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8. Help

Allah helps those who help Him

إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ....

'If you help Allah, He will help you and will keep your feet steadfast.' **(*47: 7*)**

إِن تَنصُرُوا اللَّـهَ يَنصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ

'And surely Allah helps those who help Him.' **(*22: 45*)**

The questions that come foremost to the mind after reading the above two verses is 'Is it possible for a man to help Allah?' 'How to help Allah?' 'How do we know that our help will reach Him? ' As mentioned earlier, 'Mastership and love' is the soul of Islam and the reality of faith. In a tradition, mentioned above, Imam Sadiq (a.s.) has elucidated the meaning of Allah's satisfaction and His anger, war with Him, obeying Him, becoming a cause of regret to Him, distancing oneself from Him, etc.

The gist of this tradition was that when any of these actions – obedience, regret, anger, war, is performed against Allah's chosen ones and His friends, Allah ascribes these actions to Himself. For instance, obeying the وَلي of Allah amounts to Allah's obedience, distancing (برائت) oneself from the ولي of Allah is tantamount to distancing oneself from Allah Himself, and war with the ولي of Allah, is equal to going to war against Allah Himself.

In light of the above discussion, we can say that helping Allah actually means helping His friends. By this interpretation, one who helps the Imams (a.s.), has in fact helped Allah Himself. Then the promise of Allah's help will extend to all those who help his ولي Imam al-Asr (a.t.f.s.). Thus, helping the Imam (a.t.f.s.) is one of the most crucial duties of the Shias accompanied with correct Mastership and recognition of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

Of course, in the time of occultation, it is not easy to help Imam (a.t.f.s.) as compared to assisting him while he is physically present. Hence, in the discussion of awaiting, we propounded the idea of the intention to help Imam (a.t.f.s.) and explained that according to traditions, one who sincerely intends to help Imam (a.t.f.s.) while he is in occultation, Allah will reward Him purely on his intention. So one who sincerely intends to help Imam (a.t.f.s.), must do so under any pretext and to whatever extent possible.

One way of helping Imam (a.t.f.s.) in occultation, is by supporting him with the tongue. In this regard Imam Husain (a.s.) declares:

'My grandfather informed me that my son Husain will be killed in the desert of Karbala, while I am a stranger, totally alone, in a condition of extreme thirst. Then whoever helps him has helped me and my son Qaim. And whoever helps me with his tongue, he will be in our company on the Day of Judgment.'[1]

This statement was made by the chief of the Martyrs, Imam Husain (a.s.) on the eve of Ashura in front of his companions. His assertion implies that everyone should assist his Imam in every possible manner. One of the means to extend help and support to Imam is by the tongue. By doing this, one will attain the status of martyrs of the highest level.

Imam Moosa Kazim (a.s.) declares:
'One who helps Allah and His Messenger (s.a.w.s.) in occultation and defends Imam (a.t.f.s.) from the side of Allah and His Messenger (s.a.w.s.), will be among the martyrs of the highest standing on the Day of Judgment.'

We have been commanded to help and defend Imam (a.t.f.s.) from Allah's side and His Messenger's (s.a.w.s.) side, even in his (a.t.f.s.) occultation, and not just in his (a.t.f.s.) presence. It is possible to help Imam (a.t.f.s.) in several forms and one of these is the tongue. One can make the hearts of the people attentive towards the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) through his speech. He can employ his tongue to revive the remembrance of the Imams (a.s.) by reciting elegies and poems related to the Imams (a.s.), by simply narrating their virtues and excellence and/or by recounting their traditions so as to establish their superiority over all others.

De'bal al-Khozaee (r.a.) was among the poets of Aal al-Muhammad (a.s.) and praised them excessively and narrated their virtues abundantly in his poems and elegies. Once he went to meet Imam Ali Raza (a.s.) on the Day of Ashoora. When Imam (a.s.) saw him, he exclaimed,
'Welcome O De'bal! Welcome Oh our helper with the hand and tongue!'

Then Imam (a.s.) made some place and seated De'bal (r.a.) next to himself. Imam (a.s.) asked De'bal (r.a.) to recite poems on the afflictions of Imam Husain (a.s.) and said to him:

'O De'bal, recite elegies for Imam Husain (a.s.) You are our helper and exalter for the rest of your life. Then do not neglect to help us in whatever way you can.'

