Greater Sins, Volume 2

Ayatullah Sayyid Abdul Husayn Dastghaib

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Sayyid Abdul Husayn Dastghaib Shirazi

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In this text Ayatullah Dastghaib has exhaustively explained the phenomenon of sin, the classification of sins, the necessity of avoiding them. He has described fifty different types of Greater Sins such as: association with God (Shirk), fornication, drinking alcohol, gambling, disrespect towards parents and cutting ties with relatives.
See also volume 1 and 3 of this text.
Link to volume 1: https://www.al-islam.org/greater-sins-volume-1-sayyid-abdul-husayn-dastg... [3]
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Topic Tags:

Sin [9]
Morality [10]
Akhlaq [11]

Dedication

Our sins strike him like arrows.
When he examines the scrolls of our deeds,
He weeps at our sins.
We dedicate the book
To this same Infallible Personality.
May Allah hasten his Reappearance.

Translator's Preface

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds and benedictions upon the Messenger of Allah and his Purified Progeny (‘a)

By the Grace of the Almighty, the first volume of “Greater Sins” has been completed in English.

The significance of Moral Science and Ethics is evident from the words of the Messenger of Allah (S) when he has described the aim of his advent. He said, “I have been sent for perfecting the morals.”

The learned Alim, Ayatullah Dastghaib was one of the greatest Muallim ul-Akhlaq (Teacher of Moral Science). Some of his important books are Gunahane Kabira, Qalbe Salim, Ma’ad, Barzakh etc. His books cover various moral and ethical issues.

The book Gunahane Kabira deals with Greater Sins. Ayatullah Dastghaib has exhaustively explained the phenomenon of sin, the classification of sins, and the necessity of avoiding them. He has also described fifty different types of Greater Sins.

Although the English translation is based on the Urdu Edition, I have relied upon the original Arabic text while translating traditions and Qur’anic verses.

Since the English equivalents of Islamic terminology do not convey the exact meaning, I have used the Arabic terms. However those who are not conversant with Arabic words may refer to the Glossary of Islamic Terms.

Wassalam.
Sayyid Athar Husayn S.H.Rizvi

A Short Biography Of Ayatullah Dastaghaib Shirazi

Martyr Ayatullah Abul-Husayn Dastghaib Shirazi was a nobleman from a highly religious family that was known for its intellectual heritage going back to 800 years. Due to religious and spiritual atmosphere, resulting from such a sound Islamic background he had a natural and spontaneous tendency towards acquiring knowledge. After obtaining elmentary education in his hometown, he moved towards Najaf al-Ashraf (Iraq) in pursuit of higher knowledge.

In the town of the abode of the Chief of the believers, ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib (‘a), he continued his studies associating with the various scholars and teachers. Soon his knowledge reached a stage such that, he was granted permission by the Maraja of that time to practise Ijtehad. He then returned to his native town of Shiraz.

In Shiraz he spent thousands of tumans for the construction of the Jame Masjid Ateq which was in a highly dilapidated condition. There, he began to lecture on the exegesis of the Qur’an and ethics. His persistent efforts raised the standard of education of the Hauz al-Ilmia of Shiraz in the various fields of Fiqh, Beliefs and Moral science. The irreligious and tyrannical Shah imposed restrictions upon him and he was arrested many times. He was also put under house arrest by the autocratic ruler. After the success of the Islamic revolution, he was elected a representative at the Majlis (Iranian Parliament).

At the instance of the people of Shiraz he was designated as the representative of Imam Khomeini. The post of Imam of Jame Masjid of Shiraz was also bestowed upon him.

Martyr Dastghaib has left behind innumerable works. The most remarkable of these are: Gunahane Kabira (Greater Sins), Qalb al-Salim, Salatal Khashain, Ma’ad, at-Tawba, Zindagani al-Hazrat Zahra and Zainab al-Kubra.

Apart from these he has penned dozens of books on the improvement of morals, Fiqh and the exegesis of Qur’an. Hence, he was an excellent model of spirituality with a lofty character and a loving nature.

On that fateful day (in the year 1984) as he was proceeding to lead the Friday congregation, he was brutally killed in a bomb explosion by the hypocrites (the Capitalist agents).

Preface

By the Grace of the Almighty we present the Second Volume of Ayatullah Dastghaib Shirazi’s Greater Sins (Gunahane Kabira).

Since the publication of the first volume, the readers were eagerly waiting for the second and there were many enquiries. However, since we intended to maintain the same quality there was a delay. We hope the readers find this volume as useful and interesting as the first one.

We would like to sincerely thank Sister Zainab Muljiani for editing and revising this volume as she had helped us with Volume One. May Allah reward her for the long hours she devoted to this work.

We also request the readers to pray that Allah (a.j.) give us the Tawfeeq to publish the third and the final volume as soon as possible.

Islamic Study Circle
Mumbai
India
January 2001

The Sixteenth Greater Sin: Singing

The sixteenth Greater sin is singing songs. Traditions have graded it amongst the mortal sins. This fact is clear from the narration of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) as quoted by Amash. Muhammad Ibn Muslim relates that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) said,

"Singing is that sin which has been promised a penalty of fire (Hell) by Allah."

It is evident from numerous reports, that whichever sin incurs Hell as its punishment, is a Greater Sin. Singing too falls in that category.

What Is Singing?

Sayyid Murtadha, in his book, Wasila writes,

"Singing is Haram. It is also Haram to listen to a song or to sing for money. However every melodious sound is not a 'song'. Singing denotes a special way of prolonging the voice and rotating it in the throat. These features are common in sensuous parties. Such type of singing is usually accompanied by music."

Most of the Shi'a Mujtahids and the experts of Arabic language opine that 'singing' means the turning and rotating of one's voice in the throat. These types of strains are invariably found in classical music and Qawwalis. A prolonged tune of a-a-a is produced. In the dictionary, 'Sihah' it is mentioned that singing is a sound which produces a strange type of sorrow or pleasure in the listener. The other dictionaries almost agree to this definition. In brief, singing or song is a sound that makes a man unusually sad or joyful.

The book Zakhiratul Ebad says: "Every sound that is produced for entertainment and is capable of exciting passion is known as 'singing.' It could be produced by making it emanate from the throat like in classical music or by any other means. In brief whatever is understood by common sense as a song is Haram. Consequently it is sinful even to recite the Holy Qur'an, Nauha or Marsiya in the tune of songs. In fact this is more sinful than singing songs for it tantamounts to insulting and degrading the Qur'an and Nauha or Marsiya. It is for this reason that this type of sin deserves double the punishment.

About Singing

1. Singing Is A Greater Sin

When Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) said,

“Singing is that Sin which has been promised the penalty of fire (Hell) by Allah” he (‘a) had also recited the following verse of the Holy Qur’an:

“And of men is he who takes instead frivolous discourse to lead astray from Allah’s path without knowledge and to take it for a mockery; these shall have an abasing chastisement.” (***Surah Luqman 31:6***).

2. “Frivolous Discourse” Implies Singing

Bringing together the above verse and the tradition of Imam al-Baqir (‘a), singing is understood to be one of the ‘frivolous’and ‘evil’ acts. Other worthless acts are aimless talk or action, or poetry which is of no good to the people; all these deprive man of benefit.

In other words, anything that restrains one from following the truth and the Holy Qur’an is a ‘frivolous discourse.’ Anything that leads one astray is ‘frivolous discourse.’ All those things that create passion and sensuality, sin and transgression are ‘frivolous discourse.’ It is a sin whether one sings or listens to a song. The Qur’anic verse quoted above is followed by:

“And when our communications are recited to him, he turns back proudly, as if he had not heard them, as though in his ears were a heaviness, therefore announce to him a painful chastisement.” (***Surah Luqman 31:7***).

3. The Exegesis (Tafsir) Of The Term “False Words”

In addition to the phrase ‘frivolous discourse,’ the Holy Qur’an also refers to singing by the term, ‘False words.’ Abu Basir inquired from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a), the exegesis of the following ayat:

“… and avoid false words.” (***Surah Hajj 22:30***).

The Imam (‘a) replied,

“(It means) singing.”

In explanation to the ayat,

“And they who do not bear witness to what is false, and when they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly.” (***Surah al-Furqan 25:72***).

Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (‘a) remarked,

“(Vain means) singing.”[1]

In yet another tradition, when Muhammad Ibn Uthman inquired about the meaning of this ayat, Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (‘a) answered,

“It includes the evil words of one who is singing.”

4. “False Words” Denote Singing

The later portion of the same verse says,

“… and when they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly.” **(*Surah al-Furqan 25:72*).**

Thus, according to the holy Qur’an when the righteous people pass by, where songs are being played, they pass in a dignified manner, uninfluenced and unimpressed by them.

A similar kind of verse appears in Surah Al-Mum’inun, as well:

“And who keep aloof from what is vain.” **(*Surah al-Mum’inun 23:3*).**

Both the above verses describe the qualities of a believer. Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) and later Imam al-Ridha (‘a), have both explained the term “vain words” as follows:

“Vain words imply music and singing and the true worshipers of Allah refrain from these.”[2]

5. Singing And Hypocrisy

The sixth Holy Imam, Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) said,

“Listening to music, songs and useless words cultivate hypocrisy in the heart, in the same way as algae grows in water.”[3]

The same book, al-Kafi mentions a tradition of Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) that,

“Singing and music is a nest for the bird called hypocrisy.”

6. Singing Programme

The venue of a singing programme is a place where descends divine retribution. Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) says:

“Do not even enter houses, the inhabitants of which are deprived of divine mercy.”

He (‘a) is reported to have also said,

“The house where music is played is not safe from sudden disasters. Supplications at such a place are not answered. Angels do not enter this place.”4

It has been established in the preceding chapter that when the divine punishment descends, it does not discriminate. The excuse, “Though we go to places where there is music and song, but we dislike it in our hearts”, seems unlikely to be acceptable. Dislike needs to be expressed by ones action, also. Songs and music should be discouraged.

7. Singing Causes Poverty

Amir ul-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) says,

“Singing creates hypocrisy and causes poverty.”5

8. Punishment For Singing

The Holy Prophet (S) has explicitly stated,

“When the singer shall rise from his grave on the Day of Judgement, he will be blind, deaf and dumb.”6

The traditions also state that the singer will be recognised by these very signs, i.e., blindness, deafness etc.

In another tradition Holy Prophet (S) is quoted to have said:

“Molten lead shall be poured into the ears of one who listens to songs, intently.”7

Deprived Of Divine Mercy

Qutub al-Rawandi has recorded from the Holy Prophet (S),

“The singer is from that group of people, who would not be looked upon with mercy by Allah on the Day of judgement.”

A Fan Of A Singer

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) says:

“One who respects a speaker, becomes his slave. If the speaker calls towards Allah the listener worships Allah, but if he calls towards shaitan, the listener has worshipped shaitan.”8

It is also narrated from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) that he said,

“Whenever a person begins singing, two satans mount on his shoulders and continue to hit their heels

upon his chest, till the time he sings the song."

Is the one kicked by the satans to be loved and admired?

Melodious Sounds Of Paradise

Hazrat Imam 'Ali Ibn Musa al-Ridha ('a) said,

"One who avoids songs shall be provided by Allah, a tree, which will produce such a melodious sound as has never been heard by anyone. But the one who has not kept himself aloof from songs will not be able to hear this sound."[9]

Beautiful Songs In Heaven

The following tradition of Allah's Messenger (S) is recorded in the book Tafsir Majmaul Bayan,

"One who has listened to too many songs will not be able to hear the Ruhanis on the Day of Qiyama."

"Who are the *Ruhanis*, O Prophet of Allah (S)?" someone asked.

The Prophet (S) replied,

"They are the melodious singers of Heaven."

A similar tradition from Hazrat 'Ali ('a) is found in Nahjul Balagha,

"Hazrat Dawud ('a) will be the chief of the singers of Paradise."[10]

The people will listen to such melodious songs from Hazrat Dawud ('a) in Heaven, the like of which have never been heard by anyone. However only those who have refrained from listening to songs in this world would be able to hear them.

Strict Prohibition

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

"Calamities will befall my Umma as sinking of the earth and rain of stones."

The people asked, "When would it happen?"

"When the instruments of music become common, singing girls are in great number and the use of intoxicants is widespread. By Allah, many people of my Umma will be such that they shall spend the night in merry-making and sensuality and in the daytime become like monkeys and pigs. It will be the consequence of considering the prohibited things permissible, they will be occupied with singing girls,

frequently take intoxicants, devour interest and shall dress in clothes made of silk."

Singing And Fornication

Singing instigates one to commit fornication. The Holy Prophet (S) said:

"Singing is the stepping stone to fornication."[11]

Songs are responsible for awakening the latent sensual desires of man, which are soon manifested. It is the same whether one sings a song or merely listens to it. He forgets Allah (S.w.T.) and is prepared to commit any kind of indecency.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says,

"And all those wasteful pastimes are Haram which make one forgetful of Allah; like songs and playing musical instruments."

Yes! Music makes one shameless and lacking in self-respect. It also destroys the feeling of love, compassion and mercy, reducing society to a nightmare.

Prohibition Regarding Songs And Singing

There is no difference of opinion among the Shi'a jurists about the illegality of singing. It can be said that there is 'ijma' (unanimity) upon this point. The writer of the book, titled Mustanad says, "To consider singing and music 'Haram' is one of the necessities of faith. That is, if a Muslim says that singing is not Haram then he becomes a kafir." According to the author of Izah, "the traditions that state that music and singing is Haram, are mutawatir (very numerous)."

However a slight difference of opinion exists, as to the meaning and connotation of the word 'song'. The majority of the Mujtahids believe that any kind of sound, capable of creating a desire for joyful mirth and sensual feelings is a song; and it is Haram.

Reciting Qur'an In Tune Of Songs

As we have stated earlier, it is Haram to recite Qur'an in the characteristics of songs. Similarly it is also Haram to recite Nauhas, Marsiya or Azan in this way; it is immaterial whether it is poetry or prose that is being recited. Rather, rendering of the sacred compositions into songs carries double punishments. One for the sin of singing songs and the other for causing disrespect to a sacred text.

Reciting Qur'an In A Melodious Voice

Every melodious sound is not a song. If Qur'an or Nauha is recited in a pleasant voice without unduly turning it in the throat, it is not Haram, rather it is desirable to do so. The Messenger of Allah (S) is reported to have said,

"Recite the Qur'an in a pleasant voice, in the style of Arabs. You are ordered to avoid the transgressors and doers of greater sins. Certainly, such people will appear in the world who will recite the Qur'an in a singing manner to make the listeners emotional. It is not allowed to go near these people or to call them near you. The hearts of these people have deviated and those who are influenced by them shall also have their hearts deviated."12

Pleasant Voice And Singing

While describing the signs of the arrival of the Day of Judgement, the Prophet of Allah (S) said:

"Such kind of people will appear in the world that they would learn the Qur'an for worldly benefits and will recite it in a singing tune."

However there are many traditions to the effect that reciting the Qur'an in a pleasant voice is Mustahab (recommended). However we must ensure that its tone is not that of singing.

Singing And Music During Weddings

Subject to the following Three conditions some of the Mujtahids have allowed women to sing on the occasion of marriages.

1. The first condition is that no grown-up men should be able to hear the singing. Not even those who are mahram (under the prohibited degree).

2. Secondly, the songs must not be loud and also must not be based on false statements.

3. And lastly, the singing must not be accompanied with any kind of music.

A few scholars have permitted playing of the small tambourine (tambourine is a drum with skin on only one of its sides). Shahid al-Thani and Muhaqqiq al-Thani say that tambourine could be played in a wedding if it does not have tinkles around it.

However, precaution is desirable and hence on the occasion of weddings also women should avoid singing; the playing of tambourine should also be avoided. Shaykh al-Ansari (r.a.) quotes Shahid al-Thani in the book, Makasib and Sayyid Murtadha says in his book Wasila that, "Precaution is the way to salvation."

1. Refer Amali of Shaykh Tusi and also the book al-Kafi.
2. al-Kafi.
3. al-Kafi.
4. al-Kafi and Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
5. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il, chapter 78.
6. Jameal-Akhbar.
7. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
8. Furu al-Kafi.
9. al-Kafi.
10. Nahjul Balagha.
11. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
12. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.

The Seventeenth Greater Sin: Lying

Lying is another sin which is classified among the Greater sins. The famous scholar, Shaykh al-Ansari (r.a.) writes in his book, Makasib al-Muharrama:

"Common sense suggests lying is Haram, all the revealed religions also say so; particularly Islam. The Qur'an is explicit in this regard. The corpus of hadith (opinion of the majority of the jurists) verifies this tenet and reason also sustains this assertion."

Lying is listed with the greater sins in the narration of Fazl Ibn Shazan from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a).

Lying Is One Of The Greatest Sins

A tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) declares,

"Beware I inform you regarding the greatest of the mortal sins: Associating anything with Allah, disobeying parents and lying!"1

A similar tradition has been quoted from Imam al-Hasan al-Askari ('a) also,

"All the evils have been locked in a room and its key is lying."2

Angels Curse The Liars

The Prophet of Islam in another tradition is quoted to have said,

"When a believer utters a lie without a valid excuse, he is cursed by seventy thousand angels. Such a stench emanates from his heart that it reaches the sky and because of this single lie Allah writes for him

a sin equivalent to that of committing seventy fornications. Such fornications that the least of which is fornication with ones mother."[3]

Undoubtedly, lying is the worst of sins. It is obvious that the evils of lying are more dreadful than those of adultery. Some false words lead to war between two tribes or two sections of the society. Some lies blight the honour of thousands of people or endanger their lives, or lead to economic disasters.

One kind of falsehood is that which is attributed to Allah (S.w.T.), the Holy Prophet (S) or the Holy Imams ('a). Understandably this is the worst kind of falsehood. Often due to lying, innocent people are sent to the gallows and their families destroyed. It is for this very reason that the traditions state:

"Lying is an evil, greater than drinking wine."

Qur'anic Verses & Ahadith That Denounce Lying

Allah the Almighty says in Surah an-Nahl, verse 105:

"Only they forge the lie who do not believe in Allah's communications, and these are the liars." (***Surah an-Nahl 16:105***).

And in Surah az-Zumar it is mentioned:

"Surely Allah does not guide him aright who is a liar, ungrateful." (***Surah az-Zumar 39:3***).

It can be understood from the verses of the Qur'an that a liar calls for divine curse and invites the anger of Allah (S.w.T.).

For example:

"... and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars." (***Surah Ali- Imran 3:61***).

And also:

"... the curse of Allah be on him if he is one of the liars." (***Surah an-Nur 24:8***).

A large number of Qur'anic verses and traditions condemn the sin of lying and describe its evil consequences. The late Haji Nuri has collected these verses and traditions and classified them into forty points for easy recalling and reference. We shall quote them for the benefit of our readers.

1. Lying Is Transgression

Allah (S.w.T.) says in Surah al-Baqarah:

"...there shall be no intercourse nor transgression nor quarreling amongst one another (***during***

***Hajj*).” (*Surah al-Baqarah 2:197*).**

The word “transgression” in this ayat refers to falsehood or lying.

Again in Surah al-Hujurat it is mentioned:

“O you who believe! If an evil-doer comes to you with a report, look carefully into it, lest you harm a people in ignorance, then be sorry for what you have done.” (Surah al-Hujurat 49:6).

This ayat was revealed for Walid, who is mentioned as an “evil-doer”; i.e. a liar.

2. Meaning Of The Term “False Words”

Alongwith the prohibition of worshipping idols it is ordered by Allah (S.w.T.) to abstain from falsehood.

“…therefore avoid the uncleanness of the idols and avoid false words.” (Surah Hajj 22:30).

In this verse ‘false words’ mean lying.

3. The Liar Is Not A Believer

One of the verses quoted above demonstrates that a liar is not a believer and one who is a believer never speaks a lie. The verse pronounces:

“Only they forge the lie who do not believe in the signs of Allah.” (Surah an-Nahl 16:105).

For it is clear that one who disbelieves in the divine communications cannot be a Mu’min (believer).

4. Lying Is An Evil And A Sin

Traditions have mentioned lying as a sin and an evil. For example, Hazrat Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) says:

“Falsehood is absolutely an evil and a sin.”

5. The Liar Is Accursed

The liar is eligible for divine curse and Allah (S.w.T.) causes His retribution to descend upon him.”

For example:

“…the curse of Allah be on him if he is one of the liars.” (Surah an-Nur 24:8).

6. The Blackened Face Of The Liar

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“Beware of falsehood! Because falsehood blackens the face.”[4]

An interesting incident is found in the book, Habibus Sayr:

Sultan Husayn Mirza, the king of Khorasan and Zablistan, sent one of his envoys to Sultan Yaqub Mirza, the king of Azerbaijan and Iraq. The envoy carried with him books and other gifts. The Sultan had ordered the inclusion of the book Kulliyat al-Jami in the set of books. It was a very popular book in those days. Amir Husayn Abiravi, the envoy, in his haste packed the book Futuhat al-Makki instead of Kulliyat al-Jami. On reaching Iraq, he found a hospitable host in the ruler of Iraq. He was asked, “You must have been bored during this long journey?”

The envoy replied, “Not at all! The Sultan has sent for you Kulliyat al-Jami. So whenever we halted, I read some portions of it and passed my time.”

Sultan Yaqub was eager to see the book. But, when he ordered for it, it was not found to the embarrassment of the envoy.

The king demanded, “Aren’t you ashamed to utter such a lie?”

The envoy says, “I left the court ashamed and returned home without a reply to my Sultan’s letter. I did not even halt or rest during the journey to Khorasan. I felt death would have been better for me, rather than uttering such a lie.”

7. Sin Of Lying Is Worse Than Drinking Wine

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) says:

“Certainly Allah has created the lock for every evil and the key to all these locks is drinking wine. But lying is worse than drinking.”[5]

Wine disables reason and sense, but lying kills the reason. It makes one so insensate that he becomes ready to commit any kind of satanic act. An alcoholic when under the influence of alcohol is not in his proper senses, and thus it is not possible for him to act with cunningness and treachery. But a liar can cause untold mischief in the society through his cunningness; much more than a drunkard can.

8. The Foul-Smelling Mouth Of The Liar

It is recorded in a tradition that on the Day of Judgement the mouth of a liar will give an awful smell.

9. The Angels Abhor The Liars

The smell of a liar’s mouth would be so disgusting that even the Angels will not go near him. They will keep away from the liars. This is not only for the Day of Judgement. Even in this world, the Angels can

smell the foul odour from the mouths of the liars. In a prophetic tradition it is said,

“When a believer utters a lie, such a bad smell emanates from his mouth that even the Angels move away.”[6]

10. Lying Is Disbelief (Kufr)

The Almighty Allah curses the liars, as is evident from the verse of Mubahala[7] and the verse of ‘Lam’[8].

A mention about this has been made earlier.

11. The Stench From The Liar’s Mouth Reaches The Skies

12. It Is Also Recorded That The Angels Of The Sky Curse The Liars

13. Falsehood Spoils Faith

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) says:

“Lying destroys Faith”[9]

14. Falsehood Deprives The Liar From The Taste Of Faith

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) says:

“Every believer is deprived from the taste of faith till he gives up lying seriously and also in jest.”[10]

15. According To Traditional Reports, Lying Causes Animosity And Hatred Between People

16. The Vice Of Lying Questions The Character Of The Liar

A tradition of the Prophet (S) says:

“The least forbearing is the one who is a liar.”[11]

17. The Traditions From Ma’sumin (‘A) Inform Us That All The Evils Are Locked In A Room And The Key To That Room Is Lying

18. Lying Is A Sin And A Transgression

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said.

“Avoid speaking falsehood, because it is a kind of evil and transgression. And both of them belong to Hell.” (They make one eligible for Hell).[12]

19. According To Other Reports, Seventy Thousand Angels Curse The Liar

20. Lying Is A Sign Of A Hypocrite

The following tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) is present in the book of Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il:

"The Three signs of a hypocrite are:

Lying, betraying trust and going back on his word (Not fulfilling a promise)."

21. The Islamic Shari'a Does Not Pay Heed To A Liar's Advice

In this regard the Holy Prophet (S) remarked:

"The advice of a liar has no value."[13]

22. Falsehood Is The Worst Of The Psychological Ailments

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) says:

"The disease of lying is the most dreadful of the (psychological) diseases."[14]

23. Lying Is An Embellishment Of Satan's Hands

A narration of the Prophet (S) is as follows:

"Certainly, Iblis applies antimony (surma), wears a ring and uses snuff. His antimony is laziness and dozing, the ring of his finger is lying and his snuff is pride and arrogance."

24. The Worst Earning Of A Man Is Falsehood

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

"The worst of the profit is from the trade called 'lying'."[15]

Yes! It is a fact that by lying, a person is liable for punishment more than for any other sin.

25. A Man Came To The Holy Prophet (S) And Asked

A man came to the Holy Prophet (S) and asked "Which action makes the highest number of people the inmates of Hell?"

The Holy Prophet (S) replied,

"Lying. When a believer speaks a lie, he becomes prone to commit every other sin; and when this

happens, he commits kufr (disbelief) which then makes him enter Hell."[16]

26. Lying Causes Forgetfulness

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) is reported to have said,

"One of the divine punishments for too much lying is that Allah makes the liar afflicted with forgetfulness."[17]

Thus a man speaks a lie and then forgets his lie. Consequently people come to know that he has spoken a lie and his falsity is exposed to the people.

Now to save his skin he speaks more lies and is insulted further because his forgetfulness does not enable him to hide his false statements.

27. Falsehood Is One Of The Doors Of Hypocrisy

28. Terrible Punishment For The Liars

A liar is inflicted with several kinds of punishments. Aqa Rawandi has quoted a lengthy tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) in his book Dawat. The Prophet (S) while describing the spectacle of Mi'raj (Ascension) said:

"I saw a man, who lay flat on his back while an angel mounted his head. The angel who was standing upon the head had a pointed iron rod. He repeatedly injured the sleeping person. The face of the victim was shattered upto the neck. But when the rod was lifted the head returned to its original form. Again the rod was hit on the face and the man suffered the same retribution."

The Holy Prophet (S) says that he inquired,

"Why is this man punished?"

He was told, "This is a man who left his home in the morning and uttered a lie that caused harm to the people. So he shall be punished in this manner (after death) till the Day of Qiyama."

30. The Liar Is Deprived Of Salat Al-Shab (Tahajjud – Salat ul-Layl)

The liar is deprived of Salat al-Shab (Tahajjud – Salat ul-Layl) and in this way he is also deprived of the benefits that accrue from Salat al-Shab (Tahajjud – Salat ul-Layl) and one of these benefits is the increase in sustenance. Sharifi narrates from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) that he said,

"Doubtlessly, when a man speaks a lie, he is not able to get the opportunity of (performing) Salat al-Shab (Tahajjud – Salat ul-Layl). And when he doesn't get this opportunity (to perform Salat al-Shab) he does not get an increase in his sustenance.

31. Falsehood Deprives The Liar From True Guidance And Causes Him To Deviate

The Qur'an says:

"And Allah does not guide the unjust people." **(*Sura al-Jumu'a' 62:5*).**

32. Politeness And Civility Are Removed From The One Who Lies

Hazrat Isa Ibn Maryam ('a) is reported to have said,

"Civility abandons the one who is a frequent liar."[18]

Then no one is attracted towards him and no one finds any emotional attachment with him.

33. Falsehood Is The Most Outrageous Kind Of Evil And An Abomination

34. We Have Proved Falsehood To Be A Greater Sin

35. Lying Is Poles Apart From Belief

In fact a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) says:

"Falsehood is inversely proportional to belief."

That is; when falsehood increases, belief decreases.

36. The Greatest Sinner Is The One Who Has Lied

The Prophet of Allah (S) said:

"The greatest of the sins is talkativeness and falsehood."[19]

37. The Liar Is Doomed Because Of The Lies That He Utters

The Messenger of Allah (S) says:

"Avoid falsehood. For it may appear to be a way of salvation, whereas in reality it leads to destruction."[20]

38. The Liar Does Not Deserve Friendship And Brotherhood

The Chief of the believers, 'Ali ('a) says:

"Every Muslim is supposed to avoid friendship and brotherhood with a compulsive liar. Because one who befriends a liar is himself considered a liar. Even if he speaks the truth, he is not trusted."[21]

39. The Liar Is Kept Away From Truth And Reality

- ***"...surely Allah does not guide him aright who is a liar, ungrateful."*** **(*Surah az-Zumar 39:3*).**

- ***"...Surely Allah does not guide him who is extravagant, a liar."*** **(*Surah Ghafir, 40:34*).**

40. Inhuman Form Of The Liar In Barzakh

The liar has a human form only in this world. In Barzakh he does not retain the human form. While describing the scenes of Mi'raj, the Holy Prophet (S) told Janabe Fatimah al-Zahra ('a):

"On the night of Mi'raj I saw a woman whose head resembled a pig and her body was like that of a donkey. It was because she spread discord and told lies."[22]

Various Grades Of Lying

Although, Shahid al-Thani and many other Mujtahids consider every kind of falsehood to be absolutely Haram and a great sin, yet we find in traditions that falsehood is of different grades. Among these different kinds of lies, are some that are certainly greatest of the sins and some are among the greater sins. There are also some types of lying about whom there exists a doubt whether they are "greater" or not. Let us examine each kind of falsehood.

Falsehood Against Allah (S.W.T.), The Prophet (S) And The Imams ('A)

The worst kind of falsehood is what one utters against Allah (S.w.T.) the Almighty, His Prophet (S) and the Imams ('a). The divine book, Qur'an says:

"And, for what your tongues describe, do not utter the lie, (saying) this is lawful and this is unlawful, in order to forge a lie against Allah; surely those who forge a lie against Allah shall not prosper. A little enjoyment and they shall have a painful punishment." **(*Surah an-Nahl 16:116-117*).**

The sixth holy Imam, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"To attribute falsehood to Allah and this Holy Prophet (S) is the greatest sin."[23]

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) also told Abu Noman:

"Do not attribute falsehood to us. Such a lie will expel you from the upright faith (Islam)."[24]

This means that even if a single falsehood is attributed to the Imams ('a) the light of faith is extinguished

from the heart. It is such a serious sin that if one intentionally commits it during the fast of Ramzan, his fast is invalidated.

Every Type Of Falsehood

Every kind of lie and every method of speaking an untruth is Haram. Just as it is Haram to speak a lie with the tongue it is similarly Haram to write something false. Even to point a finger in expressing a lie is "Haram." For example if a person who does not pray is asked by another, "Have you performed Salat?" and he nods his head. This tantamounts to lying and is a sin. Similarly propagating the words of a liar while being aware that they are untrue is Haram, and so is supporting a liar.

Interpreting The Qur'anic Verses And Traditions To Suit Oneself

Attributing falsehood to Allah (S.w.T.), the Holy Prophet (S) and Imams ('a) means that one fabricates a saying and attributes it to them. For example, saying that the Holy Prophet (S) has said such and such thing, while knowing that it is an absolute lie, or to say that such and such is a Qur'anic verse, when it is certain that it is not a part of the Holy Qur'an. Similarly, it is Haram to distort the apparent and the true meanings of the Qur'anic verses and traditions to suit ones desire or to prove ones point. Incorrect translation of the Holy verses and traditions is also a falsehood.

It Is Not An Easy Job

It is for this very reason that most people are not eligible to speak from the pulpit. It is not an easy task to translate the ayats and traditions and explain their meanings in the speech. There is a need to exercise utmost caution in such risky situations. One who has not studied the rules of Arabic grammar properly will inadvertently misunderstand the saying of the Holy Prophet (S) and the Holy Imams ('a) He is bound to err even while explaining the apparent meaning. Therefore the speakers must make it a point to say only the apparent meaning of the ayats and the traditions. They must especially abstain from the exegesis of the ambiguous verses.

A Kind Of Falsehood Attributed To Allah (S.W.T.)

An example of this kind of lie is when a lying person, in order, to prove his statement says:

"Allah is a witness that I am speaking the truth." Or, "Allah knows that I am saying the truth."

There is a saying of Imam Ja'far al–Sadiq ('a):

"One who says, "Allah knows,"where as Allah does not (i.e He knows the opposite of it), the heaven shudder at the Might (and the anger) of Allah"[25]

In another tradition, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"When a man says, 'Allah knows' while what he says is a lie, Allah tells him, 'Didn't you find anyone else to attribute a falsehood to?'"[26]

In some traditions it is mentioned that when a person makes Allah (S.w.T.) a witness for a falsehood Allah (S.w.T.) says, "Didn't you find anyone weaker than Me to be a witness for your falsehood?"

Falsehood Against The Prophet (S) And Imams ('A)

It implies fabricating a tradition and then attributing it to the Holy Prophet (S) or the Imams ('a). In the same way it is Haram to knowingly propagate a weak tradition. However if one is sure of the proper references then he can quote the tradition and attribute it to the Ma'sumin ('a).

Traditions Must Be Quoted With The Chain Of Narrators

Numerous traditions are found in the books and one is not sure whether they are authentic or not. In this case one can give the name of the narrator and also provide the title of the book as reference. However one must be certain that the tradition is not against the Zururiyat ad-Din, (the necessities of Faith). If there is anything against the basics of the principles of religion it is most certainly a fabricated tradition. Similarly there must not be any sort of disrespect to the Ma'sumin ('a), nor should the tradition be against reason. Lastly as a precautionary measure one must quote only from the reliable books.

The fifth Holy Imam, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) has said:

"And do not quote (a tradition) except from a reliable authority, otherwise you will fabricate a great falsehood. And falsehood debases you (in the sight of Allah and His creatures)."[27]

The Sermon of Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) to Harith al-Hamadani also contains the following advice:

"Do not quote everything circulating among the common people. It suffices to be a falsehood."[28]

Hence whenever quoting a tradition it is necessary to mention its source. Not a single word must be deleted or added, and not even a single word must be replaced, because in all such cases it would amount to attributing falsehood to the Ma'sumin ('a).

The honourable Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

"One who attributes something to me, which I have not said, shall sit in the Fire."[29]

Aqa Nuri writes in his book Darus Salam:

"A person came to Aga Muhammad 'Ali a pious scholar and author of the book Magame, and said:

“I dreamt that I am tearing at the flesh of Imam Husayn (‘a) with my eenth. What is the interpretation of this dream?”

Aga Muhammad ‘Ali pondered a while and then said:

“You must be a preacher, relating the tragedies (Masaeb).”

The man replied in the positive.

Aga Muhammad ‘Ali told him, “Either you give up this profession or quote only from reliable books.”

Another similar anecdote is recorded in the book, Shifaus-sudoor. A preacher was reciting a majlis in the presence of Ayatullah Al-Haj Muhammad Ibrahim Kalbasi. He was saying that Hazrat Imam Husayn (‘a) said, “Zainab, O Zainab!”

Upon hearing this Ayatullah Kalbasi loudly exclaimed, “May Allah break your mouth! Imam (‘a) did not say ‘Zainab’ twice, he had said it only once.

1. Relating The Contents Of The Narrations

However it is permitted to render the import of traditions in ones own words but it is a must that the speaker should be well versed with the Arabic language and also be capable of understanding the usage. Thus, it is allowed to relate the contents of the tradition in ones own words.

When it is not disrespectful to the Ma’sumin (‘a), poetry could be rendered into prose and vice-versa. In the same way the past event could be quoted in the present tense. For example if one intends to say that, “a person came to Imam (‘a) and said....” He could say, “a person comes to Imam (‘a) and Imam (‘a) tells him.” However, the audience should be aware that what is being related in the present tense has actually passed. In the same way if the traditions say that Imam (‘a) has prohibited something, the speaker could say, “Imam (‘a) said, ‘Do not do it!’”

2. False Oath And Avoiding Testimony

Another grade of falsehood is a false oath, false evidence and escaping from testifying in an Islamic court. This type of falsehood is also confirmed as a greater sin. Each one of these shall be described in detail in the following pages.

3. The Evil Effects Of Falsehood

To lie is surely a great sin, with obvious evil effects, due to the harm it can cause others. The more harmful a lie, the more serious is the sin associated with it. For example, a lie causing monetary loss is definitely less serious than the one that causes loss of a human life.

4. Lying In Jest And Pleasantry

Lying in jest is another kind of falsehood. For instance, telling a simpleton that, “A certain lady wants to marry you,” or “that person has invited you for dinner tonight,” when actually there is no truth in it. This type of falsehood is also Haram as proved conclusively from the traditions.

Certain Mujtahids opine that if something untrue is said in jest, and it is clearly understood to be a joke, then it is permitted. However, other Mujtahids regard even a falsehood in jest to be absolutely Haram, whether it is an apparent joke or not, as a precautionary measure. The traditions also confirm that lying even in jest is not permitted.

Total Abstinence From Lying

Hazrat Imam Zayn ul–’Abidin (‘a) says,

“Avoid falsehood, whether it is small or big, in solemnity or jest.”30

Hazrat Amir ul–Mu’minin (‘a) said,

“No man can taste faith, till the time he completely forgoes lying, in solemnity and in jest.”31

It is also related from Amir ul–Mu’minin (‘a) that he said:

“There is no merit in falsehood, whether in seriousness or in jest. Do not even promise your child something if you do not intend to fulfill it. Certainly, falsehood leads man to sin (fearlessly) and (this) leads to the Fire.”32

The Holy Prophet (S) in his advice to Abu Dharr al–Ghaffari (r.a.) says:

“O Abu Dharr one who protects his private parts and his tongue shall enter Paradise. One who utters a small falsehood in company of people to make them laugh, that same lie shall take him towards Hell.”

“O Abu Dharr, woe be upon the one who speaks falsehood to make people laugh. Woe be upon him woe be upon him O Abu Dharr. One who remains silent will obtain salvation. Then silence is a must for you (in place of falsehood). Not even the smallest lie should be uttered by you.”

Abu Dharr (r.a.) says that he asked,

“O Messenger of Allah, what is the repentance of the one who has intentionally spoken a lie?”

The Holy Prophet (S) replied:

“The sin shall be erased by Istighfar (seeking forgiveness) and by the five–times prayers.”33

The Prophet of Allah (S) is quoted to have also said:

“Curse be upon the liar if he has lied in jest.”

It is also narrated from the Messenger of Allah (S) that he remarked,

“I guarantee a house in the best part of Paradise for one who refrains from a dispute even when he is on the right, and a house in the medium-grade area of Heaven for one who refrains from falsehood even in jest, and a house in the garden of Paradise for a person with the best morals.”[34]

Lying in jest is a sin but it is not a greater sin. However if this joke hurts the feelings of a believer or causes him physical harm or is an insult to him, it will be a greater sin.

Exaggeration Is Not Falsehood

Common hyperboles in a conversation are not falsehood. For example after relating a certain thing one says:

“I have told you a hundred times!” Obviously, he has not repeated his statement a hundred times and it is also clear that by “hundred” he does not imply the figure “100”; but rather it means that he has said it a number of times.

Similarly other figures of speech are also permitted, especially in poetry.

No Falsehood Should Be Regarded As Insignificant

It is commonly seen that when the host asks his guests to stay on for dinner or lunch, the guests say, “we are not hungry;” although in reality it is not so. Consequently it is a lie. People tend to ignore such lies and consider them insignificant. The traditions denounce them in unequivocal words, and their prohibition is clearly established in the Islamic law.

Asma Bint Umais says:

“On the first night of Ayesha’s wedding, the Holy Prophet (S) gave me a bowl of milk and told me to give it to the ladies. The women said, “we are not hungry.” When the Holy Prophet (S) heard this, He said:

“Do not bring together hunger and falsehood.”

Asma asked the Prophet (S),

“O Messenger of Allah (S), if we desire something but verbally refuse it, is it a lie?”

The Holy Prophet (S) said,

“Yes! Certainly every kind of falsehood is recorded, (in the scroll of deeds) even the smallest of the small lies is written.”[35]

If a person, just for the sake of formality, invites others, “Please come, and visit us sometimes,” when he actually does not desire so, it is not a lie. Because the word “come” is conditional and uncertain. It is neither a truth nor a falsehood. But it is better to refrain from such a show of politeness, because to say something which you do not mean is a sign of hypocrisy.

One day, Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) was seated with his son Ismail when one of his followers arrived, saluted him and sat down. When the Imam (‘a) stood up and walked towards the ladies portion, the man also followed till the door. Imam (‘a) bid farewell to him from there. Later, Ismail asked his father, “Why didn’t you invite him inside just for the politeness sake?”

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) said,

“It was not proper to invite him inside. I did not wish him to come inside. Neither did I wish that Allah should include me among those who say one thing and wish another.”[36]

A False Dream

One type of falsehood is that a person says:

“I dreamt such and such.” Or attributes falsely a dream to someone else when it is not so. This is also falsehood.

The Holy Prophet (S) says: *“the worst types of falsehood are three:*

To call someone as the son of someone other than his (real) father.

To relate a dream that one has not seen.

To say something which is not said by me.

One kind of falsehood is to relate folk tales, which are not based on reality but are considered true. The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“The worst of the narrations is to narrate false history.”

Falsehood In Examples

Examples are used to explain, understand and remember some intellectual concepts. Sometimes, animals are shown as conversing among themselves. (For example, there is a poem by Allamah Iqbal where a squirrel advises the mountain to give up pride). Now everyone knows that such things are not

possible so there is no risk of anyone having a misunderstanding. On the other hand they serve a useful purpose. Hence such examples are permitted. We find such types of examples in the narrations of Ahl ul-Bayt (‘a).

Moreover there are also narrations that prove the permissibility of explaining facts and truthful concepts through the media of stories and anecdotes.

Imam al-Hasan (‘A) Mentions A Simile

Hazrat Imam al-Hasan (‘a) was in the court of Muawiya when a man said something uncivil about Imam (‘a). Imam al-Hasan (‘a) replied:

“O Umar Ibn Uthman! How stupid is your nature that you cannot understand. Your simile is like the mosquito that considered itself great. It perched on a date palm and when it took off in the air it said to date palm,

‘Be careful! I am about to land on you once more.’

The tree replied, ‘I don’t even know since when you had perched upon me, so how can your flying away affect me?’

Listening To A Lie Is Haram

It must be known that just as it is Haram to speak falsehood, it is also Haram to listen to it while knowing that it is a lie. And just as it is Haram to read or write falsehood, it is also Haram to quote a lie. The Qur’an has denounced the Jews and the polytheists for spreading untrue things. It is said regarding them,

***“(They are) listeners of a lie.”* (*Surah al-Ma’ida 5:42*).**

Shaykh Saduq (r.a.) has recorded that Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) was asked,

“Is it allowed to listen intently to a liar?”

Imam (‘a) replied,

“One who listens intently to a speaker, worships him. If the speaker is (speaking) from Allah the listener has worshipped Allah. But if the speaker is (speaking) from Satan the listener has worshipped Satan.”

A similar kind of tradition is recorded from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) in the book al-Kafi.

The Qur’an says,

***“…and avoid false words.”* (*Surah Hajj 22:30*).**

And also,

"And they who do not bear witness to what is false..." **(*Surah al-Furqan 25:72*).**

These types of verses confirm the impermissibility of listening to falsehood. When a liar is speaking a lie which is a great sin, the place where he commits this sin becomes a place of divine wrath and the listener shall also be included in it.

From the aspect of Nahy Anil Munkar (Forbidding Evil) also, it is Wajib to restrain the liar from speaking falsehood.

What Is Tawriyah? (Concealment Of Truth Without Uttering A Lie)

Tawriyah means to say something, which could be interpreted in more that one way. One of the meanings should be the truth and the other against reality. It is said that one who speaks a 'Tawriyah' intends the true interpretation whereas the listeners take it to mean the opposite. For example if a tyrant comes to your place and wants to call you outside but you want to remain in the safety of your home, a person from your family can go to the door and say, 'He is not here'; with the intention the 'He' is not at the door. The tyrant may think that you are not at home. This is permitted.

Or if an oppressor is asking you the whereabouts of a person whom he intends to oppress. In this case you can say, 'I do not know his whereabouts'; signifying by the pronoun 'his' someone else whose whereabouts you really do not know. In the same way if one has committed a greater sin and someone asks him, "Have you committed this sin?" The person could save his honour by saying, "I shall seek forgiveness from Allah (S.w.T.) if I ever committed it."

Similarly he may use uncertain terms or rhetorical sentences.

For example he may say, "Do you expect me to commit such a grave sin?"

Or he can also say the following prayer,

"O Allah protect me from such a sin."

Also if you have pointed out somebody's fault and he feels bad about it, there is no need to utter a lie and say, "You do not have this fault." What can be said to pacify instead is, "Your personality is such that it is wrong to say such things about you."

Tawriyah Is Commanded

Tawriyah is of Three kinds.

First Type

The first type is when some purpose has to be achieved or there is a risk of some harm. These types of examples are quoted above. It is apparent that such a kind of 'Tawriyah' is permitted.

Second Type

The next type of 'Tawriyah' is when a person intends to harm or insult someone else. There is no doubt that such a kind of 'Tawriyah' is 'Haram'.

Third Type

The third type of 'Tawriyah' is when there is neither a purpose behind it nor one intends to cause harm to others. According to some Mujtahids this type 'Tawriyah' is Haram. This is because 'Tawriyah' is a kind of a falsehood and whatever proofs exist for the prohibition of lying could also apply for this type of 'Tawriyah'. Secondly there is nothing to prove the legality of this third type of 'Tawriyah'. However, some of the Mujtahids are of the opinion that this kind of 'Tawriyah' is not Haram. For according to them all those proofs that permit 'Tawriyah' are also applicable to this type and hence it is not a lie.

However, the precautionary method is to resort to 'Tawriyah' only when it is certain that it permissible.

Circumstances When Lying Is Permitted

Whenever there is a danger to life, honour and property and if the danger can be avoided by lying, one is allowed to lie. The danger could be to ones own life, honour and property or to that of someone else.

So much so that it is also permitted to take a false oath in this situation and in some cases it even becomes Wajib (obligatory) to speak a lie. E.g. when there is risk to ones life. In this case, it is Wajib to save oneself by lying and taking a false oath. For example, if an oppressor intends to kill a Muslim or to beat him up, dishonour him, seize his property or imprison him and if he enquires from you of his whereabouts, it is obligatory not to tell the truth even if one has to take a false oath and say that one does not know of his whereabouts.

In the same way if someone entrusts a thing in your possession and another intends to seize it; it is your duty to protect the entrusted thing even if you have to resort to falsehood or take a false oath.

False Oath To Save The Muslims

There are many traditions that support the taking of a false oath in order to save the Muslims. For example, Shaykh al-Ansari in his book, Makasib quotes from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) and Imam 'Ali ('a) that they have narrated the following tradition of the Holy Prophet (S).

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“Swear falsely by Allah, but save your Muslim brothers from unjust murder.”

Ismael Ibn Sad records a confirmed tradition, wherein he says that he asked Imam ‘Ali al-Ridha (‘a) concerning the person who takes a false oath to save his property from an unjust ruler.

Imam al-Ridha (‘a) replied,

“There is no harm (in it).”

He was again asked, “If a man takes a false oath to save the property of his believing brother, just as he had sworn falsely to save his own property. Is it allowed?”

Imam (‘a) said,

“Yes! It is allowed.”37

Also Hazrat Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) says,

“If one is compelled to take a false oath to save the life of a Muslim or to save his property from an oppressor or a thief, not only is the expiation of this false oath not payable but he would rather be eligible for (divine) rewards.”

Monetary Loss And Falsehood

Two points must be remembered at this juncture. One is that even though it is permitted to lie to save oneself from every type of monetary loss, yet it is Mustahab (recommended) not to lie if one is capable of bearing the loss. Amir ul-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) says,

“The sign of belief is that one speaks the truth even if it causes loss and refrains from a lie even if it is beneficial (to lie).”38

If One Is Compelled He Must Limit Himself To Tawriyah

Another important point is that in situations where the Mujtahids have permitted Tawriyah it is best not to use falsehood, but limit oneself to Tawriyah only.

Reconcile Two Believing People By Using Falsehood

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) said:

“Speech is of Three types, truth, falsehood and reconciling people.”

Someone asked, “May my life be sacrificed for you. What is, ‘reconciling people’?”

Imam (‘a) replied:

“You hear someone speaking ill about somebody but you tell the other person that the former was saying good things about you.”[39]

Conveying A Message Of Ill Will

Infact one is ordered to resort to lies if by doing so, one can bring about reconcillation between two people. One who brings about such reconciliation shall not be termed a liar. Because if the message of ill will is communicated from one to other, it will only increase enmity between the two.

In the same way if a husband and wife have separated and divorce is about to take place, one is allowed to speak a lie if it can bring about a reunion. For example the husband could be told, “Your wife is very much troubled by the separation. She has such intense feelings for you that she may fall ill.” Or the wife may be told similar things so that they may reunite.

Reconciliation Among People

The Holy Prophet (S) has said,

“After the fulfillment of Wajib acts, the best action is to bring about peace and reconciliation among people. This is such an act that spreads goodness in the world.”

Amir ul-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) said that the Holy Prophet (S) has said at the time of recording his will and testament.

“O ‘Ali, Allah even likes a falsehood for the sake of peace and dislikes truth that spreads corruption.”[40]

The Holy Prophet (S) has also said,

“To make peace among people and to think about reconciling people, and removing discord is better than prayers and fasting.”

