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Foreword

By Dr. Hasnain Walji In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Ziyarat 'Ashura: A Potent Antidote to Reawaken Our Hearts

This is an age where the very purpose of our existence has been obscured by the glut of materialism. We seem to be engulfed in a quagmire that deflects our energy away from his divinely intended purpose. Our true fulfillment can only come through inner light, when the heart is awakened to seek its divinely intended purpose.

This seminal work on Ziyarat 'Ashura, aptly named *The Sacred Effusion*, by Shaykh Muhammad Khalfan, is a beacon for the seeker to seek the Sacred and the Divine. With his characteristic insight, the venerable Shaykh guides us to understand how Ziyarat 'Ashura can be a potent antidote to reawaken our hearts to the real purpose of our existence and not remain a mere habitual or ritual recitation.

As one reads the words so passionately penned by the author, one cannot help but visualize and ponder upon the origin of the very word *Ziyarat*, which originates from the word *zawr*, which means to deflect or turn away. The context becomes all the more evident when we read that the Arabic word *zur* refers to a lie – because it deflects from the path of truth. This sets the scene for the reader to contextualize the very essence of the spiritual and moral aspects of the Ziyarat – that when visiting the shrines of the Ma'sumin, or reciting the Ziyarat we momentarily 'turn away' from our worldly existence and gravitate towards an inner state of seeking none other than Allah. The essence of the Ziyarat, as elucidated by the author is that the *zair* who recites the *Ziyarat* must imbibe the spirit and attain the cognizance of the sublimity of Ziyarat 'Ashura to enable him to align himself with the spirit of the visited one.

The author eloquently elucidates that the crux of the Ziyarat 'Ashura are the concepts of al-Tawalli and al-Tabarri. He writes:

Besides its ample merits, it is a program of revolution for the sleeping masses. The crux of the Ziyarat is

al-tabarri` and al-tawalli, which can correctly be translated as 'fleeing from imperfection' and 'seeking perfection', or in beautiful words of every Muslim: La ilahaillallah – Besides Allah – the Only Beloved, there is no other ilah (beloved).

The name Allah exemplifies all the perfect attributes of the Divine Essence, which the human being has been molded to appreciate and naturally seek. The Holy Qur`an says:

...the innate nature of Allah, upon which the human beings were molded.' (30:30).

Therefore the Ziyarat in reality is a call to the unsullied innate disposition (fitra) of the human being.

The oft-repeated salutation of *Assalamu 'Alayka Ya Aba 'Abdillah*, assumes an everlasting impression upon our minds when we read how we must manifest our intentions to unite with his lofty ideals, and in cursing his opponents how we must demonstrate our revulsion at the worldly desires of his enemies. If we truly make that salutation with that understanding, it helps us align ourselves with the spirit of Imam al-Husayn (AS) and we have fulfilled and are true to the words we recite in the *Ziyarat*:

So I ask Allah, who ennobled me by knowing you and knowing your friends, and enabled me to seek remoteness from your enemies, to place me in your company in this world and the Hereafter.

This allows us to seek nearness to Allah through the Ziyarat rather than to be only motivated to gain personal benefits. Unquestionably, many traditions of the A`imma promise us that by the recitation of Ziyarat 'Ashura our needs would be fulfilled. For example Imam Ja'far as–Sadiq (AS) guided Safwan thus:

When you are confronted with some adversity, then seek redress of your grievances from Imam al– Husayn (AS) with this Ziyarat and Allah never reneges on His word.

However, the real question that we are encouraged to ponder upon is "What is our real need that we should ask for?" It helps us create an awareness of our own selves so that we can assess the true value of our neediness. Cited is an inspiring example of asking for one's real need is of Shaykh 'Abd al–Karim Hairi, the founder of the Hawza of Qum. It is said that during the Ziyarat at the Haram of Imam al–Husayn (A) he was seen weeping and telling the Imam (AS): "O dear master, I have become a mujtahid but I want to become a human being."

Thus the *Ziyarat*, must go beyond the seeking of mundane material benefits and rise to the lofty sublimities of cognition and self-awareness to awaken us from the sluggishness caused by the excesses of hubbe-duniya. To do so is to realize the ultimate purpose of Ziyarat. After all who can be a better symbol than Imam al-Husayn (AS) whose supreme sacrifice on the day of 'Ashura, symbolized the highest manifestation of Tawheed – that Besides *Allah*– *the Only Beloved, there is no other ilah* (*beloved*).

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