

# Beseeching for Help

(*Istighāthah*)

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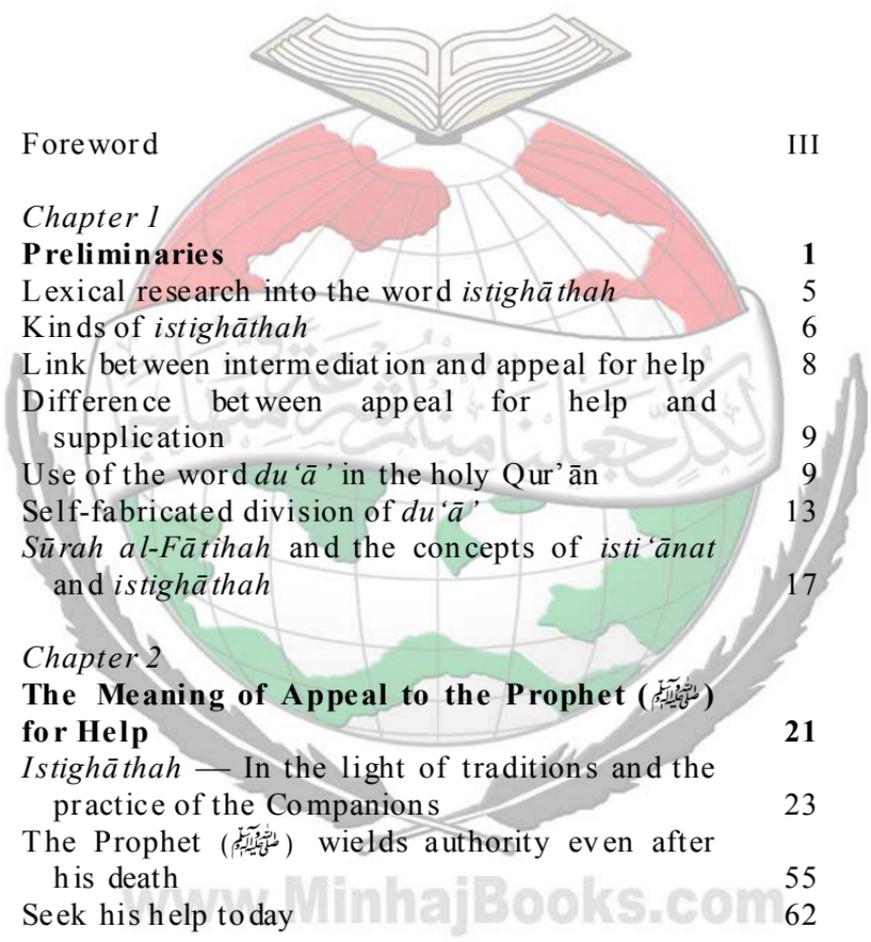
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## Foreword



For almost twelve uninterrupted centuries the Muslims ruled the world in glory and splendour. Their rule was embedded in a rare sense of egalitarianism the world had never witnessed before. The driving force behind the just dispensation was their oven-warm, unalloyed faith in divine unity and the inspiration they had drawn from the life and the teachings of the holy Prophet (ﷺ). There was absolutely no chasm between their words and deeds. What they professed, they implemented. The people they subjugated and ruled were impressed, even overawed, by the impregnable consistency of their behaviour. The Muslim rulers were not autocratic because they strongly believed that their power did not flow from the barrel of the gun, but it emanated as a blessing of the omnipotent Lord. And it was on account of the sincerity of the rulers in particular and the Muslim masses in general, that the infidels and people belonging to other creeds, flocked to the fold of Islam. In their heyday, the Muslims amply proved that Islam had not spread at the point of the sword. What really gave it wildfire popularity were its concept of justice and its absolute lack of discrimination between human beings. During the Muslim centuries, the notion of justice was stripped out of its conceptual garbs and was presented to mankind as a fleshed-out reality. The people at large had never experienced it before and so they were immediately attracted to it.

But when the Muslim world fell prey to decadence by disowning the intellectual tradition and the ceaseless struggle that had ensured its success in the past, its inviolate unity broke into innumerable splinters and the

Muslims were humiliated in almost every field of human activity. The Muslim community that had aspired to outdazzle the stars and outsmart the universe turned into a rolling stone, unanchored and unprotected. Its identity crumbled into the dust of uncertainty, the violent winds of change upset its apple-cart and, unlike the progressive nations of the world, well set on the road to growth and prosperity, it skidded off the track and immersed itself in peripheral issues — the proverbial fate of all decadent communities.

As a result, we have embroiled ourselves in marginal disputes, allowing plenty of opportunity to the world to pooh-pooh our drifting condition. While the world at large is a gainer, the Muslims are the losers and the loss is more pathetic than tragic: on the one hand, the people of the world are cashing in on the fruits of our intellectual efforts and unparalleled scientific investigations; and on the other hand, they have made Islam and its followers the butt of their indiscriminate ridicule. The Muslims are stuck in their narrow, unenlightened grooves and the irony is compounded when we realise that they are not even adequately aware of their crumbling condition. Some of them are reconciled to the inevitability of their decline — a dangerous condition as it discourages any attempt at recovery and recuperation. Consequently, disgrace and humiliation seems our immediate destiny.

We have strayed away from our real goal and are hopelessly trapped in the cobwebs of irrelevance. The people who were supposed to lead the world by breaking through the crust of stale ideas have become a hostage to these ideas. Muslim community has lost its bounce and its élan to spearhead a world whose moral fibre is in tatters because it is itself morally shattered. Its cultural heritage is a heap of cinders; its towering designs are a fuel of inaction and impracticality, its ideals are a pile of ash. The Muslim community is splitting hair while the wolves of capitalism are honking the world. There is no doubt that we do not discriminate against people and treat them

on the plane of equality, but our present lack of vision has made us squint-eyed and as a result, we are setting Muslims against one another. We are embarked upon a dangerous course as we are measuring Muslims against un-Islamic criteria, and those who do not come pat to these self-styled standards, we chuck them out as non-Muslims. The reason is that we are locked in a vicious circle of mental slavery, which has estranged us from the real problems of life by shuttering us up in frivolous issues. And this has become our second nature.

The blatant irony is that the western nations have taken over the leading role, and the nation that was supposed to lead is now imprisoned in its own false egoism. It has sacrificed its unity to self-fabricated differences authenticated neither by history nor by the central message of Islamic faith. While the western nations, on account of the inherent compatibility between the Islamic teachings and modern scientific investigations, are drawing closer to the religion of nature, the Muslims are drifting away from their religion through spurious self-incrimination. Superficial differences have split the Muslim Ummah into vested groups who are engaged more in promoting group interests rather than the interests of their faith. Insulated from the core message of Islam, they thrive on mutual intolerance; their incremental wrangles have edged out the substance of their faith.

*Istighāthah* — beseeching for help — has grown into a highly controversial issue. The Muslims have complicated it unnecessarily and undesirably. It has diverted attention from the substance of Islam and engaged the minds of the younger generation in an unpalatable debate. In their opinion, it has become the measuring rod of faith. They dub those who believe in it as disbelievers even though their hostile labelling goes against the very grain of human nature, and since Islam is the closest to human nature, their view clashes with the spirit of Islamic faith. They are in fact flying in the face of reality. Islam, being a religion of humanity, encourages mutual cooperation

among human beings as the progress and development of human society depends on this kind of coordination. Therefore, to equate this kind of innocuous activity with a breach of faith is nothing but perversity, it is to emphasise the shell at the expense of the kernel; for them the husk matters more than the grain, the wrapping more than the gift, the skin of the orange more than the juice. Thus their attitude is symptomatic of a deeper malaise — their increasingly strident disaffiliation from the true spirit of their faith.

