

17. Nadhr (Vow) To The People In Grave

People in difficulties and pain customarily make a *nadhr* (vow) that if their difficulty is solved and if their so and so work is made easy, they will donate a certain sum of money for one of the shrines over the grave and / or will sacrifice a goat for preparing food for the pilgrims. They say:

لله على كذا إن كان كذا

“By God it is on me (to perform) so and so, if so and so happens.”

This matter is prevalent among all the Muslims of the world especially at those centers where the graves of *Awliya' Allah* and virtuous personalities are present.

The Wahhabis are sensitive to these types of vows and the most abusive writer amongst them, Abdullah Al-Qasimi writes as such:

“The Shi'a, because of their belief in the divinity (Godliness) of Ali and his sons, worship them in their graves and it is for this reason that they have built their graves and populated near them. From every nook and corner of the world, they go for their zyarat and present their vows and sacrifices to them and shed tears and blood over their graves.”¹

This shameless and foul-mouthed writer whose basic culture and manners is apparent from the title of his book² has reckoned this matter to be related to the Shi'a whereas, the founder of Wahhabism, Ibn Taymiyyah has discussed the matter in a wider scope and has believed it to be related to the common Muslims. As he says:

من نذر شيئاً للنبي أو غيره من النبيين والأولياء من أهل القبول أو ذبح ذبيحة كان كالمشركين الذين يذبحون لأوثانهم و يندرون لها فهو عابد لغير الله فيكون بذلك كافراً

“Anyone who has a nadhr (vow) to make and sacrifice for the Holy Prophet (S), other Prophets and other awliya’ is similar to the polytheists who were doing vows and sacrifices for their idols. Such a person is same as the one worshipping someone other than God and he will be called an infidel (kafir).”³

The master and student have both been deceived by apparent (appearances) similarity. By the decree of this apparent similarity, they have attacked both with one stick, whereas in the case of common actions, the criterion and basis of judgement is not to be looked in its apparent form but what is important is the intention by heart.

If apparent similarities suffice in a judgement then we have to say that many of the obligatory Hajj actions are similar to the actions of the idol-worshippers who used to circumambulate around the stones and mud and worship their wooden and metallic idols. The same actions are performed by us. We circumambulate around the Holy *Ka’ba* which is made of stone and mud; we kiss the *Hajar Al-Aswad* (stone) and shed blood in Mina.

The basis of judgements and arbitrations in apparently similar affairs are the motives and the intentions and one can never pass a similar judgement only because the two actions are apparently the same.

Regarding this matter, the author of *Sulh Al-Ikhwān* has given a statement which can clarify this matter. He says:

إن المسألة تدور مدار نيات الناظرين وإنما الأعمال بالنيات فإن كان قصد الناظر الميت نفسه والتقرب إليه بذلك لم يجز قولاً واحداً وإن كان قصد وجه الله تعالى وانتفاع الأحياء بوجه من الوجوه وثوابه لذلك المنذور له الميت فيجب الوفاء بالنذر

This Sunni scholar who is himself a critic of the beliefs of Wahhabis has, in this short statement discussed the matter from the viewpoint of the intentions and motives. He says:

“If the intention of nadhr (vow) is to gain proximity to the dead, then undoubtedly such an act is not permissible (for nadhr should be for Allah and His proximity). If it is for the sake of Allah and His proximity and consequently a section of people benefit from it and its reward is presented to the dead, then there is no objection to it and one should in such a case, fulfil his nadhr (vow).”⁴

The truth is what this scholar has said in these sentences and the motive of *nadhr* among the Muslims is exactly the same as what has come in the second phase of his statement. It is here that the difference (in essence) between the action of the Muslims and the action of the idol-worshippers becomes obvious. Their intention in presenting gifts and sacrificing animals was to seek proximity to their idols. They even slaughtered animals in their names and their aim was only the idols and seeking their proximity and nothing else. On the other hand, the aim of the Muslims is to seek the satisfaction of Allah and present its reward to the dead. Therefore, they bring the word of Allah in their vows and say:

لله عليّ إن قضيت حاجتي إن افعل كذا

“The purpose of *nadhr* in reality is seeking proximity to Allah and presenting its reward to the one in grave and the beneficiaries of these *nadhr* are the poor and the indigent.”

In such a case, how can one consider this action as *shirk* and place it on par with the action of the polytheists!?

In short, these kinds of *nadhr* are one type of charity given on behalf of the Prophets (S) and virtuous people the reward of which goes to them and none of the Islamic scholars have objected to such a charity given on behalf of the dead.

For acquainting the respected readers with the fallacious thinking of the Wahhabis, we shall discuss this matter in greater length.

