

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

We seek forgiveness from Allah
We stand witness to Allah that there is no God but Him
That Muhammad (saww) is His Slave and Messenger

Introduction

The Manner of Du'a

- According to Imam Jafar Sadiq (as), one should expose his hands towards the sky if he hopes to have his desires fulfilled. In this way he is opening his hands to receive God's beneficence. However, if a man is in fear, he should expose the back of his hands towards the sky. [*Udattua Da'i*, The Asset of Supplication page 275]
- In this way, the man is implying that God is aware of all the secrets of the world and in a language of humility he is saying: 'O God! I dare not open my hands before you; rather I have put it towards the earth out of shame and humility.'

Birth Anniversary of Imam Ridha (as)

- Imam Ridha's birth anniversary is on 11th Dzul Qa'ida. Since this was a few days ago we shall spend some time talking about the life of our Imam in this class.
- One of the famous sayings of Imam Ali Ridha (as) is: "*This world is a prison for a Mukmin and a paradise for the unbeliever.*"
This hadith is actually originally from the Holy Prophet (saww). The Imam interpreted this hadith as follows: *A true believer aspires to leave this prison of his body and his Nafs and Ruh wants to get away to the nearness of God, but those who do not believe have nothing further than their mortal lives and they aspire to make it a paradise. But in the process they create their own hell on earth for their aspirations are never ending desires for accumulating material wealth.* [Source: <http://ezsoftech.com/stories/imamraza1.asp>]
- Majilisi in Biharul Anwar v49 page 401, writes that our 8th Imam insisted on eating his meals only after the entire members of his family, young and old, servants and grooms were present. One day someone who was fonder of royal formalities than the fraternity of the Ahlul Bayt, suggested that it would be better to make separate eating arrangements for the servants. The Imam replied, "*All are created by God; Adam is their father and Eve is their mother. Everyone will be dealt with by God according to his deeds. Why should there be any discrimination in this world.*"

Merits of The Soul: Seeking Knowledge

The Definition of Knowledge

- Imam Jafar Sadiq (as) has defined knowledge as follows: “*Whatever a man learns is knowledge.*”
- When he was asked if one kind of knowledge was more important than another, he said: “*We cannot give preferences to one kind of knowledge over the other. All of them are important, but they differ in their usefulness. In our times the two most important and useful branches of knowledge are medicine and religion.*”
- He also said that a time would come when human beings would benefit from other branches of knowledge as well. Every kind of knowledge, he said, had a practical use, which depended upon time.
[Source: *The Great Muslim Scientist and Philosopher Imam Jafar Ibn Mohammad As-Sadiq* (as), translated and published by Kaukab Ali Mirza]

Seeking Knowledge is Not Less Significant Than Holy Struggle

- In Surah Tawbah 9:38, Allah swt says:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا مَا لَكُمْ اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمْ اَنْفِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَتَاَقَلْتُمْ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ اَرْضَيْتُمْ
بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْاٰخِرَةِ فَمَا مَتَّعَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٣٨﴾

O believers, what is amiss with you,
that when it is said to you, Go forth in the Way of God,
you sink down heavily to the ground ?

Are you so content with this present life, rather than the world to come?

Yet the enjoyment of this present life, compared with the world to come, is a little thing.

- It has been narrated by Ibn Abbas and others that this verse is in reference to the Battle of Tabuk. In the above verse, Allah invites people to Holy Struggle with the most intensive manner.
- However, later in verse 9:122, Allah swt says:

۞ وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ لِيَنْفِرُوْا كَافَّةً فَلَوْلَا نَفَرْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِي الدِّيْنِ
وَلِيُنذِرُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ اِذَا رَجَعُوْا اِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

It is not for the believers to go forth totally

But why should not a party of every section of them go forth, to become learned in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them, and haply they may beware ?

