or do we ask of a witness for something? They are helpers in the task of the Prophet, they are assistants in the mission of the Prophet and they are dedicated as a witness to his colossal task. Together they are required to do whatever needs to be done. They occupy such an amazing position!

At the end of my undertaking let me share a profound consideration with you. The instruction regarding love for the Ahlul Bayt was conveyed to the people by the Prophet. Orders were received through the courtesy of the Prophet, just as the instruction for prayers came through the Prophet and orders for fasts did not come directly, but came through the Prophet.

Directive for prayers was sent to the Prophet and he relayed it to the people. If the instruction for prayers had been conveyed without our Prophet himself performing prayers, then the world would have been justified in saying that he was asking others to do what he himself did not practice. Had he conveyed the order for observing fasts without doing so himself, he would have been targeted by the following verse,

اَتَاۡمُرُوۡنَ النَّاسَ بِالۡبِرِّ وَ تَنۡسَوۡنَ اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ

"Order others to do good but forget to do so themselves" (***2:44***)

The Prophet conveyed instruction for prayers by personal example of offering prayers; instruction for fasts by observing fasts himself and directive for honouring commitments by fulfilling his promises. Now I wish to ask, was the instruction regarding love for Ahlul Bayt conveyed by our Prophet by demonstration of his own love for them?

The reason why I emphasize this is that in order to deliver any directive, it is essential our Prophet himself performs the task, and that too in a manner which cannot be replicated till the Day of Judgement. That is, the practical demonstration has to be of a standard that it is not possible for anyone to match it. People will offer prayers but nobody can offer them the way our Prophet did. People will fast but no one can observe fasts the way he did. The Prophet's action has to be superior to the action of all practitioners till the Day of Judgement.

God is great! This is an amazing position where I am at this juncture! God tasked the Prophet to deliver the command of love for his Aal. This command reached the people through the courtesy of the Prophet. Now it is necessary that a practical demonstration of love be given that can be followed by the people. This example should serve as a standard for the people to follow, and also prove helpful in obeying the command. The benchmark should be so sublime that no matter how much love is showered by the followers, it can never reach the standard set by the example.

Who gave this exemplary demonstration? Our Prophet did. If he communicated the order to love the Ahlul Bayt, then he personally gave a demonstration of love for these near ones. God be praised! An example of this standard can never be witnessed again. No matter how intensely or passionately anyone tries, they cannot match the love that our Prophet showered on his Ahlul Bayt.

Who can describe that love? What style of narrative can possibly capture and depict that love? Of all the prayers ever offered, the Prophet's prayer is the most outstanding. Of all the fasts ever observed his fast is the supreme one and of all expressions of love, his is the most exalted. The Prophet gave a qualitative demonstration of this love. Indeed he set a remarkable example for all to see!

Now I do not wish to remark on the quality of the Prophet's love for Hussain or the nature of this love. Why mention Hasan and Hussain? If our Prophet ever saw a child play with his grandchildren, even that child became endeared to him. Once our Prophet was going somewhere along with his followers. On the way he saw some children playing. His household children were not among them but he singled out a child for attention. When he came close to the children, he picked up this child, sat down on the ground, gently stroked his head and showered him with looks of love and endearment.

The companions were surprised at this exhibition of love, for the child did not belong to their tribe or region or family. Who should tell them? Finally they inquired why the Prophet was so affectionate to this child. He told them that once he had seen this child play with his grandson Hussain and while playing he would pick up dust from the footsteps of Hussain and rub his eyes with it. If this was his level of

attachment at such a tender age, then what would be its intensity in his youth or old age! The Prophet remarked that Gibrail had informed him that this child would be Hussain's helper in Karbala. Scholars have gathered that this child was Habib ibn Mazahir.

Now consider how Imam Hussain valued this friendship. (In Karbala) He did not summon troops or brigades for assistance. All he did was send out a letter to an old man. He specially wrote this letter to call his childhood friend Habib for help. The courier reached Kufa and knocked at the closed door. When Habib inquired who was at the door, the courier replied,

أنا بريد الحسين

'I have been sent by our leader Hussain'.

On hearing this he opened the door looking greatly worried. Earlier the Prophet had cared for Habib due to his association with Hussain and now Habib values the courier due to his link with Hussain. He holds his hands with reverence, embraces him and kisses his forehead.

The courier informed him that Imam had sent a letter. Habib took the letter, placed it on his head, held it close to his heart, rubbed his eyes with it and when he opened and read it he realized that his Imam was in great distress. Imam's letter acknowledged and reminded Habib that he was very well versed with the rights of the Ahlul Bayt, hence he should not evade the risk of sacrificing his life.

As he read the letter who knows how deeply it moved him. How was it possible to console his heart? He asked his attendant (ghulam) to prepare his horse for journey and further instructed him to take it to a certain location outside the city and wait for him. He would reach there somehow. The attendant did as he was told and waited for his master.

It was not easy to move out of Kufa, especially for Habib who was going to help his Imam. He took unfamiliar routes to throw people off track and even moved in direction of his agricultural land to give the impression he was going there. In short, since he took this long route, he was delayed in reaching the meeting point.

God knows how long it took, for the attendant was despairing and saying to his horse, "I will wait a little longer for my master, but if he does not arrive I will ride on you and go to help my Imam". As the attendant turned to address the innocent animal, the horse raised its head and tears began flowing down the eyes.

When Habib reached the meeting point he overheard the ongoing conversation and saw the horse in this condition. Upon inquiry, the attendant gave the details and informed him how the horse had been crying ever since. Habib grieved and sent salam to his victimized Imam saying, "How grave the situation is that

even the subservient is craving to lay down his life for you. I am a free man, how is it possible that I will not come for your help"?

Saying this he mounted the horse and told his attendant that from now on he was a free man. Probably the reason for this gesture was that Habib noticed the attendant's eagerness to serve the Imam and found this behaviour very satisfactory. So in a tone and manner similar to his Imam's, he said, "Go, I have released you."

The attendant protested, "you kept me with you as long as you needed help from me, and now when staying with you will be a source of eternal bliss and grace for me, you are parting with me". Habib asked what he desired. He replied he wanted what his master wanted and wished to go where he was going. "Just as you will sacrifice your life for the Imam, I too will sacrifice my life for him. In the name of God please don't leave me behind".

Thus, Habib took him along. Master was leading and the attendant followed him. Habib was on the horse and the attendant was on foot. So, the journey of love was being traversed and the two were drawing nearer to the Imam.

When Habib spotted the pole of the Imam's tent from his horseback he prepared to dismount. The attendant wondered why he was coming down for there was still a substantial distance to cover. Habib informed him that he had sighted the pole of the Imam's tent and now it would amount to disrespect if he stayed mounted. So both walked.

Preparations for Habib's welcome were in progress in the Imam's camp. In short, Habib reached his deeply loved Imam's presence and was embraced by him. Imam smiled and appeared happy. Seeing their Imam happy, the companions seemed happy too and when the Imam smiled they also smiled. When Bibi Zainab sensed this joy she called Fizza and asked her, "why are the companions of my brother so happy? It appears an army has come to support my brother. Do go out and check."

Fizza went to investigate and returned saying, "my princess, there is neither an army nor a brigade, but the Imam's childhood friend Habib ibn e Mazahir has arrived. The Imam and his companions are happy on that account". On hearing this news Bibi said,

اقري مني السلام

"Convey my salam to Habib"

Fizza went out and called aloud, "Fortunate Habib! Ali and Fatima's daughter and the Prophet's granddaughter Zainab Kubra is conveying her salam to you."

Habib was overwhelmed by this gesture. He beat up his face and while striking it with the hands he kept saying, “Me the sinner, the insignificant, the unworthy; me Habib and salutations for me from the exalted Zainab e Kubra! Me a mere speck of dust and for me greetings from the daughter of Siraj e Munir”!

God’s wrath be on the transgressors.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِنَّمَا یُرِیۡدُ اللّٰہُ لِیُذۡہِبَ عَنۡکُمُ

الرِّجۡسَ اَہۡلَ الۡبَیۡتِ وَ یُطَہِّرَکُمۡ تَطۡہِیۡرًا

“Verily, verily Allah intends but to keep off from you **(*every kind of*)** ***uncleanness, O you the people of the House, and purify you*** **(*with*)** ***a thorough purification.”*** **(*33:33*)**

The Ahlul Bayt are informed that God wishes to keep all impurities away from them and to purify them in a manner truly deserving of this purification.

The Quranic verse I have selected as my topic today is well known by the name of Ayat al-Tatheer. Our ears are familiar with this ayat (verse) and we recognize not only the text but to a large extent its meaning as well. If our ears are tuned to the words of this verse, then our hearts too recognize the people to whom this verse is addressed.

Anyway, the style of expression adopted here is unique and different from other verses. The first special treatment is that this verse starts with the word “***innama***”(33:33). In Arabic this word is referred to as ‘harf e hisar’, the enclosing or restricting word.

To explain this word I will give you an example. To fend or ward of difficulties or to create favourable conditions some people practice a particular procedure known as ‘chilla’. That is, they rehearse a specific procedure (amal) for forty days and read a particular text. The practitioner (aamil) of this activity, before starting draws a boundary (hisaar) so that this difficult task is protected from the interference of the Shaytan.

The words ‘hisar’ and ‘hisaar’ imply the same thing. Now just as a practitioner draws a boundary first and

then commences his practice, God draws a hisaar of “innama” before proceeding with the process of purification. God Almighty draws this protective boundary.

A regular practitioner draws a hisaar to ensure that those capable of obstructing this procedure are kept out of the area of practice. In the same manner the word “innama” is used by the Almighty to restrict all, except those worthy of absolute purification from the domain of this verse. They are to be restricted and not allowed to pass even close to this territory of piety. The ground of purity is not be traversed by any, save those whom God selects as the purest of pure.

Thus, the first protective step in this context is the use of the word “innama”. God has used this word for these selected people at other places, too. This is Ayat al–Tatheer and it is adorned by the subject of purification. In this very Quran there is another verse by the name of Ayat al–Wilayat and this verse determines the focal points of Wilayat and identifies the recipients of this honoured title. This title is so sublime that God has not wished to keep Himself aloof from it. In this verse too God has placed the word “***innama***” (5:55) at the beginning.

اِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَ رَسُوۡلُهٗ

“Verily, your guardian is Allah and His Messenger…” **(*5:55*)**

Only God is your wali and the Prophet is your wali……

If you use ‘only’ as the translation for “innama” then it implies sufficient or enough; but if you translate with greater clarity in everyday language, such that it is easily understood by all then the translation could be ‘no one else’.

Your Wali is Allah and His Prophet. This is Wilayat. If it was Risalat (Prophethood) than no other name could follow it and also God’s name could not precede it. But this is Wilayat. Before naming the Prophet, God uses His own name and after the Prophet’s name He considers another name worthy of mention. The next part of the verse leads us to this name,

وَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيۡنَ يُقِيۡمُوۡنَ الصَّلٰوةَ

وَ يُؤۡتُوۡنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَ هُمۡ رٰكِعُوۡنَ

“and those who believe and establish prayer and give zakat while they are bowing down **(*in***

***rukuh**)". (**5:55**)*

Anyway it is not my intention to go into the depth of this verse. I only wish to convey that God considered it necessary to draw the enclosure of *"innama*". Similarly, in the narrative of purification, that is, at the highest level of purity, God used the same word "*innama*" to preside over Ayat al-Tatheer.

Every beginning is somehow linked to its ending and every outcome is connected to its introduction. So, if the beginning of this verse is remarkable due to the usage of the term "*innama*", then it can be said with authority that its ending is extraordinary, too.

The word selected to conclude this verse is so special that even prophets cannot match its standard or significance. In fact, I would be justified to claim that none of the Books sent by God and even His House cannot come close to this standard. You may perhaps feel that I am making large claims, but let me reassure you that we definitely believe that all the prophets are pious and pure. In fact, if you ask the truth, we are the flag bearers of their genuine and immaculate purity.

Our scholars from the earlier and the later periods have all tried their level best to educate us that prophets do not make mistakes and they do not engage in sinful activity of any kind, major or minor. Even this is not a sufficient statement of their purity. The prophets cannot make mistakes intentionally or unintentionally. Their past is not polluted by sin and their future too cannot be visited by sinful activity. In fact, we believe that a prophet cannot even contemplate doing something wrong.

By the grace of God I have an appreciative audience, so let me just mention something in the passing and move on. The historical minded among you would know that Mamun Rashid was a highly intellectual scholar and a great orator of his time. He would mesmerize even the most gifted of public speakers with his rhetoric and in-depth knowledge of whatever he touched upon. I am briefly referring to an incidence in his period. Mamun Rashid was a scholar with a sophisticated taste. I have deliberately emphasized the word 'taste' for in my opinion scholarship without good taste is of no merit. Every field of knowledge requires people of good taste and inclination. So Mamun was an elegant scholar and one of the best of his time.

Now just as a period in time cannot be devoid of learned people, so we believe that every era is blessed with the presence of an Imam. So Mamun was the best scholar of his time and this period also witnessed the presence of an Imam. You have often heard his name, Imam Raza who is even today remembered for his wealth of knowledge. Mamun knew that our knowledge is acquired, whereas the source of the Ahlul Bayt's knowledge is different. They are gifted from up there while we have acquired it from down here!

There are major differences between the knowledge of prophets and their appointed helpers and that of the worldly scholars. We are those who struggle and labour to acquire knowledge after we are born and we are very well aware of the limitations of our scholarship. To become a scholar on arrival here is one thing and to be born with the gift of scholarship from God is another thing!

As an example consider the conversation of Prophet Isa who as a matter of necessity, spoke from the cradle to uphold his mother's chastity. The Lord be Praised! The amazing oratory of the infant and the spoken words recorded in verses (30–33) of Surah Maryam (chapter 19) spelt out the absolute and true picture of Prophethood. Let's go through these verses,

قَالَ اِنِّی عَبۡدُ اللّٰہِ

"(Isa) said, Verily, I am servant of Allah" **(*19:30*)**

The first word "***qala***" (said) is what God said. Isa began his sentence with "***Verily, I am servant of Allah***". Perhaps people who were present and listened, might have thought these words spoken by the newborn were not even required for they did not doubt his status as the servant of Allah. So, if no one differed then where was the need to state this and to say it with emphasis, that certainly "***I am the servant of Allah***".

Apparently, it seems out of context with the situation or even unnecessary, but God is great! The initial glance of infancy could see and reflect: 'You are not aware of the conflict that would develop in your outlook. I know now that a time will come when you will not refer to me as the servant of Allah. You will call me the son of Allah. That is your future and I at this stage desire my testimony to be recorded in the past tense with respect to your future. You will make your claim at some later stage but I want to refute these claims today, right now. Definitely, I am the servant of God'.

Using the word ***"abdullah"*****(*19:30*)** (servant of Allah) in such an emphatic manner suggests that the future labeling as 'ibnallah' (son of God) is being negated at the very time of birth. This assertion is possible only on the basis of knowledge.

قَالَ اِنِّی عَبۡدُ اللّٰہِ اٰتٰنِیَ الۡکِتٰبَ وَ جَعَلَنِیۡ نَبِیًّا

"(Isa) said, Verily I am a servant of Allah. He has given me a book and made me a Prophet" **(*19:30*)**

If Isa had said, 'God will give me a book and He will make me a Prophet' and if he had used the future tense that would have been perfectly justified. People would have understood, for he was to receive a book and he would be appointed a Prophet. If he had made this announcement from the cradle that he was to receive a book and was to be appointed a Prophet, it would have been just right from our point of view for both were due in the future.

But no, Isa did not say God will give me Prophethood and He will give me a book. Even a beginner

learning Arabic knows that the future tense of ‘ata’ is ‘yuta’ and the future tense of ‘jaala’ is ‘yajalo’.

Isa said, “***Ata niyal kitab***” (19:30). God has already given me the book and God has made me a Prophet.

Also this appointment is valid

اَیۡنَ مَا کُنۡتُ

“wherever I may be” (***19:31***).

Now this is a strange sentence, “***wherever I may be”*** (***19:31***) and it is not very frequently used. It gives insight into the depth of knowledge of the one in the cradle who knows he has to live in various places. ‘Sometime I will stay on this Earth and sometimes up above in the Heavens. I am blessed if I stay here and will be blessed when I am there.’

The words “***aina ma kuntu***” (19:31) suggest that the mind of the infant knew that he will have to stay in different places at different times. ‘Sometimes I will be here and sometimes there but wherever I may be my glory will not undergo any change. I will be blessed here and I will be blessed there. Subsequently when I return here I will still be blessed! I am blessed wherever I may reside.’ He also mentions that these blessings have already been endowed!

وَ السَّلٰمُ عَلَیَّ یَوۡمَ وُلِدۡتُّ وَ یَوۡمَ اَمُوۡتُ وَ یَوۡمَ اُبۡعَثُ حَیًّا

“And peace be on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive”. (***19:33***)

‘There is peace for me, peace for my faith and peace for my actions. Also there is peace for my personality, for my name and honour and in short for my very existence. The day of my birth is blessed, the day of my death is blessed and so is the day of Banishment (mehshar) when I shall be raised again’.

I am sure my audience has not yet forgotten that Isa spoke from his cradle as an arrangement by God for providing relief to the increasing agitation of Maryam. The entire sketch must be present in your mind. When Isa was born his mother uttered these words, duly reproduced and recorded by the Quran,

یٰلَیۡتَنِیۡ مِتُّ قَبۡلَ ہٰذَا وَ کُنۡتُ نَسۡیًا مَّنۡسِیًّا

"Would that I had died before this, and had been a thing forgotten, lost in oblivion". (***19:23***)

This lament suggests that the mother was disturbed that she gave birth to a child and wished she had died a long time ago so no one would remember her. She wished that people would have forgotten who she was (and that she had not lived to see herself giving birth to a child).