Abu Hanifa Saeq Al Haj says, “There was an inheritance dispute between my son-in-law and me. Our dispute was in process when the agent of Imam al-Sadiq (‘a), Mufazzal happened to pass by. He stopped to listen for a while then returned to his house. He then gave us four hundred dirhams and solved the dispute.

Then he said, ‘The money that I gave you was not mine. It belonged to my master Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a). He had ordered me to solve the disputes among his followers through this money.’”

This shows the importance of peace and reconciliation. The Holy Prophet (S) has also stated that it was better than prayers and fasting, even though this action is Mustahab (recommended) whereas the former are Wajib (Obligatory). The reason for this could be that due to prayers and fasting an individual is reformed. Whereas the peacemaker reforms the whole society and consequently prayers and fasting

also become popular among the people. Unity among the Muslims is not only beneficial for the Hereafter, it is very much needed from the worldly point of view also. When the hearts of the believers unite for the sake of Allah (S.w.T.), such a power is achieved that not only the apparent enemies can be faced but even the hidden enemies, i.e. “the self” and “shaitan”, can be easily deflected.

Kur Water And The United Hearts

The unity and understanding among the people could be compared to Kur[41] water. If water is divided by putting it in different vessels and each of them is less then a kur, then whenever impurity (Najasat) falls into one of them, it makes that water Najis (impure). But if all the water is collected in one place and it becomes more than a kur and if an impurity falls into it, it does not make the kur water Najis. On the contrary the kur water is capable of purifying the impurity of a Najis object. Exactly, in the same way when the people unite together, the divine mercy descends upon them and each one benefits by it. Secondly due to the unity among the Muslims they will be held in high esteem by people of different faiths.

Another example is the merits of congregational prayers and its great rewards. It is very much recommended to behave kindly towards the believing brother, to help him and support him. Similarly it is highly meritorious to visit the believers, to shake hands with them and to hug them. These actions carry great benefits. To make peace between two believers qualifies one to untold rewards. Similarly it is mentioned that to befriend a believer for the sake of Allah (S.w.T.) carries tremendous rewards. After examining the rewards for all of the above actions one concludes that all such actions have been promulgated for maintaining the unity among believers.

Falsehood In The Battle-Field

It is known from some traditions that during a war with unbelievers, it is permissible to use falsehood, if by doing so, victory can be gained over them.

Promise To A Wife

A man can give a promise to his wife even if he does not intend to fulfill it, a man can give a false promise to fulfill his wife’s desire, if he thinks that his refusal will cause dispute and discord in the family, or make his wife extremely unhappy. Obviously such falsehood is also permissible under compelling conditions when a man fears that refusing to promise may lead to an extreme situation like divorce.

However, whether such a promise is permitted or not is difficult to confirm. Some weak traditions do state that such a false promise is allowed. For example if a wife asks for something, her husband can give her a false promise.

Fear Of Retribution And Good Deeds

Hazrat ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib (‘a) says:

“Avoid lying! For when one desires something he strives for it and when one fears something he strives to keep it away from himself.”[42]

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) explains the above tradition as follows: If one sincerely desires the pleasure of Allah (S.w.T.) one must strive for it and one of the ways of doing so is by refraining from lies. Falsehood is a forbidden act causing extreme displeasure of Allah (S.w.T.). In the same way if one really fears divine retribution, one must keep aloof from sins, for sins incur punishment. If a person merely claims that he hopes for divine rewards and fears divine punishment, but does not perform good deeds nor refrain from sins, he is a liar.

The following saying of Amir ul-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) is recorded in Nahjul Balagha:

“One who thinks that he hopes (in divine rewards) but his actions do not express it, then by Allah, he is a liar. For when he hopes for something it becomes apparent from his actions.

But if he hopes in Allah and his actions do not show it? In the same way when one is afraid of something his actions express this (fear) and he flees from that thing. Then after claiming to be fearful of divine punishment why does he not flee from sins?”

Thus if a person who claims to be fearful of Allah (S.w.T.) and hopeful of divine rewards, but whose actions do not confirm his claim, is considered a liar. In the same way a person who claims to have the traits of patience, thankfulness, contentment and resignation etc. which are not shown in his behaviour is also a liar.

Your Speech Must Conform To Your Thoughts

Hazrat Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) says,

“Whenever you say ‘Allahu Akbar’ (Allah is the greatest) you must consider everything between the earth and the sky to be lesser than Allah. Because when Allah sees that a person say Allaho-Akbar only superficially, He says, ‘O liar! You try to be smart with Me? By My Might and Honour I shall deprive you of My remembrance.’”

It is regretful that people verbally say, ‘Allahu Akbar’ but their actions belie their words. For if they are told to do something for the sake of Allah (S.w.T.) or to refrain from something for the sake of Allah (S.w.T.) they do not pay any heed, but if a monetary fine is due for any disobedience, they are sure to respond. Thus money has importance for them than Allah (S.w.T.)’s pleasure or displeasure. There are people who perform particular actions or restrain from them only due to fear of harm by fellow humans. If

they are told to do so only due to the fear of Allah (S.w.T.), they will not be impressed.

A Show Of Submission

A person who says to Allah (S.w.T.), 'Thee only do we worship and Thee only we ask for help', but his actions are such that day and night he is involved in the acquisition of wealth and is preoccupied in the satisfaction of carnal desires. Can we consider this man to be truthful? Does this man really worship Allah (S.w.T.)?

In the same way many a man puts his trust and faith in the apparent agencies through which he gets his profit and gain. He regards these as the deciding authorities and seeks their help, overlooks the fact that these means themselves are through Allah (S.w.T.)'s grace. Can such a person be truthful when he says "Thee only do we worship and Thee only we ask for help?"

Falsehood In Supplications

Oftentime people supplicate with the following words, "I am pleased with my Lord and Cherisher, He the sole cherisher of all the creatures. I am satisfied with Him."

But if the situation changes and these people are faced with distressing circumtances, they do not hesitate to complain about what Allah (S.w.T.) has decreed for them. In such a case the above-mentioned supplication amounts to lying.

Confession Of Belief In The Imams ('A)

The supplication, "I am pleased that Muhammad (S) is my Prophet; and Qur'an is my Book and 'Ali is my Imam; and all of them are for my guidance," will also be a lie when uttered by a person who does not practice the tenets of Islam as explained by our Ahl ul-Bayt ('a) and behaves according to his own whims and fancy.

Do You Speak The Truth?

A man prays, "(O Allah (S.w.T.)) when I look at my sins, I weep and when I see Your mercy and forgiveness I become hopeful and happy in anticipation that You will forgive me," but when faced with temptations, he makes no serious effort to restrain himself and commits sinful acts without any qualms. The falsehood of such a person is clear.

In the same way if a person says, "I weep due to (the fear of) the agony of death, due to the fear of questioning of the grave, due to the fear of Qiyama," while in reality he is not fearful of any of these, his falsehood is obvious. It could be this very kind of falsehood that is referred to in Du'a Abu Hamza Thumali of Imam Zayn ul-'Abidin ('a):

“O Allah! May be You have found me in the position of a liar and for this (You have taken away your mercy from me) left me on my own condition.”

Lying To The Imams (‘A)

An example of lying to the Imams (‘a) is that of a person who recites the Ziarat and says, “(O Imams) I accept your sayings and act upon your commands and obey you,” but who does not do so in reality. In fact he obeys his own desires. Such a person is a hypocrite! He is lying to the Imams (‘a).

Another example of such a falsehood is when he says in Ziarat, “We make peace with those who are at peace with you and we make war with those who are at war with you.” Even though he verbally claims this, in actual practice he is friendly with the enemies of Islam. Also, he is inimical to the believers. He also claims, “I keep aloof from your opponents,” but does not act upon it. Isn’t such a person lying to the Imams (‘a)?

Then How Should We Pray?

A question arises here that if by reciting a Du’a or Ziarat, if one is bound to utter lies, then how should one pray?

Although a detailed reply to this is beyond the scope of this book, we can say in brief that the manner of praying denounced by us is when the supplicant invokes Allah (S.w.T.), the Holy Prophet (S) and the Imam (‘a), but he takes his supplication lightly and makes no sincere effort to better himself.

However, a believer should not feel that since it is not possible to avoid falsehood in prayers it is better not to pray. This is despair of Allah (S.w.T.)’s mercy and a satanic instigation to keep the believer away from the divine rewards. What one should do is to pray sincerely and to achieve perfection in a gradual manner and Allah (S.w.T.) will surely help such a person in achieving this ultimate aim.

A person either understands the meanings of duas and Qur’anic verses (as those quoted above) or not. Even if one recites them without following the actual meaning, the duas and Qur’anic verses will illuminate his heart by their light. He will also be eligible for the divine rewards.

Every Person Has A Different Position

With respect to knowledge and piety our Ma’sumin (‘a) occupy the highest position. Amongst the believers there is a wide spectrum of people capable of different levels of understanding and piety, but none can reach the stage of Ma’sumin (‘a). All believers succumb to their desires and selfish motives to a greater or lesser extent. Consequently they fall prey to sins and disobey Allah (S.w.T.). This is inevitable. This situation is aptly described in the following words of Du’a Abu Hamza Thumali.

“O Allah! I did not sin due to disbelief in You, nor did I sin considering Your command insignificant or thinking that your punishment is light. But I sinned due to the instigation of my selfish desires and due to pride...”

The believers can comfort themselves that they are not really lying when they do not rise up to the level expected in the supplication they utter. They can also comfort themselves that they are believers because they fear Allah (S.w.T.) and repose their hope in Allah (S.w.T.), as the Holy Qur’an says:

“And fear (only) Me if you are believers. ” (Surah Ali-‘ Imran 3:175).

Firm Conviction And Disobedience

Even though the belief in Allah (S.w.T.) and the fear of His retribution is present in man, he is still prone to sins. It is not that one who believes in Allah (S.w.T.) cannot sin. For example, who does not know that a dead body cannot cause any harm? Everyone firmly believes in it. Yet how many people can stay alone with a corpse at night? Here a firm belief is unable to rid the man of his fear of the dead. Even a firm belief cannot guarantee one’s actions. It is for this reason that we recite in Du’a, “Bestow upon me such a firm conviction that I can worship you with sincerity.” There is no doubt that if one prays to Allah (S.w.T.) out of intense fear; which would restrains him from committing sins, Allah (S.w.T.) will surely create such a fear in his heart.

Also the magnitude of his fear increases along with the increase in grades of piety and obedience which he achieves due to constant efforts.

It has been mentioned in the traditions:

“Whoever desires something and strives for it, finds it.”

Truly! Being absolutely truthful seems possible only for the Ma’sumin (‘a). As the Holy Qur’an states,

“And be with the Truthful Ones!” (Surah at-Tawba 9:119).

The “Truthful Ones” referred to in this ayat are the Ahul Bayt (‘a).

1. Wasa’il ul-Shi’a.
2. Mustadrak ul-Wasa’il.
3. Mustadrak ul-Wasa’il.
4. Mustadrak ul-Wasa’il.
5. Usul al-Kafi.
6. Mustadrak ul-Wasa’il.
7. Reference to the following Verse:

> But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our near people and your near people, then let us be earnest in prayer, and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars. (3:61).

8. Reference to the following Verse:

And it shall avert the chastisement from her if she testify four times, bearing Allah to witness that he is most surely one of the liars; (24:8).

9. al-Kafi.
10. al-Kafi.
11. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
12. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
13. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
14. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
15. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
16. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
17. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
18. al-Kafi.
19. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
20. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
21. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
22. Uyun al-Akhbar al-Ridha.
23. al-Kafi.
24. al-Kafi.
25. al-Kafi.
26. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
27. Kashful Muhajja.
28. Nahjul Balagha.
29. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
30. al-Kafi.
31. al-Kafi.
32. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
33. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
34. Khisal.
35. Safinat ul-Bihar.
36. Bihar al-Anwar.
37. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
38. Nahjul Balagha.
39. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
40. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
41. 'Kur' is 377 litres. According to Islamic Practical Law if the quantity of water is more than a kur and if it comes in contact with a najis thing, it is not considered najis unless its colour, or its smell, or its taste has changed.
42. al-Kafi.

Eighteenth Greater Sin: False Oath

According to the traditions 'false oath' belongs to the category of greater sins. False swearing is a greater sin as mentioned in the authentic tradition recorded by Abdul Azim and also in the tradition of

Imam al-Ridha (‘a) as quoted by Fazl Ibn Shazan. There is a report from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) in the book Tuhaf ul Uqul:

“False swearing causes destruction of the faith.”[1]

According to traditions a person who conveys a false report or oath will be sunk in depravity and will be surrounded by hell fire. The traditions state that false oath destroys a person’s faith just as a sharp blade removes hair from the body. To swear by Allah (S.w.T.), to convey a falsehood is a particularly detestable sin.

Punishment For A False Oath

“(As for) those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their own oaths-surely-they shall have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the Day of Resurrection nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement.” (Surah Ali-‘Imran 3:77).

This same verse was quoted by Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) to prove that taking a false oath is one of the greater sins.

The Prophet (S) Orders The Taking Of Oath

An interesting incident is quoted in *Tafsir al-Mizan* from the book Amali. Imrul Qays and another man had a dispute regarding some property. Both of them came to the Holy Prophet (S). He (S) asked Imrul Qays,

“Can you provide two just witnesses to substantiate your claim?”

He replied, “No!”

The Holy Prophet (S) said,

“Then your opponent should take an oath.”

Imrul Qays said, “But what if he swears falsely and acquires my property?”

The Holy Prophet (S) replied,

“If he swears falsely he shall be included among people who will not be eligible for Divine Mercy on the Day of Judgment and Allah shall not purify him of sins. There would be a dreadful punishment for such a man!”

When the litigant heard these statements he was filled with horror and gave up his false claim to the

property of Imrul Qays.

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) is reported to have said:

"One who knowingly takes a false oath had made war upon Allah."[2]

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) says that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

"Refrain from false oath, because it destroys inhabitations and makes the sinner helpless."[3]

According to other traditions, false oath and severing relations are two such sins that cause the destruction of towns and cities. The inhabitants are eliminated and the progeny terminated.

Evil Consequences Of False Oaths

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says,

"One who swears falsely becomes poor within forty nights" (means forty days).[4]

Many traditions of similar connotations are available. The same Imam ('a) has also said:

"The false oath that takes one to the fire is the one which is taken to usurp the right of a Muslim or to usurp his property."

And Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) also remarks,

"When a person says, "Allah knows!" when in fact he is speaking a lie; then Allah tells him, 'Didn't you find anyone other than Me to ascribe the falsehood to?'[5]

The Holy Imam ('a) also says:

"When a person says 'Allah knows' and the fact is that Allah knows contrary (to what he alludes), the heavens shudder due to the Might and Divine anger."

Types Of Oaths

An oath is taken to prove some fact or report, or to relate the same with emphasis. There are four kinds of oaths:

1. Wajib (Obligatory).

2. Mustahab (Recommended).

3. Makruh (Detestable).

4. Haram (Prohibited).

When Does It Become Wajib (Obligatory) To Swear?

It is Wajib to take an oath in a situation where one's life or honour, or that of another Muslim, is in danger, and taking the oath can ward off the danger. When it is Wajib to protect ones property it is also Wajib to take an oath for its protection. In fact in all the above situations it is Wajib even to take a false oath, although as a precautionary measure one should first try ones best to employ Tawriyah.

Mustahab Oath

There are situations where it is Mustahab to take an oath or to refrain from doing so. In case of very insignificant property belonging to oneself or to another Muslim it is not Wajib to swear. In this case it will be Mustahab to do so. Property that is usually considered insignificant is worth thirty Dirhams or less.

Zurara asked Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a): "The oppressive rulers forcefully collect taxes from us. Can we swear falsely that we have nothing to give tax on when it is not possible to save our money without swearing falsely?"

Imam ('a) said,

"Take such oaths! Such oaths are more sweet than dates and butter."[6]

However if the property is not worth much, especially if its value is less than thirty Dirhams, then it is Mustahab not to swear falsely, even if it may be necessary to save oneself from the oppressor.

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) has quoted the following tradition from the Holy Prophet (S):

"Respecting the Greatness of Allah if one refrains from swearing, Allah shall give him much better than whatever he has lost."[7]

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"If there is claim against you regarding some property and the claimant does not have any right upon you, and desires to make you take an oath, then if the claim is for something worth less than thirty Dirhams, hand it over to him and do not take an oath. But if it is worth more than thirty Dirhams, take the oath and do not give him anything."[8]

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

"If a person takes his debtor (or one who owes him something) to the court of the ruler; and the king asks him to swear; and knowing that he is on the right he respects the Greatness of Allah and refrains from swearing, then on the Day of Qiyama Allah shall not desire for him a position less than that of

Hazrat Ibrahim (‘a).”

Imam al-Sajjad (‘A) Avoids Swearing

In the book al-Kafi there is a tradition, which says that a wife of Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) had some connection with the tribe of Bani Hanifa. A Shi’a of Imam (‘a) informed him that this wife of his bore enmity to Amir ul-Mu’minin (‘a). After investigating the matter Imam (‘a) divorced her. She had already received the Mahr amount (Dower), but she filed a claim for it against Imam (‘a) in the court of the ruler of Madinah. She demanded four hundred Dirhams as Mahr from him. The ruler of Madinah told Imam al-Sajjad (‘a), “Either you swear that you have already paid her or you pay the amount of Mahr (now).” Hazrat Sayyid al-Sajjad (‘a) did not swear, but ordered his son Hazrat Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) to pay four hundred Dirhams to the woman. Hazrat Baqir (‘a) said, *“May I be sacrificed for you! Are you not on the right?”*

Imam (‘a) replied,

“Why not? But I consider Allah to be much more honourable than this matter, that I swear by His name for some petty worldly property.”

Swearing For The Sake Of Emphasis

Not only it is permitted but it is mustahab to swear in order to emphasize on a true fact, or to prove some fact, or to show its importance. For example the Holy Prophet (S) speaks after taking the oath:

“By Allah! Allah does not delay in forgiving, Though you may be lazy in seeking it.”[9]

Another example of an oath is the following saying of Amir ul-Mu’minin (‘a):

“By Allah! If people knew what I know then very few would have laughed and many more would have wept.”[10]

There are numerous Qur’anic verses and the traditions of Ma’sumin (‘a) where oath is taken. All of them are of this same type. They are for emphasis and for proving particular facts.

A person wrote a letter to Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) and asked about something which was being wrongly attributed to him (Imam – ‘a).

Imam al-Baqir (‘a) wrote the following reply,

“By Allah! What is being attributed is not correct. But under no circumstance do I like to say “By Allah” to disprove it. Yet I regret that such a thing is being said when it really isn’t so.”[11]

Swearing Is Makruh

We have already described the Wajib and Mustahab oaths. Apart from these, in all other situations, it is Makruh (detestable) to swear. It is irrelevant whether the oath is for something past, present or future. In ordinary situations, for ordinary matters, taking an oath is Makruh. Swearing for a false thing is certainly Haram. It is the command of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a):

"Do not swear by the name of Allah, whether you are speaking the truth or lying."[12]

"Because Allah says in the Holy Qur'an,

***"And make not Allah because of your swearing* (*by Him*) *an obstacle to your doing good..."* (*Surah al-Baqarah 2:224*).**

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) also says,

"One who swears falsely by Allah for a lie has disbelieved, and one who swear by Allah for truth has sinned, because Allah says: "Do not use Allah for (taking of) your oaths."[13]

The above quoted traditions could be simply explained thus:

To swear falsely in the name of Allah (S.w.T.) is definitely a greater sin and one who indulges in a greater sin, falls down from the highest position of Faith. Due to this some amount of disbelief comes to his heart. Imam ('a) has also called a true oath a sin and he has used the word "*Ithm*" (sin). Since it is well known among the Mujtahids that a true oath is Makruh the word "*Ithm*" would imply something which is very very undesirable.

A Lesson From Hazrat Isa ('A)

The book Furu al-Kafi also contains the following report from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a):

"The apostles of Hazrat Isa ('a) came to him and said, "O the teacher of good, give us some advice."

He ('a) said, "Certainly, Musa, the Prophet of Allah commanded you not to swear falsely by Allah. And I order you not to swear falsely and (nor) truly."[14]

Oath Of Respectable Objects And Personalities

Wherever it is permitted to swear by Allah (S.w.T.), it is also permitted to swear by other honourable personalities or respectable objects. In such situations it is allowed to take an oath by the Qur'an, the Ka'ba, the Prophet (S) or the Imam ('a). In the same way oath upon any other respectable object is also permissible. For example a person may swear by his father or son etc.

Those traditions that prohibit swearing by Allah (S.w.T.)'s name prohibit it for proving ones right. They do not prohibit the proving of a true fact by oath. However when a situation arises where it becomes obligatory to take an oath, then one must swear only by Allah (S.w.T.). Oath by any other object or personality will not be absolutely correct and from the Shari'a point of view the matter will not end conclusively. Similarly if one has to take an oath for performing a particular action in the future, in this case too, one must swear only by Allah (S.w.T.). Any other vow does not have any legal standing.

The Oath That Is Haram Under All Circumstances

The oath which is Haram under all circmstances and which one can never take is that of dissociating with Allah (S.w.T.) and His religion. For example a man says;

"If I do not perform this particular action, I shall be dissociated with Allah (S.w.T.) and His religion." Such an oath is certainly Haram.

In the same way if one says:

"If I do not do this, I would have disbelieved in the Holy Prophet (S), or I would have rejected the Mastership of 'Ali ('a), or I would become a disbeliever." Such a vow is also Haram. It is Haram whether one wishes to prove the truth or to lay emphasis upon a fact.

The Holy Prophet (S) heard a person taking such an oath. He (S) said, *"Woe be unto you, if you leave the religion of Muhammad (S) then which religion would you follow?"*

The narrator says that the Holy Prophet (S) did not speak to this man till the end of his life.[15]

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) informed Yunus Ibn Zabyan:

"O Yunus! Do not speak about dissociating from us in an oath. One who takes oath from it, whether for a true thing or a falsehood, he really becomes dissociated from us."[16]

Expiation For A Haram Oath

The expiation for an oath which is Haram, (the oath which states dissociation with divine personalities), according to a group of Mujtahids is equal to expiation of Zihar (when one vows to abstain from one's wife, sexually). Another group of Mujtahids has prescribed its expiation to be equal to that of breaking a vow and it is the same as the penalty of breaking or not keeping a Wajib fast of Ramadhan.[17]

However, Shaykh Mufid (r.a.) says that expiation of vow of dissociation is to feed to satiation, ten poor people and also to repent. The same decree is proved from a letter of Imam al-Hasan al-Askari ('a), which is quoted in the book Masalik.

Imam ('a) says,

“He shall feed ten poor people with a ‘Madd’ (approximately ¾ of a kilo) of food and seek forgiveness from Allah.”

In this penalty, the following edibles can be given: wheat, wheat flour, barley, rice or any other cooked food.

Since the chain of narrators for this tradition is authentic, one must act upon it as a precautionary measure.

Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq (‘A) And Mansur Dawaniqi

A man came to the Abbaside king Mansur Dawaniqi and began to instigate him against Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a). He said, “He desires to launch an attack upon you. He has sent money to different places for this and continues to do so. He has always supported the sons of Abdullah Ibn Hasan, Muhammad and Ibrahim, and these two have confronted you.”

Mansur summoned Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) from Madinah. When Imam (‘a) reached the court of Mansur, he quoted the false allegations and severely criticised the Imam (‘a).

Imam (‘a) replied,

“I seek the refuge of Allah from such things. All these are false allegations.”

Mansur called the man who had laid these false allegations against Imam (‘a). The accused man came and repeated his accusations. Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) asked him,

“Can you swear for the truth of your statements?”

This accused person began to say, “By Allah! The one besides whom there is no god, He is the...”

Imam (‘a) interrupted him,

“Do not make haste in taking the oath, say as I command you.”

Mansur asked, “Is there any defect in the oath which he has taken?”

Imam replied,

“When a man swears by Allah, praising the Divine qualities, Allah refrains from sending an immediate retribution. So he should say like this, ‘I swear by Allah ignoring His Might and Power and seek the refuge on my own might and power that whatever I have said is the truth.’”

Mansur ordered that man to swear in this manner. The man began to take the oath and had not even completed it when his tongue rolled out like a dog and he fell down dead.

Is It Against A Prohibited Oath?

Someone may think that this narration mentions the prohibited form of oath. It is not so. Muhaqqiqe–Qummi says that in the first place the chain of narrators of this tradition is weak. Secondly it may be that ordering such an oath may be the sole prerogative of an Imam. The Imam (‘a) knew that the one taking such an oath is not a believer. He was an enemy of Ahl ul–Bayt (‘a) and it was necessary to resort to such means in order to clear himself of the false allegations.[18]

From the explanation of this tradition by Muhaqqiq it is clear that Imam (‘a) considered that accursed man deserving of death and his death only depended upon the oath of dissociation. It was also necessary that Imam (‘a) was not disrespected and that the Imam (‘a) could save himself from being unjustly persecuted at the hands of Mansur. Another benefit that accrued was that, Mansur for the time being, refrained from oppressing the other Sadat (descendants of Holy Prophet) and believers.

Repenting For A False Oath

The method of repenting for a false oath is that one must feel extremely remorseful for it. He should know that he has considered the Divine name of Allah (S.w.T.) to be a plaything, and that he has committed a grave sin. The more remorse one feels and the more serious he considers his sin, the closer he shall be to Allah (S.w.T.)’s Divine Mercy and Forgiveness. If due to this false oath some monetary loss has occurred to a believer or a believer has been insulted, then the one who had taken the false oath must compensate for the monetary loss and apologise to the believer, and as far as possible try to make up for the harm that has been caused due to his false swearing.

When Is The Vow Correct?

There are some requirements for the correctness of a vow that a person takes for performing or avoiding particular actions in the future. If all the requirements are fulfilled then it is Haram to break this vow. If it is broken, expiation becomes Wajib.

The following are the conditions for such vows:

1. The vow should be with regard to a Wajib or a Mustahab act. For example, he can vow that he shall not intentionally avoid the Morning Prayer, he will make it a point to say Salat al–Shab. In the same way if one vows to abstain from a particular act, this act has to be either Haram or Makruh in nature. For example he can vow that he shall not speak a lie in future or he can vow to refrain from spitting in the mosque. A vow to refrain from a Mubah (permitted) act or thing should only be taken when there is some benefit in it. For example it is Mubah to smoke. So one can take a vow in order to give up this habit.

2. Vows with regard to all the five types of actions, i.e. Wajib, Mustahab, Haram, Makruh and Mubah are valid only when the name of Allah (S.w.T.) is uttered with a firm intention to do or to refrain from a

particular thing. One must not swear by Allah (S.w.T.) in jest. If one is in a habit of saying, "By Allah I shall do this." or "By Allah I shall not do it" then unless he seriously means it, such a vow is not considered valid.

The Qur'an says:

"Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but he calls you to account for the making of deliberate oaths; so its expiation is feeding of ten poor men out of the middling (food) you feed your families with, or their clothing, or the freeing of a neck; but whosoever cannot find (means) then fasting for Three days; this is the expiation of your oaths when you swear; and guard your oaths. Thus does Allah make clear to you His communications, that you may be grateful. **(*Surah al-Ma'ida 5:89*).**

Useless Vow

From the foregoing discussion we can conclude that a vow is only valid when there is some inherrent good or evil in the concerned action. Therefore one can take a vow only for acts that one is inclined towards or those that are Wajib or mustahab. Similarly if a person vows to refrain from a particular action he must feel an aversion to it or it should be something makruh or Haram. Hence to vow to perform some lewd action is itself lewdness. Such a vow is invalid from Shari'a point of view. We must never vow to perform evil acts whether it is evil according to reason or according to Shari'a.

It is Haram for one to vow to omit Wajib or mustahab prayers or vow not to speak to ones mother or any other relative. It is also not allowed to vow against performing Hajj if one is capable of doing so. To vow that one would never mediate between two believers is also Haram. All such vows are invalid. Hence if one has ever taken such vows one must repent for them.

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says,

"If one takes a vow to refrain from a beneficial act he must perform it (and disregard the vow). There is no kaffarah for breaking such a vow. It is only a satanic instigation."[19]

Although apparently the above tradition and other such reports imply that a vow for a mubah act which is beneficial is invalid, the mujtahids are of the opinion that one must exercise caution and in case such a vow is broken, kaffarah should be paid. According to the majority of the jurists a mubah thing becomes Wajib if one takes a vow for it. Thus the best thing is to follow the path of precaution.

Said Aeraj, a narrator of traditions says that he asked Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) about a person who had vowed to do a particular thing, whereas the avoidance of that was more beneficial, and now the person himself was worried to disregard his vow. Imam ('a) said,

"Have you not heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say that whenever you find that you have vowed

against doing something that is better to be done, you must ignore your vow?”[20]

Types Of Vows

In the same book, al-Kafi we have a tradition of Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) that he said,

There are Three types of Vows:

1. *A vow that makes hell incumbent.*

2. *A vow that makes kaffarah Wajib.*

3. *A vow that neither earns hell nor entails kaffarah.*

A vow that makes hell incumbent is a false one. It is a vow that proves harmful to the Muslims. It is called ‘Yaman Ghamus’ in the religious terminology.

A vow that entails Kaffarah is one that is taken to perform a charitable act or taken to refrain from an evil act. If a person breaks such a vow he is liable to pay kaffarah for the same. In addition he must feel remorse for it and repent.

Lastly, a vow that neither earns hell nor makes kaffarah *Wajib* is the vow of doing Qat al-Rahm taken under duress before a tyrant ruler, parents or ones spouse. Other vows like the doing of some evil act or to refrain from a *Wajib* are also included in this category. Those who wish to study in detail may refer to the comprehensive books of jurisprudence.

1. Bihar al-Anwar.
2. al-Kafi.
3. al-Kafi.
4. al-Kafi.
5. al-Kafi.
6. Wasa’il ul-Shi’a.
7. Furu al-Kafi.
8. Furu al-Kafi.
9. Masalik.
10. Masalik.
11. Mustadrak ul-Wasa’il.
12. Furu al-Kafi.
13. Furu al-Kafi.
14. Furu al-Kafi.
15. al-Kafi.
16. al-Kafi.
17. Refer Shariyatul Islam.
18. Jame ush-shatat.
19. al-Kafi.
20. al-Kafi.

The Nineteenth Greater Sin: False Testimony

According to the corpus of traditions false testimony is a Greater sin. It is also mentioned in the narration of Abdul Azim quoted from Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (‘a). Similarly the tradition of Fazl Ibn Shazan includes it in the list of Greater sins as mentioned by Imam al-Ridha (‘a). That it is a Greater sin is also proved by the hadith of Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) as quoted by Amash. We have already mentioned in the chapter on “lying” that falsehood is a Greater sin. False testimony obivously is also a branch of falsehood.

In the tradition narrated by Hazrat Abdul Azim, Imam (‘a) has proved the ‘greatness’ of not giving false testimony on the basis of the following verse of the Holy Qur’an:

“And they who do not bear witness to what is false….” **(*Surah al-Furqan 25:72*).**

“…These shall be regarded with high places…” **(*Surah al-Furqan 25:75*).**

In this verse the word ‘false’ signifies the action of proving a falsehood as though it were the truth.

Another verse says,

“…therefore avoid the uncleanness of the idols and avoid false words.” **(*Surah Hajj 22:30*).**

The Holy Prophet (S) says,

“To testify falsely tantamounts to polytheism.”

It is mentioned in Tafsir Abdul al-Fath Razi that the Holy Prophet (S) repeated this statement thrice and then quoted the above ayat (Surah Hajj 22:30).

A similar kind of tradition is recorded in Mustadrak ul-Wasa’il, from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a).

“In the Qur’an Allah has compared false testimony to polytheism.”

Allah (S.w.T.) mentions the avoidance of ‘uncleanness of the idols’ and ‘false words’ in a single verse, one after the other.

‘False Words’ Imply Sin And False Testimony

From the traditions quoted above it becomes clear that whenever the term ‘false words’ etc. occurs in Qur’an it implies ‘lying.’ Similar verses have been quoted in the chapter of music and songs. Hence some traditions state that ‘false words’ refers to music or songs. Actually the word ‘false’ stands for every evil, wrong and undesirable thing. Music, songs and lies head the list of these things.

Punishment Of Hell For The False Witness

Hazrat Imam Muhammad al–Baqir (‘a) says,

“Whenever a person testifies falsely to usurp the property of a Muslim, Allah writes at that very moment a punishment of the blazing fire for this man.”1

Imam Ja’far al–Sadiq (‘a) says,

“The false witness may not even have moved from his place but that the punishment of fire will have already become incumbent for him.”2

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“False testimony before an oppressive ruler is not yet complete when a place in the fire (Hell) is already decided (for the false witness).”3

The Messenger of Allah (S) has also said,

“One who testifies falsely against someone will be hung by his tongue with the hypocrites in the lowest portion of Hell.

And if one usurps the property of his believing brother, Allah does not give an increase in his sustenance till he repents for it.”4

Hazrat Imam Muhammad al–Baqir (‘a) narrates from the Holy Prophet (S) that he said,

“One who hides testimony before a just Islamic judge, or gives a false testimony to shed the blood of Muslims or intends to usurp a Muslim’s property by it, he shall be raised on the Day of the Judgment in such a condition that there will be darkness before his eyes and his face will be scratched. The people shall recognise him by these signs (that he had testified falsely).”5

The Holy Prophet (S) asked,

“Shall I inform you about the Greater of the Great sins?”

The companions said, “Why not, O Prophet of Allah (S).” The Prophet (S) said,

“To make someone a partner of Allah, and disobedience to parents...” The Prophet (S) was resting his back against the wall. Now he sat up straight and continued in a more serious tone, “And beware! (Every) Falsehood!”

The narrators say that the Holy Prophet (S) has denounced falsehood so many times that we wished he had not done so.6

Since we have already explained that 'falsehood' includes every type of lying it also includes false testimony. The Holy Prophet (S) has also described 'falsehood' to be a Greater sin. False testimony is a manifold sin. Firstly because it is a lie which is a greater sin, secondly because it amounts to falsely accusing a Muslim which is also a greater sin and thirdly because it is instrumental in oppressing an innocent person which is still another greater sin. Also, through false testimony a person tries to acquire something which does not rightfully belong to him, thus making unlawful thing lawful, which is prohibited by Allah (S.w.T.). Lastly usurping somebody else's property is also a greater sin. Thus we can say that many great sins constitute a single sin called, 'false testimony'.

One Should Testify Only After Knowing The Facts

It does not make any difference whether one knowingly gives a false testimony or one testifies without being certain of the facts. Both of these are 'Greater sins'. It is Wajib upon the witness not to testify till he is sure of the facts.

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"Do not testify till you are as certain as you are about the palm (of your hand)."7

Someone inquired from the Holy Prophet (S) as to when it was allowed to testify as a witness. The Prophet (S) told him:

"Can you see the sun?"

"Yes," he said.

"Testify like it or do not." (Meaning you should testify only if you are absolutely certain, otherwise you must not do so).8

Hazrat Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) says,

"The witness should testify only for that about which he is certain. He must fear Allah. To testify without having certainty or to testify against something without being certain is also falsehood. Allah says, Refrain from falsehood! And remain upright for (the sake of) Allah and do not be among the polytheists. So, Allah has equated false testimony to polytheism."9

One Who Testifies Falsely Is Soon Exposed

If a person testifies in an Islamic court and later regrets for his testimony, then it is first determined whether he had knowingly and intentionally testified wrongly. If it was so, then that person is branded as a transgressor whose testimony is no more valid in the Shari'a Court. But if he had been a victim of doubt and uncertainty he is not disqualified from testifying in the future. However, if due to the wrong

testimony someone had to undergo undeserved punishment or suffer harm, it is Wajib for this witness to make up the loss. The details of such laws could be obtained from the books of Jurisprudence.

One of the methods of disproving a testimony is that the witness himself confess it to be false. Another procedure for this is that two just witnesses may testify against him. This is known as 'Bayyana'. Finally, the judges may on the basis of some firm evidence falsify the testimony of a witness who had tried to mislead the court. Hence the judge is empowered to reject a witness if he is himself certain. If someone has suffered a loss the judge shall impose on the witness some exemplary punishment of a few lashes so that he may not repeat such a crime in future.

The judge should also announce in the city and the surrounding areas that such and such person is a false witness so that people may not be misled by him and may not rely upon his evidence. In this way, one who testifies falsely becomes notorious for his falsehood in the society, and the wellbeing of society is maintained. Both these actions i.e. exemplary punishments and warning the people against a false witness, are put into effect whether the judge has already passed his judgment (based upon that false testimony) or not.

They Do Not Qualify As A Witness

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) is reported to have said,

"The false witness must be lashed, and the number of lashes is determined by the Imam (or the Islamic judge) and he should be paraded (in the city) till people know him (and may not rely on him in the future)."

The Imam ('a) recited the following verse of the Qur'an:

"...and do not admit any evidence from them ever; and these it is that are the transgressors, except those who repent after this and act aright, for surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." **(*Surah an-Nur 24:4-5*).**

(It means that after he repents and reforms, his evidence again becomes valid)

The narrator says that he asked Imam ('a), "How do we know that he has repented?"

Imam ('a) replied,

"At the place where he is lashed, he must confess in public that he had given a false testimony. And he must seek the forgiveness of Allah. In this way it could be known that he has repented."[10]

Compensation For The Loss

If, due to a false testimony a Muslim has had to suffer some monetary loss or loss to one's life or property, the witness has to make good the loss. A narrator by the name of Jamil inquired from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) regarding the one who has testified falsely. Imam (‘a) told him:

"If the disputed property is still intact it must be restored to the rightful owner. If it is not then the false witness is responsible to the extent of it's loss."[11]

This means that if it is not possible to return the property, the false witness will have to reimburse it by providing a thing similar to that property or pay a price for it. Detailed laws are discussed in the books of Islamic Jurisprudence.

Repentance For The Sin

The method of repenting for the sin of giving false testimony has already been explained. The first important requirement is that the sinner must feel a deep remorse for the act committed by him. He must also seek the forgiveness of Allah (S.w.T.) for disobeying His command; and compensate the Musilm who suffered the loss. As Allah (S.w.T.) Himself says,

"...except those who repent after this and act aright, for surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (***Surah an-Nur 24:4-5***).

1. al-Kafi.
2. al-Kafi.
3. al-Kafi.
4. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
5. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
6. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
7. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
8. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
9. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
10. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
11. Masalik.

The Twentieth Greater Sin: Concealing Evidence

To refrain from testifying in an Islamic Court is clearly classified among the ‘Greater sins' according to the authentic tradition narrated by Hazrat Abdul Azim. There are some situations when it is Wajib to prove right what is right and to prove wrong that is wrong. In the narration mentioned in the previous

discussion, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) states that to conceal evidence is a ‘Greater sin’. He presents the following verse as the proof:

“…and do not conceal testimony, and whoever conceals it, his heart is surely sinful; and Allah knows what you do.” (***Surah al-Baqarah 2:283***).

This verse mentions the sinful heart (his heart is surely sinful). There are two noteworthy points in this. One: That the concealing of testimony is a sin of the heart. The heart alone commits it, and other organs are not apparently involved in it. The person hides the reality in his heart and does not speak out. Secondly, just as the heart is superior to all the organs of the body the sin associated with the heart is also greater than the sin performed with other organs. It is just like the obedience of Allah (S.w.T.) through ones heart is much superior than obeying Him in actions. It is this same heart that involves one in a great sin like polytheism. These sins of the heart are definitely more than sins associated with other organs. One of the sins of heart according to the ayat of Qur’an is concealing evidence. In order to emphasise, Allah (S.w.T.) says in the later portion of this ayat, ***“…Allah knows what you do”***, so that the sinner may realize that even though people may not be aware of Allah (S.w.T.) is aware of his sin and He will certainly punish him for it.

Allah the Almighty also says,

“…and the witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned.” (***Surah al-Baqarah 2:282***).

Similarly in another verse, Allah (S.w.T.) says,

“And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah?” (***Surah al-Baqarah 2:140***).

Such a person is like the Jews and the Christians, who had seen the characteristics of the Holy Prophet (S) in the Torah and Injil but deliberately concealed them.

Testify For The Truth Even If It Harms You

In Surah an-Nisa’, the Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) says,

“O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah’s sake, though it may be against your own selves or (***your***) ***parents or near relations; if he be rich or poor, Allah is nearer to them both in compassion; therefore do not follow*** (***your***) ***low desires, lest you deviate; and if you swerve or turn aside, then surely Allah is aware of what you do.”*** (***Surah an-Nisa’ 4:135***).

Thus one must not conceal testimony due to the fear of the rich or mercy for the poor. One must not feel undue compassion for the accused who is poor. One should neither pay heed to ones own interest nor

care for any other person while giving testimony. The Divine command should always be respected in entirety.

Justice For The Enemy

The following verse of Surah al-Ma'ida states:

"O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people invite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety, and be careful of **(*your duty to*)** ***Allah; surely Allah is aware of what you do."*** **(*Surah al-Ma'ida 5:8*).**

According to this ayat testimony should be given only to seek the pleasure of Allah (S.w.T.). No feeling of enmity should be allowed to come in the way of stating the truth. Allah (S.w.T.) says in another verse:

"...and give upright testimony for Allah." **(*Surah at-Talaq 65:2*).**

Those Who Conceal Evidence

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) remarks,

"On the Day of Qiyama, Allah shall cut off the flesh of one who conceals evidence; then order him to eat it before all the creatures."[1]

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) also says that those who conceal evidence are described in the Qur'an as those whose hearts have sinned. 'Hearts have sinned' actually implied that 'hearts have disbelieved'," according to Imam ('a)

Another tradition recorded from Imam ('a) is thus:

"One who goes back upon his testimony or conceals it wholly, Allah shall cut off his flesh and force him to eat it before everyone. And when he will enter Hell he would be chewing at his own tongue."[2]

Hazrat Imam Musa al-Kadhim ('a) says,

"When you are asked to give evidence, give it. For Allah says:

"Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners..." **(*Surah an-Nisa' 4:58*).**

Evidence is itself a trust. Allah (S.w.T.) also says,

"And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah?" **(*Surah al-Baqarah 2:140*).**

The following tradition of Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) is recorded in Tafsir 'Ali Ibn Ibrahim Qummi:

“One who possesses some evidence, has to make it known. And when he is asked for it, he must give it. He should not fear anyone’s criticism. He must fulfill his obligation of Amr bil Ma’ruf (enjoining good) and Nahi Anil Munkar (forbidding evil).”[3]

Is It Wajib To Testify?

Is it Wajib to become a witness if one is requested to do so by a believer brother, in order he may achieve some benefit from the case he is pursuing in an Islamic Court? According to most of the Mujtahids it is Wajib. Allah the Almighty Himself says:

“,.and call in to witness from among your men two witnesses; but if there are not two men, then one man and two women from among those whom you choose to be witnesses, so that if one of the two errs, the second of the two may remind the other; and the witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned.” **(*Surah al-Baqarah 2:282*).**

Hisham says that Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) said,

“And the witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned.” **(*Surah al-Baqarah 2:282*).**

And in the succeeding ayat,

“…and do not conceal testimony”, meaning concealing testimony from a Shari’a judge.” **(*Surah al-Baqarah 2:283*).**

● Numerous traditions state that to be a witness is *Wajib* (obligatory). For example, Muhammad Bin Fuzail asked Imam Musa al-Kadhim (‘a) the meaning of the above ayat (Surah al-Baqarah 2:282)

“And the witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned.” **(*Surah al-Baqarah 2:282*).**

Imam (‘a) replied,

“When someone calls you to give evidence in a matter of some debts or some right, then you do not have the choice to ignore it.”[4]

Of course the Qur’anic command in the verse 282 of Surah al-Baqarah asking the witness to testify before the Shari’a judge implies that the person had in the first instance been a witness to the transaction etc.

The person who has witnessed the transaction etc. has to exercise extreme care and caution in this regard. He must memorise all the details or put them in writing, if necessary, so that there is no scope for doubt or misunderstanding in future. If this person is called upon to be a witness, it is Wajib on him to comply, even if he has to travel some distance.

People Whose Supplications Are Not Accepted

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"Du'a of four types of people is not answered:

A Person who sits idle at home and prays to Allah to provide him with sustenance is told, 'Have We not ordered you to make effort for obtaining your sustenance?'

The person who prays for some misfortune for his wife. He is told, 'Have We not given you the choice of giving her divorce if you do not want such a wife?'

One who had squandered the money and spent it in evil ways. Now if he prays for sustenance, he is told, 'Did We not order you to spend in moderation?'

One who gives a loan to someone but does not make anyone witness it. Hence if the borrower refuses and the creditor prays, he is informed, 'Had We not ordered you to have witnesses?'"[5]

Testifying Is Wajib And Concealing Evidence, Haram

There may be occasion when a person has not directly witnessed a transaction but has some information for having heard or seen something related to the issue. If the information he has can save a Muslim from harm or enable him to secure his right, it is Wajib on this person to testify if he is summoned. If he is not summoned, it is Wajib for him to volunteer to testify by approaching the Shari'a judge with the information he has. If by not disclosing what he knows, a Muslim is harmed or loses his right, it is Haram to remain silent.

In short if a person is capable of helping the oppressed or prevent the oppressor from oppressing, it is Wajib on him to do so.

It is not Wajib to give evidence in a situation where not testifying does not cause any harm to a Muslim, nor does it deprive him of his right. In this case a person can even refuse to testify even if he is ordered to do so, because neither is he a direct witness to the dispute nor is his silence harmful in anyway.

Muhammad Ibn Muslim says, quoting an authentic tradition from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a): "If one hears an evidence (i.e. he becomes a witness) but he had not been made a witness, then if he likes he can testify or he can prefer to remain silent."[6]

Testify Only If You Are Certain

The witness is required to pay attention to all the aspects of the matter that he has witnessed and when he is testifying, he must only say that, about which he is certain. He must not mention those things,

which he himself has not heard, or seen. It should be clear as the Sun, as mentioned in tradition.

When A True Testimony Will Oppress Someone

It should be known that a testimony should not endanger the life, property or honour of a Muslim. It should also not pose a threat to the life, property and honour of the witness. It is Wajib to give evidence and Haram to conceal it so that justice is established in the society and injustice is eradicated. The oppressor ought to be punished and the right may be restored to its owner but if the testimony itself becomes the cause of oppression it is not Wajib to testify. Rather it is Haram to do so and it is Wajib to conceal evidence. For example if a person knows that if he testifies against a particular oppressor, the oppressor will take revenge on him or on his relatives or plunder his wealth, then it is Wajib to conceal evidence. Similarly, there may be a situation where a debtor deep in debts is unable to clear his dues because of his poverty. At the same time he cannot prove his helplesness and the creditor is not prepared to spare him. In this case also it is Wajib to conceal evidence, if the evidence given by a witness will cause the poor debtor to be oppressed.

The following traditions of our Ma'sumin (‘a) emphasise the justification of concealing evidence under special circumstances.

Hazrat Imam Musa al-Kadhim (‘a) says:

“Give evidence for the sake of Allah even if you have to testify against yourself, your parents or your own relatives – But you must not cause harm to your believing brother by concealing evidence. However, if your believing brother is going to be oppressed, then do not testify.”[7]

Dawud Ibn Hasan says that he heard Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) saying:

“Give evidence for the sake of Allah, even if you have to testify against your parents or your own son. But do not give evidence to cause harm (Zair) to your believing brother.”

The narrator says that, ‘I asked, “What is Zair?” He (‘a) said,

“It is when someone who has a right, and in order to obtain it he resorts to oppression, contrary to the order of Allah and the Holy Prophet (S). For example, a man is indebted to another, but the debtor is in straitened circumstances. In this situation, Allah has ordered that he must be given respite till he becomes self-sufficient. And (Allah) says,

***…then let there be postponement until* (*he is in*) *ease…* (*Surah al-Baqarah 2:280*).**

Now if in spite of this the creditor summons you to testify, and you know the poverty of the debtor, then it is not permitted for you to testify (that he has taken the loan).”[8]

A Tradition From Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (‘A)

Muhammad Ibn Qasim Ibn Fuzail narrates a tradition from Imam Musa al-Kadhim (‘a). He says, “I asked Imam (‘a), ‘One of your devotees has taken a loan from an enemy of yours. The creditor wants to oppress him and have him imprisoned. Allah (S.w.T.) knows that he has no money to repay the debt, neither is he capable to do so at present. He does not even have al-Bayyina (two just witnesses) to prove his bankruptcy. Then is it allowed for him to take an oath so that he can prove his bankruptcy and obtain respite till the return of favourable conditions? And if from your Shi’as there are some witnesses who can testify against him, (that he has taken the loan) can they testify?’”

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (‘a) replied,

“It is not permitted for them to testify. And it is not permitted for the creditor to oppress the debtor.”[9]

When Testifying Harms

When we speak about Haram testimony that causes harm to a Muslim, we mean a wrongful harm or unjustified oppression but if the person deserves to be punished, it is Wajib to give the evidence. For example a person commits a crime. The witness of this crime does not testify only because if he does so the one against whom he testifies will demand the debt which the witness owes him. This is not a valid excuse for withholding evidence. The criminal must be punished according to Shari’a even if the witness has to suffer a monetary loss. However, if the hardship for the witness far outweighs the seriousness of the crime of the accused then the witness has a valid excuse to refrain from testifying.

