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Part 3: Self-Building

The Ways of Self-Building

The reverend Shaykh was highly capable of influencing talented souls with his charismatic power in training and self-building them. One of the Shaykh's disciples said: 'Once I was accompanying the Shaykh and the late Ayatollah Muhammad Shahabadi (ra)[1] in Tajrish square. The Shaykh was very fond of Ayatollah Shahabadi; someone came to us and asked the latter.

"Do you say the truth or this man (pointing to the Shaykh)?

The late Shahabadi (ra) replied: "What truth are you talking about?

What do you mean?"

The man said again: "Which one of you say the right thing?"

Ayatollah Shahabadi said: "I teach and they (the students) learn; he (meaning the Shaykh) constructs and builds human beings."

Although this suggested how extremely humble and self-negating this divine man and ascetic was, it represented the efficacy of the Shaykh's speech and his enriching and training power as well.

"For Sixty Years I Treaded the Wrong Path"

Dr. Hamid Farzam describes the Shaykh's charisma and verbal influence as follows: 'Professor Jalaluddin Huma'i, a leading Professor of literature at Tehran University, was a renowned expert in *ma'arif* (Divine knowledge), Persian literature, and Islamic Mysticism, and was my own professor. He had audience with the reverend Shaykh at the age of sixty.
When I was at the age of seventeen, studying with the Prof. Huma'i, he had already edited Abu Rihan

al-Biruni's *Al-Tafhimu li Awa'il Sana'at al-Tanjim* and 'Izzuddin Mahmud Kashani's *Misbba al-Hidaya wa Miftahu'l Kifaya.* He had also authored very scholarly such volumes as *Ghazali Namah,* a collection on Imam Muhammad Ghazali's life and works. His comprehensive introduction on *Misbba al-Hidaya* is by itself a perfect course of theoretical and practical mysticism.

Anyway, this mystic was my teacher in his early sixties. One day, as usual, when I went to have an audience with the.Shaykh, he said:

"Your professor Mr. Jalaluddin Huma'i came to me. I said some sentences to him; he was so deeply touched that he struck his forehead (as a sign of deep regret an repentance) and said: Strange!! I have fared the wrong path for sixty years!!"

It was actually the impact of the revernd Shaykh's words and personality that so deeply moved Professor Huma'i with such high scholarly and mystical status. May God bless their souls.

In some sessions of supplication and prayer, when the Shaykh began to talk in his absorption, he would say:

"Friends! Such words that I tell you are of the final class (advanced level) of mysticism."

And it was indeed so.

Another disciple of the Shaykh said: 'The Shaykh's lessons would transform copper into gold. Thus, the prime point in expounding the Shaykh's self -building power is the secret of his efficacy on the audience and his style of teaching and training as well as the method of (moral and spiritual) construction this divine man applied to his disciples.

Self-Building by One's Manners

From the viewpoint of Islamic traditions, the major condition for the efficacy of teaching and training by instructors of ethics is their obligation to act according to their own teachings and guidelines. In this respect Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a) said:

"من نصَبَ نفسه للناس اماما فعليه أن يبدأ بتعليم نفسه قبل تعليم غيره، وليكن تأديبه بسيرته، قبل تأديبه بلسانه"

"Whoever undertakes leading people should, before teaching others, attempt to teach himself (sufficiently) and before training others for good manners by speech should do the same by his own good manners."[2]

The most outstanding feature of the Shaykh's efficacy of discourse and his enriching power was his application of the above instruction of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a) and calling people to God by means of his

good manner prior to his (use of) speech and preaching.

If the Shaykh called people to monotheism, he had already shattered (أرباب متفرقون) (Many lords differing among themselves) (Yusuf: 39) and on top of all his idol of *nafs* (carnal desire). If he called people to sincerity in all deeds, his deeds and gestures were all sincerely for God. If he ever fell negligent, God's Grace would come to his aid, in such a manner that he once said:

"Every needle that I drive in the cloth for the sake of other than God, it would stick into my finger."

And if he called others to love of God, he himself was burning fervently in the fire of love of God. If he called people to benevolence and self-sacrifice to others and serving them, he was himself a pioneer in this way. When he referred to the "world" as "the hag" and bewared others of liking it, his own ascetic life was clear evidence of his unwillingness to such "hag". And finally, if he called others to struggle against whims of *nafs* for the sake of God, he was himself on the forefront of this struggle and was triumphant like Yusuf (a) from a hard trial.

Educational Methods

The method used by the reverend Shaykh in self-building and training his disciples can be divided into two parts: 1) his educational method in public sessions and 2) His educational method in his private encounters.

1. Public Sessions

The Shaykh's public sessions were usually held in his house once a week. Similarly, in most occasions such as Islamic festive days, birth and martyrdom anniversaries of the Infallible Imams (a), he would hold sessions in his own house. In the months of Muharram and Safar[3] and the holy month of Ramadhan, he would also hold preaching sessions. These sessions that were occasionally held in his friend's houses on a regular basis would last for two years.

Weekly sessions were usually held after performing evening and night prayers on Thursday nights with the Shaykh as prayer leader. After prayers, he would recite some couplets of the late Fayz[4] containing *istighfir* (asking Allah's forgiveness with an attractive and impressive voice:

'I seek Allah's forgiveness for whatever (I have done for) other than the Beloved,

I seek Allah's forgiveness for my fictitious existence.

If a moment elapses without remembering his (beautiful) countenance,

I seek Allah's forgiveness myriad of times for that moment.

The tongue that is not engaged in remembering the Friend,

Beware of its evil and seek Allah's forgiveness. Life came to its end and due to negligence

I was not conscious for a single hour, I seek Allah's forgiveness (for that negligence).

The youth gone by and the old age drawn near to its end,

I did nothing (worthwhile), I seek Allah's forgiveness.'

One of the Shaykh's disciples says: 'He would sing these poems in a way that we could not help crying. In the end he would read in an indescribably charming spiritual state one of the fifteen whispered prayers[5] attributed to Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (a).'

Another disciple said: 'In his supplication sessions I did not see anybody else shedding tears like him; his weeping was really heart- rending.

At the end of the supplication and serving tea, the reverend Shaykh would begin to talk and preach. He was very eloquent; in his lectures he would try to impart to others what he had found through the Qur'an and the Islamic traditions as well as the facts about which he had himself attained certitude.

The keyword he frequently used when addressing those present in his session was *rufaqa* (friends); and the main topics of his lectures included: monotheism, sincerity, love of God, consistent presence of heart, proximity to God, rendering service to people, pleading with the Ahl al-Bayt (a), awaiting *faraj,* warning against love of *dunya* (worldly-mindedness), egotism, and whims of carnal soul (*nafs*). In the next chapters the above topics will be discussed in details.

Dr. Thubati said about the beginning of his acquaintance with the reverend Shaykh and what his sessions were like: 'In the last years of high school, I was introduced to the reverend Shaykh by the late Dr. Abdul 'Ali Goya-holding Ph.D. in Nuclear Physics from France -and attended his sessions around ten years. His sessions were brief and private, attended by very few people. Whenever the sessions got too crowded and some strangers attended, he would temporarily call the sessions off. That means he was not after (attracting many) followers.

Except for a few words, some advice, and preaching, which ended in a *dua* (supplication), nothing else would be brought up in his sessions. Although the talks were rather repeated, the sessions were so spiritually attractive that whatever repeated talks we heard they would not make us tired or bored at all[6] Like the Qur'anic verses that whatever much you recite they are still fresh and pleasant, his talks too were similarly always fresh and pleasant.

The sessions were so spiritual (and otherworldly) that nobody tended to bring up the material and worldly issues, and if by any chance someone would talk of the material things, the people around would ignore them with contempt or even disgust. The reverend Shaykh's talks mainly concerned "proximity to God", "love of God", and "journey toward God". He would epitomize "proximity to God" in the following brief words:

"You should change your *ussa* (i.e., *ustad* or master); that is, you have been doing for yourself whatever you did so far. From now on, whatever you do, do it for God and (know that) this is the nearest way to God. 'Step on your own self, embrace the Beloved.'[7]

All human selfishness is due to one's self-love; you will not attain anything (make no spiritual achievements) unless you turn to be a lover of God:

'If you get rid of your self, you will join the Beloved; Otherwise, keep burning eternally, your state of affairs being unripe'.

You should do things out of love for Him; that is, love Him and do things for the sake of His love. Loving Him and doing things for Him is the secret of all spiritual advances that mankind can make, and this will be possible. Thus, all human advancements are attainable by opposing carnal desires; you will not attain it unless you wrestle with your *nafs* (carnal desire) and knock it down."

He said about egotism:

"Here, a fatigued body and a broken heart is worth buying, the self-selling market is far away from this market place."

And he also said:

"Your price is as high as you demand; if you demand God, your price is infinite and if you demand the world (material possessions); your price is as low as what you have desired.

Do not ever say I wish this I wish that, (rather) see what God wishes. When you give a feast see if you invite whomever *you* desire or whomever that Allah wants you to invite. As long as you are following the footsteps of your carnal wishes, you will reach nowhere. The heart is God's Abode; do not let anybody else in; only God must be residing and presiding in your heart. Imam Ali (a) was asked how he attained such high station. 'I sat (watchful) at the gate of my heart and let no one except God in. He replied."

After his short talks, light refreshments would be served and then *munajat* (whispered prayer) would start. His *munajat* was really pleasant to hear and his spiritual state was very fascinating. He would not recite supplications plainly and formally; rather they were performed as whispering love songs to a sweetheart. While reciting *munajat,* he would so deeply get absorbed in the Beloved that it sounded as if a mother was seeking her lost child, weeping whole-heartedly lamenting and talking to the Beloved Friend in His Holy Presence.

Sometimes it seemed that amid the supplication, he would have received mystical intuitions, so that the signs and effects would then be revealed in his talks and manners. He deeply regretted that his "friends" did not make the advance that he had expected of them. He wished his friends opened up their eyes soon enough to see the angels and the Holy Imams (a).

When someone returned from a *Ziyarat* (of the Holy Imams' (a) shrines), he would ask him:

"Did you see that blessed Entity?"

Of course some were successful in this respect, too, and had found good spiritual states and even had some spiritual intuition. Others, however, were dragging behind.

Anyway, his munajat was highly enchanting so that it would enliven the others too. He knew the meanings of the supplications and stressed on some phrases in the supplication, repeating or explaining them sometimes. He would recite the supplication of *Yastashir* and *Munajat-i Khamsa 'Ashar* very often. He believed that the supplication of *Yastashir*[8] was expressing love to the Beloved.

During the month of Muharram, he would talk very little; he would, instead recite some poems from the book Taqdis on the afflictions of the Ahl al-Bayt (a), and would weep and then recite the munajat.

Emphasis on Obeying God and Refraining from Carnal Desires

The reverend Shaykh believed that the wisdom behind creating man is his Divine vicegerency, representing God (on earth)[9] Once man attains this station, he can carry out Divine acts. The way to reach this place is through obeying God and opposing the carnal desires. In this respect, he said:

"It is quoted in a Divine (*Qudsi*) *hadith:*

"يا ابن آدم! خلقت الأشياء لأجلِك وخلقتك لآجلي"

'O son of Adam! I created everything for you and created you for Myself.'[10]

"عبدي أطعني حتى أجعلك مِثلي أو مَثَلي"

'My servant! Obey me, so that I make you like Myself or an example of Myself.'[11]

Dear friends! According to these *ahadith,* you are vicegerents of Allah; you are like pears, king of the fruits! Appreciate your value, do not follow whims of your carnal soul, and obey God so that you can achieve a place that enables you to perform divine things. God has created the entire universe for you, and has created you for Himself. See how high a station He has granted to you!"

The Shaykh believed that one would be ranked among the human beings unless he attains the status of Divine vicegerency. He would say:

"As spoons are for eating food and cups are for drinking tea, so also men are for turning into humans"

He would repeatedly say: "God has graced me with *karamat;* you too perform Godly work, He will grant you the same. O person whose profession is brick laying! O person whose work is tailoring! When you lay the brick or stitch with the needle, do it with love of God and be conscious of God! When you are wearing clothes .that cost one hundred *tomans*[12] a meter, do not say I have bought this one hundred *tomans* a meter; say, in stead, God has bestowed this on me. Represent God! Do not represent yourself!"

Recognition of Internal States

The Shaykh would recognize inner states of the audience through his intuitive faculty. However, he would never point out the weak points of any person in public, unless of course in a way that the person himself would understand the admonition and would endeavor to rectify himself. Two examples of such a case are briefly stated as follows:

Putting the Shaykh to Test

One of the eminent and upright preachers said: 'One afternoon in 1956, I was in the *Madrasa* of Haj Shaykh Abdul Husayn in the Tehran's Bazaar–next to Masjid of Shaykh Abdul Husayn. The late Shaykh Abdul Karim Hamid–an eminent disciple of the late Shaykh Rajab Ali–came to me and talked about his *ustad* (master), Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat, and his status of sincerity and spirituality and finally asked me 'to accompany to the Shaykh's Thursday evening session with him. I accompanied him to the Shaykh's session. When we arrived in, I saw the Shaykh was sitting facing the *qibla* and engaged in reciting the *munajat* of Amir al–Mu'minin Ali (a):

"اللهم اني أسالك الأمان يوم لا ينفع مال ولا بنون.."

"O Lord! I seek Your security on the Day that neither property nor children are of any benefit."

At the same time some of his devotees were sitting behind him, chanting the *munajat* along with him. I, too sat behind the crowd in the last row, saying to myself: O God! If he is one of Your *awliya,* may You make my preaching sessions thrive so that I can get a good material benefit!

As soon as this idea crossed my mind, the Shaykh said in the middle of his supplication:

"I say forget about money, but he has come here to test me with money!"

He said this in Persian and then went on reciting the *munajat* (in Arabic):

"وأسالك الأمان يوم لا ينفع مال و..."

"I seek Your security on the Day that neither property....."

The Presence of an Informer

Gradually, high-ranking government officials and famous personalities were also attending the Shaykh's sessions. According to the reverend Shaykh, they would come (to attend his sessions) for solving their own problems and looked for the "hag world" in the Shaykh's house. Nevertheless, there were some among them who benefited from the Shaykh's, sermons as much as their capacity. Due to the presence of such individuals, the Intelligence Service of the Shah's regime become suspicious toward the sessions held by the Shaykh, and commissioned a major called Hasan al-Baygi to attend - incognito the Shaykh's sessions together with another agent in order to report the reason for the presence of the government officials in those sessions.

When the Intelligence Service agent entered the session, the Shaykh said while preaching and giving advice to the audience:

"Focus your attention to God and do not let no one but God in your heart, as heart is (like a) mirror and if it gets the slightest stain, it will show itself up very quickly. Now, some look like informers and come in with a nickname; for instance his name is Hasan but he feigns to be such and such.

These words impressed and amazed the Intelligence Service agent, Major Hasan al-Baygi, whose real name was not known to anybody, so deeply that he was said to have resigned from SAVAK (the then Intelligence Service in Iran).

"First Please your Father!"

Sometimes the reverend Shaykh did not admit some people in his sessions or he would impose a condition on them. One of the Shaykh's disciples who had been with him for about twenty years describes how his relation with the Shaykh first began:

"At first, whatever I tried to attend his sessions, he would not allow me; Until one day I saw him in Masjid-i Jamah, and after greeting asked him why he does not let me in his sessions. He said:

"First, please your father, then I will talk to you!"

That night I went home and fell at my father's feet, imploring him to forgive me. Having gotten very surprised, my father asked: What has happened? I said: Do not ask anything, just forgive me, I know I did not know what I was doing. ...And finally my father forgave me.

The next morning I went to the Shaykh's house. As soon as he saw me, he said:

"Well done! Now come and sit next to me."

Since then, right after the Second World War, I remained in his company until his death.'

2. Special Guidelines

One of the most outstanding features of a perfect *ustad* (master) and instructor on the path toward God Almighty is that his guidelines are given according to the needs of a spiritual seeker in his different stages of truth-seeking. This undertaking is, of course, not possible in public and in the presence of others.

A physician, however expert and experiencd cannot treat all the patients visiting him by a single prescription and a single drug. Each patient needs a specific medication. It is even probable that for some reasons two different types of medicine are prescribed for two patiets suffering from a same illness. This is also true for the illnesses of the soul.

An ethics instructor is indeed a physician of man's soul. He can cure the ethical maladies only if he identifies first and foremost the origin of the illness, and has the suitable medicine at his disposal as well.

Great Messengers of God (a) who are the main instructors and trainers of the souls were generally possessed of this characteristic. They not only realized the general requirements of the human society in various ways, but they were perfectly aware of personal needs of each members of their community.

Imam Ali (a) comments on this feature of the Holy Prophet (s) as follows: "He was a physician who, with his knowledge, wandered about seeking his patients, while his medicines and medical instruments were prepared by all means. They were used on demand and healed the souls which were suffering (ailments such as) blindness, deafness, and dumbness. With his medicine, he looked for the houses of negligence and stations of bewilderment."13

Scholars of Divinity, who are true successors to the prophets and to their vicegerents, enjoy such characteristic too. They are the ones who according to Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a):

"هجم بهم العلم على حقيقة البصيرة، وباشروا روح اليقين"

"Knowledge based on true insight have reached them and they have attained the spirit of certitude!"14

Of course, as stated inthe holy Imam's (a) words:

"أولئك والله الأقلّون عدداً، والأعظمون عند الله قدْراً"

"The number of those scholars of Divinity, who enjoy the highest status with their God Almighty, are very few in number..."15

The Importance of a Perfect Instructor

The late Ayatollah Mirza Ali Qazi (ra) is quoted as saying: 'The most important requirement in this path is having a knowledgeable, selfless perfected master. When a person is a seeker on the path to Allah, if they spend half of their lives looking for a master (*ustad*), it is worth it. The one who has found a master, they have traversed half the way.'

Careful study of the Shaykh's special guidelines to his disciples reveals that he had through self-negation, sincerity, and assistance from the unseen attained such a high status of spiritual perfection that he was able to diagnose the spiritual maladies and problematic situations arising in the lives of others, and to cure and resolve them with the proper prescription. This reality is clearly evident to those who are familiar with the Shaykh's life.

Sins and Calamities in Life

From the Islamic viewpoint, man's improper deeds play a basic role in the predicaments and misfortunes that befall him. The Holy Qur'an asserts accordingly:

(وما أصابكم من مصيبة فبما كسبت أيديكم)

(Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because of the things your hands have wrought,..) (al-Shura: 30)

Interpreting and explaining the above verse, Imam Ali (a) said: "Beware of sins, as all calamities and shortcomings in livelihood, even the scratch on the body or falling down to the ground are due to committing sins because God Almighty says: (Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because of the things your hands have wrought.) (al-Shura: 30)."[16]

If a person really believes that his improper deeds will not only cause agonies in his life after death but also entangles his worldly life in various predicaments, then he would avoid committing vileness and does not even think of them. The more this belief is strengthened, the more the ground for fostering pious human beings will be prepared.

With his Divine intuition and spiritual vision, the reverend Shaykh would literally notice the relation of vileness to the plights and predicaments of human life, and by stating them he would resolve peoples' problems and difficulties. Employing this method of self-building, he would direct them toward human perfection.

"We Sell on Credit even to you!"

One of the Shaykh's children said: 'One day the late famous Murshid Chilow'[17], went to the Shaykh complained of his (catering) business being sluggish, saying: '*Dadash* (olloquial way of addressing a friend)! What is this situation we are stuck in?! For a long time we had prosperous position, we sold 3–4 large pots of *chelow* (cooked rice) to plenty of customers. But all of a sudden the table turned and the customers abandoned one after another, the sale turned sluggish and we now hardly sell a large pot each day. The Shaykh pondered for while and then said: ' It is your own fault; you reject the customers!"

