

Third Session – The Environment

I presented myself early on the morning of the third day, and on admittance, I entered, and being ordered to sit, sat down.

He (as)began, "O Mufaddhal! I have explained to you in detail about the creation of man and the subtle design of the Almighty Allah that has gone into his perfection and the lessons to be learnt from the modifications of his circumstances. I have also dealt with an account of the animal world.

I now take up an account of the atmosphere, the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky, day and night, summer and winter, the winds, the four fundamentals, rain, the rocks, the mountains, the plant kingdom, the date tree, and the common trees, pointing out the signs therein and the lessons to be learnt therefrom.

The Sky

Look at the colour of the sky and see how appropriate is the design! This particular colour is the most appropriate tonic compared with all the other colours. Even the physicians direct a man to gaze on the green hue or on some other darker hue in case of some ailment of the eye. Efficient physicians direct a person with a weakened eyesight to gaze on in a basin of green colour, filled with water.

Just see how the Almighty Allah has created the sky with a green colour inclined to be dark, so as not to cause, by repeated looks, some imperfection.

This same characteristic which people have found out as a result of thinking and experimentation is a self-existent characteristic, so that those who would, learn a lesson therefrom, and the heretics – may Allah (swt) destroy them, go astray.

Sunrise and Sunset

Consider the rising and the setting of the sun in the production of the day and night. Without sunrise, all businesses of the world would come to a stop. The world would be sunk in darkness with no possibility for work or livelihood. There would be no relish in life without the pleasant effects of sunlight.

The benefits of sunrise are obvious indeed and need not be expatiated. Just consider the sunset. If it did not set, men would have no~ comfort nor any rest. Men inevitably need to rest and comfort to recuperate the faculties of digestion and assimilation, and to soothe and relax the nerves of the body.

Their greed, by persistent work, would have caused serious bodily disturbances, for many are so constituted that unless the night becloud them, they would enjoy no comfort and rest, in the pursuit of livelihood and the accumulation of wealth.

Perpetual sunshine would have heated the earth with repercussions on the lives of the animals and plants. The Almighty Allah has, therefore, ordained that there shall be periods of sunshine and darkness, like the lamp which is lit up as the household needs and it is put out when not needed, to give them comfort and rest. Light and darkness are opposed to each other and yet both are made subservient to the interests of the world's betterment and amelioration.

The Four Seasons

Then consider the four seasons of the year, as a result of the elevation and inclination of the sun and the benefits and planning thereof.

The trees and plants get an upsurge of vital two periods of the sun's movement.

The condensation of vapour in the air causes clouds and rain. The animals get their bodies re-invigorated in this season. There is an upsurge of vital heat in the summer as well with the production of the material which matures in winter. The plants get flowers and fruit in this season. The animals get excitement to sexuality.

The air is heated in summer which leads to the ripening of fruit. The waste products of the body get accentuated. The earth gets dried up and becomes fit for building and other performance.

Air is purified in winter, ailments are negotiated. Physical bodies become healthful. Night gets longer and thus aids in the performance of certain tasks because of the longer periods.

The air in this season suits other performance as well, which will take a lot of time to expatiate.

The Sun

Now consider the motion of the sun through the twelve Zodiac belts to complete a year and the skill underlying it. This the period that comprises the four seasons – Winter, Summer, Autumn and Spring, in their completeness. Grains and fruits ripen during this annual movement of the sun to meet human needs. The cycle of development goes on repeating.

Don't you know that the sweep of this sun across the heavenly belt., from the Pisces belt back to it, constitutes one year? The year, etc., have continued as the calculating measures of time since the

beginning of the world in all past ages. People calculate thereby the periods of life-spans, loans, contracts and other business matters. It is with the movement of the sun that the year is complete and a correct estimate of time is established.

Just see how the sun sheds its light on the world and with what ingenuity has this been ordained for it. If it shone only at one spot of the Zodiac constantly, without changing its place, the benefits of its rays would not penetrate in all direction due to the interpolation of mountains and walls.

It has, therefore, been so patterned that it rises from the East in the forenoon, shedding its light on objects opposite in the West, to move on constantly, extending its light from side to side till it goes on to the West to shed its light on objects which failed to receive it in the forenoon, so as not to allow any corner to remain without the benefit and purpose, it is meant to serve.

If for a whole or a part of the year the situation changed to the contrary, you can imagine the plight of human beings. In fact what chance would they have to survive at all?

Does not man observe such magnificent planning, wherein his own schemes would utterly fail? They function automatically without negligence, nor do they lag behind the time regulated for the management of the world's organisation and maintenance.

The Moon

There is a sign revealed by the Almighty Allah in the creation of the moon – a fine indication. People in general calculate months on its basis, but the year is not correctly established by it. Its motion does not comprehend the changes of season nor the times of the blossoming and the ripening of the crops. That is why lunar months and years differ from solar months and years.

