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Divine Love in the Supplications of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)

The Relation with Allah

"Say, 'If your fathers and your sons, your brethren, your spouses, and your kinsfolk, the possessions that you have acquired, the business you fear may suffer, and the dwellings you are fond of, are dearer to you than Allah and His Apostle and to waging *jihad* in His way, then wait until Allah issues His edict, and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot."1

The correct form of relation ('alaqat) with Allah, the Exalted, develops as a result of the coming together of a number of harmonious elements.

The Islamic sources reject the idea that the relation with Allah should be established based on a single element only, such as fear, hope, love, or humility. Rather they regard such a relation as one devoid of equilibrium and harmony.

There is a wide range of elements that make up the correct form of relation with Allah. Some of these have been mentioned in detail in the verses of the Qur'an, the traditions and supplications.

Some of these elements are: hope in Allah (*raja*'), fear of Him (*khawf*), pleading before Him (*tadarru*'), humility toward Him (*khushu*'), lowliness before Him (*tadhallul*), love of him (*hubb*), yearning for Him (*shawq*), intimacy with Him (*uns*), returning to Him (*inabah*), dedication to Him (*tabattul*), pleading for His forgiveness (*istighfar*), seeking protection from Him (*isti'adhah*), beseeching His mercy (*istirham*), total absorption in Allah (*inqta'*), extolling Him (*tamjid*), praising Him (*hamd*), craving for Him (*raghbah*), obedience to Him (*ta'ah*), His servanthood (*'ubudiyyah*), His remembrance (*dhikr*), neediness to Him (*faqr*), and holding fast to Him (*i'tisam*).

Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) says in a supplication, "O Allah, I ask You to fill my heart with love of You, awe of You, belief in You, faith in You, fear of You, and yearning toward You."2

A harmonious spectrum for establishing a relation with Allah is constituted of these various elements mentioned above. Each of these elements is to be considered a key to a door out of the doors of Allah's mercy and recognition (*ma'rifah*). For instance, beseeching Him for His mercy is the key to His mercy, as pleading for His forgiveness is the key to His forgiveness.

Moreover, each one of these elements is, in itself, to be regarded as a path leading toward Allah. Thus, one's yearning for Him, love for Him and intimacy with Him, is a path which leads one to Allah. Fear and awe of Him is another path leading to Him. Humility toward Him (*khushu*') is yet a third path to Him. Entertaining hope in Him and invoking Him is also another path arriving at Him.

Accordingly, one should make his way to Allah through different paths, not confining himself to one single path. This is because each of the above mentioned paths has its own kind of aroma, taste, perfection, and fruition in one's journey toward Allah which is not be found in other paths.

As a result, Islam presents a pluralistic basis for the establishment of relation with Allah, the Exalted. However, this is a very wide topic in itself which we do not intend to discuss at the moment.

Love of Allah

The best of these elements, the most powerful, and the most efficient of them in binding one to Allah and strengthening his relation with Him is the 'love of Allah' (*hubb allah*). Among the different forms of relation with Allah, there is no form more powerful and effective than 'love' in consolidating the relation of a servant with Allah.

A comparison between the elements which make up the relation with Allah has appeared in a number of Islamic traditions. Some of them are as follows:

- 1. It is narrated that Allah, the Exalted, revealed to Prophet Dawud ('a) saying, "O Dawud! My remembrance (*dhikr*) is for those who remember Me (*dhakirin*), My paradise is for the obedient ones (*muti'in*), My love (*hubb*) is for those who yearn for Me (*mushtaqin*); while I am specifically for the lovers (*muhibbin*)."3
- 2. Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says: "Love is better than fear (khawf)."4
- 3. Muhammad bin Ya'qub al-Kulayni reports from Imam as-Sadiq ('a), "There are three types of worshippers ('ubbad'); a people who worship Allah, the All-mighty, the Majestic, out of fear; this is the worship of the slaves. A people who worship Allah, the Blessed, the Exalted, for reward; this is the worship of the merchants. And a people who worship Allah, the All-mighty, the Majestic, out of love; this is the worship of the free people, and it is the best kind of worship ('ibadah)."5
- 4. Al-Kulayni also narrates from Holy Prophet (S), "The best of the people is he who is passionately in love with worship (*'ibadah*), embraces it, loves it from his heart, applies his body to it and attends to it,

such that he is not bothered in which condition he is in this world, in difficulty or in ease."6

5. Imam as–Sadiq ('a) says: "The secret conversation of those who have attained thorough recognition of Allah ('arifin) revolves round three principles: fear (*khawf*), hope (*raja*'), and love (*hubb*). Fear is the subsidiary of knowledge ('*ilm*), hope is a subsidiary of certainty (*yaqin*), and love is a subsidiary of recognition (*ma'rifah*). The sign of fear is taking flight (*harab*) {from the anger of Allah}; the sign of hope is seeking (*talab*); and the sign of love is to give preference to the Beloved over everything other than Him.

Thus, when knowledge is actualized in the breast (*sadr*), he would have fear (*khawf*); and when the fear gets firm, he would take flight (*harab*); and if he takes flight, he would attain salvation (*najat*); and when the light of certainty shines on his heart, he would witness the grace (*fadl*), and when he is able to see the grace, he would become hopeful; and when he experiences the sweetness of {the state of} hope, he would seek (*talaba*); and if he succeeds in seeking, he would find (*wajada*).

When the light of recognition (*ma'rifah*) is disclosed (*tajalla*) to the heart (*fu'ad*), the breeze of love is stirred up (*haja*); and when the breeze of love is stirred up, he would become intimate with the patronage (*dilal*) of the Beloved, and prefer him over everything other than Him, and carry out His orders.

The parable of these three principles is that of the holy Sanctuary (*haram*), the sacred Mosque (*al-masjid*), and the *kaʻbah*; whoever enters the *haram* would be safe from the creatures; and whoever enters the *masjid* his limbs would be guarded from being employed by him in sinning; and whoever enters the *kaʻbah* his heart would be protected from being occupied by him with the remembrance of other than Allah."7

- 6. The Holy Prophet (S) is related to have said, "Prophet Shu'ayb ('a) wept out of love of Allah, the Allmighty, the Majestic, until he lost his sight..., so Allah revealed onto him saying, 'O Shu'ayb! If this was out of fear of the Fire, then I have protected you from it; and if it was out of eagerness for the Heaven, then I have permitted you {to enter it}.' So he said, 'O Allah, O my Master, You are aware that I did not weep out of fear of Your fire, nor out of eagerness for Your heaven, but {because} Your love has engaged my heart such that I cannot endure {it} until I see You.' So Allah, the Majestic, revealed to him saying, 'If this is the case, then because of this I will make the one who spoke to Me (*kalimi*), Musa bin 'Imran, to be at your service."8
- 7. A phrase in the book of Prophet Idris ('a) read, "Blessed are a people who worshipped Me out of love, and took Me as {their} lord and nourisher, and kept awake at night and persisted during daytime in acquiring My pleasure without fear or eagerness, nor out of fear of the Fire or aspiration of the Heaven, but due to {their} sincere love, firm resolution, and detachment from all other Me."9

Imam al-Husayn ('a) says in the supplication of 'arafah, "Blind is the eye which does not see You watchful over itself, and the bargain of a servant for whom You have not allotted a share from Your love is in loss." 10

Belief and Love

It has appeared in the Islamic sources that belief is nothing but love. Imam al-Baqir ('a) says: "Belief (*Iman*) is love (*hubb*) and hatred (*bughd*)."11

Fudayl bin Yasar reports, "I asked Abu 'Abdillah {as-Sadiq} about love and hatred whether they are part of belief. He replied, 'And is *Iman* other than love and hatred?" 12

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) has also said, "Is religion (*din*) other than love? Allah, the All-mighty, the Majestic, says: 'Say, 'If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you.' 13" 14

Imam al-Baqir ('a) is reported to have said, "Religion is the love, and love is the religion." 15

The Pleasure of Love

If worship is out of love, eagerness and yearning, then there is no pleasure and sweetness above it. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a), who is among those who had tasted the sweetness of love and remembrance of Allah, says: "O Allah... how pleasant is the taste of Your love, and how sweet is the drink of Your proximity." 16

Indeed such a sweetness and pleasure dwells in the hearts of the friends (*awliya'*) of Allah. It is not something which occurs to them at times and goes away at other times. When the sweetness of the love of Allah settles in the heart of a person, then such a heart is the one inhabited by the love of Allah. And Allah shall never punish a heart inhabited by His love and in which the sweetness of His love has settled.

Imam 'Ali ('a) says: "O Allah, by Your might and glory, I have loved You with a love whose sweetness has settled in my heart. And the hearts of those who confess Your Oneness cannot believe that You hate Your lovers." 17

Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a) says regarding this steady and established state of the Divine love, "By Your might, O my Master, even if You drive me away, I will not leave Your door, and I will not cease to compliment You, because of what I have come to know of Your generosity and kindness." 18

This is one of the most eloquent expressions describing the profundity of love and its abiding in the heart, such that it would not disappear from it or change even if his Master were to drive him away and distance him from His proximity. And far it is from Him that He should do that with a servant in whose heart His love has dwelt.

When one experiences the taste of the love of Allah, and the pleasure of intimacy with Him, he would not prefer anything over Him. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a), the leader of the lovers, says: "O Allah, who can have tasted the sweetness of Your love, then wanted another in place of You? And who can have

become intimate with Your nearness, then sought removal from You?"19

The reason behind the difference of the people in relation to their goals and views about life is that they are deprived of the pleasure of the love of Allah. Otherwise those who have experienced such a pleasure do not seek anything else in life after this.

In the supplication of 'arafah, Imam Husayn bin 'Ali ('a) says: "What has he found one who has lost You? And what has he lost one who has found You?"20

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) seeks forgiveness from Allah for every pleasure other than the pleasure of the love of Allah, and for every occupation other than the remembrance of Allah, and from every happiness other than that of the proximity to Allah; not because Allah has prohibited His servants from all this, rather because of the fact that all this is the result of the distraction of one's heart from Allah, and of its occupation with other than His remembrance even for a short time; whereas a heart which has experienced the pleasure of the love of Allah is never distracted from Him.

In fact, the dynamic force behind every action and endeavour in the life of the friends of Allah is the love of Allah, the Exalted, His remembrance and obedience. Anything beside this is seen as diversion from Allah. Hence, Imam as–Sajjad ('a) seeks Allah's forgiveness for all this and says: "I pray forgiveness from You for every pleasure other than that of Your remembrance, and for every ease other than that of intimacy with You, and for every happiness other than that of proximity to You, and for every occupation other than obeying You."21

Love Compensates the Deficiency of the Deed

Love is never dissociated from action ('amal). The sign of he who has fallen in love is action, activity and endeavour. However, on the other hand, love compensates the inability of a deed and mediates for the performer of that deed, as love is an effective intercessor before Allah, the Exalted.

In his lofty supplication at dawn famously known as the supplication of *abu hamzah ath-thumali*, Imam al-Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) says: "My recognition, O my Master, is that which guides me to You, and my love is my intercessor to You, and I trust my evidence since You have guided me {to it}, and I am comfortable with my intercessor since You will accept it."22

In fact, the best of evidences (*dalil*) and intercessors (*shafi'*) are recognition (*ma'rifah*) and love (*hubb*). Accordingly, one whose evidence to Allah is *ma'rifah* shall never be misguided, and he whose intercessor with Allah is *hubb* shall never fail to reach the Divine presence.

Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn, ('a) says: "O Allah, You are indeed aware that though my obedience to you has not been persistent in practice, but it has endured in love and determination."

These words are in fact a subtle indication to the fact that one's obedience (ta'ah) to Allah may at times

fall short of the desired standard, and, as a result, it might not be possible for him to rely upon his obedience of Allah. But that in which the lovers (*muhibbin*) never entertain doubt is their certainty (*yaqin*) in that they do love Allah, the Exalted, and their determination ('azm) on moving on the path of love and obedience.

And one who has experienced the love of Allah within himself would never doubt in this fact; for it is possible that a servant may show negligence in obeying Allah practically, as sometimes he may embark on something which is disliked by Allah; but that which is not imaginable, even while he is indulged in the wrongdoing, is his dislike for Allah's obedience and his love for sinning.

In short, the bodily parts may slip and fall into sins, as *shaitan* and one's own lowly desires (*hawa*) may gradually entice them into it; or they may fall short of the desired degree of obedience. But what is certain is that nothing other than the love of Allah, the love of obeying Him, and the abhorrence of disobedience to Him, enters the heart of the righteous ones (*salihin*).

The above point is brilliantly reflected in the following phrase of a supplication, "O Allah, I love obeying You even though I have fallen short of it; and I dislike disobeying You even though I have embarked on it; so be gracious to me in granting me the Heaven."23

And this is in fact the split between the bodily instruments (*jawarih*) and the instruments of the soul (*jawanih*). The bodily parts sometimes fail to accompany the instruments of the heart, but the *jawanih* of the righteous ones solely belong to Allah and always succumb to the love of Allah.

However, if the heart (*qalb*) attains a higher state of purity and sincerity, then the bodily parts would have no way but to obey and submit to it. Rather, in such a case, the bodily instruments would abide with what the instruments of the soul command them and want from them. At this point, the split between the *jawarih* and the *jawanih* shall disappear as a result of the sincerity the heart has attained.

Love of Allah Protects Man from the Punishment

If sins cause a person to fall in the eyes of Allah and expose him to His punishment, the love of Allah protects one from His chastisement.

Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) says in a whispered prayer (*munajat*), "O Allah, my sins have indeed frightened me, but my love of You has given me protection."24

Levels of Love

The hearts of people are at different levels and stages in relation to the love of Allah. Among the instances of love is a love which is so superficial and weak that it remains unnoticed even by the lover himself. And yet among its instances is the love which fills the heart of a person such that it does not leave any empty space in it for other things, things which people take as amusement and which occupy

their time from the remembrance of Allah.

There is another level of love in which one is not satisfied with the remembrance of Allah and with standing before Him; the thirst of his heart is not quenched by remembering Him, invoking Him, praying to Him, and performing good deeds for His sake, however long his standing and prayer before Him might be.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says in a supplication, "My Master, I am hungry of Your love such that I can never feel satiated; and I am thirsty of Your love such that it cannot be quenched. Oh my yearning for He who sees me while I am unable to see Him."

In the whispered prayer of *al-muftaqirin* (the utterly poor), Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) says: "Nothing will... cool my burning thirst but reaching You, quench my ardour but meeting You, damp my yearning but gazing upon Your face."25

Among the other signs of the love of Allah is passionate love (*walah*) and burning thirst (*hiyam*) for Him. A phrase in the *Ziyarat* of *aminullah* reads, "O Allah, indeed the hearts of those who surrender to You are full of passionate love."

In his *munajat* of *adh-dhakirin* (the rememberers), Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) says: "O Allah, love-mad hearts are enraptured by You... hearts find no serenity except in remembering You, souls find no rest except in seeing You."26

This is, in fact, the characteristic of the love-mad hearts and those burning in Allah's love that they do not find rest and security except in Allah's remembrance.

And among the more beautiful and more profound kind of love is what we find in the words of Amir al–Mu'minin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) in the supplication of *kumayl*. He says: "...Then suppose, O Allah, my Master, my Protector and my Lord, that I am able to endure Your chastisement, how can I endure *separation from You*? And suppose that I am able to endure the heat of Your Fire, how can I endure not gazing upon Your generosity? Or how can I dwell in the Fire while my hope is Your pardon?"

This expression is among the most brilliant gestures of love and the most sincere of it; assume that a servant could endure the punishment of the Fire of his Master, how can he bear His separation and anger? A lover may endure the punishment of his Master, but he cannot endure His anger and outrage. As he might bear the fire of hell which is the most severe of the punishments, but he cannot bear separation from Him. And how can a servant be at rest amidst the fire of hell while he hopes that his Master would turn to him favourably and rescue him from it?

Of the magnificent picture presented in this lofty supplication is that 'love' and 'hope' are two things which never part the heart of the servant of Allah, even at the time when he is being driven into the fire of hell as a result of the wrath of Allah.

A servant might love his Master while he is drowned amidst His bounties and grace. This is indeed a form of love. But a love above which there is no love is the one in which love and hope do not part the heart of a servant even when he is admitted to the punishment of his Master.

Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) says in the supplication of *abu hamzah ath-thumali*, "By Your might, O my Master, even if You were to drive me away, I would not leave Your door, and I would not cease to compliment You, because of what I have come to know of Your generosity and the vastness of Your mercy. To whom can a servant go apart from his Master? Whom can a creature seek refuge with other than his Creator?

O Allah, even if You tied me with the chains {of hell}, and deprived me from among the people {present on that day} Your flowing streams {of favours}, and pointed out my scandals to the eyes of Your servants, and ordered me to the Fire, and separated me from the righteous ones, {still} I would not lose hope in You, nor would I dismiss my anticipation of Your pardon, nor would Your love depart from my heart..."

This is the most pure and sincere form of love, hope and aspiration which does not depart from the heart of the servant of Allah even if he is tied in chains, deprived of the favours of Allah, and his misdeeds disclosed by Him before the people.

Now let us continue to study the remarkable forms of love and hope described by Imam 'Ali ('a) in the supplication of *Kumayl*:

"By Your might, O my Master and Protector, I swear sincerely that if You were to leave me with speech, I would lament before You, from the midst of inhabitants of the Fire, with the lamentation of the hopeful; I would cry to You with the cry of those crying for help; I would weep before You with the weeping of the bereft; I would call upon You: 'Where are You, O Sponsor of the believers, O Goal of the hopes of Your knowers, O Aid of those who seek assistance, O Friend of the hearts of the sincere, and O Lord of the worlds.

Tell me –glory be to You O Allah, and Your's is the praise, can You hear from the Fire the voice of a slave imprisoned in it because of his disobedience, suffering the pangs of its torment because of his wrongdoings, and confined within its levels because of his sin and crime, while he {still} laments before You with the lament of one hopeful of Your mercy, calls upon You with the tongue of those who profess Your Oneness, and entreats You by Your Lordship?

O my Master, so how could he remain in the punishment while he has hope for Your previous clemency? Or how could the Fire cause him pain while he expects Your bounty and mercy? Or how could its flames burn him while You hear his voice and see his place? Or how could its groaning encompass him while You know his weakness? Or how could he be convulsed among its levels while You know his sincerity? Or how could its keepers torture him while he calls out to You: O Lord? Or how could he have hope of Your grace in freeing him from it while You abandon him in it?

Far it be from You! That is not what is expected of You, nor what is well-known of Your grace, nor is it similar to the goodness and kindness You have shown to those who have professed Your Oneness. So I declare with certainty that were it not for what You have decreed about punishing Your deniers, and what You have decided about making those who stubbornly resist You abide {in the Fire} forever, You would have made the Fire, all of it, cool and safe, and no one would have had a place and abode in it."

Once a respected friend of mine told me that heroism and bravery stem from the very person of 'Ali ('a), such that they do not part him even during prayers before the Lord of the worlds. Here he is, imagining in the supplication *kumayl* that the Fire has embraced a sinful servant and surrounded him from all sides, still he does not stay quiet and submit to the chastisement, as is the case with he who has been encircled by the punishment and surrounded by its keepers. Rather, he laments, cries out, shouts and calls out.

Do not you see how he describes this situation while invoking Allah? "By Your might, O my Master and Protector, I swear sincerely that if You were to leave me with speech, I would lament before You, from the midst of inhabitants of the Fire, with the lamentation of the hopeful; I would cry to You with the cry of those crying for help; I would weep before You with the weeping of the bereft; I would call upon You: 'Where are You, O Sponsor of the believers…'"

I said to him that you have not been able to get the right taste of the speech of 'Ali ('a); for if he was intending to say what you have understood, then he would not have said in the beginning of this part of his speech "If You leave me with speech..." As for me, I regard the inner state of 'Ali ('a) –while he utters these words before Allah– as that of a small child who has not known a place of refuge and protection in this world but the affectionate, kindness, love, and the compassion of her mother; such that whenever something befalls her or harms her, she would immediately seek refuge with her mother and call for her help.

Likewise, if she were to make a mistake that would expose her to her punishment, then she would look around herself for a shelter. And if she could not find any place of refuge other than her mother, she would take shelter in her and ask for her help, in the same manner as she would do in the case when a stranger intends to harm her.

This is precisely the state of 'Ali ('a) in this supplication. He ('a) had learned with his great heart and the vast horizons of his insight to take refuge with Allah, the Exalted, and call Him for help; as he ('a) did not know anyone other than Him as a refuge and shelter.

He, the Glorious, is his only shelter and refuge, as he does not know anyone other than Him. Accordingly, when he imagines that Allah has surrounded him with His punishment, he does not hesitate, even for a moment, to take refuge and shelter with Him, and ask for His help and aid, as he used to do every time. Is not He, the Glorious, his only refuge and shelter? If He is, then why should he be hesitant this time to ask for His help?!

Describing this point, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a) says in the *munajat* of *at-Ta'ibin* (the repenters), "O Allah... if You cast me out from Your door, in whom shall I take shelter? If You repel me from Your side, in whom shall I seek refuge?...O Allah, does an escaped slave return but to his Master? Or does anyone other than Him protect him from His anger?"27

Also in the supplication of *abu hamzah ath-thumali*, he ('a) says: "And O my Master, I seek refuge with Your grace, and I escape from You to You." In another place he says: "To whom shall a servant go beside his Master? And with whom other than his Creator shall a creature take refuge?" 29

"Escaping from Allah to Allah" is among the subtle meanings and concepts in the 'relation' of a servant with Allah, as the sensation described by 'Ali ('a) in the relation of a servant with Allah is among the most subtle and sincere of the 'feelings' of love and hope in the hearts of the lovers.

What is worthy of note here is that in this phrase of the supplication, 'Ali ('a) is not employing a poetic language by taking help of the imagination (*khiyal*) to complete the painting of this beautiful picture in this supplication. Rather, he is absolutely sincere in expressing before Allah his feelings and sensations. And it is for this very reason that immediately after bringing in the concept of the 'servant's call for help to his Lord' he follows it with that of 'Allah's help to His servant'.

Based on what we know of Allah's mercy and grace, it is not possible for Him to disappoint such a sincere and pure feeling of love and hope of the servant, rejecting his 'love' for Him and dashing his 'hope' in Him. With regard to this, Imam 'Ali ('a) says: "...How could he remain in the punishment while he has hope for Your previous clemency?

Or how could the Fire cause him pain while he expects Your bounty and mercy? Or how could its flames burn him while You hear his voice and see his place? Or how could its groaning encompass him while You know his weakness? Or how could he be convulsed among its levels while You know his sincerity? Or how could its keepers torture him while he calls out to You 'O Lord'?"

Is it then possible that the keepers of the hell fire would drive him to the Fire and torture him in it, while he calls out 'O Lord' and seeks shelter in Him with the tongue of those who profess His Oneness? Nay! What has preceded in our lives of His clemency and grace sharply and absolutely negates this.

Interestingly, the Imam ('a) argues through the clemency of Allah for His clemency, and through His grace for His grace, "...while he has hope for Your previous clemency?" The Imam ('a) is decisive regarding this side of the issue, that is, the 'decsending part' in the relation of Allah with His servant, as he is equally decisive and assertive regarding the other side of the issue, that is, the 'ascending part' in the relation of a servant with Allah.

Thus, as he was decisive in the fact that the hearts which have tasted the sweetness of His love and hope would never part with it, and would never seek another love and hope in place of the love of Allah and hope in Him, even if the punishment of Allah were to encircle these hearts; similarly, he is decisive

in the fact that Allah cannot disappoint such a true love and hope which dwells in the hearts of the truthful ones (as-Sadigin).

Just contemplate the determination, decisiveness, and clarity in the speech of 'Ali ('a), "Far it be from You! That is not what is expected of You, nor what is well-known of Your grace, nor is it similar to the goodness and kindness You have shown to those who have professed Your Oneness.

So I declare with certainty that were it not for what You have decreed about punishing Your deniers, and what You have decided about making those who stubbornly resist You abide {in the Fire} forever, You would have made the Fire, all of it, cool and safe, and no one would have had a place and abode in it."

We find this determination and decisiveness in other words of 'Ali ('a) also when he talks about the ascending order of the relation, that is, the relation of the servant with his Master, as well as the descending order of the relation, that is, the relation of the Master with His servant.

In his famous whispered prayer, he addresses Allah, the Exalted, and says: "O Allah, by Your might and majesty, I have indeed loved You with a love whose sweetness has settled in my heart. And the hearts of those who confess Your Oneness cannot believe that You hate Your lovers."30

In the *munajat* of *al-kha'ifin*, Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a) says: "O Allah, a soul which You have exalted by its professing Your unity, how will You humiliate it with the humiliation of Your separation; and a heart which is inhibited by Your love, how will You burn it in the heat of Your fire?"31

In his prayer at dawn during the holy month of Ramadan, famously known as the supplication *abu hamzah ath-thumali*, Imam as-Sajjad ('a) says: "Would You, O Allah, ever disappoint our thoughts or let down our hopes? Nay, never, O Most Generous, this is not how we think about You, nor is it what we expect from You. O Allah, we have a greater and ever lasting hope in You, we have a great hope in You…"

The State of Yearning and Intimacy in Love

Love manifests itself in two ways; at times, it manifests itself in form of 'yearning' (*shawq*), and at other times, in form of 'intimacy' (*uns*). Both states are a description of 'love', with the difference that the state of *shawq* occurs to the lover when he is away from the beloved, while the state of *uns* occurs to him when he is in the presence of the beloved.

The above two states occur to the heart of a person in relation to Allah, the Exalted. This is because Allah has two kinds of disclosure (*tajalli*). Sometimes He discloses Himself for a person from a distance, and at times He does so from a close up:

"... who is far and thus cannot be seen, but is close and thus witnesses secret conversations..."32

If Allah discloses Himself to a person from a distance, the state of 'yearning' occurs to him; and if He discloses Himself to him from close up such that he feels himself in the presence of his Master, as the Qur'an says:

"And He is with you wherever you may be"33,

"And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein" 34,

"When My servants ask You about Me, {tell them that} I am indeed nearmost"35,

then the state of 'intimacy' occurs to him.

In the supplication of *al-iftitah*, which has reached us from Imam al-Hujjah al-Mahdi ('aj), there has appeared an accurate portrayal of the above two states, "All praise is due to Allah whose curtains can never be opened, and whose doors can never be locked…"

No doubt the one whose curtains can never be opened is the very one whose door can never be closed. But it makes great difference in understanding Allah through this perception or that.

Moreover, there are two kinds of veil (*hijab*), the veil of darkness, and the veil of light. Some of the time, what prevents one from seeing through is pitch dark and the intensity of the darkness. This is the veil of darkness (*hijab al–zulmah*).

But at other times, what stops one from seeing through is the intensity of light and its brilliance, as one cannot see the sun, not because of a barrier, but due to the intensity of its brilliance. This is the veil of light (*hijab an-nur*).

The veils of darkness in the relation of man with Allah are love of this world (*hubb ad-dunya*), committing sins, and that which sullies the heart; whilst the veil of light within this relation is something different. This is the veil which, according to Imam al-Hujjah ('aj) in the supplication of *al-iftitah*, can never be opened.

