

Obedience

The Essence of Worship

Translation of
Prof. Abdur Razzaq's Book
"Kis Leyay Aay They Aur Kia Ker Chaley"

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CHAPTER ONE

In order to fulfill the requirements of life, man has invented millions of things. Some of these, apparently very ordinary, yet serve many useful purposes. But no matter how petty or magnificent the invention, its use is decided beforehand. Take the example of a pen. Although an ordinary little thing, yet the service it has done to mankind and is still doing, is colossal. Its usefulness and importance are beyond imagination. Certainly, before inventing it, man had already determined its use. The same rule applies to paper. In short, nothing, be it a pen or an aeroplane, is manufactured until its purpose is decided. It is a fact and a part of our daily routine that, we discard things which do not function properly, or do not serve the purpose, for which these were originally designed. These end up either in the trash bin or incinerator. Keeping this undeniable fact in mind, let us ponder over this vast universe. Our earth with its manifold treasures, is for us to explore. The mountains with sky high peaks stand gracefully on the face of this earth; fields and meadows stretch as far as the eye can see. There are lush green valleys, cascades, springs, and flowing rivers. Our earth is encircled by the magnificent rolling oceans. There are deep green forests and woods inhabited by varieties of species of animals and birds. The hot sun shining above our heads never fails to follow its course. The evaporation and condensation of water are continuous processes, so are rainfall and cultivation of various crops and vegetables on land. The fact is that this entire stage has been adorned for the human being who has the central role in the entire set up. The question is whether all this has been made aimlessly or everything is part of a plan? If man, does not consider any of his own inventions as useless, let it be a needle, how can he then commit the blunder of considering the entire universe as being aimlessly created?

Now let us try to analyse why this universe was created? If one relies upon his intellect alone, to solve this mystery, he will consume his whole life, without coming to any concrete conclusion. Such attempts have always proved to be futile. But if individuals do arrive at a certain conclusion, each on their own, it is inconceivable that they would agree on the same stand, thus leading to conflicts and rifts. Therefore, the easiest solution to this problem is to directly ask the Creator of this universe. It is needless to get into the discussion about the Creator, because only a Moron can deny the existence of a Creator. When a tiny needle cannot come into existence on its own, how can a super system of life which is running smoothly since times immemorial, exist without a Creator. It is only

common sense to believe that there is a Creator, so why not ask *Him* about it?

The most important question now is how to communicate with *Him*. Fortunately, this is not a big problem for man. The reason being that **ALLAH** has not only created man, but has also arranged for his guidance; that he may learn how to live in this world. All other living things have inborn instincts that guide them to survive through life. But before making arrangements for man's guidance, **ALLAH** took an oath from man as is clear in the following verse: "And if there comes to you, Guidance from *ME*, whosoever follows *My* guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve." (2:38).

Men of exalted characters from amongst different nations, through different ages, were selected by **ALLAH** to act as a link between the Creator and *His* creation, i.e. man. Their duty was to convey the message of **ALLAH** to humanity. The last of these Prophets, was entrusted with a manual of instructions, to serve as a guiding force till the end of time. **ALLAH** has therefore undertaken the responsibility to protect the contents of this Book from all forms of corruption, and it still exists in its pristine originality. People who believed in the Last Prophet (SAW), i.e. his Companions, willingly sought his (SAW) guidance for the solution of their queries, but even his (SAW) worst enemies did not hesitate to admit his (SAW) truthfulness and honesty. When he (SAW) never lied about his fellow men, how could he mislead anyone about the Creator? Therefore let us consult, what has been rightfully revealed unto the Last Prophet (SAW), to solve the mystery: why this universe was created? The Holy Quran [name of the Book revealed to the Holy Prophet (SAW)], says: "Not without purpose, did *We* create Heaven and earth and all that is between them." (38:27).

So we do know that it is not aimless, is it then only for enjoyment and fun that **ALLAH** undertook this creation? This doubt is also clarified by: "We created not the heavens, the earth and all between them merely in (idle) sport." (44:38). The purpose of the creation of this entire universe is explained by **ALLAH** in two stages: firstly the function of everything besides man, and secondly the reason for creating man. The Holy Quran states: "It is *He Who* has created for you all things that are on earth." (2:29).

It is furthermore specified: "And *He* has subjected to you, as from *Him*, all that is in the heavens and on earth." (45:13). It is therefore clear that earth with all its treasures and resources has been designed to serve mankind. It is difficult to comprehend how man can subject the sun, the heav-

only bodies, blowing winds, to his command. This mystery can be solved when our mind is clear about the concept of 'subjection'. Some of the resources available to us in nature, can be directly controlled and exploited by us, whereas others are confined to a certain framework of action, programmed to serve man. None of us can thank ALLAH enough for *His* graciousness. The Holy Quran states: "Do you not see that ALLAH has subjected all things in the heavens and on earth to your use and has made *His* bounties flow to you in exceeding measure both seen and unseen." (31:20).

The second aspect of creation deals with man himself; he has been showered with favours by the Creator. Not only is he gifted with knowledge and cognition but also with power to express himself. He is granted with an inborn instinct to exploit the resources available to him. The question now arises: why was man created? Let us just ponder over this verse: "Did you then think that *We* had created you in jest and that you would not be brought back to *Us*?" This suggests that man has been entrusted with certain assignments which he must complete and return to his Creator for accountability. Another verse defines the real motive of man's creation. It states: "*I* have only created jinns and humans, that they may worship *Me*." (51:56). The word 'worship' maybe wrongly interpreted as certain manifested acts of worship only such as prayers or fasting. It is humanly impossible to constantly perform such exercise; there is certainly more depth in the meaning of the word. The following verse adds another dimension to its meaning: "Did *I* not enjoin on you, O children of Adam, that you should not worship Satan; for that he is to you an open enemy? And that you should worship *Me*, for that is the straight way." (36:60-61). Compare these two verses and it becomes clear that 'worship' does not denote certain physically performed acts only, because otherwise, it would suggest fasting for or praying to Satan, which no one has ever done. The verse: 'Do not worship Satan' actually means, "Do not listen to him, and so not be misled by him." Worshipping in reality stands for 'doing as told'. A famous Arabic dictionary 'Lisan al-Arab' compiled by Raghīb Isfahani, defines the meaning of 'worship' as 'obedience'. A renowned scholar of Islam, Imam Razi has explained the verse 'Do not worship Satan', as 'Do not obey his order'. It is therefore concluded that 'worship' is not only the performance of rituals but is actually one's total subjection to the commandments. ALLAH has created us, so that we may obey *His* orders, during every single moment, and in all the diversified aspects of our lives.

Let us first analyse the economic aspect of our lives. The Holy Quran says: "We have provided therein means of subsistence for you." It is our job to explore and exploit these resources and earn a livelihood. Another verse states: "And when the salah is finished, then may you disperse through the land, and seek of the bounty of ALLAH." Therefore economic activity, involving efforts to earn a livelihood, is not only enjoined but also encouraged. While carrying out this duty, we may choose different fields of action, such as trading, agriculture, industry, arts and crafts or technology. Again we need to take guidance from ALLAH on criterion set by *Him* to differentiate between legal and unlawful sources of earning. No matter what professions we pursue, all fair means adopted by us to earn a living are thus acts of worship. Our obedience, (the very reason for our existence) does not hinder our progress in worldly and business matters, but actually elevates our daily business routine to the level of worship.

Coming to the social aspect of our life, its structure is laid out perfectly by our Creator. Rights enjoyed by close relatives, neighbours, colleagues, friends, even foes are explained in much detail. A golden rule for a harmonious civic life is laid down in this verse: "Help you one another in righteousness and piety, but help you not one another in sin and rancour." (5:3). If all of us adhere to this rule sincerely, no evil and mischief can flourish in the society, and nothing can hamper the propagation of righteousness, and tranquillity and peace shall prevail.

Now we know that we were created only to worship and serve our Master, and are mentally at ease with our conclusion but is our heart also satisfied with our realization? Because, if the heart believes in it, only then it will motivate us to act accordingly, otherwise we only undergo mental exercises devoid of any fruitful results. Luckily if our heart is ready to strive for righteousness, then our first step is to critically analyse ourselves, our past and present lifestyles. Are we living according to what we were designed for? Does our ideology, scope of action, engagements, likes and dislikes, our individual and collective socio-economic set up depict subjection to ALLAH's commands or are we but slaves of our desires? Are we in a habit of seeking assistance from our enemy avowed? Because, if we are, then we really need to stop here, to ponder pensively: "Is this how we wish to carry on with our lives?" If the answer is in the affirmative then it is a sorry state of affairs. We certainly have drifted away from our course and have lost the capability of steering ourselves towards the achievement of our goals. According to our unprecedented standard, a malfunctioning unit is discarded by its manufacturer since it

no longer serves the purpose of its creation. This rule, sadly enough, shall apply on us too, and a gruesome fate is inevitable, which is rejection by **ALLAH** in this world and a blazing fire in the Hereafter.

