

Part 2.2: The Twelve Worlds

On the basis of what has been said above, a devotee, making a spiritual journey has to pass through 12 Worlds before reaching the world of sincerity. The names of these worlds are:

Minor Islam, major Islam, greater Islam, minor faith, major faith, greater faith, minor emigration, major emigration, greater emigration, minor jihad, major jihad and greater jihad. It is necessary to know the characteristics of these worlds and to be aware of the obstacles and barriers which a devotee has to face while advancing towards them. To make our point clear we describe these worlds briefly.

Major Islam means complete submission to Allah, not to criticize any action of His and to believe with full conviction that what is happening is not without some advantage and what is not happening was not advisable. Imam Ali hints at this point when he says that 'Islam means submission and submission signifies conviction.' A devotee not only should have no objection against any Divine directives or decrees but also should not feel even in his heart unhappy about any of them. Allah says:

But nay, by your Lord, they will not be faithful unless they make you judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of that which you decide, and submit with full submission. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:65)

This is the stage of greater Islam. At this stage Islam should infiltrate the soul of the devotee and truly overwhelm his heart and life.

When the devotee's heart is illuminated by the light of greater Islam, not only his heart testifies that everything is from Allah, but he also physically observes this truth. In other words, he often sees with the eyes of his heart that Allah is omnipresent and omniscient.

This stage is called that of vision and greater Islam. But as the spiritual traveler has not yet attained to perfection, he has to face many material obstacles, especially when he is busy with his natural needs, and a state of unmindfulness overcomes him.

Therefore it is necessary for him to use his will power so that the state of vision may become a permanent feature for him and may not be disturbed by his other activities. For this purpose it is

necessary to push the state of greater Islam from the heart to the soul so that this elementary state may become a fully developed state governing all internal and external faculties. This is the stage which is called by the gnostics the station of well doing (ihsan). The Qur'an says:

As for those who strive in Us, we surely guide them to Our path. Surely Allah is with those who do well. (Surah al-Ankabut, 29:69)

As such a striver in the way of Allah cannot find the way of guidance and proximity of Allah until he reaches the stages of well doing. An eminent companion of the Holy Prophet Abu Dharr Ghifari once asked him what well doing signified. The Holy Prophet said: "That you worship Allah as though you see him. If you do not see Him, He surely sees you".

In other words, man should worship Allah as if he was seeing Him. If he is unable to worship Him in this way, then there is a lower grade of worship. He should worship Allah as though Allah was seeing him. So long as the devotee does not reach the stage of greater faith, he is only occasionally invested with the state of well-doing.

In this state he performs the acts of worship with zeal and fervor. His soul having been imbued with faith, puts all his organs and faculties on their proper job. The organs and faculties once controlled cannot disobey the soul even for a moment. Concerning the devotees who have attained to the stage of greater faith Allah says:

Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers and who shun all that is vain. (Surah al-Mu'minun, 23: 1-3)

Only that man that is interested in trivial things will busy himself with them. A spiritual traveler who has attained to the stage of greater faith and for whom well doing has become a habit cannot be fond of anything vain, for no heart can love two contradictory things at one and the same time. Allah Himself has said:

Allah has not assigned to any man two hearts within his body. (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:4)

If we find any devotee flitting away his time in amusements, we can easily conclude that he is not fully devoted to Allah and that his heart is not free from the hypocrisy which is called in this context greater hypocrisy and which is the opposite of greater faith. As a result of this hypocrisy man does not act according to his inner incitement, but is guided by reason, expediency or apprehensions. The following verse refers to this kind of hypocrisy:

When they stand up to offer prayers, they perform it languidly. (Surah an-Nisa', 4: 142)

When the spiritual traveler attains to the stage of greater faith, no trace of hypocrisy is left in him. His actions and deeds are no longer guided by unreliable directives of reason nor by any apprehension, expediency or conservatism. All his actions are then motivated by inner zeal, hearty inclination and real

love.