It is this veil which stirs up yearning (*shawq*) and longing (*lahfah*) in the hearts of the servants of Allah. Speaking of this yearning for Allah, Imam 'Ali bin al–Husayn Zayn al–'Abidin ('a) says in the whispered prayer of *al–muridin* (the devotees), "O Allah, nothing will cool my burning thirst but reaching You, quench my ardour but meeting You, damp my yearning but gazing upon Your face, settle my settling place without closeness to You, allay my worry but Your repose, cure my illness but Your medicine, eliminate my grief but Your nearness, heal my wound but Your forgiveness, remove the rust on my heart but Your pardon...

O utmost Hope of the hopers, O ultimate demand of the askers, O Highest desire of the desirers, O patron of the righteous, O Security of the fearful, O Responder to the supplication of the distressed, O Storehouse of the destitute, O Treasure of the pitiful..."36

In contrast to this disclosure, there is another type of disclosure, that is the disclosure of Allah to His servants without closing a door between them and Him, such that He listens to their secret prayer while He is nearer to them than their jugular vein, He intervenes between a man and his heart, and nothing of what enters into their hearts is concealed from Him.

Here it is that a servant feels that he is in the presence of his Master, and fears going against His commands and disobeying Him, develops intimacy with His remembrance, and finds tranquility in invoking Him and whispering to Him, prolongs His remembrance, secret prayer to Him, and standing before Him.

In a Divine Narration (*hadith al-qudsi*), Allah, the Exalted, says to some of His messengers, describing their prayer to Him in the darkness of the night while people are asleep, "Had you only seen them praying to Me in the darkness while I have become incarnate before their eyes, addressing Me while I am far above to be seen, and talking to Me while I cannot be {physically} present."37

As a result, a servant would not get wearied of standing before Allah, nor would he feel the passing of time. Have you not seen a man in the presence of a beloved whom he is fond of, does he get tired or perceive the passing of the time? Then what would be the case if a person feels that he is in the presence of Allah, hearing His speech and seeing Him, while He is with him, "And He is with you wherever you may be." 38 Thus, he would attain tranquility and rest only in the remembrance of Allah, "The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance." 39

Imam al-Mahdi ('aj) says in the supplication of *al-iftitah*, "So I began to call You trustingly, and ask You familiarly, neither fearing nor scared, pointing out to You that because of which I turned toward You."

No doubt that this state of intimacy with Allah, finding rest with Him, feeling safe under His shelter, is a state which springs forth from the feeling that one is in the presence, proximity and company of Allah, the Exalted. This is the best of the states a servant could ever be in before Allah. However, this state does not represent everything as far as the relation of man with Allah is concerned; rather the state of intimacy with Allah must be accompanied by the state of *shawq* (yearning) so that it may reach completion, be balanced and well–coordinated.

These two states are distinct in the worship ('ibadah) of the friends of Allah and the righteous ones, as they are distinct in their relation with Him. Thus, some of the time the attribute of shawq and longing (lahfah) for Allah is dominant over their worship and relation with Him; while at other times the attribute of intimacy (uns) and rest (sukun) becomes dominant over their worship, remembrance, and relation with Allah. And sometimes both attributes may dominate their worship, which is in fact the best and the healthiest of states, and the nearmost to the state of equilibrium and harmony in the relation with Allah.

Hammad bin Habib al-'Attar al-Kufi says: "We came out as pilgrims, and we left Zubalah at night. We were struck with a dark sandy storm as a result of which the caravan got dispersed. I lost my way in that desert and land until I reached an uninhabited valley. When night fell, I took shelter in an ordinary tree.

When it got completely dark, I suddenly saw a young man coming, wearing white tattered garment, with fragrance of musk emanating from him.

So I said to myself, 'This is one of Allah's friends.' Whenever he sensed any movement from me, I feared that he would go away, thus stopping him from a lot that he intended to do. So I hid myself as much as I could. He came near to the place and prepared himself for prayers. Then he stood up praying while he said, 'O He who has taken everything under His control, and who has conquered everything by His power; make the joy of turning toward You enter my heart, and admit me to the domain of those who obey You...' Then he began to offer prayers.

In the final hours of the night, he stood up and said, 'O He whom the seekers had aspired and found Him to be {their} guide, and the fearful sought refuge in and found Him to be full of grace, and the worshippers took shelter in Him and found Him to be the bestower {of favours}. When did he who erected his body for other than You find ease? And when has he become happy one who aspired other than You in intention? O Allah, the darkness is disappearing while I have not been able to accomplish even a little of Your service, and my whispering to You has been but inconsiderable. Send {Your} blessings on Muhammad and his Progeny, and do to me what is worthy of You out of the two things40, O Most Merciful of the merciful."

Hammad says: "I feared that his person may escape me and his trace may remain hidden to me, so I clinged to him and said to him, 'By him who has got you rid of the weariness and has bestowed upon you intent yearning and the pleasure of desire (*raghbah*)... who are you?' He said, 'Since you have sworn, I am 'Ali bin al-Husayn bin 'Ali bin Abi Talib.'"41

Al-Asma'i says: "One night I was circumambulating the *ka'bah* when I suddenly saw a handsome young man, clinging to the cover of the *ka'bah* saying, 'The eyes have slept; the stars have risen, and You are the Sovereign, the Living, and the Self-subsistent. The kings have closed their doors and kept guards over them, while Your door is open for the petitioners. I have come to You so that You may look at me with Your Mercy, O Most Merciful of the merciful.' Then he began reciting the following verses:

O He who answers the distressed in the darkness, O He who removes adversity and affliction during sickness,

Your visitors around the House have all slept, And You alone, O Self-subsistent, have not slept, I call upon You, O my Lord, with a calling You have ordered, Have mercy on my lamentation for the sake of the House and the haram,

If he who has committed excesses against his own soul should not hope for Your pardon, Then who else will bestow his bounties upon the sinfuls?"

Al-Asma'i says: "I followed him in his tracks and found him to be Zayn al-'Abidin ('a)."42

Tawus al-Faqih narrates:

"I saw him worshipping and circumambulating from the evening until dawn. When he saw that there was

no one, he looked at the heavens and said, 'O Allah, the stars of Your heavens have fallen in, and the eyes of Your servants have slept, and Your doors are open for the petitioners. I have come to You so that You may forgive me, and have mercy upon me, and show me the countenance of my grandfather Muhammad (S) in the courtyard of the Day of Judgement.'

Then he wept and said, 'By Your might and majesty, I did not intend to violate Your {commands} by committing sins, and I did not disobey You when I disobeyed out of doubt in You, nor out of ignorance of Your chastisement, nor exposing myself to Your punishment, but my soul prompted me, and Your protective veil which made me live in ease assisted me over that; and now from Your retribution who will rescue me?

And to whose rope do I hold on fast if You were to cut off Your rope from me? How disgracing it would be to stand before You tomorrow, when it would be said to those with light weight, 'Go through', and to those burdened {with sins}, 'Stop'. Will I pass with those whose weight is light, or will I have to stop with those burdened? Woe unto me, my sins increased as I lived longer, but I did not repent; has not the time come for me that I should feel ashamed of my Lord?'

Then he wept and began reciting:

Shall You burn me with the Fire -O the Highest Desire, Then what happened to my hope and what happened to my love {of You}?

I have come to You with disgracing and miserable deeds, As there is not amidst the creatures one who has committed the like of my crime.

Then again he wept and said, 'Immaculate are You, You are disobeyed as if You do not see, and You are so clement that as if You are not being disobeyed, You display Your love for Your creation by bestowing upon them Your favours as if You were in need of them, while You, O my Master, have no need of them.' Then he fell to the ground prostrating."

Tawus says: "I went near him, held his head and put it on my lap. Then I wept to the extent that my tears flowed over his cheeks, so he sat upright and said, 'Who is it who has distracted me from the remembrance of my Lord?' I said, 'It is me, Tawus. O son of the Prophet of Allah, what is all this fear and fright? Are we required to do the like of this, as we are disobedient and sinful? Your father is Husayn bin 'Ali, your mother is Fatimah al–Zahra', and your grandfather is the Messenger of Allah (S).'

So he turned toward me and said, 'Never, never, O Tawus! Stop talking about my father and my mother and my grandfather. Allah has created the Heaven for he who obeys Him and performs good deeds, even if he were to be a slave from Abyssinia. And He has created the Fire for he who disobeys Him, even if he were from the Quraysh.

Have you not heard the word {of Allah,} the Exalted, "And when the trumpet is blown, there will be no ties between them on the day, nor will they ask {about} each other."43 By Allah, nothing is going to benefit you tomorrow except that which you have sent ahead of the good deeds."44

Habbah al-'Arani reports:

"While Nawf and I were sleeping in the courtyard of the castle, we suddenly found ourselves with Amir al–Mu'minin ('a) in the last quarter of the night. He had put his hand on the wall looking confused, while he recited. "Indeed in the creation the heavens and the earth..."

Then he continued to recite these verses and he walked by as if he had lost his senses. He said, 'Are you asleep, O Habbah, or are you awake?' I said, 'I am awake; if you do all this then what about us?!' So he lowered his gaze and wept, and thereafter he said to me, 'O Habbah, indeed Allah has a stand (mawqif), and we have a stand before Him; so nothing of our deeds is hidden from Him. O Habbat, indeed Allah is nearer to you and me than the jugular vein. O Habbah, nothing can hide you and me from Allah.' Then he said, 'Are you asleep, O Nawf?' 'No, O Amir al-Mu'minin, I am not asleep. I have prolonged my lamentation tonight', he replied.

Then he advised and admonished us and said in the end, 'Beware of {disobeying} Allah. I have indeed warned you.' Thereafter, he started walking and saying, 'Would that I knew in my state of negligence (*ghafalati*) whether You have turned away from me, or are looking at me? Would that I knew what is my condition during my sleep and my being ungrateful to Your blessings on me?'"
Habbah continues, "By Allah, he remained in this state until the rising of the dawn."45

In fact, the supplications and whispered prayers transmitted to us from the Ahl al–Bayt ('a) are rich in such lively and dynamic illustrations, describing the the state of intimacy (*uns*) and yearning (*shawq*). This is true, in particular, about the fifteen whispered prayers that 'Allamah al–Majlisi has narrated in *al–Bihar* from Imam Zayn al–'Abidin 'Ali bin al–Husayn ('a), which are replete with such concepts as 'intimacy' and 'yearning'. We find in the heritage of the Ahl al–Bayt ('a) a treasure of such illustrations and concepts that we seldom find in the heritage of others.

We will mention here some of these unique illustrations before we conclude our discussion.

1) "O Allah, who can have tasted the sweetness of Your love, then wanted another in place of You? Who can have become intimate with Your nearness, then sought removal from You? O Allah, place us with him whom You have chosen for Your nearness and Your friendship, purified through Your affection and Your love, given yearning for the meeting with You, made pleased with Your decree, granted gazing upon Your face, shown the favour of Your good pleasure,

given refuge from separation from You and Your loathing, settled in a sure sitting place in Your neighbourhood, singled out for true knowledge of You, made worthy for worship of You, whose heart You have captivated with Your will, whom You have picked for contemplating You, whose look You have made empty for You, whose breast You have freed for Your love, whom You have made desirous of what is with You, inspired with Your remembrance, allotted thanksgiving to You, occupied with obeying You, turned into one of Your righteous creatures, chosen for whispered prayer to You, and from whom You have cut off all things which cut him off from You.

O Allah, place us among those whose habit is rejoicing in You and yearning for You, whose time is spent in sighing and moaning, their foreheads are bowed down before Your mightiness, their eyes are wakeful in Your service, their tears flowing in dread of You, their hearts fixed upon Your love, their cores shaken with awe of You.

O He the lights of whose holiness induce wonder in the eyes of His lovers, the glories of whose face arouse the longing of the hearts of His knowers. O Furthest Wish of the hearts of of the yearners, O Utmost Limit of the hopes of the lovers, I ask from You love for You, love for those who love You, love for every work which will join me to Your nearness, and that You make Yourself more beloved to me than anything other than You, and make my love for You lead to Your good pleasure, and my yearning for You protect against disobeying You, oblige me by allowing me to gaze upon You, gaze upon me with the eye of affection and tenderness, turn not Your face away from me..."46

The verses of this prayer are overflowing with concepts of love, yearning and intimacy. I do not intend here to comment on this prayer, for I will never be able to add to its verses any beauty apart from what they contain, nor an eloquence better than what they entail. I am not among those either capable of commenting on the master pieces from the verses of various supplications, and the verses of love or literature.

The first thing which draws our attention in the verses of the above supplication is the 'call' with which the Imam ('a) is calling out his Lord, "O Furthest Wish of the hearts of the yearners, O Utmost Limit of the hopes of the lovers...", "O He the lights of whose holiness induce wonder in the eyes of His lovers, the glories of whose face arouse the longing of the hearts of His knowers..."

The Imam ('a) has three requests in this prayer; the great three which a servant asks from his Lord.

1. Firstly he asks from Allah to choose him for Himself, and purify his heart for His love, make empty his look for His noble face, and make him desirous of what is with Him, and free his breast for His love, inspire him with His remembrance, cut off from him all that which cut him off from Him, and turn from him all that which turn him away from Him.

Such a start is essential for the move that the Imam ('a) is asking from Allah, whose goal he defines as gazing upon the face (*wajh*) of Allah. It is not possible for a person without such a start to move through this difficult and tedious path to the climax of meeting with Allah and gazing upon His honourable face, which is indeed the source of ease for every prophet and friend of Allah.