Harm And Being Deprived Of Benefit

It must be mentioned that to be harmed is different from being deprived of some benefit. In the examples already mentioned, if a witness refrains from testifying due to fear that the accused will deprive him of some money, or that some benefit may not accrue to him; this does not amount to him being ‘harmed’.

However if the accused is the employer of the witness and will fire him from his job thus causing untold hardship, then it is allowed for the witness to refrain from testifying as it could be regarded as ‘harm’ in common parlance.

Hence we can conclude that false oath, false testimony and concealing evidence, each of these are Greater sins if there is no risk of any harm. If there is any chance of any harm to a Muslim or an innocent witness, then they do not remain sins – they are permitted. Rather in some circumstances these actions become Wajib as we have seen from the traditions of Ma’sumin (‘a). However as far as possible one must give priority to the more important alternative.

1. Wasa’il ul-Shi’a.

2. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
3. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
4. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
5. Iddatud Dai.
6. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
7. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
8. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
9. al-Kafi.

The Twenty-First Greater Sin: Non Fulfilment Of A Promise

The twenty-first of the Greater sins is 'Breaking of a promise.' There are authentic traditions to this effect from Abdul Azim where he quotes that Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) has proved it to be a Greater sin with the help of the following verse of Holy Qur'an:

***"And those who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation and cut asunder that which Allah has ordered to be joined and make mischief in the land; (as for) those, upon them shall be curse and they shall have the evil (issue) of the abode."* (*Surah Ra'd 13:25*).**

The Holy Qur'an denounces the breaking of promise in the following ayat too:

***"Yea, whoever fulfills his promise and guards (against evil) - then surely Allah loves those who guard (against evil).* (*Surah Ali-'Imran 3:76*).**

(*As for*) *those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their own oaths - surely they shall have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the Day of Resurrection nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement."* (*Surah Ali-'Imran 3:77*).

Similarly we find another verse of the same connotation:

***"Surely the vilest of animals in Allah's sight are those who disbelieve, then they would not believe).* (*Surah al-Anfal 8:55*).**

***Those with whom you make an agreement, then they break their agreement every time and they do not guard (against punishment)."* (*Surah al-Anfal 8:56*).**

This ayat is critical of the Jews of Bani Qurayza, who did not honour the pact, which they had formed with the Holy Prophet (S) regarding cooperation with the infidels. They supplied arms to the disbelievers of Mecca for the Battle of Badr and thus invalidated the pact. Later they justified their action saying they

had forgotten the pact.

They once more entered into a pact with the Holy Prophet (S) only to violate it at the time of the Battle of Khandaq (trench). They went against the pact and sided with Abu Sufyan.

In various places in the Holy Qur'an we find that fulfilling a promise has been made obligatory and highly emphasised.

For example,

***"and fulfill the promise, surely* (*every*) *promise shall be questioned about."* (*Surah al-'Isra', 17:34*).**

Also,

***"O you who believe! Fulfill the obligations."* (*Surah al-Ma'ida 5:1*).**

Similarly in Surah al-Baqarah the ayat says,

***"...and the performers of their promise when they make a promise..."* (*Surah al-Baqarah 2:177*).**

We also find the following verse:

***"O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do."* (*Surah as-Saff 61:2-3*).**

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) has explained this ayat in the following manner:

"A believer's promise to his believing brother is a vow that has no expiation (It cannot be broken). But one who goes back on his word declares his opposition and enmity to Allah, and invokes the anger of Allah."[1]

After this the Imam ('a) recited the above-mentioned ayat.

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) advises Malik al-Ashtar regarding the honouring of promises:

"Breaking a promise causes the anger of Allah."[2]

'Ali ('a) also quotes the same verse after this.

Hazrat Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) said:

"There are four types of sinners who are punished very soon:

The person who violates the pact that he has made with you, even though you have respected it.

One who inflicts harm upon you even though you caused him no harm.

One who has promised you something and you are faithful upon your agreement but he is unfaithful.

One who wants to severe relations even though the relative wishes to continue the relationship."[3]

Abu Malik inquired from Imam Zayn ul-'Abidin ('a), "Inform me about all the rules of religion." Imam ('a) told him,

"To speak the truth, to judge with justice and to fulfill the promise."[4]

Although a vast number of traditions and ayats denounce the breaking of promises. We shall quote some selected ones.

Types Of Promises

There are Three types of promises:

1. Promise of Allah (S.w.T.) to His creatures.

2. Promise of the creatures to Allah (S.w.T.).

3. Promises of the people among themselves.

The promise of Allah (S.w.T.) to His creatures is that of the Alam al-Zar (in the spiritual plane). We come to know of this promise through the Qur'anic ayats as well as the traditions. According to this, Allah (S.w.T.) first created the souls of all human beings and made the following covenant: That they remain upon the right path, do not associate anyone or anything with Allah (S.w.T.), obey the commands of their Prophet, and do not follow Shaitan, Allah (S.w.T.) shall recompense them by helping them, by keeping them forever in His mercy, and give them a place in Paradise but if they do not respect their covenant, Allah (S.w.T.) will also disregard His side of the promise. It is for this very fact, that Allah (S.w.T.) says.

"...and be faithful to (your) covenant with Me, I will fulfill (My) covenant with you." (Surah al-Baqarah 2:40).

Allah (S.w.T.) also says,

"Did I not charge you, O children of Adam, that you should not serve the Shaitan?" (Surah Yasin 36:60).

The covenant that Allah (S.w.T.) took from the people in the spiritual plane also includes the oath with regard to the Wilayat (Mastership) of Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) and the Imams ('a). Numerous traditions mention this fact. It is even recorded in the various heavenly scriptures, and all the Prophets have conveyed the message of the Wilayat of the Fourteen Ma'sumin ('a).

However, some scholars have rejected this concept of the Alam al-Arwah or Alam al-Zar. They give a different explanation to the traditions and ayats that deal with this subject. According to them Alam al-Arwah (the spiritual plane) is essentially the innate human nature, which is so designed by Allah (S.w.T.) that it is desirous of obeying Allah (S.w.T.)'s command and does not desire to follow Shaitan. Of course the reasoning capacity of man directs him to follow his nature and accordingly obey Allah (S.w.T.)'s orders. Hence if a man goes against Allah (S.w.T.)'s command he goes against his own nature. These thinkers consider the covenant, to be the same as the innate nature given to us by Allah (S.w.T.). This book is not concerned with the detail of these two theories.

Anyway whether a man breaks the promise given in Alam al-Zar, or goes against his innate nature, he commits a greater sin. This fact has been emphasised in most ayats and traditions, and it is confirmed that honoring the covenant is Wajib and not respecting it is Haram. It is also confirmed that the breaking of this first covenant can bring severe chastisement. The people are also warned of dire consequences in case of default. The traditions also inform us that serious retribution incured just for violating the first covenant, which is the greatest of the sins. Hence it is incumbent upon the people to fulfill their covenant so that Allah (S.w.T.) may also fulfill His promise.

Allah (S.W.T.) Has Promised To Answer Every Prayer

One of the promises of Allah (S.w.T.) to His creatures is that He will answer every prayer, but this is only on condition that the supplicant honors this covenant with Allah (S.w.T.).

Jamil narrates from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) who said,

"When a man prays to Allah with a pure intention and a sincere heart, Allah answers (his prayer) after man has fulfilled his promise to Allah . But if man prays to Allah without a pure intention and sincerity, Allah does not answer it. Has not Allah said:

"...and be faithful to (your) covenant with Me, I will fulfill (My) covenant with you." (Surah al-Baqarah 2:40).

so the promise is kept only with one who keeps his own word.'[5]

Verbal Expression Of A Promise

The second type of promise is one that the man himself gives to Allah (S.w.T.), like a vow or an oath. For an oath to be binding, it is necessary that it be expressed verbally. For example, if someone wants to vow to Allah (S.w.T.) and state it in Arabic language he should say 'Ahadto Allah' (I have vowed to Allah) or 'Alayya Ahadollah' (The vow for Allah is upon me). The statement of promise, oath or the vow can be in any language but expressed verbally. A vow for example may consist of saying, "if I return safe and sound from the journey, I shall give such and such amount as charity in the way of Allah."

If an oath is intended mentally and not expressed verbally, it is not binding.

Vow Or Oath For A Useless Thing

It must be remembered that a vow, oath or a promise should not be taken for a useless object. That is, the object must not be undesirable from the Islamic point of view. An oath taken to carry out some makruh or Haram action, a vow to abstain from a Wajib or a mustahab act is invalid. An oath taken for an action which is Wajib and its avoidence Haram in a prevailing set of conditions, automatically becomes invalid if the conditions change. For example, a man vows to give a thousand rupees in charity if he gets well, but after he is well be becomes so poor that it is hardly possible for him to maintain his family. In these circumstances the vow is considered invalid and it is not Wajib on him to fulfill it.

Vow Should Be For A Useful Aim

In conclusion it can be said that an oath should be taken if it is acceptable from the Shari'a point of view. In any case an oath should be taken when common sense dictates that the oath serves some useful purpose, either by carrying out an action or by abstaining from it. For example to walk and exercise etc. which are beneficient and Mubah (permitted) actions, and to abstain from smoking which is harmful to health although Mubah.

Conditional And Absolute Covenant

Just as in the case of oath and vow, a covenant is also either conditional or absolute. An example of an absolute covenant is when a man says, "I make covenant with Allah that I shall perform such and such good action." Then this shall become binding upon him. If he does not do so he would have committed a Greater sin. In addition he also has to pay the penalty. The conditional covenant is the one when the person attaches some conditions. For example, he may say, "If Allah gives me a son, I will perform such and such good deed." Then that good deed becomes Wajib upon him only when he gets a son. Once the condition is fulfilled it will also be Haram for him to leave the deed undone and he will have to pay the additional penalty also.

Three Types Of Covenant With Allah (S.W.T.)

Actually a vow and an oath is also a covenant with Almighty Allah (S.w.T.). Therefore a covenant is of three types. One is the covenant itself and of the other two one is a vow and the other an oath. It is only due to Divine Mercy that man is given a choice of Three kinds of covenants in case he wishes to avoid the risk of being liable for keeping sixty fasts etc. Hence, he can make a vow or take an Islamic oath.

Expiation Of A Vow Or A Covenant

Breaking of a covenant, whether absolute or conditional, is Haram. The expiation becomes Wajib in case of default. It is the same penalty as that of breaking or omitting, without any reason, a fast of the month of Ramadhan, i.e. feeding sixty poor people, keeping sixty fasts or freeing a slave.

If a vow is broken its kaffarah (expiation) is same as that of breaking an oath. That is, feeding, or clothing ten poor people or freeing a slave; but if he cannot do any of these then it is Wajib for him to keep three fasts.

Breaking Of Promise And Hypocrisy

Breaking of a promise is a very serious sin. It is a sin that sows the seed of hypocrisy in the heart of the person who commits it. The person dies in a state of disbelief and is raised with the hypocrites on the Day of Judgment. The Holy Qur'an says:

"And there are those of them who made a covenant with Allah: If He gives us out of His grace we will certainly give alms and we will certainly be of the good. But when He gave them out of His grace, they become niggardly of it and they turned back and they withdrew. So He made hypocrisy to follow as a consequence into their hearts till the day when they shall meet Him because they failed to perform towards Allah what they had promised Him and because they told lies." **(*Surah at-Tawba 9:75-77*).**

The Shan al-Nuzul (circumstances of Revelation) of this ayat, according to Tafsir Minhaj us-Sadiqin is as follows: "Thulbe Ibn Khatib was a very staunch and a well known Christian. One day he came to the Holy Prophet (S). He began to complain of his poverty, and requested the Holy Prophet (S) to pray for him. The Holy prophet (S) advised him, "Do not emphasise upon this prayer of yours but be patient in your circumstances. Too much of wealth is dangerous for you. If you are grateful for this favour it is better than too much of wealth that makes you unthankful. By Allah if I pray that mountains become gold and silver and move with me, Allah shall cause it to be so but I know that an honourable hereafter is better, and those who are well provided in this world have a difficult hereafter. So, follow the Prophet of Allah and accept his advice."

But Thulbe the Christian did not follow the advice of the Holy Prophet (S) and again he came back to him with his entreaty and said: "O Prophet of Allah! I make a covenant to Allah that if He gives me abundant wealth I shall spend it upon the deserving ones and do good through it."

When he persisted in his request, the Holy Prophet (S) prayed for the removal of his property.

Allah (S.w.T.) gave abundant increase in his livestock; and he became a Muslim. His animals multiplied and he became so busy in supervising them that he stopped praying behind the Holy Prophet (S) in the

congregational prayers. He prayed only the morning and the evening prayers. Then his herd became so large that the surrounding area of Madinah was not sufficient any more. He took his animals to the outskirts of the town and settled there. Now he was deprived of praying the daily prayers behind the Holy Prophet (S). Still he continued to come to Madinah for the Friday prayers. Then his business expanded beyond the valleys surrounding Madinah. Finally he could not even attend the Friday prayers.

One day the Holy Prophet (S) asked his companions, "Why is Thulbe not attending the congregation?" The people replied, "He has so many goats and sheep that a single valley is unable to accommodate them. Now he has moved to such and such valley and settled there. The Holy Prophet (S) upon hearing this said,

"Woe be upon Thulbe, Woe be upon Thulbe, Woe be upon Thulbe!"

Later when it was Wajib to pay zakat due to the revelation of the verse of Zakat, the Holy Prophet (S) summoned one of his followers and gave him this verse in writing and sent with him a tribesman of Bani Salim. The Prophet ordered, "After you have collected Zakat from Thulbe go to such and such good man and collect it from him too." Both of them went to Thulbe. They showed him the Qur'anic verse and also gave him the letter of the Holy Prophet (S) containing the rules of Zakat. Thulbe had become so much attached to his wealth that he said, "Muhammad is collecting Jiziya from us! Go somewhere else! Meanwhile I shall think upon it."

The two men went to this righteous person (of the tribe of Bani Salim). When he saw the ayat and the letter of the Holy Prophet (S), he said, "I hear and I obey the command of Allah and the Prophet."

He went among his camels and selected the best ones for Zakat and said, "Please take these for the Messenger of Allah (S)." The agents told him that it was not Wajib to give the best of the camels. He said, "How can I not offer the best for Allah and His Prophet?"

Then these two men came back to Thulbe. The wretched fellow repeated his previous objection and refused to pay Zakat.

When the Holy Prophet (S) heard of this incident he said just once, "Woe be upon Thulbe!" Then the Holy Prophet (S) prayed for the well being of the one who had paid the Zakat willingly.

The companions used to wonder why Thulbe had not accepted the advice of the Holy Prophet (S) and saved himself from apostasy! (Zakat is one of the Dhururiyat al-Din and one who says that Zakat is not Wajib has apositisised and is no more a Muslim!) The ayats quoted before this discussion were revealed for Thulbe.

Mutual Covenants And Agreements

The third type of promise is when people form actual covenants and agreements. The ayats and the

traditions state that it is Wajib to fulfill this type of promise and it is Haram to go against them.

For example in Surah al-'Isra':

***"...and fulfill the promise; Surely (every) promise shall be questioned about."* (*Surah al-'Isra', 17:34*).**

Similarly the Qur'an describes truthful and the pious people thus,

***"...and those who fulfill their promise when they make a promise."* (*Surah al-Baqarah 2:177*).**

Also when describing those who shall be saved from Hell and earn Paradise, Allah (S.w.T.) says,

***"And those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenant."* (*Surah Al-Mum'inun, 23:8*).**

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says,

"To keep your word to your believing brother is Wajib like a vow, even though there is no expiation for going against it."

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

"One who has belief in Allah and in last day (Qiyama) must keep his word when he promises."[6]

Thus keeping a promise is a fulfillment for the belief in Allah (S.w.T.) and the Day of Qiyama. Similarly, the beginning verses of Surah as-Saff have also denounced the breaking of promise and clearly prove that non-fulfillment of a promise (of every type) is Haram.

Hypocrites Do Not Keep Their Words

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

"Three traits make man a hypocrite even if he prays and fasts:

Betrayal of trust, lying and non-fulfillment of promise."[7]

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says,

"Those who are just in their dealing, those who do not lie and those who fulfill their promises are from those who have perfect morals. And it is Haram to criticise them behind their back. Their being just (Adil) is obvious. To maintain brotherly relations with them is Wajib."[8]

It follows from this tradition, that a person who is unjust, a liar and one who does not keep his word, does not possess morals. He is not a just person (Adil) but a transgressor (Fasiq) and it is not Wajib to fulfill the rights of brotherhood towards him.

No Concession

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) has also remarked:

"There are Three obligations in fulfillment of which Allah does not give concession to any: To behave well with the parents, whether they are righteous or sinners; to fulfill ones promise; whether to a righteous person or a sinner; and to deliver a trust (to its owner) whether he is righteous or a sinner."[9]

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) says:

"One must also fulfill that promise that he has made to his wife. For a Muslim is always careful of his promise except when it is for making a prohibited thing legal or prohibiting that which is permitted."[10]

Treaties With The Polytheists

It is an established fact that there are numerous Qur'anic verses and traditions which prohibit the breaking of a promise, and makes obligatory the fulfillment of promise. The following verses are sufficient to prove this point:

***"Surely the vilest of animals in Allah's sight are those who disbelieve, then they would not believe. Those with whom you make an agreement, then they break their agreement every time and they do not guard (against punishment)."* (*Surah al-Anfal 8:55-56*).**

Thus those who do not fulfill their promises are the worst of creatures! They are worse than animals. It is also important to know that Allah (S.w.T.) has ordered us to honour and fulfill even the treaties and promises made with the disbelievers and polytheists. These promises cannot be disregarded.

The Holy Prophet (S) Respected The Treaty With The Polytheists Of Mecca

When the power and glory of Islam was at its zenith a verse of Surah Barat was revealed; ordering Jihad (holy war) against the polytheists. The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) commanded the Prophet to purify the Holy Mecca from the filth of polytheism and idol worship but it was also ordered not to break the treaty with the polytheists if they did not break it. The ayat is as follows:

***"Except those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement, they have not failed you in anything and have not backed up anyone against you, so fulfill their agreement to the end of their term; surely Allah loves those who are careful (of their duty)."* (*Surah at-Tawba 9:4*).**

Abu Rafe says: "The Quraish sent me to the Holy Prophet (S). When I met him, my heart became illuminated with his countenance. I said to him, "O Prophet of Allah! I do not wish to go back to the

Quraish." He said, I would not act against the terms of treaty, and retain their messenger. Abu Rafe, go back to your people now and after this if you wish, you may accept Islam and join us."

Honouring The Terms Of The Treaty With The Quraish

Huzaifa Yamani says that there was one thing that discouraged me from participating in the Battle of Badr. Abu Husael and I were going out when we came face to face with some men from the Quraish. They asked, "Do you love Muhammad?"

"We love Madinah," we replied.

They made us promise that after reaching Madinah we shall not accompany the Holy Prophet (S) in the battle. When we met the Holy Prophet (S) and told him of this promise he said,

"Do not think of joining in the battle due to this oath of yours. We shall seek the Divine assistance!"

The above two traditions are recorded in the book, "Islam and World Peace" by Sayyid Qutb, page 264.

The Kafir Father Took Away His Son

During the treaty of Hudiabiya, Sohail Ibn Umer was representing the disbelievers in negotiating with the Holy Prophet (S). When it was time for drawing up the treaty and the signatures were yet to be affixed, Jundal the son of Sohail left the pack of disbelievers and went to the Muslims. Seeing that he was attracted to the Muslims, the Quraish chained his legs but he escaped with the chains intact. He went away with the Muslims and began to behave like one. When his father saw this, he came to his son and gave him a resounding slap. Then he told the Holy Prophet (S), "O Muhammad! This (treaty) is the first step of reconciliation between you and us and as per its terms you have to surrender my son to me."

The Holy Prophet (S) agreed to it and surrendered Jundal to his Kafir father, but upon the condition that he would be protected and not harmed. Sohail Ibn Umar agreed to this condition. When it was time to hand over Jundal to the disbelievers, Jundal protested, "O Muslims! I have become a Muslim! How will I return amongst the polytheists?"

The Holy Prophet (S) told him,

"Go! But have patience. Allah will provide ease to you in this way only. We cannot go against the terms of the treaty."

Sohail caught his son's hand and led him away. He did not remain true to his promise and tortured his son very much.

This incident proves the importance of the fulfillment of a promise. The same incident is mentioned in the exegesis of Surah al-Fath in Tafsir Minhaj us-Sadiqin.

I Will Stay Here All My Life

The following narration is recorded in Bihar al-Anwar:

The Holy Prophet (S) promised a man that he would wait for him at an appointed place near a stone. The Holy Prophet (S) waited there but the man did not turn up. Morning turned into afternoon while the Holy Prophet (S) stood in the blazing sun. Some of his followers saw him and said, "Please stand in some other place."

He (S) replied,

"I cannot move away from here till that man returns."

The man arrived at last. The Holy Prophet (S) said,

"If that man had not come, I would have continued to stand till death!"

Janab Al-Ismail And The Fulfillment Of The Vow

The Holy Qur'an refers to Prophet Ismail as the "Truthful in Promise," in the following verse:

***"And mention Ismail in the Book, surely he was truthful in* (*his*) *promise, and he was an apostle, a prophet."* (*Surah Maryam 19:54*).**

Hazrat Ismail ('a) had promised to wait for a person, who did not turn up. Three nights passed but he still kept waiting. However, according to most of the scholars and well-known tradition the period of his wait was a whole year. During this time he also had to bear untold difficulties and sometimes survived on leaves.

Violation Of A Promise Is Caused By Disbelief

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) has mentioned that it is disbelief that causes one to go back on his word and break a vow. He says:

"By Allah, Muawiya is not more cunning than I am but he deceives and commits evil deeds. Had I not been hateful of deceit I would have been the most cunning of all men. But (the fact is that) every deceit is a sin and every sin is disobedience (of Allah), and every deceitful person will have a banner by which he will be recognised on the Day of Judgment."[11]

Allamah Majlisi says that the one who commits greater sins is also referred to as a disbeliever in traditions. Hence every type of a deceitful person has been called a Kafir in this sermon. It is that disbelief which has its root in the heart and which takes the form of disobedience to Allah (S.w.T.)'s

commands.

A Muslim Is Never Deceitful

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) has said:

"Surely fulfillment of pledge is the twin of truth. I do not know a better shield (against the assaults of sin) than it. One who realizes the reality of return (to the next world) never betrays. We are in a period when most of the people regard betrayal as wisdom. In these days the ignorant call it excellence of cunning. What is the matter with them? Allah may destroy them. One who has been through thick and thin of life finds the excuses preventing him from orders and prohibitions of Allah, but he ignores them despite capability (to succumb to them and follows the command of Allah), while one who has no restraints of religion seizes the opportunity (and accepts the excuses for not following the commands of Allah)."[12]

Violation Of Promise And Falsehood

Some of the Mujtahids consider violation of a promise to be a kind of falsehood. Especially when at the time of promising, one has no intention of fulfilling it. Thus all the verses and tradition denouncing and prohibiting falsehood also apply here.

If There Are Some Conditions

According to the Fatawa (religious decrees) of the leading Mujtahids, it is Wajib to honour the terms and conditions of a transaction and it is obligatory to fulfill them. For example the buyer can put a condition that if the goods are defective he can return them within two months. Or the seller may put a condition that the buyer must not spoil the goods if he wishes to return them. In such situations it is Wajib to honour the terms of agreement. Similarly if the landlord has restricted the use of his premises to any one except the tenant, the tenant has to observe the terms faithfully. Both the parties to a transaction have a right to lay down their terms and conditions.

Other Mujtahids state that not only is it Wajib to honour the terms and conditions of a transaction but the one who has put them may enforce his rights and insist on the condition being fulfilled. For example if an employee has laid a condition that he shall be paid his salary on the first day of every month, then not only is it necessary to pay him as agreed but the employee has a right to demand it on that day, and he can even take it without the knowledge of his employer.

At times it may happen that the conditions agreed upon are quite irrelevant to the actual transaction and not directly related to it. Even in these cases it is necessary to fulfill the obligations.

In cases where the terms and conditions are such that the parties consider it better to observe them, these conditions do not contribute a right and it is not Wajib to follow them to the letter.

Fulfillment Of Promise Is A Must

In all respects, fulfillment of a promise is so much emphasised in the Qur'anic Verses and the traditions, that one should be extremely careful in honouring every type of agreement and pledge. If a person has to give a promise under compulsion and he does not wish to become a sinner, he can use words like, 'May be', 'If', or 'Insha'Allah' etc. For example he can say, "Insha'Allah (If Allah wills) I will do this."

To Vow Or Pledge After Saying Insha'allah

It is the opinion of Allamah Hilli, and other Mujtahids agree, that every vow or pledge after uttering Insha'Allah (or its translation in any other language) makes the pledge conditional to the Divine will. Hence it is not strictly Wajib to fulfill it. But if it is with regard to some promise or condition (of an agreement), that concerns a Wajib act or it is for the avoidance of a Haram act, it has to be observed faithfully, even after uttering Insha'Allah.

It must however be understood that the promise which is made conditional by saying 'Insha'Allah' is not binding, only when the person intends the actual meaning of the term Insha'Allah. That is, he must really mean to subject the matter to Allah (S.w.T.)'s will. If he utters Insha'Allah only for the sake of seeking divine blessings then it is binding upon him to remain firm upon his vows.

It should also be clear that it is not only permitted, to disregard a promise of abstaining from a Wajib act or to perform a Haram act but it is infact Haram to fulfill it. For example if one vows to punish his wife or son if they did such and such thing, it is better to disregard such vows and forgive them instead.

The Qur'an says:

"And let not those of you who possess grace and abundance swear against giving to the near of kin and the poor and those who have fled in Allah's way, and they should pardon and turn away. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you?' (***Surah an-Nur 24:22***).

It means that Allah (S.w.T.) forgives the sins of those who forgive the wrongdoings of others.

Prophet Ayyub ('A) And His Oath Of Beating His Wife A Hundred Strokes

In a situation where, one has taken an oath in utmost seriousness to inflict punishment, and one does not wish to go against it, it is better to carry out the oath in a manner that a token punishment is given and the oath is also not violated. For example, Prophet Ayyub ('a) saw his wife doing something against his will. He took a vow to hit her a hundred strokes after he recovered from the illness. When he recovered, Allah (S.w.T.) ordered him,

***"And take in your hand a green branch* (*with a hundred twigs*) *and beat her* (*your wife*) *with it* (*once*) *and do not break your oath."* (*Surah Sad 38:44*).**

1. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
2. Nahjul Balagha.
3. Khisal.
4. Khisal.
5. Safinat ul-Bihar.
6. Usul al-Kafi.
7. Usul al-Kafi.
8. Usul al-Kafi.
9. Shaykh Saduq: Khisal.
10. Tahzib.
11. Nahjul Balagha Sermon 200.
12. Nahjul Balagha Sermon 42.

The Twenty-Second Greater Sin: Khayanat

The twenty-second greater sin is defalcation or misappropriation of property. Misappropriation of property as a greater sin is stated in the Qur'an and the authentic tradition related by Abdul Azim from Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (‘a) and also from the traditions of Imam al-Sadiq (‘a), Imam al-Kadhim (‘a) and Imam al-Ridha (‘a).

Khayanat is itself an Arabic word. In the tradition of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) as related by Amash the word 'Khayanat' is used in the list of the greater sins. Another Arabic word used for misappropriation is 'ghulul.' 'Ghulul' is used in the narration of Fazl Ibn Shazan where he quotes Imam al-Ridha (‘a). According to some lexicographers 'ghul' denotes misappropriation of a property obtained as spoils of war against the disbelievers which is not yet been distributed among the Muslims. However other scholars maintain that 'ghulul' applies to every kind of embezzlement.

The Punishment Of Misappropriation According To The Holy Qur'an

The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) says

"...and he who eats unfaithfully shall bring that in respect of which he has acted unfaithfully on the Day of Resurrection; then every soul be paid fully what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. Is then he who follows the pleasure of Allah like him who has made himself deserving of displeasure from Allah, and his abode is hell; and it is an evil destination."* (*Surah

***Ali-'Imran 3:161-162*).**

In Surah at-Tahrim we find the verse:

***"Allah sets forth an example to those who disbelieve, the wife of Nuh and the wife of Lut: they were both under two of Our righteous servants, but they acted treacherously towards them so they availed them naught against Allah, and it was said: Enter both the fire with those who enter."* (*Surah at-Tahrim 66:10*).**

Also Allah (S.w.T.) says:

***"... Surely Allah does not love the treacherous."* (*Surah al-Anfal 8:58*).**

and

***"O you who believe! Be not unfaithful to Allah and the Apostle, nor be unfaithful to your trusts while you know."* (*Surah al-Anfal 8:27*).**

Similarly the Qur'an says,

***"...but if one of you trusts another, then he who is trusted should deliver his trusts, and let him be careful* (*of his duty to*) *Allah, his Lord..."* (*Surah al-Baqarah 2:283*).**

At another place the Divine Book states,

***"Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners..."* (*Surah an-Nisa' 4:58*).**

Breach Of Trust Denounced In The Traditions

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

"One who embezzles a property in his charge and does not deliver it to its owner and dies in such a condition, then he does not die in my community (he does not die a Muslim). When such a person meets Allah, He shall be infuriated with him. And one who purchases an embezzled property knowing that it is embezzled is just like the (actual) embezzler."[1]

Another tradition states,

"And it will be ordered to throw him in the fire; he will remain in the deep pit of Hell forever."[2]

The Prophet (S) is also reported to have remarked,

"If one is Muslim, he must not practice deceit and defalcation. For I have heard from Jibril that deceit and cheating belong to hell."

Then he (S) continued,

“One who cheats a Muslim is not from us, and one who embezzles the believers is (also) not from us.”[3]

The following tradition is recorded in the book al-Kafi:

“There are Three qualities that are the sign of a hypocrite even if he prays and fasts and calls himself a Muslim: lying, violating promises and defalcation.”

This tradition had already been mentioned in the previous discussion.

Amir ul-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) says;

“There are four things and even if one of them enters a house it causes economic catastrophe and it never remains blessed: defalcation, thievery, wine and adultery.[4]

Thus if one or more members of a household indulge in one of these sins, such a household is deprived from divine blessings. It brings about an economic ruin. It must also be clarified, however, that the house of the thief is deprived of ‘barakat’ (divine blessings) and not the place where robbery occurs.

Misappropriation Causes Misfortune

The Holy Prophet (S) remarks,

“Trustworthiness causes one to be self sufficient (financially) and misappropriation causes poverty.”[5]

The narrator says that I said to Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a),

“There is a lady in Madinah, with whom people leave their daughters for training (and education). We have observed that she could maintain herself with so less, but we have never known her to have any financial problem.”

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) remarked,

“It is because she is truthful and trustworthy. These two qualities increase sustenance.”[6]

Another tradition from the same Imam (‘a) is as follows:

“Do not be deceived by the prolonged sajda and Ruku’ of a man, they may be a part of his habits (that he could not avoid). See his truth and trustworthiness.”

Thus it is these qualities that prove righteousness and piety.

Anyone Could Be The Owner Of The Entrusted Property

We have numerous traditions dealing with this subject. They emphatically state that it is Wajib to guard the trust and Haram to misappropriate it, whether the one who entrusts it, is a Muslim or a Kafir. It is even Wajib to protect the goods entrusted by a Nasibi (those are openly inimical to Ahl ul-Bayt a.s.) in spite of the fact that the Nasibi are the worst kind of people.

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"Fear Allah! And return the entrusted thing to the owner. Even if the murderer of 'Ali ('a) entrusts me with something, I shall deliver it to him (when he desires)."

Imam ('a) also says,

"Then fear Allah! And guard the trusts (placed by) the white as well as the black (people). Even if the one who entrusts is from the Khwarij or a Syrian (those who hate 'Ali - 'a)." That is, even if he is a confirmed enemy of the Ahl ul-Bayt ('a).

A man inquired from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a),

"Is it allowed to misappropriate the property of a Nasibi?"

Imam ('a) replied,

"Honour the trust of every person who entrusts you with it, or seeks your advice. Even if it is the killer of Imam Husayn ('a)."[7]

Another similar narration is as follows:

Husayn Shabani says that he asked Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a), "One of your followers considers the property and blood of Bani Umayya permissible for himself. He is also in possession of some property entrusted to him by the Bani Umayya?"

Imam ('a) replied,

"Restore the entrusted property to its owner even if they are Majus (fireworshippers)."

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) is also reported to have said,

"Allah has not sent any messenger but with (the order to propagate) truth and restoring of trust, whether of a righteous man or a sinner."[8]

Muhammad Bin Qasim says that he mentioned to Abul Hasan, Imam Musa al-Kadhim ('a) regarding the person who had entrusted someone with something valuable. "The trustee is an Arab and he is

competent enough not to return the trust. Whereas the one who entrusts is a wretched Khariji (enemy of Ahl ul-Bayt)?"

Imam ('a) said,

"Tell him to return the trust; because it is a divine trust that he is entrusted with." (Meaning that it is a trust, which is to be restored according to divine command).

Hazrat Imam Zayn ul-'Abidin ('a) advises his Shi'as:

"You must return the trusts when required. By the One who has sent Muhammad (S) as a messenger with trust, even if the killer of my father Husayn ('a) had entrusted me with the sword with which he had slain him, I would have delivered it back to him."

Satan Instigates

The greater the importance of a duty in Islamic law, the greater is the effect put in by Shaitan to deviate a person from fulfilling it.

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says,

"If a person makes good the trust in his possession, he unties a thousand knots that had tied him to Hell. So, do not be sluggish in delivering trusts. When one becomes a trustee, Iblis orders a hundred of his assistants to follow him so that they may deviate him and suggest him to defalcate. They continue to pursue him till he is doomed. Except the one who is saved by Allah."

Amin (Trustworthy): A Title Of The Holy Prophet (S)

Every historian has recorded that even prior to the declaration of his prophethood, the disbelievers of Quraish addressed the Holy Prophet (S) by the title of 'Amin'. The disbelievers trusted him to the extent that even though they did not heed his call and did not profess Islam, they deposited their valuables with him. The trust in the Prophet's trustworthiness was not restricted to the Quraish tribe, but was shared by the people of other tribes and areas as well. When these people came to Mecca during the Hajj season they used to put their belongings in the safe custody of the Holy Prophet (S). This continued after the declaration of prophethood. When the Prophet (S) migrated to Madinah he gave all the things that were in his custody to Hazrat 'Ali ('a) and said:

"Proclaim loudly, every morning and evening in Mecca that whoever had kept anything with Muhammad (S) may collect it."

Types Of Misappropriations

Defalcation the opposite of safekeeping is of Three types: Breach of trust with Allah (S.w.T.), with the Holy Prophet (S) and with people.

1. The Trust Of Allah (S.W.T.)

"Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to be unfaithful to it and feared from it, and man has turned unfaithful to it; surely he is unjust, ignorant." **(*Surah Ahzab 33:72*).**

What is meant by Divine trust? The scholars have a variety of opinions in this regard. Some opine that it denotes the grace of intellect given by Allah (S.w.T.). The safeguarding of this trust (intellect) means that man should employ it to recognise and obey his Creator. According to other scholars this trust consists of the laws of Islam that Allah (S.w.T.) has sent through His Prophet (S). These laws are a Divine trust. To guard these laws means to obey them faithfully. It is obvious that the heaven, the earth and the mountains did not possess the ability to protect these trusts and hence they refrained from accepting them. Man was competent to obey the command of his creator and therefore he accepted the trust. But he allows his emotions to subvert his intellect and permits his desires to override reason. He therefore ignores the laws he had agreed to obey oblivious of divine retribution. This is breach of trust with Allah (S.w.T.).

The Blessings Of Intellect And Trustworthiness

Intellect or the faculty of reasoning is one of the greatest trusts that Allah (S.w.T.) has bestowed upon man and this trust demands that man continually honours it. We must not say or do anything that is against reason. If we allow our desire to conquer reason we would have committed a breach of trust with Allah (S.w.T.).

As regards the safekeeping of trust with reference to the rules of Shari'a,

Imam Muhammad al–Baqir ('a) says:

"Misappropriating the trust of Allah and His Prophet (S) is their disobedience. As far as the breach of trust is concerned, every person is the trustee of the laws revealed by Allah."9

It is clear from this tradition that the Divine laws promulgated for men are Allah (S.w.T.)'s trust. The safekeeping of these trusts means the acceptance of these laws and implicit obedience to them. Every individual is expected to study these rules of Shari'a and not to remain ignorant of these. Every individual has to make a point to learn and understand the obligations and be fully conversant with all the laws governing every aspect of his or her life. After learning these laws the individual is further obliged to accept them and follow them in all sincerity.

It is said that when it was the time for prayers, Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) became fearful and restless and his face became pale. People were shocked to see him thus, and asked him the reason for it. He replied,

"It is the time for prayers! It is the time of delivering the trust that Allah had offered to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, which they had refused. This is what I fear!"

However, this is not restricted to prayers. All the laws of Shari'a are the trust of Allah (S.w.T.) and prayers occupy a lofty position among them.

Propagating The Laws Of Religion

It is pathetic that most of the people of our time are committing breach of Divine trust. People are so engrossed in the materialistic world that they have no time to learn the basic laws of religion, or to act upon them. Day by day religion is given less and less importance although more than before, the need of the day is that people should learn about religion and propagate it to others. We must ourselves act upon the laws of Shari'a faithfully and also exhort others to do the same.

2. Trust Of The Holy Prophet (S)

Both Shi'as as well as Sunnis agree that before his passing away the Holy Prophet (S) had said,

"I leave among you two weighty things, the Book of Allah and my Progeny."

The Prophet's words after this, according to history are,

"On the Day of Qiyama I will question you concerning them (as to how you have safeguarded them)"

According to Tafsir Majmaul Bayan: The Qur'an and the Progeny have been referred to as "two weighty things" because to follow them is a very difficult task indeed. A true Muslim is one who is able to carry the weight of this responsibility. A Muslim must obey the Qur'anic orders and follow the Ahl ul-Bayt ('a). Alas! The followers of Muhammad (S) did not safeguard the important trusts.

"And the Apostle cried out: O my Lord! Surely my people have treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing." **(*Surah al-Furqan 25:30*).**

May Allah (S.w.T.) not include us in that majority of people about whom the Prophet (S) shall complain to Allah (S.w.T.).

Ahl Ul-Bayt ('A) Are The Trust Of The Holy Prophet (S)

Ahl ul-Bayt ('a) are themselves a trust that the Holy Prophet (S) has left with us. To honour this trust is to love them (Ahl ul-Bayt), and believe in their truth with sincerity. We must obey their commands because their orders are the commands of Allah (S.w.T.) and the Holy Prophet (S). They are the Hujjat

(proof) of Allah (S.w.T.). By sending them to us Allah (S.w.T.) has completed His proof, so we cannot say that there was no one to lead us after the death of the Holy Prophet (S). The Ahl ul-Bayt ('a) are the link between Allah (S.w.T.) and us. We must also respect the Sadat (the Sayyids) as they are from the Progeny of Ahl ul-Bayt ('a), and fulfill their needs, for in this way we would be safeguarding the trust of their ancestors. On one hand the Ahl ul-Bayt ('a) are the trustees of Divine laws from the time of the Prophet's death till the Day of Judgement, on the other hand they themselves ('a) are a valuable trust of the Prophet with us, like the Holy Qur'an. One of their rights upon us is that we consider their grief and sorrow as our own, rejoice in their happiness and joy and honour them by going for Ziarat to their holy shrines.

3. Trust Of The People

Trust of the people is divided into two categories:

(1) Trust of Property and

(2) Trust of the Shari'a.

The first one denotes any goods or property that a person keeps with someone for safe custody. This can be in various forms. Sometimes one keeps a valuable with another person solely for its safekeeping. Sometimes a thing is given for use but it must be returned after the use is over. This is also known as Ariya or Musta'ar. Another form of trust is when a particular thing is given on hire and its rent is collected, for example a house.

A loan is also a trust. Sometimes a valuable is pledged as the surety for some loan. If the loan taken against this surety is not repaid this item is sold to recover the dues. In the same way in transactions of Mudarabba (partnership) the property given out for trading is also a trust.

Trusts Of Shari'a

By trust of Shari'a we mean property which is in possession of a person who is not its actual owner. This property may not have been handed over to him by the owner, but he may come to acquire it through circumstances. For example, a strong wind blows a cloth from a house to the neighbours, or someone's lost domestic animal may stray into somebody's house, or one may buy something and find later that the seller has given an extra item by mistake, or the buyer may pay the seller more than the prescribed rate, or one may find some money on the way, or one may come to acquire some stolen goods or those belonging to someone else. All these things are considered as trusts according to Shari'a. It is Wajib to restore them to the rightful owners, those who have them in their possession should not use such items. Another example of such a trust is a letter addressed to another person. It is Wajib upon the person to send it to its rightful addressee. It is Haram to open or read a letter addressed to someone else.

Misappropriating Other's Property

If one is in possession of a person's property through circumstances, it is Haram to embezzle it. As we have already stated, misappropriation is a greater sin.

Misappropriation is a compound of Three sins:

(1) Injustice

(2) Disregard of an obligatory act and

(3) Illegally using someone's property

Illegally Using Someone's Property

It is a sort of injustice to use the property or a thing belonging to someone else without his permission. It is Haram even to borrow something without the permission of the owner. It is Haram to use the thing even for a moment. In fact, even displacing a thing without permission is Haram when there is no valid excuse.

A person using an article without the owner's permission has to give it back immediately or ask permission for its use. If any damage has occurred to the property the user has to make good the loss.

If one expects that the owner will permit the use of his property, then its use without permission is allowed. But the user will have to compensate in case there is any damage to the property.

A user is not accountable if a property is damaged despite his best efforts to safeguard it, but he will be responsible if the damage is the result of his carelessness.

The 91st verse of Surah at–Tawba says,

"...there is no way **(*to blame*)** ***against the doers of good..."*** **(*Surah at-Tawba, 9:91*).**

According to this ayat the trustee who has done a good deed by guarding a property will not be liable for any loss or damage. The one who entrusts has no lawful recourse against the trustee.

Carelessness In Guarding The Trust

A trustee shall be made to pay for any loss or damage that occurs to the good entrusted to him, if he has not taken reasonable care of the goods or has kept them in an unsafe place. It is also not allowed to hand over the property in ones trust to someone else for safekeeping without the owner's permission. If the trust is transferred to another person and a loss occurs, then the first trustee shall be held responsible. It will amount to a sort of carelessness on his part. Even if he considers someone else to be a better trustee he cannot move the goods to him without the permission of the owner. In the same way

the trustee cannot carry the trust with him when he goes on a journey. The owner's permission has to be sought in this case also. If the trustee intends to travel, he can keep the property in a safe place, or he can hand it over to another person only with the permission of the owner.

However if there is a risk of loss or damage in his absence he must return the trust to its owner or his representatives. If the owner or his representatives are not available, he can surrender the trust property to the Mujtahid or the religious judge or he may avoid travel altogether. But if the journey is more important than the safe-keeping of this trust, and the owner nor representative nor a Mujtahid is available then he can, to ensure its safety keep it with someone reliable. He may even carry it with himself on the journey in such circumstances.

If one is sure that he will not be able to take care of the trust, it is Wajib for him to refuse to accept it. If such a person has already taken it, it is Wajib for him to return it but if in spite of his inability to safeguard the trust property, the owner insists on handing it to him he is allowed to accept it. In this case the trustee cannot be held responsible, and the owner would bear the loss in the event of the goods being lost or damaged. Even if one is compelled to be a trustee against one wishes, it is better to take care of the goods entrusted, as a moral obligation.

It is apparent that this transaction (of one who entrusts and the trustee) is a legal transaction. Either party may terminate the agreement whenever he or she desires. That is, the owner may ask for his property whenever he likes. In the same way the trustee can return the goods in his trust to the owner whenever he wishes. However, it is Wajib for the trustee to return the trust when the owner demands it and the one who entrusts cannot insist upon the trustee to continue to safeguard his goods when he (the trustee) wishes to relieve himself of the responsibility.

Delay In Returning The Trust

Under special circumstances it is permitted to appropriate the property of a Kafir, not living under the protection of Islamic government. But if such a person gives his property as a trust, it is not permitted to misappropriate this property. If the property to be entrusted is stolen or acquired by illegal means, it is Wajib to accept it and restore it to its rightful owner.

As we have already mentioned, anything that is maintained as trust must be restored to the owner or his representative; like some responsible member of his family, if they are not available, the trust could be given in charge of a Mujtahid or his representative. If even these are not available the trust must be handed over to a reliable person. Especially when one perceives the approach of death one should immediately arrange to return the trusts. If none of the above persons are available then it is Wajib upon the dying person to make a will and provide the address of the owner so that the property may be restored to him.

In the same way if the owner learns that the trustee is dead, it is Wajib for him to go and collect the things that he had deposited as trust. If the heirs of the deceased do not recognise him he can describe

the distinguishing features of the trust property and obtain it from them. Similarly if the owner dies, the trustee is under obligation to return the trust to the heirs of the deceased.

Transactions Of Hire, Ariya (Free Loan), Mortgage And Partnership

As we have already mentioned, all the goods that are the basis of the above transactions constitute a trust. Whenever the owner demands the property, it has to be restored immediately. However, if a period has been agreed upon, the owner cannot demand his property before the end of the stipulated period. For example, the landlord cannot expel his tenant before the expiry of the agreement of tenancy. Similarly the pledged article cannot be taken back without the repayment of loan. The same is the case with a loaned article.

At the end of the stipulated period the trustees are obliged to return the property that had been in their possession even if the owner has not demanded it back, but if the owner extends the period the trustees can continue to retain the property.

However, 'Ariya' is a transaction where the owner is at liberty to demand back his property whenever he likes. For example, someone has borrowed a book for a week but the owner demands it the same day. The borrower, in this case, is obliged to return the book immediately. 'Ariya' is just like the keeping of some trust. The owner can ask for it whenever he wants. Even though he may have given it for sometime, he can demand it whenever he likes.

Search For The Owner: Sadaqah On His Behalf

The above discussion was regarding the property trusts. If someone is in possession of a Sharaii trust and the owner is not known, the finder of a property has to search for him for one whole year. He must publicise it from masjids etc. If the owner is still unlocated he must give all of the found property in charity on behalf of the owner.

The One Who Entrusts And The Trustee Should Be Adults

A transaction of trust is valid only when both the parties are sane and adult. So a child or an insane person cannot entrust their property nor can they act as trustees. However, if the guardian of a child or an insane person permits, the property can be held in trust. Whether the guardian permits or not, if the property of a minor or an insane person held in trust suffer some loss or damage, the trustee has to make good the loss. He has to return it to the guardian and not directly to the minor or insane person. If one finds a minor child or an insane person in possession of something and there is a risk of it being lost or damaged, he can take it from him and deliver it to his guardian.

These are thus some laws regarding trusts. For detailed laws one can refer to the books of jurisprudence. The important thing is to understand the significance of trusts and to avoid the pitfalls of a sin like misappropriation. We shall present one more ayat and a few traditions before closing this

chapter.

Trustworthy People Praised In The Qur'an

It is mentioned in Surah Ali–'Imran:

***"And among the followers of the Book there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a heap of wealth, he shall pay it back to you; and among them there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a dinar he shall not pay it back to you except so long as you remain firm in demanding it; this is because they say: There is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way (reproach); and they tell a lie against Allah while they know."* (*Surah Ali–'Imran 3:75*).**

This verse praises those Christians who do not embezzle when non–Christians entrust something to them and it denounces the Jews who consider it permissible to misappropriate the property of anyone who is not a Jew. They falsely claim that they have been given a licence by Allah (S.w.T.) to do so.

When the Holy Prophet (S) recited this ayat, he said:

"The enemies of Allah lie! I have corrected every custom and belief of the age of Jahilya (ignorance) but (the matter of) trust is as it was. Whether the trust belongs to a righteous person or an evil one, it has to be returned."[10]

According to the ayat the embezzlers are like those Jews who defalcated and if a Muslim considers embezzlement to be permissible, he is included among the enemies of Allah (S.w.T.).

Recovery Of Damages From A Property In Trust

The Qur'an and Hadith clearly state that under no circumstances is it allowed to pilfer a property held in trust. Shaykh Tusi in his book, Nihaya and other Mujtahids have also mentioned this fact.

Narrators of traditions have mentioned the following from Imam Ja'far al–Sadiq ('a):

"One person sends another with money to purchase a cloth. When the latter goes to the market he sees that he already has the same type of cloth at home. So can he come back and without saying anything give him the cloth that he was already having and retain the money?"

Imam ('a) continued, "He should not even think of doing this and make himself contaminated with such a sin." Then Imam ('a) recited the 72nd ayat of Surah Ahzab:

***"Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to be unfaithful to it and feared from it, and man has turned unfaithful to it; Surely he is unjust, ignorant."* (*Surah al–Ahzab 33:72*).**

Then the Imam (‘a) further said:

“Even if this man has something better than what is available in the market, he must not give it to the buyer without informing him of the fact.”[11]

This is because the actual transaction consisted of taking the person’s money to the market and purchasing a cloth. Anything contrary to this is ‘Khayanat’.

