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MEANING OF 'ADL'

The word **عدل** (adl) was originally coined to convey the idea of “making two things equal”, and “distributing equally”.

The same is the case with **انصاف** (Insaaf) which literally means “dividing in two halves”.

The idea of equal distribution naturally leads to “Equity” or “Justice”. And as a result (**عدل**) “Adl” came to denote “Justice”, “Equity,” “To be on straight path”, “Straightforwardness,” “To be of exact standard neither less nor more”, and “to keep everything in its proper place”.

The opposite words are (**جور**) ‘Jaur’ and (**ظلم**) ‘Dhulm’.

(**جور**) ‘Jaur’ means “to be inclined to one side”, Which consequently means “not to be impartial in Justice”, “to be biased for or against one party”. (**ظلم**) ‘Dhulm’ means “to put a thing in a wrong place.”

As an unjust judge misplaces his judgement by not giving the aggrieved party his due, he is called **ظالم** (Dhalim).

The **عدل** ‘Adl’ is one of the most important attributes of Allah, according to the Shia Ithna asheri faith.

So far as the existence and Oneness of Allah is concerned it comes under the first root of religion ‘Tauheed’ and has been explained in the previous booklet. But the Actions of Allah come under this Second Root, i.e. Adl. As the differences amongst the Muslims concerning the ‘Adl’ of Allah are vast and manifold, it is essential to study the following chapters very carefully. Remember that every “term” or “Phrase” in these chapters has a significance, and if a student tries to change any terminology or any phrase, he would put himself in a mess of contradictions or irrelevancies.

VIRTUE AND EVIL

First and foremost difference is that the Sunni sects hold that nothing is good or evil by itself, and what God commanded us to do, became good and what He forbade became evil. The Ithna-asheris on the other hand believed that, irrespective of religious commandments, there is real merit or demerit in different courses of actions, and it is because a certain work is good that commands us to do it, and because the other action is bad that He ordered us not to do it.

ACTIONS OF ALLAH

Allah can do no wrong or evil. I do not use this phrase in the sense of “King makes no mistake”. Because “King makes no mistake,” means actually that he does nothing at all; he just signs what is passed by the parliament. So this tribute is based upon ‘inaction.’ But “Allah does no wrong” means that He is active and powerful but He can do no wrong. Anybody who commits wrong or injustice does so either because he does not know that it is wrong, (but Allah knows everything) or because he needs something which cannot be obtained without wrongdoing, (but Allah has no need) or because he has been compelled by somebody else to commit that wrong, (but Allah is Omnipotent and nobody can compel Him to do anything). So logically it is impossible for Allah to do any injustice, or wrong.

NOTHING WITHOUT PURPOSE

God never acts aimlessly, i.e. without purpose or design. All His actions are based on wisdom and intelligent purpose, though we may not know them. The Sunnis, on the other hand, say that there is no real demerit in acting aimlessly, and if God does anything

without purpose, the mere fact that God did so, would make that action good.

CAN WE KNOW ALL THE REASONS?

As I just said, God does nothing without reason. There must be a reason for everything which is created by God. But it is not necessary that we should know every reason. We say that every work of Allah is such that if we are made aware of its reasons, we would readily admit that it was the very right thing to do. We often feel perturbed by some incidents or by some problems because we do not know the real purpose behind them. An illustration can be found in Quran where the meeting of Hadhrat Musa (a.s.) and another man (who had more knowledge than Hadhrat Musa (a.s.)) is described. The learned man had allowed Musa to accompany him on the condition that “ask me not concerning aught till I myself mention of it unto thee.” Here is the whole episode:

“He (the stranger) said, ‘Lo! Thou canst not bear with me. How canst thou bear while thou canst not compass any knowledge.’

“He (Moses) said, ‘Allah willing, thou shalt find me patient and I shall not in aught gainsay thee.’”

Then they proceeded in a boat. When they in the ship, he (the learned man) made a hole therein. Moses

objected to it, and was reminded of the promise. Then the learned man slew a lad. Upon this Moses could not contain himself, and condemned him in severe language. Again he was reminded of his promise not to ask questions.

Then they came to a township where they were refused food. There they found a wall on the point of falling in ruin, and the learned man repaired it. Moses said, "if thou hadst wished, thou couldst have taken payment for it."

Upon this third argument the learned man told Moses, "This is the parting between thee and me." Then before parting he explained the reasons for his actions. "As for the ship, it belonged to poor people working on the river, and I wished to mar it; for there was a king behind them who is taking every good ship by force.

"And as for the lad, his parents were pious persons, and we feared lest he should oppress them by rebellion and disbelief; and we intended that their Lord should change him for them with one better in purity and nearer to mercy.

"And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the town, and there was a treasure belonging to them, and their father had been righteous, and thy Lord intended that they should come to their full strength, and should bring forth their treasure, as a mercy from their Lord, and I did it not upon my own command."

I hope this example will suffice to explain our point of view about the actions of God.

There is a saying of Ulama:

كُلُّ مَا حَكَمَ بِهِ الْعَقْلُ حَكَمَ بِهِ الشَّرْعُ وَكُلُّ مَا حَكَمَ بِهِ الشَّرْعُ حَكَمَ بِهِ الْعَقْلُ

"Whatever is ordained by reason, is ordained by Sheriat; and whatever is ordained by Sheriat, is ordained by Reason."

A layman often misunderstands this saying. He thinks that whatever we decide to be good must be confirmed by the Sheriat to be good accordingly. It is not so.

The meaning of the above saying is this: if we were to know the reason behind a certain law of Sheriat, our intellect would certainly admit that, that law is as it should have been. And that all laws of Sheriat are based upon wisdom.

COMPULSION OR FREEDOM?

Now comes the most vital difference which exists amongst Muslim sects. And that is the question of Compulsion or freedom of man in his actions.

There are four groups:-

(1) Mutazilas say that man is completely free to do whatever he wished, and that God has no power over his actions. This group is also called 'Qadariyya.'

(2) Mujabbira said. "man has no power over any of his actions. He is a tool in the hands of God like a pen in our hand."

(3) Ashaira say that man has no power or will of his own in his action; but he still "earns" the action. Their term is "Kasb"; actually what they mean is a riddle.

(4) Shias say that man is neither completely independent of God nor compelled by God. But the actual position is between these two extremes.

It will be seen that the theories of Mujabbira, Mutazila and Shia are easily understood for what they stand. But the Ashaira's theory of "Kasb" is as incomprehensible as the Christians' belief of three-in-one god. It is clear that they have used this term as a mask to hide their actual belief which is 100% in accordance with Mujabbira. Therefore, I will treat both these groups as one.

As the modern days' Sunnis are all Ashaira and as the topic under discussion is of vital importance, I propose to deal with it in some detail.

SUNNIS' BELIEF

The position of the Sunnis in this respect is as follows:

"No act of any individual, even though it be done purely for his benefit, is independent of the will of Allah, for its existence; and there does not occur in either the physical or the extra-terrestrial world the wink of an eye, the hint of a thought, or the most sudden glance, except by the decree of Allah, of His power, desire and will. This includes evil and good, benefit and harm, success and failure, sin and righteousness, obedience and disobedience, polytheism and true belief." (Al-Ghazzali)

It will not be out of place to mention here that this belief was invented by, and under the influence of Banu Umaiyya to provide a respectable mask to their debauchery and tyranny. As the famous Sunni Scholar, Allama Shibli Numani (of India) has admitted in his book 'Al-Kalam':

"Although all the causes were present which were responsible for the differences in faith, yet the political differences started the ball rolling. The reign of Bani Umaiyya was full of cruelty and bloodshed; and as against that there was a spirit of revolt among the common people. But the well-wishers of the government always silenced the people by saying that 'whatever happens takes place according to the will of

Almighty', and as such people should not raise their voice at all. Everything is destined beforehand, and whatever happens, good or bad, happens according to the will of Allah, and we should bow down to that." (Al-Kalam, part 1, page 17)

I think this disclosure is more than enough to discredit this belief.

SHIA BELIEF

The Ithna-asheirs, on the other hand, believe that we know the difference between falling down from a roof-top and coming down by ladders. The second act is done by our power, will and intention; while the falling down is not so. And we know that our actions are not like falling down from a roof-top; instead they are like coming down with our own will and power. Therefore, they are our own actions and should not be attributed solely to God.

