

Surah Al-'Ankabut, Section 5: To Argue in the Best Way Possible

Part (Juz') 21

Surah Al-'Ankabut, Chapter 29 – Verse 45

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

اتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ
وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

45. “Recite that which has been revealed to you of the Book, and establish the prayer, verily prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is greater, and Allah knows what you do.”

In this verse Allah's commands to the Prophet (S) for reciting the Qur'an and establishing the prayer have come beside each other and it is for the sake that Qur'an and prayer are two strengthening sources of strength.

Allah, Who informs His Prophet (S) of a heavy responsibility, tells him to take help from two strengthening sources for performing this heavy responsibility; one is recitation of the Qur'an, and the other is establishing prayers.

However, after the end of different parts of the life story of the former nations and the great prophets and the unpleasant manner of those nations with those Divine leaders, and the painful end of their lives, in order to comfort and console the Prophet (S) and for strengthening his spirit and showing a general and conclusive policy, the Qur'an, addressing him, commands him and at first says:

“Recite that which has been revealed to you of the Book...”

He (S) is commanded to recite these verses, because whatever he wants is found in them: knowledge and wisdom, advice and admonition, the criterion of the cognition of right and wrong, the means of enlightening of the heart and spirit, and the path of every group and people to move along, all are in the Qur'an.

He should recite it and apply it in his life, recite it and be inspired by it and recite it and enlighten his heart by the light of its recitation.

Next to this command, which is, indeed, an instructive one, it pays to the second command which is the main branch of education.

It says:

“...and establish the prayer, verily prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil...”

Of course, since the nature of prayer reminds man the strongest restraining factor, i.e. the firm belief in origin and Resurrection, it has an impedimental effect from indecency and evil.

He who stands in prayer, says ‘*Allahu Akbar*’, and calls Allah higher than and beyond everything, he remembers his bounties, praises and glorifies Him, praises Him for His mercifulness and compassionateness, remembers the Day of His Judgment, confesses his servitude to Him, seeks for His help, asks Him to lead him to the straight Way, and he refuges to Him for the path of those inflicted with His wrath and those gone astray.¹

No doubt, there will appear a movement in the heart and spirit of such a person toward the truth, purity, and piety.

He bows for Allah, he falls in prostration before Him, he contemplates deeply in His greatness, and forgets overweening and self-admiration.

He certifies to His Oneness, attests to the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad (S), and he sends salutation to His Prophet and asks Allah in supplication that He appoints him among the righteous servants.

All these things create a wave of spirituality in him, a wave that can be considered as a barrier against sins.

This action is repeated several times in a day and night, and when he gets up in the morning he is drowned in the remembrance of Allah.

At midday, when he is busy with material life, suddenly he hears the sound of ‘Allahu ‘Akbar’ called by Mu‘azzin, he ceases his current program and hastens to go to Him.

And even at the end of the day and at the beginning of the night, before he goes to bed to rest, he prattles with Him and makes his heart the centre of the rays of His Light. Moreover, while he is preparing himself for establishing prayer, he washes himself and purifies himself, he sends away unlawful things and anger from him and goes toward Him.

All these affairs have an impedimental effect against the line of indecency and evil. But as much as every prayer contains the conditions of perfection and the essence of worship, it keeps one away from indecency and evil. Sometimes it is a general and inclusive prohibition and sometimes it is a limited and partial prohibition.

It is often impossible that someone keeps up prayer but it affects him nothing, even when his prayer is untrue, even if he is sinful. This kind of prayer, of course, has a little effect, and if such persons did not keep up that very prayer, they would be more polluted than that.

Speaking more clearly, the prohibition from indecency and evil has naturally many degrees, and according to observing its conditions, every prayer deserves some of these degrees.

Some Traditions

1– A tradition indicates that the Prophet of Islam (S) once said:

“The five ritual prayers is like a stream with flowing wholesome water at the door of the house of one of you in which he washes himself five times a day, then there will remain no dirt (over his body).”²

2– Imam Amir-ul-Mu‘mineen Ali (as) said:

“I recommend you to prayer and protecting it because verily it is the best deed and it is the pillar of your religion.”³

3– We recite in a tradition from the Prophet (S) that a young man from the Helpers (‘Ansar) once established prayer with the Prophet (S) while he was polluted with some ugly sins. Some persons went to the Prophet (S) and told him his circumstance.

He (S) said:

“Verily his prayer will finally purify him from his pollution one day.”⁴

4– This very effect of prayer is so important that some Islamic traditions refer to it as the criterion of the

accepted prayer and the none-accepted prayer.