Murshid said: 'I did not reject anyone; I even serve the children and give them half a kebab.'

The Shaykh responded:

"Who was that Sayyid who ate (in your restaurant) for three days on credit and the last time you pushed him out of your shop?"

Having gotten very embarrassed, Murshid left the Shaykh and hastened to look for that Sayyid. When he found him, he apologized him and then put up a sign on the window of his restaurant that read:

"We sell on credit, even to you; cash will also be lent as much as we can afford!!"

Annoying the Child

One of the noble disciples of the reverend Shaykh said: 'My two year old child, who is now forty years old, had wetted his bed and his mother had beaten him so hard that he fell almost dead. An hour later, my wife came down with a high fever so that we rushed her to a doctor, spending sixty *tomans* for the medication, but the fever did not subside, and even worsened: We visited the doctor again, spending another forty *tomans* that was exorbitant for us those days.

Anyway, in the evening of the same day I picked up the Shaykh to accompany him to the session. My wife was also present in the car. When the Shaykh got in the car, I introduced my wife to the Shaykh and said: "This is my children's mother, she's got a fever; I took her to the doctor but her fever has not come down yet. The Shaykh looked at us and said to my wife:

"A child is not to be beaten like that; ask Allah's forgiveness for that, go appease him and buy something for him; she will recover from the illness."

We did so, and her fever subsided!

Annoying the Wife

The same person relates: One day the Shaykh and I were in Agha Radmanish's house. I said to him (the

Shaykh): 'My father[18] died around the year 1352 A.H. 11933 CE. I would like to see how he is doing now (in the purgatory world). The Shaykh said:

"Recite (the Surah) al-Fatiha!"

Then he deliberated and paused for a while, and said:

"They do not let him come, he is encumbered due to his wife!"

I said: 'Please talk to his wife if possible.' He said: "Your stepmother is coming."

'She was a villager who was my father's wife, and since my father got married to several other women, so she was not on talking terms with my father to the end of her life. Whenever my father entered through a door, she would leave the room from another door.

I said to the Shaykh: 'Ask her what I should do to make her pleased with my father'. The Shaykh replied: "He (i.e., me) should feed the hungry." 'How many?' I asked. He said one hundred people. I said: 'I could not afford so many; and he finally lowered the number down to forty people. Upon accepting, the Shaykh said: "Your father's voice is heard now. As that woman became pleased, your father was liberated. He says tell my son why he has married two women. See what affliction I am encumbered in! Now take care to treat [your wives] justly." Another friend of the Shaykh said: 'I asked him of my father's condition in barzakh (purgatory world). The Shaykh answered: "He is encumbered by your mother!" I found he was right; My father had married another woman and my mother was upset in this regard. So I went to my mother and made her pleased. The next time that I visited the Shaykh, he said as soon as I arrived in:

"How nice it is to reconcile two people; your father is at ease now!"

Annoying the Husband

One of the Shaykh's disciples related: 'There was a woman whose husband was a Sayyid and a friend of the reverend Shaykh. She would irritate her husband a lot. After some time, she died. At her funeral the Shaykh was present. Later on he said:

"This woman's spirit was disputing while she was being buried, saying well! Now I am dead, so what happened?! When she was being placed in the grave her deeds materialized into a black fiel dog. As the woman noticed the dog was (as torture in her grave) being buried with her, she found out what misery she had piled up for herself in the course of her life. She began to lament and implore and yell! I saw she was too distraught, so I asked this Sayyid to forgive her; he forgave her for my sake. The dog went away and she was buried!"

The Displeased Sister

One of the Shaykh's sons narrated: 'There was an architect whose job was constructing houses for selling. He had constructed one hundred units, but due to excessive indebtedness he was in a terrible financial situation and was about to be arrested and jailed. He came to my father and said he could not go home, and that he had to hide himself from the public. After a short deliberation, the Shaykh said: "Go and please your sister!" The architect said: 'My sister is pleased.' The Shaykh said she was not. The architect pondered for a while and then said: 'Yes, when my father died, he bequeathed us some money. My sister's share amounted to fifteen hundred *tomans* that I remember I did not give her. Then he went away and returned some time later and said: 'I gave my sister five thousand *tomans* and secured her consent.

My father kept silent for a moment and after a short deliberation said:

"She says she is not satisfied. Does she have a house?"
The architect said: 'No, she is a tenant.' The Shaykh said:
"Go and transfer the ownership of one of your best houses to her, and then return to me to see what can be done for you."
The architect said: 'Reverend Shaykh! There are two of us sharing the buildings, how can I do that?' The Shaykh said:
"I am at my wit's end; this servant of God is not yet satisfied."

At last, he went away again, finally transferred one of the houses to the ownership of her sister, and helped her move her household furniture to that house. When he returned the Shaykh told him: "Now it is solved!"

The next day he managed to sell three of the houses and relieved from the predicament.

Unkindness toward the Sister

One of the merchants of (Tehran) Bazaar went bankrupt. While he was complaining and telling his grief to his friend, the Shaykh passed by his shop. Upon seeing him, his friend advised him to tell his problem to the Shaykh. The merchant said: 'I do not know him.' He finally agreed to consult the Shaykh, at his friend's insistence. He went to the Shaykh and after greeting, narrated his problem to him. When he ended his explanation, the Shaykh said with lowered head:

"You are a cruel person; it has been four months since your brother-in-law has died and you have not called on your sister and his (orphaned) children. This is the source of your problem."

The merchant said: 'We have a dispute.' The Shaykh said:

"Your problem is rooted there, but you do not know it yourself."

The merchant went back to his friend and told him what the Shaykh revealed to him. Then he bought some household articles, took them to his sister, reconciled with her, and his problem was resolved.

The Displeased Mother

Several people, including a young man, were sentenced to death. His relatives went to the Shaykh and asked him imploringly for a solution. The Shaykh told them that he was encumbered by his mother. They went to his mother and she said whatever she prayed it was to no effect. They told her: 'The reverend Shaykh says you are displeased with him (her son). She answered: 'That is right; my son had newly married when some day after eating lunch I cleaned the table cloth, put the tableware on a tray, and held it to my daughter-in-law to take it to the kitchen. My son took the tray from me and said to me: 'I have not brought you a handmaid!

Finally his mother was pleased with him and prayed for his son. The next day, it was announced that there has been a mistake and the young man was released.

The Broken-Hearted Aunt

One of the Shaykh's friends related: 'My father was suffering a serious illness that whatever they did for his cure was to no effect. I told the Shaykh that my father had been sick and bed-ridden for a year. The Shaykh asked me if I had an aunt. The answer was, yes. The Shaykh said:

"Your father is encumbered by your aunt, and if she prays he would recover."

'I requested my aunt to pray for my father; she prayed but my father did not get well. I went to the Shaykh again and said my father did not get well despite my aunt being pleased. The Shaykh gave me some instruction for doing favor to my aunt's four orphaned children and told me to ask them to pray.

I did as the Shaykh had instructed and then asked my aunt what the reason for her discontent with my father was. She said: 'After my husband died, your father took me and my four children to his own house to live with them. Until one day that I was quarrelling with your mother when your father arrived and dislodged my children and me from his house. My heart was broken at that moment.

At last, with aunt being pleased, my father got better but did not regain perfect health. Once again I went to visit the Shaykh and told him the story. This time he instructed me to do favors to a Sayyid that he introduced, and after I did so my father got perfectly well.

Annoying the Employer's Son

One of the Shaykh's disciples quoted him as saying: "You are never unduly afflicted."

Once I broke my head in an accident. Along with some friends I went to see the Shaykh. My friend

asked the Shaykh: 'See what he had done to have broken his head!' The reverend Shaykh deliberated for a while and then said:

"He has annoyed a child in the factory."

I found he was right. I was an operator of a bending device, which was a rare profession in those days. Such professionals were typically dear to their employers. Once my employer's son found a fault with me and it was irrelevant to him; so I had a row with him to the extent that he burst into tears.

The Shaykh said:

"If you do not satisfy him, your problem will continue." I went (to that child) and apologized.

Annoying the Employee

Several officials from the finance department went to see the Shaykh in one of his disciples' house. One of them said, my body is itching and it does not get cured. The Shaykh said after a little deliberation:

"You have annoyed a Sayyid woman."

That person said: 'These (ladies) have come (to the office) to sit at their desks but they do not perform their duty; and as you say something to them, they burst into tears!' It turned out that a Sayyid woman had been employed in their office and he had annoyed her with his remarks. The Shaykh said:

"You are not going to recover from the itching unless you ask her forgiveness."

Another of the Shaykh's disciples told a similar story as follows: We were sitting in the presence of the Shaykh in the courtyard of one of his friends' house. There was also present in the meeting a high ranking official who regularly attended the Shaykh's sessions. Having stretched his legs due to some ailment, he said to the Shaykh: Your reverence! I am suffering this pain in my legs for the last three years. Whatever I do, I get no results and the medication is not effective. As it was his usual custom, the Sheikh asked the people present to recite the Sura al-Fatiha, then deliberated for a while, and said:

"The pain in your legs started since the day you reprimanded the typist lady because of her mistakes in typing and shouted at her. She was a Sayyid woman whose heart broke and cried. Now you should find her and beg her for pardon so that the pain disappears."

The man said: 'You are right, she was the typist in our office and I shouted at her, making her cry.'

Usurping the Old Woman's Right

One of the Shaykh's disciples, who had lost his spiritual state after having eaten certain food, asked the Shaykh for help. The Shaykh suggested:

"The kebab that you ate was paid by such and such a merchant who had usurped the old woman's right."

Offending others (with foul language)

One of the Shaykh's disciples narrated: One day the Shaykh and I along with some others were passing through Imam Zadeh Yahya (s). Street when a bicycle rider hit a passer-by. The latter offended the rider by calling him an ass!

The Shaykh, hearing this, said:

"His interior turned into an ass right away!"

Another of his disciples quoted him as saying: "Once I was passing through the bazaar when I saw a cart moving by, with a man holding the bridle of the horse that was pulling the cart. All of a sudden a passer-by jumped before the horse to cross the bazaar. The carter shouted at him: 'You hackney!' I saw that the carter also turned into a horse, and the bridle split into two.

Cruelty to Animals

According to the Islamic laws, cruelty to animals is a reprehensible deed. A Muslim is not allowed to annoy or even imprecate animals.[19]

Thus, the Holy Prophet (s) is quoted as saying: --

"لو غُفر لكم ما تأتون الى البهائم لغُفرَ لكم كثيراً"

"If the cruelty you do to animals is forgiven, many of your sins are forgiven!"[20]

Although the slaughter of *halal* meat animals is allowed as lawful in Islam, the slaughter itself involves rules that cause the animal suffer as less pain as possible. One rule is that the animal must not be slaughtered before the eyes of other animals of the same species.[21]

As Imam Ali (a) has stated:

"لاتذبح الشاة عند الشاة ولا الجزور عند الجزور وهو ينظر اليه"

"Do not slaughter a sheep in the presence of another sheep and a camel in the presence of another camel while they are looking at the animals' being slaughtered.[22]

So, beheading an animal's offspring before its mother's eyes is strongly reprimanded, as it represents utmost cruelty and ferocity, leaving detrimental impacts on the perpetrator,

One of the Shaykh's disciples related: 'A slaughterer came to the Shaykh and said: "My child is dying; what shall I do?'

The Shaykh said:

"You have slaughtered a calf before its mother's eyes."

The slaughterer implored the Shaykh to do something for him. The Shaykh said:

"It says: no way, he has slaughtered my baby, so his baby must die!"23

1. Imam Khomeini's (ra) teacher in science of irfan. Imam Khomeini (ra) always mentioned his name with high respect mentioning him as 'perfect arif'.
2. Mizan al-Hikmah, I, 222: 850.
3. He advised his son: "Make sure to attend the mourning gatherings (rawda) always on the last day, snce Hadrat Fatima Zahra (a) is present there.
4. The late Muammad Mohsin Fayz renowned as Mulla Muhsin Fayz Kashani (1595-1680 CE. / 1006-1091 A.H.) ranked among the leading scholars, philosophers, mystics, exegetists, and poets of the 11th century A.H.
5. Munajat khamsa asharah includes 15 tersely state whispered prayers attributed to Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a). See The Psalms of Islam, translated by William Chittick, London, 1988.
6. The suffering by love is no more than a single story, and it is so amazing that from whomever you hear it, it sounds untold. (Hafiz)
7. Step on your own self, embrace the Beloved One (instead), up to His ka'bah of union with Him, you are just one step away
8. See "Recite the supplication of Yastashir", Chapter Six, Part 3.
9. It is narrated that the Shaykh said: "I asked a number of scholars and people of spirituality why God has created man. I did not get convincing answers until I asked the same from Ayatollah Muhammad Ali Shahabadi (ra). He said: God has created man as His vicegerent: (I will create a vicegerent on earth.) (al-Baqarah: 30)"
10. Sharh-i Asma-i Husna, I, 139: 202; Rasa 'il-i Karaki, III, 962
11. Bihar al-Anwar, CV, 165; "Maqam-i Imam Ali (a), III; 185, with a slight difference
12. One hundred tomans per meter cloth was very costly at the time of the Shaykh.
13. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon: 108, with some comment by the author.
14. Nahjul-Balagha, Maxim: 147.
15. Ibid.
16. Khisal, 616:10; Bihar al-Anwar, LXX, 350: 47.
17. The father of Heydar 'Ali Tehrani, the poet nicknamed "Mu'jiza". (His story related to the Shaykh are given in, "Humility"; and "Your Father should not Turn into an Idol for you" Chapter five, Part I, and Chapter Two, Part 3, respectively.).
18. Akhund Mulla Muhammad Baqir, son of Akhund Mirza Jani Qazvini, was among the pious and combatant scholars of Qazvin, born in 1290 AH./ 1873 CE, and a student of Grand Ayatollah Akhund Khurasani (the author of al-Kifaya), Haj Shaykh Mulla Fatullah Khurasani, and Haj Muammad Hadi Tehrani in Najaf-i Ashraf. Also see: Ganjinay-i Danishmandan, IX, 219.
19. Mizan al-Hikmah, III, 1343.
20. Ibid. III, 1344: 4520.
21. Wasa'il al-Shi 'a, XXIV, 16; Tahrir al-Wasila, P. 151, issue no. 20.
22. Al-Kafi, VI, 229: 7; Tahdhib al-Ahkam, IX, 80: 341.
23. Ayatollah Fahri quotes Agha Sayyid Muammad Reza Kashfi as saying: 'There was a butcher living in our neighborhood whose son came down with a severe stomachache. He appealed to Agha Kashfi, who in turn referred him to the reverend Shaykh. He told him: "You have slaughtered a calf before its mother's eyes, so this son of yours will not be cured."

The Basis of Self-Building

"Salvation" is in fact an epitome of all the human virtues and perfection and the way to attain it, from the Qur' anic viewpoint is through self-building and purification of the soul. Following numerous swearing, the Exalted Allah asserts:

(قد أفلح من زكّاها)

(Truly he succeeds (attains salvation) that purifies it,) (al-Shams: 9)

All that the Divine Messengers have brought from the Almighty God for guiding man, are preliminary steps to "Salvation" and actualization of human potentials. The significant issue in purification of the soul for mankind is to find out how to begin self-building and what its basis is from the viewpoints of Divine Messengers. The basis of self-building and the first step in purification of soul is "monotheism". Thereupon, the first message of all Divine messengers was, "*La ilaha illa Allah*-there is no god-but Allah":

(وما أرسلنا من قبلك من رسول الا نوحي اليه انه لآ اله الا انا فاعبدون)

(Not a messenger did we send before you without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me.) (al-Anbiya: 25)

The first sayings of the Holy Prophet (s) addressed to the people was:

"يا ايها الناس! قولوا: لا إله الله، تفلحوا"

O people! Say 'There is no god but Allah', so that you attain Salvation."[1]

Nevertheless, mere utterance of *"La ilaha illa Allah"* is not sufficient by itself, as what forms the basis of self -building and leads to Salvation and actualization of human perfection, is the truth of monotheism and turning into a true monotheist.

The sign indicating that man has attained true monotheism-in the perfect and real sense of the word-is that he can like Divine angels and through Divine Essence witness the oneness of the Exalted God Almighty:

(شهد الله أنه لآ اله الا هو والملئكة واولوا العلم)

(There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those endowed with knowledge...) (Ale 'Imran: 18)

One of the Shaykh's disciples said about him: 'May God bless his soul! All his endeavors were toward attaining *la illaha illa Allah,* and all his words were dedicated to reach the reality of this pure phrase. '

Another of his disciples said: 'The Shaykh was an expert in this discipline. He did his best to transmit to others what he had attained himself and to enhance his disciples to the rank of intuitive monotheism.

The Shaykh said: "Monotheism is the basis of self-building. Anyone who wants to construct a building, they must first lay the foundation firm enough, otherwise that building will not be well grounded. The spiritual seeker must begin his journey from monotheism, as the first utterance of all the prophets has been *la ilaha illa Allah.* Man will fail attaining human perfection, unless he appreciates the truth of monotheism and believe that there is nothing in existence except God's Pure Essence. Having grasped the reality of monotheism, man will whole-heartedly attend the Creator."

He also said: "If you wish that God call2 you, (try to) gain a little divine knowledge and (enter into a) deal with Him."

"When we say *la ilaha illa Allah,* we should tell the truth (be honest). Until a man does not leave aside the false deities, he cannot be a monotheist and be truthful in uttering *la ilaha illa Allah. Ilah* (god = false deity) is something that captivates human heart, and whatever that captivates his heart is his god3 When we say, *la ilaha illa Allah* we should be astounded by Him."

"The entire Qur'an refers to the statement, *la ilaha illa Allah.* Man must reach to the point that there remains nothing engraved in his heart except this statement, and whatever other than Him depart from his heart: (Say: ' Allah (sent it down)": then leave them.) (al-An'am: 19)

"Man is the tree of monotheism, the fruit of which is the emergence of Divine attributes; it (the tree) will not be perfect until it yields such fruit. Man's peak of perfection is reaching (nearness to) Allah, that is, to become a manifestation of God's attributes. Try to bring to life Divine attributes in you. He is Gracious; you be gracious too. He is Merciful; you be merciful too. He is Concealer (of defects); you be concealer too."

"What is beneficial to man is the Divine attributes, nothing else is as influential on man, even the Greatest Name of God!"

"If you are engrossed in monotheism, you will enjoy the Exalted God's special bounties at any moment that you had not enjoyed prior to that moment. God's bounties and blessings are novel at any moment."

Cleansing of Polytheism

Cleansing polytheism off your soul and heart is the first step toward attaining the truth of monotheism. Hence, in its main motto, i.e., *la illaha illa Allah,* denying false gods is considered prior to proving the One Real God.

Now, it must be noted what polytheism is. Who is a polytheist? Is polytheism merely believing in deity of objects? Are polytheists the only people who have faith in inanimate idols? Or something else is the case.

Polytheism vs. monotheism is the belief in illusory forces and their efficacy in the world of being and their worship against the Real Efficient, i. e., the One Sustainer.

The monotheist does not view anything effective in the world except the One God and does not worship anything, neither the inanimate idols nor the animate ones, except Him.

The polytheists are the ones that view as effective other than God and obey other than Him; sometimes they worship objects, sometimes they obey the powerful, sometimes they are slaves to their own carnal desires and whims, and sometimes they are in the service of all three.4

From the Islamic viewpoint, all three types of polytheism are blameworthy, and to attain the reality of monotheism there is no other way than wiping ofolytheism in the strict sense of the word.