It is to be borne in mind that people discarded and rejected by **ALLAH** live in a world of constant despair, where tremors of unhappiness and discontent are endlessly experienced. **ALLAH** becomes heedless of such people and reprieves, only to let them loose in the wilderness of evil. But if we are ready to mend our ways, then the first step is to develop good relations with **ALLAH** by repenting sincerely and humbly over past mistakes, marked with a deep sense of regret. This is followed by a firm resolve in our hearts never to go astray again. Evil insinuates itself in all sorts of insidious ways from within, so as to influence us. These evil powers may be Satan or his evil hosts among human beings or jinn. It is imperative to seek **ALLAH**'s protection against evil and to seek knowledge of **ALLAH**'s Commandments to remember them and act in accordance with them.

CHAPTER TWO

It is clearly understood that the purpose of mankind's creation is, obedience and submission to ALLAH's will. This submission seems burdensome when we have little knowledge about ALLAH and do not share a cordial relationship with *Him*. It is also not very clear, whether it is in our interest to obey ALLAH or not.

It is extremely important that we must believe that ALLAH is our greatest Well-Wisher. *He* is the *One, Who* created the body with a befitting soul, showered us with mental faculties, physical powers and capabilities. *He Who* is not dependent on any of *His* creations whereas all *His* creations turn to *Him* for help, is undoubtedly the Most Caring of all. *He* has not only brought us to life, but has also provided for our sustenance and guidance. We must therefore, not only show our gratitude, but nurture a deep sense of love for *Him*. Since it is easy to follow the instructions of the beloved, therefore, when we develop a bond of love between ourselves and ALLAH, obedience towards *Him*, becomes a pleasure rather than a burdensome routine. To develop this bond of love, it is important to develop a rapport with the *Rabb* Almighty. To achieve this, apply the simple interaction technique. It is commonly experienced that when strangers meet frequently they become close friends whereas close relatives are alienated if forsaken. Our Almighty ALLAH with *His* graciousness has arranged for a constant interaction between *Him* and us by enjoining on us the daily five prayers.

The Majestic Court of ALLAH allows admission to all those who wish to surrender themselves to *Him*. ALLAH has been kind enough not only to allow us admission to *His* Majestic audience but also has taught us how to present ourselves before *Him*, and what to ask of *Him*. *He* provides us with an opportunity to communicate with *Him*, to put forth our problems, to beg for *His* assistance to show gratitude for *His* blessings and to confide in *Him*. We can take as much extra time as we may wish to register our problems. ALLAH makes us feel important by formally inviting us to *His* Presence at the mosque, a building exclusively constructed for *His* worship. Such beautiful are the words of this formal invitation or the Azaan, which we hear five times each day. The Azaan, calls out on us, 'come to pray', 'come to your salvation'. We must not fail to appreciate the graciousness of ALLAH *Who* planned this exercise, only for our welfare. Our visits to the mosques should be marked by a deep sense of humility, and the feelings of gratitude. We must recognize the status of our Creator, *Whose* generosity is boundless. *He* certainly will

be generous to us provided we beg sincerely. A pre-requisite to prayers is cleanliness and proper etiquettes. Praying regularly with complete observance of the rules inculcate a relationship of love and mutual understanding between ALLAH and us. When we are successful in attending to our obligatory prayers, we find ourselves craving for more time to be in ALLAH's audience. This desire will compel us to stay up at late and quiet hours of night, talking in total privacy to ALLAH. Sleep and comfort are no longer barriers to such meetings, for when we start loving someone, obedience becomes a pleasure. It is unfortunate for those who are heedless of their prayers. They have failed to appreciate the generosity of the Almighty. Such people who abandon the mosques, are often only concerned with beautification and lavish decoration of their houses. Such futile efforts leave their hearts void of happiness and tranquillity, and they are deprived of peaceful sleep at nights.

Indeed it is matter of great celebration for all those who voluntarily disrupt their engagements to attend regularly to their prayers. It is a milestone on the path of obedience. Our next stop over on this path, too, has been planned by ALLAH. Human beings have various biological drives. We need to harness these, or else they may overcome us and lead us astray. Fulfilment of these drives gives us pleasure and takes us, considerably away from the achievement of higher goals, such as nearness to ALLAH. Therefore, to teach us discipline and self control and make obedience easy for us, ALLAH has enjoined on us a month's fasting each year, i.e. the month of Ramadhan. From dawn to dusk we have to abstain from food and drink, intimacy with the spouse, and also have to remain very careful in our dealings with others.

It is imperative that we respect the very spirit of fasting. We need to monitor our entire self closely. The powers of speech and hearing should be, exercised according to the rules laid down by ALLAH. No evil should be spoken or heard. Our eyes should not gaze around aimlessly, our hands should not engage in any act of cruelty, nor should our feet tread in the wrong direction. If we only keep the stomach empty, and let the faculties loose and out of control, then we are merely starving ourselves without benefitting anything from this exercise.

Do not be misguided to believe that By enjoining fasts on us *He* has curbed our freedom. Think for a moment, how for the sake of good health, we willfully and strictly follow the instructions of a doctor. Do we ever eat anything which has been declared harmful by him? Since the desire in us to live longer is strong, we trust and obey the doctor and get

satisfaction in doing so. Can we not trust our Creator more than even a doctor? Can't we refrain from all that *He* commands us to, and that too for our own betterment? Well, if the answer is in the negative, then we have deviated from our orbits and have lost the meaning of the purpose of our existence. Had we been on the right path, we would be prostrating in jubilation and gratitude before ALLAH for taking such good measures, which ensure the health and nourishment of both body and the soul. Doctors agree that fasting is beneficial to the physical health, but be ware, do not fast, just because the doctors say, but do it for the sake of love and obedience towards 'The Mightiest' and 'The Wisest'. Since intentions play a vital role in the assessment of actions; similar actions directed by different intentions bear different results. Our legal system is based on this principle.

Fasting in the month of Ramadhan inculcates a deep sense of cautiousness in us. The Holy Quran states: "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you even as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may ward off evil." (2:183). This will help us to discern the right from wrong, and help us to avoid involvement in any doubtful activity. Such cautiousness is a virtue of truly God-fearing people. Thus, by observing the fasts with religious zeal and fervour, we have trained ourselves to lead a noble and pious life. The best scale to measure the effectiveness of this exercise is to scrutinize ourselves minutely. If a month's efforts have embedded in us a sense of accountability, conscientious avoidance of sin, a yearning for righteousness, then our efforts have been fruitful, but if this is not the case, then the entire month of fasting was nothing more than a pseudo display of abstinence.

Having learnt, to some extent, the art of self control, we no longer hesitate to give up moments of relaxation and entertainment to seek ALLAH's pleasure. But there is still one formidable enemy to be defeated and, that enemy lives within us. It is the love and greed for wealth and riches, the desire to excel in wealth over others. We opt for various professions for earning a living. No matter which field we choose, business, medicine, technology, science or agriculture, there is no reason to attribute our achievements entirely to our mental and physical capabilities. Take the case of an agriculturist who has worked hard on his fields; when he is all set for the harvest, a windstorm or a hailstorm destroys his crop. All he can do is watch the disaster silently and helplessly. Take the example of people who excel in various fields due to mental capacity and hard work. They must realise the graciousness of ALLAH who gifted them with such powers and capabilities required to attain excellence. So all our attain-

ments are directly or indirectly dependent on ALLAH's grace. ALLAH has given us freedom of choice to consolidate all available resources to earn a living. At the same time, lawful and unlawful means have been differentiated and clearly defined.

Unlawful means, no matter how lucrative, must be avoided. We must realise a very important fact, that we are, but the custodians of all the wealth we possess, which we have acquired by employing the resources made available to us by ALLAH. Therefore, it is only reasonable and fair that we spend them to win the pleasure of the real Owner. We must accept the rules *He* has laid down for spending this wealth. ALLAH has formulated a perfect system for our fiscal activity. This system discourages squandering the hard earned money, and at the same time prohibits a niggardly attitude. This perfect system, or Zakat, provides a complete framework for monetary balance. It is enjoined on each one of us to put aside one fortieth of our annual savings. This fraction is to be distributed amongst deserving people. By paying Zakat, we practically endorse the belief that whatever we have is owned by ALLAH. It is *His* Magnificence and Generosity that *He* has demanded only a fraction of our surplus wealth whereas *He* has the right and the power to demand all of it. Our contributions help so many people who are less privileged. This natural imbalance in the financial status of people may be comprehended by the following example.

