

11. Seeking Help From Awliya' Allah During Their Lifetime

The request for something from the '*Awliya' Allah*' takes place in various ways which we shall mention as under:

1. We request a living personality to assist us in building a house or ask him to quench our thirst by handing over the vessel of water which lies next to him.
2. We request a living personality to pray for us and seek forgiveness for us from God.

Both these cases are common, in that, we ask the person to do a work that is fully within his natural capability to fulfil it. However, the first request is related to the worldly affair and the second one to religious and heavenly affair.

3. We request a living personality to perform a task without utilizing any common and natural means. For example, we ask him to cure the sick without treatment, find our lost one or repay our debt.

In other words, we ask him to fulfil our needs through miracle or wonder without having recourse to the ordinary and natural tools.

4. The person whom we ask is not alive but since we believe that he is alive in another abode and is receiving his sustenance, we request from such a person to pray for us.
5. We request from such a person to cure our sick and find our lost ones and through utilizing the spiritual powers bestowed upon him by Allah.

These two cases, similar to the second and third one are a request to a living person except that in those cases, the responsible authority is alive in this physical and material world and in these last two cases the responsible authority is physically dead but in reality is alive. We can never request from such a person to help us in the material affairs through the ordinary channels. This is because it is presumed

that he has left this world and he is cut off from the normal channels of this world.

In this way, there are five types amongst which, three of them are related to request from the living ones in the material world and two are related to the living ones in another world.

We shall discuss in this chapter, request to a living person in the material world and discuss in the next chapter, request (for help) to the *Awliya' Allah* who are living in another world.

Here is the description of each of the three cases of the first type:

First Case

Requesting for work and help from a living person in the ordinary affairs of life that have natural and ordinary causes, forms the basis of human civilization. The life of human beings is established in this material world on the basis of cooperation. All those in this world, who possess intellect, seek mutual assistance in their worldly affairs. This matter is so obvious that nobody has ever found fault with it and because our discussion is based on Qur'an and traditions, we shall restrain ourselves at this point by quoting a verse. Zul-Qarnain while building the dam against the oppression of *Ya'juj* and *Ma'juj* turned towards the people of that place and said:

فَأَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ أَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا

Thus you only help me with workers; I will make a fortified barrier between you and them. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Kahf, 18:95)

Second Case

Requesting someone to pray for good or seeking forgiveness from living persons in this material world; the correctness and firmness of such a request from the living is from the necessities related to the Holy Qur'an. Anyone having a little acquaintance with the Holy Qur'an is aware that the ways of the Prophets was to seek forgiveness for their *ummah* (nation) and or the *ummah* themselves were placing such a request before the Prophets. Now we shall bring here all the verses which have come down in this regard.

Of course, the verses concerning this section are of several categories where, for the sake of simplicity of the matter, we shall number them as follows:

1. Sometimes, God orders His Prophet to seek forgiveness for his people such as:

فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ

Pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them, and take counsel with them in the affair. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Aale Imran, 3: 159)

فَبَايِعْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Accept their pledge, and ask forgiveness for them from Allah, surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Mumtahina, 60: 12)

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Take alms out of their property, you would cleanse them and purify them thereby, and pray for them, surely your prayer is a relief to them, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Tawbah, 9: 103)

In this verse, Allah directly commands the Holy Prophet (S) to pray for them and the effect of his prayers is so quick that one feels comfort in one's heart after the prayers of the Holy Prophet (S).

2. Sometimes, the Prophets themselves used to promise the sinners that they would seek forgiveness for them under special circumstances.

For example:

إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ

But not in what Ibrahim said to his father: I would certainly ask forgiveness for you, (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Mumtahina, 60:4)

سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا

I will pray to my Lord to forgive you, surely He is ever kind to me...(Holy Qur'an, Surah Maryam, 19:47)

وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَا إِيَّاهُ

And Ibrahim asking forgiveness for his sire was only owing to a promise which he had made to him. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Tawbah, 9: 114)

These verses show that the Prophets used to promise and give glad tidings to the sinners just as Ibrahim too had given such glad tidings to Azar. But when he saw him persisting in idol-worshipping, he stopped from seeking forgiveness for him because, one of the conditions for acceptance of prayers is that the person for whom the forgiveness is sought should be a monotheist and not a polytheist.

3. Allah commands a group of sinful believers to approach the Holy Prophet (S) for seeking forgiveness from Allah and to request the Prophet (S) to seek forgiveness on their behalf and if the Prophet (S) seeks forgiveness for them, then Allah would forgive their sins.

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا

And had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Apostle had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft returning, Merciful. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Nisa, 4:64)

Which verse can be clearer than this one where Allah orders the sinful *ummah* to approach the Holy Prophet (S) for acquiring the forgiveness of Allah and requesting him to pray for them? Going to the Holy Prophet (S) and asking for forgiveness has two obvious benefits:

A. Requesting for forgiveness from the Holy Prophet (S) enlivens the essence of obedience to the Prophet in sinful persons and due to their feeling of the Holy Prophet's position, they will sincerely follow and obey the Holy Prophet (S).