If looking at the face of Allah is a provision (*rizq*) which Allah provides for whomsoever He wishes and chooses from among His servants, then the servant must ask Allah to provide him such a provision together with its keys; for when Allah provides any of His servants with a provision, He gives him through its doors and keys, and facilitates for him its causes and means.

On the contrary, those who pray to Allah to grant them a provision from other than its doors and without

its proper means are in fact beseeching Him against His norms (*sunan*) and laws which He has ordained for His servants.

The doors (*abwab*) from which man enters and from which he sets out to the climax of meeting with Allah (*liqa' allah*) and gazing at His face are as follows:

First: To free the heart from every sully, want, love and worldy attachment. This stage is termed by the scholars as that of *at–Takhliyah* (to empty), that is emptying the heart from every want and attachment to other than Allah.

The Imam ('a) says in this regard, "Place us with him whom You have...purified for Your affection and love...whose look You have made empty for You, whose heart You have freed for Your love...and from whom You have cut off all things which cut him off from You."

This is the first step of the starting point which entails a negative (salbi) meaning.

Second: *at–Tahliyah* (embellishment of the soul with good qualities) as it is termed by the *'ulama''* in contrast to *at–Takhliyah*. This step involves a positive meaning and is referred to by the Imam ('a) in his following requests, "Make me among those whom You have... made pleased with Your decree... singled out for true knowledge of You...made worthy for worship of You... made desirous of what is with You, inspired with Your remembrance, allotted thanksgiving to You, occupied with obeying You, turned into one of Your righteous creatures, chosen for whispered prayer to You...", and, "Make us among those... whose foreheads are bowed down before Your mightiness, their eyes wakeful in Your service, their tears flowing in dread of You... and their cores shaken with awe of You."

This starting point, with both steps, is the key of the movement toward Allah, the Exalted. It is the point from which man sets out to the meeting with Allah (*liqa' allah*) and gazing upon His honoured face and beauty.

2. The second request follows the first one, as it is the intermediate stage in one's ascending movement toward Allah. It is not possible for one to traverse this path to Allah, nor attain proximity and nearness to Him, "in the abode of truthfulness with an omnipotent King"47, without passing through this stage.

The means which carry man to this ultimate goal which is desired by every prophet, friend of Allah, truthful one and martyr, is the love of Allah, intimacy with Him, and yearning for Him. Without this, it is not possible for man to ascend such a lofty ascent toward Allah.

Love, yearning and intimacy are undoubtedly a provision from Allah, which He provides to those He chooses and picks up from His servants. However, this takes place after traversing the preliminary stages mentioned by the Imam ('a) in different verses of the above whispered prayer.

The Imam ('a) greatly insists on this request and he employs different means and expressions in order to attain his request. Thus, he calls out to Allah with such an impressive calling, "O Furthest Wish of the

hearts of the yearners, O Utmost Limit of the hopes of the lovers..."

Thereafter, he asks from Allah love of Him, love for those who love Him, and love for every work which would take him to His proximity.

Let us ponder on the words of the Imam ('a) himself, for commentary of them would make us miss the opportunity of directly looking at the horizons of this 'love' which the Imam ('a) is trying to open for us in this supplication, "I ask from You love of You, love for those who love You, love for every work which will join me to Your nearness, and that You make Yourself more beloved to me than anything other than You; and make my love for You lead to Your good pleasure, and my yearning for You protect against disobeying You, endow me with gazing upon You, look at me with the eye of affection and tenderness, and turn not Your face away from me."

He also says: "Make us among those... whom You have given yearning for the meeting with You...whom You have given refuge from separation from You and Your loathing... and whose heart You have captivated with Your will."

He then says: "O Allah, make us among those whose habit is rejoicing in You and yearning for You, whose time is spent in sighing and moaning... whose hearts are fixed upon Your love, and their cores shaken with awe of You."

In short, there are four requests put forth by the Imam ('a) in the above verses:

- 1. He, the Exalted, should give us refuge from being separated from Him and from His loathing.
- 2. He should bestow upon us His love and affection.
- 3. He should provide us with intimacy with Him.
- 4. He should endow us with yearning for the meeting with Him.

The Imam ('a) summarizes the concepts of *hubb* and *shawq* in this beautiful statement, "O Allah, make us among those whose habit is rejoicing in You and craving for You."

Rejoicing (*irtiyah*) in Allah is different from craving (*hanin*) for Him, and the Imam ('a) asks Allah for both. Rejoicing is the state of intimacy (*uns*) which stems from the 'meeting' (*liqa*'), while craving (*hanin*) is the state of yearning (*shawq*) which springs from the movement toward the 'meeting with Allah'.

3. The third stage of this heavenly journey toward Allah, the Exalted, as described in this noble whispered prayer, is the ultimate goal and the noblest of what the prophets and the truthful have been asking from Allah. It is asking Allah for *gaze* upon His majestic face and His brilliant beauty. This is a goal which cannot be attained except by the chosen among the chosen ones whom Allah picks up for His nearness and neighbourhood.

The Imam ('a) says with this regard, "Make us among those whom You have granted gazing upon Your face... and whom You have settled in a sure sitting place in Your neighbourhood... and whom You have picked for seeing You... and endow me with gazing upon You."

What a great wish that man should look at the face of his Lord, see His majesty and beauty from the close, sit beside Him in the abode of truthfulness in His neighbourhood, and that His lord should give him to drink a pure drink.

Another Illustration

2) Here is another unique portrait of yearning for Allah and intimacy with Him in the whispered prayer of *al-muridin* (the devotees) from Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a):

"O Allah, so make us travel on the roads that arrive at You, and set us into motion on paths nearest to reaching You. Make near for us the far, and make easy for us the hard and difficult. Join us to Your servants, those who hurry to You swiftly, knock constantly at Your door, and worship You by night and by day, while they remain apprehensive in awe of You.

You have purified their drinking places, taken them to the objects of their desire, granted their requests, accomplished their wishes through Your bounty, filled their minds with Your love, and quenched their thirst with Your pure drink. Through You have they reached the pleasure of whispered prayer to You, and in You have they achieved their furthest goals.

O He who comes toward those who come toward Him and grants gifts and bestows bounty upon them through tenderness. He is compassionate and clement toward those heedless of His remembrance, and loving and tender in drawing them to His door. I ask You to place me among those of them who have the fullest share from You, the highest station with You, the most plentiful portion of Your love, and the most excellent allotment of Your knowledge, for my aspiration has been cut off from everything but You, and my desire has turned toward You alone.

You are my object, none other; to You alone belongs my waking and my sleeplessness. Meeting You is the gladness of my eye, joining You the wish of my soul. Toward You is my yearning, in love for You my passionate longing, in inclining toward You my fervent craving. Your good pleasure is the aim I seek, vision of You my need, Your neighbourhood my request, nearness to You the utmost object of my asking.

In whispered prayer to You I find my repose and my ease. With You lies the remedy of my illness, the cure for my burning thirst, the coolness of my ardour, the removal of my distress. Be my intimate in my loneliness, the releaser of my stumble, the forgiver of my slip, the accepter of my repentance, the responder of my supplication, the patron of preserving me from sin, the one who frees me from my neediness. Cut me not off from You, and keep me not far from You. O bliss and my garden. O my this

world and my Hereafter..."48

The is a sublime piece from the loftiest of the whispered prayers, a marvelous piece from the beautiful texts of *du'a'*, and the prime from among the prime words of the Ahl al–Bayt ('a) in supplication, entreaty and love; which has emanated from a heart filled with passionate love for Allah, and longing for the meeting with Him.

These verses are worthy to be pondered upon a great deal. We shall, however, restrict ourselves to a quick look at some of the descriptions and concepts about the Divine love with which this whispered prayer is embellished.

In the beginning, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) asks Allah to hold his hand and make him traverse the path which arrives at Him. This is in fact the summary of all that which is in this prayer of the loftiest requests.

In this supplication, the Imam ('a) does not ask from Allah this world or the Hereafter, though it is a permissible request which is also liked by Allah; rather he asks Him for nearness, reaching Him, and His neighbourhood in the abode of truthfulness with the prophets, martyrs, and the truthful ones. He ('a) says: "O Allah, so make us travel on the roads that arrive at You."

The Imam ('a) does not say "the **road** (*sabil*) which arrives at You" in a singular form; he rather says "the **roads** (*subul*) that arrive at You" using the plural form. The reason being that the path (*sirat*) toward Allah is one and not manifold, as the Qur'an has not mentioned except one path. Allah, the Exalted, says:

- "Guide us on the straigth path (sirat), the path of those whom You have blessed –such as have not incurred Your wrath, nor are astray." 49
- "...and Allah guides whomever He wishes to a straight path (sirat). "50
- "...and guides them to a straight path (sirat)."51
- "... We chose them and guided them to a straight path (sirat)."52

But with regard to the word 'sabil' (road), it has appeared in the plural form many times in the Qur'an, both in the case of truth (haqq) and falsehood (batil). He, the Exalted, says:

- "With it Allah guides those who follow {the course of} His pleasure to the ways (subul) of peace."53
- "...and do not follow other ways (subul), for they will separate you from His way (sabil)."54
- "...and why should we not put our trust in Allah, seeing that He has guided us in our ways (subulana)."55

• "As for those who strive in Us, we shall surely guide them in Our ways (subulana), and Allah is indeed with the virtuous." 56

Allah, the Exalted, has kept numerous ways which lead the people to Him, as it is common among the scholars that 'There are as many roads to Allah as the breaths of the creatures." Although all these ways and roads are in accordance with the straight path (*as–Sirat al–mustaqim*) of Allah. He, the Exalted, has appointed for everyone a specific way through which he would come to know Him, and which would lead him to Him.

Accordingly, some of the people move toward Allah through the road of knowledge (*'ilm*) and intellect (*'aql*), while others through the road of heart (*qalb*) and breast (*fu'ad*). Yet there are people who attain recognition of Allah through trading and dealing with Him. He, the Exalted, says:

"O you who have faith! Shall I show you a deal that will deliver you from a painful punishment?"57,

and:

"And among the people is he who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of Allah, and Allah is most kind to {His} servants."58

Here, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) asks Allah to make him travel the **ways**, and not a single way, that arrive at Him; as the more one travels through different roads to Allah, the stronger, more definite and assuring would be his arrival at His neighbourhood and proximity.

Thereafter, he asks from Allah to join him with those people who hasten to Him from among His righteous servants, those who quickly move toward Allah and spend their day and night in His obedience and worship.

However, the path to Allah is hard and difficult. The Qur'an refers to this path as 'one with thorns' (*dhat ash–Shawkah*). 59 There have been many people who began journeying this path with resolution and determination, but then collapsed in the middle of the way.

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) asks Allah to make near for him the far, and make easy for him the hard during this difficult journey, and to join him to the righteous people (*salihin*) who have preceded him, though he himself is the leader of the righteous; for the company of the friends of Allah and the righteous ones on the road with thorns gives strength to the hearts of all, and increases in their determination to pursue the path further.

Indeed the journey to Allah is difficult. Therefore, if a group of the righteous move together on this path, holding firm onto each other, enjoining one another to patience and to follow the truth, then moving on the path with thorns would become much easier for them.

Regarding the nature of this difficult and long journey, and asking the nearing of the far, ease in the journey, and joining the righteous who were on this path, Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a) says: "...and set us into motion on the paths nearest to reaching You, make near for us the far, make easy for us the hard and difficult; Join us to Your servants who hurry to You swiftly, knock constantly at Your door, and worship You by night and by day."

Inspirations and Outflows of the Heart

The Imam ('a) characterizes the righteous ones, those he asks Allah to join him to them, with such a lofty attribute which is worthy of contemplation. He ('a) says: "...those for whom You have purified their drinking places, and taken them to the objects of their desire... filled their minds with Your love, and quenched their thirst with Your pure drink."

But what is this clean and pure drink which their Lord has given them to drink in this world? And which receptacle is this that Allah fills it with His love?

Indeed this pure drink is the drink of love (*hubb*), certainty (*yaqin*), sincerity (*ikhlas*) and recognition (*ma'rifah*), while the receptacle is the heart (*qalb*).

Allah, the Exalted, has provided man with numerous receptacles for recognition, certainty and sincerity, but the 'heart' is the greatest of all of them and the most spacious of them.

Thus, when Allah purifies for His servant the drink of his heart, and makes him drink a clean and pure drink, then his actions, speech, and offerings would also be clean and pure. This is because there is similarity and homogeneity (*musanakhah*) between that which enters the heart and that which comes out from it. Thus, if that which enters the heart is pure and clean, coming from a pure and sweet spring, then that which flows out from it would be similar to that. Subsequently, the actions of a person, his speech, views, behaviour, stance and offerings would all be pure and delightful.

On the contrary, if what enters the heart is dirty or polluted by it, of what satans inspire their friends, then that which comes out of it would undoubtedly be similar to it in deceit (*kidhb*), hypocrisy (*nifaq*), miserliness (*shuhh*), and turning away (*i'rad*) from Allah and His Prophet.

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said, "Indeed there are two nearness to the heart; nearness from the angel {which is} promising of good and a confirming of truth; and nearness from the enemy {which is} threatening with evil and a denying of truth. So whoever experiences that {within himself}, then he should know that it is from Allah; and whoever experiences the other {nearness}, then he should take refuge with Allah from the *shaitan*."

Thereafter, he recited: "Satan frightens you of poverty and prompts you to {commit} indecent acts; while Allah promises you His forgiveness and grace.60"61

The nearness of the angel is the Lordly inspiration (*al-warid ar-rabbani*), while the nearness of the *shaitan* is the satanic inspiration (*al-warid ash-Shaitani*).