Once the spiritual traveler attains to the stage of greater faith, he should be ready for greater emigration. There are two sides of this emigration: one is bodily emigration which means giving up social dealings with the wicked, and the other is emigration of heart which means not making friends with them. A spiritual traveler not only has to abandon all habits, customs and usages which prevent him from pursuing the path of Allah, but has also to dislike them from the core of his heart.

Such customs and usages have been mostly imported from the countries of the infidels. A man living in a material society becomes a prisoner of many customs and habits prevalent among the worldly people forming the basis of their social dealings. For example it has become customary to regard a person keeping quiet at an academic discussion as ignorant. Many people consider it a mark of their eminence to sit at the head of a meeting or to go ahead of others while walking in company.

Fine talk and flattery are called good manners, and a behavior contrary to these customs is described as bad manner and vulgarity. The spiritual traveler should with the help of Allah ignore such odd customs and whimsical ideas. In this regard he should not fear anybody and pay no attention even to the criticism of those who call themselves great scholars.

There is a report in Kulayni's Jami' on the authority of Imam Ja'far Sadiq that the Holy Prophet has said: "There are four pillars of infidelity: greed, fear, resentment and anger". In this tradition fear means an apprehension that people would be angry if their wrong ideas and wrong customs were opposed.

In short the spiritual traveler should say good-bye to all those habits and traditions, customs and usages which obstruct his advancement towards Allah. The gnostics call this attitude 'madness', because mad people also take little interest in and pay little attention to the popular habits and traditions and do not care what the other people would say. A mad man sticks to his own ways and does not fear any opposition.

Following his success in emigration and getting rid of the prevailing customs, the spiritual traveler enters the field of major jihad, which means a fight against the devilish hordes. Even at this stage the spiritual traveler is still a captive of his lower self, overwhelmed by his passions, and low desires and perplexed by apprehensions and worries, anger and disappointments. If anything that is not to his liking happens, he is upset and feels hurt.

In order to overcome all his worries, grief's and pains, the spiritual traveler should seek Divine aid and crush the forces of apprehension, anger and lust. On getting rid of worldly botherations and worries he will enter the world of greater Islam.

Then he will feel as if he was prevailing over the whole world, was safe from death and effacement and was free from every kind of conflict. He will find in himself a purity and glamour not connected with this humble world. At this stage the devotee becomes totally unconcerned with this transient world, as if he

was dead. Now he begins a new life. He lives in the world of humanity, but sees everything in the shape of the angelic world. Material things can no longer do him any harm.

As he has reached the middle stage of self-resurrection, veil is gradually lifted from before his eyes and he can see many hidden things. This station is called that of greater Islam. The Qur'an clearly refers to it in the following words:

Is he who was dead and We have raised him to life, and set for him a light wherein he walks among men, like him who is in utter darkness whence he cannot come out? Thus is their conduct made fair-seeming for the disbelievers. (Surah al-Anfal, 6: 122)

Whosoever does right, whether male or female, and is a believer, we shall surely quicken him with good life and We shall pay them a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:97)

It should be kept in mind that what the devotee views in this state may create in him a sense of false pride and as a result of that, his worst enemy, which is his lower self may begin to resist him. There is a tradition which says: "The most deadly enemy of yours is your lower self which is within you."

In these circumstances the devotee is in danger of being involved in greater infidelity unless he is helped and protected by Allah. The following tradition refers to this kind of infidelity. "The lower self is the greatest idol". It was this idol-worship for being protected from which the Prophet Ibrahim prayed to Allah when he said: "Save me and my sons from worshipping idol".

Evidently it is unimaginable that Prophet Ibrahim would ever worship any fabricated idols. It was this kind of idol-worship from which the Holy Prophet also sought refuge when he said: "Allah, I seek refuge in you from hidden polytheism".

Therefore the devotee should whole-heartedly acknowledge his humbleness and completely do away with the idea of self-conceit from his heart so that he may not commit greater infidelity and may succeed in attaining to greater Islam.

Some gnostics have throughout their life avoided even the use of the word 'I'. Some others attributed all that is good to Allah and only what could not be attributed to Allah, they attributed to themselves. They used first person plural pronoun while talking of a thing that could be attributed to themselves and to Allah both. They derived this method from the story of the Prophet Musa and Khizr. Khizr said:

As for the boat, it belonged to poor people working on the river, and I wished to mar it, for there was a king behind them who was taking every boat by force. (Surah al-Kahf, 18:79)

As the act of marring could not be attributed to Allah, he attributed it to himself and used a first person singular pronoun.

