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A Detailed Description of the Realms Preceding the World of Khulus

As mentioned, the wayfarer on the way of God, the Exalted, must traverse twelve realms before entering the world of *khulus*, which consist of the worlds ' of lesser, greater and the greatest *Islam* (submission), the worlds of lesser, greater and the greatest *Iman* (faith), the worlds of lesser, greater and the greatest *hijrah* (migration), and the worlds of lesser greater and the greatest *jihad* (struggle). One should know the attributes of these realms and their effects and signs as well as the obstacles and hindrances relating to them. Here we shall describe them briefly, as they have been described elaborately in the fine work of the marhum Sayyid Mahdi Bahr al'Ulum, the pride of the legists and saints. Those seeking the details should refer to it. Here we shall describe them concisely for clarification of the matter.

Islam al-Akbar (Greater Islam)

Islam al-akbar consists of surrender and absolute submission; that is, it involves the renunciation of all complaint and objection of any kind whatsoever against God, Almighty and Glorious, with the confession and acknowledgment that whatever exists. and has occurred is proper and good and that which did not was not such. It implies a total abstinence from questioning and complaint in regard to the Almighty_Lord, and to this station refers the statement of the Mawla of the Muwahhidin, Amir al_Mu'minin, may Peace be upon him:

Veri1y, Islam means surrender (taslim), and surrender means conviction (yaqin).

Beside the renunciation of objection, there should not be any kind of grudge or ill feeling in one's heart in relation to God's dispensations, whether they pertain to the *Shari'ah* or to the world of objective existence, as stated in this statement of God, the Exalted:

فَلا وَرَبِّكَ لا يُوِّمِنُونَ حَتَّى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجاً مِمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيماً

Nay, by thy Lord, they shall not believe until they make you the judge concerning the disputes that arise between them and thereafter when thou hast given the judgment against one of them and he finds it detrimental to his interests do not find in their hearts, in any way whatsoever, any grudge or ill feeling concerning thy judgement and surrender in complete submission. (4:65)

This is the same as the stage of *imam al-akbar* wherein *Islam al-akbar* has penetrated to the spirit and truly pervaded one's heart and soul.

Ima'm al-Akbar (The Greater Faith)

When the heart of the wayfarer is illumined with the light of *Islam al-akbar*, he enters a state wherein he witnesses_aside from an intellectual understanding of the matter_that whatever exists derives from God, the Exalted, and, in other words, finds God present and watchful in all circumstances.

This is the same as the stage of *shuhud* and *Islam al–akbar* However, as it has not reached the frontier of perfection to permeate through all the organs of the body and take charge of its members and parts, therefore the corporeal obstacles and his physical preoccupations distract him from that state and he loses that *shuhud* during his preoccupation with something and is overtaken by neglect (*ghaflat*).

Accordingly, the wayfarer must remain steadfast, with a firm determination, and raise that state to the plane of perfection, making it into an enduring habit (*malikah*), *so* that outward preoccupations do not overtake the wayfarer and divert him from the course of *shuhud*.

Hence he must develop this *Islam* from the plane of the heart to that of the spirit, so that that which was transient and passing becomes permanent and enduring. Under the command of the spirit, that state spreads to all the outer and inner faculties, changing from being a passing state to an enduring station. This station is the same which is called *ihsan* by the gnostics, as God, the Munificent, states in the Glorious Qur'an:

And those who struggle in Us, We shall guide them in Our ways. (29: 69)

And not confining to stating this, He adds:

... And verily God is with the good-doers (muhsiniin). (29:69)

Therefore, the *mujahid* of God's way cannot reach the paths of Divine guidance until he attains the station of *ihsan*. The Apostle of Allah (S) was asked concerning the meaning of *ihsan*. He replied:

(It means) that you should worship God as if He sees you, for if you don't see Him, indeed He does see you.

That is, one should worship God as if one were seeing Him, and should one be unable to worship Him in this manner, at a lower plane he should worship God as if God were seeing Him. Until the *Islam al-akbar* of the wayfarer does not reach the plane of *imam al-akbar*, the state of *ihsan* comes to him only off and on, wherein he performs worship eagerly and with much appeal and interest. But when he reaches *imam al-akbar*, the state of *ihsan* reaches the enduring station of the *muhsinin*.