The lunar months change, so that sometimes the same month has reference to the summer and sometimes to winter. So is the case with other months. For example, the month of Muharram may occupy a period in summer sometimes, in the rainy season at other times and in winter at yet another time. This shows that the lunar and solar months continue to change and do not correspond to each other.

Consider why the moon shines at night and the ingenuity underlying it. The living beings need coolness born of darkness in order to get rest and comfort. Complete absence of light and pitch darkness would not have any merit, anyhow, without the possibility for work of any kind. Men need to undertake some work for want of leisure during the day. It may be that due to extremes of heat, he may work in the glimmer of the moon, for example, agriculture, milking, wood cutting etc. The moonlight helps men to work for their livelihood whenever they are so disposed.

The wayfarers find fascination in their travels. Moonrise is ordained for different parts of the night, which it is made less luminous than the sun at the same time, lest people start working in the same way as

they do during the day without resting even unto death.

In the different phases of the moon, its appearance as a crescent, its disappearance during the nights at the end, its waxing and waning and its eclipses, there are particular indications that all these changes are ordained for the benefit of the universe by the Almighty Creator Allah, which can serve as instruction for any man disposed to avail such instruction.

The Stars

Just consider the stars and their distinctive velocities. There are some among them *which do* not budge from the positions appointed for them. There are others which move from zone to zone and have their distinctive velocities. Each one of them has two velocities – one due to the cosmic motion in the direction of the west, the other its intrinsic velocity in the direction of the east.

This is comparable to the two velocities of an ant on the upper piece of the grindstone. The grindstone moves to the right and the ant in the opposite direction. In such a case the ant will have two velocities – one its own direction, the front direction and the other unintended, along with the grindstone.

Now just inquire from these people who claim that these stars have come into being by themselves without the Design of the Almighty Designer, as to what was the hindrance in their all becoming stationary or moving bodies?

Creation without Creator presumes a single pattern, why should there occur two different movements on a definite pattern and quantum? All this clearly demonstrates that the movement of the two categories of stars as it subsists at present, is the result of a definite Purpose, Design and Ingenuity, not something meaningless as these materialist atheists claim.

If an objection is raised as to why some stars are stationary while others possess motion, our answer shall be that in case all were stationary, the distinctive signs that are now revealed by their movements from zone to zone would be out of place. Many a secret is known by a knowledge of the events connected with the sun and other stars because of their movements in their respective orbits. The advantage now gained in the matter of crop season and even predictions etc., through the movements of a few stars at present, would be out of reach.

If all of them were to possess motion, their destination would have no outposts to be recognised. The movement of the moving planets in their appointed zones, affords the necessary information, just as the rate of motion of a wayfarer as gauged by the measure of distances. In the absence of the measures of miles, or stage, an estimate of the rate of motion would be difficult.

Similarly, if all these stars were to possess motion and motions of different quantums at that, an estimate of the rate of their motion would have been impossible, because in the first place they are numberless beyond the computation of any computer or astronomer, and secondly because of their location – some

in the east, others in the west, still others in the north and yet others in the middle or on the extremities or here, there and everywhere. Their zones would be equally impossible to fix, and thirdly because of the difficulty of all of them passing; through the twelve belts. It would then have been impossible to draw any distinctions, thereby the whole purpose of their motion and existence would have been nullified.

If they all moved with a uniform rate of motion, the objective underlying would have been stultified by a confounding of their constellations.

An objection in that case from a critic would have been in place to the effect that a uniformity of motion on a single pattern indicates the absence of a Designer – a Creator, as we have deduced in proof of the Being of the Almighty Allah. It is thus quite obvious that their distinctive velocities, the changes and their movements being purposeful, are the working of Design and Discrimination.

Consider the stars that appear in certain parts of the year and disappear during the other parts of a year, for example, the Pleides, the Orion, the pair of stars of the Sirius and the Canopus. If all of them appeared simultaneously, none could stand as a distinct symbol for men to recognise, to know and receive guidance, just as men deduce from the appearance and disappearance of the Orion and the Taurus. This appearance and disappearance of each at appropriate occasions was ordained for the benefit of men.

Just as the Pleides were ordained to appear and disappear at different times for particular benefits of men, similarly the constellation of the Bear has been ordained for perpetual view, never to disappear, as it has another objective to serve, as a sign-post for men to seek their way through the unknown paths amidst forest and oceans. As the stars of this constellation are ever in view, men look to them immediately when they need to know the path for any direction. Both these opposite phenomena serve human interests.

Besides, therein is the indication of time, for agriculture, horticulture, travel through land and sea. There is also intelligibility of other phenomena that have reference to different times, for example the rainfall, blowing; of winds, the summer and the winter seasons.

Moreover, men find their way with their aid in travels through dreadful plains and fearful oceans during hours of dark nights. There are besides, a great many lessons to be learnt from these stars which now move forwards, some backwards in the direction of the East or the West.