Imagine a large reservoir of water containing enough water to supply each and every piece of land owned by every individual. A network of pipelines carries this water to individual fields. Now for some odd reason or due to some blockage certain areas do not receive their share of water and, since water is to flow, it passes on to some other field. The fields receiving this surplus water will obviously yield better crops, and better crops mean more money. Now if people making more money are asked to share a fraction of their surplus wealth with those less fortunate ones who actually became a stepping stone to their success, it is totally justified. Analysis of this example will reveal to us the distribution of wealth and fortunes among people. If we deduct Zakat from our savings, obeying the orders of Almighty ALLAH willingly, then we are not allowing wealth to become a barrier between us and ALLAH. On the contrary if we do not wish to part with our money, ignoring our obligations towards ALLAH and fellow, people then we have actually abased ourselves to the lowest levels of morality. We must not forget that we can avoid conviction on tax evasion in this world, but evasion of tax levied by ALLAH invites *His* wrath and scorn. There are so many redeeming factors in this monetary

system. By paying a small fraction, we actually purify the rest of our belongings, thus all the energy generated by purified resources shall be exerted in righteousness. On the other hand, if we do not separate this share, we are polluting the rest of our holdings, thus it will be spent on evil ventures affecting the entire society as a whole.

CHAPTER THREE

In medical science, it is a known fact that medicines vary in their potency and characteristics. Some are developed for the treatment of a specific disease, whereas others have a wider range of action and can effectively cure more than one illness. Similarly, ALLAH has prescribed a broad spectrum medicine for our ailing souls. This medication is the pilgrimage to the Holy Land which serves as the fountainhead of guidance. Pilgrimage is a difficult exercise involving an arduous, as well as, financially burdensome journey, but at the same time it eradicates many vices flourishing in our souls. Before embarking on this sacred journey, try to visualize the importance of the Holy Mosque at Makkah, as the most cherished and celebrated symbol of the oneness of ALLAH, since times immemorial. As a result of this meditation, when we depart from our home and relatives, joy rather than sorrow overwhelms us. This is a practical demonstration of ALLAH's obedience.

Since pilgrims come from all parts of the world, belonging to different classes of society with varying temperaments and behaviour, it is not uncommon to experience unpleasant situations. Sometimes we may be infuriated by someone's behaviour, or by events which we do not like. While things take us to the verge of retaliation, just try to remember the place we are going to. Don't forget the sanctity of our destination. Aren't we aware of the rules and etiquettes to be observed on this sacred journey? The Holy Quran states: "For Hajj, are the months well known. If anyone undertakes that duty therein, let there be no obscenity, nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the Hajj." (2:197). Therefore it is extremely important to control our tempers at all times and remain patient.

As we approach the 'Meeqat', the point from where the limits of The Holy Haram start, announcements are made and we all have to don ourselves in the robe designed for us by the Greatest of Designers. This robe or Ihraam is a simple two-piece white unstitched dress. We are actually free from worrying about the colour, design or quality of clothes. While clad in Ihraam, we demonstrate the will to submit ourselves completely to ALLAH. It is gratifying and yet awesome to see so many people from all parts of the world in the same uniform. This scenario must remind us of The Final Day of Judgement, when all of us shall be presented to face Our *Rabb*, clad in a similar dress. So this Ihraam is actually a milestone on the crossroads of mortal and eternal lives. We have landed on a foreign land in obedience and compliance with ALLAH's Command. The essence of this distant travel is that we must believe, that it is not only

the crossing of geographical boundaries, but it will lead to an inner transformation of our souls from evil to righteousness.

We move on the road to The Holy Mosque or Haram in Makkah, after being checked by the authorities. A sign board along the road says 'Hadaiq-e Hudabiyah'. Visualize the events fourteen centuries back. A group of true believers of Islam along with their noble leader, the Holy Prophet (SAW), headed towards Makkah with the intentions of pilgrimage. It is at this place that they were detained by the non-believers of Makkah. The Muslims waited here while a delegation was sent to convince the non-believers. Negotiations were in progress, when the traumatic news arrived in the Muslim camp, that the Makkans had martyred Hadhrat Usman (Radhi ALLAH unho). This made the Muslims furious. The Holy Prophet (SAW) took an oath of allegiance from all the Companions, to avenge this killing. The news turned out to be untrue later.

Muslims were in the ceremonial garbs and had brought sacrificial animals. They were not granted permission to even send the animals to sacrificial area in Makkah. These animals were slaughtered here in Hudaibiyah. A peaceful treaty was formulated here, by which the Makkan Quraish, after years of unrelenting conflict with Islam, at length recognised Islam as an equal power with themselves. ALLAH announced *His* rewards comprising Mercy, Forgiveness, tranquillity and subsequent victories for the believers who were present at Hudaibiyah. The believers had earned these rewards due to their unity and their trust in the Holy Prophet (SAW). The lesson we have learnt at Hudaibiyah is, that if we lead our lives according to the teachings of the Holy Prophet (SAW), we are bound to please ALLAH and experience *His* Graciousness. It is only with ALLAH's Grace, that sinful beings like us are now in The Holy Mosque, the most sacred place on this earth. In the centre of this grand mosque, stands the K'abah, a cube of black stones adorned with a black cover. This K'abah is a legendary symbol of the oneness of ALLAH. This was first built by Prophet Adam, and then Prophet Ibrahim (AS) rebuilt it, and ever since it stands as a fountainhead of guidance and light for all those who turn to it. As we stand here today, let us pray that may ALLAH list us amongst *His* chosen servants and grant us the will and desire to obey *Him*. As we start the circumambulation of the Holy K'abah, starting at the Holy Black stone, we must take a vow to spend the rest of the life in accordance with Islam. With the completion of each round, this vow must be renewed. It should be resolved in our minds that from now on our intentions will circumambulate around ALLAH's Command just the way we are physically going around the K'abah. The seven rounds should re-

flect on the seven days of our week. Each day must start with a revived enthusiasm for righteousness. At Multazim, the doorstep of K'abah, emotions soar high, all the mistakes done in the past, flash back to memory. A deep feeling of dejection overwhelms us, and we sincerely and humbly beg for forgiveness, for we are at a place which belongs to The Most Merciful, *Who* has never denied mercy to those who repent sincerely. The Holy Quran declares: "Despair not of the mercy of ALLAH, indeed *He* forgives all sins. Lo! *He* is the Forgiving, the Merciful." (39:53).

We therefore, have a golden opportunity to cleanse our soiled souls and hearts. Another important feature of the grand Mosque is The Maqam-e Ibrahim (Station of Ibrahim). This is the place where Prophet Ibrahim (AS) offered his prayers, so it is recommended that we too offer prayers here. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was an exemplary person who rejected the idea of worshipping anyone but ALLAH. For this belief, he had to abandon his family, his status in that society, and he made a lot of enemies. The rulers of the state were infuriated at the abasement of their so-called gods, and as a result ordered that he may be set ablaze. However, no amount of oppression could deter him from his belief in the oneness of ALLAH.

ALLAH blessed Prophet Ibrahim (AS), in appreciation of his steadfastness and perseverance, with unlimited grace and bounties.

ALLAH promised to keep Prophet Ibrahim's (AS) name alive and exalted, and his teachings, a guideline for all the believers till the end of time. ALLAH also promised prophethood to his descendants. He was also assigned the noble task of rebuilding the Holy K'abah. Let us all pray 'May ALLAH, for the sake of the graciousness, *He* showered upon Prophet Ibrahim (AS), help us to be steadfast in our efforts to be good Muslims.'

Within the enclosure of the Holy Mosque are the hills of Safa and Marwa. It is obligatory for pilgrims to compass these hills seven times in remembrance of a tradition laid down by Prophet Ibrahim's (AS) wife Lady Hajirah (Hagar) (RAU), centuries ago. As the Quran reveals, it was here, in the parched desert that Prophet Ibrahim was ordered to leave his wife and infant son Ismail. Without having any second thoughts or queries in his mind, he right away executed the orders laid down for him. His noble wife asked him, "who will take care of us?" "ALLAH", he replied and off he went without a glance. The Lady, who had been blessed with a noble soul, replied in deep satisfaction, "if that is the case then ALLAH will never abandon and disappoint us."

As time went by, the infant felt miserable with thirst. Maternal love forced the Lady to lay down the baby, and in her eager quest ran around these hills, seven times, when her prayer was answered. She came to pick up the infant, only to find that water gushed out from the barren land at the point, where the baby had been striking it, with his heels, in utter desperation. This spring of water is called Zam Zam. While running between Safa and Marwa we must pray, that ALLAH may be pleased with us, in just the same way as *He* was pleased with Lady Hajirah (RAU). At the same time we must also pray to achieve the level of obedience demonstrated by her. Let us pray that a spring of guidance and knowledge may surge within our rocky barren heart, as did Zam Zam in the scorched desert. The lesson to be learnt from this exercise of running between Safa and Marwa is, that life is an ongoing struggle but it should not engross us to the extent that we forget ALLAH. Therefore, every time we come back to Safa, during the compassing, we focus on the Holy K'abah and promise that no matter how deeply we may get involved in our worldly affairs, we will always turn back to *Him*. It is now time to appreciate the miraculous supply of water made by ALLAH centuries ago, in form of the spring Zam Zam, which has been flowing ever since. No scientific explanation can be given for this, as there is no other well, spring or any reservoir of water in the vicinity. It is purely a gift from 'The Greatest Provider'. Not very far from The Holy Mosque is a vast plain land, stretching as far as the eyes can see. This is called Arafat. All around us we see pilgrims clad in Ihraam, all seem to be equal in status. This is in reality a reflection of The Final Day of Judgement, when all of us will be gathered before ALLAH for accountability. Imagine how embarrassing it would be if our mistakes and shortcomings were announced in public on That Day. The only way to avoid this embarrassment, is to live a life of total submission to the Will of ALLAH.