At this point, all the particular of the wayfarer actions, as well as his general conduct, are driven by eagerness and fondness. All his actions are carried out with a tranquil mind, because at this stage faith has spread to the spirit, and since the spirit is the sovereign ruler of all bodily members and organs, it employs them all for its purposes and ends and they, too, perform their tasks easily and without hindrance, submitting and surrendering together to the spirit and without disobeying it even for a moment. God, the Blessed and the Exalted, has said concerning this group:

The believers surely have prospered! Those who are humble in their prayers, and those who turn away from what is vain. (23:1-3)

That is because preoccupation with vain things is a result of their appeal and interest for them, and the wayfarer who possess a faith of the degree of *imam al–akbar* and has reached the enduring station of *ihsan* has no inclination for them whatsoever, as he knows, moreover, that two longings and two loves cannot abide in one heart, in accordance with the statement of God, the Exalted:

God has not placed two hearts in a man's breast. (33:4)

And should there be an inclination toward or interest in vain matters in a wayfarer's heart, as causes are inferred from their effects, we conclude that his heart was devoid of a longing for the Divine. Such a heart would be hypocritical due to expressing eagerness in matters relating to God, the Exalted, as well as in matters pertaining to vanities and frivolities. This is 'the greater hypocrisy' (*nifaq al-akbar*), which is

the opposite of *imam al–akbar* The submission and obedience in the heart of such a wayfarer does not spring from inner eagerness and longing, but derives from his intellect and is the product of fear and caution. It is to this *nifaq* that this statement of God Almighty refers:

And when they stand for prayer they stand lethargically. (4:142)

The wayfarer attains to the station of *imam al-akbar* only after being freed from all degrees of this *nifaq*, when there remains no sign of his actions being inspired by a mere intellectual understanding and a prudence and caution deriving from fear; but when they are purely inspired and motivated by longing and love.

Hijrat al-Kubra (The Greatest Migration)

When the wayfarer arrives at the station of *imam al-akbar*, he must prepare to make the greatest migration. That consists of:

- (1) Distancing oneself physically from the society of the disobedient and avoidance of the company of the rebellious and treacherous children of worldliness,
- (2) The heart's migration after freedom from affection for and inclination towards them, and
- (3) The combined migration of the body and the heart together from the prevailing customs, traditions, conventions and norms that keep the wayfarer from the Path of God_and pose obstacles in his journey, for custom and tradition make the ammunition of the citadels of infidelity.

In a materialistic society man is a captive of imaginary and fantastic customs and habits, which the people of the world are used to and which they have made the foundation of their profits and losses, their transactions, relations and communications.

For instance, it is usual to regard someone who sits silent through learned gatherings and debates, without opening his mouth, as ignorant. Or, for instance, by habit everyone tries to get a front seat in gatherings, considering it a sign of one's importance. The same is true of walking ahead of others while entering gatherings and leaving_things which are considered a mark of status.

Flattery and sycophantic manners are considered a mark of geniality, courtesy, and good nature and the opposite of them are regarded as signs of unimportance, triviality, ill-naturedness or as the lack of notability and personal prestige. The wayfarer must get rid of all of them with Divine succour and assistance, and migrate from this world of fantasy and fancy, sending off this old hag with triple divorces.

In the course of this dissociation the wayfarer must not have any fear or alarm, nor should he be afraid of the people's adverse opinion, nor heed the blame of persons who consider themselves as men of learning and scientific accomplishment. Hence there is the tradition narrated in Kulayni's compendium, on the authority of Sakuni, from Imam Sadiq ('a) from the Noble Apostle (S) that he said:

The pillars of unbelief (kufr) are four: desire, fear, displeasure, and anger.

The 'fear' here has been interpreted as the fear of people for violation of their imaginary customs and norms. In fine, the wayfarer must get rid of all the conventional social customs, manners and traditions which pose an obstacle in the path of God. The gnostics refer to this as 'madness' (*junun*) because the insane person is unacquainted with the people's customs and habits, nor does he attach any significance to them. He is indifferent to their praise and blame and has no fear of their hostile reaction, nor does he try to mend his ways.