The heavenly bodies, the moon and the sun move very fast, and if they were nearer to us and their velocity was to be felt exactly as it is, do you not think the eyes would have been dazzled by their brilliance and radiation, just as they are dazzled by the radiation of the lightning when it begins scintillating continuously, kindling the space between the earth and the sky like fire?

Another illustration of this is a house with its ceiling studded with many live candles revolving round the head with terrific speeds. The eyes will necessarily be putrefied throwing; the beholders prostrate on their

faces. „Just see how it has been ordained that they would move with their existing speeds at huge distances from us to protect our eyesight against damage and disease, while retaining their tremendous speed for the purpose they have to serve.

The stars are just bright enough to give light in the absence of the moon and to enable us to move about in their glimmer. Man sometimes needs to journey at night, and in the absence of their glow, he would have found it difficult to budge on his way.

Just consider the kindness and ingenuity ordained in this creation. Darkness was also needed and a period is allocated therefore, with the addition of the glimmer, to serve the objectives we have dealt with.

The Universe

Consider the universe together with its sun, moon, stars and Zodiac, which revolve perpetually in accordance with a definite decree and judgement to bring about numerous benefits to the denizens of the earth, variegated animal and vegetable kingdoms through the changes in the four seasons, the days and nights, which have been expatiated to you. Can any man with a discerning mind think that such regulated plan and design on which depend the order and organisation of the universe, can come about without the Omniscient Designer?

If someone says that mere chance has brought this about, why does he not say that same thing in connection with the Persian-wheel which he sees revolving, irrigating a garden planted with trees and vegetation? He sees all its component parts manufactured according to a definite plan, each part coupled with the other on a pattern to serve the needs of the garden and its contents.

And if he makes the same remarks about the Persian-wheel, then what opinion about him will people entertain on hearing his remarks? Surely this is a brainless stupid fellow with an asinine mind. Does he not see how the matter and the nature of the Persian-wheel, which is itself inert and devoid of intellect, would by itself come into being with perfect appropriateness to the requirements of the garden? Can any reasonable man admit it?

Will he deny it in the case of a wooden Persian-wheel comprising a little planning and ingenuity, that it is not a piece of workmanship planned and designed, and yet will be able to say that this stupendous universe which is full of projects beyond human ken, functioning for the entire earth's surface and its contents, has come into being by mere chance without Skill, Design or Measure? Has man the means to see right if anything goes wrong with the sky, just as the wooden parts of machinery get out of order?

The Days and Nights

Just consider the relative hours of the day and night. how they are adjusted for the benefit of creation. The days or the nights do not exceed fifteen hours.

Do you know that if days were extended to a hundred or two hundred hours, the animal and plant life would have perished? Such a long interval without rest and comfort would have killed the animals, while quadrupeds would have continued grazing on. Men, too, would have continued to work on without stopping with consequent peril to life. The plant life would have withered away under the prolonged effect of heat of the daytime.

Similarly, if the night had been prolonged equally, all species of living beings would have been prevented from moving about and finding nutriment with consequent starvation. The plants would have lost their vital heat, delayed and perished, just as you see those plants which are so placed as to receive little sunshine.

Heat and Cold

Consider the heat and cold cycle of increase, decrease and quableness, and the resultant four seasons following one another in the world and functioning for our benefit.

Moreover, the physical bodies get improved and renovated hereby. This leads to their health and longevity, for in the absence of the effects of heat and cold alternatively on the physical frames, they would have suffered decadence, disintegration and emaciation.

The two (heat and cold) replace each other gradually and slowly. You will notice that the decreases giving place gradually to the corresponding increase of the other. If the one had suddenly erupted on the other, it would lead to serious damage, to an illness of the physical frames, just as man may receive damage and illness, if he suddenly issues from a hot bath into a cold place. The Almighty Allah has ordained the gradual change of heat and cold to protect man from damage of suddenness of change.

If anyone claims that this gradualness and lag, in the advent of heat and cold results from the movement of the sun and its inclination affecting the duration of the day, he may be questioned as to the reason of the movement of the sun and its gradual inclination affecting the lag and gradualness. If he answers that it is due to the space of the East and the West, he may be queried as to why it is so disposed. The questions on this line will continue to be repeated till he is obliged to admit the necessity of Omnipotence, Purpose and Design.

Without heat, the hard bitter fruits would not have matured into succulent sweetness, used for relish, fresh or dry. Without cold, the stalks would not bear corn ears in such abundant produce to suffice for nutriment and seeding.

Don't you realise the benefits of heat and cold which, with all their merits are sources of trouble to the bodies as well? There is instruction for those who would ponder over this, and a proof that all this procedure is for the good of the universe and, the individuals thereof through the Design of the Almighty Omniscient.

Let me inform you of the blessings of air. Don't you see when it stops blowing, there is distress bordering on strangulation? Healthy persons begin ailing, the ailing get emaciated, the fruits get spoiled, vegetables get decayed, physical bodies get infected and corn gets tainted? This demonstrates that the blowing of air is for the good of creation by a Plan of the Almighty Omniscient.

