

## O Allāh, Clothe Every Unclothed One

اللَّهُمَّ اكْسُ كُلَّ عُرْيَانٍ

### The Aim of Human Creation

One of the great calamities of human life is the lack of insight about the purpose of human creation. So long as man has not come to know ‘the goal of life’ he shall always have to face difficulties. This universal law applies to the affluent too. Ask every wealthy person whether his money always keeps him happy, and his answer would be in the negative. The Holy Qur’ān as well the Ahlu’l Bayt (as) have informed us that the aim behind human creation is to attain Allāh’s proximity and nearness. And the path that leads one to realize this aspiration is none other than ‘*ibādah*’ (obedience and worship). The following verse explains it:

In chapter 51, verse 56, Almighty Allāh says:

﴿ وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴾

**“And I have not created the jinn and men except that they should worship Me.”**

Here, the aim is indicated as Allāh’s Worship. But is it the ‘final aim of creation?’ To answer this we should look at chapter 15, verse 99 of the Qur’ān, which says:

﴿ وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ ﴾

**“And worship your Lord until conviction comes to you.”**

Therefore, it is *ma'rifatullah* that is the end. And the closer one gets to his Lord the better his knowledge of his Creator.

Beautiful allusions are made in the following verses too about the ultimate goal of the human being:

1. Imām 'Alī (as) in his famous supplication of Kumayl cries:

يَا غَايَةَ آمَالِ الْعَارِفِينَ!

“O the Ultimate Hope of the Gnostics.”

2. And in the prayer of 'Arafah, Sayyid al-Shuhadā (as) cries:

إِلَهِي: أَطْلُبُنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ حَتَّى أَصِلَ إِلَيْكَ.

“O Allāh, Seek me by Your Mercy until I reach You.”

It is Allāh's worship that raises the human being so high that he may witness God– of course in his own limitations as explained by some traditions of the Ahlu'l Bayt (as).

Having known this, we should realize that since the human being resides in the world of matter and possesses a structure that is submissive to the laws of matter, he is in need of different necessities that may enable him to subsist and achieve his goal in life. Examples of such basic necessities, which we may also term as 'the means of life', are food, drink, clothing, a place of shelter, etc.

## The Means and the Goal

Many who have not realized the purpose of human life busy themselves with the means and forget the goal. When they look at the luster of the various kinds of material products of the so-called developed countries, they brand that as 'human progress' and even try to doubt the authenticity of Islam.

Advancement in science and technology is not something abhorred by Islam at all. Rather it is encouraged. However it still comes under the umbrella of 'the means of the end' and thus one should not mistake it as 'the yardstick of human progress.' One should rather question oneself whether 'the material product' really serves to be 'means' on the path towards Allāh or not. Both the VCR and the Internet, for example, are helpful means of communication, but if they hamper the human being from traversing the path of eternal happiness, what use do they have in serving as 'a means' for the goal? The proponents of advancement always present two kinds of products:

1. Those of variable nature
2. Those of invariable nature

Commodities of the first category allow the human being to reason and work on the path towards perfection both before and after purchase. For example, when buying a television set, one may or may not decide to employ the same in watching only those programs that would enrich his mind and spirit. In the case of the second category, however, ‘this choice’ is out of question ‘after purchase.’ For example, if a person were to purchase an indecent film due to his base inclinations. Later if he were to decide to employ the same for a good purpose, he would not be able to do so. He cannot change the film to enrich his mind. All he can do is to erase the film and dub something that would enrich his spirit. Similar is the case with material items that directly concern human development and subsistence such as food, drink and clothing. Many kinds of food and clothing are forbidden in Islam and can thus not be branded as ‘the means’ for the human goal.