And as for the lad, his parents were believers and we feared lest he should oppress them by rebellion and disbelief And therefore we intended that their Lord should change him for them for one better in purity and nearer to mercy. (Surah al-Kahf, 18:80-81)

In this case as the act of slaying the lad could be attributed both to Allah and Khizr, the plural pronoun was used.

And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure belonging to them. Their father had been righteous, and your Lord intended that they should come to their full strength and should bring out their treasure as a mercy from their Lord. (Surah al-Kahf, 18:82)

As the intention of doing good to someone is attributable to Allah, it has been attributed to Him.

We find Prophet Ibrahim also employing this style of speech. He said:

It is He Who created me and Who does guide me, and who feeds me and waters me, and who heals me when I get sick. (Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26:78-80)

Here Prophet Ibrahim attributes sickness to himself and healing to Allah.

A devotee should leave no stone unturned to attain to the stage of major Islam and to do away with self-conceit.

Haji Imam Quli Nakhjawani was the teacher in gnosis of Agha Sayyid Husayn Agha Qazi, the father of the late Agha Mirza Ali Qazi. He completed his training in morality and gnosis at the hands of Sayyid Quraysh Qazwini. He says that when he got aged, one day he saw that he and Satan were standing on the top of a hill. He passed his hand on his beard and said to Satan: "Now I am an old man please spare me if you can." Satan said: "Look this side."

Sayyid Qazwini says that when he looked that side, he saw a ditch so deep that it sent a cold wave into his spine. Pointing to that ditch Satan said: "I have no sympathy or mercy for anybody. If I could lay my hands on you once, you would fall into the bottom of this ditch from which you would never have an escape."

Next to greater Islam is the stage of greater faith, which means such an intense upsurge of major Islam that it may transform the knowledge of truth into a clear view of it, In the meantime the spiritual traveler moving from the angelic world ('Alam Malakut) enters the souled world ('Alam Jabarut). For him greater self-resurrection would have already taken place and he can now see the sights of the souled world.

Thereafter the spiritual traveler should emigrate from his own existence which is to be totally rejected by him. This journey of his will be from his own existence to the absolute existence. Some saints have expressed this idea by saying: "Leave your self and come." The following verses of the Qur'an hint at it:

O contented soul, return to your Lord in His good pleasure. Enter among My bondmen! Enter My Garden. (Surah al-Fajr, 89:27 – 30).

In this verse the soul has been described as contented and addressed as such. It has been asked to join the ranks of the chosen people of Allah and enter the paradise.

The spiritual traveler has now completed the stage of major jihad and entered the world of victory and conquest which is the headquarters of contentment, but as some traces of his existence still remain, he has not yet completed the process of self-annihilation and hence needs embarking on greater jihad. Because of this deficiency he is not yet absolutely free. His place is still in the compound hinted at in the Qur'anic verse,

"in the nice sitting place with the Powerful Potentate". (Surah al-Qamar, 54:55)

Here 'Powerful Potentate' refers to Allah.

After this stage the spiritual traveler should wage a war against the remaining traces of his existence and remove them completely, so that he may step forward into the field of absolute 'unity'. This world is called the world of victory and conquest. The spiritual traveler has to pass through twelve such worlds before he succeeds in passing the stages of greater emigration and greater jihad and enters the field of sincerity. Then he will be called successful and victorious and will enter the world of sincerity and the compound of:

We belong to Allah and We will surely return to Him (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:156).

For him the greater self-resurrection will already have taken place. He will enter the stage of total passing away from self after crossing the curtains of bodies, souls and every thing fixed and appointed. He will have one foot in the world of divinity, and he will have passed the stage of :

Everybody has to taste death (Surah Ali Imran, 3: 185).

Such a person being at the stage of passing away from self though consciously alive, yet in one sense will be dead. That is why concerning Imam Ali the Holy Prophet said: "Whoever wants to see a dead man walking, let him see Ali ibn Abi Talib."