Again, we see that there are some of our actions for which we are either praised or blamed, while for other happenings we are neither praised nor condemned. It clearly shows that the first category is within our power and will and the second category is beyond our power and will. For example, we may be advised to treat an ailment in this or that way, but we cannot be advised to recover from that illness. It means that getting treatment

is within our power, but getting well is not within the sphere of our activities.

Therefore, we say that there are many things and aspects of life which are within our own power and will, while some others are not within our power. Those things for which we can be advised, for which we can be praised or blamed, are within our power and will.

And the commandments of religion come under this category because we have been advised or ordered to do this and not to do that; and because we are praised when we obey those commands and blamed when we disobey them. Therefore, it is absolutely wrong to say that our sins and righteousness, our obedience or disobedience, our true belief, and wrong belief are by decree of God, and His desire and will.

Our book of Creed says:

"Allah possesses fore-knowledge of human actions, but does not compel them to act in any particular manner."

But it does not mean that man is quite independent of God, in fact the power and will to act as we like is given to us by God, Thus Imam Ja'far Sadique (a.s.) said:

"There is no compulsion (by God), nor is there absolute delegation of power (from God to man); but the real position is between these two extremes."

THE POINT WHEN WE ARE FREE

And at what point does our ability to do things start? Imam Musa al-Kazim said: “A man acquires that ability when four conditions are fulfilled: 1. When there is nothing to hinder his plans; and his 2. health and 3. faculties (needed for that work) are upto the required standard; 4. and God provides him the occasion of that work. When all these conditions are fulfilled a man becomes able to act according to his own free will. “Asked for an example, he said: “Let us suppose that there is a man, without any hinderance, of good health and proper strength; yet he cannot commit adultery unless he finds a woman. When (the 4th condition is fulfilled and) he gets a woman, then it is upto him to choose one of the two alternatives; either he controls his evil emotions and saves himself as Yusuf did; or he commits adultery. If he protects himself from that sin, it will not be by compulsion of God (as some people think). And if he commits the sin, it does not mean that he was above the power of God (as others think).”

PREDESTINATION AND QUIYAMAT

According to our point of view, if anyone believes in predestination, he cannot at the same time believe in the Day of Judgement. If Allah decrees every act which

is done on our hands, then why should He inflict punishment upon us for those sins and evils and transgressions, for those polytheism, disbelief and immoralities which He predestined Himself for us. It will be gross injustice.

Here is a talk of Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (a.s.) in his childhood with Imam Abu Hanifa, the founder of Hanafi school of Sunni law:

Abu Hanifa once went to meet Imam Ja'far Sadique (a.s.). Imam was inside his house and Abu Hanifa was waiting for him to come out. In the meantime, a small child came out and Abu Hanifa, just to pass away the time asked him: “O child, from who is the action of man?” The child at once said: “O Abu Hanifa, there are only three imaginable sources: Either the man himself is the originator of his actions; or God is the doer of that action; or both together are the originators of that action. If God is the doer of the actions of man, why does He inflict punishment on man for the sins? Is it not ‘Dhulm’ (injustice)? And Allah says, **“Verily, Allah is not unjust to His creatures.”** And if both man and God are partners in that crime, then is it not gross injustice that the powerful partner (i.e. God) punishes the weaker partner (i.e.man) for an action which both of them performed together? And as these two alternatives are proved to be illogical and impossible, the third theory is

proved to be correct that man does his actions by his own power and will.”

Abu Hanifa kissed the forehead of the child. That child was Musa, later known as al-Khadim, the seventh Imam of the Shias.

ABU HANIFA AND BAHUL

Imam Abu Hanifa, of course, believed that man does nothing by his own will and power. In spite of the clear and logical discourse of Imam Musa Al-Khadim, mentioned above, he did not change his belief. Once his theory led to a tragic-comic event.

Bahlul means ‘wise’ and ‘chief’. It was the name of a famous companion of Imam Ja’far Sadique (a.s.) who lived up to the days of Imam Ali Naqui (a.s.) and saw Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) also. As a twist of fate, he is commonly referred to as ‘Bahlul Majnun’ (Bahlul the lunatic) it is so because he pretended to be insane to save himself from the responsibilities of Judgeship offered by the Caliph Haroon Rashid.

But ‘wise’ as he was, he took advantage of his supposed ‘lunacy’ and always censured great people of his time (including the kings) for their short-comings.

Once he heard Imam Abu Hanifa (who lived in Kufa, Iraq) telling his disciples: “I heard three things from Imam Ja’far Sadique which I think to be wrong.” The

disciples asked what those things were. Imam Abu Hanifa said:

“First of all Imam Ja’far Sadique says that Allah cannot be seen. But it is wrong. If a thing does exist, it must be seen.

“Secondly, he says that Satan will be punished in Hell. But it is absurd, because Satan was created from fire; how can fire do any harm to a thing or person made of fire?

“Thirdly, he says that a man’s action is done by his will and power and he is responsible for it. But it is wrong, because all the actions of man are done by Allah’s will and power, and Allah is actually, responsible for it.”

The disciples’ applaud had just begun when Bahlul took a lump of clay and sent it hurtling towards Imam Abu Hanifa. It hit him in forehead, he cried in anguish and pain. The disciples caught Bahlul and Abu Hanifa took him to the Qadhi.

Qadhi heard the complaint and asked Bahlul whether the allegation was true.

Bahlul: O Qadhi, Imam Abu Hanifa alleges that he is suffering from a searing pain in his head, because of the clay which hit him. But I think he is lying. I cannot believe him until I see the pain.

Abu Hanifa: You are really mad. How can I show you the pain? Has anybody ever seen a pain?

Bahlul: But O Qadhi, he was just teaching his disciples that if a thing does exist, it must be seen. As he cannot show the pain, I submit that, according to his own belief, he is not suffering from any pain at all.

Abu Hanifa: Oh, my head is splitting of the pain.

Bahlul: O Qadhi, there is another matter which I just remembered. He was also telling his disciples that as Satan is made of fire, the fire of Hell cannot do him any harm, Now man is made of clay, as the Qur'an says, and it was a lump of clay which hit him. I wonder how can he claim that a lump of clay did harm to a man made of clay?

Abu Hanifa: O Qadhi, Bahlul wants to go scot-free by his verbosity. Please, take my revenge from him.

Bahlul: O Qadhi, I think Imam Abu Hanifa has very wrongly brought me in this court. He was just teaching that all the actions of a man are done by Allah and that Allah is responsible for those actions. Now, why did he bring me here? If he really is suffering from the effect of that lump of clay (which I doubt very much, because of the reasons just explained), he should file suit against Allah, Who hit him by that clay. Why should a poor harmless person like me be brought to the court, when all I am supposed to do was in fact done by Allah?

The Qadhi acquitted Bahlul.

PURPOSE OF CREATION

It has been mentioned in Chapter 4 that God does nothing without purpose. We may well ask, what is the purpose of creation of man?

Allah created man so that he may acquire those virtues which may bring him nearer to Allah. Man comes in this world like a blank paper. During his span of life various designs appear on that paper as the effect of his thoughts and deeds. Virtues which he acquires are like beautiful designs; and the vices are like monstrous drawings.

Allah gave the man wisdom, will and power to acquire these virtues. He has shown him the right path and has warned him against going astray. But he has not compelled him to do good work nor to commit vices. He has given him power to do as he wishes in this life.

TAWFEEQUE AND KHIDHLAAN

As the purpose of our creation is to acquire virtues by obeying God, and as we have been given freedom of choice, God does not compel us to select a certain path. Still He in His infinite Mercy helps a man who sincerely wants to obey Him; but that help does not amount to any compulsion from God.

Let us take the example of a mason who is asked to repair a roof. He agrees to do the work, and starts preparation. But then he finds some difficulty in obtaining a ladder of proper height. You know that he is going to do the job anyhow; but you also know that he will face difficulty because of the shortness of ladder. So, you loan him your own ladder which is of proper height, and thus you make his work easier for him.

But remember, that help was given when the man had a firm intention to do the job, when he had made all his preparations. So this help did not compel him to start his work, nor did it create the intention or will or power to repair the roof. The power, the intention, the will, all was there beforehand. What you did was just to help him in carrying out his intention.

Such help from Allah, given to those persons who sincerely want to obey His commands, is called 'Tawfeeque' (توفيق)

Now let us look at the other side, suppose that mason did not want to repair that roof and refused outright to accept the job, or even after agreeing to do the work started delaying tactics and putting lame excuses. You knew that he had no intention of doing the job. Therefore, there was no sense in providing him with that ladder, and you did not offer it to him.