The Almighty calmed her ruffled heart. His Mercy was alongside in the earlier decision and it also guided her in this perturbed state. God addressed Maryam,

اَلَّا تَحۡزَنِیۡ قَدۡ جَعَلَ رَبُّکِ تَحۡتَکِ سَرِیًّا

"Do not grieve"
"Cool (***your***) ***eye"*** (***19:24***)

A tremendous word is used here. You have been blessed with a "***quratul ain***" (coolant for the eye). Keep your eyes cool. Anyway it was a way to say don't lose heart, do not be sad, do not be afraid and

فَاِمَّا تَرَیِنَّ مِنَ الۡبَشَرِ اَحَدًا

"if you come across a human being (***19:26***)***"***

Then the following words are implied but not present in the script: if they lodge a complaint, they will definitely object when they see a child in your lap – then at that instance say to them,

اِنِّیۡ نَذَرۡتُ لِلرَّحۡمٰنِ صَوۡمًا فَلَنۡ اُکَلِّمَ الۡیَوۡمَ اِنۡسِیًّا

"Verily I have vowed a fast to Ar Rahman and I shall not speak to anyone today". (***19:26***)

and point to the child. After that he will handle the rest. So these instructions were given to Maryam. After this when people saw her they remarked,

قَالُوۡا یٰمَرۡیَمُ لَقَدۡ جِئۡتِ شَیۡـًٔا فَرِیًّا

اَبُوۡکِ امۡرَ اَ سَوۡءٍ وَّ مَا کَانَتۡ اُمُّکِ بَغِیًّا

"O Maryam! Indeed you have brought a strange thing".
"Your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother an unchaste woman" (***19:27, 28***)

'What have you done'? The people who objected were praising the parents and relatives of Maryam. 'Your father was not a bad man and your mother was a virtuous lady but you have brought dishonour to them.'

فَاَشَارَتۡ اِلَیۡہِ

"Then she pointed towards the child" (***19:29***)

I am leading you to the question, why did she point to the child? What did she want Isa to say? Why was it necessary for Isa to speak? What was the need to do so? Which issue was to be addressed? Which particular need demanded this action or intervention?

The issue here was not of Prophethood, nor was there any controversy regarding Isa's status as a son or a servant. The issue was not pertaining to the Bible (Injeel) or the revelation of any book. There was only one issue at that time. How can a woman who does not have a husband and who has not committed sin give birth to a child? This issue was the reason for the child's proclamation.

After I have reminded you of the reason for Isa's discourse, you will be surprised to note that he said everything about himself but he did not utter a single word regarding the issue at hand. Perhaps my observation is to be blamed for not sighting the required words, but I am looking at,

قَالَ اِنِّیۡ عَبۡدُ اللّٰہِ ۟ اٰتٰنِیَ الۡکِتٰبَ وَ جَعَلَنِیۡ نَبِیًّا.

وَّ جَعَلَنِیۡ مُبٰرَکًا اَیۡنَ مَا کُنۡتُ ۪ وَ اَوۡصٰنِیۡ

بِالصَّلٰوۃِ وَ الزَّکٰوۃِ مَا دُمۡتُ حَیًّا.

وَّ بَرًّا بِوَالِدَتِی ۪ ۪ وَ لَم ۪ یَجعَلنِی ۪ جَبَّارًا شَقِیًّا.

"Verily I am a servant of Allah. He has given me a book and made me a Prophet.
And He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me salat and zakat as long as I live.
And duteous to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblest." (***19:30,31,32***)

These were the words. Not a single word was uttered in defense of his mother or her need. So even though Isa spoke, he did not say what he was expected to say with regard to his mother.

The interesting aspect is that not a single word was said in the context of the immediate issue, yet it assuaged the concern of Bani Israel and all criticism was halted. Whatever doubts we have now, that the real issue was not addressed, arise from the fact that we have not witnessed the appointment of one prophet after another and the sketch of what the parents of a prophet are supposed to be like has faded from our minds.

We have known only one Prophet whose kalima we are supposed to recite and that we do recite, and this Prophet too lived in our distant past. Besides our Prophet was appointed after a gap of centuries from his predecessor. The interim vacant period between Isa and our Prophet was spread over centuries.

Suppose we transport our nation from the present time period to the era of the Prophet. If we make believe that we exist in the times of the Prophet, that we belong to the class that lived during his lifetime, even then we face a situation where we have not seen an influx of prophets. We are not familiar with the circumstances or the environment inhabited by the prophets. On the other hand Bani Israel were visited by prophets day and night (they were famous for their numerical strength). Prophets came to them day and night. They came one after another and in fact many were simultaneously appointed.

Now, since Bani Israel were living in a time period where they interacted frequently with the prophets, they were aware of the lineage of the prophets. They knew that the prophets' parents and ancestors far from being infidels were not even liable to commit a major mistake. They had knowledge of what a prophet's mother should not be, what a prophet's father cannot be and what a grandfather is not. They had all this knowledge.

There is a famous proverb, talk to people according to their level of intelligence. Now if Isa were to address us today, he would have to inform us of his mother's sanctity and how God had ordained and enabled his birth without a father. If he was talking to us he would have to tell us all that, for we unfortunately, are even prepared to label the Prophet's ancestors infidels.

Bani Israel had seen hundreds of prophets. They came to them day and night. They knew what kind of wombs gave birth to prophets and what a prophet's mother was like. Hence, there was no need for Isa

to establish his mother's piety. It was sufficient for him to say that God had selected and sent him as a Prophet, and hence his mother was a Prophet's mother. They very well knew what a prophet's mother was like.

I have digressed very far. I was saying that all the prophets are pure and pious. The prophets no doubt occupy an eminent position, but even the angels are pure, every Book from God is pure. All the places and houses used for worship by God's chosen people were clean and pure. Hence, the purity of the Ahlul Bayt was not something new. Pure and pious people from amongst God's creation had existed before. The prophets, the pious leaders, the angels and the House of God designated as Qibla, they are all clean and pure. The Ahlul Bayt are clean and pure too, but purity alone is not an exclusive or a defining characteristic for them.

Now if you are listening carefully then I have to say something here. The word tatheer or the word taharat, which means clean and pure, has been used in the Quran at several places and for different people. It is used for the hoors (spouses) in heaven. The words used are,

وَ لَهُم؟ فِيهَا؟ اَز؟وَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ *؟ وَّ هُم؟ فِيهَا خٰلِدُو؟نَ

"There will be mutahhira spouses for the inmates of heaven" **(*2:25*)**

This word "***mutahhira***" is derived from the word tatheer and God has proclaimed these spouses pure and clean.

An announcement has been made for Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail.

وَ عَهِد؟نَا؟ اِلٰى اِبرٰهِيمَ وَ اِسمٰعِيل اَن؟ طَهِّرَا بَيتِىَ

"We had made a covenant with Ibrahim and Ismail to keep my house clean and pure". **(*2:125*)**

I do not wish to accept a translation that suggests a pledge was undertaken from Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail to cleanse and purify the House of God. We clean or we purify something that is impure and unclean. Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Ismail constructed the Kaaba, the entire House, with their own hands. Now if that House is not clean and if they could not keep it clean while making it, how are they expected to clean it now and ensure its purity, subsequently?

In my opinion if we were to select Muslim masons and task them to construct a mosque, then even they, while laying each brick, would remember that a house of God was being constructed. The angels that lay the foundations of the House of God would surely avoid unclean water and keep their hands clean.

After all no ordinary house is being constructed. The House of God was being constructed!

So, if a reckless human being in the name of God, while laying the foundations of a house dedicated to His name, can ensure cleanliness then if this task is entrusted to learned people, to God fearing pious persons and to highly responsible people, then how clean that mosque is likely to be. If each and every brick is laid by a scholar, a responsible person and a God fearing and pious human being who is well conversant with the requirements of purity, then surely he will ensure high standards of cleanliness.

Leave aside the scholars. If the masons are of the order of Khaleel Allah (Allah's friend) and Zabeeh Allah (sacrificed in the name of Allah) and if such eminent Prophets are the architects who have constructed His House then how come Kaaba emerged unclean and impure? Who is to be blamed for this? Ibrahim and Ismail? No. I may redirect this blame to God, for He selected them as masons to construct His House. If these sacred hands constructed an impure House then what was the specific advantage of commissioning these hands? What was the need to designate Prophets for this task when the world was full of expert masons?

There is another point in my mind that I want you to reflect upon. When Kaaba was being constructed Prophet Ibrahim was quite old and his son Ismail was still a child. Strenuous labour can be difficult both in old age and in childhood. Yet Ibrahim and Ismail built the House of God. As far as we know or hope to know, we can confidently say no third person was assigned to assist the two in the construction of the House. They could have hired labour or contracted masons to work for them but I am sure you have not heard of it and the Quran has not informed us. The Quran says,

وَ اِذۡ یَرۡفَعُ اِبۡرٰہٖمُ الۡقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الۡبَیۡتِ وَ اِسۡمٰعِیۡلُ

"And* (*remember*) *when Ibrahim and Ismail raised the foundations of the House". (***2:127***)

Both have been named. If there was a third one, he too would have been named. Here one name followed by the second one suggests that the owner of the Book paid attention that all involved in the process be named. No third hand was employed for this was a sacred place and those building it had to be worthy of the task. The unworthy could not be associated with this House.

Just as these two got together to build the House in the initial stages, so at a later stage, two others got together to revive the House. The first was the evident external construction and Ibrahim and Ismail were the two engaged in this construction. Then a time came for the internal renovation of the House, for Kaaba had been turned into a sanctuary for the idols and the House of God was packed with these idols.

When it was time to cleanse the House of these idols so that those offering prayers could bow and prostrate in peace and those seeking sanctity were able to worship, then the initial task of cleansing was phased into the final and conclusive stage. If there were two in the beginning then there should be two

for the ending too. Thus our Prophet requested,

'Climb on my shoulders Ali and break all the idols'!

There was no shortage of people to assist Ibrahim at that time and there was no shortage of people to carry out our Prophet's command at this juncture. The idols in the Kaaba were demolished at a time when Islam was at its peak and thousands of people had entered its fold. A minor command from the Prophet would have been sufficient to destroy or remove and eliminate these idols. However, just as God desired pure and clean hands for the earlier task, so He desired that this mission should also be accomplished by hands that were never likely to do any wrong.

I was saying that when God asked Ibrahim and Ismail to keep Kaaba clean He used the word ***"tahhira"*** (***2:125***)***.*** All praise to the Almighty for doing justice and for giving due consideration to the potential of those tasked with the mission. He said,

اَن طَهِّرَا بَيتِیَ

"Purify my House" (***2:125***)

but He did not say purify it as it deserves to be purified. How could Ibrahim and Ismail have fulfilled this aspect of the task? After all this was not their privilege or entitlement. In technical terms we refer to it as task beyond capacity if we thrust a task on someone who does not possess the ability to fulfill it. So God asked them to keep it clean but not as clean as it deserves to be.

There is a verse in the Quran regarding Hazrat Maryam,

اِنَّ اللّٰہَ اصطَفٰکِ وَ طَہَّرَکِ وَ اصطَفٰکِ عَلٰی نِسَآءِ العٰلَمِینَ

"Verily, Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above (***all***) ***the women of the worlds".*** (***3:42***)

God pronounced Maryam pure and clean but He made no addition that she was kept as pure as could possibly be. I want you to notice that the word ***"tahharake"*** (***3:42***) (made you pure) is used only once here. It has not been repeated. For Prophet Isa the word used is ***"mutahhiraka"*** (***3:55***) (keep you clean). God accepts responsibility to keep Isa clean, but did not promise the ultimate degree of cleanliness. In Heaven there will be partners who are ***"mutahharatun"*** (***2:25***) (purified) but they are not as pure as can possibly be.

You will be amazed to know the Quran itself informs us that the Books sent by God are pure. They have been declared pure but it does not say they are as pure as pure can be. Now if that had been said, then no one would have even dared to relocate the beginning to the end, or to exchange its zabar with zayr. You could not possibly make any kind of mistakes or change the order of the revelations. Who would have had the courage to do so? God knew He had given us a pure Book, and now it was in our hands and it was our responsibility to protect and preserve it.

So, what I am trying to say is that for prophets, for Kaaba, for heavenly partners, for Maryam and for many others Quran has used the word tatheer and in all these places this word is used once. The word ***"tatheera"*** (***33:33***) is not coupled with any of these. The absence of this word is an indicator that the absolute limit of purification is not projected at any of these locations.

What can one say of the word that had remained untouched and aloof since the inception of time and on a particular day God saw such dignified people beneath the cloak that He no longer wished to preserve this word. God wished to convey that the word He saved from every gathering, the word He safeguarded from all others was actually meant for the Ahlul Bayt. They are the deserving beneficiaries of this honour.

This word was not used earlier, for those deserving the dual tribute did not exist. In other words had anyone deserved this ultimate level of cleanliness and this absolute purity, then God would have granted them this privilege. Since, such persons were not present hence this honour was not granted, but now that they are identified and are present so why should He reserve it?

I want you all to look and reflect at the emphatic nature of the words in Ayat al–Tatheer. The Most Benevolent God says,

اِنَّمَا يُرِيۡدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذۡهِبَ عَنۡكُمُ

الرِّجۡسَ اَهۡلَ الۡبَيۡتِ وَ يُطَهِّرَكُمۡ تَطۡهِيۡرًا

"God wishes, and will keep wishing that He keeps you away from all impurities, and keeps you clean and pure to the extent that you truly deserve"! (***33:33***)

I want you to focus again on the amazing force behind the words used.

Now leave the power and the force of God's narrative on one side and consider an ordinary orator, say a person who addresses a public gathering, someone who has addressed a hundred or even a thousand such gatherings earlier. If this person ever announces that he was about to deliver a speech that would

do absolute justice to the spirit of any address, then those listening to him would know that he has delivered many speeches but never made such a bold claim before. So if he makes this claim now, it means that the speaker will use all his public speaking skills, use the depth of his knowledge and spare no effort to deliver the best possible speech. Best possible in his capacity as man with the human limitations.

Since, I have the opportunity why should I not say that God sanctioned purity for many. For this one and that one, for these and for those but He never said He was purifying them to the ultimate degree that was ever possible. This day heralds a new trend! A new tone and expression is adopted. The Creator is conferring an honour never before given to anyone!

اِنَّمَا يُرِيۡدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذۡهِبَ عَنۡكُمُ

الرِّجۡسَ اَهۡلَ الۡبَيۡتِ وَ يُطَهِّرَكُمۡ تَطۡهِيۡرًا

"God wishes and will continue to wish that He keeps the Ahlul Bayt clean and pure to an extent that purification is ever possible"! (***33:33***)

Where had He said that before? If there is any verse or another text then please show me. He has not. This power packed narrative is not found anywhere.

Now see if you can believe this. God took a covenant from Ibrahim and Ismail that they would keep Kaaba clean. They may be Prophets or Messengers of God, even Zabeeh Allah but they are not God. They may be incapable of fault, but are mortal, likely to change and they also sleep. If they are near Kaaba they can be far from it, too. If they are connected to Kaaba they can be separated from it, too. A person is responsible for something as long as he is awake and he is alive. If he is not present than how can he be responsible? When he is not near but in a distant place than how can he take responsibility? This implies that God entrusted the task of keeping Kaaba clean in the hands of the mumkin.

I am sure you have understood the meaning of mumkin. God is Wajib (certain); everything else is mumkin or possible. It is something that is likely to be and equally likely not to be. The prophets and the walis are included in this category and so are the fallibles and the insignificant. No one besides God is Wajib. Only He is Wajib, the rest are all mumkin. So, God entrusted the task of purification in the hands of the mumkin, which means that it is possible to remain pure and equally possible not to. How long are Ibrahim and Ismail responsible? As long as they are present, after that their responsibility ceases.

What I am trying to say is if the single word 'tatheer' was used in Ayat al–Tatheer, that God wishes to

keep you clean and pure, then too the first difference would be that the responsibility of keeping Kaaba clean rests with Ibrahim and Ismail whereas God is responsible for keeping Ahlul Bayt clean. They are mortals, He is Immortal. The ones keeping Kaaba clean are terminal, whereas God who keeps the Ahlul Bayt clean is Eternal. So everlasting that

لَا تَاۡخُذُهٗ سِنَةٌ وَّ لَا نَوۡمٌ

"Slumber does not seize Him, nor does sleep" **(*2:255*).**

God does not rest or sleep. He is not unaware nor does He go away. He does not fall sick nor avoid work due to illness. He neither sleeps nor dies.

I cannot find the right words but what I am trying to say is that Kaaba will stay clean by virtue of the pledge, till Ibrahim and Ismail live. Let me put it as a question. How long will Kaaba stay clean in the light of this pledge? Only till Ibrahim and Ismail live. How long will the Ahlul Bayt stay pure and clean? I do not want to say till God lives. Rather, let me humbly say that the Ahlul Bayt will stay clean till they live. They will remain clean as long as they exist.

I stress that even if a single word had been used in Ayat Tatheer it would still have clearly spelt the difference between the purity of Al Bait (Kaaba) and Ahl Al Bait (those worthy of the Kaaba). The reason being the purity of Al Bait is in the hands of Ibrahim and Ismail, and the purity of Ahlul Bayt is in the Hands of God. Here the reinforcing word, that I will keep you pure to the absolute degree, to the ultimate extent implies as explained in the example of oratory, that God will spare no effort and will use all His capabilities, all His potential and all His expertise to perform this task.

'People of the House, God will keep you pure to the absolute degree, to a level that is justified for you'. The simplest of meanings that can be assigned to this would be that God will keep these mumkins (the Ahlul Bayt) as pure as it is possible and to the degree that a Wajib can keep a mumkin pure! The intention to keep you so pure suggests that this kind of effort has not been kept in store for anyone else.