ساغرى نوش كن وجرعه بر أفلاك نشان

O heart, better that ye be ruined by rosy wine,
And have a glory, without gold and treasure,
A hundred times that of Korah.
In stations where the dervishes are seated high,
I hope you will find a majesty superior to all.
Ask you for the royal crown? Show your worthiness,
If you are like the jewel of Faridun and Jamshid's pearl.
The caravan has departed, and you are asleep,
While the desert lies yonder, when will you set out?
Who will show you the way? What will you do?
I have shown you the point of love, so do not falter
An outsider you will be if you look beyond the circle.
Take a cup, and spurt out a sip at the heavens,
How long will you grieve for the world's sorrows?

Jihad al-Akbar (The Greater Struggle)

When the wayfarer, with the Lord's help, succeeds in making the migration and frees himself from society's customs and habits, he enters the field of the greater *jihad*, which is the field of battle against the hosts of Satan. Because, at this stage, the wayfarer is a captive in the world of nature and in the bondage of the faculties of Imagination, Anger, and Desire.

A victim of conflicting urges, surrounded as he is by the darkness of expectations and hopes, he is obsessed by worries and sorrows, anguished by things and events contrary to desire and predilection and loathsome to the mind, awaiting manifold calamities, with a fire raging in every part of his breast, his inward being crushed by myriad needs and indigence, pain, and vengeance. At times he is torn in the tussles of family and kin, and at other tunes under the spell of fears of the ruin of property and assets. At times he seeks prestige and fails to attain it or pursues an office that he fails to obtain.

The thorns of envy, anger, pride and desire torment him and he is a sorry and contemptible victim in the claws of corporeal life, stung by the scorpions of the world of nature and preyed upon by the carrion of materiality. The abode of his heart is darkened by the dark and innumerable shadows of Imagination, and wherever he turns up he is struck down by the fist of fate and wherever he places his feet he is tortured by its thorns. These torments and afflictions accumulate in the wayfarer's breast, and on reflection and contemplation their multiplicity is disclosed to him.

With God's succour the wayfarer must triumph against the hosts of Imagination, Anger, and Concupiscence and be victorious in this greatest *jihad*. On winning this great battle and freeing himself from the claws of mundane attachments, removing the hurdles from his way, he finally bids farewell to the world of nature.

Islam al-A'zam (The Greatest Submission)

At this stage he enters the world of *Islam al-a'zam*, and here he sees himself as a unique jewel and a matchless diamond, encompassing the world of nature and immune to death and destruction, free from the conflict of contradictories, beholding within himself a purity, a glory, and a light surpassing the perceptions of the natural world.

That is because he has died to the world of nature and found a new life, and although he is apparently in the lower world of *mulk* and *nasut*, he beholds the beings of *nasut* in their *malakuti* forms. However, the tides of matter may turn towards him, but they do not harm him, because drawing aside the curtains he has reached the plains of the Middle Resurrection of the Souls (*qiyamat al-anfusiyyah ye wusta*), whereat many hidden mysteries become disclosed to him and he enjoys many a wonderful state. This rank is the same station of *Islam al-a 'zam* mentioned clearly in the verses of the Qur'an:

Why, is he who was deal and Me gave him life, and appointed for hint a light to walk by among the people as one who is in darkness and never emerges from it? So are their works made to appear fair to the unbelievers. (6: 122)

And similarly in the statement of God, the Exalted:

And whosoever works righteously, and is a believer; whether male or female, We shall assuredly revive him with a goodly life, and We shall recompense them with a reward better than what they did (16:97)

It should be noted that at this point the wayfarer, due to what he observes in himself, may get into a state of conceit and pride, thus confronting his biggest and bloodiest enemy, his lower soul (*nafs*), as mentioned in the tradition:

اعدى عدوك نفسك التي بين جنبيك

Your staunchest enemy is your (lower) soul, which dwells between your two sides.

And should the Divine aid not rescue him at this stage he would be afflicted with *kufr al-azm* (the greatest infidelity), and it is this *kufr* which is referred to iii the saying:

The (lower) soul is the biggest idol.

It was the worship of this idol against which Hadrat Ibrahim ('a) beseeched God's refuge, seeking deliverance from it:

And turn me and my sons away from serving idols, (14:35)

for it is quite obvious that the worship of idols was inconceivable for someone like the Friend of the All_Beneficent (*khalil al_rahman*) and it was this *shirk* from which the Noble Apostle (S) sought God's refuge, with the prayer:

O God, I seek Thy refuge from the covert shirk.