For instance, Imam Sadiq (as) says:

*“The one who likes to know whether his prayer has been accepted or not, he should see whether his prayer hindered him from indecency and evil, then with the same scale that it has hindered him, his prayer is accepted from him.”*⁵

5- Imam Baqir (as) said:

*“Islam has been founded on five things: the prayer (Salat), the poor-rate (Zakat), Hajj pilgrimage, fasting, and wilayat (mastership) of Ahlul Bayt (as).”*⁶

6- The Messenger of Allah (S) once said:

*“Whoever protects his five (ritual) prayers, on the Day of Hereafter they will be light, guide, and (means of) deliverance for him.”*⁷

7- Imam Sadiq (as) said:

*“The first thing that will be reckoned from a servant is the prayer. Then if the prayer is accepted, his other (good) deeds will be accepted, but if it is rejected his other (good) deeds will not be accepted either.”*⁸

8- Imam Baqir (as) said:

*“When our children are five years old, we order them to establish the prayer, then when your children become seven years old, order them to establish the prayer.”*⁹

9- The Prophet (S) said:

*“Allah says: ‘Verily I have a covenant for my servant that if he establishes the prayer in its time I may not punish him, and that I admit him in Paradise without reckoning.’”*¹⁰

10- The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*“Whoever takes his prayer light will not be of me and by Allah he will not arrive unto me in the pond (of Kauthar).”*¹¹

11- The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*“Whoever intentionally abandons the prayer his name will be written on the door of Hell among those who enter it.”*¹²

12- The Prophet (S) said:

*“Never comes the time of prayer but an angel calls among people: ‘O people! Stand up and by means of your prayer, extinguish the fire you have kindled upon your selves’.”*¹³

Finally, at the end of the verse the Qur’an adds:

“...and certainly the remembrance of Allah is greater...”

The appearance of the above sentence is that there is a more important statement for prayer than this.

That is, one of other important effects and blessings of the prayer, which is also even more important than prohibition from indecency and evil, is that it reminds man of Allah that is the main cause of every goodness and prosperity.

Even the main factor of prohibition from indecency and evil is this very ‘remembrance of Allah’, too. Its superiority, in fact, is in that it is also counted the cause and the basis.

In principle, the remembrance of Allah is the source of life and peace for the hearts, and nothing is comparable with it.

The Qur’an says:

“...Behold! By Allah’s remembrance (only) the hearts are set at rest.”¹⁴

In principle, the essence of all worships, irrespective of prayer and other than that, is the remembrance of Allah: The sayings of prayer, the acts of prayer, the preliminary deeds of prayer and the supplications after prayer all, indeed, revive the remembrance of Allah in man’s heart.

It is noteworthy that in Surah Ta-Ha, No. 20, verse 14 this philosophy of prayer has been pointed out, and Allah tells Moses:

“...and establish prayer for My remembrance.”

And in view of the fact that the men’s intentions and the level of the attention of their hearts in prayer, as well as other worships, is very different.

So at the end of the verse, the Qur’an says:

“...and Allah knows what you do.”

Allah knows the deeds you do in hidden or manifestly, the intentions you have in your mind, and the words you utter by your tongue.

The Effect of Prayer in an Individual and in Society

Prayer is not a thing the philosophy of which can be concealed to anyone, yet attention to the text of the

verses of the Qur'an and Islamic narrations lead us to some more narrow points in this grand.

1. The spirit, bases, preliminary, result and, finally, the philosophy of prayer is the remembrance of Allah. It is that very 'remembrance of Allah' which has been mentioned in the above verse as the most superior result.

Of course, it must be a remembrance which paves the way for contemplation, and a contemplation which leads to action; as Imam Sadiq (as) on the commentary of the phrase: /wa liḥikr-ullah-i-'akbar/ says:

"The remembrance of Allah at the time of performing a 'lawful' and 'unlawful' action."¹⁵

(That is, one must remember Allah and goes to a lawful thing and renounces an unlawful one.)

2. The prayer is a means for wiping out one's sins and for Allah's forgiveness, because, more or less, prayer invites man to repenting and amending the past.

So we recite in a tradition narrated from the Prophet (S) that he asked:

"If there is a stream at the door of the house of one of you in which he washes himself five times a day, will there remain anything from the dirt over his body?"

He was answered:

'No'.

Then he (S) said:

*"Verily the parable of the prayer is like the parable of the flowing stream. Whenever he keeps up prayer, the sins he has committed between two ritual prayers will be vanished."*¹⁶

Thus, the wounds which the man's soul obtains because of sins will be cured by prayer as a vulnerary, and the rust covered the heart will be wiped out.

3. Prayer is a barrier against the future sins, because it strengthens the essence of faith in man, and grows the plant of piety in his heart, and we know that 'Faith' and 'piety' are two strong dams before sins.

This is the same thing that has been stated in the above verse as the prohibition of indecency and evil, and it is the same thing that many Islamic Traditions refer to. There were many sinful persons whose story life was explained to the leaders of Islam and these leaders said that prayer would rectify them; and it did.