- In the previous verses, the Muslims were emphatically called toward Holy Struggle, and those who refused to do so were severely criticized. However, the above verse attracts the attention of the Muslims toward another important duty that they need to perform. This matter is not less significant than Holy Struggle from the point of importance, because the ordinances of Allah can be learnt.
- The verse indicates that all of the believers should not go to fight, but a group of them ought to remain in order to learn the religious teachings and to be learned in religion, so that when the strivers came back to them, they could teach and warn them so that they would be in awe of Allah and observe the practice of religion.
- The above verse clearly indicates the importance of knowledge in Islam. It implies that the value of learning and teaching is not less than the value of Holy Struggle.
- Imam Jafar Sadiq (as) has said: “God will gather all people in one place on the resurrection day and will weigh their deeds. The blood of the martyrs will be weighed against the pen of the learned, and the pen of the learned will be superior to the blood of martyrs.”
[*Mishkat al Anwar* chapter 8 Hadith # 705]

The *Jahil* (Ignorant) Can Be Likened to An *A'rabi* (Bedouin)

- Imam Jafar Sadiq (as) once said: “One who does not go forth to become learned in religion is indeed an *A'rabi* (Bedouin).” [*Usul Al Kafi* kitab fadl al ‘ilm vol 1 page 78]
- The reason why Imam Sadiq (as) made the analogy of an ignorant person with a Bedouin is because most of the Bedouins, who lived in deserts outside of Medina, were stubborn and more intense than the citizens settled inside Medina. The Quran in various verses rebuked the Bedouins because of their hypocrisy.
- For instance, in the Holy Quran verse 49:14, Allah swt says:

﴿ قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ ءَامَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ

وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾

The Bedouins say, we believe

Say: You do not believe, rather say, “We surrender”; for belief has not yet entered your hearts.

If you obey God and his Messenger, He will not diminish you anything of your works.

God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate.

- Furthermore, in verse 9:97 of the Holy Quran, Allah swt says:

﴿ الْأَعْرَابُ أَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَنِفَاقًا وَأَجْدَرُ أَلَّا يَعْلَمُوا حُدُودَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ

﴿ حَكِيمٌ ﴾

The Bedouins are more stubborn in unbelief and hypocrisy,
and apter not to know the bounds of what God has sent down on His Messenger;
And God is All-knowing, All-wise.

- The above verses make the point that (most of) the Bedouins had a lower standard from the point of understanding the ordinances of Allah.¹ This is the reason why Imam Sadiq (as) likened a *jahil* with an *A'rabi*.

Surah Al-Anam 6:149

- In Surah Al-Anam 6:149, Allah swt says:

قُلْ فَلِلَّهِ الْحُجَّةُ الْبَلِيغَةُ فَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَيْنَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

To God belongs the argument conclusive
For had He willed, He would have guided you all.

- It has been narrated from Imam Kazim (as) who said: “Allah has two proofs upon people: The outwards proof and the inwards proof. The outward proof contains of Prophets, Messengers and the Immaculate Imams; and the inward proof consists of intellect (and thoughts).” [*The Light of the Holy Qur'an* Vol 5 page 273]
- It is narrated that once someone asked Imam Jafar Sadiq (as), the meaning of the above verse. The Imam then explained the verse as follows: “On the day of reckoning, Allah will ask his servants. ‘Are you learned?’ If they answer ‘Yes’, then Allah will ask, ‘Do you practice what you preach?’ (This is because a true ‘Alim is one who practices what he teaches, as otherwise he cannot claim to be learned.) On the other hand, if the servant of Allah on the day of reckoning answers, ‘No, I am not learned.’, then Allah will question, ‘Why did you not acquire knowledge to practice it?’ [*Biharul Anwar* kitab al ‘ilm Vol 1 page 178]
Thus the final and conclusive argument belongs to Allah, irrespective of whether the person is learned or ignorant.

Only the Ones Endowed with Knowledge Truly Fear Allah

- Amongst his servants, only those endowed with knowledge truly fear Allah for their understanding regarding the attributes and ordinances of Allah is stronger. Fear here should not be interpreted literally. On the other hand, when we say that we should ‘fear’ Allah, we are using the word ‘fear’ in the sense of honouring Allah. A person with more knowledge can better honour Allah than someone who is less endowed with knowledge. Hence, it is correct to argue that the more knowledge you have, the higher will be your *maghrifat* for you will be aware of the responsibilities and accountabilities that come along with knowledge. Surely, with more knowledge come more responsibilities.