It is for this reason that the purity of the Ahlul Bayt is so glorified. It is at a level where one purity is linked to the next, the first to the second, the second to the third and so on. The final purity that is linked to all the previous ones, is our present Imam. He is so pure that when Prophet Isa, for whom God says,

اِنِّیۡ مُتَوَفِّیۡکَ وَ رَافِعُکَ اِلَیَّ وَ مُطَهِّرُکَ

"God will lift you up and keep you clean" **(*3:55*)**

approaches this last Imam who is the final link in the chain of purity, he will spread his prayer mat behind him for this Imam is pure to an extent that his purity touches the upper limits of ultimate purity!

It is no doubt by virtue of this powerful backing of the Almighty that even enemies have not been able to point a finger at the Ahlul Bayt. Let there be no doubt in anyone's mind that despite this eminence, the Ahlul Bayt were victimized in a manner the world has not witnessed. Their blood has irrigated the soil as no other bloodshed has. This sentence was uttered by Bibi Zainab. She used this expression when Ibn e Ziyad ordered the assassination of Imam Zain ul Abideen (the ailing son of imam Hussain) That was an extremely sensitive time. The despicable and impure Ibne Ziyad was talking to Bibi Zainab in a very rude and derogatory manner as she was standing before him as a prisoner.

Imam Zain ul Abideen tried to remain calm and patient all through this ordeal. Ah! Syed e Sajjad (another title for Imam Zain ul Abideen, implying the Leader of all prostrators) has epitomized the absolute limits of patience and tolerance. It can be said with conviction that the sort of patience demonstrated by this Imam has no parallel anywhere. Even within the Prophet's household it has not been openly manifest in the lives of Ali or Fatima or Hasan or Hussain. True, Imam Hussain exhibited great phenomenal patience in Karbala. He offered untold sacrifices including sacrifice of his young son and also his infant one; of his brother and other children of the family. However, in terms of patience, the status of Syed e Sajjad is altogether at a different level!

Once a person saw Imam Zain ul Abideen grieve and cry and as is natural he too was perturbed. If for example you see a mother cry in distress, you will be affected and will try to comfort and console her, and try to reduce her anguish in any way possible. So when this man saw the Imam cry, he felt the Imam's pain and immediately tried to comfort him and reduce his sorrow.

A person can be consoled in many ways but this man was not facing an ordinary situation. He was a follower of the Imam and before him was his beloved leader, the Imam. So very respectfully he said, "Who can be more patient than you? Maula be patient, Prophet's son be patient."

Imam Zain ul Abideen was being asked to stop crying and he did not appreciate that. In a manner of complaint he said, "Brother, you have asked me to be patient. You have asked me not to cry but you have not done justice to me". God knows how sensitive this issue was for he said, "In this matter you have not done justice at all. When Yousaf (Joseph) was separated from Prophet Yaqub (Jacob) he cried so much that he became blind. Brother, do you not know that in one afternoon eighteen people of my household were martyred? And who were these martyrs? La misla wa la nazeer (The world has not seen the likes of such remarkable people)! So I do not cry in vain".

This man again attempted to console the Imam,"Maula it is a tradition in your family to offer sacrifices in the way of God. Your ancestors (from Prophet Ibrahim to the fifth member under the cloak) have always laid down their lives in the way of God". When Imam Zain ul Abideen heard this, my heart tells me, he would have seethed in agony and would have said, 'True it has always been a tradition for us to lay

down our lives in the way of God, but tell me brother, is it also a tradition to unveil our mothers and sisters in public? To see them imprisoned? For them to be taken prisoners and marched and paraded from street to street and through the cities? Has this ever been a tradition with my ancestors"?

God's wrath be on the transgressors.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّہَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اِنۡ تَنۡصُرُوا اللّٰہَ یَنۡصُرۡکُمۡ وَ یُثَبِّتۡ اَقۡدَامَکُمۡ

"Oh you who believe, if you help Allah, He will surely help you, and will firmly plant your feet." (***47:7***)

This place is very fortunate for it serves as a platform for holding congregations in remembrance of those exalted beings whose references were often held in the heavens and the lofty skies and on this Earth these assemblies were even held under the Kisa (cloak) and convened in the plains of Mubahila. Besides, these references continue to adorn the verses of the Holy Quran. How remarkable those selected few must be whose praise and admiration is undertaken in the unspoken narratives of the Creator and their glory and adulation is highlighted by the Almighty from time to time.

God desired and thus ensured that every Holy text that was to reach this world would come as a volume of praise for these notable beings. Torat (Torah) came applauding their honour. Injeel (Bible) sang praises for Aal e Mohammad and Zabur (Testament) carried citations for the Ahlul Bayt. As for the Quran, it is a solemn fact that the commemoration of these prestigious beings serves to configure and uplift the Quranic text.

The title verse read out today points in the direction of those fortunate people who are mentioned in this verse and whose reference is enshrined in this verse. In another verse of the Quran, God informs us,

اِنَّ اللّٰہَ یُحِبُّ الَّذِیۡنَ یُقَاتِلُوۡنَ فِیۡ

سَبِیۡلِہٖ صَفًّا کَاَنَّہُمۡ بُنۡیَانٌ مَّرۡصُوۡصٌ

"Verily Allah loves those who fight in His cause in ranks as though they were an unbreakable concrete wall". **(*61: 4*)**

He loves people who are steadfast and strong when fighting for the cause of Allah. Their disciplined ranks and resolve is likened to an indestructible wall. This verse does not name anyone, but there is no doubt that it highlights those specific characteristics by virtue of which we recognize and identify those whom God loves.

First of all let me make it clear that love is always cherished no matter what the origin of this love is. Is there any person in this world who does not wish to be loved by others? No heart is bereft of this desire. Those who are worthy of being loved harbour this desire and those who are not worthy of it, even they wish to be loved. In short, love is a very pleasant and enchanting feeling and we all yearn for it.

Yet, if the truth be asked, what are we but mere human beings and what is the worth of our love? Essentially, true love is love which is eternal. It is love of One who is willing to gift us everything for the sake of this love. If a needy person loves another one in need, tell me what does he gain from this love? Yes, but if he begins to love someone who has control of everything in His hands, and if in return he is loved by this empowered One, then this needy person requires no other source of love or sustenance.

If God loves some people and holds them dear to Him, then these people are not dependent on others for love. Where is the need for them to seek the love of anyone else? Now, if anyone wishes to love the fortunate ones whom God loves, he should not presume that they need his love. In fact, he should realize and know that it is he himself who needs their love. God's love is sufficient for these blessed ones. When His love is secured than presence or absence of others love does not matter.

For those privileged ones who are the recipients of God's salutations and blessings, it does not matter if others greet them with salaam or bless them with darood. They are not dependent on anyone's greetings or their blessings. However, some people, for their own personal benefit and future salvation may choose to be narrators of darood and wish to present salaam to them.

Now, think about this. God decides to undertake the praise of someone and in this connection He makes arrangement that every divine book should come forth with praise for them. He also desires that their praise precedes their entry into the world and that their glory is announced even before they arrive in this world.

When God loves someone, He keenly follows and reports every moment of their existence. He describes for us their rukuh and sujood (bowing and prostration) and reports their qiam and quood (standing and sitting postures), their wakefulness and their slumber. He relates their movements and their rest, their activity and their leisure and He considers all this worthy of being recorded. He documents their mornings and their evenings and also their nights. So, if some people are lucky to have an ardent chronicler like God, do they require anyone else to speak for them? Do they require others to honour and commemorate them?

Indeed, these people are not dependent for praise on any of us since God highlights their virtues. They are not reliant on others for projection as God undertakes that responsibility. When we decide to pay tribute to them, it is not for their adornment but for our own benefit. Not to raise their status but to raise our standards. We remember them not for their sake but for own sake. They are loved and loved by the Creator of this Universe who informs us,

اِنَّ اللّٰہَ یُحِبُّ الَّذِیۡنَ یُقَاتِلُوۡنَ فِیۡ

سَبِیۡلِہٖ صَفًّا کَاَنَّہُمۡ بُنۡیَانٌ مَّرۡصُوۡصٌ

"Verily Allah loves those who fight in His cause in ranks as though they were an unbreakable concrete wall". (***61: 4***)

I wish to make a point here. Not a personal observation but an inference that I have drawn from the environment of the Quran. I want all of you to follow this. God says,

یٰۤاَیُّہَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اِنۡ تَنۡصُرُوا اللّٰہَ یَنۡصُرۡکُمۡ وَ یُثَبِّتۡ اَقۡدَامَکُمۡ

"O you who believe, if you help Allah, He will surely help you, and will firmly plant your feet." (***47:7***)

God is communicating to the believers that if they step into the battlefield with the intention of helping Allah, then He too will help them. If they come forth with the aim of helping God, He will be their helper. He will come to their assistance and the first sign of His help is a promise to plant their feet firmly in the battlefield. God will provide support and help in a manner that their foothold will not be uprooted from the battlefield. He will ensure firmness and provide resolve to their determination.

My audience will agree that a respectable person will always honour his pledge so what to talk of a pledge made by an imam, or a prophet and specifically that of God Himself. Nothing can prevent God from fulfilling His pledge. No difficulty can stop Him from keeping His word or be used as an excuse for not keeping the promise. For surely one who is helpless cannot be God.

Even, humans with their severe limitations, try to keep their promises before leaving this world, so how is it possible for the pledge of God, who is totally Empowered, to waver and not be honoured? Definitely, it was and will continue to be honoured. What He has promised is bound by righteousness. Thus, if you go

to the battlefield with the intention of helping Allah, He will help you and He will firmly plant your feet.

I want to highlight a point here that you may have missed. If God forbid mine or any person's feet fail to stay firm and are uprooted from the battlefield, resulting in days of absence from the battle scene, then he can either claim that he went with good intention but God did not keep His promise. Since, He did not keep His promise why should he be blamed for the retreat. In that case God does not remain God. If He is not truthful He cannot be God.

So either admit that God forgot His promise and forgot His task of being God, or if that contention is not true, which any believer will admit is not true, then it has to be said that the one uprooted did not go with the intention of helping Allah. Had he gone with that purpose God would have helped him. He would have provided the weight of lead to his feet such that they would not move away from the field. But the unsteady gait reveals the secrets of the heart. It is an indication that the person had not gone with the intention of helping Allah and hence there was no stability in his footwork. But if you see someone with a firm foothold, then be assured that he has come as a helper of God.

It is worth understanding what I now share with you. A mistake committed by us is assigned a certain level but forgiveness or pardon of this mistake occupies a totally different level. It is with His grace that the Most Compassionate God overlooks our greatest shortcomings. His Mercy bails out the wrongdoer, but the credit for this forgiveness does not belong to the one making the mistake. The credit for this goes to Allah, who is in no hurry to punish us and refers to Himself as the Most Merciful and Forbearing God.

Now what level shall we assign to the person who did not enter the battlefield with the intention of helping Allah? The desire to help God was not present. So the motivation which he did not take with him cannot be switched on or generated in retrospect. It cannot be exchanged at a later time. That record will remain in place. There is no promise of love for those who are not firm in their resolve to help Allah. At best, if they repent they can seek His forgiveness.

God informs us that he loves those who fight with resolve as though they were a fortified wall,

اِنَّ اللّٰہَ یُحِبُّ الَّذِیۡنَ یُقَاتِلُوۡنَ فِیۡ

سَبِیۡلِہٖ صَفًّا کَاَنَّہُمۡ بُنۡیَانٌ مَّرۡصُوۡصٌ

"Verily Allah loves those who fight in His cause in ranks as though they were an unbreakable concrete wall." (***61: 4***)

My learned audience can estimate whether there is an element of negation in this admission or not.

Apparently, the words used in this Quranic verse are positive. We are told that God loves those who are steadfast in the battlefield. Those who fight as though they were an unbreakable wall. He loves such people. But is there a negation inherent in this positive or not? If this verse identifies the people whom God loves, it also suggests those whom God does not like.

God loves the people who do not leave the battlefield, who are steadfast and who fight with resolve as though they were a fortified wall. So, if these are the ones whom God loves then can one say that God also loves those who are not like them? In that case, what is the use of love? Where is the need for love? If God loves certain people then there is a converse for love, too. There is also an opposite of love. If there is an inverse for steadfastness and if a contrary term exists then the opposite of love will be applicable to it. In other words, God does not love people who leave the battlefield.

I wish to inform my audience that God mentions His love in the context of guidance. I wish to raise your level here. Any information in the Quran is not merely a piece of news. Quran is not a newspaper. In fact, the purpose of its revelation is mentioned in the text. This is a Book of Guidance for the righteous people. Hence, if this is a source of guidance then each and every component is for guidance. Every chapter, every verse is for guidance. Every story, every example, every injunction and every piece of information is for the purpose of guidance.

All of Quran is for guidance. What is not for guidance is not the Quran. The entire Quran is for guidance and each and every part is for guidance. Now if this is true then the verse under discussion is also part of the Quran,

اِنَّ اللّٰہَ یُحِبُّ الَّذِیۡنَ یُقَاتِلُوۡنَ فِیۡ

سَبِیۡلِہٖ صَفًّا کَاَنَّہُمۡ بُنۡیَانٌ مَّرۡصُوۡصٌ

"Verily Allah loves those who fight in His cause in ranks as though they were an unbreakable concrete wall." (***61: 4***)

Even though the above verse is an informative sentence yet every information is for the sake of guidance, or else it is not a part of Quran. So what guidance do we get from this verse of the Quran? We are informed that God's love is directed towards those who do not leave the battlefield, so that we may also direct our love towards them. This is to ensure that God's love and our love do not point in different directions. If perchance we select an opposing direction, then we will be guilty of showing utter disregard for His wish.

By giving us this information Quran invites us to reflect deeply. God lets us know that He loves people who do not desert the battlefield. Now He wants us to check our hearts and our feelings to ascertain whom we are inclined to love. We are to determine whether we love the same people God loves or do we love those whom He does not love.

I wish to explain something here. There is as much difference between the love of human beings and the love of God as there is between man and God. Let me elaborate this a little. We humans tend to fall in love with the physical form of a human being. After we claim to love this person, we also begin to love every trait and quality of the selected person. You need to look at this logically and notice the difference in the outlook.

We love a person for his identity and because we claim to love this person then we begin to love the qualities associated with this person. Love of this person comes first and subsequently this person's attributes are also endeared to us. Now if this loved one is indifferent to us we love this indifference. If the one we adore is not true to us, we overlook this betrayal. If we notice breach of promise we ignore this infringement. All these attributes are readily acceptable to us for the sake of love for this person. Now since we have fallen in love, these qualities, regardless of their merit are worthy of love. We are simply not concerned with their good or bad!

I think you have understood the point I am trying to make. The shortcomings of the person we claim to love appear as accomplishments to us. We ourselves project the negative qualities of our beloved as virtues. This love is different. This love is blind. There is a saying regarding this kind of love that it makes the person deaf and blind. The shortcomings are clearly noticeable but are not sighted by the one who claims to love. Echoes of the failings and faults are audible but this person's hearing is insensitive to this sound. This is the drawback of love that starts with the love of a person and then leads to love of all attributes related to this person.

The glory of God does not permit Him to love a personality. He does not invest in love of a person and neither does He select an identity to love. His glory is reserved to highlight the qualities of a person and to cherish the attributes of an individual. The criteria of His love is not the person but the qualitative traits inherent in the person. When the basis of love is qualitative, then this naturally leads to love of the person in possession of those qualities. This variation in position needs to be understood.

We humans tend to love a person first and then grow to love the characteristics of that person. On the other hand God first approves of the values and virtues and then loves the person in possession of those qualities. When traits are the basis of love, the colour of the skin or the age of the person or the place he is associated with, do not matter. Now if an Abyssinian slave owns those traits God will love this John of Abyssinia. If a person belonging to the tribe of Qureish is devoid of these traits then He will not love this person and in fact He will reveal a verse showing scant respect for Abu Lahab.

Notice clearly that God does not select a person to love. He selects qualities to love. These qualities

may be exhibited by an individual of any colour, race or status. This person may reside in any continent, locality or household. These details are not important. God is only concerned with these qualities. Wherever, He finds these positive attributes He appreciates them and those in possession of those qualities are endeared to him.

He loves the owners of these qualities and He loves the place where they dwell and the homes in which they reside. The path that they tread, that path is loved. The place where they sleep that place is loved. In short, wherever they may be that place is dear to God.

I remember the Quranic verse,

لَآ أُقۡسِمُ بِهَٰذَا ٱلۡبَلَدِ

وَ أَنتَ حِلُّۢ بِهَٰذَا ٱلۡبَلَدِ

"Nay, I swear by this city (***Al Balad***)***,***
While you (***O Mohammad***) ***are resident in this city"*** (***90:1,2***)

This verse was revealed in Mecca. Al Balad is the name of Mecca. In this verse God swears by the city when the Prophet of God is stationed there. Now tell me is Mecca being sworn by or is it actually the Prophet? Appreciate the elegance of the reference being used to swear. God does not wish to directly swear by His Prophet so He selects the city where His Prophet resides. Thus, Mecca is being sworn by only when the Prophet is in that city. Mecca is worthy of being sworn by only when the Prophet resides there.

Do not miss the point that Mecca is the permanent station of the House of God and this House is not likely to move or shift to any other location. However, God does not make His House the focus in this verse. The focus is on Ahl al Bait, those worthy of His House. Mecca is worthy of being sworn by only when the Prophet is present there. This suggests that wherever the Prophet may be, that place is worthy of being sworn by. The Lord be praised! Such is the eminence of these people. They do not attain ascension, they lend ascent to others!