4. Prayer removes negligence. The greatest affliction for those who pave the path of truth is that they

forget the aim of their creation and are utterly busy with the material life and temporary joys.

But prayer, which is established five times a day and in different hours, it ceaselessly warns man and reminds him the aim of his creation; it reiterates him his situation in the world. This is a great bounty that man has a means which warns him earnestly several times a day of his duty.

5. Prayer breaks egotism and haughtiness for everyday a person performs seventeen units of prayer and in each of them he puts his forehead on the dust before his Lord and he sees him not only a very small thing before the greatness of Allah but also naught before Infinity.

Prayer removes the curtains of pride and self-loving and destroys arrogance and self-superiority.

It is for this reason that Ali (as) in his famous tradition, wherein the philosophies of Islamic worships are explained, next to Faith, refers to the first worship which is prayer with this very aim and says:

“Allah has enjoined Faith for purification from polytheism, and Salat (prayer) for purification from vanity...”¹⁷

6. Prayer is a means of fostering the virtues of morals, and that of man’s spiritual perfection, because it brings out man from limited material world and surrounded nature, and invites him to the kingdom of heavens, and makes him high in the same level with the angels. Without any agent, he sees him before Allah and speaks with Him.

The repetition of prayer during day and night, and emphasizing on the attributes of Allah, such as: mercifulness, compassionateness, and greatness, especially with taking help from the different suras of the Qur’an, which are recited next to Surah Al-Fatihah, that are the best inviters to goodnesses and purifications, have a considerable effect in the growth of the ethical virtues in man.

Upon the philosophy of prayer, Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as) in a tradition says:

*“For the God-fearing, prayer is a means of seeking nearness (to Allah).”*¹⁸

7. Prayer gives value and spirit to other deeds, because it makes the essence of sincerity alive in man. Prayer is a collection of: sincere intention, pure sayings, and noble deeds.

The repetition of these things every night and day grows the seeds of other good deeds in man’s spirit and strengthens the essence of sincerity in him.

In his famous tradition, Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as), after his head was cleft by the sword of Ibn-Muljam, the wretched, said:

*“...(Fear) Allah (and) keep Allah in view in the matter of prayer, because it is the pillar of your religion.”*¹⁹

We know that when the pillar of a tent breaks or falls, the ropes around it are useless. Such is when the

relation of the servants through prayer abolishes, other deeds lose their effect.

Besides the content of the prayer, regarding its veracity conditions, it invites man to purification of his life, because we know the place where he perform prayer, the pieces of his clothing, the carpet on which he keeps up his prayer, the water with which he makes ablution or performs a total ablution, the place where he makes and performs his ablution, all must be purified from usurpation and from oppressing the rights of others.

He who is polluted with oppression, injustice, usury, usurpation, defrauding, bribery, and obtaining some unlawful properties, how can he prepare the necessities of the prayer? Therefore, the repetition of prayer for five times a day itself is an invitation to observing the rights of others.

8. Besides the conditions of validity, the prayer must have the conditions of perfection that observing them is also another effective factor for abandoning a great deal of sins.

In jurisprudent books and tradition sources, there are also mentioned many things as the barriers of the acceptance of the prayer, including drinking alcoholic liquors, about which a tradition says:

*“The prayer of the drinker of alcoholic liquor is not accepted until forty days except that he repents.”*²⁰

A large number of Islamic narrations indicate that among those whose prayer will not be accepted is the leader of oppressors.

In some other traditions, it has been declared that the prayer of the one who does not pay poor–alms (zakat) will not be accepted.

Also some Islamic traditions denote that eating unlawful food, or egotism, egoism, and overweening are among the barriers of the acceptance of prayer. It is evident that how much providing these conditions of acceptance is constructive.

9. Prayer strengthens the spirit of discipline in man, because it must be performed exactly at proper times since before or after their time the prayers are not valid. Also, observing other rites and ordinances in relation to intention, standing up, bowing, prostration, and the like make the acceptance of discipline in life programs quite easy.

All of these are the benefits which exist in prayer, and if we add the property of congregation prayer to it, that the spirit of prayer is its being in congregation, it has other abundant blessings that we do not explain them here.

We conclude our definition and explanation about the secrets and philosophy of prayer with a tradition narrated from Ali–ibn–Musar–Rida (as).

In answer to a letter in which the philosophy of prayer was asked, he said:

“The reason of the legislation of prayer is acknowledgement to the Lordship of Allah, struggle against polytheism and idolatry, standing in front of Allah in utmost humbleness and submission, confession to the sins and asking forgiveness for the past faults, and putting forehead on the ground for glorification of Allah every day.

Again, the aim is that man may always be sensible and reminded, so that negligence does not encompass his heart, and he might not become proud, but he should be humble and be interested in increasing the merits of religion and worldly life.