Man by nature is not a hermit or a recluse. He is a social animal and likes to huddle with other human beings in small settlements or large towns. A feeling of security and cooperation motivates the fact of living together as no man is an island. He loves to seek help from others and to extend help to others. This is ingrained in his nature, which cannot be changed by the petty intellectual squabbles of some skewered zealots. Even a blunt-headed student of history and sociology knows that interdependence and coordination are the basic facts of human life. The newborn child cannot support himself; he needs someone to feed him. A young man draws on the experiences of seasoned people to educate himself and to discriminate between good and evil. In old age children support their parents. Thus in every phase of life a person depends on others and also serves as a prop for others and it is this fact of interdependence, which sustains the fabric of society. During disease, war, accidents and other natural calamities, human beings help and console one another. The patient needs a doctor's medicine, the student needs knowledge from a teacher, the labourer seeks wages from his employer, the neighbours expect help from each other, the child craves milk from its mother and the old man seeks the support of his young children. In short, all human beings need someone's help in different phases of their lives. The beauty of human culture lies in fortifying mutual relations. It is beyond doubt that the true helper and supporter is only Allāh

whose generosity knows no bounds and whose magnanimity is limitless, but in our daily routine we help people and seek help from them in scores of assorted matters. Thus the mutual help we extend to each other is not a negation of divine unity but a fulfilment of the divine command. To seek help from the prophets, the righteous and the saints is not a violation of Islamic principles; on the contrary, it is quite compatible with the teachings of Islam. We seek help from others on the assumption that their power is only borrowed, as Allāh alone possesses absolute power. This division of power into “absolute” and “relative” has prompted some mischievous minds to create unnecessary and unwarranted complications in basic Islamic concepts, including the concept of *istighāthah*. Such an attitude tends to split the Muslim community into groups and sects and therefore, needs to be discouraged in the strongest possible terms.

Historically speaking, the proof of human gregariousness is found in the most primitive communities. Centuries before the dawn of the era of stone and metal when man still lived in jungles and caves, when the invention of the wheel was a remote possibility, when the concept of society and state was only an extra-conceptual fiction, and the notion of kingship had only a nebulous existence, the only kind of awareness that swept over human consciousness was the distinct reality of cooperation among human beings. The tradition of human relations based on a mutual sharing of the experiences of pain and pleasure, sorrow and joy, agony and ecstasy wove them into an exceptional unity. Chest-beating over the death of a fellow being still mirrored human identity as a natural reaction, mutual help and assistance was still the sterling currency of those dark times, sharing mutual pain and sorrow, and calling one another for help in moments of duress and distress is part of human nature. The same human tendency served as an incentive in creating human settlements and living in groups. Man is

born to share the pain of others and those who are indifferent to it are hardly human.

Time is free from all kinds of chains and shackles; it keeps marching on in complete defiance of happenings and surroundings. Settlements appear, society takes shape, man sets out on his cultural life, rules and regulations are framed, new interpretations of the divine revelation are made, innovations and self-cooked explanations deface revelatory teachings, and Islamic message is exposed to philosophical hair-splitting. The chasm of difference and misunderstanding widens when we try to wipe out the distinction between the real and the metaphorical and rely on self-coined arguments and interpretations to hammer home the truth of our own contentions. A literal translation of the universal teachings of Islam by wrenching them from their context and without relating them to the Qur'ānic mode of narration and understanding, sometimes jostles a person into those blind alleys of misguidance which block all the return exits and blend every possibility of reinhaling fresh air into the dust of doubt and suspicion.

The first effort to make a dent in the unity of Islam was made by the British imperialists through the Qādiyānī movement. They patronised a number of other mischiefs to disillusion Muslims of the subcontinent. This imperialist conspiracy to strip the starving Muslims of the last drop of love for Muhammad (ﷺ) continues unabated. Rājpal's sacrilegious book on the Prophet (ﷺ) was part of the Mephistophelean design.

Dr Qadri's book unravels new possibilities of speculation and research, but at the same time it is marked by exceptional clarity in illuminating the issue. He has discussed its various aspects by extensively drawing on evidence from the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. An effort has been made to stamp out the possible doubts in the minds of the reader on rational and intellectual grounds and not through rhetorical bulldozing. This makes Dr Qadri's exposition an exercise in sanity and a compulsory reading

for all those Muslims whose minds are a swinging pendulum between clarity and woolliness on the issue so painstakingly elaborated in the book.

Dr Qadri has resolved the complication relating to the issue of “beseeching for help” by drawing a clear distinction between “absolute power” and “derivative power”. While Allāh’s power is absolute, the power of all other creatures, including the prophets, the saints and the righteous is derivative as it derives from the power of Allāh. By this distinction Dr Qadri has totally eliminated the possibility of disbelief, as it is only Allāh’s prerogative to grant or reject an appeal for help. His favourites can only beseech Him for help. Similarly, a petitioner can only beseech one of His favourites for help but he is convinced that the favourite lacks the power to grant his petition, it has to be granted by Allāh alone. Without this conviction, he is automatically expelled from the fold of Islam.

The actual position is clearly and succinctly summed up in the words of Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri: “To hold the holy Prophet (ﷺ) and the saints and pious people of Allāh in reverence and to beseech them for help is quite compatible with the basic principles of Islamic faith. But sometimes the petitioners, while addressing these favourites of Allāh, employ words, which are reserved only for Allāh and, therefore, according to some religious scholars, commit disbelief. This conclusion is based on a fundamental misconception as these scholars fail to draw the vital distinction between the literal and figurative sense of these words. They interpret these modes of address or the vocative forms in a literal sense and thus wring a perverse conclusion from them. It is an admitted fact that these modes of address are used only for Allāh in their absolute sense, therefore, to use them for any other creature is obviously disbelief and for a Muslim it is simply inconceivable. Thus a basic distinction must be drawn between their literal and figurative meaning. The literal sense applies to Allāh alone and no creature,

whether he is a prophet or a saint, can arrogate to himself the exclusive divine prerogative. Therefore, the petitioner is using the words only figuratively and it is in this sense alone that they are generally interpreted. The allegation of disbelief against these people is quite misplaced; it reflects rather the twisted consciousness of those who hurl such malicious allegations against them. The petitioners are, in fact, immune to disbelief.”

Dr Qadri strikes a different note in an environment that is choked with interpretative rigmarole. His approach is both conceptual and contextual. He does not examine a concept in isolation but relates it to its specific context. This is the reason his speeches and books enjoy a hot-muffin popularity especially among Muslims who like to arrive at a rational understanding of the fundamentals of their faith. *Istighāthah* and its legal aspect, is highly readable as it appeals to one’s critical as well as aesthetic sense; and it should be read by Muslims of every stripe to come to grips with a basic issue that is both delicate in substance and tantalising in appeal. Dr Qadri deserves our most sincere compliments for his scholarly and lucid exposition.

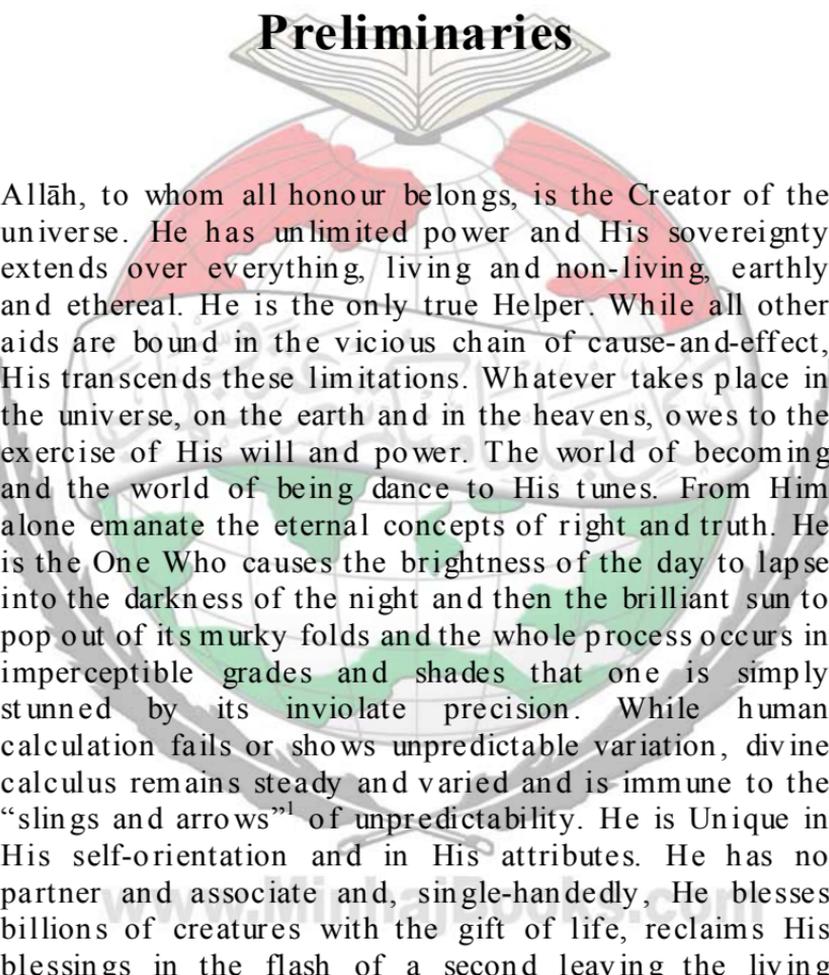
In the end I specifically appreciate the sincere and painstaking endeavours of M. Farooq Rana (Minhajian) who assisted me in the compilation of the book and helped me colour its mosaic with the tile of meticulous care.