Explanation

The spiritual excellences and their signs and consequences which have been briefly mentioned above, are the favors which have been bestowed by Allah exclusively on the followers of the Last Prophet, Muhammad, peace be on him. The merits and the perfections which the spiritual travelers of the previous ummahs (nations) could gain, were of limited nature. After reaching the stage of passing away from self they could view the Divine Names and Attributes, but could not advance any further.

The reason was that the highest stage of their gnosis was the maxim, "There is no deity, but Allah" which meant the version of Allah's most Beautiful Names and Attributes. On the other hand the spiritual travelers of the Islamic ummah have reached several higher stages which cannot be described in words.

The reason is that the guiding light of all Islamic rules is the maxim, "Allah is far above being described", The spiritual progress of a Muslim devotee being connected with this maxim, the stages which he can traverse, are too high to be explained.

That is why even the former Prophets could think of no station higher than that of the vision of the Divine Names and Attributes, with the result that they had to face many difficulties and hardships, and were able to get rid of them only by invoking the station of the spiritual guardianship of the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali, Fatimah Zahra and their progeny.

It was the spiritual guardianship of these personalities that delivered the former Prophets from their worries and grief. Although the former Prophets were to a certain extent conscious of the high position of the Imams and that is why they invoked it, but till the end of their life they did not know all its characteristics. Some Qur'anic verses show that only Prophet Ibrahim once or twice viewed these higher truths, but only momentarily. The permanent vision of them will be in the other world only.

Before quoting the Qur'anic verses in support of our point it may be mentioned that the text of the Qur'an clearly shows that the position of sincerity also has several grades, for a number of Prophets who held this position to a certain extent, could not attain to its higher grades, for which they used to pray to Allah. For example the Qur'an says about Prophet Yusuf that:

Surely he was of Our single minded slaves (Surah Yusuf, 12:24).

Still he prayed to Allah saying:

You are my protecting friend in this world and the Hereafter. Make me to die submissive to you and join me to the righteous (Surah Yusuf, 12:101)

The prayer shows that he did not attain the position he was praying for during his life time and so he prayed that he might be granted it after his death. Whether his prayer would be fulfilled in the hereafter, the Qur'an is silent on this point. Prophet Ibrahim held a high position in the station of sincerity, yet he prays saying:

My Lord, vouchsafe me wisdom and unite me to the righteous (Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26:83)

This shows that the station of the righteous is higher than that of sincerity. That is why Prophet Ibrahim wanted to be joined to those who occupied this position. Allah did not accede to his prayer in this world, but promised to grant him the position he asked for in the hereafter:

Surely We chose him in this world and he will be among the righteous in the hereafter (Surah al-

Baqarah, 2: 130).

It may be noted that the position of righteousness for which the former Prophets craved, is different from that which was conferred on Prophet Ibrahim and his descendants according to the following verse:

We bestowed upon him Ishaq and Ya'qub as a grandson. Each of them We made righteous. (Surah al-Anbiya, 21:72)

This kind of righteousness they all enjoyed including Prophet Ibrahim himself. But he was still praying to be joined to the righteous. That shows that he wished something higher than what he had already been granted.

As for the fact that the Holy Prophet and some other persons during their lifetime occupied this higher position, is clear from the following verse:

Surely my Guardian is Allah who revealed the Book. He befriends the righteous. (Surah al-A'raf, 7: 196)

According to this verse, first the Holy Prophet admits that Allah is his Guardian and then declares that his guardian is He who befriends and protects the righteous. This shows that at that time there existed certain individuals occupying the position of righteousness, whom Allah befriended. This also shows why the former Prophets made their prayers through the medium of the Imams and what a high position was held by those righteous individuals whom even great Prophets like Ibrahim wished to join.

As for the fact that the great Prophets attained to the position of sincerity, it can be inferred from a number of Qur'anic verses in different ways. The Qur'an expressly says that only the people of sincerity can eulogize Allah in a befitting manner. Allah says:

Glorified be Allah from what they attributed to Him, except the single minded slaves of Allah, whose case is different (Surah as Saffat, 37: 160).