This is the reason Angel Gabriel looked down from the elevated position he occupied in the Heavens towards the congregation under the cloak. Mind you he was in that ethereal environment when God was pronouncing to the angels and other creation residing in the heavens:

'I swear by My glory and magnificence, that I did not create the expanse of the Heavens and the spread of this Earth and the glowing moon and the shining sun, neither the orbiting space nor the flowing rivers

nor the sailing ships but for the love of these five people under the cloak'. (*Hadith al- Kisa*) (*Tradition of the Cloak*)

God transformed the darkness of eternity with the dawn of light and all creation came into being for the love of the five. They were five in number but at that moment of Divine confession, they were all together under the cloak.

I do not believe that Gabriel was not informed of the identity of the five under the cloak, but asking questions of this nature helps to reveal a lot to the world. He asked,

'My Lord, who are the five gathered under the cloak'? (*Hadith al- Kisa*)

Now listen to this carefully. God identifies the five under the cloak,

'They are the Ahlul Bayt of Nabuwat, they are the Treasure of Risalat. They are Fatima, her father, her husband and her sons'. (*Hadith al- Kisa*)

It was not said that they are the Ahlul Bayt of Nabi (Messenger) and they are the Treasure of Rasool (Prophet). The words used are, 'Ahlul Bayt of Nabuwat' and the 'Treasure of Risalat'. They are the ones who are directly linked to and associated with Nabuwat and Risalat.

The first drawback of using the term Ahlul Bayt Nabi would be to exclude the Prophet from this gathering. Now minus the Prophet the sanctity of the gathering would lose its essence. If the term Ahlul Bayt Nabi was used, the name Fatima could still be used but it would not be possible to include her father. Fatima's father is the Nabi, and he cannot be referred to as Ahlul Bayt Nabi.

I am sure you have understood that the Prophet is not Ahlul Bayt Nabi. He is Nabi himself. Hence, the term Ahlul Bayt Nabi would not accommodate the inclusion of the Prophet. After saying Fatima the term her father could not be used.

Minus the Prophet, the reference to the Ahlul Bayt would still be valid but even their real significance and importance would be diminished. This point is worth consideration. The true status of the Ahlul Bayt would not be manifest by a simple relation to the Prophet for even an inept person can claim a relation to the Prophet. The one making mistakes can also establish a link to the Prophet.

Allow me to say something here. It is an established fact that claiming a relationship to a prophet or owning a connection to the prophet is no guarantee for a safe passage to Heaven. Many relatives of the prophets have failed to earn a place in Heaven. Is that a fact or not?

Take the example of the son of Prophet Nuh. It was that awkward moment when Nuh was warned not to repeat his plea for his son's safety, for in that case his name would be removed from the list of Messengers of God. Prophet Nuh complied, for losing the prestigious task of Nabuwat was not a choice. The loss of a son was acceptable but the mantle of Prophethood had to be retained. The sacred mission

of conveying God's Messages could not be forsaken. Certainly, this son was not heading towards Heaven.

Azar was the relative of a Prophet. Some even refer to him as the Prophet's father, but we do not subscribe to that. We have no objection to referring to him as a relative. He had looked after and he had brought up this Prophet. He was a senior relation or perhaps even an uncle. He was related to the Prophet but did that relationship promise him a place in Heaven? God stopped Prophet Ibrahim from seeking forgiveness for Azar and asked him not to repeat this request. There Prophet Nuh was stopped and here Prophet Ibrahim is being checked. Be warned and do not repeat your request.

It is clear that inaptness of a relative raises problems for a Prophet, for if he pleads their case he risks losing his Prophethood. Hence, there is this scene in front of you where a Prophet's pleading may risk him his Prophethood and you will also witness a scene of intense suitability where a Prophet's not saying something may threaten his role as a Prophet. In this later case God wishes that our Prophet should announce His message both orally and physically. Say it with his tongue and raise him with his hands. Words and action both are required. He is to say it and do it.

Failure to deliver ,

وَ اِن لَّم تَفعَل فَمَا بَلَّغتَ رِسَالَتَهٗ

"And if you do not do it then (***it will be as if***) ***you have not delivered His Prophethood*** (***at all***)***"*** (***5:67***)

may serve to undo the Prophet's entire effort. So, on the one hand a Prophet risks losing his Prophethood if he pleads the case of the unworthy and on the other hand you will see a situation where if the Prophet does not proclaim the worth of his relative, he risks undoing the entire effort of his Prophethood. The previous one depicts a case of extreme ineligibility and the latter an utmost level of eligibility!

I do not wish to say that having a relation with the prophet is of no value. It is valuable but only if it is not coupled with denial of the prophets mission. It has to be said here that if there is claim of a relationship to the prophet and a state of denial exists then this person deserves more punishment then a non-believer.

Now tell me honestly, how many battles has Abu Sufyan waged against the Prophet? He was personally responsible for many battles like Badar, Uhad and others. It was under his direct command that the assaults were carried out, but do you find his mention anywhere in the Quran? How much pain and misery was inflicted by Abu Jahal? I can picture that period in time quite vividly. Is it possible to find a more vicious enemy than Abu Jahal in the context of history? His name is viewed with great scorn even

by the children and he is remembered not for his virtues but for his evil ways.

Who is not familiar with the name of Abu Jahal or ignorant of the hardships he caused the Prophet? But is he mentioned in the Quran? There is no reference to Abu Jahal or Abu Sufyan but if there is a name, it is of Abu Lahab. In my opinion God is so impartial in this matter that if a link to the Prophet is established He will make no allowance. He exercises the right to name or not name wrongdoers but if the offender is a relative of the Prophet, his name will be mentioned openly and no concession will be granted.

It is also confirmed in Surah Ahzab that if anyone owns a relation to the Prophet,

يُّضٰعَف لَهَا الۡعَذَابُ ضِعۡفَيۡنِ

"their punishment will be doubled" **(*33: 30*)**

The degree of penalty increases if a relationship to the Prophet is confirmed, for the Prophet was known to them. He was not a stranger for them. He was close to them and not at a remote distance. There was opportunity for familiarity, hence they cannot be treated like other people. Their punishment will be doubled.

So, it is established that God doubles the punishment as a result of acquaintance to the Prophet. On the other hand He proclaims love of some of these near ones as a compensation for the task of Prophethood, and since this Ajr e Risalat is also made mandatory then it has to be understood that the basis of seeking this love for the near ones, was not their nearness to the Prophet. It was on grounds of their exalted status and their qualitative superiority that they were thus rewarded.

The Sadaat (descendents of the Prophet and his Aal) can to this day claim a link to the Prophet. They are Aal e Rasool, children of the Prophet and no link or relationship is superior to that of children. They are the closest link in terms of inheritance. If even a single child exists then too the brothers of a deceased person cannot claim inheritance, nor can sisters or paternal or maternal uncles and aunts. Children and their offspring are in direct line of inheritance till the Day of Judgement no matter how far this lineage extends. They inherit and no one can deny them this right. This is valid if the dying person has a child.

It is often said that a grandson is denied inheritance. This is only true if the son or daughter of the dying man are alive. In that case they inherit. But if the dying man's children are not alive then the grandson is the sole inheritor. He is the nearest and closest relation. He will be deprived if there is someone to contest his claim. A grandson can only be denied if a person with lineage superior to his exists. So, till the Day of Judgement children will always be first in line of lineage and no relationship closer than that can ever exist.

Now I wish to ask the Sadaat, myself for example. I can claim a relation to the Prophet but can I also claim a relation to his mission of Prophethood? I think this is not a complicated issue. We are related to the Prophet but are we also related to his mission? We have a link to the one who is close to God, but do we have a relation to this closeness? We may claim a relation to a learned person but are we related to his learning, too? No way. It is one thing to be related to a person but altogether another thing to be related to his qualities and attributes.

A scholar may have many relatives but can anyone claim that they are related to his scholarship, too? A doctor may be related to many but are they related to medical science as well? If there is a link to a law expert then does it mean they possess knowledge of law as well?

To be related to the Prophet is different from being related to his Prophethood just as a relation to a scholar is different from having a relation to his scholarship. Claiming a relation to the infallible is not the same as a relation to his purity and perfection. This was reserved for the Ahlul Bayt only. They alone deserve to be Ahlul Bayt of Prophethood.

Thus, we see that the relatives of the Prophet had existed and will continue to exist till the day of Judgement, but merely boasting of a link to the Prophet is not a sign of eminence or excellence. This relation will only be worthy of pride if it is linked to his Prophethood as well. The ones blessed with this association are the ones who without being declared messengers and without being declared prophets are assisting in his task of Prophethood.

When Prophethood was confronted with an issue then relatives of this Prophethood were taken alongside for assistance.

فَقُلۡ تَعَالَوۡا نَدۡعُ اَبۡنَآءَنَا وَ اَبۡنَآءَكُمۡ وَ نِسَآءَنَا وَ نِسَآءَكُمۡ وَ اَنۡفُسَنَا

وَ اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ ۟ ثُمَّ نَبۡتَهِلۡ فَنَجۡعَلۡ لَّعۡنَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الۡكٰذِبِيۡنَ

"Say, come let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and our souls and your souls and then let us humbly pray and invoke the curse of Allah on the liars". (***3: 61***)

This was the task of Prophethood, hence the relatives of the Prophethood were sought out and those who had a link to the Prophet but not his Prophethood were left out. They were not taken for they had no link to his mission of Prophethood. Only one female was selected from amongst all the women in the world even though requirement came in plural form. From amongst all the male relatives only one was

selected as the soul of the Prophet. This is so for the sole criteria for selection is a relationship to the Prophethood and only those who possessed it were selected.

Mind you, the Prophet did not make the selection. God did. The Prophet simply obeyed His command. To this day no one has dared to say that the Prophet made a personal choice, for this command is preserved in the Quran. Nor can anyone ever claim that the Ahlul Bayt made this decision or that the Prophet wished to take them. A verse was revealed that asked him to take them along. Thus, his Prophethood banked on taking them along. It was mandatory on the Prophet to obey this command.

Now think about this, that those whom the Prophet of God was taking along with him on the instructions of God, what were they required to go and say. Just one sentence:

لَّعۡنَتَ اللّٰہِ عَلَی الۡکٰذِبِیۡنَ

"God's curse be on the liars" (***3:61***)

Now this is a short sentence. I can say it and you can say it. Call them truthful or call them liars, what does it take to say a few words? However, what had to be said there was with the permission of God and He wanted that the person saying it should never have lied, either verbally or with his actions. Such a person would be in a position to invoke the curse of Allah on the liars. To the extent of saying only, anyone can invoke the curse, but if that person has indulged in lying, then he risks the possibility of this curse to be somewhat directed towards himself, too.

This is a very delicate situation. God wishes to introduce the five under the cloak. He introduces them as 'Ahlul Bayt Nabuwat' and the 'Treasure of Risalat' and when angel Gabriel sought their names, He said,

'They are Fatima, her father, her husband and her sons'. (*Hadith al-Kisa*) (*Tradition of the Cloak*)

Of the five, God named only one. What a remarkable situation that He did not choose a senior man or a young one for introduction. The only name used is of Khatoon e Jannat, Lady of Heaven! All others are introduced on the basis of their relation to her.

'They are Fatima's father, Fatima's husband and Fatima's sons'. (*Hadith al- Kisa*)

In short, whoever was there was related to Fatima. They had a link to Fatima. It is thus clear that since the cloak belonged to Fatima, her name was used as the reference for all the introductions. All those who gathered under the cloak were there because they had a relation to the owner of the cloak. Had that belonged to someone else, those under the cloak would have been introduced with that reference. And if they had come by virtue of another relation then they would be introduced accordingly.

However, the cloak belonged to Fatima and whoever came under it was there by virtue of their relation

to her. Her father, her husband and her sons came because of their link to her. This is the respect of the cloak and respect of the owner of the cloak. Thus, God selected Lady of Heaven as the focal point of virtue and purity. He let it be known that just as it was a matter of honour for her to have a father of this stature, it was also an honour for the Prophet to be blessed with a daughter like her!

God holds His Prophet in great regard and the vital sign of this respect is that He never addresses the Prophet by name directly. You have all read the Quran and are in the habit of reading it often, so you can verify that God addresses Adam as "O Adam". He calls out to Nuh, "O Nuh" and you will also see Prophet Ibrahim being addressed by name, and addresses of "O Musa" and "O Isa" in the Quran. All the Prophets were called out by name, but even though our Prophet was the recipient of this Book and is addressed many a times in the Quran but he is never called out as 'O Mohammad' or 'O Ahmad'.

The criteria for address selected by God is based on high esteem for the Prophet. Sometimes He calls out, ***"O Nabi"*** (***33:45***) or ***"O Prophet"*** (***5:41***). Sometimes as "***O Mozammil"*** (***73:1***) or ***"O Mudassar"*** (***74:1***) and at other times as ***"TaHa"*** (***20:1***) or ***"YaSin"*** (***36:1***). God always addressed the Prophet by his qualities, his titles or his designations but never by name.

Now if a Prophet, who is so highly revered by God, stood up as a mark of respect for his daughter, then let me say this respect was not for his daughter but for her status, for her honour and for the prestigious qualities of his daughter.

Somebody has very genuinely suggested that if this respect was solely in the capacity of a daughter then this practice would have become an established 'sunnat' (tradition) for eternity. This would be a practice designated as 'Tradition of the Prophet'. However, this tradition has not been followed. We do not respect our daughters like that for they are not like the daughter of the Prophet. The Prophet respected Fatima's honour, her amazing grace and dignity and her remarkable excellence. Other fathers were not blessed with daughters of this nature hence this practice was not established.

When our Prophet, who is so dearly respected by God, saw his daughter enter the door, not only did he stand up as a mark of respect for her prestige but he would also move forward to receive Fatima. Such was the status of Lady of Heaven, the highly dignified Fatima!

Now the lady, who is treated with utmost regard by the Prophet of God, is not concerned whether the rest of the world respects her or not. She has achieved a position of high standing. Ask the Prophet about that, or ask Ali or her sons who were to be Imams later. And ask her daughter Zainab how much she revered her mother Fatima.

I will now narrate an incidence that I remember and will wind up this session with that. It dates back to the times when the Prophet was stationed in Medina. He had just concluded a prayer session in Masjid e Nabvi (Prophet's Mosque). A man stepped forward from the prayer rows and addressed the faithful, "I am a traveller and I came from far to embrace Islam. I am a Muslim now and have stayed here many months but now I miss my children and wish to return home. However, I have no clothes or money or

any means of transport and am even hungry". The Arab thus placed forth his demands to those present in the mosque.

Those were economically challenging times but still the Prophet asked the people, "Is there anyone who can address the requirements of this needy person? I will be responsible for your reward". No one was able to make a commitment. Then Salman Farsi (the honourable companion of the Prophet) stood up and said, "I myself do not own anything but I shall take you to a door from where no one ever returns unrewarded. Come with me".

Salman took the traveller with him and walked towards the destined door. I am sure you have understood which door is being referred to here. Hazrat Salman informed the traveller that whenever the Prophet came to this door he said aloud, "Assalam Alaikum Ahlul Bayt Nabuwat and Maadin Risalat". He further added, "This is how the Prophet greets the inmates of this house. You too should do likewise". Hence, this Arab offered his salaam in the same manner at the door of mercy and generosity.

Khatoon e Jannat heard the salaam and came to the door. The traveller put forth his request. Hazrat Salman Farsi explained that he had brought this man to her door for he was a traveller in need and he was hungry and without any means or sustenance. Bibi quietly said that even though her children were without food for three days running, she would not return empty handed any person seeking help at her door.

Having said that, she removed the neck band she was wearing and solemnly handed it over to Salman, who then gave it to the traveller in need. Apparently, the neck band was not a precious item and the needs of this man were far too many. He wondered, 'What did I come here for and what did I get'! Looking at him Hazrat Salman said, "You don't know who gifted this to you. Your needs are met. Your difficulties are over. God alone knows what all you have got. Come along".

They returned to the mosque. The Prophet was waiting to see what the traveller got from his daughter's door. He called the traveller and asked him what he was given. He showed the neckband and said, 'This is what I got from your worthy daughter". Tears flooded the Prophet's eyes and out of sheer love for his daughter he asked the Arab to pray for her. The traveller prayed, "Lord endow Fatima all that which no eye has ever seen and no ear has ever heard".

The neckband was in the traveller's hand. The mosque was packed with Muslims and this gathering included those whom the traveller had asked for help earlier but they had not responded. However, seeing Fatima's neckband in his hands seemed to jolt their sense of honour. The Arab had not snatched it or stolen it or taken it by any unfair way. Lady Syeda had given it by choice but still the Muslims felt indignant. After conferring with each other they addressed the traveller, "We will give you one thousand crowns if you sell this neckband to us. Also we will give you a camel to travel and ample food and clothing". When the Arab heard this he said, "God be praised. I have become rich"!

In no time the traveller sold the neckband and received the bounties. The Muslims went home, perfumed

the neckband and wrapped it in a Yemeni cloth and one of them asked his slave to take the wrapped neckband to the Prophet and gift it to him on behalf of the two of them. And then he said to the slave, “Go, I have gifted you to the Prophet as well”.

The slave took the wrapped neckband to the mosque. He conveyed his master’s message and presented the gift to the Prophet. As it was a gift the Prophet accepted it and also the services of the slave. Then he asked him to take the enclosed neckband as a gift from him to his daughter. He also gifted the slave to her.

The slave now came to Lady Syeda’s door with this trust. He conveyed her father’s message and also informed her that he was now dedicated to her service. In response she said, “I set you free in the name of God”. The slave smiled on hearing this sentence.

