

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

Continuation of Tafseer on Ikhlas Sincerity or purity of actions

Reality of Ikhlas

- We learnt from last week's Tafseer class that the intention behind performing an action is important and that we should do good deeds not to show off but to attain nearness to Allah swt.
- Furthermore, **Ikhlas is also subsequent to action**. One must exercise vigilance as it sometimes happens that man carries out an action faultlessly without any shortcoming and performs it without *riya'* (showing off) or *`ujb* (self-love) but after the action he becomes afflicted with *riya'* through mentioning it to others. Hence as Imam Baqir (as) said, "*Perseverance in an action is more difficult than the act itself.*"
- This point has also been stressed by Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as). Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as), while explaining the utterance of God Almighty in Surah Al-Mulk [67:2],

لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

That He might try you (to see) which of you is fairest in works

said, "*It does not mean one of you whose deeds are more numerous but one who is more rightful in his conduct, and this rightness is nothing but fear of God and sincerity of intention (niyyah) and fear.*"

- Then the Imam (as) added: "*To persevere an action until it becomes sincere is more difficult than (performing) the action itself, and sincerity of action lies in this that you should not desire anyone to praise you for it except God Almighty, and intention supersedes action. Lo, verily, intention is action itself.*"
- Then the Imam recited the Quranic Surah Al-Israa [17:84],

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلَاتِهِ

Say: everyone acts in accordance with his character (shakilatihi)

Imam Jafar Sadiq (as) then explained that in the above verse *shakilah* means *niyyah*.

[Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, kitab *al-iman wa al-kufr*, bab *al-iklas*, hadith #4]

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- Thus the reality of *Ikhlas* is such that it requires sincerity of intention, action and then perseverance on it is the highest station of love and servitude to God.
- The honourable `arif and the wise wayfarer, Khwajah `Abd Allah al-Ansari (qs) says: **“Ikhlas means purging action of all impurities.”** And the *impurities* mean desire to please oneself and other creatures.

Battle of Khandaq: The demonstration of Ikhlas during battle

- During the battle of Khandaq, Amr Ibn Abiwud, a famous warrior of his time, jumped the moats (*khandaq*) and challenged the Muslims. Amr called for battle; nobody responded; he was considered equal to one thousand warriors. History accounts state that all the Muslims were as though birds were sitting on their heads: they were too afraid to raise their heads.
- Three times did the Holy Prophet (saww) exhort the Muslims to give battle to Amr. Three times it was only Ali (as) who stood up. In the third time, the Holy Prophet (saww) allowed Ali (as) to go. When Ali (as) was going to the battlefield, the Holy Prophet (saww) said:
The whole faith is going to fight against the whole infidelity
- Imam Ali (as) invited Amr to accept Islam, or to return to Mecca, or to come down from his horse since our Imam (as) had no horse and was on foot. Amr alighted from his horse and a fierce battle ensued. For a while, so much dust covered both warriors that nobody knew what was going on.
- During the midst of the battle, the Imam (as) gained advantage over the giant, and Amr fell down. Imam Ali (as) got on top of his chest to finish him off. When Imam Ali (as) was on top of the chest of the enemy, Amr spat on the Imam’s face. Imam Ali (as) at once got off even though he could have killed him on the spot. Later when Amr got up, Ali (as) killed him with one stroke off his sword.
- After the battle, when Imam Ali (as) was asked why he did not kill his enemy when he first had the chance, Ali (as) replied that if he had killed him after his enemy had spat at him then his action could have been motivated by personal vengeance. However, Imam Ali (as) wanted his actions to be only for the sake of Allah rather than be motivated by personal objectives. This incident thus demonstrates how Imam Ali (as), even during the midst of battle, ensured that the intentions behind his actions were pure and sincere and only for the sake of Allah. We should also learn from this incident and should try hard to ensure that the motivation behind our good deeds is to attain the satisfaction of Allah rather than to achieve any personal hallmarks.
- It should thus not be surprising that the Holy Prophet (saww) after the battle of Khandaq said:
Verily, one stroke of Ali in the battle of Khandaq
is better than the worship of all human beings and jinns,
up to the Day of Resurrection.