Ordering the Holy Prophet to eulogize Him, Allah says:

Say; Praise be to Allah and peace be on His slaves whom He has chosen. Is Allah best or all that they ascribe to Him as partners? (Surah an-Naml, 27:59).

The Qur'an cites Prophet Ibrahim praising Allah in the following words:

Praise be to Allah who has given me in my old age Isma'il and Ishaq. My Lord is indeed the hearer of prayer. (Surah Ibrahim, 14:39)

Prophet Nuh was ordered to glorify Allah in the following words:

Then say: Praise be to Allah who has saved us from the wrong doing people. (Surah al-

Mu'minun, 23:28)

Concerning certain eminent Prophets the Qur'an expressly says that they held the position of sincerity. About Prophet Yusuf the Qur'an says:

Surely he is of Our single minded slaves. (Surah Yusuf, 12:24)

About Prophet Musa it says:

And make mention in the Book of Musa. He was single minded, and he was a messenger of Allah, a Prophet. (Surah Maryam, 19:51)

About Prophets Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub the Qur'an says:

And make mention of Our slaves, Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub, men of parts and vision. We purified them with a pure thought, remembrance of the Home of the hereafter (Surah Sad, 38:45)

According to the following verse Satan can do no harm to the men sincerely devoted to Allah: He said:

Then by Your might, I surely will beguile every one of them, save Your single-minded slaves among them. (Surah Sad, 38:82)

Only those who are not thankful to Allah are seduced by Satan:

I shall come upon them from before them, and from behind them and from their right hands and from their left hands, and You will not find most of them thankful to You. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:17)

Concerning several Prophets the Qur'an says that they were chosen by Allah:

We bestowed upon him Ishaq and Ya'qub, each of them We guided; and Nuh We guided before. From among his descendants We guided Dawud, Sulayman, Ayyub, Yusuf, Musa and Harun. Thus do we reward the good, And We guided Zakariyah, Yahya, Isa and Ilyas. Each one of them was righteous. And We guided Isma'il, Alyasa', Yunus and Lut. We gave each of them precedence over the rest of the people. And We guided some of their forefathers, children and brothers. We picked them and guided them to a straight path. (Surah al-An'am, 6:84-87)

From these verses it may be inferred that all the Prophets held the position of sincerity, whereas in the verses mentioned earlier only a few Prophets were mentioned. In these verses Allah has said that He 'picked them', that is He chose them from so many people.

Those who are beguiled and seduced by Satan are those who are not thankful to Allah. Therefore we can say that those who are thankful to Him cannot be entrapped by Satan for they are sincerely devoted to Allah. Whenever the Qur'an describes anyone as thankful, we can easily conclude that he is one of Allah's single-minded and sincere slaves. For example, the Qur'an says about Prophet Nuh:

They were the descendants of those whom We carried (in the ship) along with Nuh. Surely he was a thankful slave. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:3)

About Prophet Lut it says:

We sent a storm of stones upon all of them, except the family of Lut whom We rescued in the last watch of the night as a grace from Us. Thus we reward him who is thankful (Surah al-Qamar, 54:34-35)

About Prophet Ibrahim it says:

Surely Ibrahim was a nation, obedient to Allah, by nature upright and he was not one of the idolaters. He was thankful for Allah's bounties. Allah chose him and guided him to a straight path. (Surah an-Nahl, 16: 120)

All the other Prophets who have been described as thankful are in principle men of sincerity.

In the above verse Allah says: We picked them from amongst all men as if they were taken up carefully and put somewhere safely. On this basis the case of those who have been picked is different from all other men.

They are the people who are exclusively devoted to Allah and are especially favored by Him. This picking by Allah applies to the people of sincerity only because they have attached themselves exclusively to Him and have severed their relations from everything else. Besides, picking in this verse is not related only to those mentioned in it by name, for Allah says:

"We guided some of their forefathers, children and brothers. We picked them and guided them to a straight path". (6:87)

Here the word brothers means moral and spiritual brothers, of these Prophets, that is those who share spiritual knowledge with them. Therefore the statement appears to be applying to all Prophets, and it may safely be argued that all Prophets are the people of sincerity.