Moreover, he must remember Allah every night and day which can be provided under the light of prayer. It causes man not to forget his Master, Divisor, and Creator, and the rebellious and disobedient soul does not overcome him.

And this very attention to Allah and standing in front of Him restrain man from committing sins and hinder him from kinds of mischief.”²¹

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 46

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا ءَامَنَّا
بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

46. “And do not dispute with the People of the Book save in the best way, except for those of them who act unjustly, and say: ‘We believe in what has been sent down unto us and sent down unto you, and our God and your God is One, and to Him do we submit.’”

Islam accepts the change of ideas, correct debates between the followers of different schools of thought, cultures and nations. A dispute is accepted that the content of which and the style of its words are the best.

In the former holy verses, the words were mostly about the method of tackling the obstinate haughty, and ignorant ‘idol-worshippers’ that, because of their conjectures, they were spoken to with a harsh logic, and their objects of worship were considered weaker than the spider’s web.

In the verses under discussion, the words are about the disputation with the ‘People of the Book’ which must be milder, because, at least, they had heard a part of the Divine prophets, instructions and the heavenly Books and they had some more receptivity for a logical debate, and every one must be talked with according to the standard of his wisdom, knowledge and morals.

At first, it says:

“And do not dispute with the People of the Book save in the best way...”

The Qur’anic phrase: *lā tujādilū (do not dispute)* is derived from /jidal/ which originally means: ‘To spin thread’ and ‘fastening it’.

This term is also used for a firm building and the like; and when two persons begin disputing, in fact, each of them tries to turn the other from his thought. This action is called ‘disputation’; a wrestling is also called in Arabic /jidal/. The purpose of it, here, however, is logical discussions and argumentations.

The application of the Qur’anic phrase *l’allatī hiya ahsan/ (the best way)* is a very inclusive phrase which envelopes all of the correct and suitable ways of discussion, including the expressions, the content of the speech, its tone, and other acts accompanied with it.

Thus, the concept of this sentence is that the expressions must be uttered politely, the tone of speech must be friendly and its content must be reasonable, the voice must be free from shouting and any roughness and rudeness which cause the aspersion of honour. Also the gesticulations, which are usually the complement of man’s statement, all must be performed with the same method and style.

How beautiful are the expressions of the Qur’an that they carry a great deal of meaning by a very short sentence!

All these are for the sake that the aim of disputation and discussion is not self superiority and putty the other party to shame, but the aim is effect of the word and its penetration in the depth of the mind of the opposite party; and the best way for reaching this aim is this very method of the Qur’an.

Many a time it happens that if the speaker states in a way that the opposite party takes it as his own thought not as the speaker’s thought, he may show inclination sooner since a man is interested in his own thoughts as he is interested in his children.

It is just for the same reason that the Qur’an propounds many issues in the form of question and answer so that their answers come out from the inside of the addressee’s mind and he considers it as his own thought.

But, of course, every law has usually an exception, too. For example, this very general principle in Islamic argumentation for some instances may be rendered as the sign of weakness and despicableness, or the opposite party may be so proud that this kind of humane treatment increases his dare and boldness.

Therefore, continuing the verse, as an exception, it says:

“...except for those of them who act unjustly...”

These are those who acted unjustly both to themselves and to others, and concealed many verses of

Allah in order that people would not be acquainted with the characteristics of the Prophet of Islam (S).

These are those who constantly acted unjustly and trod on the commands of Allah where they were against their interests.

These are those who acted unjustly and brought forth some superstitions similar to that of the polytheists who called Jesus, or Ezra, as Allah's child.

And, finally, those who often acted unjustly and, instead of logical argument, used swords, betook to force, and tended to naughtiness and conspiracy.

Then, at the end of the verse, the Qur'an introduces one of the clear examples of 'dispute in the best way', which can be a living sample for this discussion, where it announces:

"...and say: 'We believe in what has been sent down unto us and sent down unto you, and our God and your God is One, and to Him do we submit'."

What a beautiful meaning, and what an interesting tone! It is the tone of Unity and faith unto whatever has been sent down from the side of Allah, and deleting all bigotries and separations; and, finally, the Unity of the object of worship and submitting to Allah without any reservation.

This is an example of 'disputation in the best way' that whoever hears it will be attracted to it. This shows that Islam is not the seeker of a group, and is not the seeker of disunion, the call of Islam is the call of unity and being submitted to any right word.

There are many examples of this discussion in the Qur'an.