Can it be said that by withholding the ladder from him you compelled him not to do the job? No. Because that man, with his own free will and choice, had refused the job (or was postponing it without any genuine cause). Your ladder had nothing to do with his decision.

This withholding of the help from those persons who, by their own free will and power choose to disobey the commands of God, is called 'Khidhlan' خذلان

You will find many Ayats in the Qur'an which refer to these two aspects of God's help. Take for example,

فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَهْدِهِ يَهْدِيهِ يَسْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ يَرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ
صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَأَنَّهُمَا صَعَدُ فِي السَّمَاءِ كَذَلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرِّجْسَ
عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

"That whom God willeth to guide, He openeth his breast to Islam; and that whom He willeth to leave straying He maketh his breast close and constricted, as if he was climbing into the height: thus does God heap the punishment on those who do not believe."

Mark that God does not mislead the unbelievers – He just leave them straying. It means that they had gone astray and then God left them to wander. This meaning becomes more clear when you see the last phrase: ***'thus does God heap the punishment on those who do not believe.'*** It clearly shows that they were left in their

wandering as a sort of punishment for their non-belief. They had chosen, on their own accord, not to believe in God; and then, as a result of that non-belief, Allah left them straying.

Another Ayat says:

يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ الْفَاسِقِينَ

“By it (the Qur’an) He leaves many straying and many He leads into the right path; But He leaves not straying except those who transgress divine commandments.”

Here also only those are said to be left straying who already have, by their own choice, transgressed the laws, it is clear that they were left in their wandering because they had gone astray themselves by their own bad choice.

LUTF (GRACE OF GOD)

If a person can do some good to any other person without any harm to any other person, and still he does not do it, it is against virtue; it is evil. Therefore, if God can do anything beneficial to His creatures and then, suppose that, He does not do it, it will be against the virtues of God, not commendable.

It is for this reason that we believe that “it is morally incumbent upon God to do every act of Grace dealing with mankind.”

What is the meaning of ‘Lutf’ which has been roughly translated as ‘grace’ in this paragraph? ‘Lutf’ is that action on the part of God which would help to bring His creatures nearer to His devotion and obedience and facilitate moral correction.

It must be mentioned here that “Allah has ordered us to be just, but He Himself treats us with something better than the justice, namely ‘Tafaddhul’ (i.e. Grace).

The belief, that ‘Lutf’ (Grace) is morally incumbent upon Allah is the special belief of the Shia Ithna-asheries. Sunnis do not believe that ‘Lutf’ is incumbent upon Allah. They say that even ‘Adl’ (Justice) is not incumbent upon Allah, let alone Lutf (Grace). According to the example given by them, if God sends good and virtuous persons to Hell and sends Satan to Jannat it will be quite right. There would be nothing wrong.

Both Tawfeeque and Lutf, as mentioned above, are primarily meant to help the individuals or groups in obeying the commandments of God. Sometimes, however, such help is offered to an obstinate person, not because he is expected to take its advantage and perform his duties, but just to close the door of arguments, to refute all his excuses, so that he may not claim that had he been given a bit of encouragement he

would have been an obedient servant of Allah. It is called 'Itmam-e-Hujjat' (finalizing the argument).

SHERIAT, PROPHETS, IMAMS AND QUIYAMAT: EXAMPLE OF 'LUTF'

Now we know that God created us to acquire virtues in this life so that we may be nearer to Allah in the life hereafter. The question is: How are we to know what is virtue and what is evil? Human intellect does appreciate inherent virtue or evil of many of our actions. But can we expect everybody to act according to perfect reason? Certainly not! Many are the times when desire or anger suppresses the voice of wisdom; many are the times when an immediate benefit (obtainable by evil means) seems more impressive than the fear of condemnation by society for losing the grace of God in the life after death.

If God had left mankind without any effective device to check their evil thoughts and desires, it would have been tantamount to defeat His own purpose. Therefore, He laid down some rules and sent the Prophet and Imams to bring those rules to His creatures and to explain and preserve those laws.

And He did not leave us at that, He also appointed a day when all will be gathered to give account of their beliefs and actions. And He, in His Mercy and Justice,

sent us the news that there was to be a Day of Reckoning, a Day of Judgement, a Day of Rewards and Punishments. This information helps the creatures in obeying those laws which were brought by the prophets.

Thus sending the shariat is a 'Lutf' which helps the mankind to achieve the purpose of life. Also, sending the prophets and Imams and appointing a Day of Judgement are 'Lutf' for the same reason. And because they are 'Lutf' they are incumbent upon Allah.

Takleef: The rules of shariat are called 'Takleef'. 'Takleef' literally means 'to put in hardship'. As any law, (though it may be the simplest one) appears to human nature as 'a hardship,' the shariat is called 'Takleef'. (By the way, lawlessness in the end brings real hardship and calamities while the law brings peace and happiness).

Though the rules of shariat are called 'hardship,' in reality they are well below our strength. Allah says:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

"On no soul does Allah place a burden but less than its capacity."

Imam Ja'far Sadique (a.s.) said: "And Allah did not give orders to His servants but less than their strength ...Because He told them to pray 5 times a day and fast one month a year and to pay zakat 5 dirhams per 200;

and to go to Hajj once in a lifetime; but the people have strength to do more than this minimum.”

Significantly the word used in the above ayat is not *طاقة* (strength and ability), but *وسع* which carries the idea of ‘ease’ and ‘comfort’ and here means “less than its strength or capacity.”

It is one aspect of Allah’s infinite Mercy that He says,

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

(Allah intends every facility for you and He does not want to put you to difficulties).

Some more explanation about the shariat will be given in the chapter of ‘Test’.

ASLAH: MOST BENEFICIAL

We believe that all the actions of Allah are intended for the benefit of His creatures. May be a man who is repairing his roof feels annoyed because of heavy torrents of rain. But rain is for the general benefit; and even the person who at this particular time feels annoyed of it, will derive benefits from it in the long run.

INSTINCTS

We believe that every instinct and desire has been created in man for some reasons. These instincts or desires should not be crushed but harnessed for the general benefit of mankind. For instance, sexual desire has been embodied in human nature by Allah Himself. To crush that instinct will be a protest against the Creator. It should not be, and cannot be crushed, but of course, its function should be regulated for the benefit of mankind. And hence the necessity of marriage.

Likewise, fear and desire are natural instincts and should be utilized for human upliftment. A Muslim is taught not to fear anybody or anything except God, and not to desire anything in this world, but to be anxious to receive the Grace of Allah.

PROMISE AND THREAT

It has just been explained that Allah has appointed a Day of Judgement. He has promised many rewards for good deeds and has threatened to punish for evil actions. There is a difference between Muslims whether God is obliged to fulfil His promises and threats.

1. Mutazilites say that it is compulsory for God: that is, God cannot forgive bad actions of a man who dies without Tauba (repentence).

2. Asharites say that God is obliged to fulfil neither His promises nor His threats; that He may put pious believing persons in Jahanam and put Satan in Jannat. This belief of theirs is based upon their belief that nothing is good or evil by itself; and only what God has commanded us to do is good and what He has forbidden is evil. According to them nothing has any inherent evil and good except what God orders or forbids. Therefore, if He puts Satan in Jannat and Prophets in Jahannam it will be all justice.

3. Shi-ites say that it is necessary for God to fulfil His promises of reward (because not to fulfil a promise of reward will be against virtue); but it is not necessary for him to fulfil His threat of punishment (because forgiving the sinners has virtue in itself). So if He punishes, it will be His justice; and if He forgives, it will be His Grace.

TEST

Now you know that we have been created to acquire virtues to be nearer to Allah. But how to ascertain the standard of our virtues? To make us understand the judgement of Allah easily, He has established a system of tests which determine our spiritual perfection (or lack of it, as the case may be) Allah has said in the Qur'an:

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

“Verify, we created man from a drop of mingled sperm, so that we test him; and so we made him hearing and seeing. We showed him (the man) the way, now he be grateful or ungrateful.”