Seeking Allah's Guidance

The first thing that a spiritual traveler has to do is to inquire into various religions as far as possible so that he may become conversant with the unity and guidance of Allah. He should try to acquire at least as much knowledge as be enough for practical purposes.

Having carried out this kind of investigation into the unity of Allah and the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet he will come out of the domain of infidelity and enter that of minor Islam and minor faith.

This is the knowledge about which there is unanimity of opinion among the jurists that its acquisition is

essential for every obligated person for the purpose of acknowledging the fundamental beliefs on the basis of proofs and arguments.

If a person cannot get the required degree of satisfaction despite his best efforts he should not lose heart and should pray for obtaining it with humility and submissiveness. This is the method that is reported to have been followed by the Prophet Idris and his followers.

The prayer with humility means that the spiritual traveler should admit his weakness, and earnestly seek guidance from Allah who always helps those who seek the truth earnestly. The Qur'an says¹.

Those who strive in Us We will surely guide them to our path. (Surah al-Ankabut, 29:69)

I remember when I was in Najaf receiving spiritual and moral training from Haji Mirza Ali Qazi, one morning I fell dozing while I was sitting on the prayer rug. All of a sudden I saw as if two persons were sitting in front of me.

One of them was Prophet Idris and other was my brother, Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i. Prophet Idris began talking. He was speaking to me, but I was hearing what he said through the medium of my brother. He said: "During my life I faced many knotty problem which appeared to be too difficult to be resolved, but they were resolved automatically.

It seemed that they were resolved by some supernatural hand from the unseen world. These events for the first time revealed to me the connection between this world and the metaphysical world, and established my relation to what is beyond this world."

I felt at that time that the problems and difficulties to which Prophet Idris was referring were the events which he experienced during his childhood. What he meant was that if anybody sought guidance from Allah earnestly, Allah would surely help him. While seeking help from Allah chanting of some appropriate verses of the Qur'an repeatedly will be very useful. Allah says:

"Remember that with the remembrance of Allah the hearts are satisfied." (13:28)

The repeated chanting of "***Ya Fattahu***" "***Ya dalilal Mutahayyirin***" will also be found useful. Anyhow, the chanting must be with full attention and concentration.

One of my friends relates that once he was going by bus from Iran to Karbala. A sturdy young man was sitting near him. No conversation had taken place between them. Then all of a sudden the young man began to cry. My friend was astonished. He asked the young man what was the matter.

He said: "I will certainly tell you my story. I am a civil engineer. Since my childhood I was so brought up that I became an atheist. I did not believe in resurrection, but I had a feeling of love for the religious people, whether they were Muslims, Christians or Jews. One night I was attending a party of my friends where some Bahais¹ were also present. For some time we all took part in games, music and dance, but

soon I began to feel ashamed of myself and so I went upstairs and began to weep.

I said: O' God! Help me if you really do exist! After a few moments I came downstairs. At dawn we all dispersed. In the evening while I was going on some professional duty along with my team in-charge and some officers, I suddenly saw a religious scholar with an illuminated face coming towards me. He greeted me and said that he wanted to have some talk with me. I told him that I would see him next day in the afternoon.

After he had left some people objected to my giving a cold reception to quite a well known holy man. I said that I thought he was some needy person, who wanted my help. By chance it so happened that my team in-charge asked me to be present next day in the afternoon at a particular place and do a certain job.

The time which he gave me was exactly which I had given to that religious scholar. I said to myself that there was no more any possibility of going to him. Next day at the appointed time I felt that I was not feeling well. In a few moments I had a high fever and it became necessary to call a doctor. Naturally I was unable to go for the job entrusted to me by my in-charge. But as soon as the representative of the in-charge went away, I felt myself relieved. My temperature had become normal. I thought over my condition and was convinced that the incident had some secret. Therefore I got up immediately and went to that scholar's place.

When I saw him, he began to talk of fundamental principles and proved each one of them to my entire satisfaction. Then he asked me to come to him next day again. For several days I went to him daily. Each day when I visited him he told me so many things in detail about my private affairs about which nobody other than me alone knew at all. A lot of time passed in this way. One day my friends pressed me to attend one of their parties.