**Prof Iftikhar A. Sheikh**

*Jamādī al-Awwal*, 1422 AH.

# Chapter 1

## Preliminaries



Allāh, to whom all honour belongs, is the Creator of the universe. He has unlimited power and His sovereignty extends over everything, living and non-living, earthly and ethereal. He is the only true Helper. While all other aids are bound in the vicious chain of cause-and-effect, His transcends these limitations. Whatever takes place in the universe, on the earth and in the heavens, owes to the exercise of His will and power. The world of becoming and the world of being dance to His tunes. From Him alone emanate the eternal concepts of right and truth. He is the One Who causes the brightness of the day to lapse into the darkness of the night and then the brilliant sun to pop out of its murky folds and the whole process occurs in imperceptible grades and shades that one is simply stunned by its inviolate precision. While human calculation fails or shows unpredictable variation, divine calculus remains steady and varied and is immune to the “slings and arrows”<sup>1</sup> of unpredictability. He is Unique in His self-orientation and in His attributes. He has no partner and associate and, single-handedly, He blesses billions of creatures with the gift of life, reclaims His blessings in the flash of a second leaving the living creature a mere bundle of bones and “a heap of broken images”<sup>2</sup> and administers countless worlds stretching to

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1. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*.
  2. Eliot, *The Burial of the Dead*.

inconceivable limits. Each particle in the universe carries the stamp of His identity. No other object or creature has the power to possess anything of his own free will because his will is moulded by divine consent. Whatever he owns or possesses is a divine gift and not a self-created achievement. An individual has no right of possession even over his own body. Gain and loss, life and death and resurrection after death are not in human control. Allāh alone is directly responsible for the act of living and the act of dying because He controls each breath we inhale, each movement we make and each step we take.

Human acts may be justified by purely human motives in terms of cause-and-effect and, only to this extent, it is supported by Islamic regulations and Qur'ānic injunctions. On this level it is possible to believe that a creature is himself responsible for his gain and loss and it is through his personal efforts that he has attained certain possessions or achieved a specific degree of excellence. But to hold him responsible for gain and loss from the point of view of creation, invention, disease or absolute power is incorrect. If we take a deeper view we will realise that any attribution of gain and loss, life and death, belonging and possession to the creatures is not real but figurative. All such phenomena should actually be arrogated to only Allāh, as He alone deserves it. But, unfortunately, some people have a chronic addiction to twist the Qur'ānic verses and clamp on them an interpretation that is tailored either to their preconceived notions or reflects a kind of perverse self-indulgence. In order to put a philosophical spin on their distorted derivations, they rely on hair-splitting and logic chopping. But their interpretations are inconsistent with the actual semantic tenor of the Qur'ānic verses, and these 'mini-devils', instead of drawing closer to the meaning of the Qur'ān, are drawn further apart and like "vacant shuttles weave the wind." But such people abound in the present times as extremism has elbowed out moderation, vulgarity has edged out modesty and shame has replaced decency.

These people have eliminated the difference between the literal and figurative meanings of the Qur'ānic verses and discarded the sobering influence of moderation. They consider it valid to base their arguments on the real meanings of these verses. Therefore, they are pathetically allergic to any metaphorical elaboration. This is the reason they have turned their faces from the explanations and interpretations offered by our forefathers. They are trying to create purely opinionative explanations and giving rise to unpalatable innovations and they are busy generating beliefs, which run counter to the actual teachings of the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*. If we cast an impartial glance, we come across innumerable ignoramuses among the masses who are victims of literal distortion and blow out of all proportion the figurative dimension, throwing the element of moderation to the winds. Their misplaced enthusiasm is as irritating as the unwelcome prejudice of the others is unsettling. Though they are firmly anchored to their faith in divine unity and other Islamic beliefs they are treated as suspects and pariahs by those who regard figurative interpretation as alien to the essence of Islam. But the fact is that those who are in search of truth follow the path of balance and moderation; they shun extremism in any shape and form. Therefore, if they keep in mind the Qur'ānic concept of balance, they can bridge the chasm between the two extremes of literal and figurative interpretation and reknit the Muslims into a more dynamic unity. It is this spirit of moderation and creative reconciliation that can guarantee the security of our faith and generate a sane and sensible response to divine unity.

Imām Ibn Taymiyyah is regarded a controversial figure as far as the interpretation of Islamic beliefs is concerned. But this is flying in the face of reality. In fact, his belief is rooted in balance. And if it receives an objective and impartial interpretation from our contemporary scholars, it can provide a link between the two extreme positions. The present situation is that a

group of people, on the basis of their limited understanding of Islamic beliefs, is offering a self-concocted version of the teachings of Imām Ibn Taymiyyah to seek endorsement for their own flawed views, while others with correct Islamic belief, are accusing him of un-Islamic beliefs which is, in fact, only a reflection of their ignorance of facts. Thus, while the first group is guilty of wilful falsification, the second group is handicapped by factual limitation. But a correct understanding of Imām Ibn Taymiyyah's views can straighten out the hump in their understanding of Islamic beliefs and draw them closer in the process.

Imām Ibn Taymiyyah's view is the view held by all Muslims: "Allāh is One; He has no associate; He alone is to be worshipped. We should pray only to Him and seek only His help. Anyone who regards non-God as the source of help is automatically expelled from the fold of Islam, as it is a negation of divine unity. Allāh alone has the power to reward our good deeds and condone our sins. Besides Him, no one on his own can either enable someone to do good or avoid evil. To seek help from the prophets or saints is justified only on the basis of its borrowed status, as it has no independent existence. Its ultimate source is Allāh alone." This is the correct Islamic belief and any deviation from it amounts to entertaining false beliefs. Ibn Taymiyyah has discussed the validity of *istighātah* and *tawassul* in detail in his book *Qā'idah jalīlah fit-tawassul wal-wasīlah*.

Once Imām Ibn Taymiyyah was questioned whether it was valid or invalid to depend on the mediation of the Prophet (ﷺ), he replied:

*"All praise for Allāh! By the consensus of the Muslims it is quite valid and proper to rely on the means of faith in the holy Prophet (ﷺ), his obedience, his remembrance, his supplication and intercession, similarly his deeds and the deeds of his followers, which they have*

*performed in obedience to the Prophet's commands. And the Companions used to depend on his mediation during his life on earth and after his death, they depended on the mediation of his uncle, 'Abbās as they used to rely on his mediation during his earthly life.*"<sup>1</sup>

## **Lexical research into the word *istighāthah***

The etymological composition of the word *istighāthah* is based on the three letters: *ghayn*, *waw* and *thā* (*ghawth*), which means help. *Istighāthah* means "to seek help". Imām Rāghib Asfahānī explains its meaning in these words:

*Ghawth means help and ghayth means rain, and istighāthah means to call someone for help or to request (Allāh) for rain.*<sup>2</sup>

The word *istighāthah* has been used in the holy Qur'ān in various contexts. During the battle of Badr the Companions beseeched Allāh's help which is explicitly referred to in *sūrah al-Anfāl*:

*When you were beseeching your Lord (for help).*<sup>3</sup>

A follower of Mūsā (عليه السلام) asked him for help and the help he extended to him is also explained in the holy Qur'ān in conjunction with the word *istighāthah*. Allāh says in *sūrah al-Qasas*:

*So the person who was of his very community sought his help against another person who was from among his foes.*<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' fatāwā* (1: 140).
  2. Rāghib Asfahānī, *Mufradāt alfāz al-Qur'ān* (p. 617).
  3. Qur'ān (*al-Anfāl*, Spoils of war) 8:9.

The lexicologists believe that the words *istighāthah* and *isti'ānat* both mean “to seek help”. Imām Rāghib Asfahānī says:

*The meaning of isti'ānat is to seek help.<sup>2</sup>*

The word *isti'ānat* is also used in the holy Qur'ān in a similar sense, that is, to seek help. In *sūrah al-Fātihah*, the Qur'ān declares while grooming the followers in the etiquette of supplication:

*We seek help only from You.<sup>3</sup>*

### **Kinds of *istighāthah***

According to the interpretations of Arab lexicologists and exegetes, the meaning of the word *istighāthah* is to seek help. It expresses itself in two forms:

1. Appeal by word (*istighāthah bil-qawl*)
2. Appeal by deed (*istighāthah bil-'aml*)

If a person, trapped in difficulties, appeals for help through words uttered by his tongue, it is called ‘appeal by word’, and if he appeals for help on the basis of his present condition or situation, it is called ‘appeal by deed’.