Hence, the wayfarer, with God's succour, should affirm his non_being and admit his inability and fallenness, servitude and slavery, casting away egoism, so that he does not fall victim to *kufr al-a 'azm* and succeeds in reaching *Islam al-a'zm*.

Some sages among the gnostics, throughout their lives, would not utter the words "I" and "we" and would say instead, for instance, "This servant came" and "This servant left," while some, in describing their actions, would ascribe that which was beautiful and good and which derived from the Divine Essence to Him, and attribute to themselves that which related to themselves as such, the Sacred Divine Being being absolved of its taints.

And in cases where something could be related to themselves as well as to God they would say "we." They based this practice on the episode of Hadrat Khidr and Musa, may Peace be upon them, where Khidr says:

As for the ship, it belonged to certain poor men, who toiled upon the sea; and I desired to damage it, (18:79)

because the inflicting of damage may not be attributed to the Divine Essence, and, accordingly, he ascribes it to himself by making the statement in the first person singular. However, as the killing of the lad could be ascribed to Hadrat Khidr *and* to God, he describes it in the first person plural.

As for the lad, his parents were believers; and we were afraid he would inflict on them insolence arid unbelief, so we desired that their Lord should give to them in exchange one better than he in purity, and nearer in tenderness. (18:80_81)

As the concern for welfare and the will to grant benefit and excellence derives, from the Divine Essence, it is attributed to the Sustainer.

As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan lads in the city, and under it was a treasure belonging to them. Their father was a righteous man; and thy Lord desired that they should come of age and then bring forth their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord... (18:82)

The same manner of speech can be observed in the words of Hadrat Ibrahim ('a) when he said:

... Who created me and Himself guides me; who Himself gives me to eat and drink, and, whenever I am sick heals me. (26:78_80)

Here he attributes sickness to himself and its healing to God. Attainment to the station of *Islam al-azam* and riddance from the soul's egoism, which sets the stage for Satan to make appearances, must take place with Divide succour. Hajj Imam_Qulli Nakhjawani was the teacher in the *ma'arif* of *marhum* Aqa Sayyid Husayn Aqa Qadi, the father of *marhum* Aqa Hajj Mirza 'Ali Aqa Qadi, may God be pleased with theirs, and he was traversing the stages of perfection in ethics and Divine teachings tinder the tutelage of *marhum* Aqa Sayyid Quraysh Qazwini, may God be pleased with him.

He says: "After I reached old age and decrepitude I saw Satan as the two of us stood at the top of a

mountain. Putting my hand on my beard I said to him, 'I have reached old age and become decrepit. Spare me, if it is possible.' Satan said to me, 'Look over this side.' When' I looked, I saw a very deep ravine. It was a dizzying sight and I was seized with an intense fright and terror. Satan said, 'I don't have any mercy or compassion in my heart. Should I get my hands on you, your place will be at the bottom of this pit that you see!"

Imam al-A'zam (The Greatest Faith)

The stage above *Islam al–azam is* that of *imam al–a'zam*, and that consists of the heightened manifestation and clarity of *Islam al–a'zm*, whereat the wayfarer passes beyond knowledge and belief to enter the stage of direct vision, *mushahadah*. *At* this point the wayfarer leaves the world of *rnalakut* to participate in the Greatest Resurrection of the Souls (*qiyamate kubra al–anfusiyyah*), entering the world *of jabarut*; and passing beyond the visions of *malakut* (*mushahadat al–malakutiyyah*) attains to the spectacle of the *jabarut* (*mu'ayanat al–jabarutiyyah*).