Basically, such goings and comings creates a special state of humility in a person towards the Holy Prophet (S) and prepares him to sincerely act upon the verse of:

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ

Obey Allah and obey the Apostle. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Nisa, 4:59)

B. This action clearly illustrates the position and status of the Holy Prophet (S) in the minds of the *ummah* and makes them understand that just as the material bounties are received through special means by the servants of God, the spiritual bounties which is the same forgiveness of Allah, is received through fixed channels such as the *du'a* of the Holy Prophet (S) and His beloved ones.

If the sun is the cause of flow of calories, heat and energy and these benefits are received by the people through the sun then in the same way the spiritual bounties and divine grace is received through the sun of *risalat* (messengership) and the universe in both the stages is the world of cause and causation and the material and spiritual bounties in both the worlds are received through (some) cause.

4. Some of the verses indicate that the Muslims were frequently approaching the Holy Prophet (S) and requesting him to pray for them. Thus, when the Muslims were advising the hypocrites to do the same, they were met with refusal and denial. As Qur'an says:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَوَّا رُءُوسَهُمْ وَرَأَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ

And when it is said to them: Come the Apostle of Allah will ask forgiveness for you, they turn back their heads and you may see them turning away while they are big with pride. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Munafiqun, 63:5)

5. Some of the verses bear witness to the fact that the people, by inspiration from their pure innate nature, were aware that the prayers of the Holy Prophet (S) for them in the court of God had a special effect and were surely acceptable. For this reason, they would approach the Prophet and request him to seek forgiveness from Allah on their behalf.

The pure nature of human being was a sort of inspiration for him that the divine bounties are received by the people through the Prophets, just as they receive the divine guidance through the Prophets. Therefore they were approaching the Prophets and requesting them to pray for their forgiveness before God.

Here is a verse about this matter:

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

They said: O our father! ask forgiveness of our faults for us, surely we were sinners. He said: I will ask for you forgiveness from my Lord, surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Yusuf, 12:97-98)

6. Verses which notify the Prophet (S) that seeking forgiveness for the hypocrites who still persist in their idol-worshipping will bear no result. This verse is one kind of exception to the previous verses and shows that other than this instance, the prayers of a Prophet has a special effect as mentioned in the following verses

إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ

Even if you ask forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not forgive them. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Tawbah, 9:80)

سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ لَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ

It is alike to them whether you beg forgiveness for them or do not beg forgiveness for them, Allah will never forgive them. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Munafiqun, 63:6)

وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ ۖ لَئِن كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ
مَعَكَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

And when the plague fell upon them, they said: O Musa! Pray for us to your Lord as he has promised with you, if you remove the plague from us, we will certainly believe in you and we will certainly send away with you the children of Israel. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf, 7: 134)

Here the sinners are asking Musa bin 'Imran (a) to pray for them and according to the sentence بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ they were aware that God had bestowed such a promise to Musa.

If the sentence ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ is a testimony to this point that the nation wanted Musa (a) to avert the punishment and they also traced in him the power of doing so, then in such a case, this verse will be an evidence for the third instance (Is it correct or not to ask the Prophets to perform some extraordinary acts by means of their divine powers?) But the sentence ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ makes this probability weak because, this sentence apparently shows that the work of Musa (a) was only 'to pray' and not to dominate in this world and avert punishments. Therefore the verse is related to this same instance.

That the prayers of Kalimullah Musa (a) with regard to the polytheists were not accepted has not been specified in this verse but in some other verses.

7. Verses which show that a group of believers were always praying for another group of believers such as,

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ

And those who come after them say: Our Lord! Forgive us and those of our brethren who had precedence of faith. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Hashr, 59: 10)

8. It is not only they who pray for the believers but the carriers of 'arsh (throne) and those besides them too, seek forgiveness for the believers. As the Holy Qur'an says:

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ
رَحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ

Those who bear the power and those around Him celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask protection for those who believe: Our Lord! Thou embracest all things in mercy and knowledge, therefore grant protection to those who turn (to Thee) and follow Thy way, and save them from the punishment of the hell. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Ghafir, 40:7)

Therefore, how good it is that we too, follow this God-loving practice of this group and always seek forgiveness for the believers.

Till here, the decree of two out of the five cases of seeking help from someone other than Allah has been clarified from the viewpoint of Qur'an and out of the three cases pertaining to seeking help from a living person only one case has remained to which we shall now refer.

Third Case

We seek help from a living person who has power over extraordinary affairs and ask him to perform an act through extra ordinary ways, examples include, curing the sick, making a spring flow, and other things through a miracle.

Some of the Islamic writers reckon this kind of request to be the same as the second case and say that the aim (of the person making the request) is only to ask them to request Allah to cure his sickness, to repay his loan, etc., etc. This is because such works are the works of Allah and since the channel (of such works) is the *du'a* of the Prophet and Imams, the work of God is metaphorically attributed to the person reciting the *du'a*.¹

However, the verses of Qur'an clearly testify that asking the prophets for fulfilment of such actions is absolutely correct and is not something metaphorical. That is to say, we sincerely want *ma'sum* (the inerrant) to do us a favor and / or through the door of miracle, cure our incurable diseases by the divine strength and power.