Another characteristic of the air is here mentioned. Sound is produced by the impact of two bodies, one upon the other. It is wafted to the ears by air. All men continue to speak part of the night or day in connection with the needs of daily business. If this speech left its impression in the air as a writing leaves an impression on paper, the whole atmosphere would have been filled with same, with consequent uneasiness and perplexity.

They would have needed a change in atmospheric air. The need "or this would be greater than that for the change of paper, in is much as oral speech is much more indulged in that written expression.

The Almighty Creator, Glory be to Him, has created such a mysterious medium, which retains the impression just for enough time to serve the needs of the people of the world and makes a clean state to get renovated for fresh impressions to be received by it, which may cause an impact thereon.

To get instruction from the blessings of the cool breeze called it is enough for you. This air is the foundation of the life of physical bodies. It supports life when we draw it in from without and allow it to contact the spirit within. This same air is the medium, for the transmission as sound waves to distant places. The same air carries fragrance from place to place. Just see how air wafts different kinds of scents to your nose.

And also the sounds. This same air is the carrier of heat and cold, which alternate regularly for the benefit of the world. The air in motion is wind which removes many a physical ailment. It transfers clouds from place to place for the general good by way of condensation and rain. It then accentuates them and they fritter away. It causes the plants to bring forth blossoms and fruits. It makes the nutrients soft and succulent. It cools water. It inflames the fires and it dries up dampness. In short, it supports and enlivens all things of the earth. Without this blowing air, vegetation would dry up, animal life would become extinct and every thing would perish.

The Earth

Consider the four fundamental components created by the Almighty Allah to fulfil the purpose of their creation adequately. Among them is the earth and its expanse. How could it have sufficed for the human needs of housing, agriculture, meadows, forests, jungles, precious herbs and valuable minerals, if it were not so vast?

A person may dislike and condemn such treeless prairies and fearful desolateness and question their utility. This is the abode of the beasts, their dwelling and feeding field. Men have a vast expanse to migrate if they are so disposed. Many a desolate plain has been converted into blossoming gardens and

palatial buildings by permanent human settlement. If the earth were not so vast, men would have found themselves, as if walled in by narrow fortresses, for they would have been unable to leave their homes even if pressed by circumstances.

Next, consider the disposition granted to the earth, in that it is so finely balanced as to serve as a fit habitat for all creation. Man is enabled thereby to move about, get rest and comfort, engage in agriculture and business with perfect firmness. If it were to tilt and incline it would have been impossible to rear up structures and to carry on trade and industry etc.

Under such circumstances of constant quaking, their lives would have been far from peasant. Just realise this from the earthquakes which last only a while and yet people affected by them fly from their homes. How could they, then, have got rest and comfort, in case the earth were to quake all the time?

If a critic questions as to why an earthquake occurs, he shall be replied that an earthquake and similar other calamities are in the nature of admonition and warnings for men to take heed against evil-doings. Similarly the calamitous troubles that befall their physical bodies and their properties have the same purpose in view, to wit, their amelioration and betterment. If they become virtuous, the reward they would get *in* the Hereafter would exceed all earthly possessions in value, It sometimes happens that there is an immediate award *in* this world, if such award is in the interests of the generality of people.

The earth in its essence is cool and dry, and so are the stones. Can you visualise that if the earth had been given a little more dry nature to harden like a stone, could it have produced any vegetation on which depends animal life? Could any agriculture have been possible or any kind of building been feasible? Don't you see that it possesses less cohesion than a stone? Pliability and softness from its essence are for the sake of reliability.

Another feature of the earth's constitution as ordained by Almighty Allah; Glorious is His Omnipotence, is its gradual slope from the north to the south. Why has Almighty Allah, Glory be to Him, Ordained it? Surely to allow the surplus water after irrigating the land, to flow to the sea, just as roof is made sloping from one side to other to prevent water collecting and to allow its easy passage. The land is made to slope for that reason. If it were not so, the whole earth might have been swamped with stagnant water with resultant hindrance in business and road communications.

Air

Similarly, if the air had not been provided in such abundance, men would have been suffocated because of the smoke and vapours congesting it. If the atmosphere had not been so vast, it could not have served as medium for light and heavy clouds, which now gradually gather up by absorption of water. An account of the same has already been given, which should suffice.

Fire

So is the case of fire. Had it been as abundant as water and air, it would have consumed everything in the world, without leaving any means for a controlled promotion of the same, for, it is of benefit in man as an undertaking.

As such it is enshrined in wood. It can be used when the need arises. It is preserved by means of wood. It is not allowed to be extinguished altogether, but some of it is preserved. As such it is not required to be kept perpetually burning for that would have been very inconvenient. Nor is it so widespread as to consume all things in its vicinity. It is created in just the right measure to avoid de-merits.

