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Ayat no. 66–68

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

And if We please We would certainly put out their eyes, then they would run about groping for the way, but how should they see? And if We please We would surely transform them in their place, then they would not be able to go on, nor will they return. And whomsoever We cause to live long, We reduce (him) to an abject state in constitution; do they not then understand?
(36:66–68)

[Haste in punishment to prevent the convict from flight](#)

So far we have discussed upto the point where God mentions two kinds of chastisements for the disbelievers. It is also a warning to those whom God gave eyes to see the signs of God and take lesson. He made you look at the growing of vegetables from the earth, to understand the Might of God.

At the end of this Surah, He says that such seeing should give you the proof of the hereafter. But what a pity that they normally drown themselves in the bounties but never see the One Who gave these bounties!

Verily a man to whom God gave eyes but he does not see and observe the signs of God's Might deserves that he should be blinded. So He says, "They are such that their eyes should be wiped out." Man is born with under-developed senses like an insect, which only has the feelings of touch and taste. He gains other faculties gradually.

At the end of his life he again, if he gets a long life, becomes like a newborn child. His sight and hearing go away and his memory stops functioning. God, Who takes away these powers gradually in the old age of man, can do this in an instant in the Hereafter.

Moreover just as these verses are arguments for the former people, they are for Muslims also so that they may take lesson.

Benefit from the bounty of youth

O Youths! Who have not yet reached the old age, derive benefit from the bounty of youth. Your body is perfect and healthy. As long as your ears function, listen to the sermons of knowledge and morals. So far as your eyes can see, look at the signs of God and take lessons, read traditions and Quran. So long as your legs are working, attend and go to the gatherings of knowledge and see learned people and attend masjids and Holy graves.

Gain honor, be it in genuflection (Rukoo), prostration or while standing in Prayer. In every condition take benefit of the God-given strength.

Imam Sadiq ('a) reportedly, used to recite the recitations of bowings and prostrations etc. five hundred times (the narrator says that he counted only this much). It is mentioned in *Kashful Ghummah* that Imam Sajjad ('a) used to recite words of divine glorification and submission a thousand times. But as the age advances, this strength does not remain. Man is not able to arise at mid-night in winter, to make ablution and try to remain in prostration for an hour.

Make the most of five things before the arrival of their opposites

It is quoted in Majlisi's *Ainul Hayat* that the Holy Prophet ('s) once said, "O Abu Zar! Take benefit of five things before you face their opposites. Youth before old age," Religious responsibility starts from the beginning till at the most thirty-three or forty years of age.

Beyond forty it is old age. O those who have not reached forty! Appreciate your youthfulness. Do not spend your prime life in wrongdoing. Inability in childhood, mischief making in youth and weakness in old age! When would you worship God?

Take full benefit of your needlessness before you enter the state of neediness. Before you are unable to do things, do as many good deeds as possible. A man who is healthy and safe must make most of these bounties before they are taken away from him or he falls ill.

One of the scholars fell in trouble. He was unable to speak as he was in a coma. O those who are able to move your tongues easily! Remember that a time will come when you will want to utter the Kalima (Testimony of faith) or a word by your tongue but you will not be able to do so. So take benefit of your ability now.

A man faces several calamities in his life. One who is well to do now should make provision for the onward journey towards God by remembering Him more and more. He should act before he is disabled.

The most important matter is that man must make the most of his life before his death. Every breath is a pearl, which leads you towards God as mentioned in a supplication of Imam Zainul Aabedeen ('a). Seek it from God in right earnest.

My Lord! Kindly make me successful in what I will be asked tomorrow on the Day of Judgment. Give me respite in the few years, which are left from my life so that I may pass them completely in Your worship and in Your service.

God makes you strong from a weak state and again returns you to weakness

From the first moment of conception in womb, from the very start of creation, it is strengthening and gaining of physical abilities. Man's creation is complete after four months. Then, after the blowing of spirit in the body, the baby gets strength to be born physically.

Surely We have created man from a small life-germ uniting (itself): We mean to try him, so We have made him hearing, seeing. (76:2)

The last period of attaining strength, as per a narration from Imam Sadiq ('a), is the age of thirty-three. Perhaps, it is so in most cases. One who attains the age of thirty-three years is the one for whom it is said: He has reached the age of perfection.