The remarkable point here is that the most dangerous type of polytheim is the third type, i. e., following the whims of carnal soul (vain desires). This type of polytheism is the source of obstacles to intellectual and emotional cognition, and the beginning of polytheism in the first and the second sense:

> (أفاريت من اتخذ إله هواه وأضله الله على علم وختم على سمعه وقلبه وجعل على بصره غشاوة فمن يهديه من بعد الله أفلا تنـّكرون)

(Then seest thou such a one as takes as his god his own vain desire? Allah has, knowing (him as such), left him astray, and sealed his hearing and his heart (and understanding), and put a cover on his sight. Who, then, will guide him after Allah (has withdrawn guidance)? Will ye not then receive admonition?) (al-Jathiyah: 23)

Accordingly, the reverend Shaykh viewed the idol of *nafs* as extremely detrimental to monotheism and would say:

"All troubles are regarding that grand idol that lies within yourself."5

Imam Khomeini (ra), the great ascetic and man of vision has also said:

"The mother of all idols is the idol of your own *nafs* (carnal desires); unless this grand idol and powerful Satan is not shattered, there will be no way to Him–the High and the Most Exalted. Lo and behold! This idol can hardly be shattered and this Satan can barely be tamed!"[6]

If man triumphs over such a grand idol, he has achieved the highest victories.

Wrestle with your *Nafs* (Vain Desires)!

One of the famous wrestlers of the time of Shaykh called "Aghar Agha Pahlavan" narrated: 'Once I was taken to the reverend Shaykh, he patted on my upper arm and said:

"If you are a real champion, wrestle with your own *nafs!"*

In fact, shattering the idol of *nafs* in the first and the last step in obliterating polytheism and achieving the reality of monotheism.

'Step on your own self, embrace the Beloved One (instead),
Up to his Ka'bah of union with him, you are just one step away.
If you get rid of your self, you will join the Beloved; Otherwise, keep burning eternally, your state of affairs being unripe.'

And maybe this is what is meant by nearness of the way to reach God, which Abu Hamza Thumali has quoted Sayyid al–Sajidin (Ali ibn al–Husayn) (a) as saying:

"وأن الراحل اليك قريبُ المسافة"

"For the one who is faring the path toward You, the distance is short."[7]

And as Hafiz of Shiraz has put it:

'As long as you see erudition and knowledge, you are deprived of Divine knowledge; I tell you only one point: do not mind yourself, and you will be free.'

Apparently, the reverend Shaykh was appointed to go on a mission to Kennanshah to tell the above point to such a great personality as Sardar Kabuli:

Traveling for the Purpose of Telling a Point

Ayatollah Fahri quoted the late Ghulam Qudsi as saying: 'In one year the reverend Shaykh came to Kennanshah. He said to me one day to go to Sardar Kabuli's house with him and we did so. I introduced the Shaykh to the late Sardar Kabuli. A while passed by in silence and then the latter said: "Reverend Shaykh! Say something to benefit us!"

The Shaykh responded:

"What should I say to the one whose trust in his own learning and acquired knowledge is more than his trust in God's Grace."

The late Sardar Kabuli was sitting silently. Some moments later; he took off his turban, put it down on the ground, and began hitting his head on the wall so harshly that I felt pity for him and proceeded to stop him but the Shaykh did not let me and said:

"...I have come here only to say this to him and return."

"Ask Allah's Forgiveness a Thousand Times!"

One of the Shaykh's sons related: 'A person from India called "Haj Muammad" used to come to stay in Iran for one month every year. Once on his way to Mashhad he got off the train to say his prayer in a corner. When the train was about to depart, his friend called at him to get on or he would be left behind. Haj Muammad did not pay any heed to his friend's calling, and with his psychic power stranded the train for half an hour. When he returned from Mashhad and visited the Shaykh, the latter told him: "Ask forgiveness from God a thousand times!"

"What for?" He asked. "You did something wrong!" Replied the Shaykh. He asked again: 'What wrong? I made a pilgrimage to Imam al-Reza (a) and prayed for you too.'

The Shaykh said: "You stranded the train there, wishing to demonstrate it was you who...! You see, the Satan deceived you. You were not entitled to do that!"

Personality Cult and Polytheism

The border between monotheism and polytheism is so narrow, subtle, and unnoticeable that no eyes can see it. The Holy Prophet (s) said in a *hadith:*

"وإن الشرك أخفى من دبيب النمل على صفاة سوداء في ليلة ظلماء"

"Verily, polytheism is more imperceptible than an ant moving on a black stone at a dark night."[8]

Only upright and insightful human beings can see the borderlines of hidden polytheism and warn against them.

Personality cult is one type of various hidden and subtle kinds of polytheism in which many people are entangled. If attention and obedience to personality, however divine and great, is not for the sake of God, it is regarded as polytheism. Thus the reverend Shaykh would say:

"If you come to me for my sake, you have much to lose!"

"Your Father should not turn into an Idol for you!"

Hujjat al-Islam Sayyid Muhammad Ali Milani, the son of the eminent jurist and *marja'* the late Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Hadi Milani (ra) gave an account of the meeting between the reverend Shaykh and his noble father as follows:

'The late Rajab Ali Khayyat, whom God had bestowed on with insight due to his self-restraint and abandonment of sins, managed to train a group of devoted people in sincerity and love of God.

He was interested in my father. I personally visited him frequently because of our old friendship and sometimes even enjoyed his sessions, in which he would generally preach for the spiritual seekers with reciting of Qur'anic verses and the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (a).

One year he found the honor to pay a visit to Mashhad for pilgrimage of the holy Imam al-Reza (a) and settled in a hotel nearby the Holy Shrine. My late father invited him for lunch. The Shaykh came to our house and my father was very pleased to meet him and they talked to each other until evening. In the same meeting the late Shaykh faced me and said:

"Be careful your father should not turn into an idol for you!"

And said to my father:

"Watch out your son does not get you in trouble!"

It crossed my mind whether one could have both this world and the Hereafter. The reverend Shaykh turned to me and said unprecedentedly:

"Recite this supplication a lot:

"ربنا آتنا في الدنيا حسنة وفي الآخرة حسنة"

(O God! Grant me benefit in this world and benefit in the Hereafter)."

I accompanied him back to his hotel, where Heydar Agha Mu'jiza (author of a poetry collection) came to the reverend Shaykh and invited him to lunch for the following day. The Shaykh did not accept his invitation first, but finally accepted at his insistence. Then, Heydar Agha went to my late father and invited him, too. At last, along with my late father we went to his house and found that the reverend Shaykh Rajab Ali and two of his co-travelers were already there. That day our session lasted until early evening.

How to Reach the Reality of Monotheism

Now the basic question is this: 'How can one cleanse themselves of polytheism, and by shattering the idol of *nafs,* uproot the covert and overt polytheism in themselves and achieve the lucidity of pure monotheism?

The reverend Shaykh replied the question as follows:

"To my humble opinion if one seeks a way to be delivered and wishes to attain real perfection and to enjoy the meanings of monotheism, they should resort to four things: first, perpetual presence; second, to rely on to the Ahl al-Bayt (a); third, begging at night (i. e., whispering prayers and supererogation during night time); and fourth, benevolence to people."

Elucidation of the above cases from the viewpoint of the Shaykh will be given in the coming chapters.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, II XX, 202.
2. We read in Munajat-i Sha'baniyya:

"الهي واجعلني ممن ناديته فأجابك ولاحظته فصَعك لجلالك فناجيته سراً وعمل لك جهرا"

"O Lord! Make me one of those people whom You call and they answer You; You look at them, they fall unconscious at Your Majesty; and You talk to them secretly and they act openly."

3. (أفرأيت من اتخذ الهه هواه وأظله الله على علم) (Then you see such a one as his god is his own vain desire? Allah has, knowing (him as such), left him astray...) (al-Jathiyah: 23).
4. The first group is referred to in the noble verse: وقالوا لاتذرن الهتكم ولاتذرن وداً ولا سُواعاً ولا يغوث ويعوق ونسرا(And they have said (to each other), abandon not your gods: abandon neither Wadd nor Suwa, neither Yaghuth nor Ya'uq, nor Nasr.) (Nuh: 23).

The second group is referred to in: أن اعبدوا الله واجتنبوا الطاغوت (Serve Allah, eschew Evil) (al-Nahl: 36).

And the third group is referred to in: أفرأيت من اتخذ الهه هواه (Seest thou such a one as taken for his god his own passion (or impulse)?) (al-Furqan: 43).

5. See: "A penny in Response to Ya Allah!". Chapter Six. Part 3.
6. Sahifah-i Nur. XXII, 348.
7. Mafatih al-Jinan, the supplication of Abu Hamza Thumali.
8. Mizan al-Hikmah, VI, 2724: 9316.

The Elixir of Self-Building

Love is the elixir of self-building and enrichment. Love of God Almighty cures all moral vileness entirely and presents all good attributes as a whole to the lover. The elixir of love makes the lover so enamored of the beloved that every other association with anything and anyone else except God is broken off.

In the Whispered Prayer of lovers, which is attributed to Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (a), we read:

"الهي من ذا الذي ذاق حلاوة محبتك فرام منك بدلا ومن الذي الذي انس بقربك فابتغى عنك حولا"

"My God, who can have tasted the sweetness of Thy love, then wanted another in place of thee? Who can have become intimate with Thy nearness, then sought removal from thee?"1

'Love is charming and when it is settled in the soul,
It closes the door of heart to everything other than the beloved.'

And in a *hadith* attributed to Imam al-Sadiq (a), we read:

"حب الله إذا أضاء على سر عبد أخلاه عن كل شاغل، وكل ذكر سوى الله ظلمة، والمحب أخلص الناس سراً لله تعالى، وأصدقهم قولاً، وأوفاهم عهداً"

"When the radiance of love of God shines on the heart of a devoted person, it delivers him from any other preoccupation; anything but remembrance of God is darkness. The lover of God is the most sincere of God's servants, the most truthful in speech, and the most faithful to vows and commitments."

In the first stage of detachment, the carnal soul (i. e., the soul that bids to evil) dies and the human rational life begins; and in its highest stage the eye of heart enlightens by the light of meeting with Allah and man attains the highest degree of monotheism, which is the status of *ulu 'l 'ilm.* We read in *Munajat-i Sha'baniyya:*

"الهي هب لي كمال الانقطاع اليك وأنر أبصار قلوبنا بضياء نظرها اليك"

"My lord! Grace me with the highest stage of detachment (from all things) toward Yourself, and enlighten the eyes of our hearts with the light of its looking (directed toward) You."2

The Real Elixir

An interesting account related by the Shaykh about love of God as an elixir as well as the real elixir is quoted as follows:

"Once I was looking for the science of alchemy; I practiced self-discipline for a time until I reached a dead end and gained nothing.

Then, in a spiritual state I was graced with the verse,

(من كان يريد العزة فلله العزة جميعا)

(If any do seek for glory and power–to Allah belong all glory and power) (Fatir: 10). I said I wanted the science of alchemy. I was told (by inspiration): 'They want alchemy for glory and power; the reality of glory and power is in this verse (the aforesaid verse). This set my mind at ease."

Several days later, two men (following ascetic practice's) came to my house and asked to meet with me. When we met they said: 'It has been two years since we have been trying to acquire the science of alchemy but to no effect. We appealed to Hazrat Imam al–Reza (a), he referred us to you.

The Shaykh smiled and told them the above story and then added: "I was permanently delivered (from such an aspiration); the reality of alchemy is attaining (proximity with) God Himself."

Sometimes the Shaykh would recite the following statement from the supplication of *'Arafah* to his friends in respect to the above verdict:

"ماذا وجد من فقدك ومالذي فقد من وجدك."

"The one who has not found (known) You, what has he found? And the one who has found you; what has he not found?"

Imam al–Sajjad (a) has made an interesting reference to the elixir of love of God at the ending part of the supplication of *Makarim al–Akhlaq* (Noble Moral Traits).

"وانهج لي الى محبتك سبيلا سهلة أكمل لي بها خير الدنيا والآخرة"

"...Open a smooth road for me to Thy love, and complete for me thereby the good of this world and the next."[3]

Hafiz has beautifully touched upon this point in his following couplets:

'O ignorant one! Make an attempt to become insightful,
You will not be a leader, unless you are a seeker on the path (yourself first).
In the school of truth and with instructor of love, try, O son, to become a father some day.
Give up the copper of your existence like the men on the (spiritual) path,
So that you discover the elixir of love and turn into gold. If the light of love shines on your heart and soul,
By God you will get brighter than the sun in the heaven.'

The Shaykh's Greatest Art

The Shaykh's greatest feature and art was his achievement of "the elixir of love". He was an expert in practicing this alchemy and was no doubt one of the clearest manifestations of: (يحبهم ويحبونه والذين امنوا أشد حباً لله) (Whom He will love as they will love Him) (al-Ma'idah: 54); and
(But those of faith are overflowing in their love for Allah) (al-Baqarah: 165), and whoever approached him would somehow enjoy the elixir of love.

The reverend Shaykh said:

"Love of God is the last stage of servitude. Love is beyond infatuation; infatuation is accidental, whereas love is essential; the infatuated one may turn away from their beloved, but the real lover is not like this; if the infatuated ones' beloved get handicapped or lose their virtues, their infatuation may disappear, but a mother loves even her handicapped child."

He used to say:

"The standard for evalution of deeds is the standard by which the doer loves God Almighty."

'The one who has not sown the seed of love,

Will not harvest even a single grain of perfection.

Shirin and Farhad

Sometimes the Shaykh would cite the story of Shirin and Farhad as similitude to what he wanted to impart to his disciples:

"With any strike of his pickaxe, Farhad was remembering Shirin.

Whatever you do, you should be in such a state to the end of your task; all your thinking and remembering must be of God, not of yourself."

"Write for the Love of the Beloved!"

One of the Shaykh's disciples related: 'I was the secretary to a trading company. One day he (the Shaykh) came to me and told me:

"Who are you writing in these notebooks for?" I said, for my master. He asked:

"If you write your name in these notebooks, will your master make any objection to it?"

I answered, certainly he will. Then he asked:

"The cloth you are measuring, for whom you are measuring it? Yourself or your master?"

I said, for him (my master). Then he asked: "Did you understand". I said, no. Then he went on to say:

"With every pickaxe that Farhad struck, he would say along: 'My sweetheart Shirin!' and he did not mention anything but Shirin's name. So, you write this notebook with the love of the Beloved! Measure the cloth with his remembrance! Consequently all these will be a preliminary step toward union (with the Beloved); even your breaths must be breathed in His memory!"

"God Has no Clients!"

In order to find clients for God (!) the Shaykh would say:

"Imam Husayn (a) has got so many customers (clients); perhaps this is the case for other Imams, too; but God has few clients! I feel pity for God with so few clients; very few come over to say: I want God; I would like to make acquaintance with Him."

Sometimes, he would say:

"While you are in need of God, He is in love with you!" We read in a *Hadith-i Qudsi* (Divine tradition):

"يا ابن آدم! إني أحبك فأنت أيضا أحببني"

"O son of Adam! I love you, So, you love Me you, too."4

"عبدي! أنا وحقي لكَ محبٌّ، فبحقي عليكَ كن لي محباً"

"My servant! I swear by My right that I love you, so, do love Me by my right over you!"5

Sometimes he would say:

"Yusuf is good-looking, but think of the One who has created Jusuf; all beauty belongs to Him."

'In the world, no one saw beauty such as that of Yusuf,

The (absolute) beauty (however) belongs to the One who created Yusuf.6

"Teach Lessons of Love!"

One of the Shaykh's disciples related; 'The late Shaykh Ahmad Sa'idi, an eminent *mujtahid* Jurist) and the teacher of the late Agha Burhan7 in *Kharij* (doctoral) lessons, asked me once:

Do you know any tailor in Tehran to make a cloak for me? And I introduced the reverend Shaykh to him.

After a time, I saw him who said to me as soon as he saw me: 'What did you do with me?! Where did you send me?!' I asked: 'How come? What has happened?' He said: 'I went to the gentleman that you introduced to me to make a cloak for me. When he was measuring for my size he asked me about my job. I said I was a *talaba* (an Islamic Seminary student). He asked:

"Do you study or teach lessons?"

I answered I was teaching. He asked what I was teaching. I said I was teaching *Kharij* lessons (advanced levels of Islamic studies). He nodded in agreement and said:

"It's fine, but teach lessons of love!"

This statement of his transformed me to a totally new person; it changed my life!

After this event, the late Sa'idi kept his contact with the Shaykh and enjoyed his audience, praying for me for having introduced the Shaykh to him.

"Learn Love from a Moth!"[8]

One of the Shaykh's disciples quoted the Shaykh as saying:

"One night I was engaged in whispered prayer and supplicating and imploring to the Beloved. I noticed, in the meantime, a moth approached the lantern and began flying around it over and over until one side of its body struck the lantern and fell down but did not die. With much effort it moved about and flew to the lantern again and struck the other side of its body to the lantern, giving up its life this time. This event inspired something to me: O such and such! Learn (how to) love from this insect; let no pretension or act of claiming remain in you. The truth of love and affection was what this insect fulfilled. I learned a lot from this strange scene, and my (spiritual) state totally transformed. .."

Fundamentals of Love of God

The fundamental principle in love of God Almighty is "Knowing Him".[9] It is most unlikely that one knows God and does not fall in love with Him:

'If you see him (Yusuf) and do tell apart between the orange (you are peeling) and your hand,

It will be admissible to reproach Zulaikha (in her fervent love of Yusuf).'

Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a) said:

"من عَرف الله أحبه"

"Every one who knows God will love Him.'[10]

The basic question raised here is that what knowledge leads to love of God? Demonstrative knowledge, or intuitive cognition?

The reverend Shaykh said: "The main point here is that unless man attains intuitive knowledge toward God, he will not fall in love (with Him). If he gains the knowledge, he sees all goodness is gathered in God

(ءالله خير أمّا يشركون)

((Who) is better? Allah or the false gods they associate (with Him)?) (al-Naml: 59)); in this case it is unlikely that he pays attention to other than God."

The Holy Qur'an names two groups whose knowledge toward the Exalted and Almighty God is of the intuitive type: One is "the angels", and the other is "those endowed with knowledge":

(شهد الله أنه لآ إله إلا هو والملئكة وأولو العلم)

(There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah, His angels and those endowed with knowledge.) (Ale 'Imran: 18)

Imam Ali (a) is quoted as saying about the sweetness of His knowledge and the satiating cup of His love enjoyed by the first group, i. e., the angels:

"ثم خلق سبحانه لإسكان سماواته وعمارة الصفيح الأعلى من ملكوته خلقا بديعا من ملائكنه .. قد استفرغنهم اشغال عبادته ووصلت حقائق الايمان بينهم وبين معرفته وقطعهم الايقان به الى الوله اليه، ولم تجاوز رغباتهم ما عنده الى ما عند غيره، قد ذاقوا حلاوة معرفته، وشربوا بالكأس الروية من محبته"

"Then Allah, the Glorified, created for inhabiting His skies and populating the higher strata of His realm new variety of creatures namely the angels. ...Occupation in His worship has released them from other responsibilities and realities of faith have served as link between them and His knowledge. Their belief in Him has made them concentrate on Him. They do not long for anything other than what is with Him. They have tasted the sweetness of His knowledge and have drunk from the satiating cup of His love."[11]

Attaining Intuitive Knowledge

To attain intuitive knowledge, there is no way other than cleansing the stains of unseemly deeds off the heart's mirror. Imam al-Sajjad (a) has said in a supplication quoted by Abu Hamza Thumali:

"وأن الراحل اليك قريب المسافة وأنك لا تحتجب عن خلقك الا ان تحجبهم الأعمال دونك"

"The seeker after You has a near distance to You. And verily, You are not veiled from Your creatures unless (unseemly) deeds veil You from them! 12

God is not veiled; our own actions veil Him from us. If the veil of unpleasant actions is removed off the heart, it will witness the elegant beauty of the exalted Almighty God and will fall in love with Him.