Do you not see when a bee collects the nectar from flowers, it gives out a pleasant and sweet honey to the people, in which there is cure for them? But if it gathers its food from unpure and unclean sources, then its produce would naturally be the same.

Allah, the Exalted, says about His Friend, Ibrahim, and His messengers Ishaq and Ya'qub:

"And remember Our servants Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub, men of strength and insight. Indeed We purified them with the exclusiveness of the remembrance of the abode {of the Hereafter}. Indeed with Us they are surely among the elect of the best."62

This lofty attribute of strength and insight which Allah ascribes to these great prophets is the result of the pure drink which Allah had given to them, "Indeed We purified them with the exclusiveness of the remembrance of the abode {of the Hereafter}."

Had Allah not purified them with this exclusiveness of the remembrance of the Hereafter, they would have neither had the strength nor insight.63

Therefore, in order for man's deeds to become pure, it is necessary that his drink be pure, as the heart gives out what it takes in.

The Principle of Choice

After we have explained the role of what enters the heart (*qalb*) and what comes out of it, and the similarity and homogeneity between them, we would like to equally insist that what has been said does not necessarily nullify the 'principle of choice' (*asl al-ikhtiyar*) which is the basis of many Qur'anic concepts and ideas. It does not mean that the heart is an empty receptacle which receives and gives out what is put in it of good and evil. Rather, the heart is a conscious receptacle which comprehends what is delivered to it, and distinguishes the truth from the falsehood, and the good from the bad.

In fact, this is another fundamental principle in Islamic thought. Many issues and principles in Islam are dependent on the principle of choice as well as on this principle, that is, the 'consciousness of the heart' (wa'y al-qalb).

There has been great emphasis in the Islamic sources on the active role of the heart in human life, of its ability of detection, and high efficiency in distinguishing the right from the wrong.

It is narrated that once Prophet Dawud ('a) secretly called upon Allah and said, "O Allah, every king has a treasury, where is Your treasury?" He, the Majestic, replied, "I have a treasury even bigger than the Throne ('arsh), wider than the Seat (kursiyy), better than the Heaven, and more beautiful than the

dominion (*malakut*); its earth is {My} cognizance (*ma'rifah*), its heavens is faith (*Iman*), its sun is yearning (*shawq*), its moon is love (*mahabbah*), its stars are secret thoughts (*khawatir*), its cloud is intellect ('*aql*), its rain is mercy (*rahmah*), its tree is obedience (*ta'ah*), its fruit is wisdom (*hikmah*). It has four pillars: reliance (*tawakkul*), contemplation (*tafkir*), intimacy (*uns*), and remembrance (*dhikr*). And it has four doors: knowledge ('*ilm*), wisdom (*hikmah*), patience (*sabr*), and contentment (*rida*)... indeed it is the heart."64

It is obvious that the above narration employs a symbolic language in terms of question and answer; a language frequently employed in the Islamic traditions.

It has been narrated that Allah, the Exalted, said to Prophet Musa ('a), "O Musa, free your heart for My love; because I have made Your heart a field of My love, and I have spread in Your heart a land of My cognizance (*ma'rifah*), and I have built in Your heart a sun of My yearning (*shawq*), and I have placed in Your heart a moon of My love (*mahabbati*), and I have put in Your heart a spring of contemplation (*tafakkur*), and I have set in motion a wind of My success (*tawfiq*) in your heart, and I have showered on your heart a shower of My grace (*tafaddul*), and I have planted in your heart a plant of My truthfulness (*sidq*), and I have grown trees of My obedience (*ta'ati*) in your heart, and I have put mountains of My certainty (*yaqin*) in your heart."65

The language employed in this narration is also a symbolic one. Anyway, both narrations illustrate the active role of the heart in distinguishing truth from falsehood, and guidance (*huda*) from error (*dalal*).

A Return to the Whispered Prayer of Al-muridin

Thereafter, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) calls on Allah with this touching call, "O He who comes toward those who come toward Him, and grants gifts and bestows bounty upon them through tenderness, and who is compassionate and clement toward those heedless of His remembrance, and loving and tender in drawing them to His door."

The above call entails two points. The first point is that Allah, the Exalted, comes toward those who come toward Him, and reverts to them by His grace. And the second point is that He is clement toward those who are heedless of Him, and repels heedlessness (*ghaflah*) from them through Lordly attractions (*al-jadhabat ar-rabbaniyyah*).

After this preamble, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) invokes Allah to make him among the righteous ones with the biggest share of His mercy, the highest status, and the greatest lot of His love, "I ask You to make me amidst them one with the fullest share from You, the highest station with You, the most plentiful portion of Your love, and the most excellent allotment of Your knowledge."

This phrase of the supplication gives rise to this question that just a while ago the Imam ('a) was wishing that may Allah join him with the righteous ones, and now he longs from Allah that He may make him to

be the one with the fullest share and highest station with Him. So how can we place this request beside the previous one? What had transpired in the atmosphere of the prayer as well as in the soul of the Imam ('a) during the supplication that led to this leap in his request; that is, from the request of joining the righteous to the desire to attain precedence over them and to lead them?

The answer to this question requires an explanation of a secret from among the secrets of prayer. The secret is that Allah, the Exalted, has taught us not to slacken off in asking and not to desist from praying so long as the Master is the Generous. And how vile it is to desist from praying when the one asked from (*mas'ul*) is the Generous, and there is no limit or end to the treasuries of His mercy, rather the frequency of giving increases Him not but in generosity and kindness.

From among the things that Allah, the Exalted, has taught us of the manners (*adab*) and characters (*akhlaq*) of the servants of the All-merciful (*'ibad ar-rahman*) is that we should ask from Him to make us the leaders of the pious ones (*muttagin*), "... and make us leaders of the Godwary."66

Besides, we frequently come across the following high–aspiring phrase in the supplications that have reached us from our infallibles (*ma'sumin*), "And give preference to me, and do not give preference to anyone else over me."

The Peak and Trough of the Prayer

Many supplications have a point of climax and nadir. The lowest point in a supplication embodies the state of the servant of Allah and what he has committed of the sins and evils; whilst the climax of it is manifested in the high aspiration and hope of the servant in Allah, the Glorious; as there is no limit to His kindness, generosity and the treasuries of His mercy.

In the supplication of *abu hamzah ath-thumali*, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) refers to this spiritual diversity in the state of the soul when he says: "When I look at my sins, O my Master, I am terrified; but when I look at Your generosity, I become hopeful."

In another place of the same supplication, he says: "My hope, O my Master, is ever great, but my deeds are evil, so grant me of Your pardon to the extent of my hope, and do not punish me because of my worst deeds."

In the supplication of *kumayl*, Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) begins from the trough and says: "O Allah, forgive me the sins which tear apart protection; O Allah, forgive me the sins which bring down adversities; O Allah, forgive me the sins which alter blessings; O Allah, forgive me sins which hold back prayer... O Allah, I find no forgiver of my sins, nor concealer of my wicked acts, no transformer of any of my bad deeds into good acts but You...

Glory be to You, and praise is due to You; I have wronged myself, I have been audacious in my ignorance, and I have depended upon Your constant remembrance of me and Your favour toward me...

O Allah, my tribulation is tremendous, and my bad state is excessive, my acts are inadequate, my fetters have tied me down, my high hopes have held me back from my again, and this world with its delusions, my own soul with its offences, and my dilly-dallying have {all} deceived me. O my Master, so I ask You by Your might not to let my evil deeds and acts veil my supplication from You; and not to disgrace me through the hidden things You have come to know from my innermost secret..."

This trough denotes the lowest level of servanthood ('ubudiyyah) and what surrounds it of the evil deeds. Thereafter, towards the end of the supplication we see the climax of aspiration which manifests itself in the great hope of the servant in the all-embracing mercy of Allah. Hence, he ('a) says: "...and bestow upon me earnestness in {my} fear of You, and continuity in {my} being joined to Your service, so that I may move easily toward You in the battlefields of the foremost, hurry to You among the prominent, desire fervently Your proximity among the fervently desirous, move near to You with the nearness of the sincere ... and make me the most excellent of Your slaves in share with You, the nearest of them in station to You, and the most elect of them in proximity to You; for that cannot be attained except by Your grace..."

And we also find this vast difference between the peak and trough in the supplication of *Abu Hamzah ath-Thumali*; as in the beginning of it Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) sets off from the lowest point and says:

"... and who am I, O my Lord; and what is my significance? Bestow upon me Your grace, and give me charity of Your pardon. O my Lord, cover me with Your veil, and refrain from reproaching me by the honour of Your face...

Do not burn me with the Fire, because You are where I place my hope, and reside me not in the abyss, for You are indeed the comfort of my eye... have mercy upon my strangeness in this world, upon my grief at the time of death, upon my loneliness in the grave, upon my fear inside the burial place, upon my humiliation when I shall be resurrected before You for the reckoning (*hisab*). And have mercy upon me when I will be lying motionless on {my death} bed and the hands of my beloved ones shall be moving me;

and be kind to me when I will be stretched on the funeral bath-place and the righteous among my neighbours shall be washing me; and be affectionate toward me when I shall be carried and my relatives would be holding the extremities of my coffin, and be generous to me when I will be transported {to the grave} while I have descended on You, alone in my hole."

Thereafter, in the climax of the supplication and the stage of aspiration, he ('a) says: "O Allah, I ask You the best of what Your righteous servants have asked from You, O Best of those who have been asked, and Most Generous of those who have given... fulfill my quest in myself, my family, parents, and children...

enrich my living, and make manifest my manliness, and put in order all my affairs, and make me among those whom You have prolonged their lives, and made their acts good, and completed upon them Your blessings, and whom You are pleased with, and have caused them to live a good life... and single me out for Your special remembrance... and make me the one with the fullest share with You amongst Your servants in every good that You have sent down or are going to send down."

This journey from the trough to the peak is another expression of the journey of man toward Allah, the Exalted; a journey of hope and aspiration. And when one's aspiration and hope is in Allah only, then there is no end to such a journey.

The Three Means

Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a) seeks recourse to Allah with three means in this journey, as Allah, the Exalted, has commanded us to do so, "O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and seek the means of recourse to Him"67, and, "They {themselves} are the ones who supplicate, seeking a recourse to their Lord."68

The means which the Imam ('a) seeks recourse with to Allah are the neediness (*hajat*), petition (*su'al*) and love (*hubb*). How excellent is the Imam as a teacher of supplication, for he well knows what to ask from Allah, how to ask, and where the places of Allah's mercy are.

The First Means: Neediness

Neediness by itself is among the places of Allah's mercy. Allah sends down His mercy upon His creatures, even upon animals and plants without them having asked for it, due to their need. However, this does not imply the negation of petition and request, as both of them are two other doors of the mercy of Allah beside neediness.

Hence, when people become thirsty, it is their Lord who gives them drink; when they become hungry, it is He who feeds them; when they are uncovered, it is He who covers them:

"and when I get sick, it is He who cures me"69;

even if they have no knowledge of Allah, and no knowledge of how to call upon Him or what to ask from Him, "O He who gives to one who asks Him, O He who gives to one who does not ask him and does not know Him, out of His affection and mercy."

In the famous whispered prayer (*munajat*) of Imam 'Ali ('a), we find a beatiful reference to this Lordly point with regard to attracting Allah's mercy. He says:

"My Master, my master, You are the Master and I the servant! Has anyone mercy upon the servant but the Master? My Master, my Master, You are the Owner and I the owned! Has anyone mercy upon the owned but the Owner? My Master, my Master, You are the Exalted and I the abased! Has anyone mercy upon the abased but the Exalted. My Master, my Master, You are the Creator and I the creature! Has

anyone mercy upon the creature but the Creator.

My Master, my Master, You are the All-supreme and I the lowly! Has anyone mercy upon the lowly but the All-supreme. My Master, my Master, You are the Strong and I the weak! Has anyone mercy upon the weak but the Strong. My Master, my Master, You are the Needless and I the needy! Has anyone mercy upon the needy but the Needless.

My Master, my Master, You are the Giver and I the asker! Has anyone mercy upon the asker but the Giver. My Master, my Master, You are the Living and I the dead! Has anyone mercy upon the dead but the Living. My Master, my Master, You are the Subsistent and I the perishing! Has anyone mercy upon the perishing but the Subsistent.

My Master, my Master, You are the Everlasting and I the vanishing! Has anyone mercy upon the vanishing but the Everlasting. My Master, my Master, You are the Provider and I the provided for! Has anyone mercy upon the provided for but the Provider? My Master, my Master, You are the Generous and I the stingy! Has anyone mercy upon the stingy but the Generous?

My Master, my Master, You are the Reliever and I the afflicted! Has anyone mercy upon the afflicted but the Reliever? My Master, my Master, You are the Great and I the small! Has anyone mercy upon the small but the Great? My Master, my Master, You are the Guide and I the lost one! Has anyone mercy upon the lost one but the Guide?

My Master, my Master, You are the Forgiver and I the sinner! Has anyone mercy upon the sinner but the Forgiver? My Master, my Master, You are the Victor and I the defeated! Has anyone mercy upon the defeated but the Victor? My Master, my Master, You are the Cherisher and I the cherished! Has anyone mercy upon the cherished but the Cherisher?

My Master, my Master, You are the All-magnanimous and I the submissive! Has anyone mercy upon the submissive but the All-magnanimous? My Master, my Master, have mercy on me through Your mercy, and be pleased with me through Your generosity, kindness, and grace, O Possessor of generosity and favour, and might and gratitude."

In these beautiful phrases of the supplication, Imam 'Ali ('a) seeks means of recourse to Allah through his neediness (*hajat*) and indigence (*faqr*), and places the neediness of the servant and his indigence in the position of attracting Allah's mercy.