When someone asked him what had prompted the smile, he replied that the reason for this amused smile was a cursory reflection on the progression of the neckband. It stepped out of the house to fulfill a need. It helped a traveller reach his destination. It clothed a person in need of clothes. It fed a hungry man and relieved him of his hunger. It enriched a poor man in need. It freed an enslaved person. It solved all the problems faced by one in distress and having done that it came back home!

Before I conclude let me remind you that Fatima commanded great respect and honour in the lifetime of her father. Also that Zainab was the pride of her mother. She was an integral part of Fatima. If Fatima was the senior embodiment of purity then Zainab was the junior version of the same piety. She was an absolute replica of Syeda. When Fatima gifted the neckband to the traveller, the honour of the Muslims was challenged. How could they allow the band that their Prophet’s daughter wore, the band that had been in contact with her body, to be given to a stranger!

It is the same Syeda’s daughters who were forced to come out bare headed from their camps after Imam Hussain’s martyrdom in Karbala. They are Fatima’s daughters Zainab and Kulsoom who were forced to appear before Ibne Ziyad in his court, or walked through the market places of Kufa and Damascus without any head coverings. And why were they bare headed? Because their brother Hussein was no longer with them. His martyrdom had emboldened this veil snatching injustice.

Zainab and Kulsoom were sadly without their brothers and without their head coverings. They were herded by the enemies to various places, along whatever routes they selected and were halted at will. The caravan of Fatima’s daughters was to pass through the market places of Damascus. They had not entered yet. The shops had already been decorated and the whole city wore a festive look of celebration.

I remember an episode. Sehel ibne Saad was a companion of the holy Prophet and he was remembered by Imam Hussein on the day of Ashura. Imam Hussein addressed his opponents, “If you do not know who I am or acknowledge my status, then ask my grandfather’s companions, for some are still alive. Ask them what the Prophet of God said about me. Sehel ibne Saad is still around. Ask him if what I say is

correct".

The companion named on the day of Ashura was by chance passing through Damascus on his way to Bait ul Muqaddus (Al Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem). While passing, he noticed that the entire city had been decorated and illuminated and wore a festive look. Since, he was travelling and unaware, he checked. It was not an occasion for Eid so why was the city so adorned. The people realizing he was a traveller informed him that enemies of the Government had been subdued and this celebration was to parade the caravan consisting of the widows, children and destitute of these rebels. The décor and arrangements were to celebrate their defeat and subjugation.

Sehel was still finding out who these people were and from where they had come when he sighted the caravan. He noticed a peculiar aura around them. The caravan was heralded in with a strange grandeur. In the forefront was a long spear on which was mounted a head covered in blood and dust. Sehel tried to recognize the face but was unable to do so. He made a strange observation here. He could not identify the face but he saw an occasional glimmer of nur radiating from the lips. It was similar to the 'nur' he had often seen emanating from the lips of the Holy Prophet.

Sehel describes the scene thus. The spear was in the forefront and the prisoners were following behind it. A captive bound in chains and fetters had his hands tied behind his neck. He led the prisoners and the reins of some of the camels in the caravan were wrapped around his hands. These camels were carrying the crestfallen women and their hands too were tied with the reins.

Sehel approached the sick and helpless prisoner in shackles and asked him kindly, "To which nation do you belong"? On hearing this question the prisoner raised his head and looking at him replied, "Sehel you did not recognize us". The reply confused Sehel. It embarrassed him that he had not recognized the prisoner even though he had correctly identified him. Imam Zain ul Abideen asked Sehel not to feel embarrassed for where had he ever seen them in chains and fetters before. Where had he ever seen them imprisoned and dragged in shackles to recognize them in this condition. Sehel now implored the Imam, "Please tell me quickly, who are you? Where do you belong? What is your identity? To which family do you belong"?

In reply to these questions the Imam said, "Listen then. Hear with fortitude and hold your heart while I tell you who I am". Then he said, "I am the heir of Mecca and Mina. I am the son of the owner of Zamzam and Safa. I am the son of Prophet Mohammad Mustafa (pbuh). I am the son of Ali Murtaza. I am the son of Fatima Zehra. I am the son of Hussein , the Martyr of Karbala"!

When Sehel heard this, he beat up his face and cried, "O Syed! I wish I was blind today and had not seen this condition with my eyes. Tell me, how can I be of service to you"? Imam replied, and this sentence is worth your attention, "If you wish to help me then lend me a piece of cloth". Sehel took of his head cover and gave a piece from it to the Imam. He was reminded by the Imam that his hands were bound and was asked to fold the cloth, lift the shackle and place it under it.

Sehel folded the cloth as the Imam had requested. When he lifted the shackle from the neck he viewed a condition that he was never able to forget. What did he see? The iron shackle had cut deeply into the skin and as a result a sheet of blood was trickling down the Imam's back. Sehel managed to place the cloth as required but then with a cry of anguish he fainted right there.

God's wrath be on the transgressors.

'Hal min nasarin yansurana? Hal min nasarin yansurana?, Hal min .....'
Is there a helper to help me? Is there a helper to help me? Is there a .....

Labbaik ya Hussain!
Labbaik ya Hussain!

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بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَ الۡعَصۡرِ ﴿۱﴾ اِنَّ الۡاِنۡسَانَ لَفِیۡ خُسۡرٍ ﴿۲﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَ تَوَاصَوۡا بِالۡحَقِّ ۙ وَ تَوَاصَوۡا بِالصَّبۡرِ ﴿۳﴾

"By the time. Verily man is in loss.
Save those who believe, and do good deeds, and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance." (***103: 1, 2, 3***)

The specific time of Asr is being sworn by to convey with certainty that man is destined to be a loser. The only exception is for those who accept faith and do good deeds, and they also promote "haq" (truth) and demonstrate "sabr" (patience). This particular Surah of the Quran begins with the word "Asr" (time) and ends with the word "sabr".

The Holy Quran is a complete and comprehensive Book and without any doubt, its identity as a composite whole is firmly established. Yet, today I want to share my intuitive outlook in this regard with you. That is, if we focus our attention on a certain segment of the Quran , for example if we focus totally and specifically on Surah Asr under consideration, then we discover that this particular component of the Quran is so weighty that it can claim to be at par with the entire Quran. All of what is evident in the Quran seems reflected in this component. I notice the same grandeur in this brilliant Surah Asr, too.

In this Surah (chapter) God is communicating a message, and keeping this message in view, at the very outset He swears by Time. In literary configuration, sometimes a particular technique is used to introduce a topic or a subject. In Arabic this is referred to as technique of Bara'at–Istehlal. This implies that the very first word used or the beginning itself, portrays the essence of the entire work and gives a clear indication of what is to be expected ahead.

The ninth surah of the Quran, Surah Bara'at uses this very technique. Out of all the hundred and fourteen chapters in the Quran this is the only one that does not begin with Bismillah, the name of Allah. Not using Bismillah here is pointing to the use of the same technique that informs of the outcome at the very start.

Absence of Bismillah here clearly indicates that we will not witness any reference to Mercy of God. In fact, it prepares us to expect warnings of punishment, threats of dire consequence and expression of dislike. So a passage that spells punishment, that declares immunity cannot be coupled to God's quality of Mercy and Compassion. It cannot be introduced in the name of Allah, the Merciful the Compassionate, for such a beginning would simply not be congruent with the situation.

I remember an incidence here that is worth sharing with you. Asmae was a noted Arab scholar and a remarkable poet and he narrates that once he decided to go on a sight–seeing trip in appreciation of nature. So he set out from home to roam through deserts and mountains, view plains and valleys, enjoy the waterfalls and the natural beauty all around. Vast stretches lay ahead of him but he saw no human being around.

While he was roaming in this solitude he saw a respectable looking elderly man. Asmae was drawn to him, as he had not met another human for many days. He reached out to him and soon realized he was talking to a learned man with a good literary taste.

Now when a poet comes across an appreciative audience, he relishes this opportunity. Asmae asked the Arab, "If you like I can present my work to you". The Sheikh being a man of good taste gave a remarkable reply, "If I have to listen to something why should I listen to your work? Can anything ever compare to God's work? So if you must then recite to me the work of God". Asmae says, "I obliged him. I kept reciting verses from the Quran and the learned Sheikh kept nodding his head in appreciation". After every sentence he kept saying, "Yes this is the work of God". He was truly moved by the recitation and acknowledged it by saying, "Why should I not be influenced? After all this is the work of God and His work is the best of all".

Asmae kept reciting and the Sheikh kept reaffirming, "Yes this is the work of God". At one point in the recitation the Sheikh lifted his bowed head and asked, "Whose work is this"? Asmae was taken aback by this inquiry. So far the Sheikh had affirmed but now he was questioning the authenticity. He replied, "This is God's work" but the Sheikh disputed, "This is not God's work".

Asmae was confused by this change of stance and deliberated how best he could respond. In this

perplexed state he realized he had by mistake altered the last part of the sentence. So he recited the correct text at which the Sheikh nodded, “Yes this is the work of God”. Asmae wondered how a small alteration had drawn this response of vehement denial. And what was this minor alteration? The verse Asmae recited was,

وَ السَّارِقُ وَ السَّارِقَةُ فَاقۡطَعُوۡۤا اَيۡدِيَهُمَا جَزَآءً

بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ

“One who steals, be it man or woman, cut their hands. This is a recompense for their deeds and a severe punishment from God”. (***5: 38***)

This far Asmae had recited the text correctly. The original verse concludes with authority that

وَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيۡزٌ حَكِيۡمٌ

“God is All Mighty, All Wise”(***5:38***)***.***

Asmae had by mistake recited ‘God is Forgiving, Most Merciful’, instead of the actual text.

Now all these are Names of God and Asmae presumed substituting one for another was not a major error, but the Sheikh had clearly disagreed and only gave assent after its correction. “What’s the matter Sheikh”? Asmae asked, “Agreed I made a mistake but it was not so grave for you to declare categorically that it could not be the work of God”.

The Sheikh said, “How come despite your literary taste and insight you cannot figure out that it would be inappropriate for God to introduce himself as Most Forgiving and Merciful when He is handing down punishment? These names are relevant only after holding a discussion on forgiveness and mercy”.

“However, here the reference is to harsh outcomes and chastisement, hence God uses the name Al Aziz, the All Mighty that suggests He possesses power over everything. He has complete authority to punish any guilty person and to determine this punishment on the basis of wisdom such that punishment dealt serves to deter crime, discourage bad intentions and dissuade criminal activity. Thus, in the context used, the names All Mighty and All Wise are most suited, whereas use of names Most Forgiving and Most Merciful are not appropriate”.

From the discussion conducted so far we can safely conclude that if locations are so specifically transfixed that a particular Name of God cannot be replaced by another one of His Names, for we have to admit that Asmae had by mistake recited ‘Ghafoor ur Raheem’ instead of ‘Aziz ul Hakeem’. He did not name another being. In fact, he did not name anyone besides God, so if we do not have the liberty or permission to exchange one name of God with another, it is frightening to imagine a situation where no linkage to the name exists at all.

So, I was telling you that this Surah Asr too employs the use of the technique of Bara’at Istehlal. A certain topic is being discussed in this Surah, and in relation to the topic God swears neither by the sun, nor the moon and neither by the stars or the galaxies. In fact, He swears by Time. The very first word of the Surah gives insight into what lies ahead. This word informs us that there is a particular Asr time in God’s estimate that is important enough to swear by. After swearing by “Asr” so vehemently we are warned,

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَ الۡعَصۡرِ ۙ﴿۱﴾ اِنَّ الۡاِنۡسَانَ لَفِیۡ خُسۡرٍ ۙ﴿۲﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَ تَوَاصَوۡا بِالۡحَقِّ ۬ۙ وَ تَوَاصَوۡا بِالصَّبۡرِ ﴿۳﴾

“By the time. Verily man is in loss.
Save those who believe, and do good deeds, and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance.” (***103:1, 2, 3***)

The word “Save” in the above verse separates the people who deserve to be forgiven from the rest of humanity that has bargained for loss. Now I ask my audience, is this Surah representative of the whole Quran or not? Is it or is it not informing us of God’s absolute decision? That only those who believe and do good deeds should expect deliverance and there is no salvation for the rest.

The order of expression in the Surah is also meaningful. As a rule when an order is issued for a group than the smaller subgroup is excused and the larger one is bound by the order. It is improper to enforce judgment or restriction on a smaller group and excuse the larger section.

Suppose we have a group where some people are educated and some are not. If the educated people outnumber the uneducated, that is, if the educated are in a majority, then assessment will target the majority. It may be said, ‘the group is educated except for a few people’. If instead the assessment says, ‘the group is uneducated except for a few people’, than this order of representation is incorrect. An order must encircle the group or the number of the people forming the majority. The minority as a rule is

exempt from the order.

In the Kalima, '**There is no god but Allah**', the term 'no god' encircles the majority. There is no other god for anyone we can see is not God. What we can comprehend is not God and anyone we can hear is not God either. Besides, the projection of our imagination and the image formed by our estimation is also not God. He is not in the past, present or future. Now this list is so extensive for whatever or whoever we see is not God. In the context of Kalima those who cannot be God, form the majority and our one and only Allah stands out as a singular minority.

A similar example can be quoted from the Quran,

قُل لَّا اَسـَٔلُكُم عَلَيهِ اَجرًا اِلَّا المَوَدَّةَ فِى القُربٰى

"Say, I do not ask of you any recompense for it (***the toils of Prophethood***)***, save the love of*** (***my***) ***relatives".*** (***42:23***)

This puts aside all recompense efforts, be they prayers, praise, good deeds or any other response. All are being refused. Only one form of recompense is suitable and that is love of the Prophet's near and dear ones. Except for this specific love, no other compensation is acceptable to the Prophet.

It clearly means that if a person thinks compensation can be offered in the form of nawafil (additional prayers) or in the form of rukuh, sujood, qiyam or qaood, or by recitation and remembrance of Quran, or by performing Haj, then this is not true. Now if it is assumed that the Prophet can be duly rewarded by this form of compensation, and our obligations to the Prophet will be fulfilled by this activity, then the answer to this is simply,

لَّا اَسـَٔلُكُم عَلَيهِ اَجرًا اِلَّا المَوَدَّةَ فِى القُربٰى

"I ask of nothing but the love of my near ones". (***42:23***)

In matters of religion the mandatory obligations have to be observed and the necessary tasks must be undertaken with responsibility. You must worship in the spirit of worship. Hence, if you want to offer anything as compensation to the Prophet than it can only be love of near ones. Nothing else can qualify or be worthy of recompense.

Similarly in Surah Asr, God exempts the group that earns salvation. The majority order ***"verily man is in loss"*** (***103:2***) is supplemented by two emphasis points. The first emphasis is conveyed by the Arabic word "inna" (verily) followed by the next emphasis in the form of pre-fix 'lam' with a 'fatha' on the word

“lafi”. In Arabic the alphabet ‘lam’ is for emphasis. Using these two emphasis points the absolute ruling is conveyed that majority of human beings are losers.

Let the literary minded amongst my audience pay special attention to what I am about to say. In this sentence of Surah Asr “***verily man is in loss***”, there is no verb (in the Arabic text); not in any tense, past, present or future. It does not say man will be a loser or is a loser or was a loser. The is, was or will be are added on by us. There is no verb in the text. This is a noun clause and it has a profound and far reaching effect. It encompasses past, present and future and is relevant at all times. The Quran does not suggest that man will, at some point in the future, become a loser. That question does not arise for man is a loser and is likely to remain a loser.

A loser is not one destined to enter Hell and burn in flames of fire. Real loss is in the form of denial of God’s Mercy. If Compassion and Mercy are not directed towards man from any direction, he definitely stands to lose even if he does not feel the pain or affliction at that moment. So the sentence ‘Man is a loser’ means man is denied God’s Mercy in this world and the Hereafter. The desired glance of Mercy is not for this person. Such people form the losing majority.

Towards whom is this glance of Mercy then directed? It is directed towards

اِلَّا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ

وَ تَوَاصَوۡا بِالۡحَقِّ ۙ وَ تَوَاصَوۡا بِالصَّبۡرِ

“those who believe and do good deeds and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance.” (***103:3***)

The obvious reference is to people who do not just bank on doing good deeds themselves, rather they exhort or ‘will’ others to do good and also urge them to uphold the truth.

The word “***tawasau***” (Will) in our everyday use refers to the deathbed wish. Instructions or requests we make in our dying moments are referred to as a Will (wasiyat). Now let us look at the Quranic verses where God has used this word for Himself,

يُوۡصِيۡكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِىۡۤ اَوۡلَادِكُمۡ

“Allah commands you concerning your children” (***4: 11***)

And we are further told,

وَ وَصَّيۡنَا الۡاِنۡسَانَ بِوَالِدَيۡهِ اِحۡسٰنًا

"We have exhorted man to treat his parents kindly" **(*46:15*)**

Also there is a command in three consecutive verses,

ذٰلِكُمۡ وَصّٰكُمۡ

..thus doth He command you... **(*6: 151, 152,153*)**

ذٰلِكُمۡ وَصّٰكُمۡ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ

"This He enjoins on you, so that you understand" **(*6:151*)**

ذٰلِكُمۡ وَصّٰكُمۡ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ

"This He enjoins on you, so that you may be mindful" **(*6: 152*)**

ذٰلِكُمۡ وَصّٰكُمۡ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَتَّقُوۡنَ

"This He enjoins on you, so that you may fear Him" **(*6:153*)**

So if Will is a dying wish why would God refer to His exhortations as such? The concept of death does not exist for God. For Him there is life and only life. The word Will has a broad meaning and can be used in multiple ways. It is a final decision. Something that is not likely to change. It is fixed, final and permanent.

The speaker addresses you on Friday and Eid sermons with the words 'O God's creation I exhort you '. So it is clear that Will is a message that is not likely to change or alter. What we say in our lifetime can be renewed, changed or deleted but what we say close to death attains certainty and is referred to as

wasiyat even though the word itself is not linked directly to death. Referring to the Surah again, let us reiterate that salvation is for those who demonstrate faith, do good deeds and exhort one another to truth and endurance. They do so in an emphatic manner and what they say is authentic and final.

