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And Make us Needless

In the verses "All®humma aghn® kulla faq®r"1 and "All®humma sudda faqran® bighin®k" we spoke about poverty at length. The apparent import of the above verse seems to be an emphasis on the previous verses. Besides, the context of this verse bears a witness to that too. Nevertheless, in order to summarize the main kinds of poverty, I have chosen to discuss the verse from another angle. It should also be noted that this particular supplication reveals the states of the Prophet (s) in his supplication. And appreciating the remoteness of this servant from the lofty station of the supplicant, it would not be easy to accurately define the motive of these verses. Therefore we would suffice ourselves in this chapter with an infinitesimal drop of the ocean.

Considering the article 'Ji' "al" that accompanies al-faqr, the word al-faqr can have different meanings. One of these is to denote a specific kind of *faqr* (poverty).

Briefly, after having gone through the Holy Qur'sn, authentic traditions, and words of wisdom of authorities in philosophy and Islamic theology, we conclude:

There are two general kinds of poverty:

- 1. *al-faqr al-mamd* th (the recommended poverty).
- 2. *al-faqr al-madhm* m (the abominable poverty).

The Recommended Poverty

Any kind of poverty that is an advantage either for the path or the goal of human perfection comes under the category of recommended poverty. Some of Almighty All®h's servants have been deliberately made to suffer the problems of poverty so that they can attain perfection after they bear the difficult situations with patience and thankfulness. Almighty All®h knows the state of every servant of His, and thus provides according to His Plan.

Realization Of Absolute Poverty

The poverty that is achieved at the end of the journey to All®h is highly praised in our traditions. It is the state of being utterly poor to All®h. Some authorities, in order to be more accurate, say that we are not poor (faq®r) in this sense, but rather 'poverty itself' ('ayn al-faqr). This is because we do not have any independent essence that is needy. In other words, it is incorrect to say that we are independent beings who are needy. No one has any share of independence whatsoever. Our beings that we conjecture to be independent entirely exist and subsist by the permission of All®h. Therefore our beings are not poor, but poverty itself. In terms of philosophy, there are no three entities when it comes to causing a creation. We do not have the Conferrer of grace (muf®d) and the object of grace (muf®d 'alayh) and the grace itself (fayd). Rather, we only have the Conferrer of Grace and His Grace—which we, due to our limited comprehension or remoteness from the Beloved, consider as an independent entity. Therefore the 'creation' or 'creatures' are grace (fayd) itself.2

∎yatull®h Khumayn® in his Chehel Had®th (40 Traditions), alluding to the reality that the dependent existents are sheer poverty, says:

...No being has any independence of its own and everything is sheer dependence, relation, poverty, and attachment to the sacred being of the Absolute Real...3

Although such poverty always exists in every being, only one who "realizes the same" through the vision of the heart, after self-purification, can be qualified to be known as poor in this sense. In his commentary on the Du' al-Sabh, Mullal Hadal Sabzawal says:

"And the really poor one is he who does not own any action, attribute, or existence, and witnesses that the kingdom is solely All®h's, the All-Paramount."4

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) is reported to have said:

"The poverty is my pride and I am proud of it."5

Im mal-Sajj d (as) in his supplication of seeking asylum with All h says:

"O the Affluent of the affluent ones, here we are, your slaves, before You... and we are the neediest of the needy toward You..."6

Therefore this kind of poverty is highly recommended and thus we do not seek emancipation from it in this verse. Rather, we eagerly ask for it and although it is known as 'poverty', no affluence and self–sufficiency can be compared to it. In other words, although near All®h, the All–Affluent, this state is absolute poverty, it is the state of being 'All–affluent by All®h's permission.'

There is a beautiful allusion in the well-known $Du' \mathbb{E}' Jawshan al-Kab \mathbb{E} r$ about this. We pray:

"O my Affluence in my poverty..."7

The Holy Prophet (s) is also reported to have prayed:

"O All h: Make me needless by becoming needy of You, and do not make me poor by being needless of You."8

The Abominable Poverty

This is the poverty from which we direly seek release. If poverty obstructs us from availing ourselves of

the basic necessities of life, that can enable us attain nearness to God, it is indeed something that we detest. If poverty makes us forget the Hereafter instead of making us alert about the Creator, then it is something that we should seek refuge from. Any poverty that separates us from the path or the goal is abominable. It is from such poverty that we should seek emancipation. Following are allusions to such kinds of poverty:

1. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said to Im m 'Al (as):

- "...O 'Ale, there is no poverty more severe than ignorance..."9
- 2. Safwin bin Mihrin al-Jammil is reported to have narrated from Imim al-Sidiq (as) that he said:

"...There is no poverty more degenerate than silliness (humq)..."10

One reason for this may be that 'silliness' deprives one from both material as well as spiritual progress.