This is Imam's (a.s.) recommendation not only to De' bal (r .a.), but to all Shias in the period of occultation, that they should help the cause of Imamat and Mastership in whatever way they can. Hence, every step towards the exaltation and propagation of the remembrance of Imams (a.s.) will be accounted as a help and support to their cause. And Allah's promise extends to all those who fall in this category. Allah promises to help them and keep them steadfast.

These glad tidings of help and steadfastness apply more to the Shias in the period of occultation, as the perils of irreligiousness, faithlessness and lapses are more severe in this period than in all previous periods. Then those who wish to secure for themselves the good fortune of Allah's help and support should endeavour to propagate the virtues and remembrance of the Imams (a.s.) with all means possible. They should understand the gravity of this responsibility and never be negligent of it. If we do this, then Allah will protect us from all pitfalls in occultation and will catch our hands in slippery places.

The manifestation of Allah's grace and mercy is the holy existence of Imam al–Asr (a.t.f.s.). The one who helps him, attracts the grace and bounty of Imam (a.t.f.s.) towards himself and makes himself aspirant for Allah's light of guidance and recognition. One of the ways of helping Imam (a.t.f.s.) and attracting his attention is by praying for the hastening of his reappearance. Imam (a.t.f.s.) considers this help as a favour from his Shias and therefore he never forsakes his Shias. Then the one who prays for Imam (a.t.f.s.) attracts Imam's (a.t.f.s.) supplications and attention towards him and becomes eligible for his favours.

In the time of Mutawakkil, the Abbasid Emperor, one person – Abdul Rahman, staying in Isfahan, had converted to Shi'ism. He was asked, 'How did you start believing in the Imamat of Ali Naqi (a.s.)?' He replied. 'I witnessed an incident that became instrumental in my becoming a Shia. I was very poor, so much so that I did not dare speak out of shame for my poverty. One day, the people of Isfahan expelled me from the city. I, along with some others, went to Motavakkil to complain about the treatment of the people. When we reached the threshold of the court, Motavakkil issued an order to summon Ali b. Muhammad ar–Raza (a.s.). I asked one of the men – who is this per son who has been summoned by Motavakkil? He replied, 'He is one of the Alawis and the Shias believe in his Imamat. Motavakkil has summoned him to kill him.' At this I said to myself, 'I will not leave until I see this man.'

Abdul Rahman recounts, 'The man came riding on his horse, while the people thronged to catch a glimpse of him. There were people standing in rows on his right and left. When I saw him, my heart brimmed with his love. I began praying – May Allah remove the evil of Motavakkil from him. He advanced forward keeping his sight fixed on the mane of the horse, not looking either left or right. I began praying for him sincerely. When he passed by in front of me, he looked at me and said,

اسْتَجابَ اللهُ دُعائَكَ. وَ طَوَّلَ عُمْرَكَ. و كَثَّرَ مالَكَ.

'May Allah accept your prayers, has prolong your life and multiply your wealth and children.'

He continues, 'I was shaken with the awe of his majesty and collapsed among my companions. They asked me as to what had happened. I replied: Nothing. I did not breathe a word about this to anyone. After this incident had transpired I returned to Isfahan.

'Then due to the blessings of my prayers for Imam's (a.s.) safety, Allah expanded my means of income, and today I have a million dirham at home in addition to what I have outside the house. Allah has given me 10 sons, while my age is over 70. And I am believing in the Imamat of the one who knew what was in my heart and Allah accepted his supplication for me.'2

This is but a small specimen of Imam(a.s.)'s favours at a time when the person does not believe in his Imamat and has no trace of Mastership. Now if we acknowledge his Imamat and Mastership, pray for his safety, is it possible that his favours and grace remain concealed from us? Is it possible that he is aware of the one who prays for him, but is not attentive towards him and neglects him? The truth is far from this. It is Allah's promise that He helps the one who helps Him, through Imam (a.s.).

1. Mikyalul Makarim, Vol. 1, Pg. 507
2. Al-Kharaaej al-Qutb al-Rawandi, Chp. 11 about miracles of Imam Hadi (a.s.)

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