This is because the creature brings down the mercy of the Creator, the lowly draws on the mercy of the All–supreme, the weak attracts the mercy of the Strong, the needy draws on the mercy of the Needless, the one provided for attracts the mercy of the Provider, the afflicted brings down the mercy of the Reliever, the lost one causes the mercy of the Guide to descend, the sinner attracts the mercy of the Forgiver, the confused attracts the mercy of the Proof, and the defeated draws on the mercy of the Victor.

All these are part of the universal norms of Allah, and the norms of Allah shall never change.

Accordingly, wherever the elements of neediness and indigence are found, the mercy of Allah would be there. The mercy of Allah comes down on the places of need as water flows to, and settles in, lower lands; for Allah, the Exalted, is kind and generous, and the Kind always takes care of the places of need and singles them out for his mercy.

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) says in the supplication of *abu hamzah ath-thumali*, "...give me due to my being poor, and have mercy upon me because of my weakness." Thus, the Imam ('a) takes up his neediness and weakness as means to attain the mercy of Allah.

It is, however, natural that this speech cannot be understood unrestrictively and as a sole factor for attaining Allah's mercy, because there are other elements as well which are decisive in attracting Allah's mercy. Likewise, there are obstacles which impede Allah's mercy. Moreover, there is also the principle of trial (*ibtila*') which is one of the norms of Allah in human life.

Hence, when we say that 'neediness and poverty attract the mercy of Allah', we ought to comprehend this speech within the framework of this comprehensive Divine system. Understanding this system entails by itself a wide horizon of knowledge which we do not intend to dwell on at the moment. I hope that Allah will grant me success (*tawfig*) in the future to explain this reality in a manner worthy of it.

We find in the Qur'an instances of the presentation of neediness and poverty before Allah, the Exalted, in order to attract His mercy and attain the response (*ijabah*) from Him. Neediness has its own kind of response as supplication and petition have a response peculiar to them; for exhibiting ones neediness is in itself a kind of prayer.

The Holy Qur'an mentions these instances, ascribing them to the righteous servants of Allah. They are:

1. The neediness of Prophet Ayyub, the righteous servant of Allah, when he called upon Allah amidst affliction and trial:

"And Ayyub, when he called out to his Lord, 'Indeed distress has befallen me, and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.' So We answered his prayer and removed his distress, and We gave him {back} his family along with others like them as a mercy from Us, and an admonition for the devout."71

Although this phrase which is mentioned by the Qur'an, quoting it from this afflicted righteous servant, does not contain any prayer, Allah, the Exalted, says: "... So We answered his prayer and removed his distress"; as if presenting one's neediness and poverty is also a kind of supplication.

2. The righteous servant, Dhu an-Nun ('a), presents his indigence, neediness and the wrong he committed against himself before Allah, the Exalted, from the darkness of the belly of the fish, deep inside the sea.

"And the Man of the Fish, when he left in a rage, thinking that We would not put him to hardship. Then he cried out in the darkness: 'There is no god except You! You are immaculate! I have indeed been among the wrongdoers.' So We answered his prayer and delivered him from the agony; and thus do We deliver the faithful."72

As exhibiting neediness is a kind of prayer, similarly the response (*istijabah*) would not be to the petition, rather to the neediness and indigence itself. In the above case, Prophet Yunus ('a) did not utter more than these words, "There is no god except You! You are immaculate! I have indeed been among the wrongdoers", but Allah answered him and delivered him from the agony (ghamm), "So We answered his prayer and delivered him from the agony."

3. We find in the Qur'an the words of Prophet Musa ('a) and his brother Harun ('a) when Allah commanded them to take His message to Fir'awn. The Qur'an says:

"Let the two of you go to Fir'awn. Indeed he has rebelled. Speak to him in a soft manner; may be he will take admonition or fear. The two of them said, 'Our Lord! We are indeed afraid that he will forestall us or will overstep the bounds."73

They neither asked Allah to protect them from Fir'awn and his army, nor provide them with the security they needed, rather what they mentioned to Allah was their weakness and fear of oppression, power and transgression of Fir'awn, "We are indeed afraid that he will forestall us or will overstep the bounds", and Allah answered their need for support and backing:

"He said, 'Do not be afraid, for I will be with the two of you, hearing and seeing {whatever happens}."74

4. The fourth example is in the words of Prophet Nuh ('a), the righteous servant of Allah, when he presented before Allah his need for his son to be saved from the flood,

"Nuh called out to his Lord and said, 'My Lord! My son is indeed from my family. Your promise is indeed true, and You are the fairest of all judges."75

This is a polite petition from this righteous servant of Allah, for he did not even ask Allah to save his son, rather he only exhibited before Him his *need* that his son should be saved from drowning.

In conclusion, neediness and indigence are among the places where the mercy of Allah descends.

Even the animals and plants attract Allah's mercy but through their neediness and indigence. Thus, when they get thirsty, it is Allah who gives them to drink, and when they become hungry, it is He who satisfies and feeds them.

There is a lot to be said on this topic and I have explained part of it in my other book called 'Open-heartedness' (*sharh as–Sadr*), in the series of lessons from the Qur'an titled 'Lessons from the Qur'an'

The Second Means: Supplication

Supplication is among the keys of Allah's mercy. He, the Exalted, says:

"Call Me, I will answer you", and, "Say, 'What store my Lord would set by You were it not for Your supplication?"76

The Third Means: Love

Through love, one can attract of the mercy of Allah what he cannot by other means.

Now in the following phrases, just ponder over these three means by which Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) is seeking recourse to Allah:

"Your good pleasure is my wish; vision of You my need... With You lies the remedy of my illness, the cure for my burning thirst, the coolness of my ardour, the removal of my distress." This is the means of neediness and indigence.

"Your neighbouring is my request, nearness to You the utmost object of my asking... Be my intimate in my loneliness, the releaser of my stumble, the forgiver of my slip, the accepter of my repentance, the responder to my supplication, the patron of preserving me from sin, the one who frees me from my neediness." This is the means of supplication.

"You are my object, none other; to You alone belongs my waking and my sleeplessness. Meeting You is the gladness of my eye, joining You the wish of my soul. Toward You is my yearning, in love for You my passionate longing, in inclining toward You my fervent craving." This is the means of love.

Now let us contemplate on this phrase of the speech of the Imam ('a) which is among the beautiful pieces of this supplication; as a prayer has a beauty just like that of the art and literature. He ('a) says: "... for my aspiration has been cut off (*inqita'*) from everything but You, and my desire has turned toward You alone; You are my object, none other; to You alone belongs my waking and my sleeplessness, meeting You is the delight of my eye."

Cut-off (*inqita*') involves in meaning what attachment (*ta'lluq*) does not. This is why the Imam ('a) does not say, 'For my aspiration has been *attached* to none but You', rather he says: 'For my aspiration has been *cut off* from everything but You'; for attachment to Allah does not negate attachment to other than Him, even if one may be sincere in his attachment to Allah, whereas the concept of 'cut-off' entails both a positive and a negative meaning, as the meaning of *inqita*' is 'detachment from the creatures and turning toward Allah'. Detachment from the creatures is the negative significance intended by the Imam ('a) from this phrase, whilst the positive significance intended by him from it is 'the turning toward Allah'.

This is because sincerity (*ikhlas*) in love manifests itself in disjoining (*fasl*) and joining (*wasl*); disjoining from all other than Allah, and joining with Allah and those whom He loves and has commanded to love. These are, in fact, two sides of one issue.

Hence, when 'love' becomes pure and free from insincerity, it would involve two things; association (*wala*') and disassociation (*bara'ah*), attachment and detachment, and disconnection from 'the creatures' to Allah.

The same meaning is also contained in the second phrase which says: "...Toward You is my yearning"; for turning toward Allah entails the turning away (*i'rad*) and the turning toward (*iqbal*). Turning away from all other than Allah, and turning toward Allah, and toward that which He loves and has commanded us to carry out.

Thereafter comes the third emphasis on this reality and the most eloquent of it. It contains of the meaning of 'love' and 'detachment from all other than Him' what cannot be described and expressed by words, "You, and none other, are my object; to You alone belongs my waking and my sleeplessness."

Wakefulness (*sahar*) and sleeplessness (*suhad*) are the opposite of sleep (*nawm*), with the difference that *sahar* is keeping the night awake in the state of intimacy (*uns*), while *suhad* is a kind of sleeplessness which occurs to a person when he is occupied with something of concern to him, such that it leaves him sleepless. In our case, this occupation with something of concern is yearning (*hanin*) and longing (*shawq*) for Allah.

Therefore, *sahar* and *suhad* represent two states among the states of love; intimacy and yearning. Intimacy with the remembrance of Allah and His presence such that the servant feels the presence of Allah in his supplication, remembrance, secret supplications and prayers (*salat*); and yearning for the meeting (*liqa*') with Allah.

In fact, a lover experiences both the above states when he stands before Allah, as both of them have a role in leaving him sleepless when people are asleep and lose their consiousness and senses because of it.

Nevertheless, sleeping is a human need, and each of the righteous and the wicked have their share of it, even the prophets and the truthful ones do sleep. But, there is a difference between one who takes from sleep to the extent of his need, the way he fulfills his need from eating and drinking, and between one who surrenders himself to sleep and is dominated by it. As for the friends (*awliya*') of Allah, they do not surrender themselves to sleep; rather sleep is a need for them and they take their share from it.

The Holy Prophet (S) did not use to sleep but a little in order to be able to stand before Allah. He (S) also used to order for the water of ablution (*wadu*') to be kept at his head so that he may stand before Allah every time after he had taken his share from this natural need. A soft and comfortable mattress would be spread for him but he would order it to be taken away lest it should gradually lead him to

submit to sleep. Instead, he would sleep on a rough mat such that it would leave an impression on his side.

Allah, the Exalted, has indeed placed in the calmness of the night treasures of His whispered prayers, remembrance and proximity which cannot be found in the daytime. The night has its own men, as the day has its own; they stand in prayers when people are asleep; they get zealous and lively when people are dull; and they ascend toward Allah when people submit themselves to sleep and fall into their beds.

The night has its dominion (*dawlah*) as has the day. There are treasures at night as there are treasures at daytime. Normally people know well of the dominion of the daytime, its men and treasures. Few among the people are aware of the value of the dominion of the night, its treasures and its men. If a person combines the dominion of the night with that of the day, then such a man is sound, rightly guided and well balanced.

The Holy Prophet (S) was the man of both, the night and the daytime, utilizing from both of them in equal proportion. He would take love, sincerity and remembrance from the night, as he would acquire power, strength and wealth from the daytime in order to pave the way for propagation of the message of Islam and strengthening it.

Nonetheless, the vigil at night used to help him and make it possible for him to carry the heavy load of Prophethood. He, the Exalted, says in this regard:

"O you wrapped up in your mantle! Stand vigil through the night, except a little, a half, or reduce a little from that, or add to it, and recite the Qur'an in a measured tone. Indeed soon We shall cast on you a weighty word. Indeed the watch of the night is firmer in tread and more upright in respect to speech, for indeed during the day you have drawn-out engagements."77

It would delight me to relate a Divine Narration here regarding the night and its men. It has been narrated that Allah, the Exalted, once revealed to one of the truthful ones and said:

"I have servants from among my creatures who love Me, so I love them; they yearn for Me and I yearn for them; they remember Me and I remember them; they gaze at Me and I gaze at them. If you follow in their way, I shall love you; and if you turn away from them, I shall hate you. He said, 'O Lord, what are their characteristics?'

He {the Exalted} answered, 'They watch the shadow during daytime just like a kind shepherd watches his sheep78; they crave for sunset just as a bird craves for her nest at sunset. When the night covers them and the darkeness gets intense and the mats are spread and the beds are prepared and every lover retires with his beloved, they rise to their feet for Me, they spread their faces toward Me, they secretly call on Me with My speech, and they cling onto Me with My melody.

You will find some of them crying and lamenting, and moaning and complaining; while some others {in

the position of standing and sitting, bowing down and prostrating. I see what they endure because of Me, and I hear their complain out of love for Me.

The foremost of what I give them are three things: I cast of my light into their hearts such that they talk of Me and I talk of them; if the heavens and the earth were to be in their scales (*mawazin*), I would undervalue that for them; and I turn toward them with My face. Can you tell Me of anyone who is aware of what I intend to give him toward whom I have turned with My face?"79

Imam al-Baqir ('a) is narrated to have said, "Among the things that Allah had revealed to Musa ('a) was, 'He is a liar who thinks that he loves Me but when the night falls he forgets Me. O son of 'Imran! Had you only seen those who stand for Me in the darkness while I have become incarnate before their eyes, addressing Me while I am far above to be seen, and talking to Me while I cannot be {physically} present. O son of 'Imran! Give Me tears from your eyes, and humility from Your heart; thereafter call on Me in the darkness of the nights and you will find Me Nearmost, Answering."80

In the sermon of *al–Muttaqin* (the Godwary), Imam Amir al–Mu'minin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) –describing for Hammam the state of the friends of Allah in their secret prayers at night, their remembrance and standing before Allah, says: "At night they rise on their feet {for prayers}, reading parts of the Qur'an in a measured tone, creating through it grief for themselves and taking counsel with it for the cure of their ailments. If they come across a verse which arouses desire {for the Heaven}, they pursue it avidly, and their spirits turn toward it eagerly, and they feel as if it is in front of them.