It has another characteristic, to wit, it is meant only for the benefit of human beings. The animals have no need for it. Human economy would have suffered a lot in the absence of fire. As for the quadrupeds, they have no use for it.

As the Almighty Allah has ordained its use for human beings alone, man has been endowed with palms and fingers so as to be able to light it up and make use of it, while the animals are not gifted with the corresponding parts. They are, however, enabled patiently to put up with the troublesome tyranny of the stomach to save them from the disadvantages which man has to *suffer in* the absence of the fire.

Let me tell you a minor merit of fire, which is very valuable and worthwhile, to wit, this lamp which people light up to meet certain needs of the night as they want. Without it human life would have been comparable to burial in a grave. How could one read, write, weave, sew, or stitch in the darkness of the night? What would have been the plight of a man suffering from a painful ailment with the need for applying an ambrocatation or a powder as a remedy relief?

Water

If this water had not been in such abundance flowing through springs, valleys and canals, it would have caused a great deal of inconvenience to the men, who need it for themselves, the watering of their quadrupeds and animals, their agriculture, the plants and corn fields. At the same time the beasts, the birds and animals or the fishes and aquatic living creatures dwelling in water would suffer a great deal.

Besides, it has other benefits which you are aware of, but the immense value and merit whereof you are ignorant. See then, besides the grand and valuable benefits underlying therein, to wit, the whole animal and plant life of the entire earth's surface is subsistent on water, it is used in other forms of beverages to soften them for a pleasant relish.

It serves to clean the dirt from the body as well as clothing. Earth is moistened with it to make it fit for moulding utensils etc. It is used in extinguishing fire in case it flares up to cause damage. Man gets refreshed after exhaustion and exertion. Similarly there are other objectives served by water, the great

worth and value thereof can be known only in time of need.

If even with all this about, you doubt the value of such abundance of water flowing in rivers and seas, know then that this same water is the abode of many species of aquatic animal life and fishes. This is the treasure-house of pearls, rubies, ambergris and various types of precious materials which are extracted from the rivers and seas. Round about the water stores are to be met with the fragrant aloes, wood along with other variegated scents and herbs.

Furthermore, it is a means of transport. It is a means of trade exchange between lands distant from each other, for example, from Iraq to China and vice versa and with Iraq itself. Trade would have suffered in the absence of such means besides conveyance on animal and human backs and commercial commodities would have remained in the producing countries in the hands of the local consumers. Their transport would have cost more than their production costs. No one would have ventured to transport them.

This would have led to two handicaps. Many articles of necessity would not have been available. Supposing the ingredients of a medical prescription to require henna or aloes or plums or some medical or nutrient drug from the cities of Asia or Europe, if they had to be transported on backs only without the means of boats through the intervening seas, how could they have reached India, and how could the Indians have availed of them. In the second place the people who now earn their livelihood by the profits gained through their transport, would have lost their economic support.

The other benefits in cooking, warming the body, burying the moist substances and dissolving hard materials etc., are so numberless that they cannot be recounted. They are so obvious that they need not be detailed.

Rain

Consider the sky when it is clear and when it rains. They alternate in the interest of the world. Persistence of any one state would have caused disorder. Don't you see that when it starts raining continually, the vegetables and plants begin to rot. The bodies of animals get convulsions. The atmosphere is surcharged with cold with consequent ailment, roads and paths get disrupted. When the sky remains clear for a long time, the earth is dried up, the vegetation withers up. Man is affected deleteriously thereby. The air gets dryness with consequent diseases.

When they alternate thus regularly, the climate is equable. Each in turn compensates the demerit of the other. Everything goes right.

A critic may question as to why it was not ordained that there were no deleterious effects. The answer will be that this is so in order that man may be occasionally inconvenienced to keep him from evil-doing. A sick person, for instance, is administered bitter and unpalatable medicine to cure him.

Similarly when man betakes himself to pride and conceit, he needs to be administered something that would inconvenience him to prevent him from mischief and to set him upon beneficence and amelioration. If a monarch bestows upon his people, will not his munificence impress their minds with his reverence and admiration? Whereas what comparison have those millions with the rain which is the source of nourishment and the flourishing state of all parts of the globe through its irrigation of corn fields?

Don't you see what a grand blessing is this little rain for mankind? Yet the people are heedless thereof. Often times when some little need of a man is frustrated, he begins grumbling and blustering. He prefers his petty need to the worth-while grand benefits possessing an excellent result. This is because he is unable to fully appreciate the merits of this lofty boon. Consider the ingenuity underlying the rain, pouring down on high to irrigate the inclement highland as well. If it were to come from a corner, it would have left the highlands irrigated without provision for agriculture. The lands of artificial irrigation are less extensive.

Rain water comprehends the whole of the earth. Often times the agriculture can be carried on in the vastness of deserts and mountainous regions with consequent abundance of grain.