Test will be held for all persons, believers and nonbelievers alike. Test presupposes that Man is not predestined to go to Paradise or Hell, as some groups of the Christians and the majority of the Muslims suppose. If the man's place is predetermined, then why should we be given orders to do this or not to do that? Those people who believe that God has already predestined our actions and our ultimate destination, cannot justify the theory of Test which is mentioned in numerous ayats of Qur'an; and also they cannot justify their belief in the Day of Judgement. Why the Day of Judgement, when everything is pre-arranged? And whose judgement, when Man does only what has been ordained for him by God?

This contradiction is more apparent in the case of those people who say that every suffering is a punishment of our crime. Because if Man does only what is predestined by God, then why punishment?

WHY TEST WHEN ALLAH KNOWS EVERYTHING?

The test, which we are to undergo, is not meant to add to the knowledge of God, God knows everything. But still it was necessary that all men should be put to test, so that the true form of the Justice and Mercy of God should emerge when we are faced with our faith and deeds in the life hereafter. If God were to send all persons to Heaven or Hell, according to His own Knowledge, without putting them to test, those who would have been sent to Hell could have complained – and rightly – why they were being punished without any sin on their part, while others are sent to Paradise without any good work to their credit? So this is the aim of test.

TWO TYPES OF TESTS

Tests may be divided into two categories. First is the test by the rules of shariat and tenets of faith. As already has been explained, Allah sent shariat with the prophets, and man is expected to believe in true religion sincerely and obey its rules faithfully.

The second category is the harder one, and that is by sufferings. Allah says in the Qur'an: ***“Verily, we shall put you to test with some fear and hunger and with some loss of wealth and lives and fruits; and convey***

good tidings to those who are patient, who when inflicted by hardship say ‘Verily we are of God and verily to Him shall we return; upon them is the blessing of Allah and His mercy.’

There are innumerable miseries, accidents, floods, earthquakes, fire, robbery, war, riot, famine, epidemics – all such things have effect upon our lives: We are tested how we react to them. Does our faith remain unshaken? Have we proved ourselves as pillar of courage to sustain the hopes of others? Have we shown fortitude and patience in face of these disasters? Our everlasting happiness depends upon the result of these tests.

CAUSES OF SUFFERINGS

Sufferings can be attributed to any one or more of the three causes:

1. Either it is a result of our own negligence or carelessness. A man overlooks the rules of hygiene and falls ill. He himself is the immediate cause of his suffering, and his affliction is the natural consequence of his carelessness. There is no sin in it, in strict legal sense. It is a self-inflicted harm. Nobody else is involved in it. He may, if he wants, blame himself.

2. The second is the suffering which can be described as ‘the act of God.’ Shipwreck, earthquake, cyclone, storms and such other things which are beyond

human control. These are the things which are necessary to run the machinery of the world, according to planned and systematic way. Nevertheless, the sufferer and his worth is put to test by these sufferings.

3. But the most complicated is the third category: a suffering inflicted by other persons. A tyrant ruler, an irritating neighbour, a disobedient child, a heartless enemy, and indisciplined sub-ordinate, a boasting superior, a dishonest customer, a cheating partner, a torturing spouse, an unjust arbitrator – these are some of examples give at random.

A man has to suffer in all these cases, whether willingly or un-willingly, often without any fault of his own.

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?

God could have made us all like angels, without any independent will or power of our own. But in that case man's virtues would not have been worth any praise. It was and is the plan of God to give us power and will to do as we like, because only then can we be responsible for our good or evil deeds. And only then can we feel that we have achieved worth its name.

Thus God gave us will and gave us power to act according to that will. And after his bestowing of power, we were sent to this world to be tested. Try to visualize

this world in this light. There is a tyrant king, trying to capture the world and eliminate the God-loving and God-fearing people from this earth. He goes against the requirements of his test. What was required of him? He was expected to accept the authority of God, to respect the religion and commandments of God, to rule justly and mercifully. Instead, he goes onto the opposite direction. In short, he is failing in his examination.

On the other side are his God-loving and God-fearing subjects. What is expected from them? They are expected to live a virtuous life, and to persuade others to follow their example. They feel that God expects them to warn this tyrant ruler because it is the only way to save him from eternal disgrace, and to save his victims from his cruelties. If they choose not to interfere, they will fail in their test. If they opt to follow the command of God they are performing their duty towards themselves, towards mankind and towards God.

What follows now, is either of the two things: Either the king accept their advice, heeds to their sermons, and follows them onto the path of God, or he ignores their warning and pursues his old tactics.

If he follows their advice and returns to the path of God, it is good for everyone. The virtuous people did their duty by warning him; and he did his own duty by

following their advice. All pass the test with flying colours.

But if he ignores their warnings, and wants to remove them from his way, he loses every chance of success in this most important test. But what should be the course of action for those virtuous persons? Should they surrender to his Godlessness, or should they continue in their efforts to make him amend his ways? If they surrender, the success which they have achieved so far, would turn into failure. If they do not surrender they would have to endure the hardships inflicted by that tyrant.

TO SUM UP

Now the position can be summed up in the following sentences:

1. Every person is being tested in this world;
2. Everybody provides a chance of test for others, as well as for himself;
3. If, for example, an ill-tempered neighbour harms his neighbour, he is failing in his test; but at the same time he is providing a test for his neighbour also;
4. If his neighbour tries to correct his behaviour by his own example, and by persuasion, he succeeds in his own test, no matter whether his ill-tempered neighbour changes his attitude or not.

By the way, it is for this reason that Islam expects us to perform our duties towards others without caring whether they perform their duty or not. After all, as we are undergoing a test, we are like students sitting in an examination-hall. No student would like to spoil his answer book just because his class-fellow has spoiled his own papers.

THE BIG QUESTION

Now comes the other question: Why should we suffer on account of the folly of others? We are not lifeless models; we are human beings. We have got feelings. Why should our feelings be injured just because somebody else is failing in his duties? Likewise, one may ask: "Why should we be inflicted with injuries or loss of life or property, or with sorrows and gloom, in the course of what is loosely termed as 'Act of God,' like flood, earthquake, storms and cyclones?" All these questions would have been of relevance if death in this world would have been the end of life. If there had been no Day of Judgement. But, at present, the position is this:

No matter how great sufferings, they are not everlasting. We have a sure knowledge that, sooner or later, all these troubles will come to an end; because our stay in this world will be terminated one day and we will

be transferred to another ever-lasting world. And as soon as we are transferred from this world, our anxiety and trouble will end provided we have made preparations for it.

According to our belief, God rewards man for his sufferings, whether he be a Muslim or non-Muslim. Those persons who have committed sins get reward in the shape of remission of the punishment in the life hereafter.

And those persons who like Prophets or Imams, did not commit any sin and still suffered most of all, will be rewarded by higher and higher prestige and honour in the presence of God.

Thus according to Shia point of view, sufferings of this world ultimately serve to cleanse man from sins, and to bring him nearer to God, in the life hereafter.

SUFFERING AS WARNING OR PUNISHMENT

It should be mentioned here that sometimes suffering and disaster is used, not as a test, but as warning to sinners or punishment to transgressors. Examples of warnings may be found in the traditions of Holy Prophet:

“When God is displeased with a people and yet does not want to wipe them out completely, the prices

go up and up, life-span is shortened, trade brings no profit and the land bears less fruits.”

Also he explained that adultery and fornication, when practiced openly, increase accidental and sudden deaths, brings such plagues and diseases which had never been heard of before.

When people resort to cheating in weight and measure, warning comes in the shape of famine, underemployment and tyranny of rulers.

When rich people withheld ‘Zakat’ (religious dues on farm produce, cattle and money) poverty strikes the community. Hadhrat Ali bin Abi Talib said, *“If all liable persons paid their ‘Zakat’, there would not be a needy person in the community.”*

These are but a few examples as how God gives us warning so that we may amend our ways.

And examples of punishment may be found in the stories of Firaun, Namrud, people of prophets Lot, Shoaib, Nuh and Saleh. It will not be out of place to mention here that the outright destruction (as like the people of Lot, Firaun and Namrud) has been discontinued from this Ummat, as a respect to our Holy Prophet who was ‘Mercy to the whole Universe.’ But the suffering to warn the transgressors continues.

God, in His Mercy and Grace, has hidden the true purpose of a particular suffering from our eyes. Therefore, we should never say that a certain man

suffering from a chronic disease is a hardened criminal undergoing punishment. Why? Because, may be, he is a good man undergoing a hard test for his virtues.

So, we should never judge anybody by his apparent affluence or poverty, by good or bad luck, by his strength or ill health; by his misfortune or good fortune. We should, instead, concentrate upon our own spiritual and moral upliftment.