There I had to take part in gambling also. Next day when I called on that scholar he at once said: "Don't you feel ashamed? How come that you committed such a grave sin?" Tears flowed down from my eyes. I admitted my mistake and said that I was sorry. He said: "Have a bath for repentance, and don't do such a thing again". Then he gave me some other instructions. Thus he changed the program of my life. All this happened in Zanjan. Later when I was going to Tehran he asked me to call upon certain scholars there. At last he asked me to go on a pilgrimage to the holy places. Now I am going on the journey which he asked me to undertake."

My friend said: "When we approached Iraq. I saw that young man weeping again. On my inquiry he said: "It appears that we have entered the land of Iraq, for Abu Abdillah (Imam Husayn) has welcomed me."

This story has been narrated to show that anybody seeking guidance from Allah earnestly is bound to succeed in his objective. Even if he is skeptical about Monotheism – the unity of Allah, he will receive guidance.

Having successfully completed this stage the spiritual traveler should strive for attaining to major Islam and major faith. In this connection the first thing to do is to know the rules of Islamic law. This knowledge should be acquired from some competent jurist.

Next to acquiring the knowledge of law comes the turn of practicing it. It is very necessary to always act according to Islamic law, for knowledge is the best incentive to action, and action produces conviction. If a person is certain about the veracity of his knowledge, he is bound to act according to it. If he does not, that means that he is not convinced of the correctness of what he knows, and that his knowledge and belief are no more than a sort of mental impression.

For example, if somebody is sure of Allah's absolute providence, he will never desperately try to earn money at all costs. He will be satisfied with what the Islamic injunctions allow him and will try to earn with tranquil happiness what is necessary for him and his family. But if a man is always worried about his livelihood, that means that he does not believe in the absolute providence of Allah or thinks that it is conditional on his trying hard, or he believes that providence is limited to earning cash or salary.

That is what is meant when it is said that knowledge is an incentive to action. The following similitude shows how action enhances knowledge. When a person says from the core of his heart: "Glory and praise be to my exalted Lord", he acknowledges his helplessness and humbleness. Naturally, power and glory cannot be conceived without there being a conception of humbleness and helplessness.

Conversely no one can be powerless without there being a powerful. Therefore the mind of the person saying: "Glory and praise be to my exalted Lord" while prostrating himself in prayers, is naturally diverted to the absolute power and glory of Allah.² This is what is meant by saying that action promotes knowledge. The Qur'anic verse,

The good deed He promotes it (Surah al-Fatir, 35: 10)

also refers to this fact. It is necessary for the spiritual traveler to do his best to abide by all that is obligatory and to refrain from all that is forbidden, for doing anything against Islamic injunctions is absolutely contrary to the spirit of his spiritual journey. It is no use to perform commendable deeds and spiritual exercises if the heart and soul are polluted, just as it serves no useful purpose to apply cosmetics if the body is dirty.

Besides being very particular about performing what is obligatory and abstaining from what is forbidden, it is also imperative for the spiritual traveler to take interest in performing commendable deeds and avoiding obnoxious ones, for attaining to major Islam and major faith depends on doing that.

It is to be remembered that every deed has a corresponding effect and contributes to the completion of faith. The following tradition reported by Muhammad bin Muslim refers to this point: "Faith depends on the deeds for the deeds are essential part of faith. Faith cannot be firmly established without good deeds."

Therefore the spiritual traveler must perform every commendable act at least once so that he may attain that part of faith also which depends on the performance of that particular act. Imam Ali has said that it is deeds that produce perfect faith.

Hence it is necessary for the spiritual traveler not to overlook commendable deeds while advancing towards the stage of major faith, for his faith will be incomplete in proportion to his lack of interest in the performance of good deeds. If a devotee purified his tongue and his other organs but at the time of spending money was negligent of his duty, his faith would not be perfect. Every bodily organ must get that part of faith which is related to it.