Hijrat al-'Uzma (The Greatest Migration)

After this the wayfarer must migrate from his own being, abandoning it once and for all, and this is the journey to the world of Absolute Being (*wujud al-mutlaq*). To this stage refers this utterance of some sages:

Leave your self and come,

and to this stage refers the statement of God, the Exalted:

. . . And Enter among My servants and enter My Garden. (89:29_30)

because, "and enter My Garden" comes after "and enter among My servants, "the words:

O contended soul! (89:29)

are addressed to a soul that has been through *jihad al-akbar* and has entered the abode of contentment, which is the world of victory and triumph. And since it has not yet gone through the

greatest *jihad* (*mujahadeh*– *ye* '*uzma*), traces of its own existence remain and their ultimate dissolution depends on the occurrence of *jihad al–a'zam*. Accordingly, it has not left the domain of the soul's domination and control (*tasallut wa qahr*) and is still in the field of "*the king*" (*rnalik*) and "*the Mighty*" (*muqtadir*) which are two Names of God Almighty mentioned in the following verse:

In the abode of truth, near the Mighty King. (54:55)

After this stage, the wayfarer struggles against the feeble traces of his existence and once and for all uproots and destroys their remnants which lay concealed, so as to put his foot into the plain of absolute *tawhid*, and this is the world of victory— and triumph. In this manner the twelvefold stages are covered, and one who has passed through the *hijrat al-'uzma* and *jihad al-a'zam* enters the world of *khulus* triumphant and victorious, entering the expanse of:

Verily, we are from God, and, verily, to Him do we return. (2:156)

Thereat the Greatest Resurrection of the Souls (*qiyamate 'uzma al-anfusiyyah*) is established for him, and having passed beyond bodies, spirits, and all finitudes (*ta'ayyunat*), being annihilated in respect of all of them, he lays his feet into the world of *lahut*, leaving behind the domain of:

Every soul shall taste death. (3: 185)

Such a person will be dead through a voluntary death, and hence the Noble Apostle (S) said:

Whoever wishes to see a dead man walking about should look at Ali ibn Abi Talib.

An Explanation and Clarification

The perfections that were mentioned hitherto, along with their characteristics and signs, more or less of them, are graces from the Almighty Lord that are exclusive for the *ummah* of the Seal of the Prophets and Apostles, Muhammad ibn Abd Allah, may Allah bless him and his Family.

The perfections of the wayfarers of the preceding *ummahs* and the past *shari 'ahs* were limited. After the attainment of annihilation and extinction of their selves they could only have a vision of the Lord's Names and Attributes, but they did not conceive of a higher stage. The secret of it is that the ultimate reach of their gnosis (*ma'rifah*) was the word:

There is no god save Allah,

whose result was the vision (*shuhud*) of the Essence as encompassing all the Attributes of perfection and beauty. But the wayfarers of the *ummah* of the Noblest Messenger (S) have ascended beyond this stage, getting to know the stages that lie beyond it and finding a way to stages that cannot be expressed or described. The reason for it is that all the laws and precepts of Islam derive from the word:

Allah is greater than that He be describable.

On this basis, the stages covered by the Muslim wayfarer inevitably lead to a point which is inexpressible and indescribable, and this is in consonance with the relation of his wayfaring to the blessed word:

Allah is greater than that He be describable.

Accordingly, the earlier prophets, too, themselves did not conceive of a station beyond that of the *shuhud* of Divine Names and Attributes so as to set out towards that nest with the wings of determination. For this reason, when they became afflicted with various kinds of tribulations they would take recourse (*tawassul*) in the spiritual *wilayah* of the Noblest Messenger, Amir al_Mu'minm and al_Siddiqat al_Kubra Fatimah Zahra' and her pure offspring, whereat they would find deliverance.

This was the same station of the greatest spiritual authority (*wilayat al-kubra al-ma'nawiyyah*) which rescued them from their sorrows and ordeals. Although they had a simple and general apprehension of this station, which enabled them to take recourse in the high stations of the Pure Ones, but its characteristics and details remained unknown to them until the end of their lives. It is only from the verses of the Qur'an that it can be inferred that Hadrat Ibrahim (*'a*), once or twice, and that too as a passing state and not as an enduring station, had a vision of the higher truths and the perfect graces. But, that perception was not lasting and settlement at that station was not attained for that Hadrat.