Among them is the sample to which Imam Sadiq (as) refers in a tradition where he says:

"Disputation in the best way is like the subject which has been mentioned at the end of Surah Ya-Sin about the rejecters of Resurrection, when they brought the rotten bones before the Prophet (S) and said:

'...Who will give life to the bones when they are rotten?'²²

He (S) answered:

'...He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first...'²³

'He Who has made for you the fire (to burn) from the green tree...'²⁴²⁵

Surah Al-'Ankabut – Verse 47

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ فَالَّذِينَ ءَاتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَمِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ مَنْ

يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الْكَافِرُونَ

47. “And thus have We sent down unto you the Book. So (some of) those whom we have given the Book believe in it, and of these (pagans) there are those who believe in it, and none deny Our signs except the unbelievers.”

The Qur'an invites all the followers of the former religions to Islam, because the Divine guidance is certain and necessary, though whole people do not accept the guidance.

As an emphasis upon the four principles mentioned in the previous verse, this verse says:

“And thus have We sent down unto you the Book...”

Yes, this Book (the Qur'an) has been sent down based on Unity of the object of worship, Unity of the invitation of the former true prophets, submitting to the command of Allah (s.w.t.) without any reservation, and disputation in the best way.

Some commentators have said that the purpose of the abovementioned sentence is the similarity of the descent of the Qur'an upon the Prophet of Islam (S) to the descent of the former Books to other Divine prophets. That is, in the same way that Allah sent down heavenly Books to the former prophets, He sent down the Qur'an to him (S), too.

But the first commentary seems more precise, though it is possible to consider both of them, too.

Then, the Qur'an adds:

“...So (some of) those whom we have given the Book believe in it...”

The reason of their belief is that not only they have found its characteristics in their own Books but also, from the view of general principles, its content is consistent with the content of their own Books.

Of course, we know that the entire People of the Book (the Jews and Christians) did not believe in the Prophet of Islam (S). Therefore, the above sentence refers to those true believers and truth seekers free from bigotry who deserve the appellation of 'People of the Book' to be used only for them.

Then, the Qur'an adds about some people of Mecca and the pagans of Allah:

“...and of these (pagans) there are those who believe in it...”

And, at the end of the verse, concerning the disbelievers of both groups, it says:

“...and none deny Our signs except the unbelievers.”

Regarding to the fact that the concept of the Qur'anic word */jahd/* is that: one believes in something but he denies it, the above sentence means: even the disbelievers confess the greatness of these verses in their hearts, and they see the signs of veracity in them and consider the Prophet's manner and his pure life, as well as that of his followers, as a reason for its nobility, but they deny often t as the result of their bigotry, stubbornness, blindly imitation from their ancestors, or for protecting their unlawful fleeting interests.

Thus, the Holy Qur'an defines the opposition of different nations against this heavenly Book.

On one line, there are believers, including the scholars of the People of the Book, True believers, and the polytheists who were thirsty of the Truth and when they found it they joined to it; and, on the other line, there were the obstinate deniers who saw the truth but, like bats, they hid themselves from it, because the gloom of infidelity had become as a part of their entity and they were afraid of the light of Faith.

It is noteworthy that this group were also pagan, but the second emphasis on their infidelity may be for the sake that they were not offered proof before and the real infidelity exists in them just now that the argument has been completed to them and they have abandoned the Straight Way knowingly and pave the wrong way.

By the way, for attracting the hearts and influencing the truth into others' thoughts, only attaching the strong and powerful proofs are not enough, but, in this stage, the style of speaking with the opposite party and the method of discussion has the deepest effect.

There are many persons who are careful and narrow in discussions and know the scientific subjects very well, but they are not so successful in influencing in others' hearts by their speech since they are not acquainted well with the way of 'dispute in the best way' nor with the constructive discussions.

The fact is that satisfaction of 'intellect and thought' alone is not enough, but emotions, which form half of man's entity, must become satisfied, too.

Studying the life of the prophets, and that of the Prophet of Islam (S) and the Immaculate Imams (as) in particular, shows that, for reaching to their educational and propagation aims, they used the social morals, psychological principles, and the best humane ways of influencing in hearts.

When confronting people, they had a kind of behaviour that they could quickly attract them toward their own aims. Though some individuals wish to render these affairs as miracles, it is not such. If we apply their way and method of discussion with others, we can affect them very soon and influence in the depths of their hearts.

The Qur'an explicitly says to the Prophet of Islam (S):

"Thus, it is due to the mercy from Allah that you have been lenient with them, and had you been

rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you..."²⁶

It has happened many times that some persons, after hours of discussion, not only have not gained anything from their debates, but they find the opposite party more stable, steadfast, and zealous in his own wrong belief. Its reason is that the method of 'dispute in the best way' has not been used in that debate.

Roughness in discussion, self-superiority, despising the opposite party, expression of pride and haughtiness, the lack of respect to others' thoughts and the absence of sincerity in discussions all are the things that cause the man's failure in debates.

That is why there is a section in Islamic morals under the title of prohibition of Jidal (dispute) and Mira' (argument) the objective of which is the discussions in which there is not 'seeking the truth', but its aim is quarrel, self-superiority, and fixing one's statement.