A hill called Jabl-e Rahmat in the Arafat reminds us of the golden rules laid down by the Holy Prophet (SAW), in his (SAW) last address to the believers during his (SAW) pilgrimage. He (SAW) told the audience to believe firmly in the oneness of ALLAH, to be kind and brotherly towards each other. He (SAW) exhorted equality and fair treatment for all with no malice towards anyone, and united all Muslims of the world in one brotherhood. If only we understood the true spirit of this brotherhood, we would never indulge in insulting, defaming or degrading other brethren of the Faith. All rituals and traditions belonging to the dark era of ignorance were revoked by the Holy Prophet (SAW). Ignorance at any level, whether ancient or contemporary is contrary to Islam. We must

try to free ourselves from the darkness, as well as, be a guiding beacon for others. He (SAW) instructed those who were present in Arafat with him (SAW) to convey his (SAW) message to all those who weren't. This is, therefore, a commandment for all of us to propagate the teachings of Islam. At sunset, it is time to leave Arafat for our next station, which is a rocky field named Muzdalifa. A unique lesson of obedience is taught, when we learn that the evening (Maghrib) prayers shall not be offered at the normal time, but we will combine two prayers and offer them on our arrival at Muzdalifa. The essence of this act is that although prayers are obligatory, and it seems strange to defer their prescribed time, but even more important is the unquestioned obedience to the Divine Will! We pray when *He* orders us to pray, and we don't pray when *He* orders us not to pray. When *He* orders us to combine two prayers, we willingly obey. This is the attitude which must be instilled in us here.

We are now in the vast rocky rather stony field of Muzdalifa. As we spend the night here under the open sky, without the comforts of our warm beds, we are actually preparing ourselves to endure hardships for the sake of ALLAH. The next morning we will leave for Mina. Here at Mina, the tradition of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) is to be revived, and animals have to be sacrificed in the name of ALLAH. Let us just briefly look back into the historical background of this tradition. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was an old man when he was blessed with a son Ismail. One night Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was commanded in his dream, to sacrifice his son Ismail, who was a young boy. Without a fraction of doubt or a question in his mind, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) took his little boy and set out for the execution of ALLAH's Command, heading for the place where we stand today. On His way, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) confided in his son and told him about the Command he had received. As expected, his son Ismail, being a pious soul, encouraged his father to carry out the Command. When Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was about to sacrifice his beloved son, ALLAH sent a sacrificial animal to be slaughtered instead. This is the tradition which, we revive at this time every year. The level of obedience, manifested by Prophet Ismail is a lesson for us, that we must never criticize or condemn any part of ALLAH's plans for us. We must neither say: 'had this happened,' nor 'if only that hadn't happened'. People who are related to Prophets either through lineage or through total obedience, never complain about any misfortune that may befall.

We must all pledge our complete submission to ALLAH's Will, no matter how many wishes and temptations we may have to sacrificed for this. It is now time to pay a visit to the three pillars erected as

symbolic representations of the three spots where Satan tried to beguile Prophet Ibrahim (AS), when he was on his way to sacrifice Ismail (AS). But the noble Prophet recognised Satan despite his disguises, and knew that only Satan would try to dissuade the righteous from the path of **ALLAH**. All the pilgrims throw pebbles and stones at these pillars. Therefore, as we stone these pillars we must resolve in our hearts to reject all personifications of the Satan. We must actually stone the vices we develop because of satanic whispers. Sometimes due to our own negligence, our inner self provides a breeding ground for Satan. He instills in us arrogance, jealousy, hypocrisy, false pretence and avarice. We must target these vices within ourselves. At the completion of pilgrimage we realise how effective this prescription has been for us. It has overhauled us and set our malfunctioning self into order.

There is so much to be seen and admired in this Holy Land of Arabia. Every inch of this land has an historical and spiritual value. Traveling back through time, we visualize a period of ignorance and utter confusion, when people worshipped everything else but **ALLAH**. To alleviate the suffering of mankind, a deliverer is born in Makkah to guide them. He, who would act as a link between people and their Creator. This redeemer is the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW), who spent forty years of exemplary life amongst his fellow people, before prophethood was conferred upon him. He was the most cherished and celebrated person, admired for his truthfulness and honesty. But as soon as he denounced polytheism and urged people to believe in one God, everyone turned against him. This land of Makkah is a witness how his (SAW) own relatives became his worst enemies. Visualize how an impious person dares to put the guts of a camel on the back of the Holy Prophet (SAW) as he prostrates in his (SAW) prayers. See how thorny bushes are spread on the lanes and paths he (SAW) has to walk on. What had the Holy Prophet (SAW) done, which invoked his (SAW) one time admirers to such animosity? Why was he (SAW) and his followers singled out for such atrocities? The only reason was that he (SAW) declared the oneness of **ALLAH** and emphasized on total obedience to **ALLAH**. The Holy Prophet (SAW) did not give up his (SAW) blessed mission in the face of all hardships.

The Makkan non-believers boycotted and confined the Holy Prophet (SAW) and his handful Companions into a narrow valley. For three years, social and economic sanctions were imposed on these noble people, even their food supply was severed. The Makkans thought that the believers would soon abandon their new religion, but they had been sadly mistaken. When these gruesome tactics had failed, the non-believers tried to

solve this problem politically. The leaders of all the tribes of Makkah invited the Holy Prophet (SAW) to their conference and offered him (SAW) a package of temptations, which they thought was irresistible. It offered all the desirable treasures of this world- wealth, women and power. But the noblest of all (SAW) turned them down and made it clear to the leaders that no amount of temptation would deter him from his noble mission which was the propagation of Islam. Once again a wave of atrocities swept through Makkah. This vicinity has witnessed the brutal persecution suffered by the followers of Islam. Visualize how mercilessly a noble Companion Hadhrat Abu Bakr is beaten to unconsciousness, how Hadhrat Khabbab is crucified, how Hadhrat Yasir's family is slain, and feel the treatment given to Hadhrat Bilal. Heavy slabs of stones are put on his chest, as he is made to lie on the sizzling sand, under the scorching sun. This land is a witness to the perseverance and endurance of all the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet (SAW), whom no degree of cruelty could deter, from the right path. If we travel a little away from the city, about three miles to the north, we come across a mountain called Jabl-e Noor. On its side is a cave called Hira. This is the place to which the Holy Prophet (SAW) used to retire for peaceful contemplation. He (SAW) spent endless days and nights painstakingly reflecting over the widespread ignorance around him. (SAW). He (SAW) continuously worried over the problems of his people, of human destiny and the age-long conflict between evil and righteousness, sin and piety. At the age of forty, he (SAW) was chosen to be the last Messenger of **ALLAH**. The veil had been lifted from the Preserved Tablet and its contents were transferred into the noble heart, to be proclaimed to the world, to be read and studied. It was to be for all times a fountain of mercy and wisdom, a warning to the heedless, a guide to the erring, a solace for those in despair. It is a system designed by **ALLAH**, that *He* has not only provided for our physical needs, but also had made arrangements for the nurturing of our souls. A simple Command, of obeying the Prophet (SAW), is a sure key to success, as the Quran tells us: "Say (O Muhammad, to mankind): If you love **ALLAH**, follow me. **ALLAH** will love you and forgive you, your sins. **ALLAH** is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful." (3:31). Now is the time to pause, and analyse how far have we understood this message, and how far have we availed this golden opportunity of salvation.

Now if we travel in the opposite direction of Jabl-e Noor, after covering distance of roughly three miles, we come across an arduous path to the top of a mountain. At its top is a cave known as Thaur. Its historical value is related to a particular event. Visualize the scenario, when the

non-believers of Makkah, unsuccessful in their efforts to deter the Holy Prophet (SAW) from his noble mission, secretly conspired attempts on his life. Men from all the eminent tribes were chosen to carry out this hideous plan. When these men had encircled the house of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and were satisfied in their hearts at the forthcoming success, he (SAW) had already left for Madinah with his most trusted companion Hadhrat Abu Bakr (RAU), as ordered by ALLAH. The enemies too followed in pursuit. The two noble men managed to reach this cave and it sheltered them for three nights. The infidels came so close to the mouth of the cave that there was no question of them not stepping in. But they did not even peep into the cave. Why? Were they stupid? Not at all! It was a small scheme designed by ALLAH to show the infidels that *He* was the Protector of *His* noble Prophet (SAW) and 'The second of the Two' (a title given to Hadhrat Abu Bakr). ALLAH created such circumstances that The Two Noble Companions escaped unscathed, only to demonstrate to the infidels that despite their best planning, ALLAH can protect and lead *His* beloved servants to safety, from right under their nose. This event teaches us the lesson to strive ceaselessly and strenuously with well thought-out plans. We will assuredly be successful on the path to righteousness, because this struggle of ours will certainly invoke ALLAH's favours. If today we encounter circumstances which demand a choice between ALLAH and the rest of the world - we must abandon the world, but must never allow our bond with The Almighty to weaken, at any cost. Let no temptation or oppression or any vested interests of ours lead us astray. We are on our way to The Holy City of Madinah. While aboard our comfortable vehicles, our hearts must cry and ache for all those who took this route, abandoning their native land, properties and relations, just to obey ALLAH and *His* Messenger (SAW). Think how they must have tread the rocky paths, centuries ago, on their tedious journey to Madinah, without much to eat, and in constant fear of persecution by the infidels of Makkah.