'The Beauty of the Beloved is unveiled and uncovered,
Settle down the dust over your path so that you can see His Beauty.'

In order to Settle down the dust over the path and cleanse the heart off the indecent actions, the heart must be detached from love of the world, since love of the world is the source of all vanities and vileness.

The Pitfall of Love toward God

The real pitfall of love of God is the love of the world. According to teachings of the reverend Shaykh, if one wants the world for God's sake, it is a preliminary step toward union with Him; and if it is for the sake of other than God, it will be a pitfall of His love. In this relation, there is no difference between the lawful (*Halal*) and the unlawful (*haram*) worldly attachments.. Obviously, the unlawful worldly gains and pleasures make man farther distant from God.

The Holy Prophet (s) has been quoted as saying:

"حب الدنيا وحب الله لايجتمعان في قلبٍ أبداً"

The love of the world and love of God never meet in a single heart."13

Imam Ali (a) also said in this respect:

"كما ان الشمس والليل لايجتمعان، كذلك حب الله وحب الدنيا لايجتمعان"

"As the sun and the (darkness of the) night do not meet, neither do the love of God and the love of the world (ever) meet."14

He said in another *hadith:*

"كيف يدعي حب الله من سكن قلبه حب الدنيا؟!"

"How may a person claim (boast of) love of God, whereas love of the world has nestled in his heart?"[15]

The reverend Shaykh would always compare the world to "the hag" in his examples and sometimes would face a disciple and say: "I see you are encumbered by this hag!"

And then he would recite this poem of Hafiz:

"There is none who is not entangled in that curling ringlet,
Who is there in the way of who lies not such a snare of tribulation?"

Actualy, the Shaykh had adopted this comparison from the following *hadith:*

> "ان عيسى بن مريم – عليه السلام– كوشف بالدنيا فرآها في صورة عجوز هتماء، عليها من كل زينة فقال لها: كم تزوجت؟ قالت: لا أحصيهم. قال: وكلهم ماتوا او كلهم طلّقوك؟ قالت: بل كلهم قتلت. فقال عيسى –ع– بؤسا لازواجك الباقين، كيف لايعتبرون بازواجك الماضين؟ كيف تهلكينهم واحدا واحدا ولا يكونوا منك على حذر؟"

"The reality of the world was revealed to Jesus (a). He saw it as an old woman (hag) that had lost all her teeth and had all (types of) ornaments on her. He asked her: 'How many husbands have you got?' She said: 'I have not counted!' His holiness asked: 'Have all your husbands died or have they divorced you?' She replied: 'No, rather I have killed them!' Jesus (a) said: 'Woe to your future husbands who have not taken a lesson from your past husbands; how you killed them one by one and they did not distance themselves from you! '[16]

The Shaykh would repeatedly say: "Those who are coming to me are just looking for the hag[17] nobody comes here to say, "I am not on good terms with God; reconcile me with Him!"

The Inward Aspects of the Worldly-Minded People

The reverend Shaykh who saw people's innermost aspects with his insight, would say about the inward images of those who are people of the world, people of the hereafter, and people of God:

"The ones who want the world by unlawful means, their inner aspects are like dogs, those who want the Hereafter are neutral, and those who want God are manly."

The God-Displaying Heart

The reverend Shaykh would say: "The heart indicates whatever it wants. Make an effort that your heart may indicate God! Whatever people like its picture will be reflected in their heart so that those who are endowed with Divine knowledge can realize what state they will have in *barzakh* by means of viewing their hearts. If they are infatuated with outward beauty of someone, or highly interested in money or property, they will adopt in *barzakh* the same forms as the things they loved in the world."

"What have you Done?"

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: 'One night I had an exciting and erotic dream which preoccupied me during the day too. The next morning I went to visit the Shaykh. Once he saw me, he recited the following poems:

'If you have in mind not to dissociate with the Friend,
Hold on to the string (of love) so that he holds on to it too.
O heart earn livelihood in a way that If your feet slip,
The angel will keep you (safe) with the two hands of supplication.'

I found out he had sensed something; he would not recite these lines without a purpose. I kept sitting for a time. The Shaykh was busy with his tailoring. I said: Is there something (you want to say)?! He said:

"What have you done that your face has turned like that of a woman?!"

I said I saw a beautiful woman in a dream and the memory has been retained in me. Then he said:

"That's it! Ask for God's forgiveness!"

"What Do I see in you?!"

One of the Shaykh's devotees said: 'Once I left home for visiting the Shaykh. On my way to his house I happened to see an unveiled lady (with no Islamic modest dress) who attracted my attention. I got in the Shaykh's house and sat next to him. He took a glance at me and said:

"Such and such! What do I see in you?!"

I said to myself: *'Ya Sattar al-'uyab* (O Concealer of defects)!' The Shaykh smiled and said:
"What did you do that what I was seeing disappeared?!"

Men who had turned into Women!

Dr. Hajj Hasan Tawakkuli related: 'One day I left my (dentist's) clinic to go somewhere. I took a bus and when it stopped near Firdawsi Square, some people got on the bus and then I saw the driver was a woman and when I looked further I saw all (passengers) were women with the same appearance and clothing! I saw a woman was sitting next to me too! I pulled up myself, thinking that I had taken the wrong bus and that it was the women employees' bus service. That bus stopped and a woman got off. After that the woman got off, all (people riding the bus) turned into men!

Although at first I hadn't intended to visit the Shaykh, when I got off the bus I went to the Shaykh. Before I said anything, the Shaykh said:

"You saw all men turned into women! As those men's attention were attracted by that woman, all turned into women!"

Then he went on to say:

"When dying, whatever a person is paying attention to would materialize before their eyes. The love of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a), however, leads to Salvation."

"How good it is to be absorbed in the Beauty of God...so that you see what others do not see and hear what others do not hear."

"What's that Table?"

Dr. Thubati said: There was a cobbler called Sayyid Ja'far, who is dead now. He related: 'Once I had a big table in my house that I did not have a suitable place to put it and I was wondering what to do with it. When in the evening I went to the session, as soon as the Shaykh saw me he said in a low voice:

"What is that table you have placed there-pointing to my heart?!" The cobbler suddenly noticed what the Shaykh meant; he smiled and said: 'Reverend Shaykh! I did not have any place to put it, so I left it here!!'

Attaining Divine Mysteries

The reverend Shaykh believed that the most fundamental step in attaining Divine mysteries is to be God-Oriented.

He would say:

"Until an iota of love for other than God exists in the heart, it is impossible to achieve any of the Divine mysteries!"

"Do not Desire Anything Save God!" The Shaykh had learned from two angels the idea that 'he should desire nothing save God." One of his disciples quoted the Shaykh as saying:

"One night two angels taught me in two statements the path to annihilation (in Divine Unity). And the two statements were: Do not say anything of yourself, and do not want anything save God!"[18]

Similarly, he stated:

"Be conscious, creation has been for your sake. Whatever you want beside God is (a sign of) your failure."

The Status of the Intellect and that of the Soul

The reverend Shaykh said:

"If man is in the stage of intellect, he will never evade devotional acts, does not commit sins – in disobedience to God, and according to the *hadith:* "العقل ما عبد به الرحمن واكتسب به الجنان" (the intellect is that by means of which the Merciful God is worshipped and by means of which the Paradise is attained)[19] at this stage he seeks other than God – i.e., Paradise. But when he achieves the stage of *ruh* (spirit), according to the verse' (ونفخت فيه من روحي)(...and (I) breathed into him My Spirit) (al-Hijr: 29) he will only look to the Truth and becomes an evidence to the second couplet of the following:
'The fastings of the masses are from drinking and eating. The fastings of the elect are from all sins.
His fastings are from other than the Friend. Whatever he wants is all for His sake.

And as Hafiz stated:
'If the Paradise is granted to me how may I accept it.
As the union with the Friend is better than the Paradise in my view.' "

Worship Based on Affection

At the peak of his God-Seeking, man worships God on the basis of affection rather than out of desire for the Paradise or fear of the Hell; the same way as Imam al-Sadiq (a) said about his own worship:

> "ان الناس يعبدون الله عز وجل على ثلاثة أوجه: فطبقة يعبدونه رغبة في ثوابه فتلك عبادة الحرصاء وهو الطمع، وآخرون يعبدونه فرقا من النار فتلك عبادة العبيد وهي الرهبة، ولكني أعبده حبا له عز وجل فتلك عبادة الكرام وهو الأمن، لقوله عز وجل: (وهم من فزع يومئذ آمنون) ولقوله عز وجل: (قل ان كنتم تحبون الله ..) فمن أحب الله أحبه الله عز وجل، ومن أحبه الله عز وجل كان من الآمنين".

"In worship of the Almighty and Glorious God, people are in three groups: one group worship Him for reward, which is the worship of the greedy and that is avarice; the other group worship Him out of fear of the Hell, which is the worship of the slaves and that is fearfulness; but I worship the Almighty and Glorious God out of love and affection for Him which is the worship of the noble, and that is the source of safety and security, for the Almighty and Glorious God says: (And they are secure of that Day's fear.) (al-Naml: 89) And also for His Almighty and Glorious saying: (Say if you love Allah....) (Ale Imran: 31)

Thus whoever loves Almighty and Glorious Allah, He would love him too and whoever is loved by Almighty and Glorious Allah, he will be secure (of the terror of the Judgment Day)."[20] The reverend Shaykh would frequently enjoin his friends to strive to attain a point in God-Orientedness where nothing but love of God motivates their acts of devotion.

Everything for Oneself, even God!

The reverend Shaykh would say:

"O Man! Why do you demand other than the God? What have you seen (received) from other than Him?21 If He does not will, nothing will be effective; and your return will be toward Him!

'There is sugar (fruitful targets) in the town.

But the wayfaring falcons are content by hunting flies!!'22

You have given up God in favor of other than Him! Why are you whirling around yourself!! Seek God and set every demand as preparatory to union with Him. The problem is that we want everything, even God, for ourselves!"

The Highest Levels of Piety

The Shaykh said about the levels of piety:

"Piety has certain levels; the lowest level is performing the obligations and avoiding the prohibited, which is fine and appropriate for some people; but there are highest levels of piety which demand avoiding other than Allah, that is caring for nothing in the heart except for love of God."

The School of Love

The reverend Shaykh believed that man will not attain the peak of humanness unless he diverts his heart from other than God; even if he strives to attain self-perfection, he will not reach that goal. Thus, if someone would come to the Shaykh asking for guidance as to the reason for his failure in his ascetic efforts, he would comment:

"You have worked for results, whereas this is not a school of results, it is a school of love, a school of God-Orientedness."

Opening up the Heart's Eye

The late Shaykh had learned by experience that opening up the eye and ear of the heart and getting to know the mysteries of the Unseen would be possible by means of perfect sincerity and God-Orientedness in the absolute sense of the word. He would say:

"If you watch out for your heart and do not admit other than God in it, you will be able to see what other people are unable to see, and hear what other people are unable to hear."

"If man keeps the eye of his heart away from other than God, He will grace him with radiance and will introduce him with fundamentals of divinity."

"If one works for God, his heart's eye will open up."

"Friends! Pray to God to deliver you from deafness and blindness; (for) as long as man seeks other than God, he is both deaf and blind!!"

In other words the Shaykh believed that intuitive knowledge is not possible except through (gaining) a sound heart; a perfectly sound heart is one in which there is not the slightest love of worldly desires and does not want anything beside God. This is in line with the esteemed saying of Imam al-Sadiq (a) in describing a sound heart.

Interpreting the verse: (الا من أتى الله بقلب سليم)(But only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart) (al-Shu'ara': 89), the holy Imam (a) said:

"هو القلب الذي سَلِمَ من الدنيا"

"That is a heart which is pure from (impurity) of the love of the profane desires."23

In another *hadith,* the holy Imam (a) said:

"القلب السليم الذي يلقى ربه وليس فيه أحد سواه، وكل قلبٍ فيه شرك أو شك فهو ساقط"

"A submissive and pure heart is one that meets the Lord while there is nothing in it other than Him; and every heart in which there is polytheism or doubt it is defective (and diseased)."24

The Inward Aspect of Heart

The reverend Shaykh said:

"Once a person is endowed with the inner eye (heart's eye), as soon as he admits other than God in his heart, his Purgatory inward state takes the same form (as what enters his heart). If you demand other than God, your price (value) is as much as what you have demanded; and if you are God-Oriented, you are invaluable- whoever is with Allah, Allah will be with him. If you are absorbed in God at all moments, Divine radiance will shine on you and you will see what you wish with the Divine light."

The Heart to which Everything is Present

The reverend Shaykh said:

"Try to set your heart for God; when your heart is for God, He will be there; when He is there all that relates to Him will be present and evident there; whenever you will all will be with you, for God is there, the spirits of the Prophets and Awliya will be there; if you will, even Makkah and Madinah will be with you So try that your heart be just for God so that whatever is created by God be present to you!"

The Man who Performs Godly Acts

The reverend Shaykh believed that if the love of God dominates the heart and it really does not wish for anything beside God, man will attain the God-vicegeral status and Godly acts will be performed by him. In this relation he would say:

"If something dominates another thing, it will impart its quality to the latter; like when iron is put in a fire, after a while the fire will permeate the iron enabling it to bum like a fire. The same will be true in respect to the relation between man and his Creator and Lord!"

It is also quoted from him: "We do not do anything extraordinary, rather, we find (develop) the nature that belongs to Godly man. Everything is granted to man by the spirit. The spirit of a cow does the work of a cow and the spirit of a rooster does the work of a rooster. Now tell me! What should the Godly spirit of man do? It must do something Godly. The verse,
"ونفخت فيه من روحي"(And (I) breathed into him of My Spirit) (al-Hijr: 29; Sad: 72) refers to the same issue."

Cleansing the Heart Thus, intuitive knowledge will not be obtained unless by means of cleansing the heart of anything other than love of God; and man will not fall in love with Absolute Perfection except through obtaining Divine knowledge. Therefore, the main problem is that cleansing the heart of the love of worldly desires is not an easy task. How can the heart be set free from its attachment to the love of this "hag with a made up face"?

From the viewpoint of the reverend Shaykh what can cleanse the heart is the same thing that can help man attain the reality of monotheism, i. e., the things pointed out in previous chapter: Perpetual presence, seeking help from the Ahl al-Bayt (a), begging at nights (nightly supplications and whispered prayers), and benevolence to people.

The Way to Love God

The reverend Shaykh placed a special emphasis on "benevolence to people" in creating proximity to God[25] and loving Him. He believed that the means to love of God is affection to God's creatures and serving people, especially the oppressed and the ones stuck in a plight.

The Holy Prophet (s) is quoted as saying:

> "الخلق عيال الله فأحب الخلق الى الله من نفع عيال الله وأدخل على أهل بيتٍ سروراً"

"People are the family of God; the most favorite person with God is the one who is the most beneficial to the family of God and who makes them happy."26

In another *hadith* it is narrated that the Holy Prophet (s) was asked: 'Who is the most favorite person with God?' The Holy Prophet (s) replied: 'The one who is the most beneficial to the people.27

It is also related in another *hadith* that the Almighty God told the Holy Prophet (s) on the eve of Ascension (Mi'raj):

"يا أحمد! محبتي محبة الفقراء، فأدْن الفقراء وقرب مجلسهم منك... فان الفقراء أحبائي"

"O Ahmad (Muhammad (s))! Loving me is to love the poor; so draw the poor near to yourself and go to their gatherings, for the poor are My friends."28

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: 'On the Shaykh's recommendation, I used to go to Neka (a city in the Mazandaran province, northern Iran) several times to have the audience with Ayatollah Kuhistani. On one occasion I was going to the bus station on Nasir Khusraw Avenue to reserve a ticket for Neka, when I ran into the Shaykh. He asked me where I had been going. I said: 'To Neka to meet Ayatollah Kuhistani.' He said:

"His style is asceticism, come with me to teach you the way of loving God!"

Then he took my hand and led me to Imam Khomeini (ra) Avenue (named so after the Islamic Revolution) which then was covered with cobblestones, and down the street turned to an alley and knocked a door. The shabby building housed a number of poor and wretched children and adults. Pointing at them, the Shaykh said:

"Fulfilling the needs of these desperate people makes one a lover of God! This is your lesson. With Ayatollah Kuhistani, you had ascetic lessons but here is lesson of loving."

Ever since, for about ten years the Shaykh and I would go to the shanty quarters of the city to help the needy; the Shaykh introduced them to me and I supplied them with provisions.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, XC111, 160; Mafatih al-Jinan; The Psalms of Islam (al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyya),IX, 77: 248.
2. Bihar al-Anwar, XCV, 99.
3. The Psalms of Islam (al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyya), p. 75.
4. Mawa'izal-'Adadi'ah, 419.
5. Irshad al-Qulub, 171.
6. According to Dr. Farzam, this poem is by Mulla Biman' Ali Raji Kermani, the famous poet of the Qajar period. He is said to have extemporized the second line of this couplet when Fath Ali Shah Qajar said the first line and told him to tell the second.
7. A great scholar in Tehran and the founder of Madrasa Ilmiyya (Islamic seminary) of Burhan next to the holy shrine of Hazrat Abdul Azim al-Hasani in Shahr-i Ray.

8. Moth is a symbol of love (of fire) in Persian literature, which sacrifices its life in the way of its beloved.
9. For further study on fundamentals of love of God see Muhammadi Ray Shahri's Al-Mahabbafi al-Kitab wa al-Sunna, researched and published by Dar al-Hadith, Qum.
10. Tanbih al-Khawatir, I, 52.
11. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 91.
12. Mafatih al-Jinan, Dua-i Abu Hamza Thumali.
13. Mizan al-Hikmah, II, 960: 3162.
14. Ibid., II, 960: 3164.
15. Ibid., 960: 3163
16. Tanbih al-Khawatir: I, 146. See also, Mizan al-Hikmah, IV, 1744: 6010.
17. Meaning they are asking for solving their mundane problems.
18. Khaja Nasir al-din Tusi said in this respect: "And man will attain monotheism only after he loses his existence and non-existence and goes beyond these two ranks. As long as he is hesitating between existence and non-existence, he is either a man of this world or of the next. If he wants unreal existence and real non-existence he is a man of the world and the next world is forbidden to him. And if he wants real existence and unreal non-existence, he is man of the next world and this world is forbidden to him. But if he neither wants existence nor non-existence, i. e., if he neither wants his self nor his selflessness and is not aware of these two (states of being) and does not see them, (then) he is a man of God and both this world and the next are forbidden to him. That is to say, ifhe looks to the world or the Hereafter, he will lose that high status and turns quite the reverse. Since as long as a man is looking for the Hereafter, the paradise, and rewards and happiness he is indeed seeking his own perfection in itself and by itself; therefore he is seeking himself rather than God. And as such, he is a man of multiplicity rather than a man of Unity as stated in the following hemistich:

Whatever you see beside God is an idol; shatter it!

Thus, wanting anything except God is idolatry; the Hereafter, the Paradise, and God's pleasure and proximity are beside God and it is unseemly for the seeker of Unity to care for any of such things or to view himself as among those seeking such things. As whoever (really) knows God bears the sign that he does not wish other than God; and this (process of) knowing God and wanting God is still (a sign) of multiplicity. For, in Unity there is no knowing and the known, no wanting and the wanted; all is God and nothing else. So, the one who sees God and nothing else is the seeker of Unity. If God Almighty unveils the existence and the non-existence, one will attain such a status. "See, Risala of 'Tawalla wa Tabarra' in the Appendix of Akhlaq-i Muhtashami", p .569.