People are saved trouble of carrying water from one place to another. Many an aggressive feud springs from the possession by one over-bearing person of the sources of water, depriving a weaker party. Such contingencies are also obviated.

Then since it was ordained, it is so disposed as to act as a sprinkling on the earth to allow it to soak in and to irrigate it. If it had come with sudden swiftness like a flood, it would not have soaked in. It would, in the form of a flood, have uprooted standing crops. It is, therefore, ordained to rain in mild showers, as to enable seed to sprout, the land to be irrigated and the standing crops to be refreshed.

There are other blessings in this downpour. It tempers the bodies, purifies the atmosphere to clear it of taint produced by stagnation. Garden plants are cured of the disease of jaundice and so on.

If a critic says, whether the rain does not sometimes cause heavy damage by its intensity or in the form of hailstorms, causing the crops to perish and the atmosphere to get unwholesome vapour with resultant diseases and troubles.

The answer will be that this damage too is sometimes intended for the betterment of man to prevent him from indulging in transgressions. The benefit that shall accrue to him in the amelioration of his faith will outweigh the loss suffered in his worldly possessions.

Mountains

Look at these mountains formed of earth and stone, which the ignorant consider as useless and unnecessary. They embody remarkable advantages. Among them is the snow that falls and stays on

their heights. Anyone can avail of it, when it melts and gives rise to springs of gushing water and marvellous canals.

They produce herbs and plants which cannot grow in plains and lowlands. They have dens and caves for the horrible beasts of prey. They serve for the superstructure of fortresses as defence posts. They can be hewn into dwellings. They are chiselled into grindstones. They contain mines of precious stones of variegated types.

Besides these, they have other merits, which He alone Who created them in definite measure, knows by His Pristine Knowledge of all eternity.

Consider the different kinds of animals which are obtained from the mines for example, mortar, lime, gypsum, sulphurate of arsenicum, lead oxide, mercury, copper, tin, silver, gold, beryl, ruby, garnet and various kinds of rocks and so on giving rise to tar, vaseline, sulphur, kerosene, etc., which are used by the people.

Is it then any mystery for a rational being that all these treasures have been laid for use by man, which he may mine as and when he needs them?

Men, however, are greedy and want to transmute base materials into gold and silver. They spend efforts in that direction but mostly in vain. Their plans do not fructify. If these people had succeeded in their search of knowledge, it would have become general knowledge. Gold and silver would have been produced in such abundance that they would have lost their worth in men's eyes. The advantages gained through the mine business and commerce would have been lost, and neither the monarchs nor anyone else would have set any stores by wealth.

Nevertheless, men were given the knowledge to change copper into brass, and into glass, tin into silver and silver into gold, which does not do much harm. Just see that knowledge was given where there was not much harm, whereas that which was harmful has been withheld.

And when a man enters a mine he may find inside it unfathomable streams of flowing water and silvery rocks.

Consider the underlying design in this of the Almighty Omniscient. He (swt) wants to give men an idea of the vastness of His treasures and Omnipotence, so that they may know that if He (swt) Wills, He (swt) can bestow on us silver in the amounts equal to mountains. He (swt) can do it, however, there would be little gain because the abundance of gems would reduce their worth, as stated before. Few would avail of it.

To illustrate it, suppose a man invents something new, for example, utensils or other commodities. They are worth-while, grand and precious, so long as they are in short supply and rare. And when the same exceed the demand and reaches every pocket, it is lowered in value and becomes worthless. Everything

is considered fine so long as it is rare.

Vegetation

Consider the plants and the varied needs they fulfil. Fruit is used in nutrition, dried hay as fodder for the animals, wood as fuel, the boards are used for carpentry of every kind. There are varied benefits accruing from their bark, leaves, large and small roots and gum.

Consider the fruits we use for our nutrition. If they were to be found in one place instead of being suspended by branches which bear them, what a disruption would have been caused in our lives! Nutrition would have been available no doubt, but what about the valuable benefits we derive from wooden boards, dried hay and other parts we have mentioned.

Moreover, the joy that is afforded by the scenic beauty and freshness of vegetation is incomparably superior to the pleasures and merriment of the whole world.

Grains

Consider how agriculture is ordained to thrive. A hundred or so grains spring from a single seed. A single grain from a single seed would have been logical. Why then such multiplication? Surely to amplify the grain so that the same may serve as food to last till the next crop besides provision as seed for the farmers.

Consider a monarch intending to populate a town. He plans to provide such quantities of grain as would suffice the residents to serve as food till the next crop besides provision for seed. See how this plan is adumbrated in the scheme of the Almighty Allah, Glory be to Him, that agriculture should lead to such multiplication as to serve both the need for nutrition as well as that for seeding.

Similar is the case with the trees, vegetation and the date-tree. They generate abundant fruit. You see that there is a single root, but there are many off-shoots. Why? Surely for the purpose of propagating the progeny from the seeds, after people have put them to their use. If there had been a single root without the branches shooting off in such abundance, it would not have been feasible to take off anything from it for sowing or any other business. In the case of a sudden calamity the original would have perished with no chance for another plant to replace it.