We are now in the Plain of Badr, about 50 miles south west of Madinah. This is the field where the first battle of evil and righteousness was fought. The small exiled community of Makkan Muslims, had organised themselves into a God-fearing community, with their friends in Madinah. They were, however, under constant threat of being attacked by their Pagan enemies of Makkah, in alliance with some of the Jews and hypocrites in or near Madinah itself. The enemies at Makkah could never tolerate the Muslims living safely in Madinah, and more so, to their dismay, were spreading Islam. In this battle, the Makkans designed to crush the

Muslims with an overwhelming force, whereas the Muslim army consisted of only about 313 men, including the elderly and the very young, mostly unarmed. The Makkan army, well armed and well equipped, numbered over a thousand, with some of the most experienced warriors of Arabia, including Abu Jahl the inveterate foe of Islam.

The army of the Muslims came out to fight such a formidable enemy, almost empty handed, simply obeying the orders of their Beloved Prophet (SAW), without questioning the possibilities of a visible defeat due to lack of supplies. This was the group which for, thirteen years, had been taught the lesson of obedience, and they surely proved to be worthy students. They had remained silent when told, and then announced their faith fearlessly when commanded, whether it meant crucifixion or gruesome torture. They forsook their homelands and before they could settle down properly in a new city, were ordered to march towards a battlefield. For their sacrifices, the Holy Prophet (SAW) attached great importance to his Companions of Badr.

Against all odds, the Muslims scored a brilliant victory and many of the enemy chieftains including Abu Jahl were killed. It was impossible, for the small, ill-equipped Muslim army to defeat the experienced warriors of the enemy, without the miraculous aid of **ALLAH**. The firmness, zeal, discipline and trust which they had shown in the Holy Prophet (SAW) had won them Divine help. When the battle began, the Holy Prophet prayed and threw a handful of dust or sand at the enemy, symbolising their blind rush to their ill fate. This had a great psychological effect on them. This act of the Holy Prophet (SAW) is ascribed to as an act of **ALLAH Himself**, in the following verse, "When you threw (a handful of dust) it was not your act, but an act of **ALLAH**, in order that *He* might test the Believers." (8:17). This was announced to reassure the believers that *He* protects and helps those who remain steadfast in *His* cause. The martyrs of this battle rest peacefully in their graves in a walled area in the field, while the dead bodies of seventy leaders of the infidels were thrown in a nearby well. The Holy Prophet (SAW) addressed each one of the dead infidels by his name and asked them, how true they had found **ALLAH's** promise, if only they had followed his teachings they could have evaded such a disastrous fate!" Graves of the martyrs and the infidels are not very far away from each other. Both have tasted death, but their eternal abodes are way distant from each other. One group receives happy tidings: "These who believe and migrate, and fight for the Faith, in the cause of **ALLAH**, as well as those who give them asylum and aid, these are (all) in very truth, the Believers. For them is the forgiveness of sins and a provi-

sion most generous.” (8:74). Condition of the cursed infidels is also mentioned in a preceding verse of the same chapter: “If you could see, when the angels take the souls of the unbelievers (at death), how they smite their faces and their backs, saying, ‘Taste the penalty of the blazing fire.’” (8:50). Our brief stay at Badr should make us realise that it is time to promise our Beloved Prophet (SAW) that we will employ all the resources given to us by **ALLAH** in *His* cause. The life which is devoid of abounding love for **ALLAH** and *His* Prophet (SAW), is akin to the life of animals.

We now move onto our destination, the Holy City of Madinah, a hundred and fifty kilometres away from Badr. This is a city of renowned hospitality, unparalleled in history. This city welcomed and sheltered people who had been exiled from their lands by their own people. The Immigrants or the ‘Muhajireen’ were well received by their hosts who were called ‘Ansaar’. The only common attribute between the hosts and their guests was their faith- their common bond of love for **ALLAH**, and the intensity of will and desire to obey **ALLAH** under all circumstances. The Holy Prophet (SAW) wove the two groups into a fabric of brotherhood, which proved to be stronger than any other lineage or blood oriented relationship. Now holding our hearts, it is time to prepare with loving care to visit the Mosque of the Holy Prophet (SAW). The eastern wing of the Mosque has the sacred tomb of our Beloved Prophet (SAW). After paying homage and salutations to him (SAW), remember this verse of the Holy Quran, “We sent not an apostle, but to be obeyed, in accordance with the will of **ALLAH**. If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves, come unto you, and asked forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have indeed found **ALLAH** Ever-Returning, Most Merciful.” (4:64). Now is the time to confess all our crimes and beg for Holy Prophet's (SAW) intercession for mercy and deliverance.

We must now pay our respects to his (SAW) most honorable Companion, Hadhrat Abu Bakr (May **ALLAH** reward him well for all his service for the propagation of Islam). Now we will pay our homage to another very close Companion of the Holy Prophet (SAW), Hadhrat Umar Farooq (Radhi **ALLAH** unho). These two exalted Companions had completely absorbed the light of guidance and radiance of nobility transmitted by the Holy Prophet (SAW). They never separated themselves from his holy presence here, and are together now in the Hereafter. There is a strong fragrance of affection and care in the atmosphere of Madinah, which affirms that this piece of earth has never been cruel to anyone, no

one has ever been tortured here. The entire environment radiates rays of warmth and affection. While sitting in the Holy Prophet's (SAW) Mosque, we will feel the warmth and affection of a mother's lap. The Holy Prophet's (SAW) Mosque was the first university, training centre, judicial court, administrative block, and military headquarters of Islam. This is the role which each and every mosque is capable of playing, but unfortunately we are incapable of conceiving this. We have, sadly, isolated our religion from our daily lives. Some Muslims, under western influence, are adamant to prove that politics and religion cannot go hand in hand, therefore, religious scholars should abstain from the political affairs of the country. It would be interesting to ask them where the Madinah Pact was signed? Has history ever produced a political document of such excellence? The political insight, with which the terms and conditions were laid down, sprang from this Holy Mosque. Where were the strategies of Badr, Uhud, Ahzaab and Tabuk planned? All these were planned and designed at The Military Headquarters, located in this Holy Mosque.

All this negative propaganda, is basically masterminded by the orient-
talists, and proudly accepted by the westernized so-called Muslims. No matter how hard they try, the importance of the Holy Mosque is manifest as daylight. It is a place which taught humanity to humans and servility to servants. This institution declared the charter of mutual rights and duties. It produced warriors of valour and courage. At the same time it was a social training centre, teaching the basic principles of daily life. A sound judicial system was laid down here and rules and ordinances formulated. When a Mosque can perform so many roles, then how can someone claim the segregation of politics and religion. Such claimants must be confined to mental hospitals. It is pathetic that such mentally disabled people, are chosen as leaders of the nation. These are the ones who proudly adopt all the vices of the westerners. It would be educating to read a confession made by a western scholar Will Durant, rather hesitatingly, in his book 'Story of Civilization', about the revolution brought about in the lives of all those who had embraced Islam. He writes: "His (SAW) Message raised the moral and cultural level of his followers, promoted social order and unity, inculcated hygiene, lessened superstition and cruelty, bettered the condition of slaves, lifted the lowly to dignity and pride, and produced among Muslims a degree of sobriety and temperance unequalled elsewhere in the white man's world." If only Muslims today realise the superiority of their religion and adopt it, things would certainly be different.

Human beings living in a society are part of a complicated system, which involves their active participation in various fields of action. Sometimes this involvement is so deep that people tend to ignore important duties, and even forget the very purpose of their creation. Petty entertainments lead to such negligence that they forget to strengthen their relation with ALLAH, and we are all collectively heading towards ignorance. ALLAH has very graciously suggested *His* 'Zikr' or Remembrance as a cure for this deadly disease of negligence and 'Forgetfulness'. ALLAH orders us to remember *Him* at all times, with devotion and sincerity. As a result, we develop love for ALLAH, and begin to feel pleasure in obeying *Him*. ALLAH's Zikr is not only a cure but also a nourishing tonic for the spirit, bringing it closer to ALLAH. The most beneficial aspect of Zikr is that, in turn ALLAH remember us. Imagine our status, our sinful souls and ALLAH's declaration in verse 152 of Chapter 2, "Then do remember *Me*, I will remember you. Be grateful to *Me*, and reject not faith." If only we could appreciate the eminence of this verse, we would never dream of being heedless to *His* Zikr.