Before resorting to a demonstration of this matter on the basis of Qur'anic verses, it should be mentioned that the station of *ikhlas* (sincerity) consists of degrees, as the prophets did possess the station of *ikhlas* in accordance with express Qur'anic texts. Nevertheless, there is a station higher and more august than that of *ikhlas* which they did not attain, and they would pray that they might reach it in the Hereafter. For instance, although Hadrat Yusuf, may Peace be upon our Prophet and his Family and upon him, was among the *mukhlasin* (the Sincere) in accordance with the express Qur'anic text,

Verily he is one of Our sincere (mukhlas) servants, (12:24)

in his prayers he would beseech God to join him with the *salihun* (the Righteous) in their station, and he would supplicate saying:

Thou art my Wali in the world and the Hereafter, make me die a muslim and join me, with the salihin (12:101)

Accordingly, he had not attained to the station of *suluh* (or *salah*, lit. righteousness) in this world and so he prayed that this station may be granted to him in the Hereafter. However, whether his prayer was answered and if he will attain the station of *suluh* in the Hereafter, is something that cannot be inferred from the Qur'an. And although Hadrat Ibrahim (*a*) did possess a high station in *khulus*, he would supplicate saying:

My Lord grant me wisdom and join me to the salihin. (26:83)

Accordingly, the station of *suluh* is higher than that of the station of *khulus* and Hadrat Khalil aspired to be joined with those who possess this station. God did not answer this prayer of Hadrat Ibrahim in this world, but He promised it to him in the Hereafter, saying:

We surely chose him in the world, and verily in the Hereafter he is among the salihun. (2:130)

It should be known that this rank of salah which was aspired to by the former prophets is different from

that which has been attributed by express Qur'anic verses to Hadrat Ibrahim ('a), himself as well as his descendants, as in the statement of God, the Exalted:

And We gave him Ishaq (Isaac) and Ya'qub (Jacob) in supererogation, and all (of them) We made righteous (salihin). (21:72)

For such an epithet applied to all of them including Hadrat Ibrahim himself who, nevertheless, prayed for the attainment of *salah*. Hence this *salah* is something much higher and sublimer.

As to the evidence that the Apostle of Allah (S) and some others in the time of that Hadrat had reached this same degree of *salah*, that is provided by the noble verse of the Qur'an which reports the words of the Apostle himself:

Verily, my Wali is Allah, Who has sent down the Scripture and He takes care of the salihin. (7:196)

Firstly, in this verse, the Hadrat affirms the absolute *wilayah* of the One (*Hadrat e Ahadiyyat*) over himself, and then he says, "my *Wali is* He Who is the caretaker of the affairs of the *salihin*." Hence it is known that there lived at that time individuals from among the *mukhlasin* at the station *of suluh*, and the Sustainer was the caretaker of their affairs.

From what has been said is revealed the secret of the prayers of the former prophets and their recourse (tawassul) to the Five Ones of the Household of Purity (Khamsah_ye Al al-Taharat), or to the Pure Imams, as well as the extent of elevation of the rank of their station of suluh which was so great that Hadrat Ibrahim beseeched God to be joined with them.

And as to the evidence that the great prophets had reached the station of *ikhlas*, that can be inferred from several points implicit in the noble verses of the Qur'an:

First, through their praise (*hamd*), as mentioned in the Glorious Qur'an, because, in accordance with express Qur'anic texts no one except the *mukhlas* servants of God can describe or magnify the One as He is worthy. God Almighty says:

God is absolved of what they describe (in praising Him), excepting the mukhlas servants of

Allah. (37: 159 - 160)

And God, the Exalted, commands His Apostle to magnify Him, where He says:

Say: All praise is God's and Peace be upon His servants whom He has chosen. Isn't God better than what they make partners with Him? (27:59)

And where it describes the praise of Hadrat Ibrahim ('a):

All Praise is Allah's, Who gave me Isma'il and Ishaq despite old age, and surely my Lord hears prayer. (14:39)

Or where He commands Hadrat Nuh (Noah), may peace be upon our Prophet and his Family and upon him, to praise God, saying:

Say: 'All Praise belongs to God, who delivered us from the wrongdoing people. ' (23:28)

Second, there are the explicit statements of the Noble Qur'an concerning the station of *ikhlas* of some of the great prophets. Thus He says concerning Hadrat Yusuf ('a):

Verily he is among Our mukhlas servants. (12:24)

And He declares concerning Hadrat Musa ibn 'Imran ('a):

And mention in the Book Musa. Verily, he was mukhlas and a prophet and an apostle. (19:51)