KNOWLEDGE OF ‘GHAIB’

علم ‘Ghaib’ means ‘Hidden thing’. Ilmul-Ghaib

الغيب means knowledge of things which are hidden like the events of future. Such knowledge is the sole prerogative of Allah. Nobody can know the ‘Ghaib’ except Allah.

Of course, many of us forecast hundreds of things which are to happen in future. We know in advance the time and extent of tide; we know the exact day, time and extent of solar and lunar eclipses. Weathermen forecast the rain, storm, cyclone and many such conditions of season and weather. Some of us, by looking at the feature of a man, can say with a degree of certainty what is the character and nature of that person. Doctors and physicians can easily gauge what are the

chances of survival of a certain patient. You may find many such examples in your life. Is it ‘Ilm-e-Ghaib? Does the weatherman know the ‘Ghaib?’.

The answer is ‘No’. Because all such forecasts and prophecies are based upon the observation of the laws of nature. By keen observation and deduction, we are in a position to know many things in advance. Such advance knowledge is based upon deduction and observation of physical laws.

The Ilm-e-Ghaib which is mentioned in the Qur’an as the sole prerogative of Allah, it is that knowledge of hidden things or future events which are not based on deduction or observation of physical laws. It is this type of knowledge which has been referred to in the following Ayat:

(Allah is) the knower of the unseen, and nor does He reveal His secrets upto any one, except unto that one of the Messengers whom He chooses; for verily He causes a guard to march before him and after him.

(Qur’an 72:26-27)

This ayat, and many similar ayats, declare in unambiguous terms that the knowledge of unseen, of secret of future, not based on physical laws or deductions, is with God only. And He, in His own Wisdom, selects some Messengers, Prophets or Imams

to divulge to them such knowledge, as and when He thinks fit.

In short, nobody can know the hidden things of future (without some present signs or deductions) except Allah. And Allah, in His Grace, informs whoever he selects for such knowledge, be they angels, prophets or Imams.

Imams have said that Allah had revealed one out of 73 parts of His knowledge to Asif bin Barkhia (the vizier of Hadhrat Sulaiman (a.s.)), and it was because of that one part of the knowledge that he was able to bring the throne of Bilquis, the Queen of Sheba, from her capital to Jerusalem within an eyewink.

The major-most part of the knowledge of Allah was revealed to Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.) and through him to his successors, i.e., 12 Imams. They were given 72 out of 73 parts of that knowledge.

LAUH-E-MAHFUDH AND LAUH-E-MAHW-O-ITHBAT

Lauh (لوح) = Tablet of wood or stone for writing upon. Metaphorically, it is used for 'knowledge', because 'knowledge' comes from 'written things'.

Mahfudh (محفوظ) = Secure; in safekeeping; that which cannot be apprehended by unauthorized persons; firmly protected.

Mahw (محو) = Erasure; rubbing out.

Ithbat = (اثبات) Affirmation; Writing.

Therefore:

Laud-e-Mahfudh (لوح محفوظ) = The tablet (i.e. knowledge) which cannot be apprehended by others; The knowledge which is firmly protected.

Lauh-o-Mahw-o-Ithbat (لوح محو واثبات) = The tablet (knowledge) capable of erasure and substitution. The knowledge which is liable to change from time to time.

Now that you know the literal meaning of 'Lauh-e-Mahfudh' and 'Lauh-e-Mahw-o-Ithbat,' let me explain what is meant by these two terms in Islam.

We know that knowledge of God can never be wrong. In other words, there can never be any change in the knowledge of God.

It is for this reason that Allah has called His own knowledge 'Lauh-e-Mahfudh' لوح محفوظ This phrase describes the knowledge of Allah, because His

knowledge can never change, it is always correct and needs no erasure or substitution.

‘Ummul-Kitab’ (ام الكتاب) is another name used for the knowledge of God. It means ‘the Basic Book,’ ‘the Mother of Book.’ God’s knowledge is called ‘the basic book’ (i.e., basic knowledge), or the ‘Mother (i.e., Source) of Knowledge,’ ‘because only His knowledge can be called ‘True knowledge.’

‘Lauh-e-Mahw-o-lthbat’ is the name given to Allah to the knowledge of the angels, prophets and Imams. Their knowledge, though the most complete and perfect of all persons’ knowledge, is still incomplete when compared with the knowledge of God.

These names have been taken from the Ayat of Qur’an:

لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ يَمْحُوهُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتُ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

“For every term there is a book prescribed; God erases out whatever He pleases and confirms (or writes whatever He wishes); and with Him is the Mother of Book” (Basic source of all knowledge).

(Qur’an 13:39)

This ‘Mother of Book’ is called ‘Lauh-e-Mahfudh’ in the following Ayat:

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ

“Nay, it is the Glorious Qur’an, in the guarded tablet.”

(Qur’an, 85:21-22)

As the knowledge of the angels, prophets and Imams is constantly being replenished, perfected and completed, it is called the ‘tablet of erasure and writing.’

You will learn more about it afterwards.

AN INTERESTING STORY: PEOPLE OF YUNUS (A.S.)

It appears from many stories of the Qur’an that sometimes God, in His Mercy and Wisdom, reveals only a part of His future plan to the angels or the prophets concerned. They are informed of His plan to a certain stage, and the knowledge of the later stages is not revealed to them. Before explaining the theory further, let me give you some examples from the Qur’an.

First of all comes the episode of the people of Hadhrat Yunus (a.s.). God refers to that episode in this ayat:

“And why, there was not a town which believed and its faith profited it except the People of Yunus. When they believed We removed from them the torment of ignominy in the life of the world and provided them (with comfort to enjoy it) for a fixed while.”

(Qur’an 10:98)

The fact is that the tribe of Hadhrat Yunus had rejected him; and only two person had believed in him: one of them a pious person but without knowledge, the

other one a righteous man with knowledge. When Hadhrat Yunus prayed to Allah to send punishment and affliction to his people because of their disbelief, God promised him that on a certain day affliction would visit them. Hadhrat Yunus and his pious companion left his people and went away. But the learned man remained with the people and tried to put the fear of God in their hearts. He told them that there still was time to repent from their kufr, to believe in God and His prophet, Hadhrat Yunus, and then to pray to God to avert that affliction. On the appointed day the children were separated from the mothers and the calves from the mother-cows; everybody fasted, all of them went out of the village; there they cried, they prayed, they prostrated and they asked from God His forgiveness and prayed to Him to avert that affliction. The sky was covered with black clouds; day became like night; thunder and lightning were shattering the whole atmosphere. It appeared that soon the punishment from God would wipe out the whole nation of Hadhrat Yunus. It was fortunate that they had repented before seeing the punishment; and, therefore, God in His Mercy forgave them; and as their prayers and crying and weeping continued, gradually the sky became clear, the clouds went away and all were saved. Then they waited for Hadhrat Yunus to return so that they should follow him. Next day Hadhrat Yunus came back expecting to

see the town destroyed. Instead he saw a shepherd tending his herd. He thought that God did not keep His promise, so he did not enter the town.

Here I am not concerned with the whole incident. What I want to show is that a God knew beforehand that the tribe of Hadhrat Yunus would repent, would accept the true religion, would believe in Hadhrat Yunus and his God; and thereupon they would eventually be saved. But He did not reveal the whole plan to Hadhrat Yunus. He was informed only that the affliction was to visit them. Naturally he thought that the affliction would wipe out the whole community. He did not know (because he was not told) that before coming of the affliction and punishment, the community would repent and that all of them would be saved. It is clear that God informed Hadhrat Yunus of the events to a certain stage without telling him the whole plan.

Why was it done so? Because if Hadhrat Yunus had known that affliction would visit them and then go away, his exhortations would not have in them the force of sincerity that softened the hearts of his people. If that learned companion of Hadhrat Yunus had known that affliction would visit and then would clear away, he could not have exhorted them so sincerely and so his words would have fallen on deaf ears. It was because God in His own Mercy and in His good plan wanted them to listen to the voice of wisdom, He did not reveal

the whole future to Hadhrat Yunus. It was not that God had told him lie, or had not intended to keep His promise. He had not told Hazrat Yunus that his people would be wiped out by the affliction. The promise was that the affliction would visit them. And it did. The promise was kept. But it was not promised that his people would be destroyed. It was not promised by Allah- though all of the parties concerned had thought that the people were going to be destroyed.

