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14. Examining The Reasoning Of Wahhabis About The Prohibition Of Seeking Shafa'a

In the previous chapter, we became acquainted with the permissibility of seeking *shafa'a* with logical reasons. Now it is time to learn about the reasoning of the opponents with regards to such request for *shafa'a*. The group of opposition has prohibited seeking of *shafa'a* with their particular way of thinking which we shall now discuss in brief.

1. Seeking Shafa'a Is Shirk (Polytheism)

By *shirk* they mean *shirk* in *'ibadah* and present seeking of *shafa'a* to be *'ibadah* of the intercessor. In chapter 9 we had discussed in detail about *'ibadah* and have clarified that requesting and asking someone and or seeking *shafa'a* will be counted as *'ibadah* only when we believe the other person to be ﷻ God, رب (Lord) and the one who is managing the world or is the source and master of divine affairs. If it is not as such then any kind of request and asking any kind of respect and honor will never be counted as *'ibadah*.

The one who seeks *shafa'a* from the true intercessors before Allah (where Allah has permitted them to do *shafa'a*) consider them as an intimate and chosen servants of Allah where they are neither God nor the divine affairs such as forgiveness and *shafa'a* have been transferred to them so that they are able to willfully and without the permission of Allah, do *shafa'a* and forgive whomsoever they wish.

Within the framework of 'Permission of Allah', these divine people can seek forgiveness and mercy for those particular people who still have spiritual relation with God and their spiritual connection with the divine intercessors has not yet been discontinued. And such a request from someone who does not reckon the intercessor to be more than an intimate servant can never be considered as *'ibadah*.

Of course, we remind you that if such a request (of intercession) to the intercessor who is dead amounts to *'ibadah* then the same request to a living intercessor too should be counted as *'ibadah*.

However, in the previous discussion we pointed out that Qur'an and traditions command the Muslims to approach the Holy Prophet (S) and request him to seek forgiveness for themselves. And such a request is nothing but seeking *shafa'a* from him in his life-time and it is impossible that one action which is polytheism in one period turns into a monotheistic action in another period.

To elaborate further, they say: *Shafa'a* is the act of God and in better terms, is the right of God and asking others about something which is related to His action will amount to *'ibadah* of that person. They speak the same about asking for *shifa'* (cure) of the sick and other similar things from the beloved ones of God and say: Such kinds of requests are requests for the acts of God and naturally it will be like doing his *'ibadah*.

By paying attention to the previous discussions, the reply to this reasoning becomes absolutely clear and it is as such: None amongst the Muslims have differences in this general rule and universal measure and all agree that asking others about the actions of Allah will be counted as *'ibadah* and involves the belief in divinity and Lordship. But the main point of our discussion is: What is meant by 'action' of God? The Wahhabi writers during these three centuries have not explained the standard for the 'acts' or 'action' of God without which the reasoning will be brought to naught.

In the discussion about the definition and limitation of *'ibadah* we reminded you that in many verses of Qur'an, the actions which are specific to God have also been attributed to other than Him. For example, giving death which is a specific action of God as mentioned in *Surah Al-Mu'minun*:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ

He is one who gives life and Death (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Mu'minun, 23:80)

is also attributed to (someone) other than Him as mentioned in another verse as such:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا

Until when death comes to one of you, our messengers cause him to die. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-An'am, 6:61)

Until the time death overtakes one of them, our messengers take away their souls. It is not only this action (i.e. 'giving death') that is specifically the action of God and is attributed to (someone) other than Him but in fact, a portion of the actions of God and those things that should be asked only from God have been permitted to be asked from someone other than Him.

For example: Qur'an commands the Muslims to say day and night (in ritual prayers while reciting *Surah Al-Fatihah*: **إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ** *Only from Thee do we seek help 1:5*) but at the same time in another

verse it commands us to seek help from (something) other than Him like *salat* and patience, as verse says:

وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ ۚ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:45)

If we wish to narrate those verses that are specific to Allah, but are attributed to other than Him, then our discussion will lengthen. ¹ What is necessary is to solve the controversy through Qur'anic insight and acquire the actual meaning of Qur'an and it is as such:

Each of these affairs irrespective of our request has two forms:

1. A 'doer' performs an action without relying on a creature, without acquiring power from any position and without obtaining the will of anybody, For example, he gives death to a living creature or helps a creature.
2. A 'doer' performs the same action by relying on a superior being, by acquiring power from a higher position and obtaining His permission. The first affair is the affair of God and the second a human or non-divine affair. This is a general yardstick for distinguishing the divine action from the non-divine ones.