#### **1. Appeal by word**

The Qur'ān enlists the example of appeal by word in reference to Mūsā's experience:

*And we directed Mūsā by inspiration (in the way) to strike his staff at the rock when his people asked him for water.<sup>4</sup>*

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1. Qur'ān (*al-Qasas*, the Narratives) 28:15.
  2. Rāghib Asfahānī, *Mufradāt alfāz al-Qur'ān* (p. 598).
  3. Qur'ān (*al-Fātihah*, the Opening) 1:4.
  4. Qur'ān (*al-A'rāf*, the Heights) 7:160.

Islam is the religion of nature (*dīn-ul-fitrah*) and it is the religion of all prophets, from Adam (ﷺ) to the last Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). The concept of divine unity forms the matrix of their teachings. According to any *sharī'ah*, including the *sharī'ah* of Muhammad (ﷺ), there is no real helper except Allāh while in this verse, his followers have appealed to Mūsā (ﷺ) for help. If it were a form of disbelief, the miracle that accompanied it would not have materialised, as there is no link between disbelief and a miracle because miracles have divine sanction behind them. History is a witness that whenever the prophets were asked to perform an act in violation of the divine unity, they stamped out the appeal firmly in order to pre-empt all forms of disbelief in future as any pussyfooting on this count could have weakened faith and entrenched evil. Therefore, they strictly forbade their followers to indulge in any such activity. On the other hand, in the verse Allāh Himself is empowering Mūsā (ﷺ) to perform the miracle at the appeal of his followers. It means that the real helper is Allāh Himself and He is delegating His powers to Mūsā (ﷺ) to perform the miraculous act. The verse also clearly illustrates the difference between real and delegated power. While Allāh's power is real, as it is self-activating, Mūsā's power is delegated as it depends on, and draws its nourishment from, the divine will.

## 2. Appeal by deed

To appeal for help through some specific act or on the basis of one's present plight and predicament without uttering a word is known as appeal by deed. The Qur'ān records the miracle that happened to Allāh's beloved and venerable prophets to justify appeal by deed. Ya'qūb (ﷺ) had lost his eyesight on account of excessive crying when his son Yūsuf (ﷺ) had been separated from him. When Yūsuf (ﷺ) came to know about it, he sent his shirt to his father through his brothers as an appeal for assistance. He directed the brothers to touch the eyes of his father with

the shirt, which would help him regain his eyesight. As a result of the act of touching, Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) recovered his vision. Allāh has referred to this incident in the holy Qur'ān in these words:

*Take this shirt of mine, then place it over my father's face, (and) he will recover his vision.<sup>1</sup>*

When his brothers touched the eyes of Ya'qūb (عليه السلام) with the shirt, he regained his eyesight through the divine will. The Qur'ān says:

*So when the bearer of the good news came, he cast the shirt over Ya'qūb's face and forthwith he regained clear sight.<sup>2</sup>*

The auspicious act of Ya'qūb (عليه السلام), through which he regained his vision, was practically made possible with the assistance of Qur'ānic example of appeal by deed in which Yūsuf's shirt served as a means for the recovery of eyesight by the divine will.

### **Link between intermediation and appeal for help**

Both intermediation (*tawassul*) and appeal for help (*istighāthah*) have a common focus of meaning. What differentiates them from each other is the nature of the defining act. When the act relates to the help-seeker, the act is known as appeal for help, and the virtual helper whose help is being sought will act only as an agent or a means because the real helper is Allāh Himself. Thus Ya'qūb's act serves as an appeal for help and the shirt serves as a means to invoke help. On the other hand, when Allāh's help is beseeched through direct prayer, He in this case acts as the real helper because there is no greater

1. Qur'ān (*Yūsuf*, Joseph) 12:93.

2. Qur'ān (*Yūsuf*, Joseph) 12:96.

source than the source of divine assistance. Therefore, while intermediation is loaded with indirect implications, appeal for direct help from Allāh has a palpitating immediacy about it and elicits a more prompt response. In short, the Qur'ānic verse clearly establishes the fact that appeal for help by deed is proved by the practice of the prophets. (A detailed discussion on the concept of intermediation is available in our book *Islamic Concept of Intermediation*.)

## **Difference between appeal for help and supplication**

To seek help in a state of trouble, grief and pain is called appeal for help. When someone cries for help unconditionally, it is called supplication as it precludes the condition of trouble, grief and pain. The relation between supplication (*du'ā'*) and appeal for help (*istighāthah*), in fact, boils down to the relation between general and particular. While supplication is unconditional, appeal is conditional; it is spurred by some trouble or pain. Therefore, each appeal is a form of prayer while each prayer is not a form of appeal for help. And this is the basic distinction between appeal and prayer.

## **Use of the word *du'ā'* in the holy Qur'ān**

The meaning of *da'ā*, *yad'ū* and *da'watan* is to call and implore. The root *da'ā* is used in various senses in the holy Qur'ān. A few significant aspects of the word *du'ā'* are explained below to illustrate the way the Qur'ān has conceptualised it in various contexts:

### **1. *an-Nidā'* (calling)**

In the Holy Qur'ān the word *du'ā'* is used in the sense of *nidā'*, and sometimes *nidā'* and *du'ā'* are interchangeable. For instance, the Qur'ān says:

*And (to call) those infidels (towards guidance) is like the parable of a person*

*who shouts at an (animal) who can listen to nothing but calls and cries.<sup>1</sup>*

## 2. *at-Tasmiyyah* (naming)

In the Arabic lexicon sometimes the word *du'ā'* is used in the sense of naming or calling. Imām Rāghib Asfahānī has given a very apt example:

*I named my son Zayd.<sup>2</sup>*

Similarly, the holy Qur'ān, stressing the dignity and reverence of the Prophet (ﷺ), says:

*(O believers,) deem not the summons of the Prophet (ﷺ) among yourselves like the summons of one of you (calling) another.<sup>3</sup>*

In this sacred verse, Allāh Himself has laid stress on the special respect to be accorded to the holy Prophet (ﷺ). He has commanded the believers not to address the Prophet (ﷺ) by his name Muhammad (ﷺ). Whenever he is to be called, he should be addressed by the special titles of Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and Friend of Allāh (ﷺ). This is reinforced by the vocative forms used in the holy Qur'ān. Allāh Himself has nowhere addressed him by his first name: at no place in the Qur'ān He has addressed him directly as *yā Muhammad* (O Muhammad).

## 3. *al-Isṭighāthah* (beseeching for help)

The word *du'ā'* has also been used in the Qur'ān in the sense of begging and beseeching for help as is declared by Allāh:

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1. Qur'ān (*al-Baqarah*, the Cow) 2:171.
  2. Rāghib Asfahānī, *Mufradāt alfāz al-Qur'ān* (p.315).
  3. Qur'ān (*an-Nūr*, the Light) 24:63.

*They implored that you should pray to your Lord for us.*<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. *al-Hath 'alā al-qasd* (persuasion)

The word *du'ā'* is sometimes used to persuade someone to do something or to provoke someone. The Qur'ān illustrates this meaning in the verse given below:

*Yūsuf (on hearing what the others were saying) submitted: O my Lord! I love the prison far too much over what they call me (to do).*<sup>2</sup>

The word *du'ā'* is used in the sense of persuasion in *sūrah Yūnus* also:

*And Allāh calls (people) to the home of peace (Paradise).*<sup>3</sup>

#### 5. *at-Talab* (desiring)

The word *du'ā'* in the sense of desiring is frequently used in the Arabic lexicon. The Qur'ān offers the following example:

*And you will also find whatever you desire.*<sup>4</sup>

#### 6. *ad-Du'ā'* (supplication)

The word *du'ā'* is also sometimes used in the sense of supplication that is sent to the Lord. The Qur'ān records the prayer of His favoured ones in the following terms:

*And their prayer will end (on these words) — 'all praise is for Allāh Who is the Nourisher of all the worlds'.*<sup>1</sup>

1. Qur' ān (*al-Baqarah*, the Cow) 2:68.
2. Qur' ān (*Yūsuf*, Joseph) 12:33.
3. Qur' ān (*Yūnus*, Jonah) 10:25.
4. Qur' ān (*Fussilat*, Clearly spelled out) 41:31.