It is true that Qur'an attributes *shifa'* (cure) to God and says:

وَإِذَا مَرَضْتُ فَبُهِرَ اللَّهُ لِي فِي رَبِّي
وَإِذَا مَرَضْتُ فَبُهِرَ اللَّهُ لِي فِي رَبِّي

And when I am sick, then He restores me to health. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Shu'ra, 26:80)

But in other verses, Qur'an ascribes *shifa'* (cure) to honey, or even to Quran itself, such as:

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ

There comes forth from within it a beverage of many colors, in which there is cure for men. (Holy

Qur'an, Surah Al-Nahl, 16:69)

وَنُنزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And We reveal of the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Isra', 17:82)

قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ

There has come to you indeed an admonition from your Lord and a cure for what is in the breasts. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Yunus, 10:57)

The way of reconciling these two set of verses (confinement and earmarking of *shifa'* to Allah and its verification for honey, the Qur'an and the divine admonitions) is this that Allah is 'efficient independently' and is self-dependent whereas other agents are effective by the permission of Allah and are dependent upon Him.

In Islamic world view and philosophy, all the factors and elements are the *causative* act of Allah and the causes are not having the least independence in themselves. Therefore, from the logical viewpoint and Qur'anic verses, there cannot be any objection to the fact that the same God Who has placed the power of cure in honey and has bestowed the power of cure and recovery in the chemical and herbal medicines gives the same power and ability to the Prophets and Imams.

If the meditators can acquire great spiritual powers through asceticism then what is wrong if due to Divine Grace or man's devotion and servitude, God grants them power and ability so that under special circumstances, they are able to perform the astounding acts without the natural means.[2](#)

Shifa' bestowed by the Prophet and Imams and performing the extraordinary acts is not inconsistent with this that the actual '*Shaaf'ee*' (curer), the true finder of the lost one, etc. is Allah Who has given these agents power and strength so that they can, by His permission, control the affairs of this world.

Incidentally, the verses of Qur'an bear testimony that the people wanted and expected such acts from the Prophets and sometimes from others too. Here we shall mention some of them.

The following mentioned verse reveals that Bani Israel requested water from their Prophet during the year of famine and that too, not through natural channels, but through some extraordinary means. They did not say: '*you pray so that God sends water for us*' but said: '*you satiate us and give us water*'. As the verse says:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ إِذِ اسْتَسْقَاهُ قَوْمُهُ أَنِ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ

And We revealed to Musa when his people asked him for water: Strike the rock with your staff. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf, 7:160)

A clearer verse to this one is the verse which speaks about Sulayman (a) asking those present in the gathering to bring the throne of Bilqis which was hundreds of miles away and un-free from barriers and obstacles.

أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِينِي بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ

Which of you can bring to me her throne before they come to me in submission? (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Naml, 27:38)

The aim was to bring the throne of Bilqis through extraordinary means as indicated by the replies given by Afrit³ and Asif bin Barkhiya⁴ that have come down in *Surah Al-Naml* (27) verses 39 and 40.

The most significant point is that people imagine that simple and ordinary works are not Divine acts and the extraordinary ones which are not within the scope of ordinary people are the work of Allah.

Actually, the measure of Divine and non-divine acts is the matter of independence and non-independence. The divine act is one in which the doer performs the act independently without seeking the help of any power and source. In other words, the divine acts are those in which the doer is the absolute authority in performing that action and is dependent on Himself and no one else.

However, the non-divine acts, whether simple and ordinary or difficult and unusual, are those acts wherein the doer is not independent in performing that action but does so under the influence and help of an independent power.

Therefore, there is no objection to this fact that Allah bestows upon His beloved ones, the power to perform extraordinary acts which are not within the scope of ordinary people and there is no objection if we too request them to perform such acts.

The Holy Qur'an addresses 'Isa (a) very explicitly and says:

وَتُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَةَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِي

“And you healed the blind and the leprous by My permission, and when you brought forth the dead by My permission. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Maida, 5:110)

The total sum of these verses shows that the divine leaders possessed such powers and that requesting extraordinary works from them was a common practice and Qur'an too bears testimony to the rightness of such requests.

Till here, the decree of all the three cases of asking from the living ones has been clarified from the viewpoint of Qur'an and we saw that verses of Qur'an have clearly approved their legitimacy.

It is now time to clarify the decree of the remaining two cases (i.e. asking from the holy spirits) from the viewpoint of Qur'an and traditions (*hadiths*). We shall discuss this in the next chapter.

[1.](#) Kashf Al-'Irtiyaab, page 274.

[2.](#) For explanation of this part and acquaintance with the verses of Qur'an, refer to the book 'Spiritual Powers of Prophets'. In this book, reader will find references from Qur'an about their spiritual powers.

[3.](#) Or Ifrit is a powerful jinn or mysterious creature.

[4.](#) Asif bin Barkhiya was court vizier of Prophet Sulayman (a). He was not a Prophet but a true believer who was bestowed by God with the "knowledge of the book" (Qur'an, 27:40). He brought Queen Bilqis's throne in the twinkling of an eye by divinely bestowed powers.

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