Sulayman Bin Khalid says, I inquired from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a): “A man had borrowed some money from me. Not only did he not repay the loan but he also took an oath that he did not owe me anything. Later he kept some of his money with me as a trust. Can I recover my debt from this money?”

Imam (‘a) replied, “Certainly that person has betrayed you but you should not betray trust. You must not commit the same sin.”[12]

As we have already mentioned, Shaykh Tusi and the other great Mujtahids have given a clear verdict in the light of the Qur’anic verses and clear ahadith, that Khayanat is totally prohibited.

But in the book Milhiqat Urwatul Wuthqa, the late Kadhim Tabatabai says, “It is commonly believed by the Mujtahids that to recover one’s legal dues from a property held in trust is permitted.”

The fatwa of Late Kadhim Tabatabai was also to this effect, but precaution dictates that one must refrain from such a course of action.

If a person is given money on the undertaking that he should give it to a poor Sadat, he cannot keep this money, even if he himself happens to be a poor Sadat, without informing the owner. But if it is certain that the owner will agree to his keeping it for himself then doing so is not breach of trust.

The Burden Of Khayanat And The Day Of Judgement

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said,

“Beware! One should not commit Khayanat of even one camel! Otherwise, he will be summoned on the Day of Qiyama riding the same camel and bleating like a camel.

Beware! One should not commit Khayanat of even one horse! Otherwise he will be summoned on the Day of Qiyama riding the same horse and neighing like a horse.

He will be calling me for help, ‘O Muhammad! O Muhammad!’ I will tell him that I had already warned him. Now I have no responsibility concerning him against Allah.”[13]

Allamah Majlisi has recorded a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S):

“You must return even a needle and thread. For Khayanat will cause untold degradation and exposure

of defects on the Day of Qiyama."

A man came to the Holy Prophet (S) with a needle that he had taken without permission. He said, "I had taken this needle to sew a pack saddle for my camel."

The Holy Prophet (S) told him,

"If this needle belongs to me I have forgiven you. However, if it belongs to the other Muslims you must pay for it so that it could be included in the public treasury for equal distribution."

"I was not aware that it was such a serious matter," the Arab remarked, "If it is so, I will not keep the needle with me." He handed over the needle to the Holy Prophet (S) and went away.

The Guilty Shall Be Recognised By Their Marks

According to Allamah Majlisi, on the Day of Qiyama the sinner shall carry the pilfered property on his shoulders. Every type of sinner will have specific distinguishing marks, by which everyone will know what sin the sinner had committed. One who commits a greater sin and dies without repenting for it, the Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) will deal with him with justice on the Day of Qiyama. So much so that the mark of the sin that he committed most will be attached to him. For example, the drunkard will be holding a wine bottle, the terrible stench of which will cause discomfort to the people. Similarly, the musician will have the instrument stuck to his hands. The gamblers will be having the instrument of gambling with them. The same thing is alluded to in the verse:

***"The guilty shall be recognised by their marks."* (*Surah ar-Rahman 55:41*).**

The Holy Prophet (S) And His Trustworthiness

One day a poor man came to the Holy Prophet (S) and told him of his poverty. The Prophet (S) said,

"Sit down! Allah is most Powerful."

Another beggar came and the Holy Prophet (S) told him to sit down too. Then a third destitute arrived and the Prophet (S) told him also to sit down. After some time a person came and presented four sa (approximately 12 kilos) of wheat as Zakat to the Holy Prophet (S). The Holy Prophet (S) distributed one sa (3 kilos) of wheat to each of the poor men. One sa of it remained. After the Maghrib and Isha prayers the Holy Prophet (S) announced that a sa of wheat is remaining with him. Any needy person can come and collect it from him; but no one came forward. The Holy Prophet (S) was compelled to take this trust home. Ayesha says that, that night the Holy Prophet (S) was very restless. When she inquired the reason of his restlessness he replied,

"I am fearful of the consequences in case I die today and this trust is not delivered to a deserving

person.”

It is also mentioned that when the Holy Prophet (S) was on his deathbed, he had an amount of six or seven dinars for the poor and the needy, remaining with him. He sent for the money and after counting it, said,

“It is possible that Muhammad (S) may reach the presence of his Lord while these dinars are still in his custody!”

Then he (S) summoned Amir ul-Mu’minin Hazrat ‘Ali (‘a), and gave him the dinars for the poor and the destitutes and then said,

“Now I can rest in peace.”[14]

Secrets Are Also Trusts

Sometimes a person is told a secret and asked not to divulge it to others. This secret is also a kind of trust. It may also be that one learns of a secret regarding another person and is sure that that person would prefer that it is not made known to others. This secret is a trust according to Shari’a. To divulge a secret that one has come to know is Khayanat. The following saying of ‘Ali (‘a) is present in Ghurarul Hikam:

“To divulge a secret that you are supposed to guard is Khayanat and betrayal.”

It is absolutely Haram to betray a secret which is a trust, whether of a friend or an enemy, of a righteous person or an evil one.

Private Discussion Is Also A Trust

The Holy Prophet (S) mentions that:

“People who sit together must be careful of safe-guarding the trust. It is not permitted for a believer to expose a secret of his believing brother.”[15]

Abu Dharr has related from the Holy Prophet (S) that he said:

“O Abu Dharr, one who sits in company must be cautious of safeguarding trust. For if you expose a secret of your believing brother, you would have committed Khayanat. So, keep away from such things.”[16]

Whatever is discussed in a meeting is also a trust with the participants. Anything that is to be kept confidential must not be divulged. It is recorded in the traditions:

“One who sits in company must be careful of maintaining the trust but it is not Haram to expose the secret of Three kinds of meetings: One, where an unlawful murder is planned; two, where fornication is planned; Three, where it is planned to loot someone’s property. The facts of such meetings could be presented in the court for proving someone’s right. In some cases it assumes such importance that it becomes necessary to expose a secret.”[17]

In Surah at-Tahrim the Almighty Allah flays some of the Prophet’s wives (Ayesha and Hafasa) for betraying a secret of the Holy Prophet (S). Allah (S.w.T.) has advised them to repent.

“If you both turn to Allah, then indeed your hearts are already inclined (to this).” (Surah at-Tahrim 66:4)

The same chapter also mentions the wives of Hazrat Lut (‘a) and Hazrat Nuh (‘a) in the following words:

“Allah sets forth an example to those who disbelieve the wife of Nuh and the wife of Lut; they were both under two of Our righteous servants, but they acted treacherously towards them so they availed them naught against Allah, and it was said: Enter both the Fire with those who enter.” (Surah at-Tahrim 66:10).

Divulging Secrets Is Khayanat

Abdullah Ibn Sinan says that he inquired from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a), “Is it Haram for a believer to expose some things of another believer that deserve to be kept secret?”

“Yes,” the Imam (‘a) replied.

The narrator further asked, “Do you mean by this the ‘private parts’?”

Imam (‘a) explained, *“It is not what you think, (Though it is also Haram to view the private parts), what I meant were the confidential matters.”*[18]

Imam (‘a) has also said:

“One who washes a dead body of a believer and observes caution with regard to the trust is absolved of all his sins.”

Someone asked, “How can one maintain secrecy with regard to the washing of a believer’s corpse?”

The Imam (‘a) answered,

“He must not tell anyone of the deformities that he might see in the dead body.”[19]

From this discussion we can be certain that exposing a secret amounts to committing Khayanat. Under all circumstances a secret is a trust, whether the person concerned himself takes you in confidence or

you come to know of the secrets by yourself, it is Haram to betray it. If the one whom the secret concerns does not wish his secret to be divulged, then it is Haram and a kind of Khayanat to expose it. Such types of trusts that involve secrets have various grades and are of different types. Certain types of Khayanat are termed as tale telling and others are called backbiting. Each of these shall be elaborated ahead.

Informing Disbelievers About The Military Secrets Of The Muslims

Khayanat can be with Allah (S.w.T.), the Holy Prophet (S) and Muslims. One can also commit Khayanat with ones own self. When a person reveals the political secrets or the military stategies of the Muslims to the disbelieving opponents, he commits Khayanat which includes all the above. He is the cause of strengthening the enemy and responsible for the defeat of the Muslims. Perhaps it is this type of Khayanat that is alluded too in the following ayat:

"O you who believe! Be not unfaithful to Allah and the Apostle, nor be unfaithful to your trusts while you know." (***Surah al-Anfal 8:27***).

In the Shane NuzUsul al-Kafil (circumstances of revelation) of this verse Jabir Ibn Abdullah al-Ansari says: One day Jibril ('a) informed the Holy Prophet (S) of the fact that Abu Sufyan was camping at a particular place with an army of polytheists. The Prophet (S) made preparation to fight with him and kept this secret so that the enemies would be taken by surprise. However, one of the hypocrites wrote to Abu Sufyan and informed him of the Muslim plan. The explanation of the verse (8:27) mentions the Khayanat of Abu Lababa and his subsequent repenting.

Divine Mercy Upon Those Who Maintain Trusts

Maintaining a secret is however, a formidable task. Only those with a high sense of honour are unflinching, and succeed in strictly maintaining secrets. It is a virtue with which very few good actions can compare and is deserving of high rewards and Divine blessings. The person is protected from fear on the Day of Qiyama. On the day when all the people will be gathered for accounting, the trustworthy people shall be placed at the safest and the best place under the shade of Divine mercy.

Imam Musa al-Kadhim ('a) says,

"Three types of people will be under the shade of Divine mercy when there will be no other shade:

(One), the person who arranges the marriage of his believing brother. (Two), the person who procures a servant for his believing brother. (Three), the person who has maintained a secret of his believing brother."

Restrain From Divulging Your Own Secrets

According to the traditions we must not inform anyone of our own secrets. Even if those people are our closest relatives or friends. It is possible that their friendship may not last forever. They might become our enemies in the future. It is very rare for an enemy not to expose the secrets of his opponent.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) has advised one of his followers:

"Do not tell your secrets even to your friend. But only tell him those things that will not cause any harm even if your enemy comes to know of it. Because even a friend could become your enemy one day."[20]

A reliable and pious person has related that when he intended to divorce his wife, he was asked about her defect; that had made him take such a decision. He replied, "An intelligent person never exposes his wife and never reveals her secrets."

Subsequently the divorce was completed and even the Iddah came to an end. Again some people asked him, "Now she is no more your wife. What was the actual defect in her, that you had to divorce?" He said, "I am not concerned with other women." It means that it is the right of a wife upon her husband that he maintains her secrets even after separation and divorce.

Revealing a secret is a kind of Khayanat and all types of people consider it to be evil. It is mentioned in the book Uqudul Farid that even a filthy man like Ziyad (May Allah (S.w.T.)'s curse be upon him) had criticised Umar Ibn Sa'd (May Allah's curse be upon him too) for revealing the last wishes and the secret of Hazrat Muslim Ibn Aqil. Ibn Ziyad (l.a.) had written to Umar Ibn Sa'd. "O Umar Ibn Sa'd! Because you yourself have revealed the secret of Husayn's coming towards Kufa, you would have to go and fight against him."

The detail of this incident are from the book Nafasul Mahmum and other books of Islamic history, and are as follows.

When Ibn Ziyad had Muslim Ibn Aqil arrested, Muslim asked, "Would you murder me?"

"Yes," replied Ibn Ziyad.

"Give me some time so that I can express my last wishes to a relative of mine."

The accursed Ibn Ziyad permitted him to do so. Muslim searched among the people present in the court and saw Umar Ibn Sad. He told Umar Ibn Sad, "O Umar! We are related to each other. I wish something from you. It is obligatory for you to fulfill it and it is a secret that I cannot reveal to everyone."

Umar Ibn Sad tried to Shirk the responsibility but Ibn Ziyad told him, "Do not try to avoid this. Listen to what your cousin wishes." So Umar Ibn Sad and Muslim Ibn Aqil went into a corner.

Muslim said, “There is debt upon my neck. When I had reached Kufa, I had borrowed seven hundred Dirhams. Please sell my armour and repay the loan. When I am killed take my last remains from Ibn Ziyad and perform a proper funeral and bury me. You must also send someone to Imam Husayn (‘a) so that he can stop him from coming to Kufa. I had myself invited him to Kufa and written that the people of Kufa are on his side. So he must have started his journey towards Kufa. Inform him of my arrest and execution so that he may turn back.”

Umar Ibn Sad immediately told Ibn Ziyad all the Three things (the debt of Muslim, the burying of his corpse and the warning for Imam Husayn (‘a). Ibn Ziyad (l.a.) said to Muslim Ibn Aqil, “A trustworthy person can never betray you but the thing is that you have considered a betrayer to be your confidant.”

An Exemplary Confidant

It is appropriate to mention an exemplary trustworthiness at this point. When Hazrat Imam Husayn (‘a) reached a spot called, ‘Hajiz’ he wrote a letter to Muslim Ibn Aqil and the Shi’as of Kufa. He wrote:

“From Husayn Ibn ‘Ali (‘a) to his Muslim and Mu’min brothers. Peace be upon you all. Praise be to Allah besides Him there is no deity. I have received Muslim’s letter. He has informed me of the glad news that you all are united to support me and prepared to fight for my right. I pray to Allah for your favourable consequences. May He reward you for this stand of yours. I have left Mecca on Tuesday the eighth of Zilhajj and started moving towards you. When my messenger reaches you, you must become serious and concerned in your mission. I shall come to you within a few days, Inshallah. Peace be upon you and the Divine Mercy.”

Imam Husayn (‘a) gave this letter to Qays Ibn Musher Saidawi who set out immediately and soon reached the outskirts of Kufa. An officer of Ibn Ziyad, by the name of Hasin Ibn Tamim tried to arrest him there. He at once tore up the letter of Imam Husayn (‘a). He was then taken to Ibn Ziyad. When Ibn Ziyad told him to surrender the letter he said, “I have torn it into pieces.”

“Why?” asked Ibn Ziyad.

“So that you may not come to know what was written in it.”

“To whom was it addressed?”

“To some people I am not familiar with.”

Ibn Ziyad ordered, “If you do not reveal the name, you shall have to mount the pulpit and invoke curse upon the liars.” [Ibn Ziyad was actually referring to Imam Husayn (‘a).]

Qays Ibn Musher went to the pulpit and announced, “O people! Husayn Ibn ‘Ali is the best creature of Allah (S.w.T.), and the son of Fatimah (S) the daughter of the Holy Prophet (S). I am his messenger. I

have left him at a place called ‘Hajiz’. I have come to you so that you may respond to his call and support him wholeheartedly.”

Then Qays invoked curse upon Ibn Ziyad and his father. He then showered praises upon Amir ul-Mu’minin Hazrat ‘Ali (‘a).

Ibn Ziyad ordered that Qays be taken to the wall of the palace and then thrown down. When Qays was thrown from such a height, his bones shattered but he was alive when Abdul Malik Ibn Amir beheaded him.

When Imam Husayn (‘a) learnt of Qays’ murder, his eyes were filled with tears. He recited the following ayat of the Qur’an:

“Of the believers are men who are true to the covenant which they made with Allah: so of them is he who accomplished his vow, and of them is he who yet waits, and they have not changed in the least.” (***Surah Ahzab 33:23***).

An interesting incident of trustworthiness is also recorded in the book, Riyazul Hikayat:

A man had one thousand Tumans in a bag. He was going to the public bath, early in the morning. On the way he met a friend who was also heading towards the public bath. When they came to a junction this person separated without informing his companion. Perchance a robber was pursuing them with the intention of stealing the moneybag. When this man reached the bath the robber followed suit. The man deposited the moneybag with the bath keeper and went inside to take a bath. The bath-keeper himself thought of taking a bath. He thought that the robber who had followed the man was the latter’s friend. So he handed him the money bag and said,

“Keep this in your custody till I return after taking a bath.”

The thief remained sitting till the bath-keeper returned. Then he gave back the moneybag to him. When the bath-keeper learnt that he was not a friend of the first person he asked, “Then who are you?”

He replied, “I am a thief.”

“Then why did you not steal the money bag?”

The thief answered, “I may be a thief, but betraying trust is against manliness. While safeguarding this trust I have also remained aloof from robbery.”

This nobility impressed the owner of the moneybag, and he opened the bag and gave some money to the robber as a reward.

However, stealing is also Haram and it shall be discussed in the forthcoming chapter. An object may be expensive or worthless, but stealing it is absolutely Haram.

1. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
2. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
3. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
4. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
5. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
6. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
7. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
8. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
9. Tafsir Safi.
10. Tafsir Majmaul Bayan.
11. Tafsir Safi.
12. Nihaya of Shaykh Tusi.
13. al-Kafi.
14. Naseekhut Tawarikh Vol.3, Pg544.
15. Bihar al-Anwar Vol. 16.
16. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
17. Bihar al-Anwar.
18. al-Kafi.
19. Amali.
20. Bihar al-Anwar.

The Twenty-Third Greater Sin: Stealing

The twenty-third sin which is certainly a Greater one is stealing or thievery. Imam al-Ridha ('a) has included stealing among the Greater sins according to the tradition reported by Fazl Ibn Shazan. Amash says that Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) has related from the Holy Prophet (S) that he said,

"A believer cannot commit fornication and a believer cannot steal."1

Thus one who fornicates or steals is not a believer. Such a person is devoid of faith. Such a person lacks belief in Allah (S.w.T.) and the Day of Judgement. If such a person dies without repenting for his sins, he does not die a believer. Some of the ayats and traditions that are critical of Khayanat also include stealing. Stealing is absolutely Haram even if it is for a worthless object. To steal even a needle is Haram. However, the hands of a thief are cut only, if in addition to all the necessary conditions the value of the stolen goods exceeds a quarter misqal of gold.

Muhammad Ibn Muslim says that he inquired from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a):

"What is the minimum amount, stealing of which can make one liable to have his hands amputed?"

Imam ('a) replied, "A quarter of a dinar."

"And on stealing two dirhams?"

“Even if it is a dirham more than a quarter of a Dinar. In all cases the hands are severed.”

Muhammad Ibn Muslim further asked, “Then if one steals less than a quarter of a dinar, is he called a thief?”

Imam (‘a) told him,

“Every such person is a thief in the eyes of Allah who steals the property of the Muslims and keeps it for himself.” (That is, Allah will punish him with the punishment that is reserved for all those who steal.)

“But (in this world) his hands are not cut off. However if he steals a quarter dinar or more his hands are severed. If the hands of those who steal less than a quarter dinar were also to be cut then we would find most of the people with their hands severed.”

Punishment For Theft

The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) says in Surah al-Ma’ida:

“And (as for) the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands as a punishment for what they have earned, an exemplary punishment from Allah, and Allah is Mighty. Wise. But whoever repents after his inequity and reforms (himself), then surely Allah will turn to him (mercifully), surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” (Surah al-Ma’ida 5:38-39).

The book Burhanul Qur’an mentions on page 170:

“The opponents of Islam have raised objection against the penal code of Islam. They label such penalties to be primitive and inhuman and not acceptable in the twentieth century. The criticism is especially severe with regard to the punishment of theft and fornication. They trump up their arguments saying that such crimes are a result of psychological disorders and moral and psychological counselling can reform criminals. We admit that moral advice is one of the ways of reforming individuals. Certainly, moral lessons have a profound effect in guiding a society in the right direction. We also do not reject the fact that most of the crimes are due to psychological and moral ills.

Islam has not overlooked moral training as a factor in the development of character but Islam also believes that inspite of such training if the individual is inclined towards crime he should be punished adequately. A breakdown in discipline and order begins if you ignore crime, eventually leading to a corrupt society.

In non-Muslim countries also the criminals are not let off with a sermon on moral values. Criminals are imprisoned and accorded various punishments. We do not deny the fact that poverty causes many a crime to be commited. We agree that destitution sometimes makes a man lose his sense of moral values and he is more inclined to Khayanat and stealing when he is in difficult economic conditions. But

we cannot accept that poverty and destitution are the sole causes of crime. We see quite a few people who inspite of their straitened circumstances are not at all inclined towards injustice and crime and prove their integrity by fulfilling their obligations with sincerity. On the other hand crimes and perversity are prevalent in affluent countries and also in communist countries which claim to have eradicated inequality.

Those who are critical of Islam to be primitive and inhuman are unable to assess their own selves. Those who proclaim independence and human rights overlook their own crimes. Forty thousand people were butchered in North Africa just because they were protesting for their basic rights. Is this nor barbaric?

The newspaper Kahyan of 14th April 1960 reports: The valiant people of Algeria have struggled for six years against the tyrannical rule of France over their country. To date, around one million people from the total population of ten million have laid down their lives in this struggle.

Coming back to our discussion we would like to point out that Islam has taken in to consideration all aspects of crimes and punishment. Islam does lays down heavy penalties for crimes committed but Islamic law takes into account, the circumstances under which the crime is committed. A person who steals due to hunger and poverty is not liable to have his hands cut off, nor is a person who has been coerced into stealing, punished. Also Islamic laws are not applicable in non–Muslim countries. So the objections raised are baseless.

As far as barbarism (of which Islam is accused) is concerned, the progressive countries in the Second World War alone killed and maimed a million people. The dropping of the atom bomb caused untold miseries of devastation, death and diseases plagued millions of people and the horrible effect of these continue to this day. It has come to light in recent times that the dropping of the atom bomb was entirely unneccessary. It was for an experiment. An experiment conducted at the cost of human life and human masses. Compared to this shocking perversity and savageness the fact that corporeal punishment in Islam is given in only limited cases.

Besides Islam prescribes rules and regulations which if followed faithfully not only improve morals, but eliminate poverty and enhance economic development of the society as a whole, thus eliminates the very cause of these crimes.

It is the duty of the Islamic government to provide every citizen with suitable employment. If some people still remain unemployed they are to be paid a stipend from the public treasury till they can secure a job. Under these conditions there is no need for anyone to steal. Inspite of this if someone steals, then surely he deserves to be punished.

It is a fallacy to think that these prescribed punishments are only meant for old times when people were savage and incapable of being controlled by any other means and that in the modern age people are receptive and suggestive and can be reformed without punishment. It is a foolish argument. If this

argument had any substance we would not be witnessing such an awsome crime rate in the “cultured” atmosphere of the developed countries.

It is obvious that the Qur’anic ayat quoted earlier does not give any details regarding the robbery or the punishment. These details have been elaborated in numerous traditions that have come down to us from our Ahl ul-Bayt (‘a)

Conditions When Corporeal Punishment Is Accorded

It should be mentioned here that as far as Shi’a faith is concerned amputing of hand implies cutting four fingers of the right hand. The palm and the thumb are left untouched.

Before amputing the hands of the thief the following conditions must be fulfilled. Even if one of them is absent, the punishment is not carried out:

1. The thief must be an adult. The signs of adulthood according to Shari’a are the completion of fifteen lunar years for a boy and nine lunar years for a girl. Another sign of maturity is the growth of pubic hair. The third sign is the ejaculation of semen in boys and the beginning of the menstrual cycle in the girl. Even if one of these signs are present the concerned person is an adult. So if the thief is not an adult his hands cannot be amputed. At the most the judge releases him after issuing a stern warning so that he may not dare to repeat this act.

Abdullah Ibn Sinan relates the following tradition from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a):

“When a minor child steals for the first and the second time he is forgiven. If he does it for the third time he is issued a strict warning and beating. If he persists in his crime, the tips of his fingers are slightly cut and if he repeats the act, some more of his fingers are cut away.”

2. The thief must be sane. So if an insane person robs, his hand is not amputed. He may be suitably warned and scolded.

3. The thief must not have resorted to stealing under duress, if he had been compelled to do so, the penal code is not applied.

4. The stolen thing must be something that is worth owning. Hence, if ones freedom is restricted it cannot be called a theft.

5. The value of the stolen object must not be less than one-fourth misqal of pure gold. One misqal is equal to eighteen grams. One-fourth misqal is four-and-a-half gram.

6. The son or the slave of the thief must not own the thing that is stolen. So if a father steals from his son, he is not punished. On the contrary if a son or a daughter steals from the father or mother their hands are amputed. The same rule applies to the master and the slave. If the master robs his slave he

is not punished. On the other hand, there exists a difference of opinion on the matter of whether the slave who steals from his master is to be accorded the punishment of theft or not. Some Mujtahids are of the opinion that if a servant steals from his office or employer, he should not be given the full penalty. Other Mujtahids have issued a decree that there is no difference between a servant, a workman and other people. They shall be deserving of the penalty. There is also a difference of opinion with regard to the theft committed by a guest from his host. The most prevalent verdict is that the guest must be punished.

7. Eatables stolen during the times of famine do not make the thief liable for having his hands cut. It is narrated from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) that he said:

"In the time of famine and draught the hands of a thief are not cut off for stealing edible items like bread and meat etc."

8. If a soldier participates in a raid and steals from the plundered goods obtained in war before they are distributed, he is exempted from the punishment.

9. If one of the parties to a transaction steals a property and claims that it rightfully belongs to him, he is not liable to be punished.

10. If a person is accused of theft, but before his theft is proved to the judge, he pays the owner the value of the goods, he is not penalised. Similarly, if a son steals from his father but before the verdict is issued the father dies, the son is not punished, as stolen goods now comprise his inheritance.

11. If the use of the stolen things is Haram (e.g. wine or pork), there is no penal action against the robber.

12. If the thief claims that he had not taken a particular thing with the intention of stealing it, and the judge considers otherwise, there shall be no punishment for it.

13. The object should have been stolen from a place where the owner's permission is required to enter. If a theft takes place in a public mosque or public bath, the thief does not have his hand amputed.

14. The thing should have been stolen from a secure place. If something is not kept in a safe place and left open, the theft of it does not incur punishment. Hence valuables should be kept under lock and key. The fruits should not have been stolen from the trees. They should have been already picked and stored in the orchard. The four-footed animals have to be stolen from the stables. Wares have to be stolen from inside the shop. The pocket that is picked must be an inside one and not the one that hangs outward. Money should be stolen from a safe etc. The shroud should have been stolen from the grave.

15. The thief must himself take away the stolen goods from their proper place. If one takes out the thing from its safe place and another one takes it away, neither of the two can be punished for theft. Because, the one who has taken out the thing from its safe place has not stolen it and the one who has stolen it

has not done so from its place of safety. We have already mentioned that one who steals something from other than its proper place is not given the punishment of theft. Only that thief is punished who removes the thing from its proper place and also takes it away. If more than one person are involved in stealing something from its proper place and taking it away, then the value of the stolen property is divided by the number of people involved. If the share of each person is more than one-fourth misqal all their hands are amputed but if their individual shares are less than this then none of them are punished in this manner.

If a thief removes the stolen object and loads it on his animal, or gives it to an insane man or a minor child for taking it away, he is penalised. This is because the animal, the insane person and the child are mere carriers of the goods.

16. Severing of the hand is a punishment for theft. Theft implies that someone takes away something without the knowledge of others who later realize that the thing is missing. Hence if a person forcibly loots some goods from its owner, he is not punished for theft. He is beaten up and issued a warning, so that he may not repeat the act. However if the goods are looted using a weapon, the punishment is equal to that of being at war against the Muslims. (This punishment is described in the thirty-third ayat of Surah al-Ma'ida. Either the criminal is killed or crucified, the left and the right foot is amputed, or he is to be exiled; the judge can award one of these punishments.)

17. If before a theft can be proved, the thief goes to the judge and repents and promises not to steal in future he is saved from the punishment. Once the theft has been proved, repentance is of no consequence and punishment will be implemented.

18. For a theft to be proved, two just witnesses should have seen the thief stealing. It may also be that there is just one witness but the owner also testifies that robbery has taken place. The thief may himself confess twice of his theft and deserve to be penalised. If he confesses only once, the stolen goods are taken away from him and restored to the owner. He is not punished for theft.

19. If the owner takes back his goods or allows the thief to keep them before the matter is reported to the Qazi and does not press for a penalty, the thief is not punished. However if the crime is proved before the judge even the owner cannot save the thief from punishment.

Some Mujtahids believe that if two just people have not witnessed the theft and it is only proved by two confessions of the thief, the judge has the prerogative to condone him. It is mentioned in the book Tahzib that a person came to Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) and confessed of having stolen something. Hazrat 'Ali ('a) asked him,

"Can you recite some portions of the Qur'an?"

He said, "Yes, Surah al-Baqarah."

‘Ali (‘a) said,

“I have respited your hand in exchange of Surah al-Baqarah.”

Ashath said, “O ‘Ali (‘a)! Have you overlooked the Divine penalty?”

‘Ali (‘a) replied,

“What do you know? Awarding the penalty is only necessary when two just witnesses have testified. But if the crime is confessed by the thief himself, the Imam can condone him.”

If the crime satisfies the above conditions, the amputing of the hands could only be carried out by the just ruler or judge. No other person is qualified to award the penalty or carry out the punishment. The Qazi is responsible for recovering the stolen goods and restoring them to the owner. If the goods are used up or lost, the thief has to make good the loss. The order for the returning of stolen goods is the same, whether the theft is proved according to Shari’a or not. If a thing belonging to someone else is taken, it has to be returned.

In some cases the theft is not proved but the Qazi issues a warning for taking the property belonging to someone else. The Qazi may scold or beat the person so that he may not repeat the act. The extent of scolding and beating is also left to the discretion of the judge. In cases where the goods are stolen from an unsafe place, or a bandit has looted the goods, or a forgerer has forged a signature and wrongfully acquired someone’s money, the property is restored to the owner and the accused is scolded and beaten. In the same way if someone digs up the grave containing a corpse, but does not steal the shroud, he is also scolded and beaten up. Even if he steals the shroud but its value is less than one-fourth misqal of gold he is similarly beaten up and scolded.

Protection Of Property And Honour

If the thief is seen stealing, he becomes a bandit. The owner can, with the intention of protecting his property fight with him. If the thief dies, his killing is condoned and no blood money is payable. Similarly the attacker can be killed in defence of ones life and honour. But the real aim has to be for defence, and if defence is possible without killing, then killing is Haram. Only the least aggressive measures necessary for defence are permitted.

The Islamic laws with regard to theft are numerous and there is a difference of opinion among the Mujtahids upon many of the points. Keeping in mind the scope of this book, we feel the discussion we have had should suffice.

How Is The Punishment Awarded?

After the crime is proved the judge cuts off the four fingers of the right hand. He leaves the thumb and the palm untouched. The penalty is the same if the thief is convicted of multiple thefts and has not been punished before. If a thief has already had his four fingers cut and he steals again and the theft is proved, his left foot is cut from the front. The heel is left so that he can walk. If he steals for a third time and again the theft is proved the robber is imprisoned for life. If he steals in the prison too, he is put to death.

The hand which is supposed to be lifted up for prayers, the hand which expresses the submission to Allah (S.w.T.), the hand which must be used to solve the difficulties of people, to help the oppressed and the orphans, to attack the enemies of faith, if the same hand is used to steal the property of the Muslim brothers and it is proved with all its necessary conditions, then there is no way except to dismember it. Society is rendered safe due to this measure.

Diyat (Penalty)

If someone's hand is amputed without any fault of his, the one who cuts the hand is made to pay five hundred misqal of gold to the victim. Whereas if someone robs one fourth of a misqal of gold his hand is amputed. It appears that one who steals a fourth of a misqal of gold is worse than the one who cuts off the hand of an innocent person. Such is the value of trust in Islam.

1. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.

The Twenty-Fourth Greater Sin: Short-Wheghing And Cheating (In Business)

The twenty-fourth Greater Sin is short weighing or cheating in business. This is recorded in the Holy Qur'an and the tradition of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) as related by Amash and the tradition of Imam al-Ridha ('a) as reported by Fazl Ibn Shazan. Imam ('a) says: "Decreasing (fraudulently) in measure and weight." (is also a Greater Sin). It is Haram for a seller to give less than the specified quantity or for the debtor to repay less than what is specified.

A terrible punishment awaits the doer of this grievous sin, according to the book of Allah (S.w.T.). A complete chapter of the Holy Qur'an deals with this topic. It says:

"Woe to the defrauders. Who, when they take the measure (of their dues) from men, take it fully, but when they measure out to others or weigh out for them, they are deficient. Do not think that

they shall be raised again, for a mighty day, The day on which men shall stand before the Lord of the worlds?" (***Surah al-Mu affifin 83: 1-6***).

Deed In Sijjin

"Nay! Most surely the record of the wicked is in the sijjin. And what will make you know what the sijjin is? It is a written book." (***Surah al-Mu affifin 83:7-9***).

Sijjin is either the name of that register which contains the account of deeds of disbelievers and transgressors. Or it is a special corner of Hell where the disbelievers and sinners will be consigned. Hence the translation of the ayats will be as follows:

"They should be fearful for it is written down that the transgressors will go to sijjin. And what can explain to you what sijjin is? It has already been written about it (And a decision has been taken which cannot be changed)."

Hazrat Shoeb ('a) was preaching to his people:

"O my people! Serve Allah, you have no god other than He, and do not give short measure and weight. Surely I see you in prosperity and surely I fear for you the punishment of an all-encompassing day. And O my people! Give full measure and weight fairly, and defraud not men their things, and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief." (***Surah Hud 11: 84-85***).

A Person Who Short-Weighs Is Not A Mu'min

According to the Qur'anic ayats, one who resorts to short weighing and defrauding does not believe in the Day of Judgement and the Hereafter. If the person had any belief in the Hereafter, he would know that, even if he succeedes in fooling people, he would never be able to hide his fraud from the Lord of the worlds; he would realize that on the Day of Judgement he would have to account for whatever he has earned by defrauding and make good the loss.

A butcher who was an idol-worshipper used to give more than the prescribed weight. When people asked him the reason for this he pointed up towards the top of the wall and said, "I give more because of him." When people looked up they saw an idol installed there. Another idol-worshipping shopkeeper was well known for his habit of casting a glance at the idol before he proceeded to weigh some goods.

When Hazrat Yusuf ('a) and Zulekha were alone in the room, Zulekha covered the idol with a cloth. Hazrat Yusuf ('a) asked her,

"Why have you covered the idol?"

She said, "I feel ashamed before it!" Hazrat Yusuf ('a) said,

“You feel ashamed before a lifeless idol created by men, when it has no power of understanding. How can I not feel ashamed before the Almighty Lord Who is ever present and all-seeing?”

Saying this he fled from that place and saved himself from fornication.

It is a great pity that idol worshippers are ashamed to commit sins in view of their idols, which are lifeless objects, whereas Muslims have no qualms in commiting sins before Allah (S.w.T.) for Whom nothing is hidden in the heaven and the earth.

Five Sins And Their Punishments

The following tradition has been recorded from the Holy Prophet (S) in the book Tafsir Minhaj us-Sadiqin According to this tradition there are five types of sins which bring about five types of calamities.

“When the people of a community break promises and oaths, Allah makes their enemies to reign upon them.

When people order against the revealed Divine commands, poverty (certainly) is widespread.

When immorality is practised openly deadly diseases certainly increase.

When people short-weigh and short-measure then there is a decrease in agricultural output. (Decrease in livelihood) and there is less rainfall.”

Advice Of Amir Ul-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘A) For The Businessmen

Whatever ‘Ali (‘a) found himself free from the administrative work, he used to go to the market place and announce,

“O people! Fear Allah! Weigh and measure with justice. Do not cheat people (by giving less) and do not spread corruption in the earth.”

One day ‘Ali (‘a) saw a saffron seller short-weighing. He had applied oil to his hand and very cunningly he applied it to the pan of the balance which held the saffron. ‘Ali (‘a) picked up the saffron from the balance and said,

“First rectify your balance, then if you like you can give more than that.”

Between Mountains Of Fire

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“One who does Khayanat in weighing and measuring is thrown into the lowest section of Hell. There he

shall be placed between two mountains of fire. He will be told to weigh those mountains. He will be busy in this forever."

The following incident is recorded in the book Tafsir Minhajus Sadeqaen:

A person by the name of Malik went to visit a friend who was sick. Malik says, "I saw him in a deplorable condition. He was screaming, 'Two Mountains of fire are going to crash upon me.' I told him, 'It is only an illusion!' He said, 'No, it is true! Because I have two different balances. With one of them I used to short-weigh while selling and with the other I weighed more while buying. I am punished for this so soon!'"

Short Changing Is Also Haram

As it is Haram to short-weigh it is also Haram to short-measure like measurement of cloth or land which are sold by measure, must not be short measured. It is absolutely Haram. In the same way those items which are sold by number, like eggs or fruits; if someone sells them to a person and gives less than the specified quantity, he is counted among those who short-weigh and short-measure. Shaykh al-Ansari has mentioned it in his book Makasibul Muharrama.

The Seller Who Cheats Is A Debtor Of The Buyer

The amount of goods given less by the seller is owed to the buyer. It is obligatory to give the balance amount to the buyer. If the buyer is dead he must give it to his heirs. If he does not know the buyer he must with the permission of the Jurist pay a similar amount as sadqa on behalf of the buyer.

If the seller does not know how much less he has given, he must give him some amount that will satisfy the buyer. If the buyer is dead he must satisfy his heir. If the buyer is unknown the Mujtahid must be satisfied.

Defrauding Is Like Selling Short

It is short weighing and short measuring when the seller gives less without the knowledge of the buyer. The buyer does not realize that he is being given less than the stipulated quantity but it is defrauding when the seller sells some goods of an inferior quality and makes it out to be of a good quality. In this case too the buyer is unaware of being cheated.

The seller may also adulterate the goods. In this case there is no short weighing but it is Haram all the same, because it is a kind of fraud. For example a grainseller adulterates 95 kg of wheat with 5 Kg of mud and sells it as a hundred Kg of wheat; or a milkman adulterates milk by adding water. Similarly a shopkeeper sells a kilo of ghee but surreptitiously puts a quarter kilo of stone beneath the layer of ghee. A butcher commits a fraud if he adds more than a reasonable amount of bones while selling meat.

Vegetable sellers increase the weight of vegetables more by pouring water over them than required. All these types of frauds are included among the sin of underweighing, even if the seller is weighing the adulterated goods accurately.

Adulteration Is Haram

To mix an inferior quality of wheat with one of a good quality or to adulterate pure ghee is also Haram. Shaykh al-Ansari says in his book Makasibul Muharrama, "The tradition prohibiting adulteration is Mutawatir."

Shaykh Saduq has recorded the prophetic tradition:

"One who sells adulterated goods to Muslims is not from us. He will be raised with the Jews on the Day of Qiyama, because an adulterater is not a Muslim."

The Holy Prophet (S) said,

"One who gives us adulterated goods is not from us."

He repeated this sentence thrice then said,

"And Allah will remove barakat from the livelihood of the Muslim brothers. (Allah) will destroy his economy and leave him upon his own condition."[1]

An edifying incident is mentioned on page 309 of the book Darus Salam by Aqae Iraqui: The respected Aqae Abdul Husayn Khawansari has related to me the following incident: "An honest perfume seller of Karbala had fallen sick. He tried the treatment of every doctor in the town but it was of no use. He spent all his property for his treatment but he was not cured. One day I went to pay him a visit. I saw him perturbed. He was instructing his son to sell off the household items. He was saying, 'Sell off everything! I do not want anything. Either I will die or be cured!' I asked him, 'What do you mean?' He sighed and answered, 'At the beginning of my career I was not so rich. During that time an epidemic fever broke out in Karbala. The doctors prescribed lime juice as its cure. Since the disease was widespread there was a great demand for limejuice.

I began to adulterate limejuice by mixing yoghurt in it. I sold it at a very high rate. Gradually the stocks of limejuice with the other shopkeeper were finished. They began to direct their customers to me. Soon the stock of limejuice in my shop was also sold out. Now I began to sell only yoghurt by adding colour and a sour material to it. I sold this concoction as limejuice. My coffers became full and I continued to amass wealth. Today I find that all this property is of no use to me. My disease is incurable. So I wish to get rid of all the things that I obtained in this Haram manner, in the hope that after doing this, I may be cured.' Not much time had elapsed after this incident when the perfume seller departed from this world. He was definitely indebted to those whom he had sold the adulterated limejuice."

Hazrat Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) says:

“One day the Holy Prophet (S) was passing through the bazar of Madinah. He (S) told a wheat seller, ‘Your wheat is of a good quality.’ Then he put his hands inside the pile and found inferior quality of wheat below He said, ‘I see that you have gathered the provisions of Khayanat and adulteration.’”[2]

Allamah Hilli says that a man asked Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a), “If a person has two types of goods one is of a superior and expensive quality and the other is of inferior and cheap quality, can he mix these two and sell at a special rate?”

Imam (‘a) replied,

“It is not correct for him to sell the adulterated goods to Muslims. However (there is no harm) if he informs them (of the adulteration).”[3]

Dawud Ibn Sujan asked Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a): “I had two varieties of musk. One was wet, the other dry. I sold the wet and fresh musk but no one was prepared to buy the dry one at the same rate. Is it permitted for me to make it wet so that it is sold out?” Imam (‘a) told him,

“It is not allowed. However if you inform the buyer that you have made it wet, it is another matter.”

Giving Less In The Rights Of Allah (S.W.T.) And Prophet (S)

People have been ordered not only to refrain from defrauding each other, but they must also not cheat and defraud while fulfilling their obligations towards Allah (S.w.T.), the Holy Prophet (S), the Holy Imams (‘a) and all the creatures.

Allah (S.w.T.) is not deficient while fulfilling the rights of people. He has taken upon himself to give sustenance to one and all. He bestows man with unlimited favours. He listens to his entreaties and fulfills his wishes in keeping with his well being. So it is incumbent upon man to be faithful in fulfilling his duties towards Allah (S.w.T.). Man can do this by being thankful to Allah (S.w.T.) for His blessings, by obeying His commands by carrying out all his obligations. Thus one who succumbs to Satan and his own selfish desires, has disobeyed Allah (S.w.T.) and he has not fulfilled Allah (S.w.T.)’s right. His prayers are not answered immediately, he becomes impatient and does not realize that he himself is deficient in fulfilling Allah (S.w.T.)’s rights. Allah (S.w.T.) says in the Holy Qur’an.

“…and be faithful to (your) covenant with Me, I will fulfill (My) covenant with you.” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:40).

It is nothing but His Beneficence that inspite of our failings Allah (S.w.T.) listens to our prayer.

Hazrat Imam Zainul Abedin (‘a) says in Du’a Abu Hamza Thumali:

“All praise be to Allah Who responds to my call. Whereas when He calls me, I am lazy in my response. All praise be to Allah Who gives me whatever I ask Him. Though when He asks me for a loan I am stingy. (All the good deeds are a loan to Allah. He shall repay men on the Day of Qiyama).

And all praise for that Allah who sees my infamies but acts magnanimously (He does not send immediate punishment). He is so forgiving as if I have not committed a single sin.”

What You Desire For Yourself

Sadi Shirazi says in a couplet,

“You usurp the property of Muslims but when someone usurps yours you protest and claim that no one is a Muslim anymore.”

If one desires not to be cheated by others one must be honest in ones dealings with others. Justice demands this. The traditions also state that one must wish for others what one desires for oneself.

Justice And Equity Is Best

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) says:

“Three actions are the best. People should receive complete justice from you so much so that you desire for them what you desire for yourself. You must co-operate monetarily with your brothers in faith. You must remember Allah in every condition. That remembrance is not merely Subhanallah (Glory be to Allah) or Alhamdu lil-Lah (Praise be to Allah), (it is remembering Allah, always). When some duty comes upon you which Allah has ordered, you must fulfill it, and when some prohibited act comes before you; leave it.”[4]

The Scales Of Justice

Amir ul-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) advises his son Imam al-Hasan Mujtaba (‘a) in his will:

“O my child, make yourself the measure (for dealings) between you and others. Thus, you should desire for others what you desire for yourself and hate for others what you hate for yourself. Do not oppress, as you do not like to be oppressed. Do well to others, as you would like good to be done to you. Regard bad for yourself whatever you regard bad for others. Accept that (treatment) from others which you would like others to accept from you.”[5]

Everything Has A Measure

In Surah al-Hadid, Allah (S.w.T.), the Almighty says:

"Certainly We sent Our apostles with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the balance that men may conduct themselves with equity." **(*Surah al-Hadid 57:25*).**

By the word 'balance', Allah (S.w.T.) means justice and Allah (S.w.T.) has appointed a 'balance' for everything. The belief of men and the truth and falsehood is also tested on this basis. The good and bad morals and qualities are also evaluated on the scales of justice. If men conform to justice in their speech and actions and belief and deeds they will be able to establish true justice in the world.

'Ali ('A) Is The Scale Of Deeds

In one of the Ziarat of Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) we read:

"Peace be upon the balance and the scales."

Hazrat 'Ali ('a) is the measure for distinguishing truth and falsehood. He is the touchstone for differentiating between good and evil. He is the scale for evaluating morals and deeds. After the demise of the Holy Prophet (S), the Holy Qur'an and Ahl ul-Bayt ('a), especially 'Ali ('a), is the channel for and the criterion of faith. By comparing the deeds and faith with the speech and actions of Ahl ul-Bayt ('a) we distinguish good from evil. If our belief and actions conform to the standards of Ahl ul-Bayt ('a) they are correct and if not then they are of no use.

Justice demands that we must not go to the extremes. We should neither exceed the limits nor remain deficient. The scales of justice are very accurate and can detect even the weight of a single strand of hair. After recognising the path of justice it is a formidable task to remain firm upon it. One who is successful in recognising the true path and wishes to follow it, is bestowed Divine help. It is this person who is proved correct by the scales of justice on the Day of Judgement. He crosses the difficult bridge of Sirat with ease and swiftness. One who is not just in this world is proved wrong in the Hereafter. He will stumble from the bridge of sirat and drop into hell. The noble Qur'an says:

"And there is not one of you but shall come to it, this is an unavoidable decree of your Lord. And We will deliver those who guarded **(*against evil*)** ***and We will leave the unjust therein on their knees."*** **(*Surah Maryam 19:71-72*).**

May Allah (S.w.T.) guide us upon the way of justice and equity. May Allah (S.w.T.) include us among the pious and enable us to be saved from falling into Hell.

1. Iqabul Amal.
2. Iqabul Amal.
3. Iqabul Amal.
4. al-Kafi.
5. Nahjul Balagha.

The Twenty-Fifth Greater Sin: Consumption Of Haram

The twenty-fifth Greater Sin is Consumption of Haram. In the Qur'anic ayat 'Akal al-soht' is translated as eating of what is unlawfully acquired. Hence the word "eat" is not restricted to consumption of edibles but includes the use of any and every article, which has been acquired unlawfully or by illegal means.

Consumption of Haram is listed as greater sin in the Holy Qur'an and the tradition of Imam al-Ridha ('a) from the book Uyun al-Akhbar al-Ridha and the tradition of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) as related by Amash. In the following ayat of Surah al-Ma'ida:

"And you will see many of them striving with one another to hasten in sin and exceeding the limits, and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired; certainly evil is that which they do. Why do not the learned men and doctors of law prohibit them from their speaking of what is sinful and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired? Certainly evil is that which they work." (***Surah al-Ma'ida 5:62-63***).

In this ayat Soht refers to the acquirement as well as use of anything acquired unlawfully. The dictionary meaning of 'Soht' is 'to be finished' or 'to be lost'. The thing that becomes 'Soht' is that which is finished off or used up. The use of this word signifies that unlawfully acquired things do not have any 'barakat' and will not benefit the possessor in any way. It should be evident that this unlawful practice would include usurping another's property, taking interest and all activities that are undertaken using the money obtained by illegal means. The use of article brought with such money is also unlawful.

Sayyid Abu A'la Maududi writes in his book Islam and the Economic Problems: "Islam permits the people to obtain their livelihood in any way they choose. They have their freedom to choose their occupation and obtain the necessities of life, but Islam does not allow them to earn in a manner that is harmful for society. It should also not endanger the social equilibrium. Islamic laws not only prohibit the consumption of wine and intoxicants and gambling, but also prohibit any action that causes these sinful things to come into being. For example to undertake cultivation of grapes for wine making, to manufacture wine, to transport, to buy or sell wine, to give it and to use it; all these are Haram too. Islam does not consider free-sex to be a human activity. Islam has prohibited dancing. It does not consider singing and playing musical instruments lawful professions. Any activity that is beneficial to one person but harmful to someone else or to society is considered Haram in Islam.

All such types of actions carry a heavy punishment in this world and a dreadful retribution in the hereafter e.g. bribes, stealing, interest-taking, adulteration and frauds, unlawful hoarding of edible items to hike their rates making life difficult for the poor. In the same way all such actions that instigate wars

and those occupations that do not require effort, making the person rich by luck, such as lottery. All these occupations are Haram."

Shaykh Saduq (r.a.) has narrated a tradition from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) that he said,

"Any action of Khayanat with the Imam is 'Soht'."

There are many types of 'Soht'. 'Soht' includes that which is received from the tyrant rulers, bribe to Qazis, payment for prostitution, wine, alcoholic nabid (a kind of wine), and interest.

"To bribe a Qazi (for giving a favourable judgement) is to disbelieve in Allah the Almighty." 1

A similar kind of tradition is to be found in the book al-Kafi, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) says:

"'Soht' means the payment for corpse, for dogs and wine. It also denotes the fee paid to a prostitute, the bribe given to a judge and the payment to a Kahin."23

Although consumption of every type of Haram is 'Soht', some of them are denounced more emphatically and their punishment is more severe. The worst of these is taking bribe. One who accepts bribe is just like a disbeliever and the Holy Prophet (S) has cursed him. The one who takes interest is equated to the one who has made war against Allah (S.w.T.) and the Prophet (S).