## 7. *al-'Ibādah* (worship)

Worship of Allāh is also called *du'ā'* as is stated by the holy Prophet (ﷺ):

*Du'ā' is precisely a form of worship.<sup>2</sup>*

## 8. *al-Khitāb* (address)

In addition to these meanings, the word *du'ā'* sometimes carries the meaning of address or speech. At the occasion of the battle of Uhud, when the Companions seemed to lose heart and were fighting in scattered groups, and only a few of them were concentrated around him, the holy Prophet (ﷺ) called those who had scattered away from him. The Qur'ān has described his words in these terms:

*When you were running away (in a state of disarray), and never cast a backward glance, and the Messenger (ﷺ), who (stood steadfast) among the group behind you, was addressing you.<sup>3</sup>*

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1. Qur'ān (*Yūnus*, Jonah) 10:10.
  2. Tirmidhī related this *sahīh* (sound) *hadīth* in his *al-Jāmi' us-sahīh*, b. of *tafsīr-ul-Qur'ān* (exegesis of the Qur'ān) ch.3, 42 (5:211, 374-5#2969, 3274), and b. of *da'awāt* (supplications) ch.1 (5:456#3372); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, b. of *du'ā'* (supplication) ch.1 (2:1258#3828); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, b. of *salāt* (prayer) 2:76-7 (#1479); Nasā'ī, *Tafsīr* (2:253#484); Bukhārī, *al-Adab-ul-mufrad* (p.249#714); Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (4:267,271,276); Abū Dāwūd Tayālīsī, *Musnad* (p.108#801); Hākim, *al-Mustadrak* (1:490-1#1802); Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyat-ul-awliyā' wa tabaqāt-ul-asfiyā'* (8:120); Baghawī, *Sharh-us-sunnah* (5:184#1384); Mundhīrī, *at-Targhīb wat-tarhīb* (2:477); Mizzī, *Tuhfat-ul-ashrāf bi-ma'rifat-il-atrāf* (9:30#11643); Khatīb Tabrīzī, *Mishkat-ul-masābīh*, b. of *da'awāt* (supplications) 2:4 (#2230); and 'Alī al-Hindī in *Kanz-ul-'ummāl* (2:62#3113).
  3. Qur'ān (*Āl 'Imrān*, the Family of 'Imrān) 3:153.

The word *yad'ūkum* of the verse, that is, he was addressing you, cannot be interpreted in the sense of worship. This interpretation borders on sheer disbelief, which is simply inconceivable for the true believer.

## Self-fabricated division of *du'ā'*

After discussing at length the eight recognised forms of *du'ā'*, we will now focus on some of the irrelevant encroachments on its authentic frame of reference. Some people, in order to declare appeal for help and intermediation as invalid acts, have devised a self-concocted division of *du'ā'* as their negation of appeal for help is not supported by any argument from the Qur'ān. All of their assumptions are based on intellectual hair-splitting, which is in fact a product of their flawed reasoning. In order to establish appeal for help as a form of disbelief, they first dress it in the robes of *du'ā'* and then derive two self-engineered kinds of *du'ā'*:

1. *Du'ā'* as worship
2. *Du'ā'* as begging

### 1. *Du'ā'* as worship

The first kind of *du'ā'* is worship and all kinds of Allāh's worship are in fact different forms of supplication as stated by the holy Prophet (ﷺ):

*Du'ā'* is the essence (kernel) of  
worship.<sup>1</sup>

While, according to another tradition, *du'ā'* is also equated with worship:

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1. Timidhī related it in *al-Jāmi'-us-sahīh*, b. of *da'awāt* (supplications) ch.1 (5:456#3371); Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam-ul-awsat* (4:132#3220); Mundhirī, *at-Targhīb wat-tarhīb* (2:482); Khatīb Tabrīzī, *Mishkāt-ul-masābīh*, b. of *da'awāt* (2:5#2231); 'Asqalānī, *Fath-ul-bārī* (11:94); and 'Alī al-Hindī in *Kanz-ul-'ummāl* (2:62#3114).

*Du‘ā’ is precisely a form of worship.<sup>1</sup>*

Since only worship of Allāh is valid, therefore, they erroneously conclude that, in conformity to this meaning, any *du‘ā’* attributed to non-God is a form of worship, and therefore, by virtue of this association, a form of disbelief.

## 2. *Du‘ā’* as begging

To beg someone, to acknowledge someone as the solver of your problem and extend a begging hand to him is called *du‘ā’* as begging.

The objection raised by these people is that, since Allāh Alone has the power to solve problems, therefore, He Alone should be implored to solve them. Since the person’s act of begging is an acknowledgement of his creaturely status, therefore, beseeching non-God for help is an acknowledgement of servitude to him and of being his creatures and thus is a form of disbelief. According to them, the person indulging in this act is a disbeliever.

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1. Timidhī related this *sahīh* (sound) *hadīth* in his *al-Jāmi‘-us-sahīh*, b. of *tafsīr-ul-Qur‘ān* (exegesis of the Qur‘ān) ch.3, 42 (5:211, 374-5#2969, 3274), and b. of *da‘awāt* (supplications) ch.1 (5:456#3372); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, b. of *du‘ā’* (supplication) ch.1 (2:1258#3828); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, b. of *salāt* (prayer) 2:76-7 (#1479); Nasā‘ī, *Tafsīr* (2:253#484); Bukhārī, *al-Adab-ul-mufrad* (p.249#714); Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (4:267,271,276); Abū Dāwūd Tayālīsī, *Musnad* (p.108#801); Hākim, *al-Mustadrak* (1:490-1#1802); Abū Nu‘aym, *Hilyat-ul-awliyā’ wa tabaqāt-ul-asfiyā’* (8:120); Baghawī, *Sharh-us-sunnah* (5:184#1384); Mundhīrī, *at-Targhīb wat-tarhīb* (2:477); Mizzī, *Tuhfat-ul-ashraf bi-ma‘rifat-il-atraf* (9:30#11643); Khatīb Tabrīzī, *Mishkat-ul-masābīh*, b. of *da‘awāt* (supplications) 2:4 (#2230); and ‘Alī al-Hindī in *Kanz-ul-‘ummāl* (2:62#3113).

## Distinction as the purpose of division is absent

This division, even from the viewpoint of this group, is irrelevant as a proof to justify the inauthenticity of appeal for help. It is both extraneous and unnecessary. They, in fact, have dissipated their division by presenting it in a semantically identical garb as they have merged *du'ā'* as begging into *du'ā'* as worship. What is the point in creating such a division when according to them, both kinds of *du'ā'* are forms of disbelief? The fact is that this division is absolutely unwarranted. The relevance of the division is proved only when it leads to the formulation of a different set of rules and regulations. Since they lack a separate identity, their division becomes superfluous. This can be illustrated through a simple example.

The act of prostration is divided into two kinds:

1. Prostration as an act of worship.
2. Prostration as an act of reverence.

These two kinds of prostration are kept in two separate compartments: prostration as an act of worship and prostration as an act of reverence do not merge. While the first kind is inspirational, the second kind is ceremonial; the first one is an expression of faith in divine unity, the second is merely a ritualised representation of a ceremony, and the twofold division reflects their differentiating features. Therefore, any attempt at merging the two kinds is a negation of divine unity. In addition, the two kinds are different in their regulatory aspect. If the act of prostration is performed before a person with the intention of worship, it clearly amounts to disbelief; if it is performed as an expression of reverence, it will not constitute an act of disbelief, though it may be declared a forbidden act. For example, if a Muslim drinks, commits adultery, murders, etc., he commits a forbidden (*harām*) act and is a sinner, violator, rashly extravagant, etc. But if he considers his act as lawful (*halāl*), he is committing disbelief. He is negating Islam and will be declared an apostate. It means every forbidden act is not disbelief, but to consider some forbidden act as lawful is disbelief.

Let us take another example. A word has three kinds: noun, verb and letter. All the three are mutually incompatible and any attempt at their merger amounts to linguistic absurdity.