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- Thus the spirit of Ali's stroke is superior to all acts of worship. It is this spirit which gives the acts of a true believer their proper meaning and significance. Outwardly the acts performed by the polytheists and the monotheists, the idolaters and these who do not worship the idols, look alike. Apparently there is no difference in them. Abu Sufyan also used to offer prayers. Mu'awiyah was himself the Imam of Congregational prayers. They performed their religious acts like others. It is the spirit of prayer that accords sublimity to it. If the spirit is there, prayer is a devotional act. Otherwise it is nothing more than a mere show and a fraud.

The four directions from which Satan attacks

- In the Holy Quran Surah Al-A'raf [7:16-17], it is stated:

قَالَ قَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
ثُمَّ لَأَتِيَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ

Said he (Satan): Now, for Thy perverting me,

I shall surely sit in ambush for them on Thy straight path.

Then I shall come on them from **before them** and from **behind them**,
from **their right** hands and **their left** hands.

Thou wilt not find most of them thankful.

Thus from the above verse, it is clear that Satan vowed to attack the creation of Allah like a predator attacking its prey.

- Imam Muhammad Baqir (as) explains the meaning of front, behind, left and right (the four directions from which Satan will attack) in the following hadith:

Front: Shows the coming world which man has in front of him simple and hollow to Satan.

Behind: Invites people to gathering properties and massing wealth and to niggardliness concerning the payment of the compulsory alms and to abandon in favor of children and inheritors.

Right: Spoils the spiritual affairs in man's view by creating doubts and dubious things.

Left: Pretend the material pleasures and lusts beautiful in the view of man.

[*Majma'ul-Bayan*, Vol 4, pg 403 & Tafsir-ul- Burhan, tradition No 5]

- Thus if we are not vigilant enough, then our good deeds can be converted to vices.

Practical points on how to preserve Ikhlas

1. If you have done some good actions solely to please God, helped someone or are performing obligatory or supererogatory acts of worship then know that you can never be secure from the evil of Satan and your lowly self (*nafs al-ammara*) until the end of your life.

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2. You must exercise vigilance, as your low self may prompt you to make a verbal mention of it in front of your friends or acquaintances, or to express it in the way of a subtle hint without directly mentioning it. For instance, if you are regularly observing night prayers, your low self may prompt you to pass a hint by speaking about the good or bad weather conditions at daybreak or about supplications or the call for *fajr* prayers, thus polluting your act of worship with *riya*. You must, thus resist all such tendencies.
3. You must keep a watch over yourself, like a kind physician or nurse, and not let the rebellious self get out of control; for a moment of neglect may give it the opportunity to break its reins and lead your sincere actions into ruin. Purification of intention from all levels of duality (*shirk*) and showing-off (*riya*), constant vigilance over it, and its perseverance in purity makes up a difficult task.
4. Try to remind yourself of your duties and judge your intention and actions in the light of Surah al A'raf [6:162] of the Holy Qur'an:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Say: "Truly my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

5. And as long as you have egoism and self-seeking, love of office and position, even if you take a step for the acquisition of divine knowledge or spiritual excellences, these will be ultimately sought for selfish ends. God-seeking and self-seeking cannot go together. Rather, if God is sought for the sake of the self, the ultimate goal is the self and the ego. [Al-Khumayni, *Forty Hadith*, chapter 20, p.8]

Conclusion

- In conclusion, the first step in the journey towards God is abandonment of self-love and crushing the head of egoism under one's foot. To the extent that one succeeds in purging his or her heart of self-love, the love of God shall enter it to the same extent and it shall also be purified of latent *shirk* (egoism).
- According to a Hadith from Prophet Mohammad as, "The person who devotes himself sincerely to God for forty days, streams of wisdom will flow from his heart to his tongue." [Al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthur*, vol.2, p. 237]

Diseases of the Soul Pretending virtuousness (Riya`)

What is Riya` ?

- *Riya'* means to falsely make oneself appear to be virtuous, good natured or a true believer before people for the sake of earning their respect and admiration, or for the purpose of gaining a good reputation among them.

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- It differs from hypocrisy (*nifaaq*) in that a hypocrite feigns integrity, uprightness, virtue, honesty and piety without sincere intention of acquiring these traits for the sake of God, while a person with *riya* acquires these good traits for the sake of pleasing God - however, he later performs good actions for the sake of gaining respect and good reputation among people.