The divine actions such as giving life, death, cure, sustenance etc., are invariably those actions for which the doer is needless of anything in performing them.

On the other hand, a non-divine action is that action which the doer has to depend on a superior and higher creature than him and without His Power and Will, is not able to perform that action.

By paying attention to this principle, it becomes clear that the *shafa'a* which is the special right of Allah is different from that *shafa'a* which is sought from the virtuous people.

Allah is needless from all angles in these actions whereas the virtuous one put them into operation only under the light of His wise Will and Permission.

Whenever *shafa'a* is sought from the *Awliya' Allah* in the first sense, then in such a case, the divine action is asked from someone other than God and such an asking will be reckoned as *'ibadah*.

However, if *shafa'a* is sought from them in the second sense i.e. a limited and permitted *shafa'a* which is in the form of one acquired right, then in such a case, a non-divine action is asked from them.

By paying attention to this yardstick, the fists of the fallacious writers of Wahhabis will open up and it

becomes clear that such kind of requests, most common being request for *shafa'a* and others such as *shifa'* (cure) and the like of it takes place under two forms and no virtuous monotheist will request such an action in the first form and no one, no matter how little Islamic knowledge he possesses, will ever reckon them to be the ones managing this world or the ones in charge of the system of creation.

Moreover, they do not (even) reckon them to be such creatures to whom God has entrusted His position and His actions and do not imagine that in the actions of *shafa'a* and fulfilment of needs they are unlimited and unconditional.

In short, asking for a limited and authorized *shafa'a* is the action of a man from man himself and is not asking for the Acts of God from someone other than Him.

We shall speak about the 'action of God' and its special features in the near future.

2. The Shirk (Polytheism) Of The Polytheists Was Due To Their Seeking Of Shafa'a From The Idols

The second reasoning which the Wahhabis give for the prohibition of *shafa'a* is this that God has labelled the idol-worshippers of Hijaz as polytheists because of their seeking of *shafa'a* from the idols; their crying and wailing before them and their request (to them) to act as mediators, The following verse bears testimony to this:

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ هَؤُلَاءِ شُفَعَاؤُنَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ

And they serve beside Allah what can neither harm them nor profit them, and they say: These are our intercessors with Allah. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Yunus, 10: 18)

Therefore, any kind of *shafa'a* from other than God will be polytheism and worshipping of the intercessor.

Reply

Firstly, this verse is never an indication of what they say and if the Qur'an calls them as polytheists it is not because they were seeking *shafa'a* from the idols but because they worship them (idols) and finally reaching the stage of seeking *shafa'a* from them.

If seeking *shafa'a* from the idols did really amount to their worship then, in addition to the sentence **ويعبدون** there was no reason to bring the sentence:

ويقولون هؤلاء شفعاؤنا

...and they say: These are our intercessors... (Holy Qur'an, Surah Yunus, 10: 18)

That these two sentences have come in a parataxis form in this verse shows that the matter of *'ibadah* (worship) of the idols was different from the matter of seeking *shafa'a* from them. Worshipping of the idols is the sign of polytheism and dualism and seeking *shafa'a* from the stones and wood is reckoned to be a foolish act, devoid of any logic or reason.

This verse never shows that seeking *shafa'a* from the idols amounts to worshipping them so that we may say that seeking *shafa'a* from the true beloved ones of Allah is the sign of worshipping them.

Secondly, even if we assume that the reason of their polytheism was due to their seeking of *shafa'a* from the idols yet, there exists a vast difference between their seeking of *shafa'a* and the seeking of *shafa'a* of the Muslims. They reckoned the idols to be the masters of *shafa'a* and the absolute authorities in the matters related to *shafa'a* and 'forgiveness of sins'. Perhaps God has discharged Himself from these affairs and has entrusted them to the idols.

Such a *shafa'a* will naturally be (like) worshipping them because they were seeking *shafa'a* from them by having belief in their divinity, lordship and their being the source of divine affairs. On the other hand, a Muslim seeks *shafa'a* and requests for *du'a* from the beloved ones of Allah as one esteemed and honorable one (of Allah) and as one authorized servant of Allah in the matter of *shafa'a*. Thus, considering these two forms as one and the same is far from justice and realism.