Respected audience, if I deliberate on this Surah in a lecture form you will get bored, so keeping your disposition in mind I shall adopt a particular style so you do not lose interest and my direction stays focused, too. I request you to pay attention and grasp each and every word I say. In this particular Surah and in many other places in the Quran the word 'Iman' (faith) is coupled with the words 'amal e saleh' (good deeds). Consider these,

وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا

الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنۡهُمۡ مَّغۡفِرَةً وَّ اَجۡرًا عَظِيۡمًا

"Allah has promised those who believe and do good deeds forgiveness and a great recompense." (***48:29***)

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَيَجۡعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحۡمٰنُ وُدًّا

"Verily those who believe and do good deeds God (***Ar-Rahman***) ***will appoint for them love."*** (***19:96***)

Whenever, God mentions those who have faith, He follows it by mentioning their deeds. Both these words used one after another double to form a regular pattern. There is no doubt that religion is neither exclusively deeds, nor is it entirely faith. Religion will only be effective when faith is coupled with good deeds and if this faith serves as an agent for useful activity.

In the absence of faith, you can very well judge, there is no genuine resolve to do good deeds. Let me say, there is no freshness in faith without supporting deeds and minus faith deeds are a non-entity. I cannot deny the solitary existence of faith, but at least let me say that faith in the absence of corresponding action is a tree with no signs of spring, or a tree without any fruit.

Spring is meaningful only in the presence of a real tree. This tree must have branches, too. That is why Faith is a primary component of Asool e Din (Rules of Religion), whereas Deeds are regarded as supplementary components of Religion (Farou e Din). A branch that has been cut off from an un-

blossomed tree will remain green for a while but will soon wilt away because it is severed from its roots.

Thus, deeds not supported by faith are akin to a severed branch. Similarly, faith not accompanied by deeds is passive. Since, faith is the fuel that propels all actions; its presence signals the ability or the potential for action. However, the tree will show signs of spring only when this potential is translated into action.

Here permit me to say that God selected Unity for His Being. Why say selected? He is by Himself. He is Alone. He is One. He is Unique. He is Incomparable and 'there is no one like Him'. These characteristics are exclusive to God. Now besides God whatever else exists, be it ideologies or personalities or creation at large, there is plurality for them. It is categorically stated,

سُبۡحٰنَ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَ الۡاَزۡوَاجَ کُلَّہَا

"Glory be to Him who created pairs of everything" **(*36:36*).**

Let me translate this more precisely. He created pairs of everything and interlinked them to each other. When the two components of a pair are together they are useful and productive. Absence of one or another is considered death. A combination of Body and Soul signifies life while separation of the two is death. Knowledge and its Application is another pair. To possess knowledge but show no utility for it signifies presence of one component of a pair only. On the other hand if you are a doer but possess no knowledge than this too is not enough. Knowledge has to be coupled with its Application. The body has to have a soul and words must possess meaning.

At this stage, if you focus your imagination you will appreciate this delicate point. A word does not exist without a meaning and similarly meaning does not exist without a word. However, a word cannot exchange place with its meaning, nor can meaning replace the word. Word belongs to the book but do you think its meaning resides in the book right next to the word? Meaning occupies another location. Words are for the book. Meanings are for the people. They are for the people who possess knowledge.

It is for this very reason that God did not appoint words or the Book as a witness to the Prophet. Instead He pointed to the source where the meaning resides. After all Prophethood is not about words; it is all about meanings. Words can never bear witness to the Prophet. This is the responsibility of people who perceive the essence of Prophethood.

قُلۡ کَفٰی بِاللّٰہِ شَہِیۡدًۢا بَیۡنِیۡ وَ بَیۡنَکُمۡ ۙ وَ مَنۡ عِنۡدَہٗ عِلۡمُ الۡکِتٰبِ

"Say, between me and you God is sufficient as a witness and he who has knowledge of the

Book.” **(*13:43*)**

The words “he who has knowledge of the Book” is extremely refined and meaningful. The word “Book” is being mentioned here as a mere formality. The witness here is one who has knowledge of the Book but the Book itself is not the witness. Knowledge of the Book is not with the Book. The location of knowledge is not the Book, it lies elsewhere. Thus, words are for the Book and knowledge is for people worthy of it. Both must stay together.

Now after accepting this logic if I assume that words alone are sufficient then my contention would be wrong or to put it differently, my words would be so meaningless! No doubt words are connected to their meanings but no one can say meanings reside on a paper. Words are for the paper. They are for the book. But meanings reside within the hearts. The real Ayaat are stored in the hearts and breasts of those granted knowledge.

Nature has a way of creating pairs. Sometimes in the form of two identical things like two ears, two eyes, and sometimes two separate things are paired together, like heart and mind. Now feel the difference between the heart and mind. Knowing is one thing and believing is another. The two are often phrased together: knowing and believing.

This may be of interest to you. To know something does not mean to believe it, too. There are plenty of examples in this world where one may know but not believe. However, knowledge that does not lead to conviction is of no consequence. The purpose of learning is to believe. Hence, by not believing the very purpose of acquiring knowledge is negated. It is as though the preface of the book remains and the content is wasted. As if ablution is done but prayer remains unsaid.

To all those present I wish to say that knowing is one thing and believing is another. In my opinion even one who does not know agrees that the location of knowledge cannot be the heart. And it is not the heart. The right location is the mind. The location of belief is the heart. The mind knows and the heart believes. In addition we can say the heart either believes or it does not believe.

Believing and not believing are both functions of the heart. Now if a state of equilibrium exists and the heart accepts the righteous and rejects the evil, then this is a remarkable heart! On the contrary if the heart rejects the virtuous and accepts the worthless than woe be to this heart! This is sheer rebellion.

Knowing and not knowing are functions of the mind. Believing and not believing are functions of the heart. This is the reason God mentions the heart when praising the faith of somebody. The Quran informs us,

اللّٰہَ حَبَّبَ اِلَیۡکُمُ الۡاِیۡمَانَ وَ زَیَّنَہٗ فِیۡ قُلُوۡبِکُمۡ

"Allah has endeared the faith to you, and made it attractive to your hearts" (***49:7***)

When rebuking the disbelievers He says,

فِی قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ

"Their hearts are diseased they do not believe" (***2:10***)

He further says

وَ لَمَّا یَدخُلِ الاِیمَانُ فِی قُلُوبِکُم

"Faith has not yet entered your hearts". (***49:14***)

When mentioning faith God does not mention the mind. He mentions the heart. Believing and not believing are functions of the heart. When we believe or chose not to believe, our hearts are involved in the process. But knowing is a function of the mind. Whenever, we forget something and try to remember it, our minds are taxed. We feel the stress. Hence, we establish that the location of knowledge and belief are separate. The function of one is to Know and the other is to Believe. Had the two functions been identical then in that case, those who knew would also believe.

Nature in general has paired of things. Religion exists in this form, too. One component is 'Iman', faith and the other is 'amal', action or deeds. If we bank on our faith and discard action then we too belong to the group that considers one component of religion to be sufficient, for we are content with mere faith and are indifferent to related deeds. A similar situation will arise if we engage in action but disconnect with faith. The essence of religion is served best when both components are assigned their due; faith in its place and action in its place.

I wish to add to this analysis. Faith and action form a pair in relation to religion. Now look at these separately. Action itself has two aspects. Doing something and not doing it. Shariat (Rules of Law) not only require us to do some work, it also forbids or restrains us from doing certain things. Am I right? It tells us not to indulge in vice but wants us to follow the obligatory. You will be a good practitioner if you respect both aspects. Now if you say your prayers regularly and also indulge in theft then are you a worthy practitioner? Will anyone approve of this practice? No way. You qualify by doing what you are required to do and avoiding that which is forbidden.

I will explain this difference to you. Obligatory or mandatory work is not to be performed all the time. It is to be undertaken only sometime. There is no perpetual requirement of obligatory prayer (namaz or salat)

or fast (roza) or recitation (zikr) or Pilgrimage (Haj). Mandatory tasks are occasional.

Now what does the Law say regarding forbidden tasks? When shall we not lie? When shall we not steal? When shall we not be unfair? When are we not to keep our promises? These questions are meaningless. These are not to be undertaken at any time. Not during the day, not at night, neither in the morning nor in the evening.

Thus, we find out that the negative aspect has a broad spectrum, whereas the positive aspect is applicable at some time and is not applicable at another time. Since, the not doing part has such a wide expanse it takes precedence over the doing part. Simply put, first reject that which must not be done and later do what must be done.

It is obvious that you will avoid vice if you dislike it and do what is required if you like it. So it is established that action has two aspects. One aspect is positive and the other one is negative. There is love on one side and hatred on the other side. Repulsion on one side and attraction on the other.

Now just as action has two aspects, faith too is dual natured. Faith implies believing or accepting something. But on what condition must this acceptance come? On refusal to accept some other things first. You cannot accept everything. You cannot group together theft and prayer, falsehood and fasting. Now if by any chance you accept both the just and the unjust than this cannot be termed faith for if after accepting the truth you accept the false then the earlier acceptance is wasted. As a rule first you refuse the false and then you accept the truth. So there are two aspects of faith and two aspects of action.

At this stage I have to state that there is a vast difference between faith and action. I will highlight the main differences between the two. Faith is not acquired with the help of eyes or ears, nor with the assistance of the tongue or hands or feet. Faith is not related to our physical being. In fact, it is linked to our spirit (ruh).

In accepting or not accepting faith our body is not affected. You can accept faith while lying down, or while walking or sitting down. You can accept faith when you are awake and at a higher level you can even accept faith while asleep. But certainly our physical body is not involved in the process.

Since, faith is not an activity; we are not required to do anything or to say anything. Neither are we required to go here and there. It is simply an approval by the spirit, an acceptance not by the tongue but by the spirit. Reference to the heart is merely figurative, for it is really the spirit that is involved. For acceptance of faith and its subsequent retention we are not required to do or say anything. Hence, faith does not calculate our strength or measure our capacity for acceptance. No energy is expended in the process and no work is done.

Action, on the other hand may run an occasional check to assess our financial capability with respect to payments for zakat, khums, Haj, compensation for fasting and others. But how much does it cost to accept faith? What do you spend on believing in God and His Prophet? What expenditure is involved in

acceptance of faith to suggest it is affordable for the rich and not the poor, for the healthy and not the sick and for the relaxed and not the agitated? Is Faith only for those with opportunity and time and can others be excused?

In matters of faith you are not required to do anything. It is mandatory for everyone at all times and in all situations. There is no condition for possession of power or strength or any concept of proper or improper time for acceptance or demonstration of faith.

But where deeds are concerned, strength is essential. We can stand up for prayers if we are strong. We can fast or perform Haj if we are healthy. Who can perform the task and who is exempt from it? These queries will crop up. Shariat will then give concessions, reduce task or change the requirement. If you cannot do this then do something else instead. Now faith is not subject to change and since it is not associated with strength or capability, there is no substitute for it.

I will highlight another point here. There is no compulsion in matters of faith. I want you to think about it. Does God force us to believe in Him? Faith and compulsion cannot co-exist. The term compulsion itself indicates the absence of belief, and faith is all about believing. Force negates the very concept and purpose of belief and since it is not true acceptance it is not faith.

Remember there is no compulsion in religion so a non-believer can never be converted to a believer by force. Faith and force cannot be grouped together so it is a sheer waste arguing why God did not enforce faith by the use of sword, or the Prophet force people to accept his Prophethood. The choice to agree or disagree rests with the people for there is no compulsion in matters of faith or religion.

Once you accept faith and become a believer (mu'min), then the follow up stage is mandatory submission plus practical demonstration. Prayers must be said, fasts must be observed, sinful practices must be avoided and good deeds are to be undertaken. Prior to acceptance of faith the choice to agree or disagree existed. Now think and tell me as a believer, do you have a choice in matters of practice? No. There is compulsion now. You will be forced to do things and refusal will lead to punishment.

For non-believers there is no punishment in this world, but if a believer rejects mandatory activity he invites punishment even in this world. There is no compulsion in acceptance of faith but there is compulsion in follow up practice. Now remember the Quranic verse,

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِى الدِّيْنِ

"There is no compulsion in din (religion)". **(*2: 256*)**

What does "din" stand for? Faith or practice? It is an accepted norm that religion (din) implies practice and we also know there is compulsion in practice. Thus it is obvious in this ayat "din" refers to faith for

we have established that there is no compulsion in accepting faith. It is worth noting that the word ‘din’ when used alone refers to Faith and not Practice.

There is no compulsion in religion. Now we know there is no compulsion in matters of faith but there certainly is compulsion in follow-up deeds. Actions can be forced but you cannot force people to accept faith. So when it is said there is no compulsion in religion, we know we are talking about faith. Now if the same Creator tells us,

اَلۡيَوۡمَ اَكۡمَلۡتُ لَكُمۡ دِيۡنَكُمۡ

“This day I have perfected for you your religion” (***5:3***)

Then ponder and tell me what has been perfected, faith or action? What is being referred to here? Our belief or our deeds? Reference is being made to that aspect where there is no compulsion. We thus find out this is not a reference to action but faith. Previously we were not aware that it was incomplete, but today it has been perfected. That is why the message concludes by informing us,

وَ رَضِيۡتُ لَكُمُ الۡاِسۡلَامَ دِيۡنًا

“And have chosen for you Islam as your religion”. (***5 :3***)

The day this message was conveyed, regardless of what day it was or what happened that day, it is clear that some part of religion was incomplete. For us, ordinary humans, some component of faith was incomplete and for our Prophet some component of his Prophethood was missing. With delivery of the message, our yet incomplete faith was perfected and similarly the Prophet by conveying God’s message to us completed his task of Prophethood. The task of the messenger is to convey, which he did, and the task of the believer is to accept the message. God sent the Message, and the Prophet conveyed His Message, that on this particular day our faith has been perfected.

I think I do not need to elaborate any more. If anyone thinks faith can exist even if a part of it is missing, then this assumption is incorrect. Faith is not something that we can split and keep some part and reject some part of it. Faith for us is akin to Prophethood for the Prophet. Our faith and the Prophet’s task are interlinked. It is spelt out in the Quran that in case the Prophet does not convey this specific Message it would be as though he had not conveyed the (entire) Message of his Prophethood. Similarly, if we do not accept this particular Message we too risk the possibility of losing our entire faith.

It is sufficient for me to tell you that faith is far superior to deeds that are subordinate to faith. Now if a portion of unfinished deed results in wastage of the entire task then how can faith survive in the absence

of a vital component? Consider this. If you are offering prayers and have performed all the mandatory tasks except one essential component will your prayer be valid? Half of it? One third? One fourth? Some fraction of it?

While fasting you observed all the restrictions save one, then will this fast be acceptable? If a deed comprising thousands of segments is incomplete in the absence of a single segment then is faith so weak that despite missing elements it remains whole and intact? Please remember that faith survives as a sum total and it goes as a whole. Faith is not something that exists in an inferior or fractional state.

God created everything in the form of pairs. The presence of both components of a pair is essential for its usefulness. If one component of a pair is present and the other is absent then we might as well not have any of them. Consider body and soul, knowledge and action, faith and activity, words and meanings, heart and mind and add to that Quran and Ahlul Bayt. Each component is vital for the purposeful existence of the pair.

Let us now go back to the verse where God swears by Asr, the Time. God alone knows how significant this particular time is. Going by our experience we swear by a thing we are attached to. The person swearing will swear by a thing that is important as well as dear to him. Without this attachment nothing is worth swearing by. So it is obvious that the Time which God swears by has a special significance for Him.

The very first word "***Wal-Asr***" (by the Time) opens the door and gives an insight into the message. This is a specific time, a particular time that God is swearing by. The Asr time we experience daily is not significant enough to be sworn by. This is the Asr time of one particular day in the life of the universe that is worth swearing by.

Now let us search for this Asr time in the battlefield where the two groups identified in this Surah face each other. One of these crosses all limits of evil and injustice while the other surpasses all standards of goodness and justice. Besides Time of Asr we must identify the presence of the losers as well as the presence of the believers and doers of good deeds. There are many references in the Quran to those who believe and do good deeds, but here we have an additional sentence that informs us that these people

وَ تَوَاصَوۡا بِالۡحَقِّ ۙ وَ تَوَاصَوۡا بِالصَّبۡرِ

"Exhort one another to 'haq' (***truth***)
and exhort one another to 'sabr'(***endurance***)***".*** (***103 :3***)

The word 'sabr' is pointing to the fact that this particular Asr is an extremely difficult and testing time.

The battlefield of Karbala offers a complete depiction of each and every aspect of this worthy Surah. At Asr time on the tenth of Moharram our Imam had a strange desire. What was that? He wished that his sympathisers and mourners were with him on that day, at that particular moment. He wished for the presence of each and every one of them. He desired the presence of children, of young and old people and of men as well as women. He hoped his followers were there with him and he was in front of them.

Our Imam knew there would be mourners of this tragedy. He knew that his followers would establish mourning at a level the world had never seen before and that they would ensure sustained remembrance such as has not been upheld for anyone else. Imam Hussain knew that other imams from his family would not be mourned the way his martyrdom will be commemorated.

Our Imam was aware there would be mourners and grievers who would narrate this tragedy and people who would listen intently and shed tears of sorrow. All this would take place in the future but for the present he wished them to be there to witness the hardships he was undergoing. His sentence was, “wish all of you were here on the day of Ashura”.

There is a reason for every wish, for every desire. Why did our Imam desire our presence that day? Not to save him from the thrust of swords. Not to take infant Asghar from his hand for burial. Not to assist him in picking up brother Abbas’s slain body. Not because he was having difficulty in picking up his young son’s body. Not to save Zainab’s veil or to assist the prisoners.