This episode clearly shows that God, because of His Mercy and Wisdom, withheld the knowledge of later stages from Hadhrat Yunus. Hadhrat Yunus came to know of the whole plan long after that plan was carried out and put into effect.

SACRIFICE OF HAZRAT ISMAIL (A.S.)

Now let us look at another example. Hadhrat Ibrahim was shown in dream that he was sacrificing his son in the name of God. As it was a dream, he must have seen how he was to kill Ismail. He must have seen himself binding the hands and feet of the child, blindfolding himself and then putting the knife on the child's throat and pressing it down. Naturally, by seeing this dream he thought he was required to kill his only son Ismail in that way. He steeled his heart to sacrifice his only child. The child heard it and prepared himself to

be killed in obedience to the command of God. Father and son both were willing to sacrifice everything in the name of Allah. Hadhrat Ibrahim did as he had dreamed himself doing; he bound the hands and the feet of the child, and put him in the position of prostration; and blindfolding himself, put the knife and cut the throat. After removing cloth from his eyes he saw Ismail smiling and a lamb slaughtered in his place. He thought that he had failed in his test. But he had done what he has seen himself doing in dream. Of course, God had not informed him of the events upto the last stage, because if Ibrahim had known that Ismail would be saved, or if Ismail had known that he would be saved there would have been no meaning in that test; there would not have been any chance of showing their willingness to sacrifice everything in the name of God. So God showed to Ibrahim in his dream the events to a certain stage but kept him unaware of the final stage; not informing him how the whole episode was to end. Because they did not know the result, Ibrahim and Ismail were able to show how willing they were to obey the command of God even to the extent of sacrificing their lives and the lives of their dear ones in His name.

If they had known the result from the beginning, the test would have been meaningless.

TAWRAT GIVEN TO HADHRAT MUSA (A.S.)

A third example concerns Hadhrat Musa (a.s.) and revelation of Tawrat. Hadhrat Musa was ordered to go to Mount Sinai, fast there for thirty days in preparation of receiving the tablets of Tawrat. On the 30th day he cleansed his teeth and went to Mount Sanai. There he was asked by God as why did he cleanse his teeth. He explained that as he was coming to a Holy place, he thought it was proper to make himself neat and clean. God told him that the smell of the mouth of a fasting person was sweeter before God than the scent of musk and ambergris. And then he was told to return to his staying place, and fast for ten days and then come to Mount Sanai without cleansing his teeth. Thus it was on the fortieth day that he was given the stone tablets of Tawrat.

God had known from ever that Musa would come after cleansing his teeth, and would be asked to fast for 10 days more. But neither Hadhrat Musa nor Bani Israel had been told about it; nor Hadhrat Musa was told before hand he was not to cleanse his teeth on the 30th day.

Where Allah refers to His knowledge, He describes the whole period of 40 nights together:

“When We made appointment with Moses for forty nights, then you (Bani Israel) took the (image of) calf

(for your god) after he left you and thus you transgressed.”

(Quran 2:51)

And where He refers to the knowledge of Hadhrat Musa, He mention 30 and 10 days separately:

And We made appointment with Moses for thirty nights and We completed it with ten (more); thus was completed the term of his Lord, forty nights.”

(Quran 7:142)

The reason of not giving the advance information is clear from the behaviour of Bani Israel, who because of his ten days' delay, left the worship of the only and true Allah, and started worshipping the image of a calf. The story is given beautifully in the following verses of Quran:

“Said God to Moses: Verily We have tested thy people in thy absence, and the Samiri had led them astray. So returned Moses unto his people angered, and sorrowful. Said he, ‘O my people, did not your Lord promise you a good promise? Did then the promise seem long to you, or did you want that the wrath from your Lord should light upon you, that you violated the promise with me?’ Said they, ‘We violated nit thy promise of our own accord’, Then he (Samiri) brought forth for them a calf, a mere body, with a lowing sound. Then they said, ‘This is your god

and the god of Moses, but he (Moses) had forgotten.”

(Quran 20:85-97)

Just imagine a whole community of several thousand companions of an Ulul-Azam prophet, in the presence of his successor and vicegerent Hadhrat Harun, Leaving the path of true religion and starting idol-worship, just because Hadhrat Musa was delayed for a few days!

This test of faith could not have been conducted if Allah would have told Hadhrat Musa that he was supposed to stay for forty days, or if he had been told beforehand not to cleanse his teeth on the 30th day.

BADA (بدا) APPEARANCE

These three examples taken from the Quran are enough to show that Allah makes known His plan to the Angels, Prophets or Imams only to that extent which is beneficent to the mankind or which is necessary to make a test meaningful. When the time comes when the Angels, Prophet or Imams concerned thinks that the plan of work is nearing its end, a new development extends the plan or brings it to an unexpected end.

This episode is called Bada (بدا) in Arabic. Bada (بدا) means ‘to appear.’

There is no need to emphasize that the appearance or clarification does not concern Allah Who knew everything from ever. It refers to the knowledge of His creatures that come to know at the end of the God’s plan what they did not know before.

And it is also for this reason that the knowledge of angels, prophets and the Imams is called ‘Lauh-e-Mahw-o-Ithbat’ (the tablet of erasure and substitution), while the knowledge of God is called ‘Lauh-e-Mahfudh’ (the protected tablet) which is above any change or substitution.

BENEFITS OF BADA

There are many reasons for this partial revelation. Some of them may be enumerated here. In the abovementioned three stories of the Qu’ran, you may find two benefits of Bada:

1. Bada helps the servants of Allah to discard their wrong beliefs and come onto the right path, as happened in the case of the people of Hadhrat Yunus (a.s.).

2. Bada helps in the test of individuals or the communities, as was the case with Hadhrat Ibrahim and Ismail (a.s.), and with the people of Hadhrat Musa (a.s.).

There are some other benefits also:-

3. As the angels can never be sure that the plan of the events as told to them is the final word, they constantly seek guidance from Allah. Thus they never think of themselves as being independent of the guidance and commandments of Allah.

4. Likewise, the prophets and Imams can never think that they have known all there was to know. Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.) was advised to say always:

قُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

(Say, O My Lord, Increase my knowledge). Imam (a.s.) said: “Had there not been an ayat in the Qur’an, I could have told all the events upto the Quiyamat.” (Imam meant the same ayat which has been mentioned in chapter 28, which says, “**Allah erases whatever He pleases and confirms whatever He wishes, and with Him is the Mother of Book.**”

It must be mentioned here that many times God informs the angels, prophets or Imams about future event, telling them that, that was the final word. In that case there can be no amendment of the plan and no erasure or substitution.

5. The human beings can never know what is in store for them in the future. Thus they will always seek the help and mercy of God. It will benefit them in this life as well as in the life hereafter.

PREROGATIVES OF ALLAH

It was mentioned in the chapter 8 (Shia Belief) that there are some aspects of our life which are beyond our will and power. An example was given of getting treatment and recovering from illness; and it was shown that getting treatment was within our power, but being cured was not within the sphere of our activities.

From birth to death, there are hundreds of such conditions which are beyond our power, which are under the absolute control of Allah. A man is born in a wealthy and educated family; another in a nomad family of primitive civilization. Naturally, the first one has more chances of material well-being and intellectual development than the second one.

A man is healthy and strong; another remains chronically sick. One is born blind, another had normal eyesight. Naturally, one can do more work than the other.

A man lives upto 80 years, another dies in young age. The first one gets enough time to fulfil his plans,

which the second one is not given time to formulate any plan.

These and many such aspects of life are beyond the control of human beings. These matters are truly subject to “Determination of God” which is called “Qadha” قضاء

and “Qadar” قدر Why Allah chooses a certain condition of life for a certain man? It is a riddle which is beyond any solution. Many groups have tried to find answer to this puzzle. But all in vain. No theory solves the problems involved even partially.

When all is said and done, the only answer is provided by the ayat of the Qur’an:

لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ

“He is not questioned about what He does, but they (the people) shall be questioned”.

(Qur’an 21:23)

It was, perhaps, for his reason that Ameerul-Mumeneen Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) said about ‘Qadar’ of Allah that “It is a deep ocean; you should not enter it.”

But we may be sure that whatever is decreed is because of some good reason. What is the basis of this assertion? Let us look at those things which we do understand, like the system of universe, co-ordination of different forces of nature, our own biological system and the arrangements which have been made on this earth

to make our lives pleasant. All these things convince us that the Creator has done nothing without a good reason. After this manifestation of His Wisdom and knowledge, if we come across some aspects of life which we are unable to understand, it is not difficult to assume that these things also must have some valid reasons.