3. Request For Fulfilment Of Need From Someone Other Than Allah Is Forbidden

The third reason which the Wahhabis give for the prohibition of the matter of seeking *shafa'a* from the divine leaders is this that by specific decree of Qur'an, we should not, in the position of *du'a*, call anyone other than Allah. And asking for *shafa'a* from other than God is one kind of asking (for fulfilment of needs).

The Holy Qur'an says:

فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا

Then do not call anyone with Allah (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Jinn, 72: 18)

If on the one hand it is said that calling someone other than Allah is forbidden and on the other hand the matter of *shafa'a* of the *Awliya' Allah* has been established, then the way of concluding is to say that we should seek *shafa'a* of the divine leaders from God and not from themselves.

The proof that such callings is *'ibadah* and worship is the following verse of Qur'an:

ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ ﴿٤٠﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

Call upon Me, I will answer you; surely those who are too proud for My service shall soon enter hell abased. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Ghafir, 40:60)

Attention is required in the beginning of the verse; the word and in the end the word has come which shows that 'calling' and worship give one and the same meaning. In the books of traditions too, we find as such:

الدعاء مُخ العبادَة

*"Du'a is the brain of 'ibadah (worship)."*²

Reply

Firstly, the verse which has prohibited دعوت (calling) of someone other than God in the sentence **فلا تدعوا** does not refer to absolute calling and requesting. Instead, this prohibition (of دعوت) refers to the prohibition of worshipping someone other than God; the reason being the preceding verse which says **وَأَن الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ**. This sentence shows that by دعوت (in this verse) is meant some specific دعوت which is accompanied by worship and a rising which is mixed with unlimited humility and lowliness in front of the one whom they consider as God of the Universe, Lord of the worlds and the absolute authority in creation.³

And such a bond does not exist in the matter of seeking *shafa'a* from someone in whom Allah has bestowed such a right to give *shafa'a* by His will.

Secondly, what has been prohibited in the verse is 'calling someone along with Allah' and 'considering him at His level', as the word of **مع الله** is a clear evidence to this fact. If someone requests the Holy Prophet (S) to pray for him, that Allah may forgive his sins or fulfil his needs, then he has not called anyone along with Allah. Rather, the reality of this calling is nothing but the calling of Allah.

If asking for fulfilment of needs from the idols is introduced as polytheism in some of verses, it is because they reckoned them to be the small gods, the authorities in all or some of the divine affairs and the ones who are powerful enough to fulfil their needs. Therefore, the Qur'an criticizes such ideas and says:

وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَكُمْ وَلَا أَنْفُسُهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ

And those whom you call upon besides Him are not able to help you, nor can they help themselves. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf, 7: 197)

The Qur'an also says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَالَكُمْ

Surely those whom you call on besides Allah are in a state of subjugation like yourselves. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf, 7: 194)

In short, the polytheists imagined the idols to be small gods and believed them to be absolute possessors of divine actions. However, asking 'shafa'a and du'a from someone whom God has granted such a right and position is devoid of such stipulations.

Thirdly, calling is having a much wider and comprehensive meaning and is occasionally used metaphorically in 'ibadah (worship) such as the verse

أَدْعُونِي اسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ

Call Me, and I will hear you! (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al- Ghafir, 40:60)

and the tradition الدعاء مع العبادة. However, such partial usages in metaphorical form is no reason that we always interpret دعوت in the meaning of worship and condemn the request for fulfilment of need and du'a from someone (in a reasonable manner) as polytheism.

Moreover, the actual meaning of دعوت is 'to call' which sometimes takes the shape of 'ibadah and mainly gives the meaning of calling others (and not 'ibada).

Later, we shall have a chapter on the meaning of دعوت in Qur'an and will prove that every دعوت (calling) and pleading is not accompanied with 'ibadah and worship.

4. Shafa'a Is The Special Right Of Allah

The following verse shows that shafa'a is the right of Allah and as such, what meaning can we derive other than this?