Relation between a name and the named is very obvious. Psychologists agree that forgetfulness for something is directly proportional to the lack of frequent interaction with it. Keeping our psychological design in mind, ALLAH has ordered us to remember *Him* by *His* name in a state of total concentration. The Quran commands: "So remember the name of your *Rabb* and devote yourself with complete devotion." (73: 8). Since there is a strong connection between the tongue and the heart, frequent recitation of ALLAH's name, will make a special place for *Him* in the heart. At yet another occasion we are ordered to remember *Him* in our hearts, without any interruption. It is commanded, "And do you remember your *Rabb* within thyself humbly and with awe, below your breath, at morn and evening, and be you not of the neglectful." (7: 205). There is one activity in the human body which never ceases, and that is respiration. Therefore the best way of continuous Zikr would be to coordinate it with the breathing process and beating of the heart. When this is done, we are protected against heedlessness of ALLAH's Zikr. ALLAH has provided us with complete knowledge about the hindrances we may encounter, the factors that act as barriers between us and our intentions to remember ALLAH. *He* has also warned us against the tactics employed by our eternal and perpetual enemy to divert us from ALLAH's Zikr. Therefore it is ordered in the Quran, "Remember ALLAH, standing, sitting and reclin-

ing.” (3:191). One important fact which comes to light is that, all other obligations like prayers, fasting, pilgrimage have definite forms and are observed at clearly defined times, whereas there is no such restriction for Zikr. It must go on forever, without any disruption. ALLAH’s remembrance is the only source of contentment and satisfaction. It is stated in the Quran: “Those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of ALLAH. Without doubt in the remembrance of ALLAH do hearts find satisfaction.” (13: 28). People try in vain to achieve contentment and happiness in wealth and power. A famous quotation says ‘Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown’. No amount of wealth and power can guarantee inner satisfaction. If ‘satisfaction’ is such an important element of our lives, then why shouldn’t we follow the simple technique and indulge in the remembrance of ALLAH, both verbally and in our hearts. Another very important advantage of Zikr, besides satisfaction, is that it keeps us alert and vigilant against our eternal rival. ALLAH tells us in the Quran: “If anyone withdraws himself, from remembrance of Rahman, *We* appoint for him, an evil one to be an intimate companion to him.” (43:42). When this happens, we follow the instructions of this evil guide within us, and he ultimately leads us to a stage where we begin to cherish our wrong deeds and believe them to be noble. Alas! We have certainly lost the right track.

We have therefore been advised by ALLAH to seek the company of noble people and forsake those who are heedless to *His* Zikr.

ALLAH has clearly forbidden us in the Quran to interact with or follow such people who do not remember *Him*, because they are no better than animals who are driven only by their instincts. It is important to note that various exercises prescribed by ALLAH are to be undertaken in recommended dosage. The most strenuous, i.e. the pilgrimage is to be performed only once in a lifetime, the less arduous such as salah has to be offered five times in a day, and the least tiring of them all which is Zikr, must be practised around the clock. This never ending exercise will revolutionize us and we will gradually develop a sense of gratitude for our Creator, and a healthy criticism towards our actions. *His* obedience becomes our second nature and a pleasure. We begin to dread the idea of ever disobeying *Him*. Our conscience has been awakened from its prolonged slumber, and it instantly makes us aware of any mistakes being committed, and urges us to humbly supplicate to ALLAH for forgiveness.

The main asset of the heart, acquainted with ALLAH, is a deep rooted love for *Him*. Since the heart is the ruler and the body its domain, the ruler shall enforce the rule of its Beloved on its kingdom. The Holy

Prophet (SAW) said that if the ruler (the heart) is on the right path, it will keep the body on the right path, but if the heart deteriorates, the entire system will degenerate." If the heart is pious and righteous it will direct the limbs to righteousness. The tongue shall only speak the truth, the ears shall hear only the lawful, the eyes shall not rove astray, the hands shall not play part in any mischief or harm; in short the whole body is now doing Zikr and remembering **ALLAH** by practically demonstrating obedience to *Him*. Human intellect may at times try to prove its supremacy over the heart, but so many incidents of our daily life prove that it is the heart and not the head, that enjoys the final authority. What makes us cry at the death of a beloved one, when we know that the deceased can never come back to us? Is there any logic in crying? These are the emotions that originate within the heart and makes us cry over the loss and thus overrule the logic. A western scholar has rightfully commented, 'The human intellect follows human emotions as the paws of a dog follow its nose'.

CHAPTER FIVE

It is a natural phenomenon that we will encounter problems in achievement of our goals; higher the goals, more serious the problems. Since our aim, which is to become truly obedient servants of ALLAH, is very sublime, therefore we will certainly face numerous hindrances on the way. The very first resistance, the lust and desire for pleasure and comfort, sprouts from within ourselves. We have been warned by ALLAH, that if we follow our desire, it will take us astray, far away from the path of ALLAH. We will lose our sense of discrimination between right and wrong, our ears will entertain evil, our eyes will behold evil and our hearts will lose their power to accept guidance. These faculties were our weapons in the war between evil and goodness. When they start malfunctioning how can we hope for victory over evil? The Holy Quran reveals, "Have you seen him, who worships his desire, and ALLAH sends him astray purposely and seals his hearing and his heart, and sets on his sight a covering? (45:23).

When we fall ill and cannot eat something we love, due to medical reasons, we obey the doctor and suppress our desire for our own good. We accept the advise of the doctor because we trust him. Then shouldn't we accept the limitations imposed on us by The Wisest of All, which are bound to be beneficial to us. If we transgress these limits and indulge in pleasures, we are doomed. This code of life must be easier for an army officer to comprehend. An army officer may like to dress up tastefully and be trendy, but he is ordered by the authorities to wear a uniform of certain quality and design. He may not like the quality of cloth or design but he does wear it, without a complaint. He also accepts with a smile, the time table of his daily routine fixed for him, because he knows that his promising future is dependent solely upon his service.

There is one creation which is totally governed by its instincts and that is the animals who do not have any sense of discrimination between right and wrong. The Quran asks: "Have you seen him who chooses for his god his own lust? Would you then be guardian over him? Or deem you that most of them hear or understand? They are but as the cattle. Nay! But they are farther astray!" (43:44). If we wish to rise above the level of animals, to the greatest ranks of humanity, then there is only one choice, the submission of one's self to ALLAH. This submission will accrue two advantages, firstly we shall not be classified as animals and secondly we will

qualify for, rewards from ALLAH, since a proclamation has already been made, "As for him who feared to stand before his *Rabb* and restrained his soul from lust, the garden will be his home." (79:40,41). If we succeed in subordinating our wishes to the Commandments of ALLAH, we shall reserve for ourselves an eternal abode in peace and tranquillity. The exalted level of humanity is achieved only when the stimulant to our actions is obedience to ALLAH. When people depend entirely on their intellect for guidance and ignore the words from ALLAH, they are bound to stumble. Two eminent philosophers of the west, John Stuart Mill and Bentham came up with a theory that 'Pleasure' is the stimulant behind our actions, whereas another scholar Mackenzie believed that the stimulant behind human actions is 'Lust'. They could think no farther, although they were men of intellect. If their theories are accepted, then what is the discrimination between human beings and cattle. We must recognize the importance of restraining from being slaves of our desire.

It is only natural that human beings cannot alienate themselves from one another. They tend to live in groups, forming larger spheres of social interaction. The basic unit of a society is a home, inhabited by a family of closest relatives. Such units together form communities of wider bonding. Normally people tend to follow and adhere to the philosophies, principles and norms of their communities. If majority of people belonging to a group are leading a life unguided by the truth revealed by Islam, it becomes a challenge for a lone member to follow the right path in that community. It is now up to this true seeker of faith to submit only to ALLAH or to follow the path of his deviated relatives. It should be kept in mind that our earthly life is a short preparatory phase for an eternal life. What we put aside for our eternal life will either win us rewards and bounties from ALLAH or will condemn us to eternal disaster. Will our relatives, now a barrier in your path of righteousness, be of any help to you then? They will certainly be of no support, as indicated in the Quran, "On the Day man flees from his brother, and his mother and his father and his children. Every man that day will have concern enough to save his head, heedless of others". (80:37-38). This clearly indicates that on the Day of Judgement each one of us will be concerned only with his own welfare and salvation. Today in this materialistic world we often witness this condition, in which everyone is selfishly committed to his own interests, in spite of being dependent on one another in one way or another. When people can cheat and kill one another, a son can kill a father, sometimes a brother kills a brother, how can they be expected to help each other on that day? So why should we spoil our relation with ALLAH for the sake of such

deceivers? It is clearly stated in the Holy Quran, "Say: if your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your spouses and your tribe, and the wealth you have acquired, and merchandise for which you fear that these will be no sale, and dwellings you desire, are dearer to you than **ALLAH** and *His* Messenger and striving in *His* way, then wait till **ALLAH** brings *His* command to pass. **ALLAH** guides not wrong doers." (9:24). This is indeed a blatant warning for all those who have blinded themselves from the right path, for the love of their family or the wealth they have amassed.