### ***Du 'ā' is not merely an act of worship***

The contention that the word *du 'ā'* is used only in two senses is not practically tenable because its eight different applications have already been discussed. If we interpret *du 'ā'* as simply an act of worship, and the act of begging for help is also merged into the act of worship, then the entire society will be pushed down into the quagmire of disbelief and (God forbid) even the prophets will not be immune to this downward slide. Therefore, it should be clearly recognised that *du 'ā'* (calling) is not synonymous with worship in all contexts. If we do not acknowledge this difference between their contextual meanings, it will amount to opening Pandora's box of disbelief, as no one will remain untainted by its rampant proliferation. The Qur'ānic verse itself is a witness to the fact that the holy Prophet (ﷺ) himself also called non-God for help, and the Qur'ān itself is according permission to call one another for help. If, as a supposition, we interpret *da 'ā, yad 'ū, tad 'ū, nad 'ū* as worship or as an act of beseeching help in every context of situation indiscriminately, which is regarded by some people as an auxiliary form of worship, then it will be quite problematic to offer a sound explanation of the following Qur'ānic verses:

1. *And, O my people, what is this that I call you to the (path of) salvation and you call me to hell?*<sup>1</sup>

2. *He said: O my Lord! I call my people night and day (to the right religion) but my*

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1. Qur' ān (*Ghāfir*, the Forgiving) 40:41.

call only increased their flight (from the religion).<sup>1</sup>

3. And Allāh calls (people) to the home of peace (Paradise).<sup>2</sup>

4. Call (the adopted sons) by the names of their fathers: that is just in the sight of God.<sup>3</sup>

5. Then, let him call (for help) his comrades. We shall also, call (our) soldiers soon.<sup>4</sup>

6. Then they will call on them, and they will not listen to them.<sup>5</sup>

7. When we shall call together all factions of human beings with their leaders.<sup>6</sup>

8. And if you call them to guidance.<sup>7</sup>

### **Sūrah al-Fātihah and the concepts of isti‘ānat and istighāthah**

Sūrah al-Fātihah not only conceptualises a number of Islamic beliefs in their quintessential form, but it also attractively presents the concept of appeal for help. It is stated:

*(O Allāh!) We worship only You and we seek help only from You.*<sup>8</sup>

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1. Qur’ ān (Nūh, Noah) 71:5-6.
2. Qur’ ān (Yūnus, Jonah) 10:25.
3. Qur’ ān (al-Ahzāb, the Confederates) 33:5.
4. Qur’ ān (al-‘Alaq, the Hanging mass) 96:17-8.
5. Qur’ ān (al-Kahf, the Cave) 18:52.
6. Qur’ ān (al-Isrā’, the Night journey) 17:71.
7. Qur’ ān (al-Kahf, the Cave) 18:57.
8. Qur’ ān (al-Fātihah, the Opening) 1:4.

It is this Qur'ānic verse that lays the foundation of appeal for help and assistance where worship and help are mentioned one after the other. The first part of the holy verse — *iyyāka na 'budu* — consists of the concept of Islamic worship, and the second part — *iyyāka nasta 'īnu* — explains the concept of help and assistance. It is this verse whose superficial understanding has prompted some individuals to level allegations of disbelief against the entire Muslim community.

In fact, a superficial study of the verse has induced in them the baseless idea that both of its parts comprise semantically identical words. The first part mentions worship, which is exclusively reserved for Allāh, while the second part refers to help and assistance. The use of identical words generally reflects an identical reality, and if one looks at this relationship superficially, one is likely to be deceived by the surface resemblance and may draw an incorrect inference. These people are the victims of a similar deception. They ignore the contextual implications of these words and equate appeal for help and assistance with the act of worship.

But if we dispassionately analyse the Qur'ānic verse, we come to an entirely different conclusion. Though the repetition of similar words cannot be denied, the interpolation of the letter *waw* (and) between the two parts of the Qur'ānic verse is not to be ignored either as it reflects a much deeper and more significant reality. If the injunction relating to help and worship were identical, Allāh would never have inserted the letter *waw* between the two parts. The addition of *waw* points towards a clear-cut differentiation between the apparently similar expressions. This difference in meaning leads to the formulation of a different injunction for each one of them. If the appeal for help in *iyyāka nasta 'īnu* were equated with the worship of God, the Qur'ān would not have disassociated it from *iyyāka na 'budu* through the conjunction of separation i.e. *waw*. The use of the separative particle clearly indicates that the two parts of

the holy verse reflect two different types of reality. If they were meant to portray identical reality, the two parts would not have been delinked by placing *waw* between them.

The Qur'ān is an inimitable model of verbal condensation and precision and is, therefore, immune to the fallacies and distortions coined by logicians and philosophers. Each word in the Qur'ān carries a precise and specific denotation and none of its letters can be declared irrelevant and superfluous as it discards all forms of waste and superfluity. If God had meant to forge a semantic coalescence between the two parts of the verse, He would never have differentiated them semantically through the addition of the particle of separation. The Qur'ān contains scores of examples to endorse this dissimilarity. Where the difference is not intended, there the distinction is made conspicuous by the absence of any delinking element. *Sūrah al-Fātihah*, especially its first four verses, furnishes a clear proof of distinction:

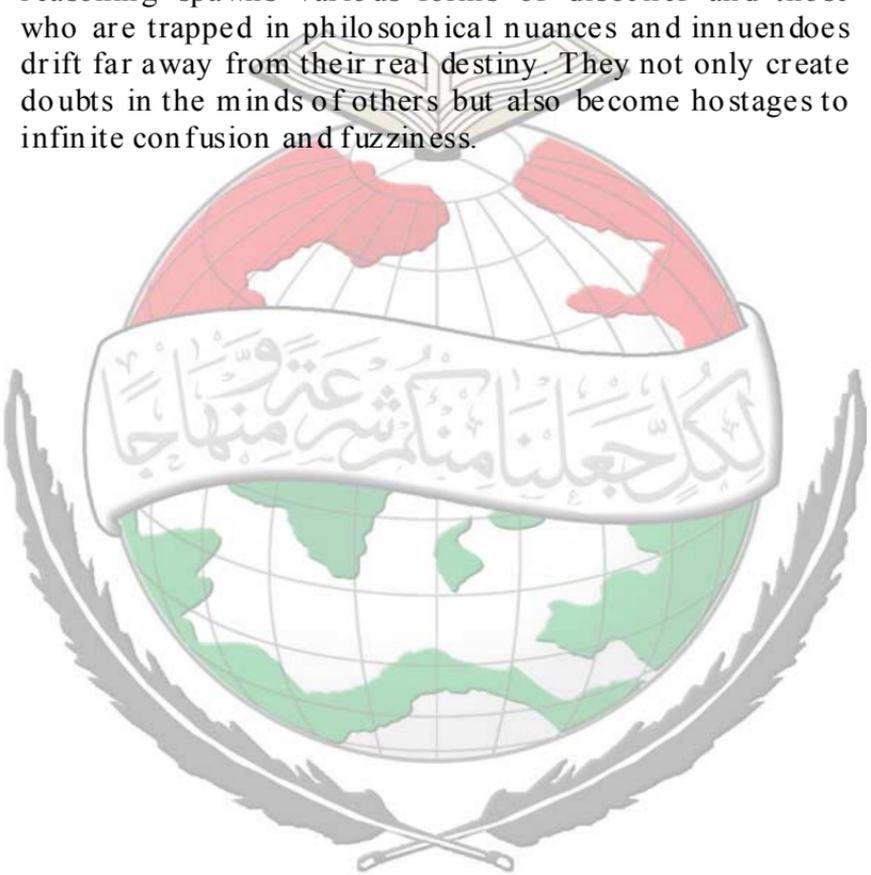
*All praise is only for Allāh Who is the Sustainer of all the worlds. He is extremely Kind and Merciful. He is the Lord of the Day of Judgement. (O Allāh,) we worship only You and we seek help only from You.*<sup>1</sup>

An examination of these four verses reveals that, after a description of His extraordinary nature, four of His attributes are consecutively mentioned. Since they are not mutually exclusive and are specifically designed to create a cumulative impression so that each attribute reinforces the other, the separative *waw* is nowhere inserted between them. But, in the following verses, where difference is intended, the linguistic particle *waw*, is inserted to indicate the difference. Thus, it proves that *du'ā'* and appeal for help and assistance are two different realities

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1. Qur'ān (*al-Fātihah*, the Opening) 1:1-4.

and, therefore, deserve different treatment and reception, and any attempt to expunge their semantic difference is an explicit violation of the inherent purpose of the Revelation. An exclusive reliance on flawed human reasoning spawns various forms of disbelief and those who are trapped in philosophical nuances and innuendoes drift far away from their real destiny. They not only create doubts in the minds of others but also become hostages to infinite confusion and fuzziness.