Types Of Bribe

There are Three types of bribes:

(1) Bribe paid to a judge for a favourable judgement.

(2) Bribe for 'Haram' work.

(3) Bribe for permitted things.

The first kind of bribe comprises of money etc. paid to a judge so that he may give a favourable judgement. The judge may also be bribed for pointing out the loopholes whereby one could weaken the position of the opposite party. It is absolutely Haram even if the one who is paying the bribe is right and the judge delivers the correct judgement. The paying and receiving of this type of bribe or whatever may comprise this bribe is also Haram and a Greater sin. A person who pays or accepts such a bribe deserves the curse of Allah (S.w.T.).

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

"May Allah curse one who gives a bribe, one who accepts it and one who acts as an agent between them."4

Elsewhere, the Holy Prophet (S) says:

“Beware of bribe! It is nothing but disbelief. The one who is involved in bribe will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise.”[5]

Bribe is not only a sin for the guilty but it constitutes assisting in sin, the one who accepts. However if one is compelled to bribe and without it he cannot obtain his rights, it is another matter, but it is still Haram for one who accepts it. Similarly it is also Haram to reach someone by bribing. The one who acts as an arbitrator or agent and takes an active part in negotiating bribe is also a sinner.

This type of bribe is absolutely Haram whether paid in cash or kind. Bribe may also comprise of offering some services to the judge like stitching his clothes free of cost or constructing his house etc. Bribe can even be paid in words. One may praise a judge unduly to please him and thus influence him to give a favourable ruling.

Bribe In The Name Of Khums And Gift

Even if a bribe is paid in the name of khums and gift, it is Haram. For example to give someone a gift or a present with the intention of bribing him i.e. with the intention that by giving a gift the beneficiary will act to benefit the giver in some way. Similarly khums and zakat given with the intention of bribing is also Haram. It will not be considered as Khums or Zakat and it will be obligatory for one who has paid Khums or Zakat with such intentions, to pay it once more. Khums and Zakat are to be given with the purest of intentions, that of achieving nearness to Allah (S.w.T.). There can be no other motive. One of the signs of Qiyama is mentioned in traditions in the following words:

“Bribes will be accepted as gifts.”

The second kind of bribe is the bribe paid to someone, a tyrant or an oppressor for inflicting harm on a third person. The Holy Qur’an says:

“And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by false means, neither seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know.” (***Surah al-Baqarah 2:188***).

In this ayat believers are warned not to use anything obtained illegally and not to use their wealth to bribe those in power in order to obtain anything unlawfully.

Paying A Bribe For Obtaining Ones Rights

The third type of bribe is one that is paid for something lawful. Like paying someone in order that he may help in obtaining ones rightful property or to escape from a tyrant. Bribing for lawful things is allowed.

In a tradition Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) was asked about the person who bribes the occupant of a house to vacate it so that the owner may himself use it as his residence. Imam (‘a) said that there was no harm in it. However the house mentioned in this hadith does not belong to the person who pays the bribe. It is a trust property or a public place like, the mosque, madrasa, lane, by-lane, and bazar etc. Thus if someone is occupying a place in the mosque or a student is living in a room in the public hostel, he can be bribed to vacate it.

Hafsul Amr enquired from Imam ‘Ali an-Naqi (‘a): “The ruler has appointed agents to purchase our agricultural produce. Is it allowed for us to bribe those agents so that we may remain safe from the ruler’s tyranny?”

Imam (‘a) replied,

“There is no harm in it. You may pay whatever you think fit.”

Then Imam (‘a) asked:

“Do you have to supply lesser quantity of grain to the ruler after you have paid the bribe to these agents?”

“Yes,” said the questioner.

“You have invalidated your bribe (i.e. you have made the bribe Haram),” Imam told him.[6]

● Thus it is clear that bribing to cause someone to be oppressed is *Haram* but it is permitted in order to save oneself from oppression.

Accepting A Bribe For Doing Something Lawful

It must however be made clear that though it is permitted to gift something for lawful acts or to save oneself from oppression, it is detestable to accept such gifts. Because these gifts bear a close resemblance to bribe. Also, the habit of bribing for lawful things may make a man habitual and he may be inclined to pay bribes for unlawful purposes too. One is prone to error. If a pious person refrains for Makruh (detestable) bribe he will never be prone to the Haram bribe. The following tradition supports this fact.

“Those are they for whom Allah does not desire that He should purify their hearts; they shall have disgrace in this world, and they shall have a grievous chastisement in the hereafter. (***They are***) ***listeners of a lie, devourers of what is forbidden.”*** (***Surah al-Ma’ida 5:41-42***).

Explaining this ayat, Amir ul-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) says:

“It is that person who fulfills the wish of his believing brother and accepts a gift in return.”

Shaykh al-Ansari says in the book, Makasibul Amal: “There are many explanations of this tradition. One of it is that we must absolutely refrain from accepting gifts in return for favours done that we may never fall into the trap of accepting bribe.”

Characteristics Of Those Who Eat Haram

A characteristic feature of earnings by Haram means the money and wealth so acquired. It is narrated from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) that he said,

“The madness of (acquiring or constructing) buildings. Mud and water occupies the head of one who earns by unlawful means.”[7]

It means that a person with unlawful earnings is constantly worried about his wealth and strives to convert it into fixed property so that it is not lost. The buildings of mud and water neither benefit the owner in the Hereafter nor do they provide peace in this world. Such a person spends every bit of his wealth for pieces of land. Finally, Allah (S.w.T.) orders the land to swallow all his wealth.

Unlawful gains are harmful both from the worldly point of view as there is no barakat in such gain and also from the spiritual point of view as these form obstacles in the acceptance of acts of worship.

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“When a single morsel of Haram enters the stomach of a person and becomes a part of his body, the angels of the sky and the earth curse him.”[8]

The Messenger of Allah (S) has also said:

“Acts of worship accompanied by the acquiring of Haram are like buildings that rest on (crumbling) sand.”[9]

They lack a firm foundation and hence are of no use. Such buildings can never remain intact and are soon destroyed.

Invocations Are Not Accepted

The noble Messenger of Allah (S) has remarked,

“Prayers of the one who eats a single morsel of Haram are not accepted for forty nights nor are his invocations accepted for forty days. Every piece of flesh that grows by consuming Haram is most deserving of being burnt in hell-fire and even a single morsel consumed causes some growth of flesh.”[10]

The Holy Prophet (S) has also stated,

“One who wishes to have his invocations accepted must keep aloof from Haram food and unlawful earnings.”[11]

A man asked the Holy Prophet (S):

“I wish for the acceptance of my deeds.” The Prophet (S) told him,

“Keep your food purified from Haram and do not let any unlawful thing enter your stomach.”[12]

The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) revealed to Janabe Isa Ibn Maryam (‘a):

“Inform the oppressors of Bani Israel that they must not call Me and invoke Me as long as they are involved in unlawful earnings. And if they call Me and invoke Me in this condition, I will curse them.”[13]

Hardening Of The Heart

Whatever man eats is like a seed sown in the earth. If the seed is good it will bear sweet fruits. If the seed is bitter and poisonous, so is the fruit that grows from it. If the food is good and lawful it has beneficial effects on the heart. It is purified from every blemish and impurity. The organs of this person perform good deeds, but if one consumes food obtained through unlawful means it causes the heart to harden. The symptoms are soon obvious. A hard hearted person is unaffected by any kind of preaching and remains absolutely impenitent. Such a man is not moved even when he sees clear injustice. No good can be expected from him. Not a trace of goodness is visible in his dark heart. He refuses to accept what is right and is immune to every kind of moral advice. The tragedy of Karbala is the perfect example of this phenomenon. These are the characteristics clearly pointed out by Imam Husayn (‘a) in his address to the troops of Ibn Sad:

“You bellies are filled with unlawful (wealth). Now you will not accept the truth. Why don’t you deal with justice? Why don’t you listen to me?”[14]

In other words, when a person’s heart becomes hard and darkness occupies it.

During the rule of the Abbasid King Mahdi, there was a Qazi named Sharik bin Abdullah. He was an honest and upright Judge, till the time he was summoned by the king. The Abbaside King forced him to choose one from three things:

(1) Either he should accept the post of the Royal Qazi

(2) He should become the teacher of the King’s son

(3) or he should dine with the king, at least once.

The Qazi thought that easiest of the Three was to eat with the king once, so he agreed to dine with King

Mahdi. The ruler ordered the royal chef to prepare the best of the dishes. When the Qazi had eaten the food, the cook remarked to his companions, “Now, Qazi Sharik will never achieve salvation.”

The prediction came to be true. The Haram food affected the Qazi to the extent that he also accepted the other two conditions. He became the special Qazi of the King and the tutor of his children. It is said that Qazi Sharik used to be very strict and unflinching with the treasurers while obtaining his share from the royal treasury.

One day the treasurer protested, “You have not sold me grain that you act so ruthless in recovering its price.” Qazi Sharik replied, “Yes, I have sold something more valuable! I have sold my religion.”

One day a tray filled with delicious dishes was sent by Harun al-Rashid for Bahlul. Bahlul did not accept it. The servants of the king said, “It is not possible to reject the present of the Caliph.” Bahlul, the wise, pointed towards the stray dogs and said, “Give it to the dogs.”

The servants became angry and said, “You have insulted the royal gifts.” Bahlul became silent then said, “Be quiet, if the dogs learn that this food is sent by the king, they will not touch it.”

A Morsel Of Halal Food

Eating Haram gives rise to every type of infamy. Whereas, the Halal morsel is the cause of every kind of goodness and charity. Numerous traditions praise the acquisition of livelihood through lawful means. For example the Holy Prophet (S) says,

“Worship consists of seventy parts and the best part is earnings by lawful means.”[15]

The Messenger of Allah (S) has also said,

“When a man eats Halal food an angel stands over his head and prays for his forgiveness till he finishes eating.”[16]

The Prophet (S) has remarked in a similar vein,

“One who strives to earn his livelihood in a lawful manner from morning till night, achieves salvation.”[17]

The Holy Prophet (S) states that Allah has said:

“I will not care on the Day of Qiyama from which door he enters Hell, the person who does not care from which door he earns money in this world.”[18]

The Prophet of Allah (S) has also mentioned the following tradition:

“One who does nor care from which way he earns wealth in this world will be sent to Hell in Qiyama and I shall not care from which way he is made to enter it.”[19]

Allah (S.W.T.) Does Not Provide Unlawful Livelihood

Maybe, those who do not refrain from unlawful earnings are afraid that if they give up this chance they may suffer poverty and deprivation. This is just a false notion. It is merely a satanic thought because it goes against the Divine promise of lawful sustenance repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'an. It is unreasonable, as it is contrary to the numerous traditions of Ahl ul-Bayt ('a). The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) has promised to provide sustenance to each and every creature. The Divine promise is never unfulfilled. Allah (S.w.T.) only tests the believers to see if they strive patiently to acquire lawful livelihood or act impatiently and deviate.

Whatever sustenance is decreed is surely received. It is only the impatience of the people and the weakness of their faith that makes them leave the path of lawful earnings and stray towards illegal occupations. When a person does this he fails the test. Allah (S.w.T.) deprives this person of the lawful sustenance that was in his destiny. Allah (S.w.T.) has not decreed for anyone unlawful sustenance.

No One Dies Without Receiving His Decreed Sustenance

On the occasion of the last Hajj, the Holy Prophet (S) addressed the Muslims in the precincts of the Masjidul Haram:

"Know that, the trustworthy Spirit (Jibril) has informed that no creature dies till he has received his destined sustenance.

Then fear Allah and do not vie among yourself in earning your livelihood. If there is some delay in receiving your sustenance, it must not be that you pursue it in disobedience to Allah. Verily, Allah has distributed only Halal sustenance to every creature. He has not destined Haram sustenance to anyone.

Hence one who fears Allah and acts with patience, Allah shall bestow upon him His sustenance through lawful means. But one who abandons purity and takes up Haram methods, a similar amount shall be decreased from his lawful sustenance. He shall be made to account for his Haram earnings on the Day of Qiyama. Allah the Almighty has prohibited it in the following words:

"...and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones)..." (Surah an-Nisa' 4:2).

It should not be that in a hurry to obtain livelihood you obtain it through illegal ways, before Allah provides you with the Halal sustenance that He had decreed for you."[20]

Deprived Of Halal Food

One day, Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) reached the mosque and alighted from his mule. He entrusted his animal to a person and entered the mosque. The man pulled out the saddle and ran away leaving the

mule unattended.

When ‘Ali (‘a) returned, he was holding two dirhams. He intended to give them to the man who had looked after the mule. He found the mule without the saddle. After reaching home he gave the same two dirhams to his slave for the purchase of another saddle. The slave went to the bazar found the same rein. It came to be known that the thief had sold the stolen rein for two dirhams. It was the same amount that he could have earned in a lawful way. When the slave related the whole incident to ‘Ali (‘a), he said,

“By abandoning patience man converts his Halal sustenance into Haram. Though he does not receive more than what is in his destiny.”21

1. Khisal of Saduq.
2. A person who earns money by passing information of the unknown acquired with the help of jinns.
3. Wasa’il ul-Shi’a.
4. Safinat ul-Bihar.
5. Safinat ul-Bihar.
6. Wasa’il ul-Shi’a.
7. Bihar al-Anwar.
8. Safinat ul-Bihar.
9. Safinat ul-Bihar.
10. Safinat ul-Bihar.
11. al-Kafi.
12. al-Kafi.
13. al-Kafi.
14. Nafasul Mahmum.
15. Safinat ul-Bihar.
16. Safinat ul-Bihar.
17. Safinat ul-Bihar.
18. Bihar al-Anwar.
19. Bihar al-Anwar.
20. al-Kafi.
21. Lailail-Akhbar.

The Twenty-Sixth Greater Sin: Usurping The Rights Of Others Or Non-Fullfillment Of Rights

Non-fulfillment of another’s right, without a valid excuse is the twenty-sixth greater sin. If a person who has some right upon someone and demands his right but the one on whom the obligation rests does not fulfill the right, even though he is capable of it, then this person has committed a greater sin. Non-fulfillment of rights as a greater sin is according to Nass (Holy Qur’an and hadith). The frequently quoted tradition of Amash from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) and the hadith of Imam al-Ridha (‘a) as narrated by

Fazl ibn Shazan also include it in he list of greater sins.

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"One who does not fulfill the rights of a believer (and does not repay what he owes to him), on the Day of Judgement, Allah will make him stand for five hundred years and blood or sweat will ooze through his body. An announcer from Allah will announce, 'This is the oppressor who had not fulfilled the right of Allah.' Then after being admonished for another forty days it will be ordered for him to be thrown into the fire (those who admonish him will be either believers or prophets).

An explanation of this hadith by Allamah Majlisi states that if the sinner's oppression is not of a very serious nature, sweat will flow from his body and if his oppression is of a serious nature, blood will seep out of him.[1]

Allamah Majlisi further says, "This tradition proves that the right of a believer is the right of Allah (S.w.T.). Allah (S.w.T.) has ordered to restore a believer's right. Disobeying this command is just like usurping the right of Allah (S.w.T.). The tradition further states:

"On the Day of Qiyama a caller will announce, 'Where are those who oppressed and tortured the friends of Allah?' Some people will stand up. They will not be having any flesh on their faces. It will be said, 'These are the ones who tortured the believers, bore enmity towards them, dealt harshly with them due to their belief.'"

It will be ordered that they may be thrown into Hell. Further, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) swears by Allah (S.w.T.) the Almighty and says that these people had the same belief as the believers, but they did not respect their rights and also exposed the secrets of the believers.[2]

And Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) has remarked:

"A believer who has something and another believer is in need of it; if the former does not fulfill the need of the needy Mu'min he will not ever taste the food of Paradise nor drink the Rahiq-al-Makhtum (A drink of Paradise)."[3]

Demand For Fulfillment Of Rights On The Day Of Qiyama

Hazrat Sajjad ('a) says:

"On the Day of Qiyama a person will be caught by his hand and the people of Mahshar (Gathering) will be told that anyone who has any claim upon him may secure his right."[4]

On the Day of Qiyama, this would be the most difficult ordeal to face. Every person will avoid meeting his relatives and friends and will be in constant dread of the demands they may make of him. Perhaps this is the predicament alluded to in the following Qur'anic ayat:

"The day on which a man shall fly from his brother, And his mother and his father, And his spouse and his son..." **(*Surah Abasa 80:34-36*).**

Actual Poverty

The Holy Prophet (S) asked his followers,

"Do you know who is the actual destitute?"

"One who has no money, property or treasure," they replied. The Holy Prophet (S) said,

"There is no destitute in my Umma except the one who has performed the prayers, kept fasts, paid the Zakat, performed Hajj but on the Day of Judgement a person will come whose property he has usurped, and a person whose blood he had shed and another one whom he had beaten. Then the good deeds of this man will be transferred to those who have rights upon him. If his good deeds are exhausted before all the rights are fulfilled then the sins of those who have rights upon him will be added to his sins. Then he shall be thrown into Hell."

Non-Payments Of Debts And Transgressing Of Rights

Anything owed by a person is a debt incurred by him which should be repaid. The full amount of the money loaned has to be paid as per the agreed payment schedule. The same applies to an item that is sold but not delivered. The seller is obliged to deliver the goods to the buyer on time. Similarly the one who has taken something on hire is responsible for it. A husband is indebted to his wife till he pays the dower amount. The husband is also responsible for the maintenance of his permanent wife. The laws of guarantee are numerous and available in the books of jurisprudence. We shall only discuss the topics that are relevant for our purpose.

Loan For A Fixed Period And Loan Without Time Limit

Loans are of two types. One that is not bound by a time limit or when the date of payment has already expired. The other type of loan has a fixed time for repayment. The creditor cannot demand the loaned property before the due date. If the loanee dies all debts owed by him become due immediately. For example if a person has borrowed something for a year, but dies before the end of the year, his heirs must pay his loan immediately. It is no excuse that the time of payment has not come. But if the creditor dies his heirs do not have the right of demanding the loan before time.

It Is Compulsory To Repay A Debt

If the time of payment is due or if the creditor demands back his loan the debtor is obliged to repay immediately. The loan must be repaid even if the debtor has to sell his excess belongings or even if he

has to sell his things at less than the market value. However if he is compelled to sell at a throwaway price then it is not obligatory for the debtor to sell those things. If the debtor does not have anything like a carpet, clothes, household items, shop etc. that he can sell and repay the loan, then he must take up a job that is suitable for his position. In any case he is under an obligation to clear his due.

Carelessness and sloth with regard to the repayment of loan are absolutely Haram; and a greater sin. If the debtor possesses only those things that are necessary for his life; like a modest house, carpets and clothes etc, then it is not necessary for him to sell them to repay his loan. The creditor cannot compel the debtor to sell off these things. However, if the debtor wishes to sell them of his own accord, he can do so, and the creditor is allowed to accept the loan. But it is desirable that the creditor respites the debtor till the time Allah (S.w.T.) makes him capable of repaying his debts.

It is related by Uthman bin Ziyad: "I informed Imam al-Sadiq ('a) that a person owed money to me and wished to dispose off his residence to repay me. Upon hearing this Imam ('a) said thrice:

"I seek Allah's refuge for you." (That you cause this poor man to sacrifice his dwelling place to pay).

Many similar traditions have been recorded in books of hadith. It is narrated that a famous companion of Imam Musa al-Kadhim ('a) and Imam al-Ridha ('a), by the name of Muhammad bin Abi Umair traded in cloth. It so happened that mounting losses pushed him to the brink of poverty. One of his debtors owed him 10,000 dirhams. When he learnt of the companion's misfortune, he sold his house and brought the money to repay the amount that he owed. Muhammad bin Umair inquired if he had received the amount of 10,000 dirhams as inheritance. When he replied in the negative, he asked if he had received it as a gift from someone. Again he replied, "No, but I have sold the house where I lived, so that I can repay my debt to you."

Muhammad bin Umair related a saying of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a), prohibiting a creditor to force his debtor to sell his house and said, "By Allah, at present I am in need of each and every dirham but I cannot take a single dirham from this."

Actually Muhammad bin Abi Umair was a rich man having assets worth over 500,000 dirhams. His present state of poverty was because of his closeness to Imam Musa al-Kadhim ('a). Due to this he was imprisoned for four years and lashed mercilessly. The tyrant Caliph confiscated whatever he had. May Allah have mercy upon such oppressed people. It is an established fact that if someone deprives a person of his rights then each day that passes makes him liable to a sin which is equal to collecting Ethesher (a 10% tax collected on orders of tyrant ruler).

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) says:

"The martyr in Allah's way is absolved of every sin except for the unpaid debt; which has no substitute. Repaying the debt is a must; or the creditor may forgo it. (otherwise even the martyr will be interrogated regarding his debts)."[5]

Moreover, he (‘a) has remarked:

“As soon as the first drop of a martyr’s blood is spilled all his sins are forgiven. Except for the unpaid debt, which is not excused. Its forgiveness can be achieved only by repaying (the debt).”6

The gravity of all this can be ascertained from the incident when a person from the Ansars departed from this world. He had left behind an unpaid debt of two dinars. The Holy Prophet (S) refused to pray the Salat al-Janaza till some of the relatives undertook the responsibility to repay the deceased’s debt.

When Muawiya bin Wahab questioned Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) regarding this tradition, he (‘a) replied:

“This is an authentic tradition and the Prophet’s saying conveys the same meaning that people should derive lesson from it and understand the seriousness of debt. They should not regard it insignificant and must make it a point to repay their debts.”7

The Holy Prophet (S), Hazrat ‘Ali (‘a), Imam al-Hasan (‘a) and Imam Husayn (‘a) were all having some debts when they departed from this world but they appointed their legatees who repaid their debts after their passing away. This hadith signifies that it is not prohibited to be in debt but to ignore or to delay the repayment of debt is Haram. It is not even advisable to travel (for pilgrimage) to Mecca and Madinah without first clearing one’s debts.

Abu Samaniya asked Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) regarding this, “I wish to go and settle down in Mecca or Madinah but I am in debt to some of the people here.” Imam (‘a) replied:

“Go home! First repay your debts. It must not be that you die in this condition and meet your Lord while you are in debt. For a believer never does Khayanat (misappropriation of trust).”8

Not Repaying Debts Is Khayanat To All

The above hadith makes it amply clear that not fulfilling someone’s right or delaying the repayment of debt is equal to Khayanat. Consequently, all the traditions that are recorded in the chapter on Khayanat are equally applicable here and the Prophetic traditions have described Khayanat as a kind of oppression.

The Holy Prophet (S) has announced:

“A Muslim who inspite of being capable delays the repayment of debt has committed oppression upon all the Muslims.”9

Not repaying a debt is a kind of oppression upon the creditor. In fact such an act is an oppression upon the Muslims in general. This is so because, upon seeing, that this person inspite of being capable is not repaying the debt, others who are capable of lending money will be disinclined to do so, for fear of meeting with a similar fate. Lending is a meritorious act and anyone who is responsible for discouraging

it, has indeed oppressed all Muslims.

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) has said:

"May Allah curse the one who closed the door of good actions. And it is the one who is not thankful to the one who has done some good towards him. Consequently the doer of good refrains from doing the same favour towards someone else in the future."[10]

Certainly, lending is an act of goodness. Not repaying or causing undue delay in the repayment is disregarding this favour. Also it can result in the creditor avoiding lending his money to anyone else in future.

Method Of Lending And Borrowing

Authentic traditions have greatly emphasised the rewards that are promised for the one who lends. On the other hand, those who avoid this good deed have severe punishment in store. Sometimes it is obligatory to lend and not prohibited to lend. And sometimes it is Mustahab (recommended) to lend and Makruh (detestable) not to lend.

Generally it is detestable to borrow but if the need to do so is genuine the detestibility is scaled down. The magnitude of detestibility is directly proportional to the actual gravity of the situation. In fact under some circumstances it is obligatory to borrow. For example it becomes obligatory to borrow to save one's life or honour. If a person knows that he will not be able to repay the loan, then precaution demands that he should refrain from borrowing unless he is in dire need.

Rewards For Lending-Punishment For Not Lending

The blessed Prophet of Allah (S) said:

"One who lends to his believing brother and gives him respite till he is capable of repaying it, the amount that he has lent is considered as Zakat and the Angels pray for him and seek Divine mercy for him till this (amount) is returned."[11]

The Messenger of Allah (S) has also remarked:

"If one lends to his Muslim brother, it is for his own (good). Every Dirham that he lends will qualify him for a reward equivalent to Mount Ohud (which is in Mecca) and Mount Sinai. And if he is lenient in collecting his debt he shall cross the bridge of Sirat like a stroke of lightning. And if a Muslim brother relates his woes before a person and this person does not lend him any money, the Heaven shall be denied to him on the Day of recompensing good doers."[12]

It Is Obligatory To Have The Intention Of Repaying Ones Debt

The person who is not in a position to repay his debt must necessarily have the intention to repay it as soon as he is capable of doing so. This intention should have the first priority with him. In fact the intention to repay should be there right at the outset. A person who takes a loan without having the intention to repay it is considered a thief. The following are the traditions of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) regarding the intention of a person who takes a loan:

“One who takes a loan but does not care to repay it, is a thief.”[13]

He (‘a) has also said:

“There are Three kinds of thieves, one who does not pay Zakat, secondly one who does not consider the amount of Mahr (dower) payable to the wife as an obligatory debt and one who takes a loan but does not intend to repay it.”

The respected Imam (‘a) further said,

“If the debtor intends to repay the loan, the Almighty Allah appoints two angels to help him till the loan is repaid. But if he becomes careless of this intention he becomes deprived of Allah's blessings.”[14]

The Incapable Debtor Must Be Given Respite

Although it is allowed for a debtor to sell off his unnecessary belongings to repay his debts, the creditor is under divine obligation not to cause undue trouble. The creditor should give respite so that the loanee can easily repay the dues. Under these conditions if he condones his loan altogether, it will be considered a Sadaqah which will remain with Allah (S.w.T.) as his trust and he will continue to benefit from it forever.

The Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an:

“And if **(*the debtor*)** ***is in straitness, then let there be postponement until*** **(*he is in*)** ***ease, and that you remit*** **(*it*)** ***as alms is better for you, if you knew.”*** **(*Surah al-Baqarah 2:280*)**.

Two important points can be derived from the Qur'anic verse quoted above. One, it is obligatory to give respite to a debtor who is incapable of repaying the loan. Secondly, it is more meritorious for the creditor to condone the loan completely.

Numerous traditions have mentioned these two points.

The Holy Prophet (S) has said:

“Your debtor is not permitted to delay in repaying the loan if he is capable to pay it. In the same way you

are not permitted to pressurise him unduly when you know that he is not in a position to repay you immediately."[15]

The honourable Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) has been recorded to have said:

"Do not harass your Muslim brother with a demand to the repayment of debt when you know that he is not able to repay it. Because our exalted grandfather the Messenger of Allah has said that it is not permitted for a Muslim to harass his Muslim brother. And if a creditor gives respite to a loanee he shall become qualified to receive the shade (and protection) of the Almighty on the day when there will be no other shade."[16]

It means that on the Day of Judgement such a person will receive special favours from the Almighty. The Masum ('a) has also remarked:

"If one wishes that he be given refuge under Divine shade on the day when there will be no other shade, he should grant respite to his debtor and must not demand it (immediately), or should condone his loan completely."[17]

Hazrat Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) has said:

"There would be some people under the shade of the Arsh on the Day of Qiyama such that their faces will be bright, their dresses and their chairs shall be glittering. Then an announcer will call: These are the people who did good towards the believers and gave respite to the incapable debtor till the time he could repay the debt."[18]

Each Day Of Respite Brings Rewards Of Sadaqah

The trustworthy scholar of the Shi'as, Shaykh Kulayni (r.a.) has recorded that Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) is reported to have said:

"One day the Holy Prophet (S) mounted the pulpit and after glorifying Allah and praising the prophets ('a) said: 'Those who are present are under the obligation to convey (what I say now) to those who are not present (in the assembly).'

Then He (S) said:

'If one gives respite to his helpless debtor then till the time he receives his loan it is upon Allah to record the reward of Sadaqah in his scroll of deeds.'"[19]

For each day of respite that a person gives his debtor he receives divine reward equivalent to the spending of the loan amount as Sadaqah. Several traditions on this subject could be quoted but the ones mentioned should suffice. It must be remembered that avoiding or delaying the payment of Khums and Zakat is also considered a failure to restore rights. Not paying Zakat is also a Greater sin according

to the rulings of the Qur'an and hadith. We shall deal with it in a separate chapter.

Allah (S.W.T.) Will Forgive

If a person dies before he has repaid his debt and the creditor has not been compensated for it from the belongings left by him; the creditor has not forgiven him his debt and provided the debtor has not been negligient about repaying, nor was the loan taken for an illegal purpose and also the person had every intention of repaying but was unable to do so. Under these circumstances according to traditions Allah (S.w.T.) by His Grace will compensate the creditor on the Day of Judgement.

Muhammad Bin Bashir came to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) and told him that he owed a thousand Dinars to Shahab. He requested the Imam to persuade Shahab to respite him till the days of Hajj. So Imam ('a) summoned Shahab and said:

"You know that Muhammad Bin Bashir is among our followers. He owes you a thousand Dinars. This amount was not spent by him on himself. Rather it remained as a debt upon some people and he had to bear the loss. I wish that you will forgo your thousand Dinars."

Then he ('a) said,

"Maybe you are under the impression that his good deeds will be given to you in return of your loan?"

Shahab said, "Yes, I am under this impression." Imam ('a) told him,

"The Almighty Allah is Merciful and Just. If someone, in order to achieve Allah's nearness, worships Him on cold winter nights and fasts on hot summer days, circles the Holy Ka'ba. Then do you think after all this Allah will take away his good deeds and give them to you? It is not so, His mercy is much more. By His munificence He recompenses the good deeds of a believer."

After listening to these words Shahab said that he has condoned his loan forever.

The Debtor Whose Good Deeds Are Given To The Creditor

If the debtor is guilty of being lazy in repaying, or if he had taken the loan for an illegal purpose, or if he has delayed the repayment inspite of being capable of doing so, and if after his death his debt has not been paid nor has the creditor condoned him. Then on the Day of Qiyama his good deeds equivalent to the loan amount shall be given to the creditor and if his good deeds are exhausted or insufficient to cover the amount, sins from the scroll of deeds of the creditor will be transferred to the scroll of the guilty debtor.

Some narrations have described this phenomena in clear words.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) has been recorded to have said:

“The most difficult time on the Day of Qiyama will be when those eligible to receive Khums and Zakat will rise up and besiege the one who has not paid it. They will complain to Allah that this person has not paid the amount due to them from Khums and Zakat. Then Allah will transfer the good deeds of that person and give them to those who were eligible (for Zakat and Khums).”

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) has also said that on the Day of Qiyama the creditor will complain against his debtor. Then if the debtor would have good deeds to his credit, they will be taken away for the creditor and if there are no good deeds for this purpose, the sins of the creditor will be added in the scroll of deeds of the debtor.

It is amply evident from the various traditions that if a person dies before fulfilling the rights of others upon him he will not achieve salvation till the rights are restored to the owner or the owner condones him. Or till his good deeds are given to the one who had the right upon him or if there are no good deeds for this purpose the sins of the latter are transferred to the scroll of deeds of the former. Or lastly, until the Ahl ul-Bayt (‘a) intercede on his behalf.

Amount Of Compensation

Exactly how many of the good deeds will be required to compensate for an unpaid debt is a matter known by Allah (S.w.T.) and the Holy Prophet (S). Neither we have any knowledge of it nor is it necessary for us to know. However, some traditions do mention some equivalents. For example in a tradition the Holy Prophet (S) said that in lieu of each dirham 600 prayers of the debtor will be paid to the creditor.[20]

And if 1/6 Dirham is of silver, then seven hundred accepted prayers of the debtor will be transferred to the rightful owner. (Each silver dirham is equal to the weight of 18 grains of gram). Thus, one who departs from this world while yet in debt will be under very difficult circumstances. Everyone must be very particular to repay one’s debt as soon as possible. If a person is unable to repay his debts he must establish contact with Ahl ul-Bayt (‘a) and seek their intercession to obtain the forgiveness of the creditor.

The Messenger of Allah (S) says,

“Nothing is more serious after the Greater sins than the fact that a person dies while he is in debt to people and there is nothing to (sell to) repay his debt.”[21]

Moreover, the Prophet of Allah (S) told his companions after prayers one day:

“Such and such person who was martyred is still waiting outside Paradise. He cannot enter it because he still owes Three dirhams to a Jew.”

Haste In Repaying Debt Is Mustahab (Recommended)

It has been made amply clear that not repaying debt, or returning the rights is Haram and a Greater sin. Depending upon the demand of the creditor and the ability of the debtor it becomes obligatory to repay the debt as soon as possible. Too much divine reward is promised for this.

Allamah Nuri has quoted in his book *Darus Salam* an incident from the book *Nurul Uyun*. He writes that Sayyid Hashmi, the pious and well known scholar said that he had taken a hundred dinars as loan from a Jew and promised to return them within a period of twenty days. "I returned half the amount to him and then did not see him for some days. People told me that he had gone to Baghdad. One night I dreamt that it was the Day of Qiyama. I was summoned with the other people to account for my deeds. And Allah (S.w.T.), in His Infinite Mercy allowed me to enter Paradise. So I decided to cross the bridge of Sirat as soon as possible. However, the scream of Hell made me fearful. While I was crossing the bridge, all of a sudden my Jew creditor leapt up from below the Hell, engulfed in flames of fire and blocked my way and said, 'Give me 50 Dinar and I'll let you go.' I pleaded to him that I had always been on the look out for him to repay the amount but was unable to find him. He said, 'You are right, but till you repay me you will not be able to traverse this bridge of Sirat.' I said, 'I don't have anything to give.' So in return for his debt he asked me to allow him to put a finger on my body. I gave him the permission and he put his finger on my chest. Just as his finger touched my chest I screamed due to the burning pain and awoke from the dream. The place where the Jew had touched my chest was burnt too." After this he opened his chest to the audience and they saw that there was a terrible wound on it. He said that he was still having it treated, but it did not seem to be cured. When the audience heard all this, they began to wail loudly.

It is also narrated in the 17th volume of *Bihar al-Anwar* that the First Martyr (Shahid al-Awwal) quoted Ahmad bin Abil Jawzi that he said: "It was my wish to see Abu Sulaiman Durrani, who was considered to be a pious and a God-fearing person. Thus, I saw him in a dream after a year of his death. I asked as to how Allah (S.w.T.) had dealt with him?" He said, "O Ahmad! When I was passing through Babe Saghir one day, I saw a camel laden with hay and grass, I plucked a twig from this and do not remember whether I picked eenth with it or threw it away just like that. But a year has passed and I am still occupied in accounting for that twig."

The below Qur'anic verse also supports this fact:

"O my son! Surely if it is the very weight of the grain of a mustard seed, even though it is in* (*the heart of*) *rock, or* (*high above*) *in the heaven or* (*deep down*) *in the earth, Allah will bring it* (*to light*)*…"* (Surah Luqman 31:16***).

Thus one who has done an iota of good will see it and one who does an iota of evil will see it on the Day of Qiyama. In the letter to Muhammad bin Abi Bakr, 'Ali ('a) says, "O creatures of Allah (S.w.T.)! Know that Allah (S.w.T.) the Gracious shall question you about your every small and big deed." The following

verse is a sufficient proof for this:

"Then one who does an iota of good shall see it and one who does an iota of evil shall see." (***Surah Zilzal 99:7-8***).

It is mentioned in Bihar al-Anwar that Sayyid Hasan bin Sayyid 'Ali Isfahani said: "At the time of my father's demise I was studying in Najaf al-Ashraf. The responsibilities of my father fell upon some of my brothers. I was unaware of this fact. Seven months after the death of my father, my mother also passed away at Isfahan. Her last remains were brought to Najaf al-Ashraf. On one of those nights I saw my father in dream. I asked him that he had died in Isfahan so how did he reach Najaf? He said, "Yes! Though I died in Isfahan, I was given a place in Najaf." I asked if mother was also with him?

"She is in Najaf, but in a different house," he replied. So, I surmised that she was not given a position equal to my father. Then I asked him as to how he was. He said that though previously he was in severe pain now by the grace of Almighty he is comfortable. I was surprised that how a pious and religious person like him could suffer pain. He said that it was due to the fact that he was in debt to Haj Raza the son of Babaju alias Nalband. "Though he had demanded the payment I was unable to repay it. I was suffering torture for this default." I awoke with a start. I wrote to my brother, the legatee of my father and told him about my dream so that he will make enquiries if my father owed some money to such a person. My brother wrote back that he had gone through all the books of account but could not locate a creditor by that name.

Again I wrote to my brother to find this person and ask him directly if he was having a debt upon my deceased father. My brother replied after sometime and said that he had found that person and questioned him about my father's debt. He was told that my father did owe him 18 tomans but except Allah (S.w.T.) no one knew about it. He said that after the death of father he had approached my brother and asked him if his name appeared in the list of my father's creditors. When my brother told him that it was not so, he was perturbed as to how my father failed to note down his name among the creditors. Since he did not have any proof he did not see any way to acquire his money. Upon hearing this my brother offered him the amount of outstanding debt. But he refused to accept it. He said that he had already condoned the amount to my late father.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) has said:

"Oppression is of Three types. One that Allah will not forgive, second which is He will forgive and lastly one which he will 'take away'.

1. The oppression Allah will never forgive is Shirk.

2. The oppression that Allah forgives is one that a person does upon himself and it is a sin between that person and Allah.

3. The oppression that Allah 'takes away' is that one that a person does by not repaying his debts.22

The Holy Prophet (S) has remarked,

"One who is able to satisfy (please) his creditors will certainly enter Paradise without any delay in accounting. He will be in the Garden, in the company of Ismail ('a) the son of Ibrahim ('a)."23

The Messenger of Allah (S) has also said,

The debt which is returned by the debtor is more superior to the worship of a thousand years and the emancipation of a thousand slaves and performing Hajj and Umrah a thousand times."24

Prophet Muhammad (S) has also said,

"If someone restores a single dirham to its rightful owner, the Almighty Allah will save him from the fire of Hell and for each Daniq (1/6 of a DIrham) he will get rewards of a prophet and for each Dirham he will get a palace of Red Pearls (in Paradise)."25

He (S) has also said,

"Returning a right to its owner is better than fasting during the day and the prayers of the night. If a person returns a debt an angel cries out from below the Arsh: O servant (of Allah) from the time you began this good deed, Allah has forgiven all your past sins.

Fulfillment Of The Rights Of People

When a person has something in his possession it can be one of two cases. The first case is the person knows that whatever he has is not fully his own, but a part of it belongs to someone else. The second case is that a person owes another person, but this person has no share in the actual goods or property in possession of the former. For example the thing he had borrowed is already used up but he is in debt to the one who had lent it. In the same way there are various types of sureties and compulsory maintenance that a person is responsible, for these should be disbursed with great care.

The first case includes the following four categories.

a) To know the quantity and the owner.

When it is known that a particular quantity of a thing rightfully belongs to such and such person, it is obligatory to return that same amount to whom it belongs and in case he is dead, to his successors.

b) When the quantity is known but not the owner.

If the exact quantity owed is known but there is a doubt regarding to whom it is owed to the extent that one feels the concerned quantity rightfully belongs to one of Three or five people. Then on the basis of

precaution it is necessary to satisfy all of these people. If it is not possible to satisfy all of them, then there are Three rulings: 1. Lots should be drawn between them and one of them to be given that thing. 2. The goods should be equally distributed among all the possible owners. 3. If the doubt is with reference to a hundred and more people or if the owner is completely unknown then as a precautionary measure, by the permission of Marja al-Taqlid the holder of these goods should give it away as charity. (Everyone has to follow his own Marja al-Taqlid in this matter).

c) When the quantity is not known but the owner is.

Under the circumstances that a person knows that he owes some of the goods in his possession to a particular person, but does not know the exact quantity owed, it is incumbent upon him to give at least a third of the goods to the owner. As a precautionary measure he should give something more and satisfy the owner.

d) When both the owner and the exact quantity are unknown.

A person knows that he owes some of the goods he has to someone. It is Haram for him to use these goods, but he does not know the exact quantity of the goods prohibited for him nor its rightful owner. He may consider a few persons as probable owners but he is unaware as to how much of it belongs to whom. In these circumstances it is incumbent on him to give Khums (1/5) on the total goods. After this the rest of the goods or property becomes totally permissible. (For details refer to the section on Khums in the books of Practical Laws).

In the second condition something is owed by a person but it is not in the form of a tangible good or property. There are four circumstances of this type:

1) If the exact quantity and the rightful owner, are known, then without any doubt that quantity has to be returned to the owner.

2) If the exact quantity is known but not a particular owner, and there is doubt between some selected people that it could belong to anyone of them. In this case it is incumbent to satisfy each of them in the way described in the rules regarding tangible goods. But if the doubt is between a large number of people the value of the goods must be given to the Qazi or given as charity by his permission on behalf of the rightful owner.

3) If the value is not known but the person to whom it is owed is known; the duty of the one who owes it is to restore the minimum quantity supposed and also to persuade the owner to forgo the rest of it.

4) When neither the exact quantity nor the owner is known the law states that an estimate has to be made and the average of the minimum and the maximum amount paid as charity after the permission of the Qazi.

1. Miratul Uqul page 361.

2. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
3. Bihar al-Anwar.
4. Layali Al Akhbar.
5. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a Chap 4, vol. 13, page 83.
6. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a chap.4, Vol. 13, page 85.
7. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
8. al-Kafi vol.5 page 94.
9. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a Vol. 13 page 97.
10. Bihar al-Anwar, Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
11. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a Chap.6 Vol. 13 page 86.
12. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
13. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a chapter of Tejarat.
14. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
15. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
16. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
17. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
18. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
19. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
20. Layali Akhbar.
21. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
22. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
23. Mustadrak.
24. Mustadrak.
25. Mustadrak.

The Twenty-Seventh Greater Sin: Avoiding Jihad

According to the Qur'an and hadith, to flee from Jihad is a Greater Sin. It is the twenty-seventh sin. The following verse of Surah Anfal is clear. It concerns running away from a confrontation with unbelievers when they are less than twice the number of Muslims.

"O you who believe! When you meet those who disbelieve marching for war, then turn not your backs to them. And whoever shall turn his back to them on that day- unless he turn aside for the sake of fighting or withdraws to a company then he, indeed, becomes deserving of Allah's wrath and his abode is hell; and an evil destination shall it be." (***Surah Anfal 8:15-16***).

Hazrat Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) says:

"Those who flee from the battlefield should know that they have angered their Lord and have damned themselves to destruction because fleeing from the battle causes Allah's anger. And one who flees from

the Holy war will be certain to face calamities and eternal degradation and his fleeing will not prevent death, and his life cannot be prolonged. That is, if the time of his death has arrived, his fleeing will not delay it. He will die due to some other reason. On the other hand, if the time of his death has not yet arrived and he participates in Jihad he will not die. Thus it is better for one to pledge his life to Allah rather than live in Allah's anger, degradation and dishonour."

Initiated Jihad And Jihad In Defence

Jihad is of two types:

(1) Initiated Jihad

(2) Jihad in defence

The first kind is that when the Muslims undertake a war against the unbelievers to invite them to Islam or for establishing justice. However, the permission of the Holy Prophet (S), the Holy Imams ('a) or their special representatives is a necessary prerequisite of this type of Jihad. Since the present period is of Major occultation this type of Jihad is forbidden.

Jihad in defence, as the name implies, pertains to circumstances when unbelievers attack Muslim territories or areas for obliterating Islamic heritage or for plundering the wealth and honour of Muslims. Under such conditions it is Wajib al-Kifai[1] to undertake Jihad and repel their attack. For this type of Jihad the express permission of the Imam ('a) or his special deputy is not necessary.

There is a difference of opinion regarding flight from the battlefield. Some scholars are of the opinion that it pertains only to those wars that have been waged against the unbelievers under the order of the Holy Imam ('a) or his special deputy. (For example, exemption from Ghusl and Shroud to the martyr also pertains to this Jihad). Other doctors of religion maintain that the decree applies to both the kinds of Jihad. Those who wish to study this problem in detail can refer to the books of Jihad or the books of jurisprudence.

While discussing the prohibition of flight it would be most appropriate to discuss the steadfastness of Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) on the battlefield. Such incidents have been included in discussions extolling the merits of 'Ali ('a). Neither the Shi'a nor the Sunni historical books mention even a single instance when 'Ali ('a) turned his back to a battle. Even in the battle of Ohud he was the only one who did not flee. In the ninth volume of Bihar al-Anwar, under the chapter of "Bravery" a narration has been recorded from Ibn Masud, concerning 'Ali ('a). Four of those who had run away from the battle of Ohud returned and again came to the Holy Prophet (S). They were Abu Dajana, Miqdad, Talha and Musayb. After this the rest of the Ansar came back. Thus it were these people who had deserted the Holy Prophet (S). All the companions had left the Holy Prophet (S) alone on the battlefield except 'Ali ('a). 'Ali ('a) was fighting in the midst of the polytheists to defend Islam and the Prophet of Islam (S).

During the battle of Ahzab, the Holy Prophet (S) bestowed ‘Ali (‘a) with the titles of “The vicious attacker” and “the non-receeder.” That is, the one who attacks the enemies with vengeance and does not recede an inch. There is no doubt that ‘Ali (‘a) was imbued with all these qualities. Whereas, history is a witness that other companions like Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman had fled from numerous battlefields like Ohud, Khaibar, Hunain and Dhat-Salasil. Ibn Abil al-Hadid the Mutazalite has penned the following couplet in his famous book:

“It is not surprising that Abu Bakr fled from Hunain. He had also deserted the battle in Khaibar and Ohud.”

1. Wajib al-Kifai means that if some person undertakes to fulfill an obligation, others need not.

The Twenty-Eighth Greater Sin: Becoming A’Arab After Hijrat

The twenty-eighth sin, which is labelled as a Greater Sin, is to become A’arab (Bedouin, gypsy etc) after Hijrat (migration).

It is recorded in *Usul al-Kafi* under the chapter of Greater Sins that according to the *Sahih* of Ibn Mahbub when he wrote a letter to Imam Musa Ibn Ja’far (‘a) he (‘a) replied and this sin was included among the Greater Sins. Moreover, Muhammad bin Muslim has quoted Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) and stated that he (‘a) has included this sin among the greater ones. The book of ‘Ali (‘a) also includes this sin in the list of Greater Sins.

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) says:

“Becoming A’arab after Hijrat and polytheism is one and the same (sin).”1

What Does ‘Becoming A’arab After Hijrat’ Mean?

A’arab refers to the nomadic Arabs or Bedouins who are absolutely ignorant of religion and rituals connected with faith. Hijrat signifies the migration of these desert Arabs to the Muslim centre, their acceptance of Islam at the hands of the Holy Prophet (S) or his rightful successor, and their consequent adherence to faith, and adherence to religious rules and regulations.

Becoming A’arab after Hijrat is the condition when a desert Bedouin before acquiring the necessary knowledge of religion turns back to his ignorant ways.

In the early period of Islam it was incumbent upon them to migrate towards the Holy Prophet (S) in order to learn whatever was necessary for being a Muslim. Similarly it was prohibited for Muslims to stay in an area populated mostly with unbelievers; where it was not possible for them to pray and fast and perform other religious duties.

'Why Don't You Migrate?'

It is recorded in Tafsir Minhaj us-Sadiqin that there were some people among the Muslims like Qays bin Walid, who were outwardly Muslims and had recited the confession of La ilaha illallah but inspite of this and their ability to do so, they did not accompany the Muslims in their Hijrat from Mecca to Madinah, and when the Quraish of Mecca marched to attack the Muslims in the battle of Badr these people joined them and were ultimately killed at the hands of the Muslims. A Qur'anic verse was revealed on this occasion:

***"Surely (as for) those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to their souls, they shall say: In what state were you? They shall say: We were weak in the earth. They shall say: Was not Allah's earth spacious, so that you could have migrated therein? So these it is whose abode is Hell, and it is an evil resort."* (*Surah an-Nisa' 4:97*).**

The above verse makes clear the fact that it is the duty of a Muslim to leave the place where he cannot adhere to his faith and rituals. In a tradition, the Prophet Muhammad (S) says:

"One who migrates from a place to another for the sake of religion, even if it is only as far as the distance of a span (of hand), Allah makes Paradise incumbent upon him. (Wherein) his companions will be Hazrat Ibrahim ('a) and Prophet Muhammad (S)."[2]

***"Except the weak from among the men and the children who have not in their power the means nor can they find a way (to escape); so these, it may be, Allah will pardon them, and Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving."* (*Surah an-Nisa' 4:98-99*).**

It is narrated from Akrama that many of the Meccans who had embraced Islam were not capable of migrating to Madinah, but when the Qur'anic verse deploring such people was revealed and they became aware of it; one of them Junda bin Zumra told his sons:

"Even though I have become extremely old and sick, I am not among those helpless people who have been deprived of migration by Allah (S.w.T.). I have yet some strength left and I also know the way to Madinah. I fear that if I were to die suddenly, my failure to migrate would be a blemish on my perfect faith. So, you all lift up the bed on which I lie and carry me outside towards Madinah."