Imam Hussain’s has a strange wish and that is “tanzarooney”, “If only my followers could see me”. Mind you, your Imam is ascertaining the Time he wished to be seen. “Wish you could see me”. When? “When I was pleading for some water for my thirsty infant Asghar. When I was holding the baby in my hands. Wish you were there to see in how many different ways I tried to persuade them to give some water to the innocent child! I did not beg for my Akbar, only for my Asghar; not for one who could speak, only for one who could not speak. Wish you could see how ruthlessly my request was turned down”. This was our Imam’s historic message.

Now try to visualize how dreadful this Asr time was when Bibi Zainab saw her brother’s head being severed from his body. This was also the time when she was deprived of her veil covering. This was the time when the camps were put on fire, and a time of sheer despondence and hardship for the Prophet’s family.

Imam Hussain’s daughter, Fatima Kubra narrates that when Asr time faded out, when her father’s head was mounted on a spear and when there was no one at all to help them, she stood watching the martyred bodies. There was no one to attend to them, to bathe them or arrange for their coffins. She watched helplessly and wondered now that the men had been slain, what will be the fate of the rest of them. Will they be killed or made prisoners? Who can stop the enemy from carrying out these terrible deeds?

Her head was swooning with unrelenting thirst when she noticed a man carrying a dagger approach her.

She thought of seeking help from her phuppi (aunt) when this dreadful man snatched her head covering and struck her back with his dagger. She fainted and collapsed to the ground. After a while she heard her aunt's persistent plea, "Get up, my daughter". She realized her head lay in her aunt's lap and she was saying, "My daughter, get up. I have to look after the orphans. I have to inquire about the welfare of the whole household. I have to attend to my sick nephew. How long will you lie in this state"?

Fatima Kubra realized her aunt was urging her on so she lamented that she had no head covering. Her aunt replied, "My child, open your eyes and look at me". When she opened her eyes she was horrified to see that her phuppi Zainab's head was uncovered too, as were the heads of all the other ladies.

She got up and walked with her aunt towards her sick brother, Imam Zain ul Abideen. There she saw a man drag him out of his bed. He fell to the ground, at which Bibi Zainab remarked, "Son did I live to see you roll in the dust like this"? The ailing nephew slowly got up and lamented, "Phuppi dear, all the male members have been slain. Alas, I alone survive to see you bare headed like this"!

God's wrath be on the transgressors.

This appendix includes two research articles by Zeynab Ali.

- The Tragedy of Karbala
- Imamat as the Fulfillment of Divine Justice

This research was presented at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Columbia University, New York, in 2011 and 2012. Zeynab Ali has received a M.A in Islamic Studies from Columbia University.

For more of her related work you may follow the link below:

http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/catalog/ac:148284 [8]

The Tragedy of Karbala A Defining Moment in the Construction of Shi'a Identity

by Zeynab Ali

Introduction

The martyrdom of Imam Al-Hussein at Karbala in 680 A.D was a defining moment for the creation of a distinct Shi'a identity. This tragedy had a greater impact on Shi'ism than any other event in Islamic history and has been described as a 'root metaphor' around which Shi'a religious beliefs and practices are grounded.1 Although the controversial issue of the succession of Imam Ali led to the initiation of Shi'a

partisanship, it was the Karbala tragedy that gave impetus to create a distinct Shi'i identity that could be distinguished from other mainstream outlooks in Islam. The way in which this clear distinction manifested itself after the events of Karbala can be assessed from the way sectarian identities became firmly demarcated in the Muslim community of Kufa, for example, after this incident.

The centrality and importance of Karbala, in the ideological and geographical context, was also affirmed by the traditions of the later Imams (the descendants of the Prophet) and it's significance can be further assessed by the evolution of distinctly Shi'a rituals informed by it. The rituals that came to be associated with the Karbala tragedy played a defining role in the creation of a distinct Shi'a identity and a political sensibility by becoming a central 'vehicle of expression' for this identity. 2

Segregation of Sacred Space in the Aftermath of the Tragedy of Karbala:

An overview of the earlier diversity of sacred space and its later segregation provides an instructive insight into the way the tragedy of Karbala had played a crucial impact on what came to characterized as a distinct Shi'a identity. Before the events of Karbala, there seemed to be porous demarcations of sectarian boundaries and identities in Islam. Various tribes had loose sectarian inclinations but most Muslims followed their clan's tribal affiliations. However, such sectarian tribal affiliations did not lead to the classification of religious spaces as being Shi'a or Sunni.3 Taking the example of 7th century Kufa, the central seat of the Caliphate at the time, it can be assessed that although sectarian affiliations existed, people from a range of sectarian inclinations easily prayed at the same venue in their own distinct ways in.4

Given that this situation changed by the 8th century within two decades of the battle of Karbala, it is clearly probable that the tragedy of Karbala created new 'religious geographies' in its aftermath which delineated a clear distinction between 'friendly/sacred' and 'hostile/accursed' spaces. Although a transformation towards the consolidation of a sectarian identity had started taking place in the mid-7th century when certain ritual practices began to somewhat 'eclipse' tribal affiliations5 it was in the post-Karbala milieu when 'some mosques were renovated to celebrate the death of al-Hussein' that some religious spaces became safe havens for the Shi'a while other became openly hostile.6 In this way it was in the aftermath of this tragedy that by segregation of spaces a distinct Shi'a identity seems to have emerged.

Muharram- Ashura Rituals as Vehicles of Expression of the Shi'a Identity

The segregation of sacred spaces is indicative of the fact that a paradigmatic change occurred in the Islamic community and in the fluid Shi'a character, with the development of a distinct set of rituals that were developed and formalized after Imam Hussein's martyrdom. These rituals, which started immediately after the Battle of Karbala, became a novel and powerful public affirmation of the Shi'a identity while serving as a unique medium for expressing and strengthening a variety of political and social identities, associations and relationships.7 So much so that the 'potency of the practice' came to

overshadow matters of theology.[8]

To this day it is the martyrdom of Imam Hussein that is celebrated most fervently in the entire Shi'a calendar.[9] The myths of Karbala, woven together with historical facts introduced a devotional aspect into Shi'ism and created the ethos of the popular Shi'a personality (Jafri 2002). They also played a crucial role in creating and consolidating the Shi'a identity and set it apart from other sectarian inclinations. Such rituals are also the particular elements which manifestly distinguish Shi'ism from Sunnism, because otherwise the differences between the two sects on actual theological or ideological constructs are rather insignificant (Jafri 2002: Enayat 2005).[10]

The 'institution of mourning' for the martyred Imam as embodied in the Ashura rituals came to symbolize the ethos of Shi'ism and became a conduit for articulating the 'revolutionary' message of Shi'ism against perverse socio-political conditions that negated the Islamic ideal.[11] The mourning rituals held during Muharram and the ensuing months also provided crucial opportunities for the development of social networks among Shi'as while fostering a sense of unity for the community identity (Cole 1986: Enayat 2005).

Imam Hussein's sacrifice also gave Shi'a Islam an 'ethos of sanctification through martyrdom' which did not exist earlier (Aghaie). Although the Shi'as were persecuted all through their early history and according to the Shi'a traditions all the Imams faced persecution and were martyred, it was the martyrdom of Hussein that has given this distinct characteristic to Shi'a Islam. These rituals provided an intrinsic socio-religious channel to articulate the devotion of the Prophet's family. For the Shi'a the primacy of the Ahle-Bayt was utmost and this was a singular event which symbolized the highest form of injustice meted out to the family of the Prophet.[12] In a way, consequently, Shi'ism unwittingly appropriated the claims to affection of the Ahle-Bayt by giving utmost importance to their reverence through such rituals and formulating an identity around them.

Pilgrimage and The Religious Geography of Karbala:

Among the various rituals that emerged in the aftermath of Imam Hussein's martyrdom, the pilgrimage to Karbala and the resting places of other Imams was a tradition that came to signify a specific Shi'a devotional outlook. Many traditions from the Shi'a Imams point to the importance placed on a pilgrimage to Karbala for strengthening the communal identity and consequently extensive pilgrimage manuals were developed which were significant in articulating the Shi'a identity. The fact that these acts of pilgrimage became integral to the Shi'i identity after the 7th century, points to the significance of the Karbala tragedy and the effect it had on the larger Islamic community in its consequent aftermath.

According to a tradition by Imam Jafar as-Sadiq, a person who failed to visit al-Hussein at Karbala had 'departed from a claim of God' because 'the claim of Hussein is a mandatory duty from God and is an obligation upon every Muslim'. In many ways pilgrimage to Karbala was almost elevated to the rank of the pilgrimage of Hajj by the Shi'ite traditions.[13] In another tradition from Imam Hasan al-Askari, a

pilgrimage to Karbala after forty days after the anniversary of Hussein's death is described as 'a sign of a true believer' and as one of the distinct characteristics of a Shi's which distinguishes them from the general Muslim population.[14] Therefore the centrality of such pilgrimage came to be seen as being integral to the construction of the Shi'a identity.

Crystallization of Political Sensibilities

Before the Battle of Karbala took place various tribes held loose sectarian inclinations. But a tribe, which for example supported Imam Ali politically, did not necessarily come to be designated as 'Shia' and such sectarian tribal affiliations did not lead to the classification of religious identity as being exclusively either Shia or Sunni (Haider 2011: 238). Subtle sectarian identities, it must be emphasized therefore, existed primarily as a consequence of political loyalties rather than any manifest theological differences. The fact that some Muslims sided with Ali, can therefore be explained only in the terms of socio-political reasons, not on the basis of theological teachings (Momen 1985: Enayat 2005). Such socio-political influences did later however lead to seemingly superficial differences and theological bifurcation on the interpretation and implementation of the tenets of the faith (Jafri 2002).

The Battle of Karbala manifestly enhanced the solidarity amongst the Shi'a and renewed their political agency because it provided a clear vindication of Shi'ism claims against the 'injustices' of Sunni political elite against the Prophets family and underlined the 'moral corruption' and 'political repression' of these elites.[15] The symbolism of Karbala as the revolt of the oppressed against oppressors, staged against tyranny, injustice, and repression had an everlasting impact on the Shi'a psyche. In the immediate aftermath of the Karbala tragedy this renewed sense of agency constituted the prelude to a series of successful Shi'ite revolts which finally overthrew the Ummayad dynasty.

Imam Hussein's refusal to compromise with 'godlessness' and 'tyranny', with an outlook that did not 'see death but as happiness, and living with tyrants but as sorrow', saved the Muslims from having to adhere to a 'pseudo-religion'.[16] After Karbala, Imam Hussein has emerged as the 'most revered and meritorious martyr' the world has produced and in this sense 'he lost the battle but won the campaign'[17] and his martyrdom has possibly brought a paradigmatic shift in the political consciousness of the Shi'a community and left a lasting impact on the construction of the Shi'i identity. Given these aspects it seems clear that the tragedy of Karbala is a central narrative in the Shi'a history that manifests, informs and consolidates the Shi'a identity.

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Imamate as the Fulfillment of Divine Justice

by Zeynab Ali

Introduction

The concepts of Divine Justice (Adl) and the doctrine of the Imamate are fundamental aspects of Sh'ism. In this context when one analyzes the relationship between the two theological beliefs its seems impossible to articulate an argument for the primacy of one over the other. Imamate complements and actualizes the goal of Divine Justice, and in this sense it is the fulfillment of God's Justice. However without an Imam to implement it, the promised justice would remain unfullfilled. In Shi'ism ideology, the world without an Imam is not a real possibility because God is eternally just and justice is inherent in his essence.18 The concepts of Divine Justice ('Adl) and Imamate are therefore both crucial to Shi'ism.

The Visceral Connection Between Adl and Imamate

The precept of Divine Justice is intricately connected with the concept of Imamate. In Shi'a theological precepts the world is a reality based on 'equity and justice' where 'justice (adl) means putting everything in its place' and inversely injustice would destroy the equilibrium.19 Everything in this universe is a necessary existant and there is a causal connection between rationality and justice. Given this, human beings have a purpose in this world as rationl beings (mukallaf) to respond to God by worshipping him. In this sense the Imamate is a consequence of the Divine Justice, where the Imams become a channel of divine guidance and manifestations of God's grace (lutf) for mankind. This divine grace (lutf), by making it incumbent upon God to have an infallible guide among mankind, provides the necessity of a supreme religious leadership in the form of Imamate. Thus the concept of the infallibility of the Imam (isma) is conjoined with the principle of the grace of God (lutf).20

Shi'ism, following Imamic traditions, also upholds that justice begins with the assertion of one's agency or exercise of will. However in Shiism there is no ultimate pre-destination or absolute human discretion, there being a sense of relativism in the argument about pre-determinism and 'the truth seems to lie between the two extremes'. In a paradoxical way then God has ordained free will for man. Whenever man wills an action , Divine power brings into effect its attainment, so that man determines his destiny by his own decisions.21 The actions which proceed from humans, all take place by their own power and choice, and are therefore their responsibility. In other words 'he is not forced to act as he does, but he can act and he can refrain from acting'.22 If humans have no power over their own actions, then God would be 'the most unjust of unjust beings' because he would be willing these actions and setting human beings up for failure. 23

However, the Quran states that there is no possibility of injustice by God because God is just and justice is a divine attribute. This is accepted through the concept of Tanzih, which proclaims that Allah is free of all defects and failures. When man makes the decision to devote himself to God, he is aided by God and without the guidance of the Imams cannot realize this purpose. Since man will be judged for the decision he makes himself, God helps him by providing the Imams for guidance at all times. Because of lutf man is able to tell the difference between good and evil. The principle of the intelligibility of good and evil, the concepts of Amr (to command good) and Nahi (forbid evil) are central to Divine Justice and are the foundation of Shia beliefs. Imamate is an incumbent kindness which complements this aspect of Divine Justice because it ultimately 'brings the creature near to obedience and keeps him far from disobedience'.24

The Characteristics of Imamate

According to Shi'ism, God has delegated to the Imams the 'spiritual rulership' over the whole world, which must always have a leader and guide. Imam's are those who have supreme leadership over affairs of religion and mundane life' and are sent to 'give proofs', 'protect' and 'guide' men at all times.25

The concept of Imamate is derived from the niyaba of the Prophet, where the Imam is the Prophet's representative who interprets the Divine message that was revealed through the Prophet. The Imam is the repository of God's knowledge and is the interpreter of His revelation as the wasi (legatee) of the Prophet. The Imam thus has a universal authority (riyasa) in 'the things of religion and of the world'.[26] The Imam is also a wali (friend of God) and his wilaya, the reality of the imamate was defined as the esoteric aspect of prophecy, with the Imam being an 'initiator into mystical truth'.[27] Among the foremost characteristics that the Imam posesses is therefore the intimate knowledge of the prophetic message, along with exceptional knowledge and ability.

The idea of the Imamate therefore rests on the idea of a permanent need for a divinely guided Imam who could act as the authoritative teacher of mankind in all religious matters. In this sense the Imams are also a proof of God on earth (hujja) and without them the earth will perish and descend into chaos.[28] Imamate is a succession (khilâfa) from God and the Prophet, and it cannot be acquired except by the word of them both. So therefore for the Shi'i the Imams have to be designated through divine appointment (nass).

In Shi'ism the notion of authority stemming from the Divine Justice and it's consequent guidance of mankind was consolidated into a principle of absolute and infallible authority. Infallibility and immunity to sin (isma) is one of the salient aspects of Imamate and is a matter which 'no one perceives but God himself'.[29] Immunity to sin is 'a hidden kindness' which God shows to the Imams, as is revealed in the Quran and understood by the Shi'ites that 'God has removed all impurity and made them absolutely pure'.[30]

Imamate is therefore a central point of reference around which Shi'ism defines itself. Imamate is also what distinguishes Shi'ism from other sects in Islam. The Shi'i outlook of the concept of imamate diverged from its Sunni counterpart because it was at marked variance with the Sunni notions of political leadership. For the Shi'a the Imam is the supreme leader of the community and there is no separation of temporal and religious authority. For the Shi'a the Imams are also leaders without attachment to the world and do not seek worldly gains. [31]

The Significance of the Imamate

As can be seen from the above argument Divine Justice would never have been able to be actualized or its objective be fulfilled because man being responsible for his own actions would need to interpret God's directives to lead a meaningful life. The Imams, as markers of God's graciousness, aid mankind in seeking and deciphering such interpretations. Like Prophethood, the Imamate has been endowed with cosmic significance as a mechanism of mediation between God and man. Importantly humanity can be without a prophet but never without an Imam. From the Shi'a perspective human beings are always in need of a leader and an organized society needs a guide to avoid disorder and chaos. Since Islam is a religion predominantly concerned with social life it needs an ever present leader who can navigate through the pitfalls of society.[32] Hence the necessity of the Imamate.

Reason cannot fully explain revelation without the Imam's intercession because there is a difference between the tafsir (exegesis) and taawil (the hidden meaning) of the revelation. The Imams possess an insight into the esoteric meaning with their ability of taawil and the way in which the Ahl-Bayt interpret the Quran is 'nothing other than the way of the Quran'.33 In this context the Shi'a seek to understand religion not only through reason but also through the guidance and interpretations made accessible through revelation, Prophecy and Imamate.34

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Fuzto be Rabil Kaaba

By God of Kaaba, I have succeeded!

Keys to the Treasures1

Illustrious advice in the form of a Will, from Imam Ali, The Commander of the Faithful, to his son, the Prince of Paradise

These exhortations are from a father who realizes the mortality of life, who is getting old, who has patiently borne reverses and calamities, who hates inordinate desires and has overcome them ..... to his son who is young, who has the desire of leading the world to sober ways of thinking and better ways of life ..... who is mortal and is bound by nature to follow the steps of all mortals .....