Life is a blend of happiness and sorrow. Sometimes happy occasions are celebrated with great joy, only to be followed by an occasion of sorrow and grief. But whatever occasion it is, we see today that people carry out such rituals which no logic can approve and no ethics can justify. The best part of all this is that people indulging in these superficial rituals, are well aware of their futility. They follow these rites, only because everyone else is also adhering to them. If customs and traditions can outweigh logic and reason, it wouldn't be surprising if they deter us from **ALLAH**'s obedience. The history of mankind reveals that nations have always rejected truth and guidance which conflicted with their traditions. The people of Moses (AS) rejected his preaching, because they were hesitant to violate the established customs. The Holy Quran quotes the words of these people, "Have you come on to us to pervert us from that faith in which we found our fathers, and that you may own the place of greatness in the land?" (10:78).

The people of Prophet Shoaib (AS) had the same excuse for disobedience. They said, "O Shoaib! Does your (religion of) prayer command you that we leave off the worship which our fathers practised?" (11:87). Yet a similar excuse was presented by the contemporaries of Prophet Ibrahim (AS), they said, "Nay, but we found our fathers doing thus, what we do." (26:74). History has proved that people have been so committed to their customs and traditions of their ancestors, that it makes them incapable of following the truth. **ALLAH** consoled *His* last Messenger by revealing unto him (SAW), verses which narrate this tendency of past nations to reject the words of guidance in favour of their traditions. It is said, "Just in the same way, whenever *We* sent a warner before you to any people, the wealthy ones among them said: 'We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we will certainly follow in their footsteps'." (43:23). Clinging to established rituals, no matter how ridiculous, is a normal behaviour.

The best way to tackle this problem in our lives is to scrutinize each ritual we observe. If there is any aspect of guidance in it and if it does not clash with **ALLAH's** Commands, then it may be carried on. But if this is not the case, then it is better to follow **ALLAH's** Commands and forsake that tradition, because the path of guidance is the right one, taking us to our destination. Is then deviation what we prefer?

CHAPTER SIX

The world we live in, is in reality an examination centre. Our life span is the trial that each one of us has been put through. Our beliefs and actions will determine how well we score in this test. We may either act in accordance with ALLAH's Will and be amongst the obedient group, or carry out the orders of our own lust and join the rebellious band. It is natural for the human beings to incline towards obedience of ALLAH, but there is a negative force created by ALLAH, to mislead them. This negative force, disguised as an affectionate mentor convinces people of it's loyalty and sincerity, and persuades them to disobey their *Rabb*,. This negative force is known as Satan. ALLAH has graciously informed us of this enemy, it's tactics and the treatment it should receive from us. It is mentioned in the Holy Quran: "Lo! the Satan is an enemy for you, so treat him as an enemy." (35:6).

A cautious person will obviously observe each and every activity of its enemy, and critically analyse the suggestions given by him. It is highly absurd that we listen and follow someone whom we believe to be our foe. Therefore, the best policy is to be aware and vigilant of it. ALLAH has questioned in the Holy Quran, "Did I not charge you, O you sons of Adam, that you worship not the devil? Lo! he is your open foe! But that you worship Me, that is the right path." (36:60-61). The only logical answer a righteous soul can give to these verses is, that it will try its best to follow ALLAH's Orders, and avoid being mislead by its foe. The Holy Quran, on more than one occasion has highlighted the strategies planned by our enemy to destroy us morally. It states, "Satan seeks only to cast among you enmity and hatred by means of strong drink and games of chance, and to turn you from remembrance of ALLAH and from (*His*) worship. Will you then have done?" (5:91).

It is amazing how intricate are the designs of Satan. He invokes in people, the desire for such vices which would destroy the society as a whole. Gambling and drinking are two of his most effective weapons for this purpose. People take to these for entertainment and end up as chronic gamblers and drunkards. At this stage, the discrimination between good and evil is lost. Soon the gambler and the alcoholic start to appreciate their own deeds and do not feel the slightest pang of guilt. We must remember that Satan is our adverse enemy, he will never guide us to the right course of action, he will rather lead us to immorality and immodesty. Nothing beneficial can ever be expected from him. In spite of this knowledge, if we still ignore the Orders of ALLAH, then we deserve a severe

CHAPTER SEVEN

Progress is a natural desire in every human being, may it be in knowledge, power, wealth or status. Had this not been our goal, life would have been extremely dull. But when the desire to excel in any of these fields, especially the lust for power and status, becomes an obsession, then the nations experience a lot of turbulence. When in power, such a person is completely devoid of logic and reason. He can think only about himself. He becomes a self centered egoist, who is intoxicated by power and might, and refuses to give any importance to human values and decency. He becomes bold and impudent to his mentors and well-wishers. In this context, many incidents from the history of mankind have been mentioned by **ALLAH**, for our guidance. When Prophet Ibrahim (AS) conveyed the message of **ALLAH** to the then ruler, it made him furious. The Quran says: "Bethink you of him who had an argument with Ibrahim about his *Rabb*, because **ALLAH** had given him the kingdom." (2:258). The propelling force behind the king's behaviour was the caprice of his power, which disabled him to grasp even the slightest notion of truth. Although Prophet Ibrahim (AS) gave an extremely august introduction of his *Rabb* and said, "My *Rabb* is *He, Who* gives life and causes death". He answered, "I give life and cause death." Prophet Ibrahim (AS) said, "Lo! **ALLAH** causes the sun to rise in the East, so do you cause it to come up from the West. Thus was the disbeliever abashed." (2:258).

The king was shocked, and in his heart must have been in awe of such a mighty *Rabb*, because he must have understood his limited powers as compared to the Infinite Power of Ibrahim's *Rabb*. But instead of being guided to righteousness resulting in submission, he was inebriated by power and lead astray. He fell below the level of humanity and ordered, "Burn Him (Ibrahim) and stand by your gods, if you will be doing." (21:68). We must never let power or authority get to our senses, for it leads to such decisions which are preposterous.

Another tale of a similar sort has been related in the Quran. When Prophet Moses conveyed the Message of **ALLAH** to the Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, this is how the Pharaoh reacted to this noble message: he said, "If you choose a god other than me, I assuredly shall place you among the prisoners." (26:29). Can we imagine a situation where a doctor feels concerned to treat his patient for his betterment, and the patient threatens the doctor of adverse consequences, if he did so. We can see how power blindfolds the senses. Yet another such event is quoted, relat-

ing to Prophet Joseph. It is said, "If he do not my behest he verily shall be imprisoned, and verily shall be of those brought low." (12:32).

A bitter reality about power is, that the person in authority refuses to hear anything against his wishes. This is why he is surrounded by flatterers and sycophants, people without any conscience. Such immoral advisers always stand between the ruler and any reformer who may approach him as a mentor. To explain this, a verse from the Holy Quran would be helpful; it relates: "The Chieftains of his (Noah) people said; Lo! we see you surely in plain error." (7:60). This was the answer given to Prophet Noah, by the men in power. How they failed to understand his noble intention! A similar situation was experienced by another Messenger Hud (AS) sent to the tribe of Aad. When Hud (AS) delivered ALLAH's message unto Aad, they replied: "The chieftains of his people, who were disbelieving said, 'Lo! we surely see thee in foolishness and lo! we deem you of the liars'." (7:66).

These noble men strived painstakingly for the welfare of their people, but look how the men in power refused to listen to any advice. Another situation of similar prodigy shown by power is narrated about the tribe of Thamud unto whom was sent a messenger, Salih (AS). The Quran states: "The chieftains of his people, who were scornful, said unto those whom they despised, unto such of them as believers: 'Know you that Salih is one sent from his *Rabb*?' They said: 'Lo! In that wherewith he has been sent we are believers'. Those who were scornful said: 'Lo! In that which you believe, we are disbelievers'." (7:75-76). When those arrogant chieftains could not suppress the call of Prophet Salih (AS), and the common man started to believe in his message, these proud chiefs resorted to threats and oppression. Some of them stooped so low that they hamstringed the camel which they themselves had demanded from Salih (AS), as a miracle from *Rabb*. Thus power and might got to their heads and they valued their misdeeds as acts of valour.