And when they come across a verse which fills with fear {of the Fire}, they bend the ears of their hearts toward it, and feel as though the sound of Hell and its cries are reaching their ears. They bend themselves from their backs, prostrate on their foreheads, palms, knees and toes, beseeching Allah, the Exalted, to set {them} free {from the Fire}. In the daytime, they are enduring, learned, virtuous and Godwary. Fear {of Allah} has made them thin like arrows..."81

Another Illustration of the State of Yearning to Allah

3) Here is another illustration of yearning toward Allah in the whispered prayer of *al-'arifin* (the knowers) by Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a). He says:

O Allah, make us among those within the gardens of whose breasts the trees of yearning for You have taken firm root, and the assemblies of whose hearts have been seized by the ardour of Your love. They seek shelter in the nests of meditation, feed upon the gardens of nearness and disclosure, drink from the pools of love with the cup of gentle favour, and enter into the watering-places of warm affection.

The covering has been lifted from their eyes, the darkness of disquiet has been dispelled from their beliefs and their innermost minds, the contention of doubt has been negated from their hearts and their secret thoughts, their breasts have expanded through the verification of true knowledge, their aspiration

have ascended through precedent good fortune in renunciation, their drinking is sweet from the spring of devotion to good works, their secret thoughts are delicious in the sitting-place of intimacy, their minds are secure in the place of terror,

their souls are serene through the return to the Lord of lords, their spirits have reached certitude through triumph and prosperity, their eyes have been gladdened through gazing upon their Beloved, their settling place has been settled through reaching the request and attaining the expectation, and their commerce has profited through the sale of this world for the next.

O Allah, how agreeable for hearts are the thoughts inspiring Your remembrance, how sweet traveling to You through imagination upon the roads of the unseen worlds, how pleasant the taste of Your love, how delightful the drink of Your nearness! So give us refuge from Your casting out and Your sending far, and make us among the most elect of Your knowers, the most righteous of Your servants, the most truthful of Your obeyers, and the most sincere of Your worshippers."

I do not intend to stop here and ponder upon this prayer which is among the magnificent pieces of prayers from the AhI al-Bayt ('a).

But I would like to briefly explain the phrase with which Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a) begins his prayer. He says: "O Allah, make us among those within the gardens of whose breasts the trees of yearning for You have taken firm root, and the assemblies of whose hearts have been seized by the ardour of Your love."

The breasts (*sudur*) of the friends of Allah –as it appears from the speech of the Imam– are gardens of delight containing delicious fruits.

Generally, the breasts of the people are of different kinds. Some breasts are libraries and schools of learning. No doubt knowledge is good and light (*nur*) provided the breast remains a garden of yearning toward Allah.

Some other breasts are like shops, banks, and stock markets, crowded with numbers, tables and charts, and the accounts of profit and loss. Wealth and trade are good, but with the condition that they should not become activities which occupy the heart and the breast of a person, such that they become his only concern which do not part with him.

Yet there are breasts which are similar to salty lands in that they produce but thorns, colocynth, poison, hatred, tussle for acquiring wealth and power, and deceit and plots against others.

There are breasts which are places of entertainment and playgrounds, the way this world (*ad-dunya*) is a play and diversion for a large number of people.

And there are people whose breasts are divided into two parts; a part for poison, hatred, deception and trickery, and a part for amusement and sport. Consequently, when the first part agitates them and makes

them restless, they would take resort to the second part and seek help from it in order to rescue themselves from the torment of the first part.

But as for the breasts of the friends (*awliya*') of Allah, they are –as put by Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a)–gardens of yearning (*shawq*), filled with joy, delightful fruits, and wherein the trees of yearning have taken firm root.

Therefore, the yearning toward Allah is not something extrinsic to their breasts such that it would disappear under the compulsion of their lowly desires, or in case this world were to glamorize itself for them; nor would it diminish or its leaves wilt if this world were to cause constrain over them, or they were encircled by its hardships; for as long as the trees of *shawq* are firmly rooted in these breasts, they would remain leafy, verdant, and fruitful despite all obstacles and difficulties.

The state of yearning is in fact the state of the lightness (*khiffah*) of the soul; a state contrary to that of heaviness (*tathaqul*) and being inclined toward this world which is referred to in the following holy verse:

"... What is the matter with you that when you are told: 'Go forth in the way of Allah', you sink heavily to the ground? Are you pleased with the life of this world instead of the Hereafter?" 82

Indeed the soul becomes burdensome and bloated whenever one becomes attached to this world and gets pleased with it and is inclined toward it. In contrast, if one is freed from this world and plucks out his self from it83, he would become spiritually light and, subsequently, easily attracted to the love of Allah and yearning toward Him.

This much of the discussion on the illustrations of love, *shawq*, and intimacy from the texts of the supplications of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) seems to be enough. We will now take up another discussion regarding the 'love of Allah'.

Sincerity in Love of Allah

The position of this issue is higher than that of 'unity in love' (*tawhid al-hubb*). This is because unity in love does not negate any other love apart from the love of Allah; rather it makes the love of Allah dominant over other kinds of love. Subsequently, the love of Allah would be the dominant and reigning love:

"...but the faithful have a more ardent love for Allah..."84

This is one of the requisites of faith (*Iman*) and a branch among the branches of *tawhid*. In contrast, sincerity (*ikhlas*) in love of Allah negates all other kinds of love apart from that of Allah, unless they are in extension (*imtidad*) to the love of Allah and take the form of 'love for Allah' (*al-hubb lillah*) and 'hatred for Allah' (*al-bughd lillah*).

However, sincerity in the love for Allah is not among the requirements of faith and *tawhid*, rather it has to do with the truthful ones (*siddiqin*) and their spiritual stations (*maqamat*). For Allah, the Exalted, enables His friends and His righteous servants to free their hearts from all kinds of love other than the love of Him.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says: "The heart (*qalb*) is the sanctuary (*haram*) of Allah. Thus, do not settle in the sanctuary of Allah someone other than Allah."85

This is a characteristic peculiar to the heart. The bodily parts move in life in different directions and embark on a variety of affairs which Allah has allowed and permitted. But with regard to the heart, it has been considered as the *haram* of Allah in which love of other than Allah and attachment to other than Him ought not to dwell.

The reference to the 'heart' in the above narration as 'a sanctuary' is precise and of significance; for a sanctuary is a guarded area and closed upon every stranger. Its inhabitants are not harmed nor do they experience any fear, and no stranger can enter it. Thus the heart is, the secured sanctuary of Allah; no love other than the love of Allah can enter into it, and no harm or evil can touch it while it is in the heart.

It is due to this very reason that the truthful ones and the sages from the servants of Allah wholly dedicate their love to Allah, such that they never associate His love with any other love, whatever it may be, unless if it is in extension to the love of Allah.

In the following prayer, we can sense the ardour of love and the trueness of sincerity in the love of Allah in the words of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a), "O my Master, toward You is my desire, to You is my fear, and toward You is my aspiration. My hope has driven me to You; and onto You, O the One, I have placed my determination, and on what You possess I have unfolded my wish.

For You are my earnest hope and fear, with You my love has become accustomed, and to You I have surrendered myself, and to the rope of Your obedience I have fastened my fear. O my Lord, my heart is living with Your remembrance, and in confiding to You do I cool within myself the agony of fear..."86

In this part of the supplication, the Imam ('a) ties his desire, fear and hope altogether to Allah, placing all his resolution on Him, and dedicating to Him his earnest hope and fear.

The Holy Prophet (S) is narrated to have said, "Love Allah whole-heartedly."87

In one of his supplications, Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a) says: "O Allah, I ask You to fill my heart with love of You, awe of You, belief in You, faith in You, fear of You, and yearning toward You."88

When the love of Allah and yearning toward Him fills the heart of a servant, there would remain no vacant place in his heart for another love apart from that of Allah, unless if the other love is in extension to His love, and, in this case, it would be counted as the love of Allah and yearning toward Him.

In his prayer at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says: "Send blessings on Muhammad and his Progeny, occupy my heart with the great of Your affair, and send love of You to it until I meet You {on the Day of Judgement} with blood gushing forth from my jugular vein."89

This statement implies sincerity in love for Allah, as His love becomes the only thing occupying the heart, and its only concern which does not part it.

The Jealousy of Allah for His Servant

Allah, the Exalted, loves His servant, and one of the properties of love is jealousy (*ghayrah*). Thus, He is earnestly concerned about the heart of His servant, as He loves His servant to be sincere in his love for Him and not to love anyone other than Him and not to let any other love enter his heart.

It has been narrated that Prophet Musa ('a) once called on Allah at the Sacred Valley (*al-wadi al-muqaddas*), saying, "O Lord, I have dedicated my love to You, and I have cleansed my heart of all other than You." {This was at a time when} he used to extremely love his family. So Allah, the Exalted, the Blessed, said to him, "... If your love is purely for Me, then take off from your heart the love of your family."90

Among the instances of the jealousy (*ghayrah*) of Allah for His servant is that He removes love of others from his heart, such that if He were to find that his heart is attached to other than Him, He would take that love away from him so that his heart may purely be for His love.

In the supplication of 'arafah, Imam al–Husayn ('a) says: "You are the one who has removed {love of} others from the hearts of Your lovers, such that they loved none but You... What has he found one who has lost You? And what has he lost one who has found You? Indeed he who is pleased with other than You as a substitute has gone wrong."91

I would like to relate in this regard an enlightening story which Shaykh Hasan al–Banna has narrated in his book *Mudhakarat ad–Da'wah wa ud–Da'iyah*. He says that Allah, the Exalted, had blessed Shaykh Shalabi, one of the Egyptian scholars in mysticism and ethics, with a daughter in the later stages of his life. The Shaykh was extremely fond of her and loved her passionately, such that he would not separate from her even after she had grown up. His love for her was on increase as she grew up and became young.

On the eve of the birth anniversary of Holy Prophet (S), Shaykh al-Banna, together with a group of his friends, visited Shaykh ash-Shalabi as they were coming back from a gathering -near the house of the Shaykh- held due to this auspicious occasion, and sat with him for a while. As they intended to leave, the Shaykh told them with a gentle smile on his face, "By the will of Allah, visit me tomorrow so that we may bury {my daughter,} Ruhiyyah."

This daughter was the only child he was blessed with after eleven years of his marriage. He would not

separate from her even while at work. Now she was grown up and was in the prime of youth. He named her 'Ruhiyyah' as her position to him was that of a spirit to the body.

Shaykh al-Banna says that we were astonished and thus asked him, "When did she pass away?" He replied, "Today, just before sunset." We said, "Why did you not inform us, so that we could have taken out the funeral procession from another house?" He said, "But what has happened? {This auspicious occasion} has lessened our grief, and the funeral ceremony has changed to a happy occasion. Do you still want a greater blessing from Allah than this?"

Hence, the discussion changed into a lesson in mysticism given by the Shaykh. He saw the reason behind the death of his daughter as the jealosy (*ghayrah*) of Allah for the heart of His servant; for Allah is greatly concerned about the hearts of His righteous servants lest they should be attached to other than Him, or turn toward someone apart from Him.

The Shaykh cited the example of Prophet Ibrahim ('a) and how he was attached to his son Isma'il, thus Allah commanded him to slaughter him; and the example of Ya'qub and his fondness toward Yusuf, due to which Allah separated him from Ya'qub for a number of years. This is why the heart of a person ought not to be attached to other than Allah, the Blessed, the Exalted, otherwise he would be dishonest in the claim of His love.

Then the Shaykh brought the story of Fudayl bin 'Ayad when he was holding the hand of his little daughter and kissed it. So she said to him, "Dear father, do you love me?" He replied, "Yes, my little daughter." She said, "By Allah, I did not think of you to be a liar until today!" He said, "And how is that? Why would I lie?!" She answered, "For I thought that because of the state of God-wary you are in, you would not love anyone else." So the man wept and said, "O my Master! Even the small children have unveiled the pretension (*riya*') of Your servant, Fudayl!"

And the like of these anecdotes with which Shaykh ash-Shalabi tried to calm us and avert what had struck us of grief due to the calamity which had befallen him, and the state of our being ashamed because of spending that night with him.

So we left and came back the next morning and buried Ruhiyyah. We did not hear any voice of wailing, nor did anyone utter a distasteful word. We did not see but manifestations of patience and submission to Allah, the High, the Great.

Love 'of' Allah and 'for' Allah

We ought to answer the following question that this interpretation of 'sincerity in love of Allah' could be seen to be contradicting the human nature (*fitrah*); for Allah, the Exalted, has created man with love for different things as well as dislike for different things. Now, sincerity in love of Allah, as explained above, seems to stand in contrast with this nature according to which Allah has created mankind.

The answer to this question is that sincerity in love of Allah does not mean the rejection of the human nature. Rather it means directing one's love (*hubb*) and dislike (*kurh*) according to what Allah likes and dislikes. Allah, the Exalted, does not want from his servant, nor did he want from Musa bin 'Imran, to take out the love of his family from his heart. Rather, what He wants from him is that his love for his family should be *through* his love of Him, and His love should be the only source of all other kinds of love in his heart.

In other words, that which Allah wants from His servant, and wanted from Musa ('a), is to tie all kinds of love with His love. As a result, one's love for his family would be, in this case, a consolidation of the love of Allah in a person.

This is a profound concept and a beautiful method of education (*tarbiyah*) which none can comprehend but those whom Allah has chosen and singled out for His love.

The Holy Prophet (S), who is the greatest of all mankind in sincerity and purity, used to say, "{Two things} have been made dear to me from your world, women and perfume; and the delight of my eyes is in the prayers (*salat*)."92

No doubt that this love in the speech of the Prophet (S) is a love which is in extension to the love of Allah. The dearest of these three to the heart of the Messenger of Allah (S) is indeed the prayers, as it is the delight of his eyes. And there is no doubt in the fact that the Prophet's love for them was in extension to his love of Allah.

Therefore, 'sincerity in love of Allah' does not lead to destruction of the human nature or cause disturbance in it. Rather, it entails a reconstruction of the structure of love and hatred in human life based on this new criterion presented by Islam.