In Arabic language, the matter of charity is presented with لام but sometimes, this letter is taken in the sense of aim, goal and motive, like; لله عليّ and sometimes it is meant to describe its usage like إنما الصدقات للفقراء and while carrying out the paradigm of *nadhr* (vow) they use both kinds of لام and say:

نذرت لله إن قضيت حاجتي أن أذبح للنبيّ

The first لام is the same لام of goal and motive and it implies that the aim of this *nadhr* is seeking the satisfaction of Allah and gaining His proximity whereas the second لام indicates the very object which derives benefit from this *nadhr* and the reward is presented to him.

While the لام in لله صلّيت لله and or نذرت لله is for expressing goal and motive i.e. I recited *salat* and I did *nadhr* because of obeying the commands of Allah and seeking His satisfaction and proximity.

On the other hand لام in أذبح للنبيّ أو لوالديّ أو لوالدي is for clarifying the beneficiary and showing that this action takes place on his behalf and it is he who reaps the benefits of its reward.

Such *nadhr* not only is not an *'ibadah* (worship) of that person but rather, it is *'ibadah* of Allah for the sake of benefit of the creatures of Allah.

In Islamic traditions, there are many instances regarding this matter where we shall hereunder mention a few of them.

1. One of the companions of the Holy Prophet (S) by the name of Sa'd told the Prophet: “My mother has died and if she was alive today, she would be giving charity. Supposing that I give charity on her behalf, will she derive any benefit from it?” The Holy Prophet (S) replied: “Yes”. Thereafter, he asked the Prophet (S) that amongst all the charities which charity was the most useful and the Prophet (S) replied:

“Water”. Sa’d dug a well and said:

هذه لآم سعد

As you must have noticed, the لام of this sentence is different from the لام that is present in the sentence **نذرت لله** the first لام is for expression of motive and the second لام shows the object deriving the gain.⁵

2. During the time of the Holy Prophet (S), a person made a *nadhr* to sacrifice a camel at place called Bavana. For this reason, he approached the Holy Prophet (S) and informed him of his intentions, the Prophet (S) asked: “During the era of paganism, was there any idol at that place for the people to worship?” He replied “No.” The Prophet (S) asked: “Was any congregation held in any of the ignorant festivals in that place?” He replied “No.” At that moment, the Prophet (S) said:

اوفِ بِنَذْرِكَ فَإِنَّهُ لَا وِفَاءَ لِنَذْرِ فِي مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ وَلَا فِيمَا لَا يَمْلِكُ ابْنُ آدَمَ

“Fulfill your vow (*nadhr*) as *nadhr* is not correct in two instances: (a) In case of sins and disobedience of Allah and (b) In things which he is not the owner.”⁶

3. A woman told the Holy Prophet (S) as such: I have made a *nadhr* to slaughter an animal at one particular place. The Holy Prophet (S) asked: “Have you made a *nadhr* for an idol? She replied “No.”: The Holy Prophet (S) said: Fulfil your *nadhr*.⁷

4. The father of Maymuna said: I have done *nadhr* to slaughter 50 sheep at Bavana. The Holy Prophet (S) said:

“Is there any idol in that place?” He replied “No.” The Prophet (S) said: “You may fulfil your *nadhr*.”

The successive questionings by the Prophet (S) about the existence of idols in the past and present and or about the presence of any congregations in the form of festivals at those places was due to the fact that under such situations, the sacrifice took place for those idols and for gaining their proximity whereas sacrifices should be only for Allah and not for the idols. In fact, one of the forbidden acts from the viewpoint of Qur’an is to slaughter in the name of an idol. As the Holy Qur’an says:

وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ

And what is sacrificed on stones set up (for idols). (Holy Qur’an, Surah Al-Maida, 5:3)

The reason that the questioners were fixing the place of slaughter was because of the presence of poor and needy people and or the easiness in performing the deed in those places. Those who are having

connection with the pilgrims to the holy graves are fully aware that *nadh*r is made for the sake of Allah and His satisfaction and sacrifice is done in His name. However, as far as the benefits are concerned its rewards go to the *awliya*' Allah and its material gains to the poor and / or to the holy shrine itself.

[1.](#) Al-Sira', vol. I, page 54.

[2.](#) He has named this book, so to speak, as a rebuff to Kashf Al-'Irtiyab written by Allama Sayyid Mohsin Al-Amin and given the title of "Battle between Islam and Idol-worshipping" and in this way has called the Shi'a, who form one-fourth of Muslim population in the world, as Idol-worshippers.

[3.](#) Furqan Al-Qur'an, page 132 written by Al-'Azami narrated from Ibn Taymiyyah.

[4.](#) Sulh Al-Ikhwan, page 102 and ...

[5.](#) Furqan Al-Qur'an, page 133 narrated from Al-Ghadir, vol. 5, page 181.

[6.](#) Sunan Abu Dawud, vol. 2, page 80.

[7.](#) Sunan Abu Dawud, vol. 2, page 81.

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