Yet another noble Messenger of ALLAH, Prophet Shoaib (AS), received a similar response from the influential class of people, to whom he was sent. It is related in the Quran, "The chieftains of his people, who were scornful said, 'surely we will drive you out. O Shoaib and those who believe with you, from our township, unless you return to our religion'." (7:88). This attitude of scorn, is a characteristic trait of power and might. When people in power do not wish to listen to logic, they come forth to suppress and oppose the truth by all possible means of force. Similarly, when the flatterers hovering around the Pharaoh heard the message conveyed by Prophet Moses (AS), they remarked: The chiefs

of Pharaoh's people said "Lo! this is some knowing wizard." (7:109). They simply did not want to accept the truth in the words of Prophet Moses (AS), but tried to abase him as a sorcerer. It was indeed meant to devalue the honorable message of ALLAH. These chiefs then dramatically asked the Pharaoh: Said the chiefs of Pharaoh's people, "Will you leave Moses and his people, to spread mischief in the land, and to abandon you and your gods?" Thus the chieftains employed psychological warfare by convincing the Pharaoh that Prophet Moses (AS), was a threat to communal peace and his Message would uproot the government of Pharaoh. The chieftains came up with yet another conclusion about the intentions of Prophet Moses (AS) and his brother, and advised the Pharaoh: They said, "Lo! These are two wizards who would drive you out from your country by their magic, and destroy your best traditions." (20:63). This piece of malicious advice, was sure to affect the Pharaoh, since his power was at stake according to the flatterers around him.

History has witnessed, that whenever and wherever some reformer tried to guide a ruler, the sycophants and opportunists around him have always maligned the reformer and have portrayed him as a power hungry person who only wanted to topple that government. This strategy has never failed to mislead the rulers. Such power and rule is undoubtedly a big barrier to truth, but look, what fate these dictators and inhuman rulers met! Pharaoh, Hitler, Namrud and Nero have been lost in the pages of history, but even today we see tyrants ruling successfully one day and rotting behind bars the other day. This is life! Power and authority are most vulnerable to change and decline, and are therefore not to be relied upon. So, of what avail can they be in the Hereafter? Then why not strive for power that never wanes, that which will be eternal and everlasting with unlimited bliss and bounties? We must therefore, very carefully recognise the dangers attached with power or else we might end up being deprived of grace and condemned to hell.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Wealth is one of the most coveted things in our life. If the desire for money remains within reasonable bounds, it is not only harmless but also natural. But when this desire exceeds its limits and becomes an obsession then the discrimination between fair and unfair means of generating wealth, is lost; this obsession is incurable now. We are therefore warned by the Quran, "Your wealth and your children are only a temptation, whereas **ALLAH**, with *Him* is an immense reward." (64:15). Children and wealth are great blessings from **ALLAH**, but at the same time, they are for our trial. It is to be seen whether we get so involved in them that we become forgetful of **ALLAH**, or we make them our allies in striving for **ALLAH**'s cause. If we fall in the former category then we have failed the test, but if we belong to the latter group then we are crowned with success. If unfortunately, we fail in this trial, then the obsession for concentrating wealth is imposed upon us as a punishment. It is related in the Quran, "Then, when they forget that whereof they had been reminded, *We* opened unto them, the gates of all things. Till, even as they were rejoicing in that which they were given, *We* seized them unaware, and lo! they were dumbfounded." (6:44).

An interesting sketch of the Day of Judgement is drawn in another *verse* of the Quran. It says: And on the day when *He* will assemble them and that which they worship instead of **ALLAH**, and will say, "Was it you who mislead these *My* slaves or did they themselves wander from the way?" They will reply, "Be *You* glorified. It was not for us to choose any protecting friends besides *You*. But *You* did give them and their fathers ease till they forgot the warning and became lost folk." (25:18). It is now evident that riches and wealth are, at times a trial, sometimes a problem and often a curse. Avarice destroys the peace and happiness here and abases in the Hereafter. There are three aspects of our trial by wealth. The first is attainment, which means how we earn or accumulate wealth. One of the sources of obtaining wealth is inheritance. If we decide to be unfair, there is no way to avoid injustice and cruelty unto others, by us. It is clearly stated in the Quran: "And you devour heritage with devouring greed, and love wealth with abounding love." (89:19-20). Inheritance received is thus a trial for us. The second source of attainment of wealth may be trade and business. How fairly we deal with our customers shall determine our success. If we forsake the path of honesty, we will always be planning to cheat our fellow beings. The Quran says, "Woe unto the defrauders, those who when they take the measure from mankind demand

its full. But if they measure unto them or weigh for them, they cause them less.” (83:1-3). This verse outlines the worst picture of human and moral degeneration. Can selfish people ever contribute something noble to their society? These selfish people are deadly beasts, in human disguise with the sole intention of destruction. Other forms of defrauding may be through bribery, forgery, perjury or oppression. We must avoid employing any method by which we end up usurping the rights of others. It is strictly forbidden in Islam.

The second aspect is saving or hoarding of wealth by us. It is a common practice, that we don't spend all our earnings but we do put aside some of it. This saved amount can be very attractive, and if we get enticed by it, we shall be on the run to accumulate more and more wealth. The most intriguing aspect of this desire is, that it is never satiated. There are two forms of this dissatisfaction: one is niggardliness and the other is to grab money from all sources. In its first form, we do not feel like spending on even our basic needs. This is a very difficult situation, in which our minds are boggled by greed. In the second situation, we are all out to plunder, and we do not care for fair or unfair means of earning wealth. Soon this misappropriation ceases to appear, as something wrong. In fact we feel that we are doing just fine, and go farther ahead to believe that it is an absolute necessity. This greed leads to social malpractices such as bribery, hoarding smuggling, adulteration, cheating and fraud. We no longer remain human beings but transform into beasts of prey let loose in the society. Loot and plunder, malicious scheming, fraud, and violence have become our second nature.

A society with people of this character cannot be considered an habitat for human beings, but a forest of beasts where the stronger devours the weaker. In this atmosphere, the wealth, honour and life of people is not secure. This obsession of wealth accumulation, takes the obsessed to a point, where he forgets not only **ALLAH's** Orders, but also **ALLAH Himself**. **ALLAH** has duly warned us of this danger in the Holy Quran: And these are those who bury gold and silver, and spend it not in the way of god: announce unto them a most grievous penalty on the Day where that (wealth) will be heated in the fire of Hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks and their backs. “This is the treasure which you buried for yourselves: taste you, then the treasure you buried.” (9:35). This is the grave punishment awaiting the misers, who only worry about amassing wealth by all means, but do not spend according to **ALLAH's** Orders. The most coveted wealth and treasures, will be the instruments of punishment for such people. The wealth, saved after fulfilling the basic

and rightful requirements of personal and social nature, does not fall into the category of accumulation or hoarding. However, unlawful techniques to amass money fall in the column of punishable acts. If we look around ourselves, we find widespread devastating effects of this greed epidemic. The commodities sold in the market are adulterated just to make more money. Grease is used instead of cooking oil. Tea has chic pea husks in it, just to increase its volume and make more money. The milkmen will swear endlessly that they do not add water to the milk, and in reality they are right, since they actually add milk to water! Powdered bricks are added to turmeric powder, fertilizer is mixed with brown sugar. Why all this blatant violation of **ALLAH's** Orders is going on? This is all because greed has blinded mankind and they are now just slaves of desire- the lust for more and more money! A glimpse at the educational system will reveal appalling misappropriations. Counterfeit certificates are sold under an organised, wholesale system, success in examinations is dependent on the seventh paper. Why is this so? Certainly the condition of our judicial system today is even more tragic. Our courts fail to provide justice to the victims of oppression. Justice is sold, rather auctioned, in the courts run by plunderers. This environment prevails the world over. This depraved state of human beings is the result of their forgetfulness for their Creator. When they disregarded their connection with **ALLAH**, they lost their own identity. **ALLAH** says, "And be you not like those who forgot **ALLAH**; and *He* made them forget their own souls! Such are the rebellious transgressors". (59:19). Will we live on in such ignorance or we await disasters to jolt us awake from the slumber. The third aspect for our trial, regarding wealth is expenditure. The true purpose of wealth is its sound expenditure to fulfill our requirements. If we do not follow the middle path, we are bound to touch the extremes. When we start to spend lavishly, we become prodigals. One form of wastage involves lavish spending over the right cause, but this becomes a curse for the spender. Wastage of wealth is strictly prohibited in Islam.

The second form of expenditure involves wastage of money over evil purposes. This is condemned very strongly in the Quran, it says: Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the satans and the Satan is to his *Rabb* (himself) ungrateful. (17:27). This verse has categorized the prodigals as part of the community of Satan, who is a bonafide rebel of **ALLAH**. Therefore, a person who gets enrolled in the opposition camp, cannot be expected to observe the rules laid down by **ALLAH** about expenditure of wealth. The right mode of spending is the middle and the balanced way. It has been indicated in the Quran: Make not your hand tied (like a nig-

gard's) to the neck, nor stretch it forth, to the utmost reach, so that you become blameworthy and destitute. (17:29).

This is a complete guideline for our spending habits. We should not be misers whereby we don't want to spend on our own needs and those of our dependents, nor should we touch the other extreme of throwing away all our money and then crying over it. How Gracious and Kind is **ALLAH**, to guide us rightfully and also indicate the erring paths- the crossroads which may cause people to change the entire course of their lives and lead them to the pits of destruction. Still if someone does not wish to listen to his Merciful Creator, how can he evade the horrifying consequences of his own deeds? Hopefully, the meaning of the verse: "I have created jinns and human beings, only that they may worship *Me*", (51:56), is now fully understood and the term 'worship' comprehended in its true spirit.