¹ However, not all Bedouins were hypocrites and a minority was true believers. For example Allah swt says that He is merciful on the Bedouins who believe in Allah and the last day, and spend in the path of Allah and say their prayers. (See verse 9:99)

- An analogue here can be made with a person in an office who has a higher rank or position than junior employees. The higher ranked employee will have more responsibilities because of the trust that the employer will have in his abilities compared to lower ranked employees.
- Similarly, Allah elevates the position of those who have faith and knowledge since they have better *maghrifat* of Allah swt.
- This is the reason why Allah swt says in verse 35:28 of the Holy Quran:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالْذَوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ كَذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

Only Allah's knowledgeable servants fear Him. Allah is Majestic and All-pardoning.

- Further in verse 58:11, Allah swt says:

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَأَفْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ
أَنْشُرُوا فَأَنْشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ



Allah will raise the position of the believers and of those who have received knowledge.

Seeking Knowledge is Incumbent on All Muslims

- The Holy Prophet said: “*Learning is incumbent on Muslim men and women and Allah loves the students.*” [*Mishkat al Anwar* chapter 8 Hadith # 684]
- One of the sayings of Imam Hasan (as) is: “*Teach your knowledge to others and (try to) learn yourself the knowledge of others*” [*Bihar-ul-Anwar*, vol. 78, p. 111]
- Imam Ali (as) said: “*Surely, the completion of religion is due to the obtaining of knowledge and acting on it (accordingly), and beware that the obtaining of knowledge is more obligatory for you than earning wealth.*” [*Usul-ul-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 23]
- Imam Baqir (as) on the authority of Rasulullah has advised us that we should either be learned or be a student. Further, we should not waste our time in fun and frolic. [*Mishkat al Anwar* chapter 8 Hadith # 681]
- Imam Baqir (as) once said: “*I will certainly punish any shia youth who is brought to me and who has not acquired religious knowledge.*” [*Mishkat al Anwar* chapter 8 Hadith # 685]

- A firm conviction of Imam Jafar Sadiq (as) was that learning of science and literature is the personal and social duty of every Muslim if not his religious duty. This is because science and literature would not only enrich and strengthen Shias, but they would make the Muslim nation as a whole, stronger than other nations of the world. [Source: *The Great Muslim Scientist and Philosopher Imam Jafar Ibn Mohammad As-Sadiq (as)*, translated and published by Kaukab Ali Mirza]

The Importance of Arranging and Attending *Majlis 'Alim*

- A man went to see the prophet and said,
“O’ Prophet of God! When the visit to ‘majlis ‘alim’ is concurrent with a funeral procession which one do you prefer to attend?”

Rasulullah said,

“If there are some people to participate in the funeral procession, I prefer to go visit the ‘majlis ‘alim’ since it is better than attending a thousand funeral processions, and visiting a thousand patients, and worshipping a thousand nights, and fasting for a thousand days, and giving a thousand dirham in charity, and going to the unobligatory pilgrimage a thousand times, and attending a thousand unobligatory wars in the way of Allah using your wealth and life. How can all these equal participating in meeting an ‘alim? Do you not know Allah is obeyed by means of knowledge? And that He is worshipped through knowledge? The good of this world and Hereafter is accompanied by knowledge, and the wickedness of this world and the Hereafter is accompanied by ignorance,”

[*Mishkat al Anwar* chapter 8 Hadith # 700]

- In another *riwayat*, Imam Sadiq (as) on the authority of Rasulullah has said:
“Uff! (Meaning that) it is disgusting for every Muslims who do not allocate a day in a week to enquire and become learned in religion.” [*Biharul Anwar* kitab al ‘ilm Vol 1 page 176]
- According to hadith of the Prophet:
“Sitting an hour in a learned gathering is:
 - ❑ better in the eyes of God than a 1000 nights in each of which a 1000 prayers are performed;
 - ❑ and better than engaging in battle for the sake of God on 1000 occasions;
 - ❑ or better than reciting the whole of the Quran 12000 times;
 - ❑ or better than a whole year of worship during which one fasts on all days and spends the night in prayer.

The Prophet further said:

- ❑ “If one leaves one’s house with the intention of gaining knowledge:
- ❑ for every step that he takes, God shall bestow upon him the reward for a Prophet;
- ❑ and the reward accorded to a 1000 martyrs of [the battle of] Badr;
- ❑ and for every word that he hear or writes, a city shall be set aside for him in Paradise.