Thus, his sons lifted the bed and carried him outside, but they had reached only a short distance when the signs of his death became apparent. Junda bin Zumro kept his right hand on his left hand and said: "O Allah! This hand is for You and this for Your Messenger. I pledge allegiance to You for those things

that Your Messenger had pledged."

After this his soul escaped from his body. When the news of his death reached Madinah, some companions remarked, "It would have been better if Junda bin Zumro had reached Madinah. In this way he would have derived the Tawab of Hijrat."

The Almighty Allah revealed the following ayat on this occasion:

"And whoever flies in Allah's way, he will find in the earth many a place of refuge and abundant resources; and whoever goes forth from his house flying to Allah and His Apostle, and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." **(*Surah an-Nisa' 4:100*).**

Becoming A'arab After The Passing Of The Holy Prophet (S)

During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (S) it was incumbent upon every person to migrate towards him (S) to obtain instruction in religion and faith. In case he lived in the midst of unbelievers where he could not perform the obligatory acts of prayers and fasting, it was all the more necessary to migrate.

Failure to migrate and returning to nomadism is decreed to be a Greater Sin and the Almighty has promised Hell fire for such people.

After the passing away of the Holy Prophet (S) it became Wajib to turn towards the Holy Imams ('a) and to obtain the compulsory knowledge of faith and articles of Islamic acts. Also, it was most essential to attain the Ma'refat of Imam ('a) i.e. it was incumbent to have knowledge of one's Imam and also to learn the matters of belief and acts. It was also prohibited to turn back to paganism after the acceptance of Islamic faith. To remain aloof from the Holy Imam ('a) even after recognising their position is Haram. Thus, Shaykh Saduq narrates from Huzaifa bin Mansur that he has reported from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) who said:

"To become A'arab after Hijrat is to recognise Imam ('a) and then be aloof from him."[3]

Since the present age is the age of occultation of Imam az-Zaman ('a) the same rules apply to us.

It Is Necessary To Migrate Towards The Jurist

Hijrat is incumbent on two types of people. The first type are those who are absolutely ignorant of the rules of religion. If there is no religious scholar in the area of their residence, whom they can refer to for their religious problems, then, it is compulsory for them to shift to a place where they have access to religious scholars for the solution of their problems.

The second types are those Muslims who live in the midst of unbelievers, and due to the oppression of

these infidels, they are unable to perform their religious duties. It is incumbent on these Muslims to migrate to an area where there is freedom to practice their religion. The Shi'a jurists have explained this matter clearly.

Order For Migration Is Forever

The Messenger of Allah (S) has told us:

"Hijrat is Wajib till the doors of repentance close. The doors of repentance will not close till the sun rises from the west." (i.e. the order for migration will be in force till Qiyama).[4]

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) says:

"The order for Hijrat will be in force till Allah demands obedience from the inhabitants of the earth in the same way as the order was first promulgated in the time of the Holy Prophet (S)."

It means that Hijrat will remain a compulsory duty till the time other religious duties remain obligatory on the people.

'They Could Not Migrate From Mecca'

In the book of 'Masalik', the second martyr[5] writes that the Holy Prophet (S) has explained the meaning of the tradition of migration saying that it is specifically concerned with the migration from Mecca. Hence when Mecca was liberated from the domination of the unbelievers there was no need for the Muslims to migrate elsewhere. The order applies to only those Muslims who are unable to perform their religious duties. According to some scholars after the conquest Mecca there was no merit in migration from Mecca; just as there was a greater merit in Jihad and struggle for Islam before the conquest.

"...not alike among you are those who spent before the victory (of Mecca) and fought (and those who did not): they are more exalted in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards..." (Surah Hadid 57:10).

In order to understand the purport of this ayat let us study the following points:

Wajib, Mustahab And Mubah Hijrat

The respected scholar Allamah Hilli writes in his book Mumtahi that there are Three kinds of Hijrat (Migration), Wajib (obligatory), Mustahab (recommended) and Mubah (permitted).

Wajib Hijrat

Hijrat is Wajib on a Muslim (not restrained by old age or disease) who lives in the midst of infidels where he can neither reveal that he is a Muslim, nor can he perform his religious duties.

Recommended Hijrat

For those Muslims who live among infidels but who have complete freedom to practice their faith, it is recommended (Mustahab) to migrate to another area, if they are capable of doing so. However, if they have some legal excuse, migration is Mubah (Permitted) for them; it is not even Mustahab.

No Migration From Areas Of Ahl Ul-Sunnat

According to Sharhe Lumah and Jameal Maqasid, the first Martyr[6] is believed to have said: "It is incumbent for a Muslim to migrate if he is living in the midst of infidels and is unable to follow Islam or perform his religious duties. In the same way a Shi'a who is living among the Ahl ul-Sunnat and is not able to perform the ritual acts of Shi'as is similarly required to migrate to areas populated with Shi'a people."

However this view which is attributed to Muhammad Ibn Makki is not compatible with the general Islamic principle. Because if a Shi'a is living among Sunnis he does not need to forgo his religious obligations. He can follow Taqiyya (dissimulation) and fulfill his ritual acts. He can perform the Islamic acts in the same manner as the Sunnis if he fears for his life or property. We do not have any tradition exhorting such people to migrate to another area. On the other hand the Holy Imams ('a) have time and again emphasised upon the adherence to dissimulation under such circumstances.

Support Of The Martyr's View

Some scholars have supported the view of Muhammad Ibn Makki who stated the following tradition from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) as quoted by Muhammad Ibn Muslim requested to explain the Islamic order for a person who during travel reaches a place where there aren't any stones or sand; all the area is covered with snow and the person becomes "mujnib" (semen has been discharged from him and he has to perform the Wajib Ghusl for prayers). How can he do tayammum (substitute of Ghusl) in absence of mud or stone? Imam ('a) replied,

"Let him do tayammum with this very snow and pray. I do not consider it proper for him to again go to such a place where he might lose his faith."

According to those who support the view, since Imam ('a) has prohibited his followers to go to a place where it is impossible to perform ghusl and wuzu, the prohibition also applies to a place where it is not possible to perform wuzu and ghusl according to Shi'a procedures.

However, this is not a sufficient argument because the tradition prohibits going to a place where one is sure to be unable to perform some obligatory acts. On the other hand it is only a possibility that in areas of Ahl ul-Sunnat a Shi'a will be compelled to practise Taqiyya. Besides, even if a Shi'a practices Taqiyya and performs the obligatory acts like the Ahl ul-Sunnat, his acts are considered correct. Moreover, if there is no constraint it may be recommended for him to migrate from the area of Ahl ul-Sunnat. However, if he is unable to express his love for Ahl ul-Bayt (.a.s.) it will certainly be Mustahab for him to migrate.

Propagating Wilayat In Areas Of Kuffar

Samad says that he told Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a), that he was travelling to an area populated by polytheists and that he would have to stay there for some time. Some of the Mu'minin had told him that it was not advisable to travel there because if he were to die in that place he would be counted among the polytheists. Imam ('a) asked him if he would be able to propagate the Wilayat of Ahl ul-Bayt and invite people towards truth in that place? Samad said, "Yes, master, there is total freedom of expression and religion. The people there, are receptive of truth." Then Imam ('a) asked whether such a freedom was possible in an Islamic area. Samad said, "No! On the contrary we have to practise extreme Taqiyya, and none of us can even dare to utter the names of one of you (Imams)." Imam ('a) told him,

"If death overcomes you in such a place you would be counted as a monotheist community." [i.e. he will be equal to a whole community of monotheists; like Hazrat Ibrahim ('a)]. The light of belief will emanate from your face."[7]

Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) writes in the Sharh of al-Kafi that it is possible that A'arab means to become a nomad again or to forgo Hijrat after the order of Hijrat has been revealed. Like the prohibition of interest, which came into force only after the Divine command was revealed. Nevertheless, since the early period, failure to migrate without a valid reason or to migrate and then revert to nomadism, both of these are Greater Sin and promised the fire of Hell by the Almighty Allah.

Qur'anic View Of Nomadism And Apostasy

We have already mentioned at the beginning of our discussion that nomad specifically applies to the desert Arabs who were away from the centre of Islam and could not learn the Islamic rules and regulations, nor could they remember and follow the articles of faith. In this connection the following verse was revealed in the Qur'an:

"The dwellers of the desert are very hard in unbelief and hypocrisy, and more disposed not to know the limits of what Allah has revealed to His Apostles; and Allah is Knowing, Wise." **(*Surah at-Tawba 9:97*).**

The Almighty also says:

“And of the dwellers of the desert are those who take what they spend to be a fine, and they wait (the befalling of) calamities to you; on them (will be) the evil calamity; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.” (*Surah at-Tawba 9:98*).

Also:

“And of the dwellers of the desert are those who believe in Allah and the latter day and take what they spend to be (means of) the nearness of Allah and the Apostle’s prayers; surely it shall be means of nearness for them; Allah will make them enter into His mercy; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” (Surah at-Tawba 9:99).

Ignorance Of Islamic Acts Is A Kind Of Nomadism

The above two verses which flay the infidel Bedouins are clear regarding the fact that the nomads were deserving of criticism not because of their being dwellers of desert. It was because of their ignorance of articles of Islamic acts and belief. For those Bedouins who followed the Islamic religion, the Holy book has praised them in the third verse. They have been promised Divine Mercy.

On the basis of this, people who avoid learning Islamic rules and regulations and those who keep away from the centres of religious knowledge are in fact, nomads, and the verse denouncing the desert Arabs also applies to them even though they are living in cities.

The respected Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) remarked:

“Learn the rules of religion. Those of you who do not learn about religion are nomads. As the Almighty Allah says in His book,

‘Why does not a company from you goes to learn about religion so that when they come back they can warn their people in order they may become fearful (of disobeying Allah).’” (Surah at-Tawba 9:122)[8].

Thus one who does not try to learn about religion and articles of faith is a desert dweller. The Imam (‘a) also told his followers:

“Knowledge of the Divine religion is incumbent on you. And do not become a nomad. Because if you fail to understand a religious act, Allah will not look upon it with Mercy on the Day of Qiyama and He will not purify that deed.”[9]

One Who Learns But Does Not Act Upon It Is Also A Nomad

Muhaddith Faiz writes in Wafi that it is possible that the above pronouncement may also apply to those who learn about the Islamic rituals and practices but fail to act upon them. He also quotes a tradition

from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) to prove this point. Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) states in the Sharh of al-Kafi that some scholars are of the opinion that being a nomad in the present time applies to those who after acquiring religious instructions, do not act upon them and remain aloof from Islamic knowledge.

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) says:

"A man says that he has migrated, though in fact he has not. Because a migrant is the one who abandons sins and does not even go near them. And a person says that he has fought in the way of Allah but in reality he has not, because Jihad is the leaving of sinful acts and a war against enemy inside our own self. Whereas many people go out to fight not for the obedience and satisfaction of the Lord. Their motive is only to gain fame so that people may praise their bravery and fearlessness."10

Desert Of Ignorance And Negligence

From the Qur'anic verses, the traditions and writings of the Islamic scholars we can conclude that nomadism implies the condition of a person who is ignorant and unaware of Allah Almighty's Nobility of which human beings are capable and the eternal bliss which one can achieve, and instead he is totally immersed in the desires of this transient world. He is oblivious to righteousness and does not refrain from committing any sin or evil. He does not care to acquire knowledge (Ma'refat), nor does he pay attention to good deeds, that would fetch him eternal rewards in the Hereafter. It would surely deprive a person of salvation and eternal bliss.

Hijrat (migration) is the exact opposite of Nomadism. Nomadism after Hijrat (migration) implies that a person migrates to Islam and obtains knowledge of religion and then reverts to his former ways. It can be said that performing some good actions for some time and then leaving them is also a kind of reverting to nomadism. The denouncement is valid only if the person does this due to laziness and sloth and not due to some real hindrance or helplessness. It is necessary to continue to perform good actions once we have begun them. As far as possible we should not discontinue them.

Jabir Johfi quotes Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) to have said:

"I like to continue good actions so that I become habitual in them. If I could not perform a particular deed in the day I make up for it during the night and if I do not perform an action during the night I make up the following day. Certainly the best of the deeds near Allah are those which one continues. Hence all the deeds of the week are presented to Imam ('a) every Thursday and the deeds of the month at the end of the month and all the deeds of the year at the middle of Shaban. So if you begin a good ritual, keep at it for the whole year." (i.e. continue it for at least a year).11

Neglecting Religious Knowledge

If a person begins to acquire religious knowledge but later discontinues the same it is considered

reverting to nomandism by some. However, it is *Haram* only if his religious education is obligatory (i.e. if he leaves it, he will go astray). However, it is incumbent to continue acquiring knowledge till the end of one's life so that one can continue to perform good deeds with sincerity and purity of intention. In this way a person becomes righteous and deserving of the rewards of his good deeds, both in this world and the hereafter.

As the Holy Prophet (S) has said:

"Acquire knowledge from the cradle to the grave."

1. Usul al-Kafi chapter of Greater sins.
2. Minhaj us-Sadiqin.
3. Mani al-Akhbar.
4. Masalik.
5. Zainuddin Jebel Amili.
6. Muhammad Ibn Makki.
7. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
8. Bihar al-Anwar, Book of Aql.
9. Shahid al-Thani.
10. Bihar al-Anwar vol. 15.
11. Bihar al-Anwar.

The Twenty-Ninth Greater Sin: Helping The Oppressors

The twenty-ninth sin, that is classified as a Greater Sin is 'Helping the oppressors'. Fazl Ibn Shazan has narrated from Imam al-Ridha ('a) that he said concerning the Greater Sins:

"And helping the oppressors and bending (leaning) towards them."

In the narration of Amash from Imam al-Sadiq ('a) the following is mentioned, "Not helping the oppressed people is a Greater Sin." In other words helping the oppressors is also a Greater Sin.

Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far ('a) says:

"To participate in the activities of the oppressors and to endeavour to achieve their evil objectives and to help them is equal to infidelity and to knowingly lean towards them is a Greater Sin and deserves Hell."1

The Holy Prophet (S) similarly says:

"On the night of ascension (Mi'raj), I saw the following inscription on the doors of Hell, 'DO NOT BE A

HELPER OF THE OPPRESSORS.'"[2]

It means that if one does not wish to enter Hell he must refrain from co-operating with the oppressors. Moreover, this is a sin that is promised Divine punishment by the Almighty in the Holy Qur'an.

"And do not incline to those who are unjust, lest the fire touch you, and you have no guardians besides Allah, then you shall not be helped." (***Surah Hud 11:113***).

According to Tafsir Minhaj us-Sadiqin 'do not incline' means we must not have the slightest inclination towards the oppressors. Hence we must not treat them honourably nor mix with them freely nor express our affections for them. We must not be greedy of their gifts, nor should we praise them and obey their orders. When such are the prohibitions against the oppressors, it is obvious that then it cannot be lawful to help them and co-operate with them in oppression.

The Messenger of Allah (S) remarks,

"One who prays for the long life of an oppressor is as if he likes the opposition of Allah on the Earth."[3]

There is an interesting incident in the book Rawzatul Jannat concerning the author of Maqasikul Ahkam, Sayyid Muhammad. Once the Sayyid and another respected teacher, Shaykh, planned a pilgrimage to the Holy tomb of Imam al-Ridha ('a) at Mashad, but when they learned that Shah Abbas Safavi was staying at Mashad they decided to cancel their visit.

Similarly under the biography of Sayyid Bahrul UlMansurm it is mentioned that when the Governor of Shustaran Province behaved with utmost respect with him, he says, "Before I could develop some liking for him and come under the denouncement of the Qur'anic Verse, I fled from that place." Thus he shifted from Dezful and settled down in Iraq for the rest of his life.

When we study the biographies of some scholars we realize how strictly they refrained from meeting, mixing with or communicating with the oppressors, so that there would not be even a remote chance for them to befriend them and help them in their activities.

Muhaddith Jazaeri writes in the book Fawaidur Rizvia that there was a person who committed some blunder in the presence of Shah Abbas Safavi and in order to escape his wrath took refuge in Mashad. Then he approached the late Mulla Ahmad (Muqaddase Ardebeli) and requested him to write to the Shah that he may forgive his mistake. Muqaddase Ardebeli wrote as follows:

"Founder of a kingdom obtained through asking, Abbas! Know that even though this man was initially an oppressor, but he is now an oppressed one. So, overlook his mistake. I hope Allah will forgive some of your mistakes."

Signed: From the slave of the king of Wilayat, Ahmad Ardebeli.

The Shah replied to his letter:

“You have been grateful upon me for ordering those things which you did (in your letter). Do not neglect me in your invocations.”

Signed: Dog of the House of ‘Ali, Abbas.

It is quoted from Tarikh Bahire that Khwaja Nizamul Mulk the Prime Minister of Malik Shah Seljuq, was very much thoughtful of the Hereafter and the Day of Judgement and he used to be fearful in this regard. During the tenure of his ministry he was a supporter of the helpless, a patron of intellectuals, and steadfast in following the religious obligations. He thought of obtaining a certificate from the scholars and intellectuals, certifying his good morals, so that the document could be kept inside his shroud during burial. He hoped to achieve salvation by this. He drafted a certificate and sent it to various scholars and intellectuals for their signatures. When it reached Baghdad and was presented before the respected teacher of Nizamiya Madrassa, Shaykh Abu Ishaq, he wrote, “I witness that Shaykh Nizamul Mulk is slightly better (oppressor) from among the oppressors.”

When Khwaja saw the remark of Abu Ishaq, he wept and said: “Whatever Abu Ishaq has written is true.” There is no doubt that helping the oppressors in any way is Haram and a Greater Sin. There is an Islamic law for every kind of oppressor and the ways of helping the oppressors, and it is incumbent to learn these rules and commands.

Types Of Oppressors

‘Zulm’ the Arabic word for oppression and injustice implies disregard for Divine commandments and also to oppose whatever is compatible with reason and logic. There are two types of such oppression:

(1) Crossing the limits of religious law is equal to polytheism. As the Almighty says,

“…most surely polytheism is a grievous inequity.” (***Surah Luqman 31:13***).

(2) Belying the Divine signs is also oppression as stated in the Holy Book,

…and the unbelievers- they are the unjust.” (***Surah al-Baqarah 2:254***).

In short, we can say that all the religious laws that we are supposed to follow according to reason or religious commands must be obeyed in totality. Not accepting them or not believing them is a kind of injustice. Apart from this, non-acceptance of the Divine commands or not acting upon them or disregarding the limits specified by the Almighty, like neglecting a Wajib act or doing a Haram one, all of these constitute injustice.

Thus the Almighty Lord says,

"…and whoever exceeds the limits of Allah these it is that are the unjust." **(*Surah al-Baqarah 2:229*).**

This also applies to injustice upon ones own self. As Allah (S.w.T.) mentions:

"Therefore whoever disbelieves, his unbelief is against himself." **(*Surah Fat'ir 35:39*).**

Various kinds of oppressions include insulting, abusing, degrading or imprisoning a person; also backbiting or accusing a person falsely or hurting a person physically. Another form of oppression is to usurp someone's property or to obtain it without the owner's permission, or not to return the rights to its owner etc. Another way of usurping a right is to forcefully occupy a position reserved for someone else. The supreme example of such injustice was comitted by the tyrant rulers of Bani Umayya and Bani Abbas when they usurped the position of Wilayat which clearly belonged to the Holy Ahl ul-Bayt ('a). Another example is that of the unjust jurist who assumes the seat of Qazi.

Oppression belongs to two categories. In one category are the tyrant rulers and vicious kings, for whom committing oppression is a normal practice. In the second category are the individuals who may do injustice to someone else once in a while. We shall study all these types of injustices in four sub-topics.

Helping The Oppressor In Oppression

Helping an oppressor in any way whatsoever is Haram. For example to hand over a cane to someone so that he can beat an innocent person, or to help in any way to imprison him or kill him.

The renowned Shaykh al-Ansari writes in Makasib that the prohibiting of co-operation with the oppressors is confirmed by all four proofs required to prove the Islamic laws. i.e. Qur'an, reason, Sunnat and Ijma.

Logic: Reason dictates that there is no difference between the actual oppressor and the one who helps him. Both are equally responsible for the act of injusice. It is possible that if there is no one to help the oppressor he may not be able to oppress. Hence logically it is Haram help an oppressor.

Ijma: Refering to books on jurisprudence, confirms that all the jurists are unanimous in their opinion that helping the oppressor is Haram.

Qur'an: The Qur'anic verse

"And do not incline to those who are unjust" **(*Surah Hud 11:113*).**

is sufficient to prove the illegality of helping the unjust. Because if even a slight inclination towards unjust people is prohibited, then how can helping them be permitted. As helping them would be the greatest form of inclining towards them.

Moreover, the Almighty says:

***"...and do not help one another in sin and oppression; and be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Allah; surely Allah is severe in requiting evil."* (*Surah al-Ma'ida 5:2*)**

The Traditions Of Ahl Ul-Bayt ('A) Against Helping The Oppressors

Numerous traditions have reached us in this connection. Shaykh al-Ansari has also recorded the following tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) in his book Waram:

"If one knowingly goes to help an oppressor, he has apostasized from Islam."[4]

Naturally an act that makes a person bereft of the Islamic faith must be a sin that results in his destruction.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"When Qiyama occurs an announcer will call: Where are the unjust, the helpers of Unjust and those like the Unjust? So much so that even if one has procured merely pen and ink for the oppressor to write the order of oppression; all these people would be bundled up in a cage of iron and thrown into Hell."[5]

The Messenger of Islam (S) says:

"If a person even hangs up a cane for the tyrant king so that he can beat the oppressed one, Allah will change that cane into a snake, seventy thousand yards long and place it in the Hell fire (to torment him)."[6]

"Those who take the affairs of oppressors in their hands and help him in oppression will, at the time of death, be conveyed the Divine curse and news of Hell fire by the angel of death. And Hell is an evil resort. One who guides the oppressor will be considered at par with Haman (the minister of Fir'on). And the punishment of those who help the unjust and the oppressors themselves will be more grievous than other punishments of the inmates of Hell. And if a person backbites about his believing brother to the ruler, and even though the Muslim may not have to suffer any injury from it, the backbiter will have all his good deeds nullified. However, if the Muslim had to suffer oppression at the hands of the ruler, the back-biter will be kept by Allah in that section of Hell where Haman will be confined."[7]

Praising The Oppressor Is Also Haram

To praise an oppressor so that his power and authority may increase, or he may be enouraged to become more daring, is also Haram. This is confirmed by arguments that have been mentioned, and also the proofs concerning the forbidding of evil (Nahy Anil Munkar).

Shaykh al-Ansari has specifically related a tradition from the Holy Prophet (S):

“One who shows respect to a rich man and in the greed of his wealth considers him good; the Almighty Allah becomes angry on him and puts him in a cage of fire at the lowest part of Hell where Qarun is confined.”[8]

This tradition applies to all types of people, but if the praised one is unjust, the one who praises will be eligible to severe retribution. The Prophet of Allah (S) has said,

“If one praises a tyrant king or shows humility due to greed (of his rewards) then he will be in Hell with him (the King).”[9]

Another prophetic tradition states,

“Whenever a transgressor is praised, the heavens shudder and the Divine Anger envelopes the one who has praised.”[10]

We Must Not Accept Any Honour From Oppressors

The most common way of helping the oppressors is to accept some post or position from them, especially if that post is a cause for any type of oppression. For example the post of maintaining law and order. If a person assumes such an assignment from the oppressors and as a result unleashes oppression on innocent people, such an appointment and such an acceptance of the post is a Greater Sin. If as a result of it, innocent people are subjected to hardships, the doer of such actions is sure to have a severe punishment from the Almighty.

There is one very well known tradition of Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) and it is quoted here from Tuhaf ul-’Uqul. Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) says:

“The Haram post is the post of an oppressive ruler and the posts of those who are busy in the assignments entrusted by the tyrants. Hence it is Haram to fulfill the duty of this post. One who takes up this post will become involved in Divine punishment. Whether the job is significant or paltry, any attempt to help the oppressor is a Greater Sin. Because accepting a post from an oppressor will result in the trampling of rights, the manifestation of injustice, the spread of corruption and disturbance, the destruction of heavenly books, the murder of Prophets, the demolishing of mosques and the interpolation of religious laws. Therefore it is Haram to work with them. Except when there is a condition of utter helplessness, like when it becomes permissible to drink blood and eat the flesh of dead.”[11]

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) has also said:

“Those who accept some assignment from the oppressors; the minimum punishment for them on the Day of Judgement would be that Allah would make them stand near fire till He does the accounting of

the rest of the people. After that He will decide about them."

In the last portion of the book Darus Salam there is an incident concerning Sayyid Muhammad 'Ali Iraqi. He was one of those who had the honour of seeing Imam az-Zaman ('a). He says: "during the time of my youth I was staying in my native village in Iraq. The name of that place was KarharMansurd. In those days a person whom I knew by his name and lineage passed away and was buried in the graveyard opposite to our house. For forty days, at the time of sunset a fire arose from his grave, and wails and screams were heard. On one of those nights the wailing of that dead man became more intense and I was very much troubled. I became so much frightened that I was trembling uncontrollably as if the punishment was on myself; so much so that I eventually began to lose consciousness. When my friends came to know of my condition they came and carried me to their house and I remained there till I was well again. Afterwards I came to know that the dead man was working in the local court. One day he had demanded some tax from a Sayyid who was unable to pay. This man arrested the Sayyid and locked him up in one of his rooms. He hung him from the ceiling of his house for quite some time. It was due to these deeds that he was punished after death."

Another similar incident is related by a reliable person that, some time ago there was a person by the name of Aqa Muhammad 'Ali. He was a dealer in perfumes and was also in some way connected with the law courts. He had promulgated an order banning all the people from any kind of trade in perfumes. During that period a Sayyid had some perfume and he sold it to some other trader. When this tyrant came to know of this he met the Sayyid in the market and abused him excessively and even slapped him. In reply to this the Sayyid said, "My ancestors will repay you for this." When the tyrant heard this he turned back and ordered his slave to catch hold of the Sayyid. Then he beat the Sayyid with a cane saying, "Go and tell your ancestor to cut off my arms." The very next day this oppressor contracted high fever and his arms began to pain severely during the night. On the third day his arms had swollen terribly and puss began to ooze from them. On the fourth day the surgeons amputed his arms in a way that only the stubs remained. He died on the seventh day.

Therefore, it is important to know that acceptance of an assignment or a post from an oppressor or a tyrant is a great help to that unjust man. And it is impossible for the person who accepts such assignments to remain just and non-violent.

It is mentioned in the Sahih of Dawud bin Zarbi that one of the followers of Imam al-Sajjad ('a) had requested Imam al-Sajjad ('a) to recommend him to the ruler of Madinah, Dawud bin 'Ali for an appointment in the governmental post. Imam al-Sajjad ('a) replied: "I will never do such a thing."

On hearing this he thought that Imam ('a) was unwilling to recommend him because he might be worried that some injustice would be caused by him. So he approached Imam ('a) and began to promise and take oaths that he would never do any kind of unjust act and said that he would not do anything except help the people. Imam ('a) looked at the sky and began to weep. Then he said that going to the sky was easier. It was apparent that Imam ('a) meant to say that once a person accepts employment of an

oppressor it is impossible for him not to oppress.

When Is It Permitted To Accept A Position Under Rulership?

There are two situations where it is allowed to accept appointment in the service of oppressors and rather in some cases it becomes Wajib to do so. It is permissible when a person is forced to accept it or if he is practising Taqiyya. That is, if he refuses, his life property or honour will be in danger. Permissibility of accepting employment under tyrants is proved in many ways.

The Holy Prophet (S) has said,

"My people will not be questioned for what they are forced to do."[12]

And Imam al-Sadiq ('a) has mentioned:

"There is nothing that Allah has not made permissible for one who is helpless."

Imam al-Ridha ('a) has been reported in Wasa'il ul-Shi'a to say that he accepted to be heir-apparent of Mamun under duress and Taqiyya. When Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) was asked about working for a tyrant king, he replied,

"It is not allowed, except when a person is not able to obtain his livelihood from any other means or if his life is in danger and his life depends on accepting some work from the tyrant. In that case it is allowed. But if he receives any remuneration from the tyrant he must pay Khums from it."[13]

Such appointments are permissible when the job involves only peacekeeping and maintaining of law and order. Like posts in armies where the aim is to defend the borders of Muslim countries, to see to the welfare of believers and the downtrodden people, and to restore the rights to those who were deprived of it. Accepting service under tyrants is allowed in these circumstances provided one has a firm intention of dealing in a just manner. If the intention is to help the Shi'as specifically, it is more meritorious. Ziyad ibn Abi Salma says that he went to meet Imam Musa al-Kadhim ('a). Imam ('a) asked him if he was employed with the government? "Yes," he replied. Imam ('a) asked, 'Why?'

He replied, "I am benevolent and helpful to the needy so I cannot leave this job. Apart from this I have a family and children and I have no other means of livelihood." Imam ('a) said,

"O Ziyad if I am taken to the top of a high mountain and thrown from it and my body is shattered to pieces. I would prefer that to doing some job for these people or even to step inside their threshold. Except for one condition. Do you know what that is?"

Ziyad said, "May my life be sacrificed for you; I don't know."

Imam ('a) continued,

“Except that I rescue the believers from grief and hardships or liberate an imprisoned believer, or repay the debts of a believer.” After this Imam (‘a) went on to say, “O Ziyad! If you are employed under a tyrant, work for the welfare of your believing brothers so that it will recompense for the sins that you may happen to commit during your service period.”

Fazl Ibn Abdul Rahman says that I wrote a letter to Imam Musa al-Kadhim (‘a) asking, “Please permit me to work on a governmental post.” Imam (‘a) replied,

“You are permitted, provided you do not change my religious commands or cross the limits laid down by Allah. The compensation of your action will be your fulfilling the needs of your believing brother.”14

‘Ali Ibn Yaqtin, who was the Prime Minister of Caliph Harun, wrote to Imam Musa al-Kadhim (‘a): “Please give me permission to resign from this post.” Imam (‘a) replied to him,

“I do not consider it permissible for you to leave this governmental post because in the courts of tyrants there are people through whom Allah removes the difficulties of His loved ones. And they are the ones whom Allah has made immune from the fire of Hell. Hence fear Allah with respect to your brothers.”15

Muhammad bin Ismail Bazi was also a minister in the court of Harun. He had the honour of meeting Three Imams, Imam Musa al-Kadhim (‘a), Imam ‘Ali al-Ridha (‘a) and Imam al-Jawad (‘a) who provided his own garment to serve as his shroud. He relates from Imam al-Ridha (‘a) that he said,

“There are people in the courts of tyrants through whom Allah manifests His proof and they are appointed in specific cities. Allah removes the difficulties of His loved ones through them and by them He brings about the welfare of Muslims. The believers take refuge with them in calamities. The needs of our needy Shi’as are fulfilled through these very people. And the Almighty Allah through their means imposes the fear and dread of the believers upon the houses of oppressors. These are the true believers who are the trust bearers of Allah on this earth. Congratulations to them for their position and post!”

Then Imam (‘a) asked,

“Wouldn’t it be better that at least one of you reaches that position?”

Muhammad asked, “May my life be sacrificed for you. How can a person reach such a position?” Imam (‘a) replied,

“Being with the tyrants, he makes the heart of our Shi’as happy; that makes us happy. O Muhammad! After you do this you will be considered among those people who have lofty positions.”16

Accepting Employment Under A Tyrant Ruler Becomes Wajib In

One Condition

At times it is Wajib to accept rulership or a post in government. A person should do so only when he is sure that if he assumes the post he will be able to uproot a great evil or will be able to prevent at least one sinful ritual or system. But such a situation is rare because it depends on personal confidence, that after one assumes authority, one will never commit any sort of injustice or sinful act nor go against justice and Divine commands. It is obvious that such a proposition is very difficult because there are numerous dangers that lurk behind the facade of governance. It is most difficult to save oneself from them.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) replied to the letter of Abdullah Najjashi the ruler of Ahwaz:

"It has come to my knowledge that you assumed the rulership of Ahwaz. I am happy by this news and aggrieved too. Happy because I hope Allah will remove the difficulties and the problems of the Progeny of Muhammad and help them through you and through you the fire of opposition will cool down on them. I am aggrieved on account of the fears, the least of which is that you may become a cause of injury or difficulty to our followers and thus be deprived of even the fragrance of Paradise."17

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

"One who assumes the leadership of a community will be raised on the Day of Qiyama in a way that both his hands will be tied to his neck. Then if he had dealt with the people according to Shariah; Allah will free him. But if he has been unjust he will be thrown into Hell. And what an evil resort it is. If a leader of a community does not deal with justice and goodness with the people, for each day that he ruled, he will be made to stand at the boundary of Hell for a thousand years with both his hands tied behind his neck. Thus if he has dealt with equity he will be freed and if not, he will be thrown into Hell, into a depth of seventy thousand years."

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"If a person has authority in a particular affair of the people and he deals with justice with them and the doors of his house are open for those who refer to him and seek his help and he does not remain aloof from the people. Then the Almighty Allah will keep him safe from dread and fear on the Day of Qiyama and make him enter Paradise."18

It must be remembered, however, that this is a vast subject and it is not possible to discuss all its facets. Hence those who wish to study in detail may refer to books of jurisprudence.

Helping The Oppressors In Other Matters

Helping the oppressors or tyrants in matters other than oppression; like to work as their personal assistant, to stitch clothes for them, or build their house or guard their property. All these types of jobs

can be classified into Three categories:

(1) In some cases these jobs indirectly help in oppression; for example, if the tyrant had usurped a piece of land and orders a mason to build a house on it, or a cloth which has been obtained forcefully is given to a tailor to stitch a dress, or a person may be ordered to guard the money exhorted from innocent people.

There is no doubt that all such kinds of jobs are Haram. Because the use of things acquired by illegal means is Haram for the one who has acquired them or for anyone else who is aware of their contraband nature.

(2) The second category is of those jobs which are not direct acts of oppressions or which do not help in oppressing, but since the one who is involved in them is associated with the tyrants and the common people consider him to be a part of that oppression; it is Haram. His presence may encourage the tyrants, consequently his name is also included in the list of oppressors. He is also counted among those who usurp the rights of people. All these are Haram according to numerous traditions. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) says:

"One who has his name registered in the office of Bani Abbas will be raised on the Day of Qiyama in the form of a pig."19

In another tradition he says that such a person will be brought in the form of a black pig. Imam (‘a) has also said,

"Do not help the oppressors in the construction of mosques."20

Ibn Abi Yafur says that I was in the company of Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) when one of the Shi'as came and spoke to Imam (‘a). He said, "May our lives be sacrificed for you! Some of our people have problems in obtaining livelihood whereas there are vacancies in the establishments of Bani Abbas for construction of buildings and digging of canals. So what is your opinion regarding this?"

Imam (‘a) replied:

"I don't like to tie even a knot, or the mouth of a water bag or the strap of a purse for them. Even if they were to pay me with Madinah and whatever is in it. I do not like that I help them even as little as the ink at the tip of a pen. Without any doubt, the oppressors will remain standing at the verge of Hell-fire till the time Allah decides about all others."

Muhammad bin Azafar says that Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) told his father,

"I have come to know that you deal freely with Abu Ayyub and Abu Rabie. Then what would be your condition when your name will appear in the list of the helpers of tyrants?"

Hearing this command the father became aggrieved. When Imam (‘a) saw his restlessness he said,

“I have only warned you of that about which the Almighty has warned me.”

The narrator says, “My father remained sorrowful for the rest of his life.”21

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) says, “It is incumbent upon Allah to raise you on the Day of Qiyama with the same group from which you derived benefits in this world.”

The Imam (‘a) has also mentioned the incidents when some of the followers of Hazrat Musa (‘a) decided to support Fir’on for worldly benefits and secretly planned to change sides. When Musa (‘a) was about to win, they enrolled as his supporters, but it so happened that when Fir’on and his soldiers were about to be drowned and these people made a bid to cross to Hazrat Musa’s side, the Almighty Allah caused their horses to perish and they also drowned with Fir’on and his army22.

Our beloved Imam (‘a) has the following advice for us:

“Fear Allah, strengthen your faith with an uncomparable Taqiyya and avoid presenting your needs to the ruler. And if a person is respectful to an irreligious man, Allah will degrade him and will consider him His enemy and leave him on his own. And if he receives any monetary benefit from this man, Allah will remove barakat from it. And if he uses this money to perform Hajj or emancipate slaves, or for any other benevolent deed, he will not get any reward for it.”23

‘Ali bin Abi Hamza says, “One of my friends was a scribe in the employ of Bani Umayya. One day he requested me to take him to Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a). I took him to Imam (‘a). He saluted and said, ‘May my life be sacrificed upon you, I had been in the employ of Bani Umayya as a scribe and have earned a huge amount of wealth without giving any thought to right or wrong.’ Imam (‘a) said,

‘If people like this had not been in the service of Bani Umayya to write letters for them, collect their wealth for them, fight their enemies and attend their assemblies, they (Bani Ummaya) would not have usurped our rights. And if they had been left alone they would not have been able to accumulate any wealth more than what they had.’

The man said, ‘May I be sacrificed for you, can I attain salvation after what I have done?’ Imam (‘a) said,

‘Separate whatever wealth you have earned from them and try to return it to the rightful owners if you know them. Whatever you cannot deliver should be given as charity (Sadaqah) on their behalf so that I can guarantee that Allah will send you to Paradise.’

Upon hearing this, the young man bowed his head thoughtfully for sometime. Then he raised his head and said, ‘May I be sacrificed on you, I will do as you have ordered.’ After this he accompanied me to Kufa and returned all his wealth to the rightful owners as much as it was possible; the rest he gave away as Sadaqah. He even gave up the dress he was wearing. I procured some money for him and bought

him a dress and gave him some amount for his expenses. After some months he fell ill and I paid him a visit. I found that he was in a very serious condition. He opened his eyes and told me, "Ali ibn Abi Hamza, by Allah, your Imam (‘a) has fulfilled his promise.' He died soon after. I supervised his final rites and returned to Madinah to meet Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a). Imam (‘a) said,

‘O ‘Ali! I have fulfilled my promise to your friend.'

I said, ‘May I be sacrificed upon you! You speak the truth, because my companion testified to it at the time of his death.'"[24]

Assistance Which Is Not Haram Nor Can Be An Encouragement

(3) The third type of help is that which is not objectionable in any way an encouragement to the oppressor, nor can it be considered as help to the oppressor in general sense. For example, to hire vehicles or carry the load of permissible goods and eatables etc. All these types of actions are not totally Haram but some elders have mentioned that on the basis of precaution it is necessary to avoid even these actions. As we have stated earlier, by involving oneself in such matters one is prone to incline towards the oppressors.

Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (‘A) Commands Safwan Jamal

Safwan bin Mahram Kufi was a very pious companion of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) and Imam Musa al-Kadhim (‘a). He used to earn his livelihood by hiring out camels. He owned a large number of camels. He says that one day Imam Musa al-Kadhim (‘a) said to him,

"Safwan every action of yours is meritorious except one."

"May I be sacrificed for you, what action is that?" He said,

"You hire your camels to Harun al-Rashid (l.a.)"

He said, "I don't give my camels for hunting or games but he takes them when he goes for Hajj and I do not serve him myself, I order my servants to accompany them on the journey."

Imam (‘a) asked,

"Do they pay you in advance or after their return?"

"After they return", he replied,

"Don't you carry the hope that they return safe and sound from their journey so that you receive your payment?"

“Yes.”

Imam (‘a) said,

“One who wishes them to remain alive is like them and one who is connected with them will go to Hell.”[25]

Safwan says that when he heard this he sold away all his camels. When Harun heard of this he summoned him and asked the reason for it. He said, “I have become old and weak and am unable to take care of the camels, even my slaves are not capable of maintaining them properly.”

Harun said, “It is not so! I know who has persuaded you to do this. You have done this on the direction Musa Ibn Ja’far (‘a).”

“What do I have to do with Musa Ibn Ja’far?” said Safwan but Harun was not satisfied and said that if he had not had good relations with Safwan he would have got him killed.

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) says:

“One who likes the oppressors to continue (to live) likes the disobedience to Allah (to continue) on this earth.”[26]

While explaining the Qur’anic verse,

“… and do not incline to those who are unjust, lest the fire may touch you.” (***Surah Hud 11:113***).

Imam (‘a) says,

“If a person comes to a ruler and wishes for him to live if only for as long as it would take for him to put his hand inside his money bag and give some amount.”

Wishing for the life of an oppressor even for a moment is the same as being inclined towards him.

Helping An Oppressive Person Who Is Not An Habitual Oppressor

To help a person, who is not always oppressive, but occasionally happens to commit oppression, is also absolutely Haram. If one knowingly helps a person in a situation where he oppressing another, one commits a Haram action and a Greater Sin and will be punished as promised in Qur’an:

“Surely We have prepared for the iniquitous a fire, the curtains of which shall encompass them about; and if they cry for water, they shall be given water like molten brass which will scald their faces, evil the drink and ill the resting place.” (***Surah al-Kahf 18:29***).

Oppressing and helping someone in oppression is one and the same.

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) has remarked:

“The oppressor, the one who helps an oppressor and the one who is satisfied with it, are all partners in oppression.”27

It means all Three of them are equally responsible. A similar tradition has been narrated from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) who says that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

“One who breaks allegiance to the Imam, or raises a standard of misguidance or conceals a piece of knowledge which is obligatory to be imparted or usurps some property or helps an oppressor knowingly; then he has deserted the religion of Islam.”28

On the night of ascension (Mi’raj) the Holy Prophet (S) saw the following inscription on the door of Hell:

“Allah degrades the one who insults Islam, the one who insults the Holy Ahl ul-Bayt (‘a) and the one who helps an oppressor in oppression.”29

In this way the Qur’anic verses and traditions prove the seriousness of oppression and helping an oppressor as a Greater sin. Moreover, one who helps an oppressor has also acted against the Divine commandments of forbidding evil. He is actually a hypocrite because he has in fact encouraged an evil and this is one of the characteristics of a hypocrite. As the Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur’an:

“The hypocritical men and the hypocritical women are all alike; they enjoin evil and forbid good…” (***Surah at-Tawba 9:67***).

Preventing Oppression Is Necessary

If a Muslim sees an oppressor trying to oppress someone and if he is in a position to prevent him it is obligatory on him to do so. The Messenger of Allah (S) says:

“Help your Muslim brother whether he is an oppressor or the oppressed one.”

People asked, “O Messenger of Allah! We shall help the oppressed ones but how is it possible to help the oppressor?” He replied,

“Hold both the hands of the oppressor so that he cannot oppress. If you do it, it is as if you have helped him and such an action is a help to your brother (in faith).”30

Helping A Person Who Is Not A Professional Oppressor

It is permitted to help an oppressor (in acts other than his acts of oppression) if rendering this help can

discourage him from his oppression.

If however, helping him has no effect on his oppressive activities then from the point of view of Nahy anil Munkar (forbidding evil) it is Haram to help him.

We Must Not Co-Operate In Sinful Deeds

It is also Haram to help an oppressor whose oppression is not directed to others; but he is unjust to himself. For example to omit prayers and avoid fasting, to drink wine, commit adultery, gambling etc. Every type of sinner is being unjust to himself. Hence helping him in being unjust to himself is also prohibited. One who helps him is his partner in sin. The Almighty Allah has mentioned:

"Help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and oppression, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is severe in requiting (evil)." **(*Surah al-Ma'ida 5:2*).**

Sin (Ithm) is limited to the one who commits it and aggression (udwan) affects others too.

All the proofs and arguments that are applicable to the obligation of forbidding evil also apply here.

Helping In Sin

To help in any condition required in a sinful act is Haram.

(1) For example to sell grapes with the specific purpose of making wine.

(2) A person may help in some way without the intention of helping towards a sinful act, for example, he may sell grapes to a wine-maker without the intention of this being used for making wine, but if there is no other source available for the wine maker to procure grapes, then the selling of grapes by this person is Haram, because it would directly contribute to the manufacture of wine.

Helping A Sinner In Some Other Way

Is it allowed to help a sinful person, by way of giving loan or solving his difficulties to one who does not pray or is an alcoholic? Sometimes it is very difficult to decide as to what is the proper course of action in such circumstances, because we are commanded to maintain a distance from sinners. Thus 'Ali ('a) says:

"The Messenger of Allah has ordered us to be unfriendly with the sinful people."[31]

Hazrat Imam al-Sadiq ('a) rebuked his followers:

"It may happen that in your social circle one of your Shi'as does evil, and you do not prevent him nor dissociate with him nor hurt him, till he gives up his evil deeds."[32]

There are several traditions regarding certain specific sins. For example:

“One who helps a person who does not pray, with a morsel of food or a piece of cloth, is as if he has murdered seventy Prophets, the first of whom being Adam (‘a) and the last, Muhammad (S).”[33]

In another tradition the Holy Prophet (S) says:

“One who smiles at a person who does not pray, is as if he had demolished the Holy Ka’ba seventy times.”[34]

The Prophet of Allah (S) also says:

“One who helps a person who does not pray, with a drink of water, is as if he has made war upon me.”[35]

Other traditions of this kind are against associating with alcoholics, with those who cut off relationships with their kith and kin and with liars. On the other hand we have traditions that emphasise the respecting of a believer’s rights, helping and socialising with the followers of Ahl ul-Bayt (‘a), the Sayyads, the neighbours etc.

The latter kinds of traditions are not conditional. For example it is obligatory to do Silet ar-Rahm with one’s kindered and it is not a necessary condition that the relatives should be pious. We have discussed this matter in the chapter of Silet ar-Rahm and the rights of parents. Even if they are unbelievers we have to fulfill our duties towards them. In the same way the Holy Prophet (S) says regarding Sayyads:

“Respect my descendants, be kind towards the righteous from among them for the sake of Allah and towards the non-righteous ones for my sake.”

Imam al-Ridha (‘a) says the following with regard to the devotees of the Progeny of Muhammad (S):

“Be a friend of the Progeny of Muhammad even if you are a trangressor and befriend their friends even if they are transgressors.”

As far as the rights of neighbours are concerned we are told that if your neighbour is a Muslim he has double rights upon you (One of neighbourhood and another of being a fellow Muslim). If he is an infidel he still has the right of neighbourhood on you.[36]

On the basis of the above it is incumbent to befriend the followers of Ahl ul-Bayt (‘a), help them and fulfill their needs even if they are not pious. We must respect the Sayyads and fulfill our rights towards the kindered even if they are sinners.

Secondly when one is faced with more than one obligation at a time, one should try to fulfill all if it is easy to do, if this is difficult, one should fulfill the one which is more important.

For example when one is faced with a situation when one is keeping an obligatory fast and a child is drowning in a pond. If he jumps into the pool his head will submerge and the fast will become invalid, but since it is more important to save a human life it becomes Wajib for him to jump into the pool. According to Shari'a breaking a fast is a lesser evil than allowing the death of a human. By doing this he would not be liable for the punishment of breaking a Wajib fast. On the other hand he will be deserving of Divine reward for saving a human life.

Preventing Others From Evil Is Most Important

Enjoining good and forbidding evil are the Divine commands, which are obligatory to be followed. They are so important that in case of their clashing with other duties, priority has to be given to these comands. If mother, father, son or some relative do not obey the divine obligatory commands like praying etc. And if by withholding kindness and help from them, it is possible to reform them and induce them to give up their sinful ways, then it is Wajib to withhold kindness and help from them.

The same reasoning applies to Sayyids, neighbours and the followers of Ahl ul-Bayt ('a) who have a right on us. But if withholding help is not going to make any difference in their behaviour, then it is meaningless to adopt such measures. For these were witheld only that they may force the sinners to reform. Otherwise there is no point in employing these retaliatory tactics. If one's parents and relatives are not in the habit of ritual prayers and dissociating with them will not change their attitude; then it is Haram to dissociate with them or disobey them.

We Must Discriminate Between Different Ranks And Positions

We must remember that Nahy Anil Munkar (Forbidding evil) is more important than the rights of relatives, Sayyads and neighbours. Hence we should first try to fulfill the duty of forbidding evil even if it necessitates the non-fulfillment of latter duties, provided there is scope of improvement among the sinners. If it is not so, then it is not required to dissociate with them or withhold kindness etc. from them.

And as far as possible we should try and adopt a charitable option. If it is possible to reform a sinner through love and help we must try it, before we resort to harsher ways of withholding kindness and help. For example, a father has better chances of influencing a son, who is not steadfast in his prayers, if he tries to influence him gently. A gentle option must be tried before taking strict measures against him.

In other words, when withholding kindness does not achieve the desired results (giving up of sinful ways) there is no prohibition in being kind. In fact it is an obligatory act and its omission is Haram.

1. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
2. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
3. Minhaj us-Sadiqin.
4. Majmua Waram.
5. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.

6. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
7. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
8. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
9. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
10. Safinat ul-Bihar.
11. Tuhaf ul-'Uqul.
12. Khasael.
13. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
14. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
15. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
16. Bihar al-Anwar vol. 15.
17. Makasib Muharrama.
18. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
19. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
20. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
21. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
22. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
23. al-Kafi.
24. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
25. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
26. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
27. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
28. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
29. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
30. Anwarun Nomaniya.
31. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
32. Tehzib.
33. Layali Akhbar.
34. Layali Akhbar.
35. Layali Akhbar.
36. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.