19. Al-Kafi, I, 11:3.
20. Mizan al-Hikmah, VII, 34l8: 11647.
21. It is quoted in a Qudsi (Divine) hadith: 'O Man! Everybody wants you for himself or herself and I want you for yourself, so do not flee from Me! -al-Mawa'iz al-Adadiyah, 420."
22. Hafiz.
23. Mizan al-Hikmah, X, 4984: 16931.
24. Ibid. X, 4684: 16930.
25. See "The Way to Proximity to God", Chapter Six, Part 3.
26. Al-Kafi, II, 164: 6.
27. Ibid. 164: 7.
28. Irshad al-Qulub, 199.

Sincerity of Friends of God

One of the principal concerns of the Shaykh in training his disciples was emphasizing sincerity not only in belief and devotion but also in all actions. Most often he stressed that:

"The true religion is what is being preached on the pulpits, albeit lacking two things: sincerity and love of God Almighty .These two must be added to the subject matter of the preaching."

All Deeds for God's Sake

One of the Shaykh's most valuable and instructive statements was his following keynote:

"Everything is good, but (only if it is) for God's sake!"

Sometimes he pointed at his sewing machine and said: "Look at this sewing machine! All its small and big parts have the manufacturer's trade mark...denoting that the smallest nut in this machine must bear the mark (name) of the manufacturer too. All the endeavors of a faithful person must also bear the name of God."

In the Shaykh's training school, the spiritual seeker must deliberate before doing anything to see if it is illegal, avoid if for God's sake, and if it is legal and lawful do, it for God's sake. He must also see if it is lawful but pleasing to his carnal soul as well, he must first ask for God's forgiveness for his carnal desire and then proceed with that task for God's sake.

Eating and Taking Rest for God's Sake!

According to the guideline given by the Holy Prophet (s) to Abu Dhar:

"يا ابا ذر، لتكن لك في كل شيء نية صالحة، حتى في النوم والأكل"

"O Abu Dhar! You should have pure intention in all your deeds, even in (lawful) eating and drinking."[1]

The Shaykh would frequently assert to his disciples: "All your tasks must be for God's sake, even your eating and sleeping. Once you drink this cup of tea while remembering God, your heart will be radiated with Divine light. But if you drink it for the sake of satiating your desire, it will turn to what you had wanted (other than God)!"[2]

Ayatollah Mahdawi Kani said: 'At the beginning of my studies as a *talaba* (an Islamic seminary student) when I was about fourteen or so, once I wanted to make a garment for myself–after having given back the clothes I had borrowed from the late Burhan.

I went to a person called Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat, taking the cloth with me to have a garment made. His workshop was in his house at a room near the doorway. I sat for a time, then the Shaykh came in and said: "What do you want to become?" I answered: "A *talaba.*" He said: "Do you want to become a *talaba* or a human being?'

I got somewhat surprised at the way an ordinary man talked to a religious student. He went on to say:

"Do not get annoyed! Being a *talaba* is fine, but it is meant to become a (real) human being. I give you a piece of advice to remember; do not forget your Divine goal from now on that you are still young and are not polluted (with sins) yet. Whatever you do, try to do it for God. Even when you eat a delicious food, eat it with the intention to gain energy to pray and serve in the way of God. Do not ever forget this advice all through your life."

Stitch for God's Sake!

He would say to a shoemaker:

"When you make a shoe, first of all do it for God's sake, and then stitch it fine and firm so that it would not tear apart too soon and last longer."

He would say to a tailor:

"Any cut you stitch, try to stitch it for God and firmly!"

Come Over for God's sake!

One of the Shaykh's disciples described his recommendation on sincerity by quoting him as saying:

"When you come over (to the Shaykh's house), come for the sake of God; if you come for my sake, you'll be at a loss!"

His state of mind was amazing; he called people to God not to himself.

Blow into Fire for God's Sake!

The Shaykh's son related: 'Shaykh Abdul Karim Hamid was an errand-boy at my father's workshop. One day he was blowing into the fire in the iron-the old Iranian iron that heated up by the fire in its cavity-when my father told him:

"Abdul Karim! You know how to blow into the iron?"

He answered: 'No, sir. How should I blow?' My father said: "Purse your lips and blow for God's sake!"

Love them for the Sake of God!

One of the Shaykh's disciples said that the Shaykh told him in a private session:

"Your mind is wandering such and such a place; it's all right, but it should be for the sake of God."

One day I went to visit the Shaykh along with a friend of mine. The Shaykh pointed to my friend's heart and said:

"I see two children there; that's fine, but the heart is the place of God; interest in children must be for the sake of God."

He used to say:

"The religious people's work is all fine, but they have to replace their 'egos' with 'God'."

Kiss for the Sake of God! Ayatollah Fahri described the Shaykh's recommendation for sincerity as follows: 'The phrase he frequently used was "work for the sake of God". He so frequently used this phrase when addressing his disciples that "working for God's sake" had turned into a motto for them. Like a mahout (elephant driver) who repeatedly strikes the elephant's head with the hammer, the Shaykh would also frequently strike his disciples' mind with (the motto) "Work for God".

He would give examples from himself and others in this respect to have them master this instruction. In all states he stressed to everyone to work for the sake of God. He would say:

"God must be present in all your aspects of life; even when you go home at night and kiss your wife, kiss her for the sake of God!"

Those who were trained at the Shaykh's school achieved spiritual stations and intuitions as a result of practicing this instruction.

What have you done for God's Sake?

One of the Shaykh's children related the following account: 'One day my father and I went to Bibi Shahrbano. On the way we ran into an ascetic, and my father asked him:

"What has been the outcome of your (ascetic) self-discipline?"

The ascetic bowed down and picked up a stone from the ground.

The stone turned into a pear and he offered it to my father, saying: 'Here you are, help yourself!

My father cast a glance at him and said:

"You did this for me, let me know what you have done for God?!" Hearing this, the ascetic burst into tears!

Woe to me! Woe to me!

One of the Shaykh's disciples who had spent around thirty years with him quoted the Shaykh as saying to him:

"I saw the spirit of one of the scholars of spirituality –who had been residing in one of the big cities in Iran –in Barzakh, who pitied himself, beating on his thighs and saying: 'Woe to me! I have come (out of the world) with no pure and sincere actions in hand!'

I asked him why he is doing so. He answered: 'In my life once I made acquaintance with a businessman who introduced to me some of his esoteric features. When I parted with him, I decided to practice asceticism so that I could also acquire an insight to have intuitions and to see the *barzakh* and the unseen. I practiced self– discipline for thirty years before I succeeded. At that time death knocked at my door. Now (in the *barzakh*) they are telling: By the time you ran into that man of spirituality, you were indulged in your carnal desires, and after that you spent about thirty years of your life in achieving intuitions and vision of the states in *barzakh.* Now tell what you have done purely for Us?!"

To Become Good for God's Sake

One of the contemporary scholars who is a professor of ethics and mysticism said: 'I asked the reverend Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat about myself to see what he thought of me. He answered:

"Agha Hajj Shaykh! You want to become good but for yourself ! Try to become good for the sake of God!"

Dear readers! you are noticing how the reverend Shaykh, with his Divine insight, could realize the subtle borders between monotheism and polytheism and warned about them. It is true, these borders make up the path which is thinner than a hair. There are no other ways except this path to attain the reality of monotheism and the paradise of meeting with God.

Go on a Pilgrimage for the Sake of God!

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: Once I asked his reverence if he consented to go on a pilgrimage of Imam al–Reza (a) to Mashhad together. He replied:

"I am not permitted (to do anything) on my own!"

At first his reply sounded a bit weird to me as to how he did not have permission to go on a pilgrimage. Until some time later I found out that a devotee (of God) has no personal opinion other than what God

wills for him and that his tasks are subject to God's permission and consent. Later on, a talk about sincerity and pilgrimage to that blessed Imam (a) was raised. The Shaykh said in that relation:

"If we go on a pilgrimage for the sake of God and have nothing in mind other than God's pleasure, the holy Imam (a) will receive such a pilgrim with special favor.

On one of my pilgrimages to Imam al-Reza (a) I had no intention but the pleasure of God, the holy Imam (a) did me such a great favor that I was extremely enamored. If this favor could be put into words I would tell how it felt. However, if you wish to perceive this kindness and favor, you have to purify yourself to be able to see what I saw!"

Fruits of Sincerity

The Shaykh would frequently use the following phrase in his talks:

"Whoever is with Allah, Allah will be with him."[3] Whoever works wholeheartedly for God, God will be for him. He would say:

"من كان لله كان الله له

"You be for God, He and His angels will be for you."

Sometimes he said:

"If one does not manage to act accordingly, even talking about it also makes a desirable impact on one's spirituality."

Divine Guidance

The Shaykh regarded enjoyment of special Divine Guidance as one of the most significant blessings of sincerity. Accordingly, by virtue of the verse,

(والذين جاهدوا فينا لنهدينهم سبلنا)

(And those who strive in Our cause -We will certainly guide them) (al-Ankabut: 69), he expounded the idea as follows:

"If you rise up for God, all the universe's assets will guide and support you. Since their perfection lies in merging in you, they wish to deliver what they naturally possess to achieve real perfection. If man rises up for God, all existing creatures will line up in his cause to present to him what they possess and to be

his guide."

The Shaykh regarded as necessary the highest levels of sincerity in order to enjoy special Divine guidance that is indeed God's special training. That is, man must have no other goals in his endeavors than the pleasure of Almighty God; he should even disregard his own perfection too.4

He said in this regard:

"As long as man views his own perfection, he will not achieve the Truth. All faculties and means at man's disposal must be utilized in the way of attaining (union with) God. In this case Almighty God would train man for Himself."

The Fragrance of God in Deeds

The reverend Shaykh asserted:

"Once you know God, whatever you do should be purely out of love and sincerity. Do not even consider your own perfection, as carnal soul is very shrewd and subtle and very persistent in imposing itself (on man's sublime intentions).

As long as man wants himself and attends to himself, his tasks are mundane and not Divinely motivated. However, once he abandons self-centrism and becomes God-Oriented, his tasks turn Divine and his acts get the Divine fragrance; and that have a sign which is revealed in the words of Imam al-Sajjad (a):

"وما أطيب طعم حبك"

"How pleasant is the flavor of your love!"5

Overpowering the Satan

One of the blessings of working for the sake of God is overpowering the Satan. The Shaykh said in this regard:

"The one who rises up for God's sake will encounter the carnal soul along with seventy five armies and the Satan with its troops who will also stand up to destroy him, but "جند الله هم الغالبون'" The troops of Allah are verily victorious.' Intellect also consists of seventy-five armies which will not let the devoted worshipper be defeated:
(ان عبادي ليس لك عليهم سلطان)(Surely, you will have no authority over My sincere worshippers.) (al-Hijr: 42) If you are not interested in other than God, the carnal self and the Satan will not have any authority over you; rather, they will be overwhelmed by you."

He would also say:

"There is a trial in every breath you take. You should see if it is taken with a Divine motivation or it is mingled with a satanic motivation!"

Opening up of the Heart's Eye

The reverend Shaykh believed that as long as man is directed toward other than God and seeks other than Him, he is in reality a polytheist and his heart is contaminated with polytheism, referring in this respect to the holy verse (انما المشركون نجس)(Verily, the polytheists are impure and filthy.) (al-Tawbah: 28)

As long as the heart is dusted with polytheism, man will not be able to get familiar with realities of Being. Thereupon the Shaykh said:

"As long as man's attention is directed toward other than God, he will be veiled to the realities of Being and unaware of the inward aspects of Creation."

'O Hafiz, you are the veil to the path, move away!
Happy is he who fares this path unveiled.'

However, if man purifies his heart of the dust of polytheism, he will be entrusted with mysteries of creation. The reverend Shaykh said accordingly:

"If one works for the sake of God, his heart's eye opens up. If you watch out for your heart and do not admit other than God in it, you will be able to see what other people are unable to see, and hear what other people are unable to hear."[6]

Material and Spiritual Blessings

The Holy Qur'an asserts that if someone is after the life of this world, obedience of God will not reduce his worldly life; rather, obedience to God will provide him with the eternal pure life as well as the worldly blessings of this life:

(من كان يريد ثواب الدنيا فعند الله ثواب الدنيا والآخرة)

(Whoever desires reward in the life of this world, then (he should know) with Allah is the reward of this life as well as that of the Hereafter.) (al-Nisa: 134)

In other words, the Almighty God is (literally) everything; the one who had God, possesses everything.[7] One of the Shaykh's devotees said: The reverend Shaykh asked me what my job was. I said I was a

carpenter. He said:

"Do you strike the hammer on the nail in remembrance of God or in remembrance of money?! If you strike in remembrance of money, you'll only get the money, but if you strike in remembrance of God, you'll both get the money and attain (union with) God."8

I taught them for God's Sake

One of the Shaykh's disciples quotes him as Saying:

"A very large crowd had attended the funeral procession of Ayatollah Burujirdi (ra) and it turned to be a very magnificent function. In a spiritual state, I asked him how he happened to be paid such great homage. He replied: I used to teach all *talabas* (Islamic seminary students) for the sake of God."

God Tackled our Problem!

One of his devotees quotes the Shaykh as saying:

"My son was summoned to do his military service, and I was about to go along with him to take care of this problem when a couple came to me to help them tackle their dispute. So I stayed on to solve their problem. In the afternoon, my son returned home and said: Near the military garrison I came down with such a severe headache that my head got swollen. The doctor (in the military garrison clinic) examined me and diagnosed me as exempt from military service. As soon as I left the garrison, I felt not a single trace of the headache and swelling!"

The Shaykh went on to say:

"We (I) proceeded to tackle people's problem, and God tackled our problem."

1. Mizan al-Hikmah, XIII, 6578: 20999.
2. See "Material and Spiritual Blessings", Chapter Four, Part 3.
3. This statement is related in hadith sources such as Bihar al-Anwar, LXXXII, 197; al- Wafi, V, 784; and Rawzat al-Muttaqin, 3, 195 without attributing to any infallible Imam and just with the phrase "as it is related" which denotes its being a hadith. Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi has attributed the statement to the Holy Prophet (s) in his interpretation of the Holy Qur'an I, 76. Research indicated the oldest source bearing this hadith is Khawaja Nasir al-din Tusi's Akhlaq Muhtashami, XII, 122. In that source, however it is not attributed to any of the Infallible either.
4. See "Guidelines of Imam Khomeini (ra) to his son Hajj Ahmad Agha (ra)", Chapter Seven, Part 3.
5. Imam al-Sajjad (a), The Psalms of Islam, XV.
6. See "Opening up the Heart's Eye", Chapter Three, Part 3.
7. As pointed out in the supplication or Arafah: "مالذي فقد من وجدك؟""What lacks the one who has found you?"
8. See "Eating and Taking Rest for the Sake of God!" Chapter Four, Part 3.

The Dhikr of the Friends of God

The reverend Shaykh had a basic guideline that on various occasions he would repeatedly emphasize it. Although this guideline is adopted from Islamic traditions, the significant point here is the Shaykh's personal experience in that respect.

In principle, the significance of this divine man and righteous servant lies in the fact that his sayings are his own findings and inner expenence.

Perpetual Presence

The reverend Shaykh insisted to train his disciples in a way that they see themselves in all states in the presence of the God Almighty. And this is in fact the instructive and significant words of the Holy Prophet (s) who said:

"اذكروا الله ذكرا خاملا، قيل: وما الذكر الخامل؟ قال: الذكر الخفي"

"Remember God by the *khamil dhikr.* He was asked: 'What is *khamil dhikr?'* He replied: The silent and *covert dhikr.*"[1]

In another hadith, His Holiness (s) said:

"يفضل الذكر الخفي الذي لا تسمعه الحفظة على الذي تسمعه سبعين ضعفاً"

"The covert *dhikr* that is not heard by the angels is seventy times better than the *dhikr* that they hear it"

The superiority of the covert remembrance of God over the overt one is due to its significant and determining role in man's development Remembrance by tongue is easy; however, remembrance by the heart, especially when done uninterruptedly, is too difficult. Thus, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a) views it as one of the most difficult tasks

"ثلاث من أشد ما عمل العباد: إنصاف المؤمن من نفسه، ومواساة المرء أخاه، وذكر الله على كل حال، وهو ان يذكر الله عز وجل عند المعصية يهم بها فيحول ذكر الله بينه وبين تلك المعصية، وهو قول الله عز وجل (ان الذين اتقوا اذا مسهم طائف من الشيطن تذكروا فاذا هم مبصرون)

"Three tasks are the most difficult for people equity by the faithful, a man's financial assistance to bis brothers, and remembrance of God in all states, i.e., man should remember God when encoumering a

(temptat;on tn) sin and decision tn commit it Then this remembrance of God prevents him from sins, as per the words of Almighty God (Verily, those who are pious when an evil thought touches them by Satan, they invoke Allah's remembrance, (then) they see things clearly) (al-A'raf 201)"[2]

In another *hadith,* viewing equity, charity and perpetual *dhikr* as among the most difficult Divine obligations, Imam al-Sadiq (a) clarifies that what he means by remembrance in all states is not merely remembrance by tongue, although it is also regarded as remembrance of God:

> "أما أني لا أقول: سبحان الله، والحمد لله، ولا اله الا الله، والله أكبر، وإن كان هذا من ذاك، ولكن ذكر الله في كل موطن إذا هجمتَ على طاعته أو معصيته"

"By remembrance of God, I do not mean reciting *Subban Allahi, wal Hamduli'lallahi, wa la ilaha il Allahu wa Allahu Akbar;* although these are also regarded as *dhikr,* but what is meant is remembering God when encountering obedience and disobedience of God."[3]

It is extremely difficult for man to see himself in the presence of God. If man attains such consciousness, it is impossible that carnal vain desires and Satan overpower him and force him to disobey his lord.

How to Liberate from Carnal Soul and the Satan

The reverend Shaykh said: "There in no way to liberate from the evils of carnal soul except by attention to God and perpetual presence in Him. As long as you are in His presence and you are not disconnected from God, the carnal soul will not be able to deceive you."

With reference to the following verse:

> (ومن يعشُ عن ذكر الرحمن نقيض له شيطاناُ فهو له قرين)

(If anyone withdraws himself from remembrance of (Allah) the Most Gracious, We appoint for him an evil one, to be an intimate companion to him.) (al-Zukhruf: 36)

The Shaykh would say on many occasions:

"Whenever man's attention is turned away from God, the carnal soul and the Satan that are lying in ambush will capture his heart and start their job from there."

Take your Hands Off me!

One of the Shaykh's disciples quoted him as saying:

"I saw my own carnal self in (my) spiritual state; I told it to take his hands off me! It responded: Do not you know that I will not take my hands off you until I destroy you!"

Perhaps due to the same intuition the Shaykh was very interested in the following couplets:

'In the school of Eternity Your Beauty guided me.

Your Bounteous Grace assisted me to be enslaved by You. My vile carnal soul favored all vanities.

Your Blessed Emanation liberated me from its clutches.'

Divine Grace descends on man's heart through perpetual remembrance of Him. Once God's remembrance enters the heart, as the first step it will purify the heart of satanic temptations and carnal vanities and prepares it for receiving Divine Grace from the Absolute Bestower of Bounties.