Surah al Kahfi [18:110]

- In Surah Kahfi [18:110], Allah swt has said:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُمُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

Say (Prophet Muhammad saww): I am only a mortal the like of you;

it is revealed to me that your God is One God

So let him, who hopes for the encounter with his Lord, work righteousness,
and not associate with his Lord's service anyone.

- Thus in the above verse, Allah swt has stated that whosoever is desirous of meeting his Creator, he should perform virtuous deeds and should not ascribe any partner to God in his worship. Only then his *ibadah* be *amalan shalihan*.
- Once someone asked Imam Jafar Sadiq (as) the explanation of the above verse. Imam al-Sadiq (as) replied,
'The acts of a person who performs good deeds not for the sake of being blessed with the vision of his God, but rather aiming to be considered as pious by the people, and so that people should know about his deeds [will cause that person to be] counted among polytheists who have ascribed partners to God.'
The Imam (as) continued:
'There is no one in the world who has concealed his good deeds and after a passage of time God has not revealed them. And there is no one in the world who could conceal his wicked deeds for ever, for they will be exposed by God before he passes away from the world.' [Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 453]

Example

- When Ahlul Bayt (as) fulfilled their nazar, the following verse of Surah Al-Insan 76:7-9 was revealed:

يُوفُونَ بِالَّذَرِّ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا

They fulfill vows and fear a day the evil of which shall be spreading far and wide

وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive

إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكْرًا

We only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks

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- In Surah Al-Baqarah [2:207], Allah swt states:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَؤُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

And among men is seeking the pleasure of Allah;
and Allah is Affectionate to the servants.

It is cited in *Atyab-ul-Bayan fi Tafsir-il-Qur'an* that the book called *Quayat-ul-Maram* has narrated twenty traditions, nine of which are through the Sunnite scholars and eleven of them are narrated through Shi`ah scholars, denoting that the verse under discussion was revealed on the virtue of Ali ibn Abi Thalib (as) on *laylat-ul-mabit* i.e. the night when he (as) slept in the Prophet's bed and the messenger of Allah (saww) migrated to Medina.
[*Atyab-ul-bayan*, vol. 2, p. 386]

Mind Blowing Stories

Imam Ali (as) and Gabriel

Imam Ali (as) was born in the House of God and his *shahadah* was also in the House of God. When Imam Ali (as) was attacked during *sajdah* on the 19th Ramadan, the Imam's words were, "*I have succeeded in the name of the Lord of Kaabah.*"

He was known not only for his bravery in the battle fields but also for his knowledge. Indeed, he used to say to the people to ask him (questions) and seek knowledge before they lose him.

Once when the Imam (as) was delivering a sermon in a mosque in Kufa, someone stood up and asked him a question: "*Where is Gabriel at this very moment?*"

The Imam (as) looked up and down. He look to the left and then to the right. Imam Ali (as) then said, "*You are Gabriel.*"

At that moment, the man who had asked the question turned into the angel and flew up in the sky towards heavens. Everyone was surprised to see and there were roars of *Allahu Akbar*.

Then someone asked the Imam (as), "*How did you know that he was Gabriel?*"

The Imam replied, "*When I looked up, my vision went up and penetrated the hijab towards Allah. When I looked down, my vision went down till the base of the earth. When I looked at my right and to my left, I could see all the Creation of Allah and yet I was unable to find Gabriel. Surely, the one standing in front of me had to be Gabriel.*"

[*Anwaar Annukmaniyyah Juz 1* pg 31 quoted from the book *Saluuni Qabla an Tafquduunii*]

Imam Ali (as), the teacher of Gabriel

Once when the Prophet (saww) was with Gabriel, Imam Ali (as) entered. Upon seeing Ali (as), Gabriel stood up. At that time Imam Ali (as) was very young. The Prophet (saww) asked Gabriel, “*Why did you stand up for this youth?*”

Gabriel answered, “*I stood up because Ali has the right of a teacher over me.*”

Then the Prophet (saww) asked, “*How is it that Ali has the right of a teacher over you?*”