## Chapter 2

# The Meaning of Appeal to the Prophet (ﷺ) for Help

According to sound Islamic belief, the ultimate focus of beseeching help and assistance through the prophets and saints is Allāh Himself because He is the only true helper and supporter and has the real power to relieve a difficult situation and mitigate an intractable exigency. He Himself has repeatedly stressed upon the people to implore Him for help and relief whenever they face an ugly predicament or are driven into a tight corner. Thus, if anyone sets aside this fundamental Qur'ānic teaching and regards someone else except Allāh as the source of gain and loss, he is surely guilty of disbelief, because it virtually amounts to imploring non-God for help and assistance. He is a disbeliever whether his request is conditioned by natural causes or is engineered by supernatural factors. On the other hand, if he believes in Allāh as the true helper and then turns to some other person for assistance, he is not committing disbelief because his action is religiously sanctioned. For example, if he consults a doctor for treatment or seeks the assistance of a saint for supplication or some kind of spiritual healing, he is operating within the well-recognised and widely accepted parameters of Islamic faith. His act conforms to approved standards and is compatible with the traditionally hallowed practice of the virtuous people. Allāh has on many occasions in the

Qur'ān stressed upon the believers to help one another. He says:

*And help one another in (acts of) righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in (the acts of) sin and oppression.<sup>1</sup>*

In the Qur'ānic verse Allāh is enjoining upon the community of Muslims to help and cooperate with one another. This cooperation is predicated on the fact of discrepancy between its members, as it is inconceivable without the presence of inequality among them. Thus it is possible only when there are two classes among the believers: the affluent and the non-affluent. The latter are supposed to ask for the help of the former who are expected to extend this help to them. It is obvious that this principle applies indiscriminately in material as well as spiritual matters; it also applies equally in natural and supernatural conditions because Allāh has made it collectively binding and nobody can claim exception, because a Qur'ānic injunction cannot be limited by *khbar wāhid* (a single saying) or analogical reasoning. Therefore, if anyone tries to restrict it conditionally or by the logic of compromise and expediency, he is undoubtedly indulging in an act that clashes with the divine intention. The injunction for mutual cooperation is one of the basic components of Islamic teaching and is supported by a number of Qur'ānic verses and traditions. It proves without reservation that the person whose help is being craved must assist the person who is craving his help; he should respond to the appeal for help and try to alleviate the suffering of his fellow beings.

The Qur'ān has furnished in different contexts a number of justifications for beseeching the prophets and saints for help. It is as valid to beseech the holy

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1. Qur'ān (*al-Mā'idah*, the Feast) 5:2.

Prophet (ﷺ) for help as the act of a Qibtī who beseeched Mūsā (عليه السلام) for help against the excesses of a tyrant. In response to his appeal, Mūsā (عليه السلام) extended help to him and relieved his misery. Who could be a greater source for the validation of this act than the prophets themselves whose primary mission was to disseminate the message of divine unity throughout the world! Allāh has not pronounced anyone of them, Qibtī and the prophet, as a disbeliever on account of this act of beseeching help from others. Allāh says:

*So the person who was of his very community sought his help against another person who was from among his foes.<sup>1</sup>*

The Qur'ān has also described at various junctures that the believers from former communities beseeched their prophets and saints for help. It is similarly applicable to the followers of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) and is clearly reflected in the practice of the Companions. A number of traditions support the validity of this act. These traditions focus on extending help to the needy and alleviating the problems of the less fortunate.

### ***Istighāthah* — In the light of traditions and the practice of the Companions**

To support someone in his hour of trouble and to commiserate with him in his moment of agony is to fortify the relationship steeped in love. The message of Islam is the message of peace and security and the life of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) is permeated with the perfume of love. Even when he is stoned by the ruffians of Tā'if, only the flowers of prayer blossom on his lips; there is not a squeak of complaint against them. He condones the acts of those who are after his blood because his faith is essentially the interpretation of love. Who could be a

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1. Qur' ān (*al-Qasas*, the Narratives) 28:15.

greater means of redemption than the Prophet (ﷺ) himself who alleviated the pain of others and helped them — in the fulfilment of their needs! On the Day of Judgement, when people will face their greatest calamity and become self-obsessive, they will rally round the prophets and saints to beseech their help and intercession, but all will express their inability to help them on that day, and finally they will beseech the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for help and rely on his mediation for their salvation, and Allāh will end their torture for the sake of the holy Prophet (ﷺ). According to the tradition the Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘people will beseech Adam (عليه السلام) for help, then Mūsā (عليه السلام) and finally himself.’ If this is permissible on the Day of Judgement, this should be equally permissible during our stay in this world. This reflects the kind-heartedness and benevolence of the prophets that the believers can depend on them as a means of approach to the infinite mercy of Allāh, whether we are on the earth or in the Hereafter.

The text of the tradition is as follows:

*Narrated by ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Umar that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “A person constantly begs from other people till he on the Day of Judgement has no flesh on his face.” He added, “The sun will come closer to the people on the Day of Judgement. It will be so close that half of one’s ear will be drenched in sweat. In this condition, people will first seek the mediation of Adam (عليه السلام), then of Mūsā (عليه السلام) and finally of Muhammad (ﷺ).” And ‘Abdullāh — the sub-narrator — added, “Layth narrated to me that Ibn Abū Ja‘far had narrated: He [the Prophet (ﷺ)] will intercede with Allāh to judge amongst the people. Then he will leave here until he will hold the arc of the gate of Paradise. On that day, Allāh will make him ascend the glorious station*

*and all the people present there will sing his praises.<sup>1</sup>*

The tradition has, thus, furnished a justification not only of the word *istighāthah* but also of its popular usage. The noteworthy point is that when it is valid to beseech the prophets and the saints for help in the Hereafter and also to seek the help of the living in this phenomenal world, it is simply meaningless and absurd to deny its relevance during the purgatorial existence.

A number of traditions attest to the fact that the Companions beseeched the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for help and assistance and sought the solution of their problems through his mediation by stressing their penury, disease, suffering, need, debt and humility. This act was based on their underlying conviction that the holy Prophet (ﷺ) served only as an intermediary in their gain and loss and the real operating force behind all these phenomena is only Allāh Himself. No one, not even His beloved Prophet (ﷺ), can encroach upon His exclusive terrain.

Given below are a few traditions in which the Companions beseeched the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for help:

### **Abū Hurayrah's appeal for help**

Abū Hurayrah had a weak retentive power and therefore, could not easily remember the commands of the Prophet (ﷺ). He beseeched the Prophet (ﷺ) for help who permanently cured his tendency to forgetfulness. This is the reason that he proved to be the most prolific narrator of traditions. Abū Hurayrah relates it in his own words:

*I said: 'O Messenger of Allāh! I listen to many of your traditions and then I forget*

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1. Bukhārī, *as-Sahīh*, b. of *zakāt* (obligatory charity) ch.51 (2:536-7#1405); Tabarānī transmitted it in *al-Mu'jam-ul-awsat* (9:331#8720); and Haythamī cited it in *Majma'-uz-zawā'id* (10:371).

them.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘spread your sheet.’ So I spread it. Abū Hurayrah says: ‘then the Prophet (ﷺ) picked up something (from the air) with his hands and put it in (the sheet). Then said: “join it to yourself,” so I joined it, and afterwards my memory never slipped.’<sup>1</sup>

The tradition indicates that the Companions beseeched the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for help in every difficult situation. Who could be a greater supporter of the concept of divine unity than the Companions themselves! And who could be a stauncher claimant of the oneness of Allāh than the Prophet (ﷺ) himself! But, in spite of it, Abū Hurayrah beseeched the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for help and succour and instead of turning down his request he solved his problem forever. The reason is that anyone who believes in divine unity, knows that the only real helper is Allāh, while the prophets, the saints and other pious people whose help is being sought, act only as intermediaries. Their power of mediation derives from Allāh’s blessing Who has conferred on them this power to ease the problems of the believers. The act of mediation is, therefore, divinely sanctioned, and does not amount to a trespass of divinity.

Abū Hurayrah beseeched the Prophet (ﷺ) for help who fulfilled his need. He never told him to pray to Allāh directly and to remain steadfast in his belief in divine unity. On the contrary, he picked up a fistful of something

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1. Bukhārī narrated it through different chains of transmission in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of ‘ilm (knowledge) ch.42 (1:56#119), b. of *manāqib* (virtues) ch.24 (3:1333#3448); Tirmidhī in *al-Jāmi‘-us-sahīh*, b. of *manāqib*, ch.47 (5:684#3835) and graded it *hasan* (fair) *sahīh* (sound); Ibn Sa‘d, *at-Tabaqāt-ul-kubrā* (2:362; 4:330); Tabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam-ul-awsat* (1:451#815); Ibn-ul-Athīr, *Asad-ul-ghābah* (6:314); Haythamī, *Majma‘-uz-zawā‘id* (9:362); ‘Asqalānī, *Fath-ul-bārī* (1:215; 6:633); and ‘Aynī in *‘Umdat-ul-qārī* (2:182; 16:168).

invisible from the air and put it in his sheet and commanded to rub it on to his chest. Thus Allāh acknowledged this act of mediation as valid and fulfilled Abū Hurayrah's need.