Besides the spiritual and ethical aspects, the prohibition of Jidal (dispute) and Mira' (argument) is for the fact that they are not mentally successful in this kind of discussions.

The prohibition of ***Jidal (dispute)*** and ***Mira' (argument)*** are close to each other; but the Islamic scholars have considered some differences between them. They believe that Mira' is for the expression of excellence and perfection, while Jidal is for despising.

The Arabic word ***Jidal*** is used for the elementary attacks in discussion while /mira'/ is applied for the defensive attacks.

The term /jidal/ is used for the scientific issues, but the meaning of /mira'/ is general. (Of course, there is not any contradiction between these commentaries.)

However, the dispute and discussion with others is sometimes 'dispute in the best way', and it is a discussion in which the abovementioned conditions are exactly observed, and sometimes it is other than that when the abovementioned affairs are forgotten in it.

We conclude this statement with a few expressive and instructive narrations:

A tradition from the Prophet (S) indicates he said:

*"No servant perceives the reality of Faith unless he abandons Mira' (argument) though he is right."*²⁷

Another tradition indicates that Solomon (as), the Divine prophet, told his son:

*"O my son! Avoid Imira'l (argument) because not only it has no benefit, but also it stirs up enmity between the brothers."*²⁸

Again, it has been narrated from the Prophet of Islam (S) that he said:

“No group went astray after when they were guided except by the dispute (in which the truth is not pursued).”²⁹

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 48

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُوا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذَا لَارْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

48. “And you did not recite before it any book, nor did you transcribe one with your right hand, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted.”

The descent of the Holy Qur’an upon the illiterate Prophet (S), who could neither read nor write, is one of the Divine ways of completing the argument to mankind.

We must not be proud and boast of our ability of reading and writing, sometimes it happens that, by the Will of Allah, an illiterate person changes the culture of human beings.

In this holy verse, one of the clear signs of veracity of the invitation of the Prophet of Islam (S) has been pointed out which is an emphasis on the content of the previous verse. It says:

“And you did not recite before it any book, nor did you transcribe one with your right hand, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted.”

How is it possible to believe that an illiterate person, who has not been taught by a human teacher and has not gone to any school, brings a Book by himself and invites all mankind to challenge it but everybody is impotent to bring the like of it? Is this not a proof to the fact that his power gets help from the infinite power of Allah and his Book is a heavenly revelation which has been inspired to him from the side of Allah?

It is necessary to note this point that if a person asks how can we know that the holy Prophet of Islam never went to school and learned to write? In answer we say that he used to live in an environment where the literate and educated persons were very scanty, and it is also said that there were only seventeen persons in Mecca who could read and write.

In such a place it is impossible for an individual to be able to conceal his being taught if he has gone to any school. If so, he will be known everywhere and his teacher and his lesson will be introduced. Thus, how can such a person claim that he is a true prophet while he tells a lie so manifest?

In particular that these verses were sent down in Mecca where the Prophet (S) lived and grew up, and before the obstinate enemies from whose view the smallest point of weakness was not hidden.

By the way, in the commentary of Surah Al-'Araf, no. 7, verse 157 it was said that there have been mentioned three meanings for the Arabic word *'ummi* among which the meaning: 'unschooled' is the most clear.³⁰

Surah Al-'Ankabut – Verse 49

بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ

49. “Nay! It (Qur'an) is the clear signs in the breasts of those who have been granted the knowledge, and none but the unjust reject Our Signs.”

The verses of the Holy Qur'an influence in scholars' hearts and it is this group who apprehend the truthfulness of the Qur'an with their whole selves.

In this holy verse, there are stated some other signs for the legitimacy of the Qur'an. It implies that this heavenly Book is a collection of clear verses which influence in the breasts of the bearers of knowledge.

The verse says:

“Nay! It (Qur'an) is the clear signs in the breasts of those who have been granted the knowledge...”

The application of the Qur'anic phrase: *'ayatun bayyinat* refers to this fact that the signs of legitimacy of the Qur'an are found in the Qur'an itself and in its verses, and its proof is with it.

In fact, it is the genetic verses that by the recitation of which man needs no other thing to understand the truth. These verses containing of divine legislation, from the point of both appearance and content, are in such a manner that they all are the proof of their own truthfulness.

Besides that, the adherents and lovers of these verses are those who have a portion of knowledge and awareness, though they are poor.

In other words, one of the ways of knowing the nobility of a school of thought, is verification of the state of the believers of that school.

If some ignorant persons or charlatans are the supporters of someone, it seems that he is of the same group, but if some people, who carry the secrets of knowledge in their breasts, announce their loyalty to a school of thought, it is the evidence of legitimacy of that school.