Before going further, it will be a good idea to refresh your memory by going through the chapters 3, 4, 5 and 16 again. Then you will know that Allah does nothing without purpose; that we are not in a position to know every reason of everything in this world; that God does whatever is most beneficial to mankind; that if we were told the reason of these aspects of our lives, we would have to admit that, that was the best thing to happen.

DETERMINED MEASURE

Allah says in the Qur’an:

“Verily, everything have We created to a determined measure.”

(Qur’an 54:49)

So, it is according to His own measure and plan that Allah creates everything. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, we are justified in believing that there is good reason for every aspect of an individual’s life as

planned by Allah, though that individual may be unable to understand it by himself.

Look at a wristwatch. Some parts are made of gold, others of steel, still others of glass and ruby. There is flat dial; arrow-like hands; hair-like spring-wheel; and various wheels, all of different sizes. The dial is white, the numerals black, the hand of second, red and hands black. The numbers vary from one to twelve. In short, it takes scores of parts of different type, colour, origin and shape to make an ordinary wristwatch work.

Could the wristwatch work if all the components were of the same shape, size and design? Can the minute and hour hands complain justifiably why they were coloured black while the hand of second was painted red? Can the numeral '1' complain why it was not given the position of '12'? And if all the numerals were put in one and same position, could anybody know the time from the watch?

If a small ordinary wrist-watch cannot work without different types of parts, is there any reason to believe that the human society could go on without different types of people having various colour, outlook, capacity and ability?

And look at what the critics say. They demand that there should not have been sickness, any handicap, and financial gap; men should have been of equal strength, intelligence and wealth.

Now let us look at what it envisages. It means that nobody would have depended upon any other person. Nobody would have done any work, because we have already supposed that one person would have as much money as the other. Then why should anybody work when this health, life span, wealth and social status is guaranteed? The world would have remained as it was when Adam came on this earth. No improvement, not even bark-cloth! It would have been like spoon-feeding little children who have to do nothing for their own needs. But this is not for which we were created. We were created for a higher purpose, not just to eat, drink and breed.

If there was to be any test, there was bound to be some hardship. And that hardship differs from person to person. That test varies from man to man. And it is because of this variety of test that we find variety of problems.

EQUALITY IN LAW

Question: If what you say is true, then it means that there is no equality between man and man. Where is the equality of which Islam is so proud?

Answer: By 'equality' we do not mean that all human beings are of equal health and strength; nor that all of them are of equal intelligence; not that all of them

are born with equal eyesight, or hearing capacity; not do we mean that man and women are equal in physical capacity and biological functions: What we do mean by 'equality' is the equality before Law. Rich and poor, strong and weak, all are equal in the eyes of religion; all have to follow the same rules and all are governed by the same civil, criminal and ethical codes. There is neither high nor low, neither favourite nor neglected in the eyes of Law. Another meaning is that anybody in Islam can achieve the highest possible honour and office without any distinction of origin, colour or tribe. The criterion of respect in Islam is neither wealth nor strength, neither birth nor colour. The only criterion is the 'character'. God says: ***"Verily, the most honoured before God amongst you is the most pious of you."***

WHERE IS JUSTICE?

Question: But where is the Justice of God, when He gives one person normal eyes and deprives another of both eyes?

Answer: You have been told that we are here for test. The examiner is Allah. It is His prerogative to decide in which way a person is to be examined. The Justice is in the fact that the examiner does not burden anyone with a test which is beyond his ability Allah has not given us wings to fly. And He does not tell us to fly

in the air like birds. It is justice. Had He asked us to fly like birds (without giving us the wings) it would have been 'Injustice' But can we claim that because He did not give us wings (while birds have got it) we have been wronged by God? No. It is His sole prerogative to decide by which test should a particular person be examined. And it is His justice and mercy that He does not demand from anyone more than this ability. If He has created a man without hands, He at the same time has exempted him from Jihad, Wudhu and Tayammum. Had he been required to wage war without hands, then we could have rightly complained. But so long as the responsibilities of an individual are tailored to his abilities, nobody can say that Allah has done injustice.

Now we may sum up this topic in the following few lines:

1. This world could not work if all people would have been of the same strength, same ability and same life-span.
2. The working of the world requires people of different caliber, strength and ability.
3. All are equal in the eyes of the religion and laws of religion.
4. Everybody's responsibility is tailored to his abilities. And that is the only thing demanded by Justice.

Imam Ja'far Sadique (a.s.) was asked about 'Qadha' and 'Qadar'. He said: *"When Allah will gather His*

servants on the Day of Quiyamat, He will question them about that which He entrusted them with i.e., our obedience of shariat which is within our power and will; but will not question them about that which He decreed and measured for them,” i.e., the conditions of life which are beyond our control.

TADBEER AND TAQDEER

It was mentioned in chapters 8 and 9 that though the power and opportunity to do a certain work is given by Allah, the ultimate responsibility is ours because we opt to do or not to do that work by our own free will and choice. Thus, while the tools of our actions are provided by God, the final choice is ours.

It is interesting to note that to a certain extent in matters of ‘Determined Measure,’ the opposite is true, i.e. while the preliminaries are provided by human beings, the final decision is in the hands of Allah. (Mark the phrase ‘to a certain extent.’ I have used this phrase because the decree of Allah is not “always” dependent upon our actions).

To give you one example, if we want to reap a harvest, we will have to cultivate the land, sow the seed, irrigate the plants, weed out the grass and remain always on alert.

Still, after doing all that was needed, we cannot be sure of getting the harvest. A cyclone, a fire or a lightning may destroy the produce; armed gangs of robbers may attack; we may be forced, by circumstances, to sell the farm just before the harvest, and so on. Thus while the preliminary stages are prepared by us, the final outcome of that venture is in hands of Allah.

Two of the matters which are a day to day interest to the readers and which are under the direct control of Allah, are life and death and means of livelihood.

In the following chapters some light will be thrown on these subjects.

LIFE AND DEATH

Allah says:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ
تُمْتَرُونَ

“He it is Who created you of clay, then decreed the term; and the determined term is with Him; and yet you doubt.”

In another Ayat it is said:

وَمَا يُعَمِّرُ مِنْ مَّعْمَرٍ وَلَا يُنْقِصُ مِنْ عُمُرِهِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ
يَسِيرٌ

“And ageth not any aged, nor is reduced from any one’s life, but it is all in a Book; verily it is easy for Allah.”

(Qur’an 35:11)

These two ayats, and especially the last one, show that the life-span of a person is liable to be increased or decreased at the decree of God. And the first ayat speaks of a “term” and a “determined term” which is with Allah. What do all such references mean?

The idea may be understood easily in the light of the previously mentioned two ‘Lauh’ (See chapter 28).

God decree that Zaid would live upto 100 years; but if he proves disobedient to his parents, his life-span would be reduced, for example, by 30 years and he would die at the age of 70.

This is the direction given to the angel of death. The angel of death does not know how will Zaid behave with his parents. Therefore, he cannot know whether Zaid would live upto 100 years or would die at the age of 70.

Now suppose the said Zaid proves disobedient to his parents. At the end of 70 years the Angel of Death must seek guidance from Allah about him. Allah tell him

to erase the 100 years, and replace it with 70 years. And Zaid dies.

Thus the knowledge or information of the Angel of Death is constantly being updated. It is thus that the decrease or increase in the life-span of a man is effected. And it is his knowledge which is called simply as “term” in the first ayat.

But Allah knew from ever that Zaid would die at the age of 70. There was no change in His knowledge. The actual age to which a man would certainly reach is known to Allah only; and it is that age which has been termed as ‘determined age’ in the first ayat.

Question: Why Allah did not decree a fixed age for human beings?

Answer: So far as human beings are concerned, Allah had designed everything with only one purpose: to help him to acquire virtues and become an obedient servant of Allah. It is precisely for this reason that he has been informed that his life-span is effected by his deeds. When a man knows that by being generous to his relatives, he will live longer in this world (and that this immediate reward is quite separate from the rewards of Akherat) he will naturally try to be good to his relatives. And thus he would become a virtuous servant of Allah.

SUSTENANCE

Though trying to earn a livelihood is within the sphere of our activities, the final result is not within our power. We see many people endeavouring hard from sunrise to sunset to earn livelihood and still they spend their lives in constant poverty and need.