In this respect, Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a) says:

"أصل صلاح القلب اشتغاله بذكر الله"

"The quintessence of heart's soundness lies in its occupation with remembrance of God."[4]

Feeling perpetually present in the Presence of Almighty God liberates man from the captivity of the carnal soul and the Satan and consequently cures various maladies of the soul. Imam Ali (a) is quoted as saying:

"ذكر الله مطردة الشيطان"

"Remembrance of God drives the Satan away."[5]

"ذكر الله دواء أعلال النفوس"

"Remembrance ofGod is the medicine for the soul's maladies."[6]

"يا من اسمه دواء وذكره شفاء"

"O He whose Name is a Remedy, whose remembrance is cure."[7]

Through perpetual remembrance of God, the Divine grace grants the heart a human life and makes it radiant, reinforces the soul, makes the man of heart intimate with his God, gradually gracing man with

the elixir of love and affection;

Imam Ali (a), the great knower of Allah and the one familiar with the maladies of human soul, said accordingly:

"من ذكر الله سبحانه أحيى الله قلبه ونور عقله ولبه"

"Whoever remembers God Almighty, God will enliven his heart and enlighten his mind and intellect."[8]

"مداومة الذكر قوت الأرواح"

"Perpetually remembering God gives sustenance to the soul."[9]

"الذكر مفتاح الأنس"

"Remembrance of God is the key to proximity (to Him)."[10]

"من أكثر ذكر الله أحبه"

"Whoever remembers God abundantly, God will love him."[11]

What was briefly brought up here is a small part of the blessings of remembering God in life and in enrichment and development of human beings.[12] With some deliberation on the above mentioned, however, it will be clarified that how valuable is any moment that we are remembering God and how detrimental is any breath that we take without remembenng God.

Remembrance of God in Sleep

Dr. Thubati said: Once we were invited by a member of the session to his house for lunch. After lunch, everybody proceeded to rest. I was lying down and remembering God and thinking in this relation with my eyes closed. At this moment, the Shaykh who was sitting before me and noticing me recommended to the friends:

"You should be remembering God even when you are sleeping."

That was the only time I heard him recommend remembering God even at sleep in that session and I do not remember him mentioning it anywhere else.

A Message from *Barzakh*

One of the Shaykh's friends related: Once I had an audience with the Shaykh who said:

"I saw a young man in *barzakh* who was saying: 'You do not know what is going on here! When you come here you will find out; any breath that you have taken for other than God has ended up to your loss.'

Virtues of some *Dhikrs*

When we talk about the virtues (benefits) of *dhikrs* in the school of the Shaykh, it must be remembered that his is a school of love not of outcome and results, and that he who does not seek anything other than God, the one who does not even seek his own perfection, will gain results. Similarly, whatever the results of remembrance of God, the goal mustn't be anything other than God.

Giving Importance to Two *Dhikrs*

One of the Shaykh's devotees said: The Shaykh regarded *Istighfar* (asking forgiveness) and *Salawat* as highly important, and had figured out that these two *dhikrs* were two wings for the wayfarer to fly with.

The Shaykh would say:

"If you send Salawat abundantly in your lifetime, the Apostle of God (s) will kiss your lips at death."

On Overcoming Carnal Desires

1. Perseverance in the *dhikr:* "لاحول ولاقوة الا بالله العلي العظيم" *Lahawla wa la quwwata illa billa al 'Ali al-'Azim* (there is no might neither power except through Allah, the most High, the Supreme-in-Glory)."

2. The *dhikr:* "يا دائم ويا قائم" *"Ya Da'im-u ya Qa 'im* (O Eternal! O Persistent!)

3. In order to suppress the unruly carnal desires, recite the following *dhikr* thirteen or one hundred times in the morning and evening: **"اللهم لك الحمد وآليك المشتكى وأنت المستعان"** *"Allahumma lakalhamdu wa alayka 'l mushtaka wa Anta al-Musta'an* (O Allah! All praise is due to You, complaints are made to You, and You are the one whose help is sought for)."

4. Recite one hundred times every night: **"يازكي الطاهر من كل آفة بقدسه"** *"Ya Zakiyyut Tahiru min kulli afatin bi kudsih* (O You who are) pure and clean from any bane through Your sanctity).[13]

The reverend Shaykh stated while recommending the above *dhikr* for suppressing the carnal desires:

"I myself have applied it and started (the spiritual seeking) through reciting it. One day I recited this *dhikr* so many times that my carnal soul died. I said to myself: I will continue until my (worldly) existence turn into non-existence. However, when for a time I neglected reciting it as is expedient to human nature, I found my carnal soul was alive. Obviously anyone who directs his attention toward the world his carnal soul will strengthen; reciting this *dhikr* is effective in overcoming the carnal soul."

Suppressing the Satanic Temptations when Encountering Women other than our Next of Kin

Dr. Farzam related: the reverend Shaykh Rajab Ali considered the *dhikr* "ايا خير حبيب ومحبوب صل على محمد وآله *Ya khayra Habibin wa Mahbubin, Salli 'ala Mubammadin wa Alihi* (O Best of Lovers and the Best of Beloved! Bless Muhammad and his Family)) very effective after one glances at a woman other than his next of kin. He frequently advised me to recite this *dhikr* to remain secure from the Satan's temptation. He said:

"When you glance at a woman other than your next of kin, if you do not enjoy looking at her you are sick! But if you enjoy, you ought to cast your look away from her and say: *ya khayra Habib* Which means: O God! I cherish you. These are not likeable; whatever is mortal is not likeable. ..."

For the Love of God

Reciting one thousand times Salawat (every night) for forty nights.

For Purifying the *Batin* (the inner)

The reverend Shaykh regarded the recitation of the Sura *al-Saffat* every morning and the Sura *al-Hashr* every night as very helpful in purification of the batin.

One of the Shaykh's devotees said that he advised him to recite the Sura *al-Hashr* every night, and he believed that the Greatest Name (of God) is mentioned in the latter *ayahs* of this blessed *Sura.*

For Attaining the Honor of Meeting Wali 'Asr (aj)

Reciting one hundred times the holy Sura,

(رب أدخلني مُدخل صدق وأخرجني مُخرج صدق وأجعل لي من لدنك سلطاناُ نصيراُ)

(O my Lord! Let my entry be by the Gate of Truth and Honor, and likewise my exit by the Gate of Truth and Honor; and grant me from Thy Presence an authority to aid (me)) (al-Isra: 80), up to forty nights.

As narrated, many of the Shaykh's students have found the honor of meeting Imam al-'Asr (aj) through persevering with this *dhikr;* although at the time of meeting they have not realized the Imam (a). Two instances are given as follows:

1. How Ayatollah Ziyarati Attained this Honor

One of the Shaykh's disciples narrated: 'The reverend Shaykh had given instructions to the late Ayatollah Ziyarati in Mahdi Shahr to meet Wali' Asr (AJ) -apparently by the above-mentioned *dhikr.* After having

performed the instructions, he went to the Shaykh and said he had done what he instructed but to no effect.

The Shaykh deliberated for a while and said: "When you were performing prayers in the *Masjid,* a Sayyid told you: 'Wearing a ring on the left hand is abominated'. And you replied: 'All the abominated (*Makruh*) are permissible'. That holy man was Imam al-'Asr (a)."

2. How a Shopkeeper found this Honor

Two shopkeepers undertook to provide for the needs of a Sayyid family. One of them began the *dhikr* instructed by the Shaykh to find the honor of meeting Imam al-'Asr (a). Before the fortieth night, one of the children of the Sayyid family went to his shop and asked him for a bar of soap. The shopkeeper grumbled that why her mother did not send him to such and such –meaning the other shopkeeper – to get what they want!

This man said: When I went to sleep at the same night, I heard someone was calling me. I went out to check but I did not see anyone. I went to bed again; I heard that voice calling me by name. The third time I went out to see who it was. When I opened the house door, I saw a Sayyid with covered face who said:

"We can sustain our children, but we wish you to attain a (high) position."

For Solving Problems and Curing Illnesses

Dr. Farzam said: The reverend Shaykh would recommend some Qur'anic verses and supplications along with sending*, Salawat* as *dhikr* for solving problems and remedy to illnesses, such as:

"رب اني مغلوب فانتصر وأنت خير الناصرين"

"Rabb inni maghlubun, fantasir wa anta Khayru'l Nasirin (O Lord! I am defeated. Help me Thou who art the Best of Helpers!)"

Once I had a problem, the Shaykh instructed me to say the following *dhikr:*

"رب اني مسني الضر وأنت أرحم الراحمين"

"*Rabb inni massani al-durr wa Anta Arham al-Rahimin* (O Lord! I am afflicted with a loss, and Thou art the Most Merciful)." He would say: "These are *dhikr,* say them along with Salawat!" Or when our children got sick, he would recommend us to say:

"يا من اسمه دواء، وذكره شفاء صل علي محمد وآل محمد"

"O He whose Name is a remedy, whose remembrance is a cure! Bless Muhammad (s) and the Family of Muhammad (s)!"

For Averting Heat and Cold

One of the Shaykh's disciples related: 'On my first journey to the noble Makkah for Hajj pilgrimage I asked the Shaykh what I should do for warding off the extreme heat. He instructed me to resort to the following verses to protect myself from cold and heat:

(سلام على ابراهيم * كذلك نجزي المحسنين)

(Peace and salutation to Abraham! Thus indeed do We reward those who do right.) (al-Saffat: 109, 110)

(يا نار كوني برداً وسلاماً على ابراهيم)

(O Fire! Be thou cool, and (a means of) safety for Abraham.) (al-Anbiya: 69)

1. Mizan al-Hikmah, IV, 1866: 6491 and 6493.
2. Mizan.al-Hikmah, IV, 1856 6454
3. Ibid. IV, 1856: 6455
4. Mizan al-Hikmah, IV, 1846: 6394
5. Ibid, IV, 1850: 6427.
6. Ibid, IV, l850: 6418.
7. Ibid, IV, l850: 6419.
8. Ibid. IV, 1848: 6399.
9. Ibid. IV, 1848: 6403.
10. Ibid. IV, 1850: 6422.
11. Ibid. IV, 1842: 6435.
12. For more information about the impact of God's remembrance in life, see Mizan al-Hikmah, under the entry: "Al-Dhikr", Thamarat al-Dhikr.
13. This dhikr is an item in the Dua -i Hazrat-i Idris (a). See Misbah al-Mutahajjid p. 601.

Supplications of the Friends of God

One of the most important instructions of the Shaykh was planning regular periods to spend in seclusion with God for supplications and whispered prayers which he referred to as "begging at the doorstep of

God" and stressed:

"Recite supplications for an hour every night; even if you are not in the right mood for it, do not give up seclusion with God."

He also said:

"There are amazing blessings in waking up at dawn and the last one third of the night. Whatever you want from God can be obtained through begging at dawns. Do not be negligent of begging at dawns; whatever blessings you achieve can be gained by that. A lover hardly goes to sleep and yearns nothing but union with the beloved. Dawn is the time of meeting and union with Him."

Any treasure of happiness that God granted to Hafiz.

Was by virtue of supplications at nights and litanies at dawns.

Supplications of the Shaykh

The reverend Shaykh would recite the following supplications very frequently and recommended his disciples to recite them too: supplications of *Yastashir*, *Adila, Tawassul;* whispered prayers of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a) in the Masjid of Kufa which begins with, "اللهم اني أسألك الأمان يوم لاينفع مال ولا بنون" *"Allahumma inni as 'aluka al- aman yawma la yanfa 'u malun wa la banun* (O Lord! I beseech You to bestow safety on me the day neither property nor children will be of any benefit)," as well as the fifteen whispered prayers (*Munajat Khamsa 'Ashar*) of Imam al-Sajjad (a). From among the latter, the Shaykh stressed reciting 'The Whispered Prayer of the Utterly Poor' (*Munajat al- Mufta qirin*) and especially 'The Whispered Prayer of the Devotees', (*Munajat al-Muridin*). He would say:

"Any of these fifteen *Munajats* (whispered prayers) has got its own virtues (blessing)."

His Regular Supplication

Dr. Farzam narrated that one of the Shaykh's regular supplications was the following one:

"O Lord! Teach, perfect, and train us for Thyself O Lord! O Sustainer! Prepare us for meeting with Thyself."

Thursday evenings, after prayers the reverend Shaykh would usually recite the Supplication of Kumayl or one of the above mentioned whispered prayers or supplications, and commented on them.
"Recite the Supplication of *Yastashir!"*

Ayatollah Fahri[1] quoted the reverend Shaykh as saying:

"I said to God: O God! Everybody has amorous and joyful whispering with his Beloved; I too wish to

enjoy this blessing, what supplication should I read? I was told in a spiritual state to recite the supplication of *Yastashir.* "

That was why he would recite the supplication of *Yastashir* very fervently and lively.

"Find a Pretext to Seek 'Him'!"

The reverend Shaykh believed that if one has a real longing for God and is not content with other than Him, the Almighty God will eventually undertake his affairs and lead him to (sublime) destination. In this regard, the Shaykh related the following interesting example:

"A child who is quibbling and throwing around every toy or sweetie that he is given and would not stop the grudge and cry so much that finally his father embraces and caresses him; then he calms down. Thus if you do not care for the luxury of world and quibble and (this way) find a pretext to seek 'Him', the Almighty God will finally undertake your affairs and raise you up. That's when you attain the real joy."

The Value of Weeping and Whispered Prayer

The reverend Shaykh believed that a man will merit whispered prayer and dialogue with God Almighty only when he drives away the love of other than God from his heart. If a person's vain desire is his god, he cannot say "O Allah!" truthfully. He said in this regard:

"Weeping and whispered prayers are worthwhile only when man has no love other than love of God in his heart."

An instructive intuition is quoted from the shaykh which confirms the above statement

A Penny in Response to "Ya Allah!"

Ayatollah Fahri quoted the Shaykh as saying

"I was walking through the Bazaar when a beggar asked me to give him something. I reached into my pocket, to give him some money, my hand felt a two Rial coin, I pushed it aside and found a ten *shahr* coin2 to give him instead. At noon I went to the mosque and said my prayers. After performing prayers, I raised my hands to pray to God, saying "O Allah!" As I uttered the phrase, I was shown (intuitively) the same two Rial coin which I left in my pocket (and held back from giving to the beggar)!"

There are some points in this intuition to be pondered about:

1 The analogy of taking one's vain desire as his god, as the HolyQur'an clearly asserts:

(أفرأيت من اتخذ الهه هواه)

(Then seest thou such a one as takes as his god his own vain desire?) (al-Jathiyah: 23)

2 To the same extent that man obeys his vain desire, he will be away from God; he is, rather, a slave to what he desires and thus "God" turns into a "two Rial coin" in the realm of intuition!

3. It is worthwhile to give as charity what you like best. A believer should give away in the way of his Beloved what he is fond of rather than what is of no interest to him to give away:

(لن تنالوا البر حتى تنفقوا مما تحبون)

(By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give (freely) of that which you love.) (Ale 'Imran: 92)

The Way to Proximity to God

The reverend Shaykh believed that the way to attain proximity to God is through doing benevolence to people. If a person wants to find a proper state of mind for prayer and to enjoy *dhikr* and *munajat* with God, he must be at the service of God's creatures for God's sake. He commented in this regard as follows:

"If you want to be graced with proximity to God and take pleasure in whispering prayer to Him, practice benevolence to God's creatures by learning it from the Ahl al-Bayt (a) (about whom the Holy Qur'an says):

ويطعمون الطعام على حبه مسكيناً ويتيماً وأسيرا إنما نطعمكم لوجه الله لانريد منكم جزاءً ولا شكوراً

(And they feed for the sake of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive -(saying), 'We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.) (al-Insan: 8, 9)

He further said:

"What creates in man a spiritual state of servitude to God after performing obligatory duties is doing good to people."

What should we implore from God?

One of the most significant issues in supplication is that the supplicant should know what to say in his whispered prayer to God and what to request from Him. In his commentary on supplications, the reverend Shaykh emphasized on supplicatory phrases such as:

"يا غاية آمال العارفين" و "يا منتهى أمل الآملين" و "يا نعيمي وجنتي ويا دنياي وآخرتي"

"Ya ghayati amali'l arifin", "Ya muntaha amali'l amilin", and " *Ya na 'imi wa Jannati wa Ya dunya i wa akhirati"* (O Goal of the hopes of Thy knowers! O Ultimate abject of hope of the hopeful in thee! O my bliss and my garden! O my this world and my Hereafter!)"

and then would say:

Friends! Learn sagacity from your Imam (a)! See how the Imam whispers to God, saying' I am seeking refuge in you! I have come to embrace you! I want You (I rejoice in You)!

The reverend Shaykh himself would say in his supplications and whispered prayer:

"O God! Accept these (supplications) as preliminary (means) to reunion with Thyself!"

What Does a Lover Want from the Beloved?

After quoting the above instructions from the reverend Shaykh, Dr. Hamid Farzam said: 'Sometimes the reverend Shaykh would relate simple and delicate analogies in order to explain highly mystical issues such as the following:

"A lover knocked at the door of his beloved's house. The latter asked: 'Do you want bread?'
'No.' Replied the lover.
'Do you want water?'
'No.'
'What do you want then?'
I want you! Answered the lover.

Friends! The Landlord must be loved, not His feast and food. As Sa'di said:
'If you expect benevolence from the Friend.
You are bound up in your self, not in love with the Friend.'

He would recite the above poem to us and say:
"You must be in love only with God, and whatever you do must be only for Him. Be in love with Himself; do not even worship Him for rewards!"

He would sometimes tell me in a cute tone:
"Do something that your ringlets entangle yonder (meaning to fall in love with the Eternal Beloved)!"

He would add some very befitting poems –especially from Hafiz – to his instructions that were of great effect, such as the following: 'If you wish the Beloved may not break off the union.
Keep holding on to the (love) link so that He may hold on, too.'

"Complain of being Forlorn!"

The reverend Shaykh would say: "Whenever you manage to engage in nightly begging, complain of being forlorn and implore: 'O God! I have no power to challenge the carnal soul; it has crippled me, come to my aid and deliver me from its grip! 'And (also) appeal to the Ahl al-Bayt for intercession."

And then he would recite the following verse from the Holy Qur'an:

(ان النفس لأمارة بالسوء الا ما رحم ربي)

(The (human) soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord bestow his Mercy.) (Yusuf: 53)

The Real Reason for Appealing to the Ahl al-Bayt (a)

The reverend Shaykh used to say:
"Majority of people do not know what appealing to the Ahl al- Bayt (a) is for. They appeal to the Ahl al-Bayt (a) for solving their own problems and difficulties of life,3 whereas we should go to the doorsteps of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) for traveling on the path to monotheism and the knowledge of God. This path is so difficult to pass and it is impossible for man to traverse this path without a light and guide."

The Ziyarat of 'Ashura

One of the points that the reverend Shaykh stressed about appealing to the Ahl al-Bayt (a) was recitation of ziyarat of 'Ashura and would relate accordingly:

"I was instructed in a spiritual state to recite the ziyarat of Ashura."

He recommended:

"Do not miss recitation of ziyarat Ashura as long as you are living. One of the Shaykh's disciples continued reciting ziyarat of 'Ashura for forty years on the instructions of the Shaykh.

The Condition for Getting Answers to Supplications

One of the important conditions for a supplication to be answered is the lawfulness (being *halal*) of one's food. A person asked the Holy Prophet (s): 'I would like my supplications replied'. His Holiness said:

"طهر مأكلك ولا تدخل بطنك الحرام"

"Purify your food and avoid eating *haram* (unlawful)"4

"First, Pay for the Salt!"

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: ' A group of us together with the Shaykh set out to go to (mount) Bibi Shahrbanu for supplication and whispered prayer. We bought some bread and cucumbers. Meanwhile, we picked some salt from the cart of the cucumber vendor (without paying for it) and then went up the mountain. When we arrived there the Shaykh said:

"Let's go down, we are rejected. They say: First pay for the salt and then come for prayer and supplication."