[Quoted from *Jami’s as Sa’adah*, by Muhammad Mahdi ibn Abi Dzarr an Naraq]

Imam Ali on Knowledge

- Imam Ali (as) used to say: “O seeker of knowledge, knowledge has many merits. (If you imagine it to be a human being then) its head is humbleness, its eye is freedom from envy, its

*ear is understanding, its tongue is truthfulness, its memory is research, its heart is good intention, its intellect is the knowledge (ma`rifah) of things and matters, its hand is compassion, its foot is visiting the learned, its resolution is integrity, its wisdom is piety, its abode is salvation, its helmsman is well-being, its mount is faithfulness, its weapon is softness of speech, its sword is satisfaction (ridha), its bow is tolerance, its army is discussion with the learned, its wealth are refined manners, its stock is abstinence from sins, its provision for journey is virtue, its drinking water is gentleness, its guide is Divine guidance, and its companion is the love of the elect.” [Al-Kulayni, **al-Kafi**, kitab fadl al-‘ilm, bab al-nawadir, hadith # 2]*

- Imam Ali (as) said: “*There are three signs of a knowledgeable person: Knowledge, Forbearance and Silence*” [Al-Majlisi, **Bihal al-Anwar**, vol. 2, p. 59]
- Imam Ali (as) comparing knowledge with wealth said: “*Knowledge is better than wealth because it protects you while you have to guard wealth. It decreases if you keep on spending it but the more you make use of knowledge, the more it increases. What you get through wealth disappears as soon as wealth disappears but what you achieve through knowledge will remain even after you.*” [Quoted from **Nahj ul-Balagh**]
- Imam Ali (as) said “ There are four groups of people who help to maintain this world;
 - Active ‘alims who put their knowledge into practice.
 - Rich people who are not greedy to aid the religious people with their wealth.
 - Poor people who do not trade their Hereafter for the world.
 - Ignorant people who are not so proud that they do not learn.[**Mishkat al Anwar** chapter 8 Hadith # 706]

C o n c l u s i o n

- The importance of seeking knowledge cannot be overemphasised in Islam. Indeed, Islamic revelation started with the word ‘iqra’ which means ‘read’.
- The actions of *jahil* would increase corruption more than they would offer any improvement. A *jahil* can be likened to a lost traveler. The more he travels, the further away he gets from his destination.
- The Holy Prophet said: “One who proceeds on a path in the pursuit of knowledge:
 - God makes him proceed on a path to the Garden (Paradise).
 - Verily, the angels spread their wings for the seekers of knowledge out of delight.
 - Every creature of the heaven and the earth asks forgiveness for the seeker of knowledge, even the fish in the sea.
 - The merit of the *alim* (the learned) over the *abid* (the devout) is like the merit of the moon over the stars on a full-moon night.
 - The learned are the heirs of the Prophets, for the Prophets did not leave behind a legacy of wealth but that of knowledge. So whoever partakes of it derives a plenteous benefit.[Quoted from **al-Wafi**; part 3 p. 40 (as quoted from *al-Kafi*)]

Mind Blowing Story

Imam Ridha (as) is also known as Imam-e-Zaamin (as)
(Zaamin means "The Guarantor")

One day when Imam Ridha (as) was on his historical journey from Madina to Marw (Khurasan), while in a jungle the Holy Imam (as) came across a hunter who was about to kill a deer. The deer was trying to get away and when she saw Holy Imam (as), she said something to him. Holy Imam (as) asked the hunter to free the deer so that she could go and feed her little baby deer who were very hungry. Imam Ridha (as) also told the hunter that once the deer had fed her babies she would come back.

The hunter allowed the deer to go because Holy Imam (as) had told him to, but he did not think the deer will come back. But Imam Ridha (as) waited with the hunter until the deer returned with her young ones. The hunter was amazed on witnessing this miraculous event and he set the deer free as a mark of respect for Imam Ridha (as). After this historical event Imam Ridha (as) became famous as Imam Zaamin (as).

The famous artist of the contemporary world, Ustad Mahmud Farshchiyan has depicted this historical event in this beautiful masterpiece iconograph entitled "Zaamin-e-Aahu" (The Guarantor of the Deer). [Source: <http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/imamraza1.asp>]

Disclaimer:

In this tafseer class, there might be shortcomings in imparting the knowledge of the tafseer. If there is any information that requires correction, please do not hesitate to let us know via e-mail:

jaafari_tafseer_committee@yahoo.com.sg. Allah knows best.