The Thirtieth Greater Sin: Not Helping The Oppressed

The thirtieth sin, which is mentioned as a Greater sin, is 'not helping the oppressed people' and 'not warding off oppression from them'. In the tradition of Amash, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says,

"...and not helping the oppressed (is a greater sin)."

To defend the oppressed is to help them ward off evil; not performing such a task is shirking a great duty which Allah has made incumbent upon us.

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (‘a) says:

“If a person due to some difficulty takes refuge with his Muslim brother but inspite of being capable of helping him does not do so then he has for his own self cut off the Divine help.”1

Allah (S.w.T.) does not help a believer who does not help his brother in faith and leaves him on his own.

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) has mentioned that,

“A believer who inspite of being financially capable does not help another believer will be degraded by Allah in this world as well as the Hereafter.”

Similarly Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) says:

“None of you should go to a place where a tyrant ruler is oppressing, and killing innocent people, if you are not capable of helping the oppressed. Because in event of a believer being present in such a place it would be his religious duty to help his believing brothers. But if he is not present at that place the obligation will not exist.”2

Umru bin Qays says, “My cousin and I went to meet Imam Husayn (‘a) when he was surrounded by the army of Yazid (l.a.). Imam (‘a) conversed with us briefly and then asked,

‘Would you like to help me?’

I replied, ‘I have a family to look after, besides I also have some trusts of some people with me. I don’t know what my end would be and I don’t want that the property of those people, which I have as trust should be destroyed.’ My cousin also offered the same explanation.”

Imam Husayn (‘a) said,

“If you cannot offer your assistance to me you must go far away from this desert so that you may not be able to hear my plaintive cry for help. Because if anyone is to hear our cry for help and does not respond, it would be incumbent upon Allah to throw him in the fire (Hell).”3

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) says:

“A Jewish scholar was punished with fire maces in his grave with such severity that the flames leapt out from inside. This was because he had prayed without Wuzu and once he was passing by an oppressed person who called for help but he did not respond.”4

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

“It is necessary to help a believer whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed one. If he is an oppressor he should be restrained from oppression and if he is oppressed he should be helped in obtaining his

rights. He should not be deserted and left on his own."[5]

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"He is not a believer who inspite of being capable avoids helping his brother in need; Allah also leaves him on his own and does not help him in this world nor the Hereafter."[6]

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) says:

"A person before whom the defects of his Muslim brother are mentioned; and he does not try to remove those defects inspite of being able to do also; then Allah will expose (his defects) in this world as well as the Hereafter."

From the above tradition and other similar narrations it seems that oppression is not confined to physical harm or monetary difficulty. It is also with regard to the injury to one's honour and respect. For, the honour of a believer is as precious as his life and wealth. Defiling the honour of a believer is also Haram, like usurping his wealth or taking his life. The traditions are emphatic that just as it is necessary to defend the life and property of a believer, it is also incumbent to protect his honour and respect. It is Wajib to assist him in defending his honour.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"If a person tells something (misleading) to a believer by which he intends to make him an evil man and due to this his respect and honour will be destroyed and he will be degraded in the eyes of common people and people will not trust him anymore nor respect him. Then such a person is deprived from the Guardianship of Allah and left for the Shaitan who also does not accept him."[7]

The Messenger of Allah (S) says:

"If a person hears of the defects of his believing brother in an assembly and tries to defend him, Allah closes a thousand doors of evil from him in the world and the Hereafter. But if inspite of being capable he does not refrain the one who is speaking about the defects of a believer; his sin will be equal to that of seventy backbiters."[8]

Shaykh al-Ansari says that this sin is equated to that of seventy backbiters probably for the reason that if the one who is mentioning the defects is not restrained he may repeat this act on several other occassions. The Shaykh further says that preventing the backbiter is not sufficient but one should also endeavour to defend the believer from all such accusations and defects. For example if the defects pertain to some worldly matter one should say, "After all he has not committed a sin." If the defects are with regard to some religious obligation he should try to somehow prove that the accusation is false. As an example, if a believer is said to have omitted prayers one can defend him by suggesting, that may be he had forgotten to offer them. If a believer is accused of being an alcoholic, one can suggest that he must have seen him drinking something else, or as a last resort one can say, "He is after all not a

Masum (infallible). A man is prone to sin sometimes, so instead of back-biting about him you should try to reform him and help him in his difficulties."

Thus one should make every effort to defend his believing brother from such dishonour. The details of this shall be discussed in the chapter of backbiting.

It Is Not Necessary That Only Those Who Request For Help Should Be Assisted

We should know that helping an oppressed does not become Wajib only when they request for help. Every person who is capable of removing difficulties of a believer must do so and if the needy person has entreated for assistance it becomes all the more important. As the Messenger of Allah (S) says,

"One who hears the entreaty of a man, 'O Muslims! Come for my help,' and does not assist him, is not a Muslim."[9]

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says,

"If a person requests his Muslim brother to help him and the latter does not do so inspite of being capable enough; the Almighty Allah installs a huge snake from (the snakes of) Hell on his grave so that it can continuously bite him."[10]

In another tradition it is reported that such a person will continue to receive this punishment till Qiyama even if he had been pardoned (for other sins). Moreover, Imam ('a) also said,

"No person refrains from helping and pleasing his Muslim brother unless there is some benefit in it." (i.e. his helping would have been sinful instead of rewarding)."

There are many traditions of this type from the Holy Imams ('a). Imam al-Sajjad ('a) says:

"The sin which results in the descending of calamities is when one does not respond to the call for help of the helpless people."[11]

Then the Imam ('a) invocated Allah (S.w.T.) saying,

"O Allah! I plead for forgiveness for the time when someone is oppressed in my presence and I do not help him. I seek refuge in You for not helping an oppressed and a needy person."

(Sahifa al-Sajjadia)

Traditions on this subject are numerous and widespread. Let us be content with the ones we have discussed.

Helping The Oppressed Is Not Only For Believers

Helping the oppressed is Wajib. This does not mean that it is Wajib only to help the oppressed believers. The commands of helping the oppressed in the light of Qur'an and traditions are only conditional as far as the capability of the helper is concerned. Even if the oppressed people are not Shi'as and they belong to other sects of Muslims, it is still Wajib to help them. Even if a non-offensive infidel is being oppressed, the command of enjoining good and forbidding evil dictates that he should be helped and the evil must be eradicated.

There is an incident in Muntahiul Amal that Mansur Dawaniqi was in Mecca when an expensive diamond was brought to him. It was for sale. When Mansur saw the diamond he recognised that it had belonged to Hisham bin Abdul Malik and should have been surrendered to him (Mansur). Since Muhammad a son of Hisham was still alive he must have brought it for sale. So he ordered his guards to close all the doors of the Holy Mosque after morning prayers the next day, and allow the people to leave only from a single door after careful scrutiny. When Muhammad bin Hisham was found he should be arrested and brought to him.

When on the next day after morning congregational prayers all the doors were shut and it was announced that people should leave from one particular exit, Muhammad bin Hisham realized that it was a plot to arrest him. He became fearful and looked here and there in confusion and worry. He did not know what to do. Just then Muhammad bin Zayd bin 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a) came towards him and asked, "Who are you? And why are you so frightened."

"If I reveal my identity, would my life be safe?"

"Yes!" he replied, "I take an oath to remove this danger from you."

"I am Muhammad, the son of Hisham Ibn Abdul Malik, Now tell who you are?"

"I am Muhammad Ibn Zayd bin 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a) and certainly your great grandfather Marwan had killed my father unjustly, but do not worry, you are safe. Taking your life will not avenge the innocent blood of my father and you had not killed my father yourself. Now I will try my best to save you from this danger. I have thought of a way out of this. I want you to co-operate with me and promise me that you will be absolutely fearless and repose your trust in me."

Thus, Muhammad bin Zayd covered the head and face of Muhammad ibn Hisham with his own robe and pulled him towards the exit beating him at every step. When they reached the exit he told the guard loudly, "This wretched man is a camel driver from Kufa. He had hired a camel from me but he ran away and he gave it to someone else. I also have two just witnesses to support my claim. You send your deputies with me and I will take him to the Qazi for judgement. Rabi, the chief guard ordered two of his deputies to accompany them and they came out of the Holy Mosque together. When they had walked for

some distance Muhammad ibn Zayd told Muhammad bin Hisham, “There is still time for you to repent and promise to return my money, I will not trouble these guards and the Qazi if you assure me.”

Muhammad bin Hisham picked up the cue and said, “O son of the Holy Prophet (S). I promise to do as you say.”

Muhammad bin Zayd told the guards that since the fellow has repented there was no need for them to take more trouble. The guards left them. Muhammad bin Hisham took off the robe from his face and kissed the face and head of Muhammad bin Zayd and said, “Allah the Almighty knew well where to put His message that He appointed the Prophet from your family.”

Then he took out an expensive diamond from his pocket and requested Muhammad bin Zayd to accept it as a reward for saving his life but Muhammad bin Zayd declined saying, “I belong to a family that does not accept anything in return of a good deed. When I had condoned the murder of my father what value can this diamond have for me? I cannot take it.”

The Worshipper Sinks In The Ground

Shaykh Tusi has related from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a), “There was an old man of Bani Israel. He was praying when he saw that two children had caught a fowl and were pulling its feather. The fowl was shrieking in pain but he remained engrossed in prayers and did not help the poor bird by having it released from the clutches of the naughty children. So the Almighty ordered the earth to swallow this man and sucked him to the lowest depths.”

The Worldly And The Heavenly Rewards For Those Who Help The Believers

A large number of traditions have reached us which emphasise the necessity of helping and assisting the believer and the rewards that are earned by those who do so. Let us study some of these traditions:

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) said:

“One who responds to the entreaties of his believing brother in difficulties and makes him glad and helps him and fulfills his needs; then seventy two bounties become incumbent for him from Allah. One of these bounties is given to him in this world so that it can solve his worldly problems and the other seventy one are stored for him to remove the dread and difficulties of the Hereafter.”[12]

He (‘a) has also said:

“If a person tries to fulfill the need of a believer and he completes it, the Almighty Allah writes in the scroll of deeds the rewards of a Hajj and Umra and Ihtikaf of two months in Masjidul Haram and fasts of

two months. But if the need is not completely fulfilled the reward of one Hajj and Umra is written."[13]

Imam ('a) has also mentioned that it was revealed upon Hazrat Dawud ('a) that,

"When one good deed of one of My servants reaches Me I shall grant him Paradise."

Dawud ('a) asked, "O my Lord what deed is that?"

"Removing sorrow and difficulties of a believer, even if it is as little as giving him a date (fruit)!"

Dawud ('a) said, "It is only You O Allah! Who is of such greatness that once a person recognises You, he must never despair of Your Mercy."

It is quoted from Maimun bin Mahram in the book Faqih, "I was sitting in the assembly of Imam al-Hasan ('a) when a person entered and said, 'O son of the Messenger of Allah. I am indebted to such and such person and now he wants to imprison me.'

Imam ('a) said,

'I do not have any money to repay your debt.'

He said, 'Maybe you can speak to him so that he will not put me in prison.'

Imam ('a) arose and put on his shoes. I said, 'O son of the Messenger (S) did you forget that you are in Ihtikaf and cannot go out of the mosque?'

Imam ('a) said,

'I have not forgotten, but I have heard my father say that the Holy Prophet (S) had said, "One who tries to fulfill the needs of his believing brother is as if he has for 9000 years fasted during the days and prayed during the nights.'"

Letter Of Imam Al-Sadiq ('A) To The Ruler Of Ahwaz

When Najjashi assumed the rulership of Ahwaz there was a person in his service who requested Imam ('a) that, "I owe a certain amount to the ruler and he is a Shi'a, if you feel proper, please write to him regarding this matter."

Imam ('a) wrote:

"In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful. Please your brother so that Allah may please you."[14]

The narrator says that when the person went to Najjashi, he was busy in some official matter. When he was free he handed Najjashi the letter saying that it was from Imam ('a). He kissed the letter and

touched it to his eyes and asked, “What is the matter?” He told him that he owed some taxes. “How much?” Najjashi asked, “Ten thousand Dirhams,” he replied. Najjashi called his accountant and told him to note down his debt as paid and close his account in the register. Then he went further and said that for the following year too this amount of taxes should be marked as paid. Then he turned towards him and asked, “Have I made you happy?”

“Yes!” replied the man.

Then he called for a horse, and a slave brought it. He ordered for a dress and gave to the man. At each step he kept asking, “Have I made you happy? Have I made you happy? The man kept replying “Yes! Yes! May I be sacrificed for you, Yes!” At last he told him to take even the carpet on which he was sitting. Because, he said, “It was on this carpet that you handed me this letter of my Master (‘a), and if you have any other need, tell me.” The man thanked him profusely, returned to Imam (‘a) and related the details. The Imam (‘a) was extremely pleased at the behaviour of Najjashi. The man asked, “O my Master are you pleased with Najjashi’s response?”

Imam (‘a) replied,

“By Allah! Najjashi has also pleased Allah, His Prophet (S) and his Progeny.”

Yaqtin the father of ‘Ali relates that one of the accountants of Yahya bin Khalid was appointed to collect tax from their area. Yaqtin says, “At that time I was owing a considerable amount of tax and if all the tax had to be cleared I would have had to sell off all my property. Some people suggested that he was a Shi’a, but I was too fearful to approach him in case he turned out to be a non-Shi’a and would force me to part with all my wealth, as I was a follower of ‘Ali (‘a). So I decided to run away from that place and headed for Mecca. After completing pilgrimage I decided to visit Madinah and presented myself before Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) and told him, ‘Such and such person has been appointed as a tax collector but I was too scared to approach him for the fear that he may not be one of your adherents.’ Imam (‘a) told me that there was no cause for me to worry and he wrote a brief note;

“In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful, there are many people in His shade whose guardians are only those who remove the grief and difficulties of their brothers or give them opportunity or do some good to them even if it is as little as half a dried date and this person is your brother.”

Imam (‘a) put his seal at the end and handed me the note saying, ‘Give this to him.’ When I returned to my native town and went to his door, I said, ‘I have been sent by Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a).’ He came running to the door barefooted. When he saw me, he saluted me and kissed my forehead and asked if his master has sent me. I replied in the affirmative and he said, ‘If this is so, even my life is at your disposal.’ He held my hands and implored me to tell him in what condition Imam (‘a) was when I had departed. I told him that Imam (‘a) was well. ‘By Allah? Yes, By Allah?’ he asked this Three times and after that I handed him the hand-written note of Imam (‘a). He kissed it and touched it to his eyes. Then he asked me what I wanted from him. I told him that I owed several thousand dirhams in taxes and I

would spend my whole life in paying them. He called for my file and condoned the taxes payable by me and gave me a receipt. After this he called for his money chest and gave half of the money to me. Then he called for his horses and distributed them equally between us. After this he sent for his clothes and distributed them in the same way. When he had divided all his belongings and given me half he said 'O Brother! Have I pleased you?' Yes, I replied, 'By Allah!'

When it was the time for Hajj I said to myself that I could never repay his kindness except for that which is most liked by Allah (S.w.T.) and His Holy Prophet (S). So I decided to go for Hajj in order that I may pray for him and after Hajj meet Imam ('a) and inform him of the kindness and request him also to pray for this noble soul. When I met Imam ('a) after Hajj he seemed very pleased and asked,

"O Yaqtin how did that person behave with you?"

When I described his goodness the face of Imam ('a) beamed with happiness. I asked whether Imam ('a) was pleased with his actions? (so that Allah (S.w.T.) may please the noble man). Imam ('a) replied:

"By Allah he has pleased my ancestors! By Allah he has pleased Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) and the Holy Prophet (S) and he has pleased the Almighty Allah at the High Heaven."

Imam Musa Al-Kadhim ('A) And 'Ali Ibn Yaqtin

Ibrahim Jamal wanted to meet 'Ali Ibn Yaqtin, the Prime Minister of Harun the Caliph, but he was not granted an audience. The same year 'Ali Ibn Yaqtin was honoured by Hajj and later went to Madinah and decided to meet Imam Musa al-Kadhim ('a) but Imam ('a) did not permit him to enter. Again the next day he presented himself and upon the refusal of Imam ('a) asked as to what sin he had committed that Imam ('a) did not want to meet him. Imam ('a) said that since he had refused to meet his brother, the Almighty Allah would not allow his efforts to succeed, till the time Ibrahim Jamal does not forgive him. 'Ali ibn Yaqtin said that since he was in Madinah and Ibrahim Jamal in Kufa how was it possible to obtain his forgiveness at that moment?

Imam ('a) said,

"When it is dark, go alone to Baqi, and do not let anyone know it. You will find a thoroughbred horse there. Mount that horse."

'Ali Ibn Yaqtin did as instructed and in a short time found himself at the door of Ibrahim Jamal. He knocked at the door and announced "I am 'Ali Ibn Yaqtin." Ibrahim Jamal said from inside, "What do I have to do with 'Ali Ibn Yaqtin?"

'Ali Ibn Yaqtin said that he had some urgent work with him and begged for the permission to enter. When he was allowed inside he said, "My Master has refused to see me till you forgive me."

Ibrahim said, “May Allah forgive you.”

‘Ali Ibn Yaqtin fell down and implored him to put his foot on his (‘Ali’s) face. Ibrahim did not agree. ‘Ali Ibn Yaqtin again implored him in the Name of Allah. Ibrahim complied with his request. Then ‘Ali Ibn Yaqtin said, “O Allah be a witness,” and mounted the horse again. Within a few minutes he found himself at the door of Imam (‘a). He knocked and Imam (‘a) permitted him to enter.

By these traditions we can judge the importance of helping our believing brothers. ‘Ali Ibn Yaqtin was one of the closest companions of Imam (‘a) and has assumed the ministership by the order of Imam (‘a). He was also held in such high esteem that on the day of Eid-uz-Zuha Imam (‘a) said,

“I did not recall anyone else’s name. I just prayed for ‘Ali Ibn Yaqtin!”

Inspite of such an honourable position he was not able to satisfy Imam (‘a) till he had satisfied his believing brother. We must exercise utmost caution in our daily lives that we may not cause any believer’s rights to be trespassed; which may bring down the anger of Allah (S.w.T.) and the Holy Prophet (S) upon us.

His Own Needs Are Fulfilled

It must be known that one who strives to fulfill the needs of a believing brother or wards off oppression from an oppressed soul, apart from the rewards of the Hereafter he is also bestowed honour in this world and his own needs are fulfilled. We have many traditions to prove this, however we shall mention only one such incident.

The esteemed scholar, Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Khalid Al Barqi who was present in the life time of Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (‘a) and also during the Minor Occultation, says in his book Mahasin:

I was under the patronage of the tax collector of the city of Pahencha Kootkeen. His name was Abul Hasan Madarani. He had given me a yearly endowment, which I used to collect as tax from an area at Kashan, but he was so busy that he became inattentive towards me and my own taxes were demanded from me. I was much worried, when one day a noble and pious man came to me. He was very weak and it seemed as if he had no blood in his body. He was like a walking corpse. He told me, “O Abu Abdillah! There is a relation of common faith and purity between you and me and the relation of devotion to the Pure Imams (‘a). Please do something for me for the sake of pleasing Allah (S.w.T.) and for the sake of the love of Sadat.” I asked him as to what he wished? He said, “People have falsely spread the rumour that I have given some secret information against Kutani to the Sultan. Hence, they have confiscated all my property.”

I promised to help him out and he went away. I thought to myself that if I approached the collector with two requests at the same time I would not be able to achieve them both. On the other hand if I presented the problem of only the old man then what of my own difficulty? I went inside my library and

was in deep thought when a tradition of Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) came to my mind. It was to the effect that if a person strives, sincerely, to solve the difficulty of a believer, his own difficulty is solved by Allah.” I got up at once and went to Abul Hasan Madarani. When I entered I saw that he was sitting on his chair with a pillow to rest his back and he held a stick in his hand. He told me to sit. At that very moment a Qur’anic verse came to my mind and I recited it loudly:

“And seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode, and do not neglect your portion of this world, and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek to make mischief in the land, surely Allah does not love the mischief-makers.” **(*Surah al-Qasas 28:77*).**

Abul Hasan said that since I have recited this verse I must be in some need? He told me to mention it clearly. I said that people have spread false rumours against such and such person. He asked me if he was a Shi’a and if he was acquainted with him. I said, “Yes”! He called for the register and I saw that a large property had been seized from the old man. Abul Hasan ordered all the seized property to be restored to its owner. He also told his servants to give him a mule and a new dress and accompany him to his family with respect. After this he said, “O Abu Abdillah you have corrected my mistake.” Then he picked up a slip of paper and wrote an order transferring the rights of the particular piece of land in my name. Again he waited for sometime then ordered the old man to be paid 10,000 dirhams extra, saying, “Because he had guided us to the correct way!”

I requested him to let me kiss his hands but he said that if I kissed his hands he would kiss my feet and said that he did not wish to waste away his good deed. It was nothing much for him as he was holding the rope of the Progeny of Muhammad (S).

1. al-Kafi.
2. Safinat ul-Bihar.
3. Safinat ul-Bihar.
4. Safinat ul-Bihar.
5. Darus Salam.
6. Bihar al-Anwar.
7. al-Kafi.
8. Makasib.
9. Wasa’il ul-Shi’a.
10. Mustadrak.
11. Mani al Akhbar.
12. Wasa’il ul-Shi’a.
13. Al Amr bil Ma’ruf.
14. Usul al-Kafi.

The Thirty-First Greater Sin: Sorcery

The thirty-first sin that is clearly stated to be a Greater Sin is sorcery. A tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) has been recorded in Wasa'il ul-Shi'a in which the Prophet (S) has mentioned that Magic is a Greater Sin. The tradition of Abdul Azim (r.a.) has also mentioned from Imam al-Jawad ('a) who has related through his fore-fathers from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) that he said to the effect, "Sorcery is a Greater Sin because the Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"And they followed what the shaitans chanted of sorcery in the reign of Sulaiman, and Sulaiman was not an unbeliever, but the shaitans disbelieved, they taught men sorcery and that was sent down to the two angels at Babel, Harut and Marut, Yet these two taught no man until they had said, 'Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever.' Even then men learned from these two, magic by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it anyone except with Allah's permission, and they learnt what harmed them and did not profit them, and certainly they know that he who brought it should have no share of good in the hereafter and evil was the price for which they sold their souls; had they but known this." (***Surah al-Baqarah 2:102***).

According to Tafsir al-Mizan this ayat shows that sorcery was prevalent among the Jews for a long time; and they used to ascribe it to Hazrat Sulaiman ('a). They believed that Hazrat Sulaiman ('a) had mastered the techniques of controlling the angels, jinns and wild animals through magic, and some of these alleged methods had reached them. They also implicated the two angels Harut and Marut for other magical rites. Therefore, the Holy Qur'an has denounced their belief regarding Hazrat Sulaiman ('a) because sorcery is the method of misusing the power of human spirit in order to perform extraordinary acts. It is against the Divine law because it negates the supremacy of Allah (S.w.T.). Since Hazrat Sulaiman ('a) was a Prophet and undoubtedly infallible, he cannot be blamed for such a violation of Divine Command. Therefore to ascribe sorcery to Hazrat Sulaiman ('a) was absolutely wrong. As the Almighty says,

"...and Sulaiman was not an unbeliever, but the shaitans disbelieved, they taught men sorcery..." (***Surah al-Baqarah 2:102***).

Regarding Harut and Marut the Holy Qur'an says:

"...and that was sent down to the angels at Babel, Harut and Marut, yet these two taught no man until they had said, "Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever." Even then men learnt from these two, magic by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it anyone except with Allah's permission, and they learnt what harmed them and did not profit them..." (***Surah al-Baqarah 2:102***).

We should however know that some of the commentaries of the Holy Qur'an by Ahle-Sunnat have recorded some lewd traditions on this subject; and their lewdness itself proves their forged nature. For example they say that the Jinns stole the ring of Hazrat Sulaiman ('a) and with the help of its power ruled for forty days from his throne and during this period the satans spread the practice of sorcery among the masses. They have also written that Harut and Marut were two angels and when they became seized with sensuality, they drank wine and murdered a man; later they committed adultery with a woman. The woman then ascended to the heavens; and the star Zahra on the sky is that same woman.

This is a false allegation because during his conversation on this subject with Ma'mun, as mentioned in Uyun al-Akhbar al-Ridha, Imam al-Ridha ('a) says that Harut and Marut were two angels who had taught people the method of nullifying the magic of the sorcerers so as to enable them to prevent the effect of magical rites practiced by the magicians. They did not teach any magical spell before warning them that this was a Divine test and they must not fall prey to infidelity but some people became disbelievers by misusing the spells to cause discord between husband and wife, though the proper utility of the spell was obstructing black magic.

Even the Shi'a scholars differ in the explanation of this verse. Tafsir Majmaul Bayan has also recorded different views. Some thinkers have opined that this is one of the Divine secrets and they further offer the exegesis that Harut and Marut signify the intellect and soul of man. These two entities changed their abstract form and assumed a physical body. Therefore, they were examined in their material life. They became engrossed in satisfying their carnal desires. Consequently they attached themselves solely to the material world and continued to worship their desires. In this way they committed gross injustice upon themselves and deprived themselves from eternal bounties. They also made themselves liable for a terrible punishment. Such traditions are unacceptable according to their wordings and if they are reported to have been uttered by the infallibles they should be understood in the light of their sayings only.

The honourable scholar Shaykh Saduq says that Zahra and Suhail are two types of marine animals who are referred to in traditions by the name of Harut and Marut. They are not two stars as the Ahle-Sunnat believe. Moreover, the Qur'anic ayat mentioned above is clear that magic is equivalent to disbelief and the sorcerer will not receive any benefit on the Day of Qiyama.

As the Holy Qur'an says,

***"And if they had believed and guarded themselves* (*against evil*)*, reward from Allah would certainly have been better; had they but known* (*this*)*."* (*Surah al-Baqarah 2:103*).**

The Holy Prophet (S) says,

"Three kinds of people will not enter Paradise, habitual alcoholics, habitual sorcerers and those who severe relationships."[1]

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) says,

"The magician will enter hell like the disbeliever."[2]

Imam ('a) also says,

"If one learns magic, whether a little bit or more, he has become an infidel. And his end result is that he does not receive Divine Mercy. His punishment is that he be killed except if he repents."[3]

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) says that a woman came to the Holy Prophet (S) and said,

"My husband is very severe and misbehaves with me, so I have prepared something for him that he may become kind to me." (i.e. I have prepared a magical potion to change his attitude).

The Holy Prophet (S) said,

"Curse be upon you! You have darkened the realms of the seas and the lands, the angels of the earth and the heavens curse you."

After going from there the woman began to fast during the days and pray during the night and she trimmed her hair and started wearing a leather garment. When the Holy Prophet (S) learnt of this he remarked that her fasting and prayers would not be accepted.[4]

Muhaddith Faid mentions this hadith and comment that these actions will not save her from death penalty. Sorcery is such a severe crime that her repentance and worship will not bring her near Allah (S.w.T.). She has done an injustice to her husband and unless he forgives her, she cannot be forgiven.

The Holy Prophet (S) says:

"If a person goes to a magician, a diviner or a liar and testifies to the truth of whatever he says, he becomes an infidel according to all the books revealed by Allah."[5]

Sorcery Is Punishable By Death

A Muslim who indulges in magic and does not repent is punished by death. An infidel guilty of sorcery must not be killed. He should be punished according to the decree of a just jurist (Qazi) and his penalty is at the discretion of the Qazi.

According to a tradition of Imam al-Sadiq ('a):

"The sorcerer must be given a single blow of the sword on his head."[6]

"If two just witnesses testify, it is permissible to kill him."[7]

Imam ('a) also said, that the Holy Prophet (S) ordered,

“The Muslim sorcerer must be killed and the infidel magician must not be killed.”

Someone asked, “O Messenger of Allah, why shouldn’t the disbelieving sorcerer be killed too?”

The Messenger of Allah (S) replied,

“Because disbelief is a more serious sin than magic; and sorcery and polytheism are the same.”

It means that when a zimmi infidel is not sentenced to death for his infidelity he cannot be killed for the sin of practising magic because infidelity is greater than sorcery. Whereas the Muslim magician is killed because he has committed polytheism.

What Is Sorcery?

The late Sayyad writes in Wasila an Najat that magic means the writing and reciting of some special spells and charms and the burning of particular objects so that its smoke can be used for some extraordinary effects. Making a picture and blowing, or tying up knots, or buying special objects in particular places so that the person for whom the magic is intended may be affected physically or mentally. That is if he is reported lost he can be located by it or he can be put to sleep or made unconscious. It can also be used for creating love or discord between two people; like husband and wife etc.

In the exegesis Tafsir al-Mizan very interesting points are mentioned under the explanation of the 104th verse of Surah al-Baqarah. We shall present them for our readers.

A Philosophical Discussion

It is common knowledge that many unusual events do take place which are beyond the established natural system. It is difficult to find someone who has not seen, or heard about some abnormal or seemingly supernatural event. But on close scrutiny it turns out that most of them are not enigmatic and mysterious at all. They are the results of normal and natural causes, like intensive practice and training, for example, eating poison, lifting heavy loads, walking or dancing on a tight rope etc. Some are based on natural causes that are not known to the general public, for example, a man walks into flaming fire without coming to any harm, (he applies some chemicals like talc to his body); or sends a sheet of blank paper and the addressee understands the message it contains. (He writes with an invisible ink that becomes visible if heated by fire or treated with some chemicals). A third set depends on the sleight of hand like juggling. All these seemingly abnormal feats actually emanate from normal causes, although the causes are unknown to the common man; they may even be beyond his ability.

Yet there are other strange happenings that cannot be attributed to any normal physical cause. For example, giving information of the unseen, and particularly foretelling future events; the charms for love and hate, the harmful or beneficial spells affecting man’s virility, hypnotism, mesmerism, spiritualism,

telekinesis and so on. It is known that such events do take place from time to time. We have seen some demonstrations ourselves, and similar reports were brought to us by reliable sources. At present there are many people in India, Iran and the western countries, who demonstrate such extraordinary feats and their authenticity is beyond doubt.

It appears from close investigation of their methods and regimen that these feats spring from the will power of the doer, and from his unshakable self-confidence. The will power arises from the special knowledge which they have mastered. Sometimes the will acts independently and sometimes it needs some boosting; for example, writing a certain charm with a certain ink in a certain place at a certain time (for the amulets of love or hate); or fixing a mirror before a certain child (in the seances of spiritualism); or chanting a certain incantation a certain number of times, and so on and so forth. When the conditions are fulfilled the will is strengthened to bring the desired effect into being. When the knowledge becomes one with the knower, it influences his senses to such an extent that he sees the end product, that is, the desired effect, with his eyes.

You may verify this statement yourself. Just tell yourself that a certain person is present before you and that you are looking at him; then put your imagination to work to bring his form before your eyes; this should be raised to such a high level of certainty that you become oblivious of all other thoughts and ideas and then you will actually see him standing before you-as you had imagined. Many ancient doctors, acting on this principle, restored to health their incurable patients-simply by creating in them the confidence that they would soon regain their health.

Taking this principle a step further, if someone's will power is extraordinarily strong, it might influence the psyche of another individual and create the desired impression on him also. That impression might, or might not depend on fulfillment of certain conditions, as indicated earlier.

From the above discourse, we may deduce the following three principles:

First: The appearance of such extraordinary events depends on the firm "knowledge" and strong conviction of the doer but it is irrelevant whether that "knowledge" is true to the fact or not. That explains why the conjurations of the priests of the sun god and the moon-goddess etc. seemed to work although they believed that the heavenly bodies had souls, which they claimed to bring under by their magic. Probably the same applies to the angels and satans whose names are "discovered" and invoked by many practitioners of the magic art. The same is true for spiritualism and its seance and spirit communication- and the spiritualist belief that the spirits attend their sittings. Utmost that may be claimed regarding those sessions, is that the spirit appears in their imagination or, let us say, before their senses- and this "perception" emanates from their firm belief in their art but it can never be said that the spirit actually presents itself at the sittings- otherwise all the participants in the sitting should have perceived its presence, because everyone of them has the same senses as the medium has.

But accepting this principle, we may solve many problems related to the seance and spirit

communication. For example:

1. Sometimes the spirit of a living man is called to present itself at a seance, and supposedly it comes there but at that very moment, that man is busy attending to his affairs and he never feels his spirit leaving him even for an instant. The question is: As a man has only one spirit, how was it possible that his spirit presented itself to that seance without his being aware of it?

2. The spirit is an immaterial essence which has no relation whatsoever with space and time. How can it present itself at a certain place at a certain time?

3. Why is it that often a single spirit appears before different mediums in different forms?

4. Why is it that sometimes when the spirits are called to a seance, they tell lies and give wrong answers? And why do the various spirits sometimes contradict each other?

All these problems will be solved if the principle is accepted that it is not any spirit that presents itself to the seance; it is only the firm belief and conviction of the spiritualists and his medium that is at work, making the medium see, hear and feel the spirit. It is all a play of his imagination and will; and nothing more.

Second: Some of the people, holding the strong and effective will-power, rely on their own power and their own being, in bringing about the desired effect, the intended supernatural events. Such events are bound to be limited in strength, confined in their scope- in their own imagination as well as in reality.

On the other side, there are some persons, like the Prophets and the friends of Allah (S.w.T.) who, in spite of their most effective will power, totally rely on their Lord. They truly worship Him and have full trust in Him. They do not wish anything but from their Lord, and by His permission. Theirs is a pure and clear will, untainted by any personal feeling. It does not depend except on Allah (S.w.T.). This is a Divine Will- not limited in anyway, nor restricted in any manner.

The supernatural events that are brought into being by the first group may be of many kinds; If they are based on enquiry of, or help from, a jinn or a spirit etc. then it is called "al-Kihanah" (divination, sooth-saying, fortune-telling); and if it comes about by means of a charm, amulet, talisman or other such instruments or potions, then it is called magic.

The supernatural events shown by the prophets and saints are also of various kinds. If it is produced as a challenge, in order to prove the truth of the claim of prophethood, then it is called miracle, if it is not offered as a challenge, then it is named "al-Karamah" which literally means nobility, mark of honour; and in Islamic terminology is used for a miraculous event shown without a challenge; and if it happens as a result of the prayer to Allah (S.w.T.), then it is called, "answer to the prayer."

Third: As the whole thing depends on the will power of the doer, its strength varies according to the strength (or weakness) of the will. That is why some of them may nullify the others, as, for example, the

miracle annihilates sorcery. Also, a weak agent fails to impose his will on a stronger psyche, as is often seen at the sessions of mesmerism, hypnotism and seances.

Various Kinds Of Magic

There are many fields of study dealing with various awe-striking feats and extraordinary deeds; and it is very difficult to classify them so as not to leave anything out. However, we give here a list of the more commonly used branches of this art.

a) as-Simiya: It deals with the ways of combining the will-power with particular physical and material forces for manipulating the natural order and, thus, producing extraordinary effects. Under this head comes the manipulation of thought, also known as the eye-enchantment.

It is the most deserving candidate for the title of magic

b) al-Limiya: It teaches how one may establish a connection between his psyche and the higher and stronger spirits, in order that one may bring them under one's control, for example, the spirits of the stars, or the jinn, etc.

It is also called the knowledge of subjugation of the spirits.

c) al-Himiya: It explains how the powers of the higher spiritual world may be combined with the base elements of this world to produce awe-inspiring effects. It is also called talisman. The stars and their configuration have some relation to the material happenings of this world, in the same way as the elements and compounds and their physical qualities affect those phenomena. Supposedly if the heavenly forms, pertaining to a certain event, for example, A's life or B's death, could be combined with the relevant material forms, the desired effect would take place without fail.

d) ar-Rimiya: It trains one how to control and manipulate the qualities of various things, to produce seemingly super-natural effects. It is also called "ash-Sha'badhah" (sleight of hand, jugglery, magic).

These four fields of knowledge, together with the fifth, called "al-Kimiya" (alchemy, the forerunner of chemistry, primarily the attempt to transmute base metals into gold or silver) formed what the ancients called the five secrets, mysterious branches of knowledge.

Ash-Shaykh al-Bahai has said: "The best book written on these subjects was the one I saw in Herat, 'Kulah al-sar' (the head's cap) by name. Its name was an acronym, made of the first letters of the five subjects, that is, al-Kimiya, al-Limiya, al-Himiya, al-Simiya and ar-Rimiya."

The standard books of these subjects are the epitome of the books of Balinas, Rasa'il, al-Khusraw Shahi, adh-Dhakhirah, al-Iskandariyya, as-Sirru'l makhtum (by ar-Razi), at-Taskhirat (by as-Sakkaki) and A'malu'l-kawakib as-Sab'ah (by al-Hakim Tamtam al-Hindi).

Supplementary of the above are the following subjects:

– The knowledge of numbers (numerology): It shows the relation of numbers and letters with the desired effect. The relevant letters or numbers are filled in a magic square or triangle etc. in a particular sequence.

– al–Khafiyah (the hidden knowledge): It breaks down the name of the desired effect or other relevant names, and finds out the names of the angels or the satans managing the said effect; and then composes the invocations made of those names.

Divination Or Kahanat, Soothsaying

To predict future events is known as divining and when the prediction is made on the knowledge obtained through some groups of Jinns it is known as Kahanat. (However we shall use the word soothsaying as an equivalent of Kahanat). Kahanat pertains to the prediction of future with the help of special knowledge. For example, the soothsayer may be adept at guessing the words of the enquirer or his private affairs etc. According to the author of *Nihaya* this kind of soothsayer is known as 'Araf' but according to the majority of scholars a soothsayer is the one who predicts with the help of Jinns. The Jinns inform him of hidden matters. For example, he might be able to find where a stolen thing is hidden or who is the thief, or who is the murderer of a particular person. All the jurists are unanimous in their opinion that 'Kahanat' or soothsaying is Haram. Just as it is Haram to learn, teach, perform magic, in the same way it is Haram to learn soothsaying, to act upon the advice of a soothsayer and even to go for advice from a soothsayer. Some scholars maintain that soothsaying is a kind of magic.

Imam al–Sadiq ('a) says:

"One who divines or the one who goes to a soothsayer for divination, (both) have renounced the religion of Muhammad (S)."8

Janabe Haitham enquired from Imam Ja'far al–Sadiq ('a), "There is a person we know who informs about stolen property etc. Is it permitted for us to seek his advice?"

The Holy Imam ('a) said,

"The Messenger of Allah (S) has mentioned that one who goes to a sorcerer, a soothsayer or a liar and testifies to what he says has become an infidel in the light of all the divine books revealed on Allah's Messengers."9

The Shaykh comments that according to this tradition, informing about the hidden matters is Haram; whether through divination or otherwise. However, if someone guesses and conjectures or doubts; it is allowed. Imam Ja'far al–Sadiq ('a) considers soothsaying a prohibited profession and also considers it earnings Haram. Amir ul–Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) is also recorded to have mentioned a similar tradition.

Ignorance About Future Is Better For The People

We must understand that prohibition of soothsaying is beneficial to us. Allah the Almighty does not wish people to have knowledge of the future. It is possible that a person may come to know of something of tremendous importance which will take place is according to his wishes. But their happening may be dependant on his giving Sadaqah or invoking Allah (S.w.T.). Having this knowledge beforehand may prevent the person from giving Sadaqah and invoking Allah (S.w.T.) with the result he will be deprived of his wishes. Similaly he may come to know of some calamity is to befall and this will cause him great anxiety when in reality this happening may not occur at all because of change in Allah (S.w.T.)'s ordinance (Bada). It is well known that many calamities are warded off by invoking Allah (S.w.T.) or giving Sadaqah or due to some good actions of the person or repentance. We can recall the people of Prophet Yunus ('a), who were to be subjected to a great disaster. But their Du'a and repentance at the eleventh hour changed the course of their destiny. The Qur'an has also mentioned this fact.

A tradition is quoted in the Ihtijaj of Tabarsi from the sixth Imam ('a). The gist of the same is as follows:

After the birth of the Holy Prophet (S) the shaitans and the Jinns were denied access to the heavens, hence they were unable to give information about the heavenly affairs. Now they could only inform about the evil magical matters. This information is unreliable because among the jinns too there are liars as well as truthful jinns. Therefore the fortune telling of a diviner is unreliable.

Sorcery And Soothsaying Are Evil

To understand the evil of magic and soothsaying it is enough to know the numerous frauds, crimes, thefts and cheating committed through them. The sorcerer discontinues all the good actions and concentrates only on performing satanic rituals. He commits adultery with a married woman, sometimes he kills a person or drinks human blood. He shows disrespect to the things that Allah (S.w.T.) has made respectful. For example, he desecrates the verses of the Holy Qur'an. He performs actions that bring him closer to shaitans and eventually enters their company. Rather he debases himself lower than the shaitans so that they may help him in soothsaying and sorcery.

It is certainly a great pity that a human being who is capable of utmost good and worthy of rising to a position equal to angels or even higher, should so debase himself by his evil deeds that his position is degraded below that of the Shaitan.

Shoabada, Illusion

Fast movements of an object can create an optical illusion for the beholder. For example if a ball of fire is moved in circles it seems to be a circle of fire. In the same way a person who is travelling in a car or train feels himself stationary and feels that his surroundings are moving in the opposite direction. Some

people are adept at creating illusions of this type which audience perceives as real. To create such an illusion is Shobada. All the fuqaha are unanimous that Shobada is Haram; and that it is a type of magic. A tradition of Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) in Ihtijaj also mentions that creating illusions is a kind of sorcery. Another form of this magic consists of the perceived effect being a reality and not an illusion. The magicians of Fir’on used both the methods with Hazrat Musa (‘a). First they created an illusion, then they switched over to actual sorcery. Apart from these there are many other kinds of magics and tricks; but we need not go into details.

It has been narrated about Abu Hafs Hadad that when he was a young man he had fallen in love with a lady. He was so enchanted by her that he was prepared to do anything to acquire her. Someone told him that there was a magician Jew in Nishapur and he would be able to fulfill his wishes. He went to the Jew and told him about his desires. The magician told him to abstain from prayers and other good deeds for forty days so that he can make his magic work for him. Abu Hafs returned from there and acted upon the instigation of the sorcerer.

After the forty days had elapsed Abu Hafs went to the Jew again and told him that so far the magic had not worked. The magician was also surprised and he told Abu Hafs that he must have done at least one good deed in those forty days that has nullified the magic. Abu Hafs pondered, and said that as far as he remembered he had not done a single good action except that he had picked up a stone from the path so that it may not hurt a traveller. “That was it!” The magician exclaimed, “Though you disobeyed God these forty days and did not fulfill any obligation, yet He is such a Merciful God that He accepted even such a small deed from you and prevented the magic to work for you. So, it is not appropriate for you to disobey such a generous God.”

The words of the magician had such effect on Abu Hafs that he repented for his misdeeds and became absorbed in worship and sought forgiveness from Allah (S.w.T.). He became so pious that eventually he was bestowed miraculous power by the Almighty.

The Powers Of The Magician Are Limited

When Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) had described the different varieties of magic to the one who had posed a question, the person asked Imam (‘a) if it was possible for a magician to transform a human being into a dog or a pig etc.? Imam (‘a) said,

“The magician cannot do this, because if he can transform the creations of Allah he will become a partner of Allah in His creation whereas no one can be a partner to Allah.”

If the magician had such powers he would have got rid of his own senility, difficulties and maladies and would not have allowed his hair to gray and would have removed his own poverty.

Actually the most dangerous kind of magic is that which causes differences between two friends. It

creates hatred and malice between those who love each other. Such discord and dissension can also be created by instigating people against each other. The two are closely inter-related.

Taskhirat

Taskhirat (controlling Jinns etc.) can be defined as the method of controlling Angels, Jinns, souls or various wild animals. This is also Haram and considered a form of sorcery. The Shaykh has also mentioned in Makasib that all the characteristics of magic and sorcery are present in Taskhirat. Although Shahid al-Awwal and Shahid al-Thani consider magic Haram because it does harm to others, they may have also considered that the fact the process of controlling angels and jinns causes them much sufferings.

Qayafa (Guess)

Qayafa is the art of determining the lineage of an individual. A person practicing Qayafa can decide whether a particular individual is the son or brother of another. But this practice is against the doctrine of Islam for establishing lineage and it is a kind of magic, therefore it is Haram in view of all the jurists. On the other hand it is possible for a knowledgeable and wise person to ascertain certain facts regarding an individual on the basis of his physical characteristics. This practice is not Haram. Many unusual episodes have been narrated on the basis of such knowledge.

An interesting incident is mentioned in al-Kafi as well as the eleventh volume of Bihar. During the time of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a), ‘Ali bin Huraira was a governor of the Abbasid Caliph. He had a slave named Rafid. One day he was so angry with Rafid that he decided to kill him. Rafid ran away and took refuge with Imam al-Sadiq (‘a). Imam (‘a) told him to go back to his master and say that Imam (‘a) has ordered him to spare his life, as he has taken refuge with Imam (‘a). Rafid was horrified but Imam (‘a) insisted that he go back. So Rafid obeyed and when he was on his way he met an Arab, who said, “Where are you going? Your face is that of a dead man.” Then he told Rafid to show his hand. Again he remarked that the hands were of a person who has been killed. He looked at the legs and passed the same judgement. He said that his complete body was that of a person who has been murdered. Then he asked him to show his tongue. Upon seeing the tongue he remarked, “No harm will come to you because your tongue is that of an envoy and it carries such a message that if you were to go to huge mountains they would become soft, and become obedient to you.”

Rafid says that when he came to his master ‘Ali bin Huraira, he at once gave the orders for his execution. His hands were tied and an executioner moved towards him with a naked sword. Then he told his master that it was not he who had got him arrested, but that he himself had returned to him. He also requested him to listen to what he had to say in privacy. He agreed to the request and Rafid told him, “Ja'far bin Muhammad (‘a) the master of both of us has sent you salam and requested you to spare my life.” When he heard this he could not believe it. Rafid repeated it to him under oath. He at once

freed him and asked his forgiveness. He insisted that his hands be tied in the same way by Rafid. Rafid could not make himself do this; but upon insistence he tied his hands and untied them quickly. Then he gave his seal ring to Rafid and set him free.

Similarly, Shaykh Saduq has related from Hisham that he went with Imam Musa bin Ja'far ('a) to a slave trader who had come from the west. Imam ('a) selected a slave girl but the trader refused to sell her. The next day Hisham went alone and bought the slave girl at a higher price according to Imam's instructions. The slave trader asked him who was that man who had accompanied him the other day. Hisham acted under Taqiyya and said he didn't know much, but that he was from the Bani Hashim. The slave trader said, "When I had purchased this slave-girl from a far away place in the west and was carrying her with me, a woman stopped me and asked where I was taking her. I said I had purchased her for myself. She said the girl was not made for me. She was destined for a man who was the best of the people in the world and in the near future she will give birth to a son to whom the west and east will be subservient."

In keeping with the prediction, the slave girl gave birth to Imam al-Ridha ('a).

Astronomy And Meteorology

Predictions regarding future events; i.e. price fluctuations of grain, its shortage and abundance, the scarcity and intensity of rain and all other types of good and bad happenings; based on the knowledge of the effect of heavenly bodies on earth is known as meteorology. It is permitted if the one who is predicting only considers them a possibility but not a certainty because the final authority for all cause and effect lies with Allah (S.w.T.). Thus there is no harm in predicting the solar and lunar eclipses and the position of stars etc. because such predictions are based on complicated calculations and such predictions are usually true unless there is a mistake in calculation. The movement of the heavenly bodies follows well-defined laws and principles, hence there is hardly any chance of a wrong prediction.

On the other hand to predict future events with a belief that only the stars and heavenly bodies (without any Divine will) govern them is Haram and a kind of magic.

The Shaykh has concluded his discussion in Makasib by stating that predictions are of four types:

1) It is not Haram to predict the future position of heavenly bodies and other phenomena like the solar and the lunar eclipse etc.

2) It is also permitted to predict an occurrence if it is caused by the influence of the movement of stars or by the heavenly bodies coming near the earth but it must not be considered a phenomenon independent of the Divine will. It should be looked upon as the will of Allah (S.w.T.). In other words one should say that 'when the comet etc. passes near Earth such a thing will happen by the permission of Allah (S.w.T.).' The stars must not be considered the sole cause of the phenomena. Even if one makes such

predictions by experience and without any scientific knowledge; it is allowed. One who has previous experience can predict that it will rain at night when his pet dog comes down from the terrace and comes inside the house, because this had happened before. Hence the past experience enables some to predict a future event.

3) To attribute the future events solely to the influence of heavenly bodies is considered Haram by all the jurists. Numerous traditions denounce these kinds of predictions.

4) The Holy Prophet (S) says:

"One who believes an astrologer and soothsayer has disbelieved in whatever was revealed upon Muhammad (S)."

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"Accursed is the astrologer and accursed is the soothsayer and accursed is the magician."

When Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) was proceeding for the battle of Nahrawan one of his men who was an expert in astrology restrained him saying, "If you go at this time, I fear that you will not succeed in your aim."

'Ali ('a) told him that if he thought he could predict the auspicious and the inauspicious times of departure with accuracy, he was in error and said,

"Whoever believes your prediction has denied the Qur'an." (Because according to Qur'an success and defeat all are subservient to Divine will). If a person has faith in the astrologer he will not seek Divine help and assistance when the prediction is favourable for him. In this way he will not give Sadqa nor pray for success and will eventually conclude that Allah (S.w.T.) controls nothing; thus he would become a disbeliever.