And He says about Hadrat Ibrahim; Ishaq, and Ya'qub:

And mention also our servants Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya'qub, men of might and vision. Verily, We purified them with a quality most pure and with a continual remembrance of the abode of the Hereafter. (38:45_46)

Third, through their thanksgiving and gratitude towards God, the Exalted, because, on the one hand, in accordance with the noble verse containing Satan's declaration concerning humankind:

By Your honour I will delude all of them, except such of Your servants as are mukhlas, (38:83)

Satan has no access to those few servants who are among the *mukhlasin*. On the other, in accordance with the noble verse:

Then I will approach them from their front and back and from their right and left and You will not find most of them grateful, (7:17)

the servants misled by Satan will not be among the grateful. From here it may be inferred that the grateful who are beyond the reach of Satan are the same as the *mukhlas* servants. Now if we find servants in the Qur'an whom God, the Exalted, describes in the Glorious Qur'an as being 'thankful' and 'grateful' we understand that they are among the *mukhlasin*. Among them is Hadrat Nuh ('a), about whom He says:

A seed of those whom We carried with Nuh. Verily he was a grateful servant. (17:3)

And He says about Hadrat Lut (Lot) ('a):

We loosed against them a squall of pebbles, except the folk of Lot; We delivered them at dawn_a blessing from Us; even so We recompense him Who is thankful. (53:35_36)

And He says about Hadrat Ibrahim ('a):

Indeed Ibrahim was a nation obedient unto God, hanif (of a chaste faith) and no idolater; showing thankfulness for His blessings. (16:120_121)

In general all the other prophets who have been attributed with the quality of thankfulness have been among the *mukhlasin*.

Fourth, is the epithet 'the chosen ones,' which has been ascribed by God, Almighty and Glorious, in the Glorious Qur'an to some prophets, where He says:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلاَّ هَدَيْنَا وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِن قَبْلُ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلاً مَن الصَّالِحِينَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَى وَعِيسَى وَإِلْيَاسَ كُلُّ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ وَرَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَى وَعِيسَى وَإِلْيَاسَ كُلُّ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ وَهُولَا وَكُلاً فضَلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ وَمِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَاجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيم

And We gave to him Ishaq and Yaq'ub _teach one We Guided, and Nuh We guided before; and of his seed Dawud (David) and Sulayman (Solomon), Ayyab (Job) and Yusuf (Joseph), Musa and Harun (Aaron)-even so We recompense the muhsinin_Zakariyya (Zachariah) and Yahya (John), Isa (Jesus) and Ilyas (Elias); each was of the righous, Ismai'l and Yasi '(Elisha), Yunus (Jonah) and Lut _each one We chose above all beings; and of their fathers, and of their seed, and of their brethren; and We elected them, and We quided them to a straight path.) (6:84_87)

The station of *ikhlas* of all the prophets, may Peace be upon them, may be inferred from this blessed verse, contrary to the previous case where we could draw conclusions concerning only some of the prophets mentioned by name. Our inference from this verse is based on two premises:

First is the epithet of *ijtiba'*, which lexically means 'selecting' or 'choosing' something from among things that resemble one another. For instance, if someone selects for himself an apple from a crate full of apples, his action is called *ijtiba'*.

As God says wa ijtabaynahum (and We elected them) in this noble verse, it means that 'We chose them from all Our creation and from among all human beings and We have chosen them for Ourselves, setting them apart in an exclusive station. Accordingly, their case is different from that of all other mortals.

They are persons who have been made exclusive, in the full sense of the word, and exist solely for God and enjoy His special grace. It is obvious that this selection by God corresponds to the epithet of *ikhlas*,, for the *mukhlasin* are also those who exist solely for God and who have severed all their ties totally from

all other existents to become attached to His Threshold.

Second, the *ijtib'a* in the noble verse is not exclusive to a fixed group of persons, although God, after mentioning Nub and Ibrahim and sixteen other prophets, and their fathers, decedents and brothers, says 'We have chosen *them.' But* it is obvious that by 'brethren' here is meant those who belong to their fraternity in matters of spirituality and ethics and are *their* comrades and fellow travellers in the pursuit of Divine teachings. Accordingly, the verse is general, or rather universal, and one can infer from it the station of *ikhlas* of all prophets.

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