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ شُفَعَاءَ ۚ قُلْ أُولَئِكَ كَانُوا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ قُلْ لِلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا

Or have they taken intercessors besides Allah? Say: what! even though they did not ever have control over anything, nor do they understand. Say: Allah's is the intercession altogether. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Zumar, 39:43-44)

Reply

The sentence **لِلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا** does not mean that only God gives *shafa'a* and that no one else is having the right of *shafa'a*. This is because undoubtedly, God never asks anyone to do *shafa'a* for someone else. Rather, it means that God is the original Owner of *shafa'a* and not the idols; since the one who possesses wisdom and ownership of all things becomes the owner of *shafa'a* and not the idols whom they worship which are devoid of both these qualifications. As Qur'an says:

قُلْ أُولُو كَأْنُوا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ شَيْئًا

Say, "Even though they do not possess [power over] anything... (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al- Zumar, 39:43)

Therefore, the pivot of discussion of this verse is that God is the Owner of *shafa'a* and not the idols and in whomsoever He sees worth and merit, He gives the right of *shafa'a* (and not to the idols). Therefore, this verse has no relation with the topic of our discussion because the Muslims consider only God as the Owner of *shafa'a* and not the beloved ones of God. They believe that only those who are having His permission can do *shafa'a* and not everybody. They also believe that by the decree of verses and traditions, God has authorized the Holy Prophet (S) to do *shafa'a*. Thus, they seek *shafa'a* from him as one authorized person (and not as the Owner of *shafa'a*). As such, what is the relation between the discussion and the contents of this verse?

5. Seeking Shafa'a From The Dead Is Useless

Their last reasoning is that seeking *shafa'a* from the *Awliya' Allah* is (like) seeking fulfilment of needs from the dead who are lacking the hearing sense. The Holy Qur'an explains the dead to be unworthy. As it says:

إِنَّكَ لَا تَسْمَعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا تَسْمَعُ الصَّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ

Surely you do not make the dead to hear, and you do not make the deaf to hear the call when they go back retreating. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Naml, 27:80)

In this verse, the Holy Qur'an likens the polytheists to the dead and informs us that just as the dead are not capable of understanding, in the same manner; it is not possible for you to make this group to understand. If the dead were capable of speaking and hearing, then it was not proper to compare the dead-hearted polytheists to the group of dead people.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسْمِعُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ

Surely Allah makes whom He pleases hear, and you cannot make those hear who are in the graves. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Fatir, 35:22)

The analysis of this verse is the same as the analysis of the previous verse. Thus, seeking *shafa'a* from a person is like seeking (something) from an inanimate object.

Reply

This group always finds fault with the other sects of Islam through the door of *shirk* (polytheism) and as supporters of monotheism, they seek to label others as *kafir* (unbelievers). But, in this analysis, they have changed the form of this discussion and have presented the matter of uselessness of paying attention to the *awliya'*. However, they are completely unaware that:

The *Awliya' Allah* by the blessings of rational⁴ and narrative⁵ reasoning, are alive and living. The objective of this verse is not to prove that the bodies which have been laid to rest are not capable of understanding and anybody from which the soul has been detached, is unable to perceive and understand and turns into an inanimate object.

However, it should be known that what we address is not the hidden body inside the grave but the pure and living spirits which are living with *barzakhi* bodies in the world of *barzakh* and are, as per the Qur'an, alive. We seek *shafa'a* from these spirits and not the concealed bodies in the soil.

If the dead and the hidden bodies inside the soil are not capable of understanding, it does not mean that the spirits (and their good influence) which according to Qur'an are alive and receiving their sustenance in another world are incapable of understanding.

If we say salutations or seek *shafa'a* and or speak to them, our attention is directed to those holy and living spirits and not the hidden bodies inside the soil. If we go for *ziyarat* (visit) of their graves, houses or place of living, it is because we wish by this way, to prepare ourselves for establishing a spiritual relationship with them. Even if we become aware that their bodies have changed to soil (though the Islamic traditions prove contrary to that) still we will seek of reach such instances so that in this way, we prepare for our relationship with these pure spirits.

¹. Refer to the book Manshur Javid, vol. 2, Section of "Limitation of 'ibadah".

². Reported from Prophet (S). Bihar Al-Anwar, vol. 93, page 300.

³. In fact the meaning of the verse is *مع الله أحداً فلا تعبدوا* as mentioned in another verse:

والذين لا يدعون مع الله إلهاً آخر

Those who do not invoke another deity besides Allah.. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Furqan, 25: 68)

⁴. The reasons for abstraction (non-material existence) of soul from matter after the separation of body and its needlessness from material body demands that the soul of man continues and enjoys perception after death too. By providing several reasons, the great Islamic philosophers have proved the eternity of the soul and its superiority over matter and have not left any ambiguity for any impartial person.

[5](#). The verses of Qur'an, for example, Surah Aale Imran: 169, 170; Surah Nisa: 41, Surah Ahzab: 45, Surah Al-Mu'minun: 100 and Surah Ghafir: 46 prove that life after death continues and we have discussed this matter in the earlier text and chapters.

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