And, we see that a group of the learned among the People of the Book and some pious personalities, such as Abuthar, Salman, Miqdad, 'Ammar-i-Yasir, and a high esteemed person like Hadrat Ali (as)

were the supporter, and lovers of this school.

According to a great deal of traditions narrated from the way of Ahlul Bayt (as) this holy verse has been rendered into the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (as). This does not mean exclusiveness, but it is the statement of a clear example for the Qur'anic phrase: ***‘Allāhina ‘utul-‘ilm/ (those who have been granted the knowledge)***.

When we see that some Islamic narrations declare that the purpose of the verse is Imams, in particular, it, indeed, is an indication, to the perfect stage of the knowledge of the Qur'an which is at their disposal, and it does not matter that scholars, learned ones, and the mass of people who have commonsense have a portion of the sciences of the Qur'an.

However, this verse shows that knowledge is not limited to what is studied through books and what is learnt in front of teachers, because, as the Qur'an explicitly says, the Prophet (S) did not go to school and did not learn how to write but he was the highest referent of a concept of the Qur'anic sentence saying:

“Those who have been granted the knowledge”.

Therefore, beyond the formal knowledge, there is a knowledge higher than that which may be inspired unto the heart of man in the form of a light, which is the essence of knowledge, and other sciences are as an outward cover for it.

An Islamic tradition says:

*“knowledge is a light that Allah puts it in the heart of whom He desires.”*³¹

At the end, verse the Qur'an adds:

“...and none but the unjust reject Our Signs.”

It is because the signs of it are clear: the bringer of it is the unschooled Prophet (S), and some thoughtful aware persons believe in it.

Moreover, the Qur'an itself is a collection of clear verses, and its characteristics have also been mentioned in the former Divine Books.

Yet, do reject it save those who are unjust to their selves and to the society?

We repeat again that the Arabic word ***/jahd/*** is used for a person who knows something but, in spite of his knowledge, he denies it.

Surah Al-‘Ankabut – Verse 50

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ

50. “And they say: ‘Why have signs (miracles) not been sent down upon him from his Lord? Say: ‘The signs are only with Allah, and I am only a plain warner’.”

The act of ‘seeking for excuses’ in the obstinate people does not end. (After observing kinds of miracles they demanded other miracles either.) The Prophet (S) resisted before the pretext-seekers and, answering them, he refused them, because miracle is a Divine wise affair, not a play for the pretext seekers.

However, those unbelievers who, as the result of obstinacy and persisting on falsehood, never agreed to accept the logical argument of the Qur’an, and bringing a Book, such as Qur’an, by an illiterate person, like the Prophet of Islam (S), which was a clear proof upon his legitimacy, tried to seek a new pretext, as the Qur’an through the verses under discussion, as well as the other verse, implicitly indicates that they mockingly used to say why there have not been sent down some miracles to the Prophet of Islam (S) like the miracles which were sent down to Moses (as) and Jesus (as) from the side of Allah. Why has he not a Rod and white hand like Moses or a breath like the breath of Jesus?

Why does he not destroy his enemies by great miracles, in the same way that Moses, Shu‘ayb, Hud, Noah, and Thamud (as) did?

Or as Surah ‘Isra’ from their tongue says, they used to claim some things as follows:

“... We shall never believe in you till you make a spring to gush forth the earth for us,”

“Or till you should have a garden of date-palms and grapes in the midst of which you cause streams to flow forth,”

“Or you cause the heaven, as you think, to fall in pieces upon us, or bring Allah and the angels face to face with us,”

“Or there be for you a house of gold, or you should be flying into the sky and never will we believe in your ascending unless you bring down to us a book which we may read...”³²

Without doubt, besides the Qur’an, the Prophet of Islam (S) had some other miracles which have explicitly been mentioned in history books, but by these words of theirs, they were not seeking for miracle. From one side, they wanted to ignore the miracle of the Qur’an, and, from other side, they used to ask for extemporarily miracles.

The purpose of extemporarily miracles is that the Prophet (S) should do any extraordinary action they

suggested according to their own desires. For instance, someone suggested him to make springs to gush forth, someone else said that he (S) had to change the mountains of Mecca into gold; and the third sought pretext that the Prophet (S) should ascend to sky.

Thus, they wanted to show miracles as a worthless play, and, finally, to call him a sorcerer.

Therefore, the Qur'an in Surah Al-'An'am, No. 6, verse 111 says:

“And even if We sent down the angels to them, and the dead spoke to them, and We mustered all things before them, (even then) they would not believe, unless Allah pleases; but most of them (deliberately) ignore.”

However, in order to answer to these obstinate pretext-seekers, the Qur'an uses two ways:

At first, it says to the Prophet (S) to tell them that bringing miracle is not his job that he does it according to their desires, because all miracles are with Allah alone:

“...The signs are only with Allah...”,

and He knows which miracle, in what time and for which nation, is appropriate. Allah knows who try to seek the truth and supernatural events must be shown to them, and who seek pretext and follow their carnal desires.