Therefore it is highly significant to know the difference between ‘the goal’ and the ‘means.’ Many of us unfortunately have molded our lives to struggle only for the abundance of the means and have forgotten the goal. We would understand this reality when entering our graves. The Qur’an [102: 1–2] says:

﴿ أَلْهَاكُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ. حَتَّى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ ﴾

***“Competing for abundance has engaged you until you come to the graves.”***

## **The Purpose Behind Clothing**

‘Clothing’ is one of the very basic necessities of human life and indeed a blessing of Allah (swt) to the human being. Realizing the purpose behind clothing would open several doors of understanding and enable us to do our duty while requesting the All-merciful Lord to clothe all the naked.

Following are verses of Qur’an and supplications worthy of contemplation:

1. [Chapter al-‘Arf –7:26]:

﴿ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سَوْآتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ... ﴾

***“O children of Adam, surely we have sent down for you clothing that covers your shame and an***

**attire that causes beauty; and the attire of piety; that is better...**

2. Imam Mūsā bin Ja'far al-Kāzīm (as) is reported<sup>1</sup> to have said that whenever a person would like to put on a new dress he should wipe his hand over it and say:

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي كَسَانِي مَا أُوَارِي بِهِ عَوْرَتِي وَأَتَجَمَّلُ بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ.

“Praise belongs to Allāh who clothed me with what I cover my shame and beautify myself among the people.”

Studying the abovementioned quotations we come to realize that two important reasons behind clothing are:

1. To conceal one's private parts
2. To beautify oneself

## The Inner Attire

Having spoken about this great blessing, Almighty Allāh transports the reader to a very important truth, which if neglected would cause extreme regret. He reminds the human being that he is not just composed of the material body to need ‘the material attire’ only. Rather ‘the inner attire’ is of fundamental significance. In the words of Qur'ān: *dhālika khayr* (that is the better!) ‘Allāmah Tabṭabā'ī in his *al-Mizān* has a beautiful explanation about this. In order to indicate the gravity of the situation of ‘the pain’ that the human being experiences when his shameful deeds are displayed, he says:

...إِلَّا أَنَّ ظُهُورَ السُّوءَاتِ الْبَاطِنِيَّةِ أَشَدُّ...

“...except that the pain experienced with the appearance of the inner blemishes is more intense...”

Other verses of the Holy Qur'ān clearly explain the calamity of this situation. Look at the verses below:

1. Chapter al-Tāriq: – 86:9:

يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ

**“The day when the secrets shall be made manifest.”**

2. Chapter ʿAlī ‘Imrān – 3:30:

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَيَنِّيهِ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا...﴿٣﴾

**“On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil, it shall wish that between it and that evil was a long distance...”**

3. Chapter ʿAlī ‘Imrān, 3:192:

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ مَن تَدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ ﴿٣﴾

**“O Lord, surely whomsoever you place in the Fire, you have indeed disgraced him...”**

Therefore when uttering this verse of the supplication we should try to think whether we are among those who are spiritually unclothed or not. If we are, then we should seek Divine help to establish taqwā within ourselves so that we do not face that ignominy which is so intense to bear.

The other fundamental use of clothing is to look presentable and beautiful. The inclination to be beautiful is inherent in every human being and there are ample indications in our holy traditions that encourage one to look beautiful and presentable within the limits of the Sharʿa. In keeping with the brevity of this commentary, we will avoid mentioning them.

However, we must understand that in the same manner as “taqwā” and piety is a source of protection from sin and ignominy, it also is a source of embellishment. This is because it embellishes the inner form of the human being with excellent character and makes him the beloved of Allāh. How remote is the ‘beloved of the apparently beautiful’ from the beloved of the spiritually beautiful: *razaqanallāhu jam’an* [May Allāh enable all of us to achieve the same]

## **A Word of Prayer**

O Allāh, as we humbly ask you to clothe both the physically as well as the spiritually naked ones, and seek your support to help those who have no proper clothes in their physical lives, and enable us to clothe our inner selves with the attire of taqwā, so that we may acquire the worth to clothe others as well.

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1. Hilyatu'l Muttaqin, ch. 9

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