The heart which is the chief of all organs should be kept busy with remembering the Names and Attributes of Allah and pondering over the Divine signs in men and the universe. That is the way how man's heart imbibes the spirit of faith. The Qur'an says:

It may be noted that with the remembrance of Allah the hearts become satisfied. (Surah ar-Ra'd, 13:28)

When every organ has obtained its due share of faith, the devotee should intensify his spiritual effort and enter the domain of certainty and conviction by completing the stages of major Islam and major faith.

Those who believe and obscure not their belief by wrong doing, theirs is safety; and they are rightly guided. (Surah al-An'am, 6:82)

As a result of doing spiritual exercises the spiritual traveler will not only be placed on the right path, but will also become safe from the assaults of Satan.

Remember that no fear shall come upon the friends of Allah, nor shall they grieve. (Surah Hud, 10:62)

Fear means apprehension of impending danger or evil that causes worry and alarm. Grief means mental distress and sorrow caused by the occurrence of something evil and unpleasant. The spiritual traveler has no apprehension nor sorrow, for he entrusts all his affairs to Allah. He has no objective other than Allah.

Such people as they enter the domain of certainty have been described by Allah as His friends. Imam Ali hinted at this stage when he said: "He sees Allah's path, walks on His way, knows His signs and crosses the obstacles. He is at such a stage of certainty that it seems as if he was seeing everything by the light of the sun".

Imam Ali has also said: "Knowledge has given them real insight; they have imbibed the spirit of conviction; they consider easy what the people living in ease and luxury consider difficult; they are familiar with what the ignorant have aversion to; their bodies are in the world but their souls are in high heaven."

At this stage the doors of vision and inspiration are opened before the spiritual traveler.

Evidently there is no inconsistency between passing through these stages and the spiritual traveler's being busy with his basic necessities in the world. His inner experience has nothing to do with his external activities such as his marriage, earning his livelihood and being engaged in trade or cultivation.

The spiritual traveler lives bodily in this mundane world and takes part in worldly activities, but his soul goes round the angelic world and talks with its inmates. He is like a bereaved person whose some close relative has died recently. Such a person lives among the people, talks to them, walks to various places, eats and sleeps, but his heart is always lamenting over the memory of his relative.

Whoever looked at him, could understand that he was in a wretched state of mind. Similarly a spiritual traveler despite his being engaged in fulfilling his natural needs, maintains his contact with Allah. A fire of love is always burning in his heart. The pain of separation keeps him restless, but no one except Allah knows his inner condition, though the onlookers also can in general discern that love for Allah and for truth has befallen him.

It is clear from this explanation that the wailing, weeping and prayer of the Imams were not fake, nor were the supplications which have come down from them purely for instructional purposes. Such a notion is based on the ignorance of facts. It is below the dignity of the Imams to say anything unrealistic or to call people to Allah by means of fake prayers.

Will it be proper to say that the heart-rending wailings of Imam Ali and Imam Zaynul 'Abidin were fake and had no reality or they were for teaching purpose only? Not at all. This group of the leaders of religion have attained to the stage of passing away from self and abiding in Allah after completing all the stages of spiritual journey and hence combine in themselves the qualities relating to the world of unity as well as the world of plurality. They receive Divine light in every walk of life and are required to maintain their attention to the higher world and not to violate any rule relating to that world even slightly.

When the spiritual traveler has traversed all the above mentioned worlds successfully and overcome Satan, he enters the world of victory and conquest. At that time he will have passed the material world and entered the world of souls. Hence forward his great journey will be through the angelic world and the spiritual world and ultimately he will succeed in reaching the world of Divinity.

[1.](#) A hundred year old religious community like Qadyanis.

[2.](#) The supplications which have come down to us from the Holy Prophet and his Household provide the best means of our moral and spiritual training. They strengthen faith; create a spirit of self-sacrifice and promote a taste for performing acts of worship and praying to Allah. The Supplication of Mujir, the Supplication of Kumayl, the Supplication of Abu Hamzah Thumali and the Supplication of 'Arafah may be mentioned in this connection.

<https://www.al-islam.org/light-within-me-mutahhari-tabatabai-khomeini/part-22-twelve-worlds#comment-0>