It was neither selfishness nor self–esteem nor any mental luxury that led me to impart this advice, but it was the sincere desire of making you see the world as I found it, look at the realities of lives as I looked at them, and do the right thing at the right time and right place as it should be done, which made me write down these exhortations to you. You will not find in them anything but truth and realities.

My dear son! You are part of my body and soul and whenever I look at you I feel as if I am looking at myself. If any calamity befalls you, I feel as if it has befallen me. Your death will make me feel as if it was my own death. Your affairs are to me like my own affairs. Therefore, I committed these pieces of advice

to paper. I want you to take care of them, to pay attention to them and to guard them well.

My first and foremost advice to you, my son, is to fear Allah. Be His obedient servant. Keep His thought always fresh in your mind. Be attached to and carefully guard the principles which connect you with Him.

Accept good exhortations and refresh your mind with them. Adopt piety and kill your inordinate desires with its help. Build your character with the help of true faith in religion and Allah. Take care to provide well for your future abode. Do not barter away eternal blessing for pleasures of this mortal and fleeting world.

Develop the habit of patience against sufferings, calamities and adversities. This virtue of patience is one of the highest values of morality and nobility of character and it is the best habit which one can develop. Trust in Allah and let your mind seek His protection in every calamity and suffering because you will thus entrust yourself and your affairs to the Best Trustee and to the Mightiest Guardian.

Ask as much of His Blessings and seek as much of His Guidance as you can. Try to understand my exhortation, ponder over them deeply; do not take them lightly and do not turn away from them because the best knowledge is that which benefits the listener.

Through these pieces of advice I have tried to bring home to you the value of honest–living and high–thinking and the dangers of a vicious and sinful life, I have taken care to cover and guard every aspect of your life as it is the duty of a kind, considerate and loving father.

My dear son! The Lord who is the Master of death is also the Master of life. The Creator is the Annihilator and the One who annihilates has the power to bring everything back again to existence. The One who sends calamities has also the power to protect you from them. Remember that this world is working under the laws ordained by Him.

Thus, the best out of these pieces of advice of mine are those which tell you to fear Allah and the best thing for you to do is to seek guidance of One who has created you, Who maintains and nourishes you, Who has given you a balanced mind and a normally working body. Your invocations should be reserved for Him only, your requests and solicitations should be to Him alone and you should only be afraid of Him.

Be it known to you, my son, that nobody has given mankind such detailed information about Allah as our Holy Prophet. I advise you to have faith in his teachings, to make him your leader and to accept his guidance for your salvation.

People who have carefully studied the condition of life and the world, pass their days as if they know that they are travellers, who have to leave a place which is famine–stricken, unhealthy and uncongenial, and they have to proceed towards lands which are fertile, congenial, and where there is abundant provision of all comforts and pleasures. They do not refuse to bear any discomfort and do not grudge any

expenditure by way of giving out alms and charities, and helping the poor and the needy.

Remember my son, that before you too is a hazardous journey. The journey is not only long and tedious, it is also very exhausting and you will need helpers and sustenance to reach the end of the journey – the Day of Judgement. But remember not to overload yourself with these provisions, for if this load is more than what you can conveniently bear then your journey will be very painful and tiresome.

If you find around you such poor, needy and destitute people who are willing to carry your load for you as far as the Day of Judgement then consider this to be a blessing. Engage them and pass your burden on to them. Thus relieve yourself from the heavy responsibility and liability of submitting an account on the Day of Judgement of how you have made use of His Bounties and thus you may arrive at the end of the journey, light and fresh, and with ample provision for you there.

Have as many weight–carriers as you can so that you may not miss them when you very badly need them. Remember that all you give out in charities and good deeds are like loans which will be paid back to you. Therefore, when you are wealthy and powerful, make use of your wealth and power in such a way that you get all that back on the Day of Judgement, when you will be poor and helpless.

Realize this truth, my son, that the Lord who owns and holds the treasures of Paradise and the earth has given you permission to seek and ask for them and He has promised to grant your prayers. He has told you to pray for His Favours that they may be granted to you and to ask for His Blessings that they may be bestowed upon you. He has not appointed guards to prevent your prayers reaching Him. Nor is there any need for anybody to intercede before Him on your behalf.

He hears you whenever you call Him. He accepts your prayer whenever you pray to Him. Invoke Him to grant you your heart's desire, lay before Him the secrets of your heart, tell Him about all the calamities that have befallen you and misfortunes which face you, and beseech His help to overcome them. You may invoke His Help and Support in difficulties and distress.

Think over it that by simply granting you the privilege of praying for His Favours and Mercies, He has handed over the keys of His treasures to you. Whenever you are in need you should pray and He will confer His Bounties and Blessings. But sometimes you will find that your requests are not immediately granted, then you need not be disappointed because the grant of prayers often rests with the true purpose and intention of the implorer..... Sometimes your prayers are turned down, and this is also in your interest; because you often, unknowingly, ask for things that are really harmful to you.....

Be it known to you, my son, that you cannot have every wish of yours granted. You cannot expect to escape death, and you are passing through your days of life as others before you have passed. Therefore, control your expectations, desires and cravings. Be moderate in your demands. Earn your livelihood through scrupulously honest means. Be contented with what you get honestly and honourably and do not bring down your self–respect, for nothing in this world can compensate for the loss of self–respect, nobility and honour.

Take care, my son! Be warned that you do not make yourself a slave of anybody. Allah has created you a freeman. Do not sell away your freedom in return of anything. There is no actual gain and real value in benefits that you derive by selling your honour and self-respect or by subjugating yourself to disgrace and insults. There is no real good in wealth and power that you acquire by foul means.

Know it well, son, that there are two kinds of livelihood: one which you are searching for and the other which follows you. It will reach you even if you do not try to obtain it. Remember that the little which is given to you by Allah is going to be more useful and serviceable to you and is more honourable and respectable than what is granted by man in abundance. And what can a man give you but part of that which Allah has granted him? To guard what you already possess is better than to beg from others. The bitterness of disappointment and poverty is in reality sweeter than the disgrace of begging.

The Merciful Lord has ordered that every poor deed of yours will be counted as one and a good deed and pious action will be rewarded tenfold. He has left the door of repentance open and if you repent He neither taunts you nor betrays you though you may fully deserve both. He accepts your penitence and pardons you and He never grudges His Forgiveness nor refuses His Mercy. Infact, He has decreed repentance as a virtue and pious deed.

Do good to your brother when he is bent upon doing harm to you. When he ignores or declines to recognize the kinship, befriend him, go to his help and try to maintain relations. If he is miserly with you and refuses to help you, be generous with him and support him financially. If he is cruel with you, be kind and considerate with him. If he harms you accept his excuses. Behave with him as if he is a master and you are a slave, and he is a benefactor and you are a beneficiary.

The greatest achievement of your character is that the hostility of your brother against you does not overcome the consideration and friendship you feel towards him, and his ill-treatment of you does not overbalance your kind treatment to him.

Treat the members of your family with love and respect because they act as wings with which you fly and as hands which support you and fight for you. They are people towards whom you turn when you are in trouble and in need.

Be it known to you, my son, that you are created for the next world and not for this. You are born to die and not to live forever. Your stay in this world is transient. You live in a place which is subject to decay and destruction. It is a place where you will have to be busy getting ready for the next world. It is a road on which you are standing. Death is following you. You cannot run away from it. However hard you may try to avoid it, it is going to catch you sooner or later.

Therefore take care that it may not catch you unaware or when you are not prepared for it, and no chance is left to you to repent the vices and sins committed and to undo the harm done by you. If death catches you unawares, then you are eternally condemned. Therefore, my dear son, always keep three things in mind: death, your deeds and the life in the Hereafter. In this way you will always be ready to

face death and it will not catch you unawares.

My dear son! After having given these pieces of advice to you I entrust you to the Lord. He will help, guide and protect you in this world and the Hereafter. I beseech Him to take you under His protection in both the worlds.

Dua for The Spreading of the Earth Day

*A section of the dua, recommended for Zi'qad 25, the day referred to as 'Dahwal Arz' or 'The Spreading of the Earth' Day, when the earth was laid out on the water where the Holy Kaaba is now situated and spread out from there. Refer to (79:30). Sheikh Abbas Qummi has copied this dua from Imam Ali Reza in his book 'Keys to Heavens' through the source of Hasan bin Ali Washa. (Aulia is plural of 'wali')

*****

O' God Who spread the earth below the Kaaba ....

I ask You on this blessed Day .....

Sanction for me the visit of Your Aulia,

At the time when my soul departs,

When they lower me in the grave,

When my activities cease and

When my life is concluded.

God remember me when I lie deep below the surface

For a long period of trial,

And when people who tend to forget have forgotten me

Offer me an eminent place to stay.

Place me amongst the friends of Your Aulia

And keep me with Your selected and well liked people.

Let my meeting with You be totally blessed,

And permit me to do good deeds before my time is up

And keep me away from sin and wrongdoing .

God help me alight on the banks of Kausar,

The Spring of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and his Aal

And there offer me a drink

That is pleasant, refreshing and aplenty

So I never feel thirsty again,

And am not barred from staying there

And am never asked to leave .....

Dua e Maqatil bin Sulayman

*Shaykh Al Kaf 'ami has copied this dua from Imam Zain ul Abideen in his book 'Balad ul Amin' through the source of Maqatil bin Sulayman. Thus it is Also referred to as : Dua e Maqatil bin Sulayman.

*****

My Allah! How should I call out to You for I am (merely) I

And how can I lose hope in You, for You are (indeed) You?

My Allah! When I do not ask of You, even then You provide,

So who should I appeal to provide for my needs?

My Allah! When I do not pray to You, even then You answer,

So who should I bank on to answer my prayers?

My Allah! When I do not beg You, even then You take pity,

So who should I beseech to take pity on me?

My Allah! Just as You parted the waters of Nile to save Musa,

I ask You to send blessings on Prophet Mohammad and his Aal

And rescue me from all difficulties

And relieve me of distress

Very soon and without any delay,

By Your Grace! By Your Mercy ! O' Most Merciful God!

1. This Advice was given by imam Ali, in the form of a Will (wasiyat) to his son, on his return from the Battle of Siffin. It is a must read for all sons, everywhere! It is listed as Letter 31, in Peak of Eloquence (Nahjul Balagha) which is a collection of sermons, letters and sayings of Imam Ali. It is presented in book form by Al Sharif Al Razi. This translation was taken from website: www.nahjulbalagha.org/ [10] . This is not the complete text of the letter and the order of some paragraphs was changed.

Aal

family, progeny, next of kin

Aal e Rasool

Prophet's next of kin

Aamil

practitioner

Abdullah

servant of God

ahl Al Bait

worthy of the House of God

Ahlul Bayt

descendents of Prophet and his Aal

Ajr

Recompense, reward

ajr e risalat

recompense for Prophethood

Al Bait

Kaaba, House of God,

Al Balad

Aleihis salaam

city of Mecca, also chapter 90 of Quran

blessed with peace

Al Fajr

chapter 89 of Quran

Al Hamd

chapter 1 of Quran

Allah

God

Allah o Akbar

Allama

God is great

title for a very learned person

Amal

practice, procedure

Amir ul Mu'mineen

Title for Imam Ali, Commander of the Faithful

Anamta

bestowed with blessings

Asool e Din

rules of religion

Asr

Time, name of early evening prayer

Ashur

Martyrdom day,10th of Moharram

Aulia

plural of wali, friends of God

Ayaat

verses of Quran

Ayat

verse of Quran

Azadari

Mourning

Azar

relative of Prophet Abraham

Bain ul Harmain

area between two holy shrines in Karbala

Bait ul Muqaddas

Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, Dome of Rock

Bani Israel

children of Israel

bara'at Istehlal

technique that expresses intention at the very start

Badr

battleground of first assault by Meccan infidels

batin

Hidden

Bibi

term of respect for women, Lady

chilla

a practice undertaken for a period of forty days

Dahwal Arz

the spreading of the Earth

darood

a prayer for blessings on Prophets and their Aal

dua

prayer, supplication

Iman

Faith

Fajr

morning, name of morning prayer

farou e Din

supplementary aspects of religion

farz

compulsory, mandatory

Firawn

Pharoah in the times of Prophet Moses

Ghadeer

place where Ali declared Maula by Prophet

Ghani

rich, self-sufficient, one of names of God

ghulam

slave, servant, assistant

Habib

loved one, title for Prophet Mohammad(pbuh)

Hadith

Tradition

Hadith al– Nabvi

Tradition of the Prophet

Hadith al– Qudsi

Tradition assosciated with God

Hadith al– Kisa

Tradition of the Cloak

Haj

Pilgrimmage to Mecca in month of Zilhaj

harf e hisar

the enclosing or restricting word

Hasnain

common name for Imams Hasan & Hussain

Hazrat

a term of respect used before a name

hisar,hisaar

Boundary

hoors

Hujjatul Islam

spouses in Heaven

Proof of Islam

Imamate

Leadership

Injeel

Bible

Innama

only, verily, no one else

Itar

Perfume

Itrat e Rasool

pure inheritors, family of the Prophet

Isa

Prophet Jesus Christ

Isha

night, night prayers

Jibrail

Angel Gabriel

Kalima

Article of faith, declaration of faith

Jihad

fighting in the way of God

Kaaba

House of God in Mecca

Kafir

infidel, non believer

Khums

one fifth (of savings for give away)

Khaleel

friend of God, title for Prophet, Abraham

Khaleelallah

Friend of God, title for Prophet, Abraham

Khatoon e Jannat

Lady of Heaven, title of Lady Fatima

Kisa

Cloak, reference to Cloak of Lady Fatima

la misla wa la nazir

no match or comparison to eminence

la ta'uddu

impossible to count

la tuh'soo

impossible to fathom

Mafateh ul Jinnan

Keys to Heavens by Sheikh Abbas Qummi

Maghzub

inflicted with wrath

Magrib

late evening, also prayer for this time

Mamun Rashid

Caliph of Baghdad, born in 786 CE

man yashri

trade, deal

Marhab

warrior who challenged Ali in Battle of Trench

Maryam

Virgin Mary

Masumeen

pure people

Maula

Master

Mehboob

loved one

Mehshar

day of Banishment

Meraj

Ascension

Milad

minbar e Hussaini

praise session for Prophet and his Aal

pulpit used for rememberance of Imam Hussain

Mu’min

Believer

Mumkin

likely to be and equally likely not to be

Musa

Prophet Moses

Moharram

Month 1 of lunar calendar

Mutahharatun

purified you

Mutahhira

clean, pure

Mutahhiraka

keep clean

Nabi

Messenger

Nahjul Balagha

book ’Peak of Eloquence’ by Al Radi

Nawafil

non mandatory, additional prayers

Nur e Moazzam

real bright light, title for last Prophet

Nuh

Prophet Noah

Nur

light, vision, insight

Prophet Younis

Prophet Jonah

Qasr

shortened, reduced

Qiam

The standing posture in prayer

Quood

The sitting posture in prayer

Quran e nataq

embodiment of the Quran, Imam Ali

quratul ain

coolant for the eye, source of bliss

Qurba

near ones, worthy relatives

Ramadan

Month 9 of lunar calendar

Ratb

soft or good

Rikat

one segment of prayer

Rooh

Spirit

Rukuh

the bending posture in prayer

Sadaat

descendents of Prophet and his Aal

Sadiq

Truthful

Safi

Chosen one, title for Prophet Adam

Sajda

prostration in prayer

Sujood

plural of sajda, several prostrations

Salam

message of peace, greeting

Sardaab

underground cellar

Saleh ul Mu’mineen

the most virtuous of all pious people

Saqlain

both the worlds

Shaban

Month 8 of the lunar calendar

Shah e Wala

King of the Sublime

Shariat

Rules of Law , rules of religion

Shahadat

martyrdom

Shawal

Month 10 of lunar calendar

Shia

those who love the Prophet and his Aal

Siraj e Munir

real bright sun, Quranic title for Last Prophet

Sunni

Followers of traditions of Last Prophet

Surah Bara'at

chapter 9 of Quran (The Immunity)

Surah Hashr

chapter 59 of Quran, (The Banishment)

Surah Ikhlas

chapter 112 of Quran, (The Unity)

Syed

Syed Al Shuhada

Leader, also term for Prophet's descendent

Leader of all martyrs

Syed ul Wasiyeen

Leader of the legatees, title for Imam Ali

Syed e Sajjad

Leader of all prostrators

Syed Shabab e Ahle Jannat

Leaders of Heaven youth, Imams Hasan & Hussain

Syed ul Anbia

Leader of all Prophets, title for Last Prophet

Syeda Nisa ul Aalimeen

taba saraah

Leader of all women , title for Lady Fatima

may God purify soil of the person's grave

Tahharake

make you pure

Tatheer

clean and pure

Tatheera

As pure as can be

Taurat

Torah

tayyammum

ablution with dust

Uhad

Battleground of second assault by infidels

Ummat

Followers

ummat e Mustafa

followers of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh)

Vajhallah

face of God

Valiallah

wali of God, ally of God

Wajib

essential, Absolute, term applicable to God only

Wasiyat

Will, irreversible wish

Wuzu

ablution with water

Yabis

dry or evil

Zabar

pronunciation mark above Arabic alphabet

Zabur

Book of Psalms, Psalms of David

Zakat

Charity

Zayr

pronunciation mark below Arabic alphabet

zibh azeem

The Great Martyrdom, (sacrifice at Karbala)

Zi'qad

Month 11 of lunar calendar

Zikr

Remembrance

Zaaleen

gone astray

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[4] https://www.al-islam.org/person/syeda-batool-shahid-zulfiqar-ali

[5] https://www.al-islam.org/library/prophethood-imamate

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