It is stagnation from the age of thirty-three to forty years, during which the strength neither increases nor decreases. After this, it is the downward line on graph, the arch showing a marked decline of strength.

“Nakasa” in Arabic means returning or coming back. Now one returns to weakness after gaining strength. Just as his strength was growing year after year upto the age of thirty-three, now after forty, it goes on decreasing. Whatever was given to him is now being taken back:

Allah is He Who created you from a state of weakness then He gave strength after weakness, then ordained weakness and hoary hair after strength... (30:54)

The teeth, which grew from childhood, now begin to weaken. “Nakasa” in creation means growing weakness in the body. It may reach to such an extent that one becomes absolutely senseless knowing nothing.

And Allah has created you, then He causes you to die, and of you is he who is brought back to the worst part of life, so that after having knowledge he does not know anything... (16:70)

Weakness shows up year after year or even earlier

Some have mentioned that from the age of forty it is declining and taking away of strength and ability, which man can see himself in his appearance year after year. For example, if one takes his photograph

at the age of forty-one and if he looks at his physical features after a year comparing it with the previous year's photo, he would notice the weakness himself. This decline can be seen every month between fifty and sixty years.

By the passing of every month one notices his weakness. This downward trend can then be seen on a weekly basis from the age of sixty to seventy years. Then from seventy to eighty years one can observe this change on a daily basis. From eighty to ninety years it is noticed every hour. After that there is decline with every breath.

Then, if he still remains alive he again becomes like a baby. All his faculties are gone and he understands nothing. Such is the case most of the time. Of course, some see this decline even before forty and in others it is after a long time. But, according to a tradition of the Holy Prophet (s), "The life span of most of my Ummah is between sixty and seventy years."¹

Another narration says that those who are between sixty and seventy are in the battlefield of death. There is a tradition in vol. 3 of *Biharul Anwar* wherein the narrator says, "We were with Imam Sadiq (a) on the outskirts of Medina. The Imam looked at Uhad Mountain and asked the narrator, 'Can you see the crevice in the mountain?'

'Yes sir', I replied. The Imam said, 'But I can see it no more.' When I asked, "What happened?" He replied, "I have become old. Weak eyesight is a sign of old age. The second sign is the bending of back and the third feebleness of legs."

So understand that you are in control of God

...do they not then understand? (36:68)

The first thing to be understood by man is this weakness, which proves that he is under the absolute control of God.

And He is the Supreme, above His servants... (6:61)

It is clear to you where He brought you from your cradle and then again brought you back towards weakness. Therefore, know that you are under nourishment of someone else Who makes you youthful and then makes you aged; Who gives you strength and then takes it back. It is not in your control.

Three wishes of the prince

In the details about Alexander, it is mentioned that he once asked the prince of a country annexed by him, "Be my attendant and come along with me. I will give you whatever you ask." The prince said, "I

have only three needs if you can fulfill them. Firstly make me retain my youth forever.” “I cannot do that for myself,” confessed Alexander. The prince continued, “Secondly, ensure that I remain healthy and strong and lastly, make me immortal.” Alexander said, “I cannot provide any of these and neither can anyone else.”

All this is by the Source of Power, God Himself. All doctors with all their medical appliances, aids and equipments cannot stop, defer, or postpone death. So everyone should know that they are helpless servants in total control of God alone.

Allah sets forth a parable: (consider) a slave, the property of another, (who) has no power over anything... (16:75)

Attain good abilities by forty

Do you not ponder over your weakness and frailty so that you may realize that the giver and recollector, the preserver, the bestower of strength and the confiscator is He and only He? Stop being egoistic as you are actually a subject ruled over by the Supreme King, that is Allah; so your attitude and behavior should also be like that of a subject.

Also do you not realize from this decline of strength that this would finally end in death? So, until you reach the age of decline make the most of your strength. During the remaining years of your life, provide oil for the lamp of life, which would be put out some day; so that when it is off you may have something with you.

Before the end of your life, do something for yourself. That is why it is said, “Toil until you have not reached the age of forty.” Cultivate good habits and desired virtues. Be an intelligent servant and subject. Whatever you earn by the age of forty will remain with you thereafter.

1. Biharul Anwar, vol. 3

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