The Capacity of the Worshipper

One of the subtle issues for a worshipper to take into consideration is that his demands from God should be proportionate to his spiritual capacity; if he lacks the required capacity he may put himself in trouble by supplication.

One of the Shaykh's friends related: Once business happened to become sluggish and I was so upset about that. Until one day the Shaykh asked me why I was disturbed and I told him the story. He asked if I did not recite the *ta'qibat* (supplications read after obligatory prayers). I answered, yes. He asked what I read. I told him I read the supplication of Sabah of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a) and he said:

"Instead of supplication of Saba, read the surah al-Hashr and the supplication of 'Adilah in your *ta'qibat* so that your problems vanish."

I asked him why I should not read Saba. He said:

"This *du'a* consists of such (heavy) statements and phrases that a person must have the capacity and capability to stand.

Imam Ali (a) beseeches the Almighty God in this *du'a:* 'O God! Grant me a pain that I do not neglect you even in those moment (of suffering the pain)'. Thus, this *dua* demands the required capacity, and you have read it without having such capacity which has created these problems for you. So, instead of Sabah, you read the *sura* al-Hashr and *dua* Adilah; it will solve your problems God willing."

After some time that I had started to read the *sura* al-Hashr and *dua* Adilah, one of my friends lent me ten thousand *tomans,* I worked with that money, bought a house, and gradually my business improved, too.

Courtesy of the Worshipper

Dr. Farzam also said: 'One of the things that the Shaykh emphasized about supplication was the courtesy of the worshipper. Dr. Farzam quotes the Shaykh as saying in this respect:

"Once supplicating, one must be humble and fearful, and sit in a kneeled courtly position facing the *qibla.*

Once my legs were discomforted, it crossed my mind to stretch my legs. The Shaykh who was sitting behind me at the back of the room said:

"Sit aright; in supplication sit in a kneeled position and be courteous."

1. Paramount Leader's Representative and the Friday Prayer leader of Zaynabiya in Damascus (Syria).
2. A ten shahi coin is worth a quarter of a two Rial coin
3. See "How to reach the Reality of Monotheism", Chapter Two Part 3
4. Mizan al-Hikmah, IV, 1658: 5599.

Benevolence of the Friends of God

Rendering service to people is one of the most important Islamic educational issues that is highly emphasized in Islamic traditions. The Holy Prophet (s) said:

"خير الناس من انتفع به الناس"

"The best of people are those who are (most) beneficial to (other) people.1

The Mystery of Creation

The reverend Shaykh highly stressed this educational principle. One of his disciples quotes him as saying:

"I had a proximity to God; I implored Him to tell me the mystery of Creation. I was told (by inspiration) that the mystery of Creation is benevolence to the people."

Imam Ali (a) said:

"بتقوى الله أمرتم، وللاحسان والطاعة خلقتم"

"You are commanded to God fearing and you are created for doing benevolence and obeying (God)."2

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: 'Once I told him, "O Shaykh! Tell me something to be of benefit to me!" He twisted my ear and said:

"Serving people! Serving people!"

The Shaykh would say:

"If you want to find your way to the truth of monotheism, do good to people. The burden of monotheism is heavy and hazardous, and everyone is not able to tolerate that burden. However, benevolence to the people makes its tolerance easy."

And sometimes, he would say humorously:

"Help the creatures of God during the day and beg at His doorstep at night!"

The late Fayz Kashani (ra) put it in the following poem:

All through the night lament humbly at the doorstep of the Sustainer,
When the day breaks, help out the wounded at heart and the heart-broken.'

Giving Alms while in Poverty

An important aspect that is stressed in Islamic traditions in relation to giving alms and doing good to people is giving alms in poverty.

The Holy Prophet (s) said:

"ثلاثة من حقائق الايمان: الانفاق من الاقتار، وانصافك الناس من نفسك، وبذل العلم للمتعلم"

"There are three signs to faithfulness: Giving alms in poverty; equity toward people; and imparting knowledge to the seekers of knowledge."3

Similarly, Hafiz touches upon the impact of giving alms in poverty on the spiritual self-building of man in the following poem:

'In poverty, strive for joyfulness and intoxication,
That this elixir of the whole being turns a mendicant into a Qarun.'

"Fast and Give Alms!"

One of the companions of Imam al-Kazim (a) related: 'I complained to his holiness of my poverty and said that I suffered poverty so severely that such and such took off his own clothing and gave it to me to wear! The holy Imam (a) said':

"Fast and give alms!"

I said: 'Could I give alms from what I receive myself as alms, however meager it is?'

The Imam (a) replied:

"Give alms from what God grants you as sustenance, even if you should spend it for yourself!"[4]

Benevolence to a Jobless Person Encumbered by a Large Family

One of the Shaykh's friends said: 'I was jobless and very depressed for some time, so I went to his house to find a way to get rid of the plight. As soon as I entered the Shaykh's room and upon seeing me, he said:

"You are in such a veil that I have rarely seen one like that! Why have you given up your trust in God? The Satan has covered you with a veil that you are unable to perceive on high!"

His words moved me very deeply and prompted a profound contrition in my heart. He said then:

"Your veil is removed, but take heed it would not return." After that he said:

"Somebody is jobless and sick and he has to run two families. If you can afford, go and buy some cloth for his children and bring it here."

Although I was jobless and broke, I went to an old friend's draper's and bought some cloth on credit and took it to the Shaykh. Once I placed the pack of cloth before him, the Shaykh looked at me and highly admired my endeavor.

Dr. Thubati said: 'One of the things he highly stressed was doing good to people. He regarded this as extremely valuable and viewed it as one of very close and effective ways in faring the path to Allah. Thereupon, when one failed in his spiritual seeking, he would recommend:

"Do not be negligent of benevolence and do good (to people as much as you are able to)."

'Serve the needy as long as you can in you life,
Either through your words, money, pen, or (taking) steps.'

He was himself also a pioneer in doing good to people. Someone had gotten into trouble; he visited the reverend Shaykh who said:

"This person helps his relatives only through *khums* (one fifth levy) and do not do any other good to them."

That meant giving only *khums* is not sufficient.

Benevolence to the Sister

One of the Shaykh's disciples narrated: 'One day I requested the Shaykh to contact with my late father's spirit and ask him if there is anything I can do for him. The Shaykh said:

"Recite the Surah *Al-Hamd*!"

When I recited the sura, he immediately described the appearance and stature of my father who had died forty years before. Then, he quoted my father:

"I do not need anything, tell my son to help out his younger sister with her household needs."

The Shaykh and Rendering Service to People

A study of various aspects of the Shaykh's blessed life indicates that this Divine man was a real paradigm in serving the afflicted people and solving their problems. Some instances of his services are pointed out in different parts of this book, especially in chapter three of part one. Following, other instances of his concern with this issue are touched upon:

Recompense to the Prayer Leader as Ordered by Wali al-'Asr (aj)

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: The late Suhayli[5] (ra) would say: 'My shop was located at Abbasi crossroads in Tehran. Once on a hot summer day the Shaykh came to my shop in a hurry and gave me some money and said:

"Waste no time, immediately take this money to Sayyid Bihishti."

He was prayer leader to the *Masjid* of Hajj Amjad on Aryana Ave. I got the money at once to his house and gave it to him.

Later on I asked him (the Sayyid) about the story. He said: 'That day I had a guest and nothing was to be found in my house. I went to the other room and appealed to Hazrat Wali 'Asr (aj), and then this (money) was sent to me!'

Also, the Shaykh himself said: "Hazrat Wali 'Asr (aj) commanded me to deliver this money to Sayyid Bihishti right away."

Recommendation for Serving Meals

In addition to various attempts he made to help out people solve their problems directly and indirectly, the Shaykh received guests in his small house on different occasions, particularly on religious celebrations and placed great importance on serving meals to feed the faithful at home. He always

recommended (his disciples) to try to give meals in their houses, contending that if they give the money to the poor to prepare food for themselves it would not be as worthwhile as giving meals at one's home.

Dr. Farzam said: 'Serving meals to the poor and the needy was among his frequent recommendations. Once I asked him what if we give the money instead.

He said:

"No! Giving food is something different and more effective."

Every body knew that the reverend Shaykh would hold a feast on the auspicious night of 15th Shaban, giving chicken and rice to all the guest from all walks of life who would sit attend his feast of benevolence. The Shaykh highly respected his guests and did his best to make his guests feel at home.

The Shaykh emphasized serving meals to the faithful and insisted on giving charity food in his house and observing ethics of hospitality, while he was always in financial difficulties himself.

"God Willing, it will be Sufficient!"

In one of the feasts in the Shaykh's house, a large crowd had gathered for lunch so that both floors were filled up with guests. Although around thirty kilograms of rice had been cooked, the family were worried maybe the food would not be sufficient for all those present. When the Shaykh came to know about their apprehension, he faced the cook–a religious scholar from Qum–and said:

"Sayyid Abul Husayn! What are they saying? Take the lid off the pot to take a look!"

He took some rice from the pot and said: "God willing, it will be sufficient!"

Accidentally, there happened to be not only no shortage of food but also lots of people who had gathered at the door with their bowls did not leave empty–handed.

The Blessings of Rendering Service to People

Doing good to people would entail many blessings in man's spiritual and material life. From the Shaykh's viewpoint, the most important effects of benevolence are radiance of the heart, emergence of a suitable state of mind for supplication and whispered prayer, and proximity to God, which was already pointed out.[6]

Following are some interesting and instructive reminiscences portraying the blessings ensued by rendering service to people.

The Status of Hazrat Abdul Azim Hasani

One of the Shaykh's friends said: 'The Shaykh and I went on a pilgrimage of Sayyid al–Karim (a). The

Shaykh asked him (i. e. Hazrat Abdul Azim Hasani (a)) :

"How did you achieve such a status?"

He (Hazrat Abdul Azim Hasani) answered: 'Through doing good to people; I used to write copies of the Qur'an, sell them with much difficulty, and giveaway the amount received to the poor!'

The Blessing of the Taxi Driver's Service

A disciple of the Shaykh said: In the year 1958 or 1959, I was working as a taxi driver. Once I was in Bazar Jumihri Gharbi Avenue.

There were no buses working that day, so many people were waiting in line for taxis. I saw two women, a tall and a short one, waved at me to stop. They said one of them was going to Lashkar Square, and the other one to Aryana Avenue, paying five Rials each. And I agreed to take them to their destinations.

The tall woman got off and paid for her fare, and I headed for Aryana Avenue to get the short one to her destination. She was a Turk and did not speak Persian.

I figured out she was murmuring to herself: 'O God! I am a Turk and do not know Persian and I do not know how to find my home either. Everyday I got on the bus and got off near my house with two *qirans* (Rials); I have done so much laundry since the morning for just two *tomans,* now I have to pay five Rials for the taxi fare.

I told her: 'Do not bother, I am a Turk too. I am going to Aryana Avenue and I will drop you at your house. She got very happy.

I finally found the address and stopped to let her get off. She took out a *two-toman* note and offered it to me. I said she did not need to pay, said goodbye and drove away.

A couple of days later I happened to have an audience with the Shaykh in the company of a friend of mine. He was sitting in his humble room along with some other people. After greeting, the Shaykh looked at me and-reading my mind-said:

"You are awaiting on Thursday evenings. You will be present."

I was keeping a regular (religious) program in relation to the Wali al-'Asr (aj), and what he meant by "you will be present" was that I would be present at the time of the *faraj* (advent) of Imam al- 'Asr (aj). In view of the blessings I had been previously bestowed on by God Almighty, these words of the Shaykh touched me greatly and we all cried a lot. The Shaykh, then said:

"You know what happened that you came to me? That short lady that got in your car and you did not get any money from her, prayed to God for you, and the Almighty God answered her prayer and sent you to

me!"

Assisting the Blind Man and the Luminosity of the Heart

The same noble man (the taxi driver) related: One day I was driving the same taxi on Salsabil Avenue when I saw a blind man waiting along the street for someone to help him. I pulled up immediately and asked him where he wanted to go.

'I want to cross the street.' Said the blind man.

'Where do you want to go from there?' I asked.

'I will not bother you any longer.' Said the man.

On my insistence the blind man said that he was going to Hashemi Avenue and I took him to his destination.

The next day when I went to see the Shaykh, he said immediately: "What is the incidence of the blind man that you gave a ride yesterday?"

I told him the story. He said:

"Since yesterday that you did it, the Almighty God has created a light which is still radiating in *barzakh."*

Giving Meals to Forty People and the Healing of the Patient

One of the Shaykh's friends said: 'My son had an accident and was hospitalized. I went to the Shaykh and asked him what to do. He said: "Do not be upset. Buy a sheep, gather forty workers from around the neighborhood and make *Abgusht*[7] and serve them the food; also ask a preacher to pray at the end of the feast. When those forty men say 'amen', your son will recover and return home."

I told this direction to several others too, and their requests were answered this way.

Rain in a Drought

The reverend Shaykh's son related: 'Several farmers from Sari[8] came to my father and said there was a severe drought in Sari, all plants were dried, and people were under pressure. My father said:

"Go slaughter a cow and feed people!"

'The farmers sent a telegram to Sari to slaughter a cow and feed one thousand people. It was said that at the feast it rained so heavily that the guest had trouble getting to the place. This event led to a good relation between the people of that region and the Shaykh. He was invited to attend sessions in Sari for

several times.'

Giving Victuals by the Father to Beget a Child

The same person related: ' Someone failed to beget a child despite various treatments inside the country and abroad. One of the Shaykh's friends brought him to the Shaykh and told him his problem. He said:

"God will give them two sons and for each son they must slaughter a cow and distribute among the people."

He asked what for. The Shaykh answered:

"I requested from Imam al-Reza (a) and he consented."

When the first son was born the father had a cow slaughtered at the order of the Shaykh and gave it to the people. After the birth of the second son, however, some of that man's relatives prevented him from slaughtering a cow and feeding it to the people, protesting that if Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat was a son of an Imam or he has made a miracle! Who is he that orders to do this and that?! And this way they prevented him from keeping his vow. When the person who had introduced him to the Shaykh reminded him of keeping his vow, he said it was entirely superstitious. After a while his second son died.

The Blessing of Feeding a Hungry Animal

One of the Shaykh's friends related that one day the Shaykh had told him:

"Someone was passing through one of the old alleys of Tehran, when suddenly he saw a dog in the gutter whose puppies were pushing toward her breasts for milk, but the dog was too hungry to have any milk to give to its puppies and was in agony for this reason. Noticing this scene, that person went right away to a nearby kebab shop and got several kebabs and brought to the dog. ...The same night near dawn he was graced with an inexplicable blessing by God Almighty."

The narrator went on with this anecdote: ' Although the Shaykh never said who that person was, the evidence indicated that it was himself.'

Dr. Farzam said: 'Whenever I asked the Shaykh if he would give me a piece of advice when taking leave, he would state:

"Do not forget doing good to people, even to the animals."[9]

Benevolence Based on Love of God

The principal issue in serving people from the viewpoint of the Shaykh is the motive behind it and how it

is performed. The Shaykh believed that we should be at the service of people as the Imams and Friends of God were. In their serving people, they had no goal than serving them for the sake of God and for His love. In this regard he would say:

"Benevolence to people must be based on God-Orientedness; (انما نطعمكم لوجه الله) (We feed you for the sake of Allah alone.) (al-Insan: 9) How (lovingly) you spend money for your children and you adore them too! Can children do anything for their parents? The parents are in love with their little children and spend money for them out of love. Now why do not you treat God this way?! Why do not you love Him as much as you love your children?! And if by any chance you do a favor to someone you expect reward for that!"

Words of Imam Khomeini (ra) on rendering Service to People

At the end of this chapter it will be appropriate to point out the guideline of Imam Khomeini (ra) in respect to rendering service to people.

In his testament to his son Haj Ahmad Agha (ra), he wrote:

"My son! Do not evade the humanitarian responsibility that is, serving God in form of serving the people. The Satan does not gallop less in this field than among the officials and those in charge of people's affairs. And do not struggle to attain positions; neither spiritual nor worldly positions on the pretext of wishing to approach Divine knowledge or serving the worshippers of Allah, as paying attention to such positions is by itself satanic, let alone struggling to attain them. Listen to Gods admonition whole-heartedly and traverse on that direction: قل انما أعظكم بواحدة ان تقوموا لله مثنى وفرادى (Say: I do admonish you on one point: that you do stand up before Allah-(it may be) in pairs, or (it may be) singly.) (Saba': 46) The measure at the outset of traversing is uprising for Allah, both in personal and individual tasks and in social activities; tries to succeed at this first step which is easier and much more attainable at youth. Do not let yourself to become old like your father, so that you will either mark time or move backward; this involves vigilance and self-examination. If a person possesses or rather attains the sovereignty of the jinn and mankind with a Divine motive, he is a possessor of Divine Knowledge and an ascetic in the world; but if he is carnally or satanically motivated, whatever he attains, even if it is a rosary, he will be equally distanced from God."

1. Mizan al-Hikmah, VIII, 3688: 12635
2. Ibid. I, 428: 1555.
3. Ibid. XIII, 6452: 20664.
4. Al-Kafi, IV, 18:2.
5. He was one of the Shaykh's close companions; in part four it is described that the Shaykh was held in his embrace when he died.
6. See "The way God loves", Chapter Three, Part 3.
7. A traditional Iranian dish.
8. The administrative capital of Mazanderan Province, northern Iran.
9. See Mizan al-Hikmah, VIII, 3686: 2674.

Prayers of the Friends of God

One of the eminent features of those trained at the school of the reverend Shaykh is their presence of heart in prayer. And this became possible only because the Shaykh did not accord any value to the spiritless ostentatious prayers, and tried to make his disciples perform really devotional prayers.

In the Shaykh's guidelines concerning prayers, there are four basic principles in this regard, which are adopted from the Holy Qur'an and Islamic traditions:

1. Love

The reverend Shaykh believed that as a lover enjoys talking to his beloved, a performer of prayers also should enjoy amorous whispering to his lord. Personally, he was like this as friends of God are all like this.

The Holy Prophet (s) described his joy in prayers as follows:

> "جعل الله جل ثناؤه قرة عيني في الصلاة، وحبب الى الصلاة كما حبب الى الجائع الطعام، والى الظمآن الماء، وان الجائع اذا اكل شبع، وإن الظمآن اذا شرب روي، وأنا لا أشبع من الصلاة"

"Allah–Great is His Adoration–made the delight of my eyes in prayers and made prayers beloved to me as He made food beloved to the hungry and water beloved to the thirsty; (with the difference that) when the hungry eats he will be satiated and when the thirsty drinks he will be quenched, but I never get satiated (or quenched) from (performing) prayers."[1]

One of the Shaykh's disciples, who had spent thirty years of his life with him, said: 'God knows that I witnessed him standing in prayers like a lover before his Beloved, engrossed in His Beauty .In my whole life I only saw three people who were extraordinary in their prayers; the late Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat, Ayatollah Kuhistani, and Agha Shaykh Habibullah Gulpayigani in Mashhad. They were amazing when standing in prayers; I would see intuitively that the quality of sphere (around them) was otherworldly; they paid no attention to anything other than God.

2. Courtesy

To be courteous in the presence of the Almighty lord by performers of prayer is one of the issues that Islam has greatly stressed. Imam al–Sajjad (a) said in this relation:

> "حق الصلاة ان تعلم انها وفادة الى الله عز وجل، وانك فيها قائم بين يدي الله عز وجل فاذا علمت ذلك قمت مقام

الذليل الحقير، الراغب الراهب، الراجي الخائف، المسكين المتضرع، والمعظم لمن كان بين يديه بالسكون والوقار، وتُقبل عليها بقلبك وتقيمها بحدودها وحقوقها"

"The right accorded to prayer is that you should know prayer as entering the presence of Allah the Most High, and that, when saying prayer, you are standing before the Most High Allah. So, knowing this, you should stand in prayer as an abased and humble servant, eagerly devoted, hopefully fearful, helplessly lamenting; and proceed to prayer peacefully and gracefully with great respect to the One you are standing before, and perform it whole-heartedly with (full) observance of its rules and rights."2

The reverend Shaykh said about the courtesy of presence:

"The Satan is always distracting man; remember not to break your attention to God, be courteous in prayer as when you stand attentively before an eminent personality, so that if your body is pricked by a needle, you would not move!"