Accordingly, the natural love and inclination of man remains intact, but within a new arrangement, which, in fact, contributes to the strengthening of one's love of Allah, instead of weakening it and causing confusion in it.

For this very reason there has been enormous emphasis in the Islamic narrations on the value of 'love *of* Allah and *for* Allah'. For instance, Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) is narrated to have said, "Love for Allah is the closest kinship." 93

He is also reported to have said, "Love of Allah is much stronger than the womb relation."94

The above expression is precise and depends on an important intellectual principle. There is indeed a diversity of blood relationships and close ties in the lives of the people. The firmest of these relations is the womb relation. Now, according to the above tradition, the relation with Allah is much stronger even than the womb relation. Thus, if a person ties his love and attachment to this relation, and if he succeeds in organizing his love and hatred based on it, then all his relations would become the strongest and the

most perfect of relations.

The reason they would become the firmest of relations is that if a relation is for the sake of other than Allah, then it is prone to change and upheaval, as it can be affected with things which can alter the attitude of a person toward the other. But if the love of a person for his brother in faith is for the sake of Allah, then it would be firm and strong, and more enduring in the face of different conflicting elements and factors.

'Sincerity in love of Allah' not only does not negate the natural attachments of a human being, but it also strengthens and consolidates it after he has organized them based on the 'main course' (i.e. the course of the love of Allah), which plays an exclusive role in directing the love of the truthful ones (*siddiqin*) and the friends of Allah.

Thus, the best of the people in the eyes of Allah would be the one who is more loving toward his brother in faith, for the sake of Allah. Imam as–Sadiq ('a) says: "No two believers meet except that the best of them is the one more ardent in love for his brother."95

He ('a) is also reported to have said, "Those who love each other for the sake of Allah shall be on the pulpits of light on the Day of Judgement, such that the light of their bodies and the light of their pulpits would illuminate every thing to the extent that they will be known by it; and it will be said {about them}, 'These are those who love each other for the sake of Allah."96

It has been narrated that Allah, the Exalted, once revealed onto Musa bin 'Imran ('a), "Have you ever performed a deed for Me? He answered, 'I have performed prayers (*salat*) for You, I have fasted {for You}, I have given charity {for You}, and I have been remembering You.'

So Allah, the Blessed, the Exalted, said, 'As for the prayers, they are your proof (*burhan*); fasting is {your} shield (*junnah*); charity is {your} shade (*zill*); and the remembrance is {your} light (*nur*). So which deed have you performed for Me?' Musa ('a) said, 'Show me a deed which is solely for You.' He {the Exalted} said, 'O Musa! Have you ever loved a friend of Mine for My sake, or have you ever hated My enemy for My sake?' Thus Musa came to know that the best of deeds is the love for Allah and hatred for Allah."97

This narration is profound in meaning, for one may perform prayers out of love for Allah, as he may perform it so that it may serve as a proof for him in the Heaven. Likewise, he may fast out of his love for Allah, as he may do so in order for it to serve as a protective shield for him against the Fire. But love of the friends of Allah and hatred of His enemies cannot be except out of one's love for Him, the Exalted.

The First Source of Love

From where should we draw the love of Allah? This is an important question in our discussion. Now that we have known the value of the love of Allah, we must know where to derive this love from and what is

its source?

A brief answer to this question is that Allah Himself is the source of this love, its origin and goal. We will now explain this in detail.

1. Allah Loves His Servants

Indeed Allah loves His servants, He provides for them, protects them, bestows upon them His blessings and bounties that none is able to count, forgives them, turns toward them clemently, covers their shortcomings, grants them success, guides them to the right path, takes care of them with His patronage and grace, and averts evil and calamity from them. All these are signs of His love toward his servants.

2. Allah Confers upon His Servants His Love and Affection

Among the signs of Allah's love for his servants is that He loves them and blesses them with His love. However, the affair of this love is very strange; for it is Allah who is the bestower of love, and it is He who receives love from His servants. He endows them with attraction (*jadhbah*) after attraction, and thereafter He draws them toward Himself with that attraction.

We find frequent indications to this concept in the Islamic narrations and supplications. In the whispered prayer of *al-'arifin* (the knowers), Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) says: "O Allah, make us among those within the gardens of whose breasts the trees of yearning for You have taken firm root, and the assemblies of whose hearts have been seized by the ardour of Your love." We have already explained this phrase earlier.

In the *munajat* of *al-mu'tasimin* (those who seek refuge), he ('a) says: "I ask You... to assign over us a protector through which You will deliver us from destructions, turn aside from us blights, and hide us from the striking of great afflictions; and to send down upon us some of Your tranquility, to wrap our faces in the lights of love for You, to give us haven in Your strong pillar; and to gather us under the wings of Your protection; by Your clemency and mercy, O Most Merciful of the merciful."

Again in the *munajat* of *al-zahidin* (the abstainers), he ('a) says: "O Allah, induce us to renounce it and keep us safe from it, by Your giving {us} success and by Your protecting {us} from sins. Strip from us the robes of opposing You, attend to our affairs through Your good sufficiency, amplify our increase from the boundless plenty of Your mercy.

Be liberal in our gifts from the overflow of Your grants, plant in our hearts the trees of Your love, complete for us the lights of Your knowledge, give us to taste the sweetness of Your pardon and the pleasure of Your forgiveness, gladden our eyes on the day of meeting You with the vision of You, dislodge the love of this world from our hearts, just as You have done for the righteous, Your selected friends, and for the pious, those whom You have singled out, by Your mercy, O Most Merciful of the merciful."

In the supplement mentioned by Sayyid Ibn Tawus to the supplication of Imam al–Husayn ('a) on the Day of 'Arafah, the Imam ('a) supplicates to Allah with the following verses, "How can Your existence be proved through him who is dependent on You? Does other than You have an appearance (*zuhur*) which You do not possess, such that he would become the one to expose You? When have You become invisible such that You have needed a proof to point You out? And when have You been far away such that the effects (*athar*) would lead {us} to You? Blind is the eye which does not see You watchful over itself, and the deal of one whom You have not given a share out of Your love is in loss...

Guide me to You through Your light, and make me stand before You with true servanthood... and protect me through Your protected secret... and make me travel on the roads of the people of attraction (*ahl al-jadhb*). O Allah, suffice me from planning for myself through your planning for me, and from my choice through Your choosing for me, and keep me away from cases of anxiety and restlessness...

You are the one who has caused the {rays of} light to shine on the hearts of Your friends such that they recognized You and attested to Your Oneness; You are the one who has removed {the love of} others from the hearts of Your lovers, such that they loved none but You and did not take resort to other than You; You are their companion when they are left lonely by the worlds, and You are the one who has guided them after they have been distanced from the signs and proofs. What has he found one who has lost You?

And what has he lost one who has found You? Indeed he who is pleased with other than You as a substitute has gone wrong, and verily one who has sought other than You in exchange is in loss. How can one aspire for other than You whilst You have not stopped {Your} benevolence? And how can one ask from other than You while You have not changed {Your} way of generosity?

O He who has made His lovers taste the sweetness of intimacy such that they stood before Him in praise; and O He who has clothed His friends with the clothes of His awe such that they stood before Him pleading for forgiveness... O Allah, seek me by Your mercy until I reach You, and attract me by Your favour so that I may turn toward You."98

3. Allah Shows His Affection toward His Servants

Allah, the Exalted, reveals His love to His servants by showering upon them His blessings so that they might love Him. Indeed the bounties showered upon the heedful and intelligent hearts are effective in endearing Allah to them.

In his famous supplication at dawn, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) says: "You show Your love toward us through Your bounties, and we return You with sins; the good from You constantly descends upon us, while the evil from us ascends to You. The honoured angel has always been, and is still, bringing You the news of our ugly deeds, but that has not prevented You from continuing to embrace us with Your blessings, and to kindly provide us with Your bounties. Glory be to You! How clement You are, and how

great You are, and how kind You are, as the beginner {of the creation} and the eventual claimer {of it}."99

A comparison between what descends from Allah to His servants of His blessings, grace, benevolence, beauty, forgiveness and covering, and that which ascends from the servants to Allah of evil and ugly deeds, gives rise to a sense of shame in a servant toward his Master, as he returns the love and affection from Him with avoidance and hatred toward Him. And how miserable and wretched is a man who returns Allah's love for him and His exhibition of His love for him, by avoiding Him and turning away from Him.

Just ponder over these words of the supplication of *al-iftitah* from Imam al-Hujjah ('a), "You call me and I turn away from You, You show me affection and I show hatred towards You, You display Your love for me and I do not accept {it} from You, as though I am above You. But this did not prevent You from having mercy on me, being good to me, and favouring me."

- 1. Qur'an, 9:24.
- 2. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.98, pg.92.
- 3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.98, pg.226.
- 4. Ibid, vol.78, pg.226.
- 5. Usul al-Kafi, vol.2, pg.84.
- 6. Ibid, vol.2, pg.83.
- 7. Misbah al-Shari'ah, pg.23.
- 8. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 12, pg. 380.
- 9. Ibid, vol.95, pg.467.
- 10. lbid, vol.98, pg.226.
- 11. Ibid, vol.78, pg. 175.
- 12. Usul al-Kafi, vol.2, pg. 125.
- 13. Qur'an, 3:31.
- 14. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.69, pg.237.
- 15. Nur at-Thaqalayn, vol.5, pg.285.
- 16. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.98, pg.26.
- 17. Munajat Ahl al-Bayt, pg.96 97.
- 18. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.98, pg.85.
- 19. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.94, pg. 148.
- 20. Ibid, vol.98, pg.226.
- 21. Ibid, vol.94, pg. 151.
- 22. Ibid, vol.98, pg.82.
- 23. lbid, vol.94, pg. 101.
- 24. Ibid, vol.94, pg.99.
- 25. Ibid, vol.94, pg. 149.
- 26. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.94, pg. 151.
- 27. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.94, pg. 142.
- 28. Ibid, vol.98, pg.84.
- 29. Ibid, vol.98, pg.88.
- 30. Munajat Ahl al-Bayt, pg.68 69.
- 31. Bihar al-Anwar:, vol.94, pg. 143.

- 32. The supplication of al-Iftitah.
- 33. Qur'an, 57:4.
- 34. Qur'an, 50:16.
- 35. Qur'an, 2:186.
- 36. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.94, pg. 150.
- 37. Liqa' Allah, pg. 101.
- 38. Qur'an, 57:4.
- 39. Qur'an, 13:28.
- 40. That is, forgiveness and punishment.
- 41. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.46, pg.77 78.
- 42. Ibid, vol.46, pg.80 81.
- 43. Qur'an, 23:101.
- 44. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.46, pg.81 82.
- 45. Falah as-Sa'il of Sayyid Ibn Tawus, pg.266.
- 46. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.94, pg. 148.
- 47. Qur'an, 54:55.
- 48. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.94, pg. 148.
- 49. Qur'an, 1:67.
- 50. Qur'an, 2:213.
- 51. Qur'an, 5:16.
- 52. Qur'an, 6:87.
- 53. Qur'an, 5:16.
- 54. Qur'an, 6:153.
- 55. Qur'an, 14:12.
- 56. Qur'an, 29:69.
- 57. Qur'an, 61:10.
- 58. Qur'an, 2:207.
- 59. Qur'an, 8:7 {Trans.}
- 60. Qur'an, 2:267.
- 61. Tafsir al-Mizan, vol.2, pg.404.
- 62. Qur'an, 38:45 47.
- 63. There is a bilateral-relation between that which enters the heart and that which flows out from it. If that which enters the heart is good, then what comes out from it would be good as well; as the opposite is true also. When the acts of a person are righteous, then Allah would grant him with the exclusiveness of the remembrance of the Hereafter. But if his deeds are evil, then Allah would deprive him of the pure drink and leave him on his own; thus he would be drinking of what shaitan and his own lowly desires inspire him with, and that which the people drink from the table of satan and their mean desires.
- 64. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 15, pg.39.
- 65. Ibid.
- 66. Qur'an, 25:74.
- 67. Qur'an, 5:35.
- 68. Qur'an, 17:57.
- 69. Qur'an, 26:80.
- 70. Among the supplications of the holy month of Rajab.
- 71. Qur'an, 21:83 84.
- 72. Qur'an, 21:87 88.
- 73. Qur'an, 43 45.
- 74. Qur'an, 21:46.
- 75. Qur'an, 11:45.

- 76. Qur'an, 25:77.
- 77. Qur'an, 73:17.
- 78. This is an allusion to the fact that they eagerly await the end of the day so that they may stand before their Lord in worship. {Trns.}
- 79. Liqa' Allah, pg. 104.
- 80. Ibid, pg. 101.
- 81. Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon no. 193.
- 82. Qur'an, 9:38.
- 83. Freeing oneself from this world does not mean abandoning it. The Holy Prophet (S) himself was a person free of {attachment to} this world, but still he used to work for spreading the message of Islam in this world, and to subject this world to it.
- 84. Qur'an, 2:165.
- 85. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.70, pg.25.
- 86. Part of the supplication of abu hamzah at-Thumali.
- 87. Kanz al-'Ummal, vol.47, pg.44.
- 88. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.98, pg.89.
- 89. Ibid, vol.97, pg.334.
- 90. Ibid, vol.83, pg.236.
- 91. Ibid, vol.98, pg.226.
- 92. Al-Khisal, pg. 165.
- 93. Mizan al-Hikmah, vol.2, pg.233.
- 94. Ibid.
- 95. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.74, pg.398.
- 96. Ibid, pg.399.
- 97. Ibid, vol.69, pg.253.
- 98. Ibid, vol.98, pg.226.
- 99. Ibid, pg.85.

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