3. The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

"The poorest among the people is the greediest."11

This is because such a person is never satisfied, and instead of employing the means of livelihood for the main aim behind his creation he engages in the world and forgets the Hereafter. It is from such an attitude that we always seek refuge after our zuhr prayers when we say:

- "O Alleh, I seek refuge with You from the soul that does not get satisfied." 12
- 4. Imm 'Alm (as) is reported to have said:

"Many a time there is a rich person who is poorer than a poor person." 13

5. Emphasizing the poverty that is really abominable, The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

"Poverty is the poverty of the heart."

The Holy Qur'In also alludes to this fact when it describes the Judgment Day as:

"...the day when neither wealth nor children will avail, except him who comes to God with a sound heart." 14

Hence those who are spiritually affluent are really rich, for they cannot separate from their noble traits and pure heart, and thus would come with real provisions in the Hereafter.

A Word On Material Poverty

We cannot ignore the great disadvantage of material poverty, however, for every human being would like to live a life independent of other than All h. At times, as we understood in the earlier verses of the supplication, it is the human being himself who creates impediments for his sustenance and thus is deprived of it. Sometimes however, Almighty All h, out of His Abundant Mercy limits the sustenance of His servant only to test and elevate him more. In such a situation, one cannot blame the poor believer for his misdeeds. Following are some traditions that shed light on this issue:

1. Im m Ab al-Hasan al-K zim (as) is reported to have said:

"Indeed, All®h (the invincible and exalted) says: Indeed I did not enrich the affluent one due to a nobility in him, nor did I make the poor needy due to his insignificance; [Rather] I tried the affluent ones with the destitute; and were there no poor people, the rich ones would not deserve Paradise."15

2. In his noble ascent to the heavens (*al-mi'r*), it is reported that Almighty All haddressing the Prophet (s) at one point said:

"Indeed among My believing servants there are believers whom nothing save affluence (*al-ghin*) can reform, and were I to change their state to other than that, they would perish; and indeed from among my believing servants there are those whom nothing save poverty can reform, and were I to change their state to other than that they would perish."

Judging Ourselves

In order to determine which boat we are sailing in and to which category among the two kinds of poverty we belong, it is important for us to have a yardstick for distinction. How can we determine whether we suffer from the abominable poverty or the recommended one? There is a tradition narrated from Im®m 'Al® (as) as follows:

لِلّهِ تَعَالَى فِيْ خَلْقِهِ مَثُوْبَاتُ فَقْرٍ وَعُقُوْبَاتُ فَقْرٍ، فَمِنْ عَلاَمَةِ الْفَقْرِ إِذَا كَانَ مَثُوْبَةً أَنْ يَشْكُو حَالَهُ، وَيَشْكُرَ اللّهَ تَعَالَى عَلَى فَقْرِهِ. وَمِنْ عَلاَمَةِ الْفَقْرِ إِذَا كَانَ عُقُوْبَةً أَنْ يَسُوْءَ عَلَيْهِ خُلْقُهُ، وَيَعْصِي فَيْهِ رَبّهُ، وَيُكْثِرَ وَمِنْ عَلاَمَةِ الْفَقْرِ إِذَا كَانَ عُقُوْبَةً أَنْ يَسُوْءَ عَلَيْهِ خُلْقُهُ، وَيَعْصِي فَيْهِ رَبّهُ، وَيُكْثِرَ وَمِنْ الشَّكَايَةَ، وَيتسْخَط القَضَاء، وَهَذَا النَّوْعُ مِنَ الْفَقْرِ هُوَ الَّذِيْ اسْتَعَاذَ مِنْهُ النَّبِيّ الشَّكَايَة، وَيتسْخَط القَضَاء، وَهَذَا النَّوْعُ مِنَ الْفَقْرِ هُوَ الَّذِيْ اسْتَعَاذَ مِنْهُ النَّبِيّ صَلّى اللّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآله.