The Shaykh said the above in reply to his son who said to him: 'You smile sometimes when you say prayers.' His son said: 'I guess he was smiling at the Satan implying that he cannot challenge him (i.e. the Shaykh)!'

Anyway, the reverend Shaykh believed that any move (of the body) in the presence of the Lord is considered as rude and is caused by temptation from the Satan. He said:

"I saw the Satan kissing the part of the body that one scratched in prayer!!"

3. Presence of Heart

The quintessence of prayer is remembering God and sincere presence of the performer's heart in the sacred companionship of Most Exalted God. Thus the Holy Prophet (s) said:

"لايقبل الله صلاة عبد لا يَحظر قلبه مع بدنه"

"God would not accept the prayer of a person whose heart is not present with his body."3

In view of this issue and before leading the congregational prayer, the reverend Shaykh tried to prepare those attending the prayer to find presence of heart. His own prayer was a typical one with presence of heart.

Accordingly, Dr. Farzam said: 'His prayer was very sober and good mannered.4 Sometimes when I arrived late for the mass prayer and (passing before him) saw his stature in prayer he looked as if his whole body was shivering; with radiant, pale countenance, he was absorbed in what he was reciting. His attention was totally directed on prayer and his head was always lowered. My implication was that the

reverend Shaykh never felt an iota of doubt in his heart.

Another disciple of the Shaykh said: 'He sometimes said to me: "Such and such! Do you know what you say in *ruku* 'and *sajdah?* When you say in *tashahhud:* ' *Ashhadu an la ilaha ilia 'llahu wahdahu la sharika la-h* (I bear witness that there is no god apart from Allah, Who is unique and without partners)', are you telling the truth? Are you not entangled in your carnal vain desires? Are you not attending other than God? Are you not dealing with
(أرباب متفرقون) (many lords differing among themselves) (12:39)?!

4. Perseverance in Performing Prayers at their Due Time

Islamic traditions have greatly emphasized performing prayers at their due time. Imam al-Sadiq (a) said:

"فضل الوقت الأول على الآخر كفضل الآخرة على الدنيا"

"Superiority of performing prayers at due time over performing it at the end of (prayer) time is like the superiority of the Hereafter to this world."5

The reverend Shaykh was very prompt in performing his five prayers at their due time and enjoined others to do the same.

"A Servant of Imam Husayn (a) would not put off his Prayers to Such Late Hours"

The able preacher, Hujj. Agha Sayyid Qasim Shoja'i, related an interesting memory about the reverend Shaykh: 'I used to give sermons since my school years and as I was a well-spoken preacher I used to be invited to many sessions for *rawzah*6, including the sessions held in the house of the late Agha Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat on the seventh day of each lunar month. Upstairs, on the right side, there was the room where women gathered and I recited the *rawzah* for them once every month. The Shaykh's room was downstairs. At that time I was only thirteen years old and had not reached puberty yet.

One day after the sermon was over; I went downstairs and encountered the Shaykh for the first time. He was holding a hat in his hand had seemed to be going out. I said "salam to him" he took a glance at my face and said:

"The son of the Holy Prophet (s) and the servant of Imam Husayn (a) would not delay his prayer till now!!"

I said: on my eyes! It was two hours to the sunset and I was a guest somewhere that day and hadn't said my prayer; as soon as the Shaykh looked at my face he realized this and pointed it out to me. Since

my adolescence and after that when I attended his sessions –which were held in the residence of Agha Hakimi Ahan Furush –I felt this man's sayings were inspired whenever he spoke, as he did not have scholarly knowledge but when he spoke the audience would get absorbed wholeheartedly. I still remember some of his words as he said:

"Leave behind the word 'we'; wherever the words 'we' and 'I' reign there abides polytheism. There is only one pronoun reigning and that is 'He', and if you sideline that pronoun, the other pronouns are polytheistic."

Whenever the late reverend Shaykh expressed such statements, they would get enshrined in one's heart and mind.

Anger, the Bane of Prayers

The reverend Shaykh is quoted as saying:

"One evening I was passing by a Masjid up the Sirus Avenue in Tehran.7 Entered the Masjid to enjoy the virtue of performing prayer at its due time and went into the *shabistan* (oratory). There I saw someone saying prayer and he had a halo round his head. I thought to myself I would become familiar with him to see what qualities he had that caused him to have such spiritual state in prayer. At the end of the mass prayer I accompanied him out of the Masjid. At the gate he had a row with the Masjid attendant and even shouted angrily at him and went on his way. After (letting out his) anger, I saw that halo disappeared from around his head!"

1. Mizan al-Hikmah, VII, 3092: 10535.
2. Ibid. VII, 3124: 10669.
3. Ibid. VII, 3116: 10635.
4. One of the Shaykh's disciple said: 'Like the late Ayatollah Shahabadi, the Shaykh also repeated the dhikr of ruku 'and sajdah three times.'
5. Mizan al-Hikmah, VII, 3130: 10685.
6. Recital of the Martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (a).
7. This Masjid was located down "Sarcheshmah Avenue". However, due to road expansion it was divided into two sections.

The Hajj of the Friends of God

The reverend Shaykh could never financially afford to go on the obligatory Hajj pilgrimage. His guidelines to some Hajj pilgrims, however indicates that he had been quite familiar with the mysteries of the Hajj of God's friends. He believed that the real perfect Hajj will be accomplished only when the pilgrim is in love with the Lord of the House (Ka'bah) so that he can perceive the real goals of Hajj rituals. Thus in response to someone who suggested to go on Hajj together with him, he said:

"First learn how to be a lover, then come over to go to Makkah together!"

Recommendations of the Shaykh to the Hajj Pilgrims

1. Endeavor to Visit Hazrat Wali 'Asr (aj)

One of the reverend Shaykh's old disciples said: 'The first time I was setting out on the Hajj pilgrimage to the Holy Makkah, I went to him to ask for guidelines. He said:

"From your departure until forty days read the noble *ayah*

(رب أدخلني مدخل صدق وأخرجني مخرج صدق واجعل لي من لدنك سلطاناً نصيرا)

(O my Lord! Let my entry be by the Gate of Truth and Honor, and likewise my exit by the Gate of Truth and Honor; and grant me from Thy presence an authority to aid (me)) (17:80), perhaps you will be able to see Wali 'Asr (aj).

Then he added:

"How is it possible that one is invited to go to someone's house and fail to see the landlord!? Be fully alert to see that blessed Imam (aj) in one of the rituals of the Hajj *insha ' Allah.* "

2. Forbid Love of Anything other than God while in *Ihram* (pilgrims' garment)

"The person who puts on Ihram in Mi'qat should know that he has come here to forbid himself from other than God, and since the moment he says *labbayk,* he accepts God's invitation and rendered as forbidden other than God to himself. Whatever interest in other than God is unlawful to him and he should not pay attention to other than God till the last moments of his life!"

3. Complete Orientation towards God While Circumambulating Ka'bah

"Circumambulating the Ka'bah is apparently turning around the House, but you should know that what is meant by this turning is to make God the axis of ones life and to annihilate completely in Him. Find a state of spirit so that you turn around Him and be sacrificed for Him."[1]

4. Invocation under the Golden Spout (of Ka'bah)

"In the Hijr of Isma'il and under the golden spout where the pilgrims beseech God Almighty to resolve their problems, you propose: O God! Train me for serving You and helping Your Wali, Hujjat ibn al-Hasan (aj)!"

5. Killing the Carnal Soul in Mina

"When you go to Mina, what do you do at the place of Sacrifice? Do you know what the philosophy of sacrifice is? Do indeed sacrifice your imperative carnal self!

(فتوبوا الى بارئكم فاقتلوا انفسكم)(So turn (in repentance) to your Maker, and slay yourselves (the wrongdoers).) (al-Baqarah: 54) Behead your carnal soul and return. Get rid of your carnal soul, instead of having it become more powerful once you return!"

The only Place where they Displayed Affection!

Upon returning (from Hajj), I had audience with the Shaykh and said: I would like to know whether any results have come out. He said:

"Lower your head and recite the al-Hamd!"

Then he deliberated for a moment and stated what places I have passed through in the Masjid al-Haram as well as my station there to the point where he said:

"The only place that they displayed affection to you was the cemetery of Baqi' where you were in such and such a state and demanded such and such things."

Whatever I beseeched there from God was revealed to him.

The Banquet for Returning from Hajj

After returning from Hajj, I invited the Shaykh and some others to my house for Hajj banquet. We had prepared *chelowkebab* for the feast. We spread a separate tablecloth for the reverend Shaykh and several other private guests up on the portico. Noticing this, the Shaykh called me and said:

"Why do you show off?! Do not be too proud of yourself! Do not discriminate among people; treat them equally! Why do you give preference to some? No! I will mingle with the others, no distinction!"

The Mysteries of Hajj in the Sayings of Imam Khomeini (ra)

It is worthwhile to know that what the reverend Shaykh has stated about the philosophy of Hajj based on his own intuitive findings are very close to what Imam Khomeini (ra) has expressed in explaining the mystical aspects of the Hajj pilgrimage, which are of interest to be touched upon here as a conclusion to this chapter:

The Secret of Frequently Uttering "*Labbayk*"

"Repeatedly uttering Labbayk is true for those who have heard the call of God by the ear of their soul

and are responding to the call from Allah the Almighty by (His) comprehensive Name. It is the issue of being present in the Presence and witnessing the Beauty of the Beloved, as though the chanter (of *Labbayk*) has at this moment lost to himself and repeats the response to the call followed by denying association (with other than God) in the absolute sense of the word, (and) not simply association with Divinity, which is known to the devotees of God; although denying association in that includes all stages up to the annihilation of the world in the view of the people of knowledge and contains the entire cautionary and preferential issues. For instance, *"alhamd laka wa' lni 'ma laka. ..*" dedicates *hamd* as well as the *ni'ma* to the Sacred Essence (of God) and denies association. This, to the people of knowledge, is the ultimate in monotheism, i. e., any praise (*hamd*) and blessing (*ni'ma*) that occur in the word is a praise to God and a blessing of God without association (with other than God). This high object prevails at every *mawqif* (station) and *mash'ar* (place of religious ritual), every stopping and moving, and every rest and action. Opposing to it means association in general, which we, the blind- hearted ones, are all suffering from."[2]

The Secret of Circumambulation

"Turning round the House of Allah suggests that you should not turn round other than God."[3]

"In circumambulating the Holy Haram of God, which is a sign of love of God, remove others from your heart and clean all fears other than fear of Allah from your soul, and in line with love' of God, disavow the greater and the lesser idols, the *taghuts,* and their associates,' the ones that the God Almighty and His friends disavowed from and all the liberated of the world are freed from it.[4]

Allegiance to God

"When touching Hajr al-Aswad (the Black Stone), make allegiance to God that you would be hostile to the enemies of God and his apostles and the pious and the liberated, and not to obey and serve them whoever and wherever they are; and to remove fear and meanness from your heart about the God's enemies, led by the great Satan (the U.S.A), even though they are superior in means of murdering and suppressing and criminal acts,"[5]

Sa'y (Attempt) in finding the Beloved

"In the *sa'y* between *Safa* and *Marwah* try sincerely and truthfully to look for the Beloved; when you find Him all the worldly knots will be untied, all the doubts will be removed, all the animal fears and hopes will be obliterated, all the material attachments will break off; nobility will flourish, and the satanic and idolatry bondages that hold the servants of God in captivity and obedience will fall apart."[6]

Mindfulness and *'Irfan* (Gnosticism) in *Mash'ar* and *'Arafat*

"Go on to the *Mash'ar al-Haram* and *Arafat* with mindfulness and Gnostic state and at any station (*mawqif*) reassure yourself more and more of God' s promises and the rule of the oppressed. With

silence and dignity, deliberate over signs of the truth and think of liberating the down-trodden and the oppressed from the clutches of the world arrogance, and beseech the Almighty God, at those holy stations, to show you the ways of deliverance (and liberation)."7

The Secret of Making Sacrifices in *Mina*

"Then go to *Mina* and find out the true wishes there, where is a place for sacrificing your most favorite objects of love in the way of the Absolute Beloved. And know that you will not reach the Absolute Beloved unless you abandon such objects of love on top of which are the love of self and the love of the (material) world."8

Rajm-i 'Aqabat* (Cursing the Satan by Throwing Pebbles at the Symbolic Pillars in *Mina

"You go on this divine journey to throw pebbles at the Satan. If you are, God forbid, among the army of the Satan, you throw pebbles at yourselves, too. You should become Divine, so that your *rajm* (throwing pebble) is the stoning of the Satan by the army of the most compassionate God."9

1. Mizan al-Hikmah, IV, 1572: 5225; Ghurar al-Hikam, 10162. Similar concept is found in Nahjul Balagha, maxim no. 82.
2. Imam Khomeini's message to the Hajj pilgrims on the occasion of 'id al-Adha, Aug 29, 1984.
3. Ibid. act 3, 1979.
4. Ibid, August 7, 1986.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Sayings of Imam Khomeini (ra) at the meeting with the Ulama and directors of Hajj groups on Sep 30, 1979.

Friends of God's Fear

The first question, after discussing the issue of love of God that crosses one's mind in respect to the elixir of self-building is that if God is kind and affectionate and His love is the most influential element of evolution, so why is there so much stress on fear of God Almighty in Islamic texts? Why does the Holy Qur'an regard fear of God as the most "eminent quality of the Ulama? And finally, are love and fear consistent?

The answer is yes; the reverend Shaykh gave an interesting example of consistency between fear and love, which will be touched upon in this chapter. Before that, however, the meaning of fear and love of God is to be reviewed.

The Meaning of Fear of God

The First point in interpreting Divine fear and love is that the fear of God is indeed fear of committing sins and evil acts. Imam Ali (a) said:

"لا تَخَف الا ذنبك، لا ترجُ الا ربك"

"Do not fear except of your own sins and do not hold out hope except in God."[1]

"Do not Fear God!"

One day Imam Ali (a) encountered someone whose face had been transformed out of fear; he asked him:

"What has happened to you?"

The man answered: 'I am afraid of God!' The holy Imam (a) said:

"Servant of God! Be afraid of your sins and fear Divine Justice in judging your wrongdoing against His servants! Obey God in what He has obligated you to do, and do not disobey in what is good for you. So, do not fear God as He does no injustice to anyone and He does not chastise beyond one's deserving."[2]

Fear of Separation

Hence, nobody should fear God, rather we should fear ourselves not to be encumbered by the outcome of our own unseemly actions. The fear of the friends of God of their unrighteous actions to be punished, however, is different from the fear that other people have. Those who have driven out the love of other than God from their hearts and their obedience to God is neither for the fear of Hell nor for the hope in Paradise, only fear of separation. For them the torment of separation from God is more painful than the Hellfire. Thus the leader of the friends of God, Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (a) laments in his supplication to God:

"فلئن صيرتني للعقوبات مع أعدائك، وجمعت بيني وبين أهل بلائك وفرّقت بيني وبين أحبائك وأوليائك فهبني يا الهي وسيدي ومولاي وربي صبرت على عذابك فكيف أصبر على فراقك؟!"

"So if you subject me to the punishments with Your enemies, gather me with the people of Your chastisement and separate me from Your friends and favorites, then suppose, my God, my Master, my Protector and my Lord, that I may be able to endure Your chastisement but how can I endure separation from You?[3]

The reverend Shaykh commented the holy verse, يدعون ربهم خوفا وطمعا(They call on their Lord in fear and hope) (al-Sajdah: 16) as follows:

"What is this fear and hope? Fear of separation from and hope of union with Him. Parallel to this in concept is the saying of Amir al- Mu'minin Ali (a) in supplication of Kumail:
فهبني يا الهي... وسيدي ومولاي وربي صبرت على عذابك فكيف أصبر على فراقك 'Then suppose, my Allah... that I may... be able to endure Your chastisement, but how can I endure separation from You?'

.. ووصلك منى نفسي وإليك شوقي

And also in the supplication of Imam al-Sajjad (a): 'Joining Thee is the wish of my soul, and toward Thee is my yearning."[4]

The renowned Gnostic and jurist the late Mulla Ahmad Naraqi also said in this respect:

'Said in supplication the king of *awliya,* may my soul be sacrificed to him, that O my Lord, O God,

Maybe I can tolerate Your punishment, how can I endure Your separation O Friend?

The wet-nurse frightens the kids of fire (and says) do not play o such and such otherwise,

I'll place fire on your hand and foot, stigmatize your face and back, But they frighten the lion (-hearted) man (Ali (a)) of the chastisement of separation with a thousand fold fear and awe. '[5]

Fear of not being accepted by the Beloved

Friends of God have fear even though they perform their obligations. They fear lest their Beloved does not like them and does not accept them:

(الذين يؤتون مآ أتوا وقلوبهم وجلة أنهم الى ربهم راجعون)

(And those who dispense their Charity with their hearts full of fear, because they will return to their Lord.) (al-Mu'minun: 60)

Acceptance of a Beloved who is absolutely perfect is as important for the friends of God as also the pain of separation (from the Beloved) is heart-rending and unbearable for them. This is so important that Imam Khomeini (ra), as quoted by Tehran Friday prayer leader, at the last moments of his life requested people to pray that God Almighty accept him!

Now see how the Shaykh explains this subtle Gnostic issue by a simple example.

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: 'Once he (the reverend Shaykh) said to me:

"Such and such! For whom does a bride make up herself?"

I said: 'For the groom.'

He said: "Did you understand?" I kept silent. Then he said:

"On the consummation night, the bride's relatives try to make up her in the best possible way so that the groom would have a liking for her. The bride, however, has a secret worry that is unnoticed to others; She is worried that what should she do if she could not attract the groom's interest or if he happens to feel disgust in her.

How can the servant, who does not know whether his deeds are accepted by God Almighty, be not fearful and worried?! Do you make up (adorn) yourself for Him or for yourself and for gaining a good reputation among the people?!

When people die they implore (رب ارجعون لعلي أعمل صالحاً)(O my Lord! Send me back (to life)–In order that I may work righteousness in the things I neglected.) (al-Mu'minun: 99, 100)."

Hence, the reverend Shaykh was always fearful of meeting with God Almighty and would say:

"You say that there is no fear of God, (وأما من خاف مقام ربه) (And for such as had entertained the fear of standing be for their Lord.) (al-Nazi'at: 40), but what on earth should we do if He would not like us and would not accept our deeds?"

The Shaykh's son quoted him as saying:

"O Lord! Purchase and accept us as the old junk-like object as the street vendor calls out: 'I buy (your) broken and junk objects'- O Lord accept and buy us too!"

1. See "Benevolence to Jobless Person Encumbered by a Large Family", Chapter Seven, Part 3.
2. The late Suhayli was quoted as saying: 'What he meant by "Agha Jan" (my dear master) was Imam al-'Asr (aj) who had come to visit the Shaykh at that moment.
3. In the supplication 21 of Sahifah al-Sajjadiya (Psalms of Islam, p. 79) we read:
"وهب لي الانس بك وأوليائك وأهل طاعتك" And give me intimacy with Thee, Thy friends, and those who obey Thee!"
4. Psalms of Islam, p. 247.
5. Mathnawi of Taqdis: 215.

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