Why is it so? God says:

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ

“Allah expands the sustenance for whomsoever He desires and straitens it for whomsoever He desires.”

(Qur'an 13:26)

As has been told in previous chapter about life, sustenance also may be of two kinds: For example, God may inform the angels that if Zaid endeavors hard he will be given ten thousand rupees. But if he does not endeavour so hard he will be given five thousand. God knows whether Zaid will endeavour or not. He knows whether finally he will be given ten thousand or five thousand. But Zaid himself does not know and the angels who are responsible for his sustenance do not know the final outcome. The purpose of keeping all concerned in suspense is that because of this, man will always try to work upto his utmost capacity to earn more and more; also he will try as many hopeful lines as he can, because he does not know whether he had reached the final stage of his sustenance or not. He does

not know where his better livelihood lies. Therefore, he will always remain alert to as many possibilities as will come to his way. He will remain active and ambitious, and constantly in search of a better life.

According to the ayats of Qur'an and writings of Ulama, I have come to the conclusion that God has fixed a maximum limit to the livelihood of every person. Try as he may, he cannot go beyond that maximum limit. As the maximum limit is hidden from our eyes and, as a matter of fact, even from the eyes of the angels, we cannot for at least should not sit idle without endeavouring to better our condition.

Also, it has been left to our own choice whether we want to reach that goal by lawful way, or want to get there by unlawful means. If we adhere to the commandments of God and to the tenets of religion we will reach the desired limit and at the same time, we will earn the grace of Allah in the life hereafter. If we choose the unlawful way, we will get that sustenance; but by opting the wrong method, we will make ourselves liable to the punishment from God in the life hereafter. It must be remembered that in Islam even a lawful thing becomes unlawful if it is obtained by unlawful or foul means. The end does not justify the means in Islam. There is no denying that lawful method sometimes seems to be slow, and people who want to be rich overnight resort to unlawful means. But such tactics do not

benefit very much. The following episode will make my point more clear:

Hadhrat Ali (a.s.) went to a mosque where he wanted to pray. He asked a man standing nearby to look after his horse. When he came out he had two dirhams in his hand which he wanted to give that man as his reward. But he was nowhere to be seen. Hadhrat Ali (a.s.) came to the horse and found that his rein was missing. He gave someone the two dirhams to buy another rein. The man went to the market. He saw a man selling a rein and bought it for two dirhams. Hadhrat Ali (a.s.) looked at it and found that it was his own rein which the supposed guard had stolen. Hadhrat Ali (a.s.) had intended to give that guard the same two dirhams as reward which would have been perfectly lawful for him. But his impatience turned him into a thief and he got nothing except the same two dirhams. His anxiety did not increase his wages at all and made him a criminal into the bargain.

DUA (INVOCATION AND PRAYERS)

Now you know that the knowledge given to the angels is often conditional. If Zaid does this work, he will prosper. If he opts for that work, he will lose financially. If he goes to this doctor, he will recover from his illness very soon. If he goes to that doctor, his sickness will

increase. One of the most important conditions of prosperity, success and happiness is “Dua”. If he prays to God and seeks His help his suffering will be alleviated. If he does not seek the help of Allah he will be left suffering. Thus God says in Qur’an.

قُلْ مَا يَعْبُودُكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاءُكُمْ

“Say O Prophet, My Lord would care not for you, had it not been your prayer unto Him.” (Qur’an 25:77)

Some people have misgivings that because Allah knows what is good for us, there is no need to ask for His help or assistance; there is no need of Dua.

They say that God knows what is best for Zaid and He has already decided how must he is to earn (or for example, whether Zaid will be cured of his illness or not). Therefore, what is the need of Dua? What purpose will our Dua serve?

Such people do not appreciate that, may be, God has made Zaid’s earning or health dependent on his Dua. May be He has ordered the angels to increase his earning if he prays to God to increase his income! May be the condition necessary for recovery from illness is a certain course of treatment coupled with sincere Dua and Prayer to Allah. It has been mentioned in many Hadith that one of the things which affect the life of a man is Dua. The other important thing is his efforts and endeavour. We should never minimize the effect and

importance of Dua, or the effect and importance of hard efforts.

Of course, if one has already reached his maximum age or maximum earning, or if for example his sickness is “firmly decreed” to continue, no amount of Dua, or effort or treatment can do any good.

But, the point to remember is that nobody knows what is “firmly decreed” concerning his age, livelihood or health. Therefore, we have to do relentlessly whatever is possible to improve our conditions.

TAWAKKUL

‘Tawakkul’ means trust’. Allah says:

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا

“And put thy trust in God and enough is God as dispenser of the affairs.”

(Qur’an 4:81)

Trust in God is a very commendable and highly praised virtue. But it is not an excuse for idleness. The Holy Prophet said, “Tawakkul means that you should bind the camel with a rope and then say that you have trust in God that He will protect your camel. You should not have confidence in the rope only, because many a camel has been stolen with the rope. And likewise, you

should not neglect the rope, because binding with the rope is a part of Tawakkul.”

This is spirit of Tawakkul. We are to try best and then we should have trust in God that he will make our work succeed. It is a sheer nonsense to sit idle and say that Allah will do all our work for us. He says in Qur’an:

وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى

“And that man can have nothing but what he strives for.”

The highest standard of Tawakkul was set when Amir-ul-Mumeneen Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) asked some idle persons who they were. “We are those who have confidence in Allah,” came the answer. Hadhrat Ali (a.s.) asked, “*How is your confidence in Allah?*” They said, “We eat when we get food, and we have patience when we do not get it.” Hadhrat Ali (a.s.) retorted, “*Yes, that is the very nature of a dog.*” Stunned, they asked him to explain the true meaning of Tawakkul. Hadhrat Ali (a.s.) said, “*When he get, we give to other; when we do not get, we thank Allah.*” It means that we are to try our best to improve our condition. But we should not trust our own power and wisdom. You must have confidence in Allah that He will make your effort fruitful. Then if you succeed, try to help your brethren with the fruits of your labour. And if you fail, then also be thankful to Allah.

You may ask why should you thank Allah even when you do not succeed. Yes, you should thank Allah because success or failure is not your responsibility. You were expected to do your best and you did. Be thankful to Allah that you were able to perform what was expected of you. It is your effort which matters. Success or failure is not your province. That is the province of Allah. Have trust and confidence in Him that He will not make your efforts wasteful. But if He, in His wisdom, does not grant you success, thank Him that still you were able to do your duty.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND ACTIONS OF MAN

Note: This questions is related to the chapter 11.

Question: God knows everything. He knew from ever that, for example, Bakr would be Kafir. Now, if the said Bakr accepts Islam, it would mean that the knowledge of God was wrong (which is quite impossible). Therefore, it is necessary for the said Bakr to remain Kafir.

Does not it mean that the said Bakr had to remain Kafir, because of the previous knowledge of God?

Answer: It is one thing to know what is going to happen; and quite another to cause that thing to happen. Suppose there is a doctor who, after examining a patient, declares that the said patient cannot survive more than half an hour. Can it be said that the doctor caused the death of that patient, because he knew that

he was going to die? Can a claim be lodged against him that he killed the patient? No. Instead, this incident will be quoted to show how experienced that doctor is, because he foresaw what was going to happen to the patient after half an hour.

Let us look at his example again. The doctor knew that the patient was going to die, because he was in such a condition that he could not survive more than half an hour. So, that knowledge was derived from the condition of the patient; not that patient died because of the knowledge of doctor. That knowledge was the result of the condition of the patient; not that the condition of the patient was the result of the knowledge of the doctor.

This simple difference was overlooked by the majority of the Muslims who thought that because God knew everything which was a happen, so it must happen accordingly. They failed to realize that God knew that a certain Omar was to die Kafir, because that Omar was going to die in the condition of Kufr by his own will; that the knowledge of God was based upon that independent will of the said Omar; not that the said Omar died Kafir because of the knowledge of God.

Of course, there is a difference between the knowledge of a doctor and the knowledge of God. The knowledge of doctor is imperfect and incomplete. Therefore, his forecast can be wrong at certain times. But

the knowledge of God is perfect and complete in every respect forever. Therefore, His knowledge cannot be wrong at any time. Still it does not mean that His knowledge caused the sin or polytheism or hypocrisy or Iman or virtue of His creatures.