"Allsh, the Exalted, has rewards and punishments of poverty in his creation. Among the signs of poverty when it is a reward is when one has a beautiful character, obeys His Lord, does not complain about his poor state, and thanks Allsh for his poverty; and among the signs of poverty when it is a punishment is when one is of unpleasant character, is disobedient of his Lord, frequently complains about his situation, and is not happy with what Allsh has ordained for him. And this is the kind of the poverty that the Holy

The Blessed State Of Ridh

Although we have many traditions indicating how the pious believers would undergo poverty and face difficulties in life, one should not consider 'the state of poverty' always as a distinction for them. The criteria to judge what is good for whom, is All®h's decision and choice. Therefore, even if one was able to bear the difficulties of poverty, he should not consider it always recommended for him. Consider the following tradition:

وَقَدْ وَرَدَ: أَنَّ الإِمَامَ مُحَمَدَ بْنَ عَلِيّ أَلْبَاقِرَ (ع) قَالَ لِجَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الأَنْصَارِي ـ وَقَدْ إِكْتَنَفَتْهُ عِلَلٌ وَأَسْقَامٌ وَغَلَبَهُ ضَعْفُ الْهَرَمِ: كَيْفَ تَجِدُ حَالَك؟ قَالَ: أَنَا فِي حَالٍ أَلْفَقْرُ أَحَبُ إِلَيَّ مِنَ الْصِحَّةِ، وَالْمَوْتُ أَحَبُ إِلَيَّ مِنَ الْصِحَّةِ، وَالْمَوْتُ أَهْلُ الْبَيْت، فَمَا يَرِدُ عَلَينَا مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْفَقْرِ وَالْغِنَى وَالْمَرضِ وَالصِحَّةِ وَالْمَوْتِ وَالْحَياةِ، فَهُو أَحَبُ إِلَيْنَا. فَقَامَ جَابِرُ الْفَقْرِ وَالْغِنَى وَالْمَرضِ وَالصِحَّةِ وَالْمَوْتِ وَالْحَياةِ، فَهُو أَحَبُ إلَيْنَا. فَقَامَ جَابِرُ وَقَالَ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ، وَقَالَ: صَدَقَ رَسُولُ اللّهِ (ص) حَيْثُ قَالَ لِي: يَا جَابِرُ: سَتُدْرِكُ وَقَالَ: صَدَقَ رَسُولُ اللّهِ (ص) حَيْثُ قَالَ لِي: يَا جَابِرُ: سَتُدْرِكُ وَقَالَ.

"Once Im®m al-B®qir (as) is reported to have asked J®bir bin 'Abdill®h al-Ans®r® while the latter was not well and the weakness of old age had overtaken him: 'How do you find your state?' J®bir said: 'Poverty is more lovable to me than affluence, illness is more lovable to me than well-being, and death is more lovable to me than life.' Thereupon Im®m al-B®qir (as) said: 'As for us, the Ahlu'l Bayt (as), however, we love whatever comes to us from All®h, whether poverty, affluence, sickness, well-being, death or life.' J®bir thereupon stood and kissed the Im®m (as) between the two eyes and said: 'The Messenger of All®h said the truth when he said to me: 'O J®bir, you will soon meet one of my offsprings, his name is my name, he would split the knowledge a thorough splitting.'"17

So Many Shi'as?

There are numerous traditions that outline the criteria for identifying a true follower of the Holy Prophet (s) and his infallible household. Due to the limited scope of this work, all this cannot be analyzed here. However, due to the relevance of the subject, we would like to quote one such tradition that clearly reveals what kind of relation a true She has with regard to his believing brethren. Al-Kef narrates 18 a tradition from Abe Isme's who is reported to have said:

"I said to Ab® Ja'far (as): may I be made your ransom; surely there are many Sh® ahs among us. He said: 'And do the rich among them have a soft heart for the poor, and the good-doer forgive the faults of the evil doer, and do they have concern for one another? I said: No. Thereupon he (as) said: These are not our Sh® ahs; our Shi ahs are those who do all that."

- 1. Manifestations of the All-Merciful, v. 1, pp. 16-26
- 2. And getting deeper we come to realize that in reality we only have One Being and His Actions, which form His Creation and manifest His Most Beautiful Names
- 3. Forty Traditions, pg. 578
- 4. Sharh Du' al-Sab h, pg. 137
- 5. 'Uddat al-De'e wa Najeh al-Se'e, v. 1, pg. 123
- 6. al-Sahifah al-Sajiidiyyah, Supg. 10, pg. 41
- 7. Mafeteh al-Jinen, v. 1, pg. 88
- 8. Bih r al-Anw r, v. 96, pg. 31
- 9. al-Kff, v. 1, pg. 25
- 10. lbid., v. 1, pg. 29
- 11. Mustadrak al-Was il, v. 12, pg. 68
- 12. Maftth al-Jintn, v. 1, pg. 17
- 13. Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim, pg. 370
- 14. Holy Qur'n, 26:88-89
- 15. al-Kff, v. 2, pg. 265
- 16. Riy d al-Stlik n, v. 2, pg. 390
- 17. J@mi' al-Sa'@d@t, v. 2, pg. 21
- 18. al-Kff, v. 2, pg. 173

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