

51. Standard of mercy “Lutf”

The writer has discussed this subject in length. The main theme is the dispute which has argued both Asha'ria and Motazila. We have repeatedly said that Shi'ism is an independent school, its originality is that of Islam, it is not influenced by any extraneous thoughts or any exotic ideas, it is strictly in line coherent, congruous, and concurring with the teachings of the Impeccable and Infallible Imams.

In logical issues, arguments have included the standard of Lutf (mercy or grace). The Shia has followed and benefited from the Holy Quran. The gist of belief, the theme of faith, the kernel of trust lies with the holy persons of the Imams in the Shia school of thought. This is very close to reason that the Itezal sect might have extracted many things from Shia'sm, and depended on Shia thought. Their leaders could have been the pupils of our Imams.

‘Lutf’, or grace with the Ghaybat (absence) of the twelfth Imam is mostly rejected by the Sunnis. The writer has reiterated the reply from the Shia sources. We suffice on that. The occultation of the twelfth Imam is a thing in itself an independent subject, already foretold by the Holy Prophet (S) himself. Ali Bin Abi Talib too has referred to it. Shia and Sunni traditionists have both mentioned it. Jaber too has said that the absence of the twelfth Imam is a grace (Lutf).

The Prophet (S) said: “By him who has sent me with the Message, they will be illuminated by his light, and they will benefit from his guardianship, as people benefit from the sun from behind the clouds.”

To deny every ‘Lutf’ (Grace or mercy) of the existence of the absent Imam, and to deny its influence, that is, the graceful or merciful one, in the era of his absence (Ghaybat) does not fall in line with reason. The grace, mercy or the ‘Lutf’ exists, as it is contemporary with the existence of the Imam whether he be present or absent from touch or sight. If not so, then for humans what is the usefulness of him – a Divine choice – obliged by Divine will to remain in hiding. God does not do a thing, which is vain and void of sense, or short of benefit, or lame in advantage.

Whatever proceeds from the wish or will of God bears fruit to mankind. Fecundity is His intention; prolific to His design; grace and mercy his degree; and Lutf His Imam the hidden Imam is an absolute personification of His mercy. It is through ‘Lutf’ that the Imam should be appointed by God and

designated through the Prophet (S).

Imam is in Ghaybat, that is, he is absent; but the mercy is current – the snows of the Himalayas are far from sight, but the Ganges flows down to the Bay of Bengal. In Bengal, the Himalaya peaks are not visible nor are they in other regions; but the Ganges flows, irrigating vast patches of land throughout the Northern Belt to the East.

Since we do not see the snows of the Himalayas should we deny the existence of the Ganges river as well? If it is not a mercy, then Mahdi is not an Imam. It is his Imamate that makes him graceful to man. It is the scent of a flower that gives it worth. Flowers made of paper could be more elegant; but they have no grace of odor and no Lutf of fragrance. Tosi says: “The Imam’s existence is Lutf, his action Lutf.”

Ali Bin Abi Talib says: “Else, the proofs of God will be void and vain will be His signs.” An Imam whether present or absent is a ‘grace’, a ‘mercy’, a ‘Lutf’ of God because he is His sign, guardian of His religion, holds His office and was chosen by Him.

The Imam who can carry out or execute the office of Imam-hood also imparts the Grace of God. To deny him the Grace is to deny the Imamate. It is not possible that, a Prophet cannot guide or influence the people. The mercy of his prophet hood cannot be denied, because of its essentiality with prophet hood, and its being in consistence with the office of prophet hood. To appoint an Imam is God’s mercy, and mercy from God is His obligation towards His servants and creatures.

God has appointed the son of Imam Hasan Askari as the Imam. If we deny it, it tantamount to say that God has abstained from bestowing mercy upon us in the period of Ghaybat. To say so is to deny God. It is by His Mercy that we have an Imam. His Ghaybat (absence) does not reject the reality whatever hails from God – is Lutf; the 12th Imam is Lutf and his Ghaybat is Lutf because it is God’s order.

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