Consider the grains of pulses and bean. They all grow in pods as a protection against harm, till they mature to hardness, just as the placenta. The grains of wheat and other similar grains are arranged layer by layer in hard shells, pointed sharply at their ends like spears to keep off the birds and to increase the yield to the farmers.

If, a critic asks whether the birds do not get at the grains of wheat, etc, the reply to him will be that they do get the grains no doubt and it is so ordained for them, since the birds are also the creation of the

Almighty Allah. He (swt) has ordained for them a portion of the produce of the earth. These grains are protected in these coverings, lest the birds should get complete possession of them leading to evident loss through wanton waste. In the absence of such protection the birds would have pounced upon the grains and made short work of them all. They would have suffered indigestion in consequence, to their evident detriment. The farmers too, would have been losers. These protective coverings have, therefore, been provided.

The grain, that the birds may have just enough for their need of subsistence, leaving the major portion for the use of mankind. They have a greater right thereto because of the labour put in by them, and their need is greater for the grain than that of the birds.

Propagation Of Plants

Consider the propagation of plants and various species of vegetation. They need nutrition as much as animals. They have, however, no mouths to feed themselves, nor can they move about to work for acquiring their food. They have therefore, been gifted with about under the earth, to receive their nutriment for transmission to their branches, leaves and fruit. The earth serves to them as mother from which they suck their nutriment through their roots which serve them as mouths to obtain their food, just as the young ones of animals fed on the milk from their mother's breasts.

Don't you see the pegs propping up straight without fear of fall or bending the tents and shouldaries, by means of rope tied tightly? Similarly, you will find every plant reared in the earth by the roots spreading in all directions to support it. How could the massive trees and all date-palms stand steady against the storms?

Behold! The ingenuity of creation has preceded the skill of industry. The skill employed in setting up tents and shouldaries by artisans, has before gone into the designing; plan of rearing up trees which precedes the propping up of tents with pegs and poles all acquired from trees. It is obvious that this skill has been copied from the ingenuity employed in propping up trees.

Leaves

Consider the production of the leaves of the plants carefully and you will see intertwined in its texture something comparable to the root system extending all along its length and breadth. Some of them have fine capillaries joined with thicker ones, all very stout and fine. If they were to be prepared by hand, man would not have been able to do the job on a single tree in a year's time. He would have needed implements, motion, design and instruction into the bargain.

In a few days of the spring season such abundant foliage comes into being that the mountains and lowland regions of the earth get filled with them without a word being spoken or a movement being made, just as the result of fiat permeating all things – a single inviolable dispensation.

Know, by the way, the principle underlying these fine capillaries. They are interwoven in the texture of the leaves to irrigate them, just as the network of the capillaries in the body carries nutriment to all parts.

There is yet another ingenuity in the thick veins of the leaves. Because of their resilience and strength, they hold fast the leaf texture to prevent them from being torn. These leaves are similar to the artificial foliage manufactured from cloth and *which* are supported lengthwise and breadth wise and held fast against crumbling. As such the artificial manufacturing by hand follows the natural, though it can never imbibe the true spirit.

Seeds

Consider the seed–stone embedded inside the fruit, that it may serve to propagate a substitute in case a tree perishes due to some calamity. just a nice commodity of constant utility, is preserved at odd places to be available at some other place if the same suffers an accident at one place. Then because of their resilience and hardness they hinder the fruit getting too soft and succulent. But for these seed–stone, the fruits would have split up and given way to instability.

Some seed–stones are edible and oil is extracted from others for use in different jobs. And since you have learnt the purpose served by the seed–stone, you should consider the pulp enclosed in the date seed and that enclosing the grape stone, the merits thereof and the wherefore of its shape, whereas it was possible to produce a substitute which may not have been edible, just like the cypress and the poplar trees. Surely it is so that man may come by palatable nutriment, to enjoy.

Consider the other merits of plants. You will notice that they are affected by the autumn season, so that their vital heat gets enshrined in their twigs, and material for fruit production is engineered. The spring season clothes them with leaves and you get all kinds of fruit, just as you arrange different kind of delicacies before you which have been cooked in turn. Just behold the twigs presenting their fruit to you with their own hands.

And you gloat on the flowers which come before you on their twigs as if they present themselves to you? Who has planned all this? Surely He Who Is the Omniscient Ordainer. And what purpose is served thereby? Surely, that man may enjoy the fruits and flowers. How strange, that instead of gratefulness for such boons, men would deny the Donor altogether.

The Pomegranate

Just consider the pomegranate and the skill and ingenuity that has gone into its production. You will notice, inside it is all round and elaborate with grains laid layer upon layer, as if arranged by hand. The grains are divided into different parts and each part is wrapped up in a strap, fabricated in a uniquely exquisite manner. All these are enclosed in an outer rind.