Then the verse continues saying that the Prophet of Allah (S) tells them that he is only a plain warner, and his duty is to state the word of Allah, while giving them miracles is only with His Pure Essence.

“...and I am only a plain warner.”

Surah Al-'Ankabut – Verse 51

أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَذِكْرًا لِّقَوْمٍ
يُؤْمِنُونَ

51. “And is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you the Book which is recited to them? Verily in this there is mercy and a reminder for a people who believe.”

Qur'an is an inclusive and complete Book and somehow it provides all spiritual needs, so that it is the cause of mercy and being off from negligence.

Following the previous verse, this holy verse says:

“And is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you the Book which is recited to them?...”

They ask for bodily miracles while the Qur'an is the greatest spiritual miracle.

They ask for a temporary miracle while the Holy Qur'an is a perpetual miracle and its verses are recited to them every night and day.

Is it possible that an unschooled person, or even supposing literate one, brings a Book with such contents and wonderful attraction, which is above the ability of mankind, and invites the whole human beings to challenge it while all of them remain impotent to bring like it?

If they really demand a miracle, by the descent of the Holy Qur'an, Allah (s.w.t.) has given them more than what they ask for. Nay, they are not truth-seekers. They are pretext seekers.

This fact should be noted that the Qur'anic sentence:

“Is it not enough for them?”

is usually used for the aspects that one has accomplished something beyond the expectation of the opposite party, and he is neglectful of it and shows that he is neglectful. For example, he says: *“Why did you not do me that favour?”*

Now Allah refers to a greater favour that he has ignored it. Allah says:

“Is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you the Book...?”

Besides them all, a miracle must be consistent with the conditions of the time, the place, and the circumstance of the Prophet's call. The holy Prophet (S) whose religion is perpetual must have an everlasting miracle.

The prophet, whose invitation is worldly and it must also continue for many centuries in future, has to have a so clear, spiritual and intellectual miracle that it attracts the minds of wise and mindful persons to him. Surely the Qur'an is suitable for such an aim, not the Rod of Moses and his white hand.

At the end of the verse, for an emphasis and for further explanation, the Qur'an says:

“... Verily in this there is mercy and a reminder for a people who believe.”

Yes, the Holy Qur'an is both mercy and the means of remembrance, but only for the believers; for those who have let the doors of their hearts open to the Truth; for those who seek for the Light to find the right path, such persons feel this Divine mercy with their whole entity, and they rest under its rays. Every time they recite the verses of the Qur'an, they find a new admonition.

The difference between the Qur'anic words */rahmat/* and */ikra/* may be in this that the Qur'an is not only one miracle and a source of admonition, but, in addition to that, it is full of merciful programs and laws, and it is full of constructive and educational instructions.

For example, Moses' Rod was only a miracle and it had not any effect in people's daily life, but the Qur'an is both a miracle and a complete program for life, and a source of mercy.

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1. The content of Surah Al-Fatihah
 2. Kanz-ul-'Ummal, Vol. 7, tradition 1893
 3. Bihar, Vol. 82, P. 209
 4. Majma'-ul-Bayan, the explanation under the verse
 5. Ibid
 6. Bihar-ul-'Anwar, Vol. 82, P. 234
 7. Kanz-ul-'Ummal, Vol. 7, tradition No. 18862
 8. Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, Vol. 3, P. 22
 9. Ibid, P. 12
 10. Kanz-ul-'Ummal, Vol. 7, tradition No. 19036
 11. Bihar-ul-'Anwar, Vol. 82, P. 224
 12. Kanzul-'Ummal, Vol. 7, Tradition No. 19090
 13. Bihar, Vol. 82, P. 209
 14. Surah Ar-Ra'd, No. 13, verse 28
 15. Bihar-ul-'Anwar, Vol. 82, P. 200
 16. Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, Vol. 3, P. 7
 17. Nahjul-Balaqah, saying No. 252
 18. Nahjul-Balaqah, saying No. 136
 19. Ibid, letter (will) 47
 20. Bihar, Vol. 84, P. 317 and 320
 21. Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, Vol. 3, P. 4
 22. Surah Ya Sin, No. 36, verse 78
 23. Ibid, verse 79
 24. Ibid, verse 80
 25. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, Vol. 4, P. 163
 26. Surah 'Al-i-'Imran, No. 3, verse 159
 27. Safinat-ul-Bihar, the term /mira'/
 28. 'Ihya'-ul-'Ulum
 29. Ibid
 30. The current commentary, Vol. 6, (parts 9 and 10), PP 111, 112
 31. Tafsir-i-Burhan, Vol. 3, P. 254 on
 32. Surah 'Asra', No. 17, verses 90-93

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