If an astronomer predicts with the belief that his predictions are subject to the final will of Allah (S.w.T.) then there is no harm for one to pray to the Almighty for success when the prediction is good; and in case of an unfavourable prediction invoke Allah (S.w.T.) for safety.

5) Khwaja Nasiruddin Tusi during one of his journeys stayed for the night at a water mill. The water mill was situated outside the town. Since it was a hot evening the Khwaja decided to sleep in the open. The mill-owner told him that it would rain that night. The Khwaja looked at the sky but could not make out any sign of rain. The mill-owner said, "I have a pet dog who comes down to the house when it is to rain at night." Khwaja did not heed his advice and spent the rainy night in open but he was much amused by the incident.

Four Types Of Beliefs

1) To believe that stars are the supreme controllers of the world is Haram. A person who has such a belief is a Kafir whether he denies the creator or not. All the jurists are unanimous in this regard.

2) To believe that the heavenly bodies have been bestowed by Allah (S.w.T.) the power to control the world is not Kufr but it is a foolish notion because we have no proof that the inanimate stars have any intelligence or will to influence the world.

3) The third type of belief is when a person admits that the stars have no intelligence and will power but says that Allah (S.w.T.) has decreed that when the position of the stars will be such, the following event will take place. It is the law of causation like when fire is brought near something it burns it. Though such a belief is proved correct most of the time, reason does not accept it to be unchangeable.

4) To predict future events on the basis of heavenly occurrences is not Haram according to most of the scholars. For example if the moon and Saturn come in a line there would be a good rainfall. To interpret such heavenly phenomena is not Haram but such interpretations can be accurately given only by the Infallibles (‘a). What the meteorologists predict is based on an incomplete part of this knowledge. Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) remarks:

“The complete knowledge of stars cannot be acquired and incomplete knowledge is of no benefit.”[10]

After enumerating the different types of astrological sciences, Shaykh al-Ansari says, “All these traditions imply that whatever the astrologers predict is based on deficient knowledge. They only conjecture and guess on the basis of a little knowhow. People who consult them are rarely satisfied by their predictions but it is possible that he may have experience regarding a particular event and may make an accurate prediction. Hence it is better to refrain from consulting such people and if they make a prediction, one should say, ‘It is only a possibility.’”

The Prediction Did Not Materialize

The deficiency and inaccuracy of astrological predictions can be gauged from the doubts and wrong predictions of the astrologers. The books of history are replete with such examples. In the second volume of Tatmatal Muntahi it is mentioned that in 582 A.H. seven stars came together in one constellation. Abul Fazl Khwarizmi and other astronomers gave the prediction that the whole world will be destroyed in a cyclone. The people took shelter in the caves and protective spots and also stored their rations to escape the fury of the cyclone. At last the predicted date of 9th of Jamadi ul Akhar arrived but there was no sign of any cyclone. Not even a soft wind blew. People lit candles and they burnt without even being blown out by a breeze. The poets jumped to the amusing occasion and composed couplets on this incident.

A few years ago there was a similar threat that had the people of the whole world worried. It was predicted that the whole earth would be shaken due to the impact of the collision of a meteor. Some people dived underwater to escape the shock but nothing happened at the appointed time. (The meteor missed the earth by thousands of miles).

Magic And Miracles Are Of Two Types

If a person is able to perform extraordinary acts due to his extreme piety and abstinence it is known as Karamat but if the said person is a Prophet or an Imam, he is bestowed with this high station by the Almighty and subject to Three conditions his act will be construed as a miracle (Mojiza).

1) His claim should be acceptable to reason but if his claim is illogical, whatever action he performs is magic whether one can perceive the mechanics of this act or not. For example it is an accepted fact by every Muslim that prophethood came to an end with Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (S) and that his shariah will be in force till Qiyama; there will be no prophet after him. Hence if someone claims that he is a prophet; his extraordinary acts to prove his claim will not be believed. He would be a cunning magician. Or a person claims Imamat, when according to the proven belief of Shi'as there are only twelve Imams. The first being Hazrat 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib ('a), and the last Hazrat Hujjat ibnil Hasan ('a), who will remain in occultation till the time of his reappearance. Hence the claimant will be an imposter even if he exhibits some mysterious act. Similarly is the position regarding the special representatives of Imam ('a) who were four, the last being 'Ali ibn Muhammad Saymori. If someone comes and says that he is a special representative (Naib al-Khas) he cannot be believed and whatever 'miracles' he shows will be considered magical tricks.

2) The person should possess the necessary qualification for being a prophet or an Imam. For example one of the necessary quality of a Prophet or Imam is infallibility (Ismat). That is, he must not commit either a greater or a lesser sin before his declaration or after it. He must be the most righteous and knowledgeable person of his time. One of the signs of such a character is his indifference to material wealth. Thus if there is a claimant who commits sins and lacks knowledge and covets material wealth, then if he exhibits special acts, they are merely magic.

3) It is necessary that the extraordinary act performed by the incumbent should be through the might and power of the Almighty. If he uses some tools and instruments or if he undertakes training for performing the said acts it is obvious that they are not miracles. Miracles are performed by the power of Allah (S.w.T.) and do not require prior practice and training. This aspect has been analysed in great detail in scholastic theology.

Countering Magic

Many jurists are of the opinion that countering one magic spell by another is permitted. If an imposter claims prophethood by performing magical tricks; magic can be used to expose his falsehood. Or if a

sorcerer casts a spell on someone or binds him, it is permitted to break this spell and unbind the victim with the help of magic.

It is related that Isa bin Shaqfi came to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) and said, "May my life be sacrificed for you, I am a magician and magic is my occupation. With the earnings of magic I have even performed the Hajj and now the Almighty has honoured me by your meeting but now I am regretful of my deeds; is there any way I can achieve salvation? Imam ('a) said, "Untie and do not tie." The apparent meaning of Imam's remark is that he can use his powers to counteract the magical spells of others magicians but he must not himself initiate sorcery. Some jurists are of the opinion that magic can be used only under special circumstances when there is no other alternative. Initially invocations and amulets must be tried to nullify magical spells.

Let us look at a couple of such incidents in the book Bihar al-Anwar11.

A person came to Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) and complained that a spell has been cast on him. 'Ali ('a) told him to write the following Du'a on the skin of deer and keep it with him so that the spell may not affect him:

بِسْمِ اللهِ بسْمِ الله وَما شَاءَ اَللهُ بسْمِ اللهِ لاَحَوْلَ ولاَقُوَّةَ اِلاَّ بِااللهِ قَالَ مُوْسٰ ماَ جِئْتُمْ بِه السَّحْرَ اِنَّ اللهَ سَيُبْطِلُه اِنَّ اللهَ لاَ يُصْلِحُ عَمَلَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَ بَطَلَ ماَ كَانُوْأ يَعْمَلُوْنَ فَغُلِبُوْا هُنَالِكَ وَ انْقَلَبُوْا صَاغِرِيْنَ .

In the Name of Allah and by Allah. In the Name of Allah and as Allah willed. In the Name of Allah. There is no power or might except by Allah. Musa ('a) said Allah shall soon falsify the magic of those who have come with magic. Indeed Allah does not improve the affairs of transgressors. Then the truth became manifested and falsified what they had done. The truth triumphed and they were disgraced.

Moreover he advised reciting the following Du'a seven times to safeguard against magic and the tyranny of the ruler. The same Du'a can be recited seven times after Salat al-Shab and before the morning prayers. It will protect one from the evils of magic:

بِسْمِ اللهِ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِاَخِيْكَ وَ نَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَانًا فَلاَ يَصِلُوْنَ بِآيَاتِنَا اَنْتُماَ وَ مَنِ اتَّبعَكُمَا الْغَالِبُوْنَ

In the Name of Allah and by the help of Allah. Soon We shall strengthen your hand by your brother. And appoint for you a force. By which their mischief would not harm you. Move ahead with our signs. You and your followers shall triumph.

In the book Qasasul Ulama there is an anecdote of the period of Abbas the Safawid. A Christian king sent a messenger to Abbas with the message that he may be given a chance to debate with Muslim scholars and if he defeats the Muslim scholars they must all accept Christianity. Now the person sent by the Christian king had some powers by which he was able to guess accurately what others held in their

fists. The scholars were invited to debate with him and they included Mulla Mohsin Faiz. When the debate began Mulla Mohsin remarked that the Christian king has sent an ordinary man instead of a religious scholar for debate. The envoy brushed the remark aside and told him to hide something in his fist so that he can prove his miraculous powers.

Mulla Mohsin kept the tasbih made of dust from Imam Husayn (‘a)’s grave in his fist and challenged him to guess. The man thought for sometime but kept quiet. When Mulla urged him to speak up he said, “According to my knowledge there is a piece of Paradise soil in your hand but I am astonished as to where it was and how it came into your hands.”

Mulla Mohsin said, “You are correct! It is the dust from the grave of Imam Husayn (‘a) who was the grandson of our Prophet (S). Your statement itself proves that the Imam of Muslims was on the right. Hence, you must accept Islam.”

The Christian followed his conscience and became a Muslim. A very suitable method was employed by the late Mulla Faiz to guide the Christian towards salvation. But it must be kept in mind that even under circumstances like the one described, where the person proved superior to the Christians who had extraordinary powers, it is necessary that the person has the Three necessary qualifications described earlier, otherwise he is nothing but a sorcerer.

1. Wasa’il ul-Shi’a.
2. Wasa’il ul-Shi’a.
3. Wasa’il ul-Shi’a.
4. Kitab Faqih.
5. Safinat ul-Bihar.
6. al-Kafi.
7. Tahzib.
8. Khisal.
9. Makasib Muharrama of Shaykh Ansari.
10. Wasa’il ul-Shi’a.
11. This paragraph, onwards to the end of this Chapter is not found in the Arabic version of this work (Adh-Dhunub al-Kabirah) and may have been translated from the Urdu version of the book. [N. DILP team].

The Thirty-Second Greater Sin: Israf

The thirty-second sin, which has been mentioned in the Qur’an and traditions as a Greater sin, is Israf or wasteful expenditure. It is enumerated among the Greater Sins in the tradition of Fazl Ibn Shazan from Imam al-Ridha (‘a) and also in the tradition of Amash from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a). The Qur’anic verses and traditions, both, confirm that wasteful expenditure is a Greater sin. First we shall quote these ayats and traditions and then delve into the various aspects of this sin. The Holy Qur’an says,

***"…and eat and drink and be not extravagant; surely He does not love the extravagant."* (*Surah al-Ar'af 7:31*).**

The above ayat suffices to show the dislike of Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) for the extravagant people. According to some exegesists of the Qur'an one who is not loved by Allah (S.w.T.) is doomed to perdition because the love of Allah (S.w.T.) implies Divine rewards.

According to Tafsir Majmaul Bayan, Bakhti Shoa was the personal physician of Harun al-Rashid. He was a Christian. One day he asked Waqidi, "Does your Holy book contain any medical knowledge?" Waqidi replied, "The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) has condensed the complete medical knowledge in a single verse,

***"…And eat and drink and be not extravagant."* (*Surah al-Ar'af 7:31*).**

"Did your Prophet mention anything about this branch of knowledge?" asked the physician.

"Yes," said Waqidi, "he has described the medical sciences in a brief sentence.

'The stomach is the house of pain and abstinence is the most important medicine. Everyone should be given the amount (of food) he needs.'"

Upon hearing this, the Christian remarked, "Your Book and your Prophet have not omitted anything from medical science and Galen (the Greek physician) had nothing more to say."

The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) says in the Qur'an,

***"…eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its reaping, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant."* (*Surah al-'An'am 6:141*).**

A verse in Surah Ghafir states,

***"Thus does Allah cause him to err who is extravagant, a doubter."* (*Surah Ghafir, 40:34*).**

Similarly,

***"…the extravagant are the inmates of the fire."* (*Surah Ghafir, 40:43*).**

Also,

***"And thus do We recompense him who is extravagant and does not believe in the communication of his Lord; and certainly the chastisement of the Hereafter is severer and more lasting."* (*Surah Ta Ha, 20:127*).**

Allah the Almighty again says,

***"…and do not squander wastefully, surely the squanderers are the followers of the shaitans and the Shaitan is ever ungrateful to his Lord."* (*Surah al-'Isra', 17:26-27*).**

Tafsir Minhaj cites the extravagance and prodigality of the pre-Islamic Arabs. When the rich among them invited someone for dinner, they slaughtered several camels to show off their wealth. The Almighty Allah has denounced their extravagance and has said that they squander their wealth like the insane.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says,

"Certainly, moderation is liked by Allah and He dislikes extravagance; even in the throwing away of a date-seed, because that too can be used (Arabs feed date-seeds to camels). And the same is with the throwing away of water left after drinking." (Because even this can be put to some use).1

The Imam ('a) has also said:

"Fear Allah and be not extravagant nor miserly. Be moderate. Verily, extravagance is waste. The Almighty Allah says, 'And do not waste!' Certainly Allah has never punished the people who practise moderation."2

It means that the Divine punishment is reserved for both the squanderer as well as the miser. Bushr Ibn Umar says, "I went to Imam al-Sadiq ('a) and he placed some dates before us. We began to eat the dates and some of us were throwing away the seeds. He stopped them and said,

'This is waste, Allah does not like corruption.'"3

In a tradition, from the book Faqih, the Holy Prophet (S) describes the various prohibited acts and states that the house one builds extravagantly and for show-off will be raised to seven floors by the Almighty Allah on the Day of Qiyama. Allah (S.w.T.) will kindle that building and make it into a necklace and place it on the neck of that person. Then He will toss him into the fire. The people requested the Holy Prophet (S) to explain how a person can build a house for show-off. The Prophet (S) explained that it denotes a house, which is more than needed, and one that is constructed to show the superiority of the owner over other Muslim brothers.

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) says:

"Whenever Allah intends goodness from His servants, He reveals to him to live moderately and spend his life in the best way and keeps him away from extravagance and prodigality."

Hazrat Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says:

"Do you think if Allah has bestowed someone with wealth, it is because he is His beloved? And if He has given less to someone it is because he is low? No! It is not so. Whatever wealth is there, it all belongs to Allah. Allah gives it to whomsoever He wishes as a trust and He has permitted the trustee to eat, drink,

wear clothes, marry, and ride from it, (but) in moderation. If he has excess he must distribute it among the poor and fulfill their needs. Then whoever follows the Divine commands, whatever he has eaten, drunk, worn, married and riden in moderation; all this is lawful for him and if he does not act upon it, everything is Haram."

Then Imam ('a) recited the ayat,

***"And do not be extravagant, Allah does not love the squanderers."* (*Surah al-'An'am 6:141*).**

Then he continued,

"Do you think it proper that a person purchases from the wealth which Allah has entrusted him, a horse costing 10,000 dirhams when he could have bought an animal worth 20 dirhams?; and it would have sufficed for him. Or if he purchase a slave-girl at a cost of a thousand dirhams when he could have got one in twenty dinars and quite sufficient for him? When the Almighty says,

***'Do not spend wastefully.'* (*Surah al-'Isra', 17:26*).**

(One who wastes and squanders money has done Khayanat in the trust of Allah (S.w.T.)).[4]

Abbasi says that he asked Imam al-Ridha ('a) as to how much he should spend on his family? Imam ('a) replied,

"Between the two which are disliked."

I said, "I don't know what those two are?"

"Certainly Allah hates extravagance and He hates miserliness."

Imam ('a) then recited the ayat,

***"And* (*the people are*) *those who are neither extravagant nor miserly. They are the moderate* (*people*).*"* (*Surah Al-Furqan 25:67*).**[5]

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) has said that if a person is extravagant and later becomes poor due to it, his invocations will not be accepted. Then if he says "O Allah grant me health," Allah (S.w.T.) says, "Had I not ordered you moderation?"

The Meaning Of Extravagance And Its Types

Extravagance means crossing the limits or spending wastefully. It depends upon circumstances. For example, spending on something useless is Haram, even if it is only a single dirham. Spending unduly even for a proper ocassion is extravagance. If a dress of one hundred rupees is good enough one should not purchase a dress costing five hundred. According to certain scholars spending at the wrong

place is squandering and spending more than necessary is extravagance.

Hazrat ‘Ali (‘a) says,

“The extravagant have Three qualities; he eats more than required, he wears more than is suitable for him and buys things needlessly.”[6]

Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) says

“If you wear a formal dress where it is not required, it is extravagance.”[7]

Extravagance Depends Upon The Capacity Of Every Person

It is necessary to know that extravagance depend upon the honour and respect of different people, their health and sickness, youth and old age, poverty and affluence, income levels etc. It is possible that an expensive dress may not constitute extravagance for a person who can afford the same and who holds a respectable position in society. Whereas for one who is not having the same position and income, wearing the same dress will constitute extravagance.

Kulayni (r.a.) has recorded a tradition from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) that he said,

“There are some poor people who squander more than the rich. Because the rich squander from the wealth Allah has given whereas the poor squander what they have not.”[8]

Thus such poor people are always involved in economic problems and debts. They do not consider their circumstances and spend beyond their means. This is extravagance. It is a result of competing with those who are more affluent. In trying to keep up with them one indulges in extravagance and spends ones life in misery, sorrow and grief. If instead people look at those who are less privileged than them, as ordered by Islam, they would never fall prey to wasteful expenditure. Thus, bankruptcy is often caused by extravagance. If people obey the rules of Islam and act with common sense and reason, they will always practice moderation and keep aloof from this sin; they will be satisfied with whatever they have and live within their means. Consequently, they will enjoy the goodness of this world and the Hereafter.

Amir ul-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) says:

“No one can taste true belief till he cultivates Three qualities

1. Love of the knowledge of religious rules and regulations.

2. Patience in calamities and

3. Realistic estimation of his expenses.”[9]

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) says:

“When a person practices moderation I guarantee that he will never become destitute.”[10]

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) says:

“Three things facilitate salvation: Fearing Allah, practising moderation in poverty and affluence, to say only the rightful thing even when angry or displeased.”[11]

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) explains the ayat

“We will certainly make him live a happy life.” (***Surah an-Nahl 16:97***).

and says that,

“‘A happy life' is contentment.”

Abu Dharr Repels Greed

Uthman gave two hundred gold coins to his servants and told them to take them to Abu Dharr and say, “Uthman has sent you his salam with a request to accept these coins. You can use them for your needs.”

When the servants brought the gold coins to Abu Dharr and conveyed Uthman's message he asked, “Has Uthman given a similar amount to every Muslim?”

“‘No”, they replied

“Then am I superior to all the Muslims to be given these?”

The servants told him, Uthman has said that, “these gold coins are from his personal property and by Allah (S.w.T.) they are Halal.”

“I do not need them because I am needless,” said Abu Dharr.

“But we don't see anything in your house, that shows you are needless?”

Abu Dharr pointed towards a utensil and said, “There are two pieces of barley bread in it and hence I am needless.”[12]

In another narration of the same type, Muawiya sent two of his slaves with some money for Abu Dharr and when Abu Dharr refused to accept them, the slaves said, “O Abu Dharr! Muawiya had promised to free us if you accept the money. Please accept it for our sake.”

Abu Dharr said, “If I take them you would be free from Muawiya's slavery but I will become his slave,

because then I will be forced to obey him." (It would be the same as selling my religion for material wealth).

Sayyid Abu A'la Maududi writes in his book, Islam and the Economic Problems that all the evils in the world are due to the wasteful expenditure of rich people and their vain pastimes. These people consider extra-marital sex a necessity. Due to this thousands of women become morally corrupt; thousands of men shamelessly commit debauchery. These people consider singing, dancing, music, acting etc. as necessary entertainments. Hence they have bought over the various professionals of these vices and the entertainment industry has bloomed. More and more people being attracted to these vices. Thus, the number of dancers, actors and prostitutes increase by the day.

This has resulted in the development of entertainments, which are not at all necessary for respectable people. On the contrary such vices are destroying morals and basic human values. Even sports and excursions have been commercialised into wealth ammassing business. Misguided people have instigated a section of society to indulge in producing wines, drugs and other intoxicants. The devastating effect of which on society are only too well known. They spend their money in building posh apartments, giving lavish parties. They spend exhorbitantly on jewellery, dresses, paintings etc. The height of their wasteful expenditure is reflected in the special rooms for their dogs and the golden collars and lashes with which they adorn their pets.

In the face of such wasteful expenditure are the destiutes and deprived masses who cannot have even their basic needs fulfilled. The Qaruns (profligates) have acted blatantly against humanity and against the principles of Islam by their wasteful expenditure. If only they had used their excess wealth for alleviating poverty and fufilling the needs of the poor, they would have done a service to humanity.

As pointed out earlier extravagance depends on the capacity of a person and what is extravagance for a poor man may not be considered lavishness for a rich man. However, it does not mean that the affluent people are free to spend their wealth in any way they like. Most certainly they cannot spend on anything which is Haram. In fact the rules that apply to the rich are very strict indeed.

When they have been bestowed with wealth and affluences they have to live in a manner suitable to their status. Whatever amount remains is not for hoarding. Any excess wealth has to be utilised in the manner stated by religion. It is obligatory to deduct Khums (1/5) of the extra wealth and distribute it to those who are qualified for it. One must also pay Zakat when it is obligatory.

If a person has some close relatives who are poor he has to give them some amount otherwise he will be guilty of Qat'a ar-Rahm. If some of his surplus money is needed by his destitute and poor relations, he must help them. If they are in debt he must help them repay the debts. If they are sick he should provide medicines for them and provide the other necessities of life. In fact, if he is aware of any Muslim who needs monetary help and he does not help him, he will be like the one described in the following words of Qur'an,

***"...and (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah's way, announce to them a painful chastisement. On the day when it shall be heated in the fire of Hell, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it; this is what you hoarded up for yourselves, therefore taste what you hoarded."* (*Surah at-Tawba 9:34-35*).**

The Holy Prophet (S) explains,

"If a person hoards wealth and does not fulfill the rights (if he sees a poor and needy person and he does not spend it in the way of Allah); then on the Day of Qiyama he will be branded with it and it will be told to him, 'This is your wealth which you collected with miserliness.'"[13]

Numerous ayats and traditions have emphasised spending in the way of Allah (S.w.T.) and prohibited against hoarding of wealth. The former is considered most deserving of Divine rewards and the latter earns degrading punishment. However, if we quote these verses and narrations we would be straying from our topic.

It would not be out of place to mention a few facts of the modern world. Some rich people, who feel they are Muslims, hoard up all their surplus wealth in foreign banks, in secret accounts. Only when they exit from the world do we learn of their legacies. Allah (S.w.T.) knows how they shall justify their actions. If they offer the excuse of ignorance of the matter they will be confronted with the question as to why did they not try to learn about religion, attend majlis, lectures etc?

If they had known everything why did they not act upon it. It is a pity that these wealthy people do not realize that spending in the way of Allah (S.w.T.) is the most appropriate utility of their wealth. It is the only beneficial way to spend it. The money spent in the way of Allah (S.w.T.) has been called as the 'righteous wealth' by the Holy Prophet (S). The person who spends in the way of Allah (S.w.T.) will deserve praises in this world and also earn the eternal rewards of the Hereafter. Those who do not, will be fraught with regret and bitterness, forever.

Extravagance Depends On Prevailing Conditions At Different Times

Extravagance differs from person to person, it also depends on the prevailing conditions. It is possible that spending a certain quantity may not be extravagance in times of prosperity but if a similar amount is spent in times of famine when people are starving to death, it will be counted as lavishness and squandering. It would be obligatory for those people to avoid spending like in normal times and instead distribute that wealth among those who are in need.

Moatab, a servant of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) says, "There was an acute shortage of food when Imam ('a) asked me, *'What is the position of our stocked grains?'*

‘We have sufficient to last us months,’ I replied. Imam (‘a) said,

‘Take it out and sell it.’

I said, ‘There is a shortage of wheat and barley in Madinah.’ But Imam (‘a) insisted I sell it.

When I had sold it all, Imam (‘a) told me that I should buy the daily requirements from the market like the common people and said,

‘Fix a diet of half wheat and half barley for my family, Allah knows that I am capable of feeding them all pure wheat bread but I like it that Allah sees me fulfilling duties of my life faithfully.’”

The same order applies to the matter of dressing. Some stupid people have accused Imam al-Sajjad (‘a), Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) and Imam al-Ridha (‘a) for wearing fine clothes whereas their fathers, grandfathers, the Holy Prophet (S) and Amir ul-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) all wore humble clothes. The Holy Imams (‘a) have always refuted this accusation by saying that those times were different. In those days the majority of the people dressed in very ordinary clothes but now there was prosperity and affluence in society.

“If we were to wear the same types of clothes today, people would insult us.”[14]

In an incident connected with the same subject we find Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) asking his critic to come near. When he came near, Imam (‘a) opened his outward garment and the man saw an old tattered shirt inside. Imam (‘a) said,

“This is the dress I wear to show humility to Allah and the other (outward) dress is for you and people like you to see.”[15]

Extravagance That Is Haram At All Times

We must know that three types of extravagance are Haram at all times and in all circumstances. Its prohibition is not conditional. The first kind of extravagance is when a person spends something wastefully; even if the thing wasted is of not much significance; like throwing the date seed away when it could be put to some use. Or throwing away water left over after drinking when there is a shortage of water and someone else could have used the same. Tearing up and throwing away old clothes is also a waste; because they can be given to people who are less privileged. Having a light on when there is enough sunlight. Handing over something valuable to a child or a foolish person who does not understand its value; and who will spoil the same. All these are a kind of wasteful expenditure or extravagance.

Hazrat Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) saw some half-eaten fruits that had been thrown out of a house. He said,

“What have you done? If your bellies are full there are many people as yet unsatiated. So you should give it to those needy people.”[16]

Whatever is left after eating must never be thrown away. Very many traditions have emphasised on the giving away of leftovers to animals, especially leftover bread.

During the time of Prophet Daniyal wastage of bread was rampant. The people used to throw away the leftover bread and it could be seen lying everywhere on the streets. Prophet Daniyal invoked Divine punishment for these people and hence they were inflicted with such a severe famine, that they were prepared to eat each other.

The book Wasa’il ul-Shi’a has mentioned that once Imam al-Baqir (‘a) entered the toilet and saw a piece of bread lying on the floor. He picked it up and handed it over to his slave. When he had finished, he called the slave to produce that piece of bread. The slave said that he had cleaned it properly and then ate it. Imam (‘a) said,

“I emancipate you in the way of Allah.”

The Imam (‘a) was told, “The slave had not performed any such deed that he deserved to be freed?”

Imam (‘a) said,

“It was because he had respected a great bounty, like bread and ate it; hence Paradise became incumbent upon him. I do not like to enslave a person for whom Allah has ordained Paradise.”

A similar type of tradition has been narrated from the Chief of the Martyrs, Imam Husayn (‘a).

As regards the wastage of clothes we have already quoted a tradition from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) where he has remarked about the wearing of fine clothes in common place situations. He (‘a) himself wore the fine clothes to suit his eminent position.

Eating Or Drinking Harmful Things Is Also A Waste

The second type of extravagance is spending on eatables and drinks that cause harm to the body, like eating when one is already full. It is harmful to eat on a full stomach and it is a waste. However, spending upon those things, which are good for the body, is not *Israf.*

al-Kafi has a tradition from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a). One of his followers approached him and said, “When we head for Mecca (for Hajj) we have to halt at a point to wear the *ihram* and we also feel the need to anoint our bodies with a pack made from flour husk. Since we do not have flour husk we use flour instead, but it makes me feel very guilty; though our Lord knows better.”

Imam (‘a) said,

“Whatever is necessary for the body is not Israf. Quite often we mix sieved flour with olive oil and apply it to our body.”

The narrator then asked Imam (‘a) to distinguish extravagance from stinginess. Imam (‘a) told him,

“Bread, meat, milk, vinegar and ghee; whatever you wish you can eat. But do not eat all of them at one time.”

Spending On Haram Things Is Israf

The third type of extravagance or wastage is spending on things and vices that are Haram according of Shariah. Like purchasing wine or purchasing items used in gambling; paying to singers or prostitutes, bribing government officials, spending money to obtain unlawful gains or usurping someone else’s property by force, paying for oppressing a Muslim. All these ways of spending are Israf. One who indulges in these activities commits two wrongs; one is the action itself and secondly he is also guilty of Israf.

Tafsir of Ayyashi records a tradition through Abdul Rahman bin Hajjaj who asked Imam (‘a) the meaning of ayat,

“And do not squander wastefully.” **(*Surah al-‘Isra’, 17:26*).**

Imam (‘a) said,

“If one spends in any other way than what Allah has ordered, it is squandering and if one spends in the way of Allah, it is moderation.”

Charity Is Never Extravagance

Some of the ayats that deal with the subject of charity emphasise it to such an extent that if one gives away all his belongings while he himself is in need of them, he has not been extravagant. On the contrary it is one of the recommended actions and is liked by Allah (S.w.T.). As the following ayat of Qur’an states:

***“…and prefer* (*them*) *before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones.”* (*Surah al-Hashr 59:9*).**

Preferring others to ourselves means that even though we are in need of something that we have, we give it to someone else who also needs it. We prefer to fulfill the other person’s needs rather than our own. This is the spirit of sacrifice mentioned in the Holy Qur’an. In another place we have,

“And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive…”* (*Surah al-

***Insan 76:8*).**

Majority of the Mufassirin (commentator of Qur'an) agree that the above verse was revealed in praise of 'Ali ('a), Fatimah al-Zahra ('a), Imam al-Hasan ('a), Imam Husayn ('a) and their maid, Fizza when they had fasted for Three days consecutively and every day at the time of breaking the fast they gave the bread in the way of Allah (S.w.T.) and contended themselves by ending the fast with plain water.

A person enquired from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a), "What is the best charity?" Imam ('a) replied,

"One who himself does not possess anything but toils and earns and gives it in the way of Allah. Have you not seen the ayat of Qur'an:

"And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive...* (*Surah al-Insan 76:8*)*?"[17]

A report from a Sunni narrator Asim bin Kalib is mentioned in Tafsir Minhaj us-Sadiqin. He reports that a beggar came to the Holy Prophet (S) and requested him for something. The Messenger of Allah (S) sent someone to his residence to get something for the beggar but he was informed that there was nothing at home. The Holy Prophet (S) announced among the companions as to who will render help to this poor man. 'Ali ('a) volunteered, saying,

"This destitute shall be my guest tonight."

He ('a) took him home and informed Hazrat Zahra ('a) about his condition. Janabe Fatimah al-Zahra ('a) said,

"O 'Ali! We have food enough for only one person and I had kept it for my daughter Zainab but you may do as you wish."

Imam ('a) said, "It would be better to put the children to sleep and put out the lamp because such a less quantity of food will be insulting before the guest."

Janabe Fatimah (S) did as instructed and the food was placed before the guest. He began to eat and the food was not yet finished when he said, "I am full and the Almighty Allah has given barakat in your food." Thus he departed happily.

In another narration it is mentioned that afterwards 'Ali ('a), Janabe Fatimah (S), Imam al-Hasan ('a), Imam Husayn ('a), Janabe Fizza and Janabe Zainab satiated themselves with the remaining food and the happenings were reported to the Holy Prophet (S) the next day, and the following verse was revealed:

"...and prefer* (*them*) *before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones."* (*Surah al-

***Hashr 59:9*).**

It is recorded in al-Kafi that Sama enquired from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a): "If a person has just enough food to sustain him for a day, is it incumbent upon him to give from it to a needy person? Or if one has provisions for a month, only enough for him; is he required to give to those who are destitute? Similarly the one who has stocks for a year or any appointed period. Is it in any way incumbent for him to curtail his own needs and give a part of it to the needy? Would he be implicated if he doesn't?

Imam ('a) explained,

"There are two aspects of this matter, one is that the best of you are those who do good and prefers others over oneself. They are inclined towards sacrifice and charity. Regarding them Allah says,

***"...and prefer* (*them*) *over themselves."* (*Surah al-Hashr 59:9*).**

The second point is that though one who keeps only the necessary quantity for himself is not blamed, yet the hand of one who gives is better than the hand of one who takes. You must take precedence in helping those who depend upon you."

Amir ul-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) says,

"Selflessness is one of the highest degrees of belief."

The Holy Prophet (S) says,

"There is no goodness in Israf and there is no Israf in goodness."[18]

We Must Always Practise Moderation

In addition to these verses we also have ayats that emphasise moderation in spending. For example:

***"And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck nor stretch it forth to the utmost* (*limit*) *of its stretching forth, lest you should* (*afterwards*) *sit down blamed, stripped off."* (*Surah al-'Isra', 17:29*).**

The above ayat is commanding the believers not to exceed limits in spending, so as to avoid its ramifications. The Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

***"And they who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and* (*keep*) *between these the just mean."* (*Surah al-Furqan 25:67*).**

Ibn Abi Umair has related that a person asked Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) the meaning of the ayat,

"...and pay the due of it on the Day of its reaping, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does

not love the extravagant." **(*Surah al-An'am 6:141*).**

Imam (‘a) explained,

"There was a man from the helpers (ansar) who was a cultivator. When he received his income he spent it all on the helpless and distributed it among the poor. As a result nothing remained for his family. So the Holy Qur'an has termed it as extravagance and said that he should pay the fixed taxes from farming but he must not be extravagant because Allah did not like extravagant people."

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (‘a) says,

"One who spends all his wealth in charity has certainly done Israf."[19]

Reconciling The Two Types Of Verses

In order to reconcile the differing verses, the scholars have mentioned some clauses. In the Sharh of al-Kafi we find that according to Tabarsi it is possible that the arguments in favour of selflessness pertain to the times of poverty, for example the initial period of Islam and the recommendation emphasising moderation in charity pertain to prosperous times. Or they may differ according to the economic condition of the one who seeks help, i.e. some people deserve to be helped even by sacrificing ones own needs and there are some people who need not be helped at the cost of ones own needs. It also depends upon the person who is being charitable. If he possesses complete and perfect faith, there is no harm if he exceeds the limits of generosity to fulfill the needs of people, but if an ordinary person donates everything and is himself impoverished, he will not be able to bear it. In this case it is advisable for him to stay within limits in charity. Thus except for the divine personalities and extremely pious people the masses can be said to belong to the latter category. Therefore the ayat,

"And do not make your hand..." **(*Surah al-'Isra', 17:29*).**

is addressed to the Holy Prophet (S) but it is meant for the guidance of the common Muslims. Muhammad Ibn Makki was of the opinion that the rules of charity vary with person to person. The traditions, which imply extreme selflessness, are only for those who give their personal belongings to the needy and the traditions that hint a moderation even in charity are meant for those who have wife, children and family etc. Such a person cannot prefer others to his own children. He cannot give away whatever is necessary for his family to other needy people. Sacrifice of our own needs is allowed but it is not permitted to give away the requirements of our family and children. The honourable scholar has also stated that it is makruh (detestable) for a man to donate his total wealth in charity unless he is sure he will be able to bear the consequences. Also it is necessary that he does not have the responsibility of a family or children.[20]

Sayyid Muhammad Kadhim Yazdi also remarks that according to the Holy Qur'an, sunnat of the Holy Prophet (S) and the unanimous opinion of the scholars, Israf is Haram, there is no objection against this

verdict. Israf is the expenditure on useless things which is considered as wasteful by common sense; whether the amount spent is appropriate to the occasion or not.

Is Israf possible in charitable deeds? Some of the scholars including Sayyid Muhammad Kadhim Yazdi believe that it is possible. Some well-known jurists have stated the contrary. According to the traditions, "There is no goodness in Israf and no Israf in goodness." But we should know that the former opinion is more precautionary on the basis of other traditions on this subject.

After quoting the traditions of Ibn Abi Umair and Sahih of Bazanti and other sources, the late Sayyid says, "The ayats and narrations denouncing wasteful expenditure revoke (mansookh) the ayat of selfless sacrifice." Therefore it apears that it is not proper to sacrifice and to give gifts extravagantly which are not appropriate to the status of the donor, or which common sense perceives such generosity to be excessive. There is no logic in giving and taking of such gifts and donations. As mentioned earlier wasteful spending in necessary matters is also prohibited. The only exception being the expenses of Hajj and Umra which are not subject to any limits. The Holy Prophet (S) says,

"No spending is more likeable to Allah than one which is moderate and except for over-spending in Hajj, He dislikes all types of extravagance."21

No Extravagance In Charitable Acts

The author of the present work is very strongly of the opinion that there is no extravagance in charity. Even if a person gives his total wealth with the intention pleasing Allah (S.w.T.) and of achieving Divine blessings he does not do anything unacceptable. He justifies his opinion on the basis of a few of the many ayats. The ayat,

"And do not move your hand..."

Is a lenient prohibition and does not mention the act as Haram or Makruh. Also the ayat,

"And they who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and (keep) between these the just mean." (Surah Al-Furqan 25:67).

May pertain to household expenditure and not to that which is spent in the way of Allah. It may also mean that those who are not stingy and also not extravagant are the obedient creatures of the Beneficent Lord. As regards the ayat,

"Eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and do not act extravagantly. Surely He does not love the extravagant..." (Surah Al-An'am 6:141).

We can say that both these sentences form a single statement. The tradition, which explains the ayat also shows that the two are interrelated. Though it is true that a person who donates the entire crop in

charity and does not keep anything for his family and children certainly commits Israf. Charity and selflessness is permitted, but feeding and clothing his dependents is Wajib upon him. One who deprives his dependents of the basic needs and gives everything in charity has acted against Divine commands. But if he feels assured that he will be able to fulfill the needs of his family from other sources or that his dependents will not claim their rights from him, it is permitted for him to give everything away for the sake of Allah. This can be supported by the examples from the lives of the Holy Imams (‘a).

For example, Hazrat Amir ul-Mu’minin ‘Ali (‘a) had time and again performed such sacrifice of his total belongings. Once he sold his orchard for twelve thousand Dirhams and distributed the complete amount among the poor and needy. He did not save anything for his family, but ‘Ali (‘a) and other great personalities never deprived their own dependents. Whenever they performed such charitable deeds they had faith in themselves that they would be able to provide their families from some other means. Whatever has been stated with regard to the ayats prohibiting over-spending can also be supported with the tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) wherein he denounced the person who spends all his wealth and dies leaving his minor children destitute and helpless. It is prohibited for a person to spend his complete wealth in charity when he knows that after him his children will be in need of it. If he leaves a legacy for his children who have no other source of income; the legacy shall also be in the way of Allah.

It is for this reason that drawing a will for more that a third of one’s total property is prohibited. It is also commanded for those who have young children to will for less than a third of their wealth.

The traditions of selflessness apply to only special circumstances. Extreme generosity is not prohibited and whatever has been said about the meaning of the ayats explains the tradition of Ibn Abi Umair. The narration of Sahih of Bazanti may imply that, it is not proper to over-spend where Imam (‘a) has prohibited extravagance. The tradition of Faqih may concern those people who spend in recommended ways, where it is incumbent for them not to spend. The tradition of Imam (‘a) may also be a refutation of the Sufis’ assertion that extreme selflessness is incumbent and the Imams (‘a) have also pointed out that spending for ones family’s needs is also like spending in the way of Allah (S.w.T.). The words of tradition also imply that moderation in ways of charity is emphasised with a gentle command. In other words over-spending in charity is only a recommended prohibition whereas we are aware of the incomparable charitable acts of the Holy Prophet (S) and the Imams (‘a), and verses that were revealed in the praise of these deeds (The ayat of ‘Halata’ and the verse of ‘Najva’).

Moreover, we see that Imam al-Hasan (‘a) in his life gave half his wealth in charity to the poor and needy, on Three occasions. The charitable deeds of Imam Husayn (‘a) and other Imam (‘a) are also well known. Imam al-Ridha (‘a) donated his total wealth in charity at Khurasan on the day of Arafat. When Fazl ibn Sahl pointed out that Imam (‘a) has suffered a great loss, Imam (‘a) replied that,

“Whatever I received as my share is sufficient.”

Again on the day of Navroz when he assumed the seat of heir apparent of Ma’mun under duress, he

gave away all the presents and gifts to a single poet who had recited in praise of Ahl ul-Bayt (‘a).

Hazrat Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a) has been reported to have said,

“If all the world becomes my property and becomes a single morsel and I place it in the mouth of a single believer; I will not consider myself extravagant.”

Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (‘a) says:

“If all the world becomes a morsel and I give to a true worshipper of Allah I will feel I have not fulfilled his rights completely and if I give even a gulp of water to a starving disbeliever; I consider myself extravagant.”

These two narrations expound the fact that even if the whole world is gifted to a sincere and a pious believer it will not be extravagance, because he deserves it.

Numerous instances of selflessness of pious scholars have been recorded. Some of these righteous people have seen the rewards of their charity in their worldly life. Rawzatul Jannat contains an incident regarding Muhaqqiq Ardebeli that during the times of famine he used to give away to the poor whatever he had. He used to live in poverty himself. One day when he had donated all his possessions his wife became angry with him that he had deprived his children in such times when food was scarce. He left his home and went to the mosque and sat there in Ehtekaf. An unknown person arrived at the door of his house and handed sacks of wheat and flour saying that master Ardebeli sent it and that he was in Ehtekaf at the mosque of Kufa. When Muhaqqiq Ardebeli returned home from Ehtekaf his wife told him that he had sent very fine wheat and flour. When he learnt of the details he realized that it was a Divine favour upon him and fell down in prostration to thank the Almighty. Many times it was seen that the Muhaqqiq left home with an expensive turban but if he encountered a beggar he tore a piece from it and gave it in alms. On numerous occasions he returned home bare-head.

Israf In Belief And Actions

Until now we have discussed extravagance in monetary terms but since the dictionary meaning of Israf is “exceeding limits” and “extremism” the same laws apply to beliefs and actions. Israf in belief implies believing about oneself or others something that is untrue and inappropriate. For example the belief of Fir’on that he was God. As he told the people, ‘I do not know any of the gods except myself.’ The Almighty Allah has mentioned him as ‘one who crossed the limits.’

“…surely Fir’on was lofty in the land; and most surely he was of the extravagant.” (***Surah Yunus 10:83***).

Regarding those who do not believe in Allah (S.w.T.), Prophethood, Imams, Qiyama etc.

The Almighty Allah (S.w.T.) says in the Holy Qur'an,

"And thus do We recompense him who is extravagant and does not believe in the communications of his Lord; and certainly the chastisement of the Hereafter is severer and more lasting." (***Surah Ta Ha 20:127***).

Performing detestable acts and avoiding advisable deeds is Israf in action. For example the homosexual inclinations of the people of Prophet Lut ('a) have been termed as extravagance:

"Most surely you come to males in lust besides females; nay, you are an extravagant people." (***Surah al-Ar'af 7:81***).

In fact all the sins of actions and speech are a kind of extremism and every sinner is said to have crossed the limits. The Almighty says:

"Say: O my servants! Who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the Mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether; surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful." (***Surah az-Zumar 39:53***).

But we must not despair of our deficiencies. If we turn to Allah (S.w.T.) He shall certainly forgive. We on our part should make a sincere effort not to be wasteful in our daily lives and not to exceed the limits in whatever we are engaged in. Moderation has to be practiced by us even in routine acts like eating, sleeping and talking. As the tradition says,

"Verily Allah hates the one who eats excessively and the one who sleeps excessively."

For those who wish to study the subject in more detail we recommend the book Me'rajus Sa'adat. This book discusses the method of living in accordance with Islamic principles

1. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
2. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
3. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
4. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
5. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
6. Bihar al-Anwar.
7. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.
8. Furu al-Kafi.
9. Safinat ul-Bihar.
10. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
11. Safinat ul-Bihar.
12. Safinat ul-Bihar.
13. Tafsir al-Mizan.
14. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
15. Wasa'il ul-Shi'a.
16. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il.

17. al-Kafi.
18. Safinat ul-Bihar.
19. Faqih.
20. Darus Salam of Nuri.
21. Safinat ul-Bihar.

Glossary Of Islamic Terms

Aqq al-Walidayn: One who disobeys or angers his/her parents

Ahl ul-Bayt: "People of the House". They are the Holy Prophet (S)'s family: Janabe Fatima Zahra (s.a.), 'Ali ('a) and eleven of their descendants who are successors to the Prophet (S) after Imam 'Ali ('a).

Ahsan: Goodness

Amanat: Trust

Amrbil Ma'ruf: Enjoining others to do good

Ayat: Verse of the Holy Qur'an

Barakat: Divine blessings and bounties

Barzakh: Purgatory. The intermediary stage between death and the Day of the Judgement

Bismillah: Literally "In the Name of Allah". Said before commencing any task.

Dhuhrain: The two ritual prayers of Dhuhr (noon) and Asr (afternoon)

Dhuhoor: Reappearance (of Imam Mahdi [a.t.f.s.]).

Dirham: Unit of currency

Diyah: Blood money

Du'a: Invocation or Supplication

Fajr: Dawn

Faqih: Jurisprudent, Islamic Jurist

Fir'aun: Pharaoh (In this context Ramases II)

Furu ad-Din: Branches of Religion or the practical laws of Islam

Hadd: Islamic legal punishment (plural: Hudud)

Hadith: A statement of the Holy Prophet (S) or of the Holy Imams ('a)

Hajj: Annual pilgrimage to Makkah during the month of Dhul Hijja

Halal: Permissible, legal

Haram: Prohibited, illegal

Hasana: A good deed deserving heavenly rewards

Hijab: Statutory Islamic dress for women, veil, curtain

Iblis: Satan

Iddah: A prescribed period a woman has to pass after divorce or her husband's demise before she can remarry.

I'tikaf: A recommended ritual consisting of a continuous stay of at least three days in the mosque during the last ten days of the month of Ramadhan.

Iman: Faith

Imla: Respite given by Allah to the sinners in which they become more heedless of their sins

Insha Allah: Common expression that literally means "If Allah wills" or "God Willing"

'Isha: Late evening

Jamaat: Congregation

Janabat: A state of ritual impurity that can be removed by performing ghusl (bath)

Jihad: Struggle in the way of Allah (S.w.T.), religious war

Kaba: The Holy House of Allah in Makkah, the directions that Muslims face during prayers.

Kaffara: Religious fine, penalty

Kafir: One who denies God

Kalima: To say: "I witness that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad (S) is the Messenger of Allah". Also called the Shahadayn. This testimony makes one a Muslim.

Kuffar: Plural of Kafir

Kunniyat: Patronym

Laylat 'l-Qadr: The Night of Power. Believed to be one of the odd numbered nights in the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan

Maghribain: The two prayers of Maghrib (early evening) and 'Isha (late evening)

Makruh: Detestable, in the Islamic terminology it denotes an action performing which does not incur sin but refraining from which earns divine rewards

Ma'rifat: Recognition, Realization

Masjidul-Haram: The Holy Mosque in Makkah

Ma'sumin: Infallible, Inerrant (Singular: Mas'um)

Mahram: Relatives between whom marriage is prohibited

Mahshar: The field where people will be collected on the Day of the Judgement for their final Accounting

Mi'raj: Ascension (to heaven)

Mithqal: A measure of weight of about 4.6 gms.

Muhib: Admirer

Mu'min: Believer

Mubah: Permitted. It denotes an action performing of which earns no rewards and refraining from it is not punishable

Mujtahids: Doctors of Islamic law

Munafiq: Hypocrite

Mushrik: Polytheist

Mustahab: Recommended. It is an action performing which earns rewards and refraining from it is not punishable

Mutawatir: A frequently related tradition

Nahy 'Anil Munkar: Forbidding evil

Najis: Unclean

Nama-e-Amal: Scroll of deeds (Farsi). Arabic: Kitab al-Amal

Non-mahram: Persons between whom marriage is possible

Nawafil: Recommended prayers (singular: Nafila)

Nikah: Marriage ceremony

Qasr: Shortening of the ritual prayers during a journey

Qat'a ar-Rahm: Breaking off relations with relatives

Qadha: An unfulfilled obligatory act

Qadhi: Judge, jurist

Qunut: Despondence

Rakat: A unit of ritual prayer

Riwayah: A narration

Riyaa: An act of showing off

Rizq: Sustenance

Sadat: Descendants of the Holy Prophet (S) through Imam Husayn ('a)

Sadaqah: Voluntary charity, alm

Salam: Salute, Islamic greeting

Salat: Ritual prayers

Shaban: A month of the Muslim calender

Shahadatain: See Kalima

Shari'a: Islamic law

Shiraz: A city of Iran

Silat ar-Rahm: An act of goodness towards ones relatives. The opposite of Qat'a ar-Rahm

Sirat: Path

Siyam: Fast

Taqwa: Piety

Taslim: Acceptance

Tawakkul: Reliance

Tawfiq: Divine inspiration

Tawhid: Belief in the absolute Oneness of Allah

Thawab: Divine or spiritual reward

Toman: Currency of Iran

Ulil-Amr: One who holds an authoritative position

Umma: Followers (of Prophets)

Uquq: (Plural of Aqq): See *Aqq al-Walidayn*

Wajib: Obligatory

Wajib al-A'ini: An obligation that is to be carried out by every person

Wajib al-Kifai: An obligatory act which if performed by one ceases to be obligatory on the others

Wilayat: Love and obedience

Yas: Despair

Zakat: Obligatory Islamic wealth tax

Ziyarat: Visitation or the recitation of salutation while facing the tomb of religious personalities

Zimmi: A non-muslim who lives under the protection of an Islamic government

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