The artistic ingenuity therein is that since the grains cannot help each other's growth of pulp, a membrane has been provided inside the pomegranate as a nutritive medium, in which, you see, are embedded both the grain and the pulp. These membranes help to keep them immovably fixed. Over all these, a stout covering is laid to keep them safe from external harm.

These are a few points concerning the pomegranate, to which any one who wants a lengthy account, can add a lot more. The account given here is, however, sufficient for the purpose of argument and instruction.

Creeper Plants

Just behold this weak creeper. These creepers bring forth such massive gourds, cucumbers and melons. What ingenuity has gone into its design! Since it was ordained that it will bear such large products, the plant is designed to spread on the earth. Had it been like other plants straight-standing, it would not have borne imposing yield. It would have broken down before they ripened.

See how it sprawls on the ground to put the burden of its products on the earth. You might have noticed that the roots of the gourd and the melon creepers spread in the earth with the products lying on the earth all round, just like a cat lying down lactating its young ones – the products.

Consider the fact that these creepers grow only in set seasons suited to them in the fiery heat of summer, for example, when people welcome them joyfully. If they had flourished in winter, men would not like to bear their sight. In addition they may cause ailments in winter.

It sometimes happens that cucumbers are produced in winter. The people avoid them generally, except the gluttons within a sense for harm and illness.

The Date Palm

Consider the date palms. There are female trees among; them, for whose fertilisation male plants are also generated, which fertilise without planned horticulture. The males, like those animals, fertilise, but are themselves sterile.

Consider carefully the trunk of a date palm. You will find that it is woven like a web, though there are no long threads. It is as if a piece of cloth is woven with the hand to keep it stout and straight capable of withstanding strong winds and of carrying massive bunches of fruit, on maturity, and then subsequently of being used for roofing and bridging. You will find therein threads interwoven lengthwise and breadth wise. It is strong enough to be used in tool making. If it had been hard as stone, it could not have been used in buildings as wood, for example, doors, lattice work, wooden boards and boxes etc.

Wood

There is one great merit in wood. It floats on water. Every one knows this but does not realise its full worth. In the absence of this characteristic, how could boats have been built, which carry mountains of merchandise from city to city with much labour? What hardships would have had to be borne in transporting merchandise? Many articles of use would have disappeared from the market or would have been available at great cost.

Herbs

Consider these herbs and the characteristics each has been endowed with as drugs. They penetrate down into the joints, eliminate waste products and toxic matters therefrom, for example, *Shahtra*, some others relieve hypochondria for example *ateemoon*, some others remove flatulence, for example vinegar, some others absorb inflammation, for example wild grapes and so on their efficiency.

Who then has endowed them with such properties? Surely He Who created them with a Purpose. Who gave men knowledge thereof? Surely He Who endowed these drugs with such properties. How could these matters have come to men's ken through mere chance and spontaneity, as the believers of chance claim?

Well, let us admit that man learnt all this through his intellect and reason, contemplation and experimentation. But who taught the animals? Some beasts, when they get injured, make use of herbs to get well, and some birds when suffering from constipation get well by purgation with sea water and so on?

You may, perhaps, doubt the utility of plant life and of the waste lands and plains, where no human life exists, and think it to be altogether meaningless and useless. It is not so. The wild animals feed thereon and their grain is used by the birds as food. Their twigs and wood is used as fuel by men.

There are other points a well worth noting. They serve as medicinal drugs. Hides are tanned therewith. Cloth is dyed and so on. They possess other merits as well.

Worthless Things

Don't you know that the most lowly and despised plant is the *Khairya Baradi*? They too, possess varied merits. Paper is manufactured therefrom for use by the kings and populace. They are manufactured into mats for use by all and sundry. They are used in making lids to cover utensils made of glass etc., which are stuffed with them to prevent breakage. They have many other merits in addition to these.

Then learn a lesson from the varied and benefits which are derived from beings small and big, as also from those things which have no worth and those that are valuable. The most worthless of all these are

the cow dung and excreta which are worthless pollution, and consider the benefits which accrue from them to agriculture and vegetables. They are such benefits which have no parallel. No vegetable can be worthwhile unless it is provided with manure which is so obnoxious that one abhors to go near it.

Know this too, that the worth of a commodity does not depend upon its monetary value alone. It possesses two different values in two different markets. It sometimes happens that a commodity is worthless in the economic market and yet the same is valuable in the market of knowledge.

It may be that you may consider a thing as worthless because of its low monetary value. Just notice of what high value human excreta would have been if its properties were known to the alchemist. It is a fact that certain experiments of alchemy cannot be conducted without human excreta."

It was now time for the afternoon prayers, and the Imam (as)told me to come the next day, God Willing.

I returned quite happy because of the information I had obtained from Imam (a.s.). I thanked Allah (swt) for the valuable information I received. I spent the night in perfect peace.

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