Gabriel then explained, “*When Allah created me, He asked me what my name was, who was I and who is Him and what is His name*” He then continued, “*At that time I was bewildered and confused in silence. Then this youth, Ali Ibn Abi Thalib entered from the ‘alam of Noors and taught me the answers. He told me that I was Your humble servant named Gabriel and You are my Lord The Exalted.*”

[*Anwaar Annukmaniyyah* Juz 1 pg 15 quoted from the book *Saluuni Qabla an Tafqiduunii*]

The true *Wasi* of the Prophet (saww)

Once there were two Jews who had knowledge of the earlier Books and were reciting the *Torah* & *Suhuf* of Ibrahim. During their recitation they heard that Prophet Muhammad (saww) had passed away. One of them said that the Prophet of Allah (saww) must have appointed his successor before leaving this world. They then decided that they should go to Medina to find out who the *Wasi* of the Prophet (saww) was.

When they entered Medina, they inquired about who the Prophet’s *Wasi* was. They were referred to the first caliph. When they saw the first caliph they were unable to find the character of the *Wasi* as was mentioned in Gospel and Torah. They thought that this was not the person that they were looking for. To confirm their beliefs they asked the following questions to Abu Bakr: “*What is your relationship with the Prophet?*”

Abu Bakr replied, “*The Prophet was my son in law.*”

The Jews then asked, “*Any other relationship?*”

The caliph replied, “*No.*”

The Jews then asked again, “*Where is your Lord?*”

The caliph replied, “*My Lord is on the seventh heaven.*”

On hearing this reply, the beliefs of the Jews were confirmed and they said, “*You cannot be the true successor of the Prophet.*”

The Jews then inquired again about the *Wasi* of the Prophet. They were then referred to the second caliph. They asked the same question to the second caliph, “*Where is your Lord?*” To their dismay they got the same reply similar to that of the first caliph and they concluded that this person was also not the *Wasi* of the Prophet.

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Finally, they were referred to Imam Ali (as). When they saw the Imam (as), they thought that this person seems to have the character of the *Wasi* as is mentioned in Gospel. They then asked Imam Ali (as) about his relationship with the Prophet. Imam Ali (as) replied, “*I am his brother, I am his Wasi, I am the first to have faith in him, and I am the husband of his daughter.*” The Jews on hearing this said, “*This truly is a great relationship. You are the real kinsman of the Prophet.*”

They then asked Imam Ali, “*Where is your Lord?*”

Imam Ali said, “*To answer this question I can refer to the times of your Prophet Moses (as) or the time of the last Prophet Muhammad (saww).*”

The Jews then asked Imam Ali (as) to first answer the question with reference to the time of Moses (as) and then after that with respect to the time of Prophet Muhammad (saww).

The Imam (as) said, “*During the time of Moses, there came angels: angels of the east, angels of the west, and angels of the heavens and earth. The angel of the east asked the angel of the west where he came from. The angel of the west replied that he came from his Lord. On hearing this, the angel of the east, said that he also came from his Lord. Similarly, the angel of the heaven asked the angel of the earth where he came from and the angel replied that he came from his Lord. The angel of the heavens then said that he also came from his Lord. Thus each angel got exactly the same answer to their questions. Thus the implication is that Allah is present everywhere. Allah is Omnipresent.*”

The Imam then continued, “*During the time of Prophet Muhammad (saww), Allah revealed Surah Al-Mujadilah [58:7], where He has stated:*

أَلَمْ نَرِ أَنْ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا
خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا أَدْنَى مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

Hast thou not seen that God knows whatsoever is in the heavens, and whatsoever is in the earth? Three men conspire not secretly together, but He is the fourth of them, neither five men, but He is the sixth of them, neither fewer than that, neither more, but He is with them, wherever they may be then he shall tell them what they have done, on the Day of Resurrection. Surely God has knowledge of everything.

The above surah also implies that Allah is Omnipresent and is everywhere.”

On hearing the above reply, the Jews said to the Imam (as), “*Surely you are the rightful successor of the Prophet Muhammad! What have they done to you? You should be the caliph.*”

The Imam (as) replied, “*They have taken away what is rightfully mine and are accountable & answerable for it.*”

[*Al-Tauheed* pg 171-173 quoted from the book *Saluuni Qabla an Tafqiduunii*]

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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.