Every sensible person who believes in divine unity knows that supplication is made only to Allāh for the fulfilment of needs whose power spans all the worlds. The petitioner believes that the person he is beseeching to mediate and intercede on his behalf is closer to Allāh Who responds more sensitively and urgently to his appeal for help. Therefore, the appeal processed through him stands a greater chance of immediate acceptance. The petitioner knows that his power to help is only derivative because the real helper is Allāh Himself and this is what is clearly reflected in Abū Hurayrah's tradition.

### **Qatādah bin an-Nu'mān's appeal for help**

Qatāda bin an-Nu'mān lost his eye during the battle of Badr. The eyeball was dislocated and dangled from his face. Keeping in view the severity of pain, a few Companions advised him to have the optic vein cut off to alleviate the pain. Before acting on the advice of the Companions, Qatādah decided to bring it to the notice of the Prophet (ﷺ). When he called on the Prophet (ﷺ) and related to him his story, he did not allow him to have his eye operated; rather, he placed the eyeball back at its original place with his hand, which restored his eyesight. Qatādah used to say that the vision of his lost eye was in no way weaker than the original one; it was even better than before. This tradition bearing on the validity of *istighāthah* has been recorded in these words:

*It is related by Qatādah bin an-Nu'mān that his eye was lost during the battle of Badr and the eyeball slid on to his face. The other Companions wanted to cut it off. But when they consulted the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), he disallowed it. Then he prayed for him and placed the eyeball back*

at its original place. So Qatādah's eye was restored in a manner that it was impossible to say which eye had been damaged.<sup>1</sup>

### Abscess–stricken Companion's appeal for help

It is narrated in the books on tradition that struma appeared on the hand of a Companion, which made it impossible for him to hold the bridle of a horse or the handle of a sword. He called on the holy Prophet (ﷺ) and beseeched him to cure his disease. So Allāh, Who is the real Helper, cured him through the Prophet's hand. This tradition is related in these words:

*I called on the holy Messenger (ﷺ). I had struma on my hand. I said: 'O prophet of Allāh! I have a struma (on my hand) which makes it painful for me to hold the bridle of a horse and the sword.' The holy Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'come close to me.' So I moved closer (to him). Then he opened that struma and blew his breath on my hand and placed his hand over the struma and kept on pressing it and when he lifted his hand, the effect of that (struma) had completely vanished.<sup>2</sup>*

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1. Abū Ya'lā narrated it in his *Musnad* (3:120#1549); Ibn Sa'd, *at-Tabaqāt-ul-kubrā* (1:187-8); Hākim, *al-Mustadrak* (3:295); Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il-un-nubuwwah* (3:100); Abū Nu'aym, *Dalā'il-un-nubuwwah* (p.540); Ibn-ul-Athīr, *Asad-ul-ghābah* (4:371); Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (3:52); Haythamī, *Majma'uz-zawā'id* (6:113; 8:297-8); and 'Asqalānī in *al-Isābah fī tamyīz-is-sahābah* (3:225).
  2. Haythamī narrates it in his *Majma'uz-zawā'id* (8:298) and says that Tabarānī narrated it in his *al-Mu'jam-ul-kabīr* (7:306-7#7215). Haythamī does not know the sub-narrator, Mukhallid, and above him while other narrators are *sahīh* (sound). Bukhārī narrated it in *at-Tārīkh-ul-kabīr* [4:250 (2/2/250)].

## A blind Companion's appeal for help

Restoration of the blind people's eyesight was not only a miracle performed by 'Īsā (عليه السلام), it was performed by the holy Prophet (ﷺ) as well. It is narrated that a blind Companion called on the Prophet (ﷺ) and beseeched his help for the restoration of his eyesight. The Prophet (ﷺ), instead of discouraging him or condemning it as a form of disbelief, stressed upon him to supplicate through him. This kind of supplication in itself is a composite of mediation and appeal for help, and if it is offered even today with the same intensity of sincerity, it is a patent medicine for the ailing mankind. Narrated by 'Uthmān bin Hunayf:

*That a blind man called on the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and said to him: '(O Messenger of Allāh,) pray to Allāh to give me solace.' The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'if you wish, I will stall it and this is better (for you), and if you wish, I pray.' He said: 'you should pray (for me) to Him.' So he asked him to perform the ablution: 'perform the ablution thoroughly well and then offer two cycles of optional prayer and beseech Allāh with this supplication: "O Allāh, I appeal to You, and submit to You through the mediation of the merciful Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). O Muhammad, through your mediation I submit myself to My Lord to have my need granted. O Allāh, acknowledge his intercession in my favour."'*<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ibn Mājah transmitted it in his *Sunan*, b. of *iqāmat-us-salāt was-sunnah fīhā* (establishing prayer and its sunnahs) ch.189 (1:441#1385); Tirmidhī in *al-Jāmi' -us-sahīh*, b. of *da'awāt* (supplications) ch.119 (5:569#3578); Ahmad bin Hambal in his *Musnad* (4:138); Nasā'ī, '*Amal-ul-yawm wal-*

Ibn Mājah, Hākim and Dhahabī have declared it a sound (*sahīh*) tradition while Tirmidhī graded it *hasan* (fair) *sahīh* (sound) *gharīb* (unfamiliar).

You must have noticed that the introductory sentence of the supplication in the tradition is offering the holy Prophet (ﷺ) as an intermediary before Allāh while its second sentence, in which the Prophet (ﷺ) is being directly addressed, is furnishing not only a justification for seeking the help of Allāh's favourites but also issuing it as a form of command. If, seeking help through other creatures except Allāh were an invalid act, the holy Prophet (ﷺ) would not have issued it in the form of a command. When the greatest supporter of divine unity himself commanded that the believers should beseech his help, who are we to mislead the Muslims by calling them disbelievers when they are following in the Prophet's footsteps! Those who disacknowledge the validity of this act in a fit of misplaced enthusiasm to purify Islam are actually indulging in an un-Islamic act because their efforts are in conflict with the true Islamic beliefs and the practice of the holy Prophet (ﷺ).

Similarly, another tradition narrated by Imām Hākim is couched in different words. In this tradition, 'Uthmān bin Hunayf says that he was present in the Prophet's company. A blind person called on the Prophet (ﷺ) and complained about the loss of his eyesight. He added: 'O Messenger of Allāh, there is no one to guide me and I am in great trouble.' On hearing his complaint, the

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*laylah* (p.417#658-9); Hākim, *al-Mustadrak* (1:313,519); Ibn Khuzaymah, *as-Sahīh* (2:225-6#1219); Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il-un-nubuwwah* (6:166); Subkī, *Shifā'us-siqām fī ziyārat khayr-il-anām* (p.123); Nawawī, *al-Adhkār* (p.83); Ibn-ul-Athīr, *Asad-ul-ghābah* (3:571); Mizzī, *Tuhfat-ul-ashraf bi-ma'rifat-il-atraf* (7:236#9760); Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (4:558); Ibn Hajar Haythamī, *al-Jawhar-ul-munazzam* (p.61); and Shawkānī in *Tuhfat-ud-dhākirīn* (pp.194-5).

Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘bring an earthen pot for ablution, then perform the ablution and offer two cycles of optional prayer. Then say:

*O Allāh, I appeal to You, and submit to You through the mediation of Your merciful Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). O Muhammad, through your mediation I submit myself to your Lord that He should give light to my eyes. O Allāh, acknowledge his intercession in my favour and accept my supplication also in my favour.*

‘Uthmān bin Hunayf said:

*I swear by Allāh that we had neither left the company nor had we carried on a long conversation that the man entered (with his sight fully restored) and it seemed as if he had never been blind.<sup>1</sup>*

In addition, a number of other traditionists of great repute have recorded this sound tradition and their names are given below:

1. Nasā’ī, *‘Amal-ul-yawm wal-laylah* (p.418#660).
2. Bukhārī, *at-Tārīkh-ul-kabīr* [6:209-10(3/2/209-10)].
3. Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (4:138).
4. Bayhaqī, *Dalā’il-un-nubuwwah* (6:166-7).
5. Ibn-us-Sunnī, *‘Amal-ul-yawm wal-laylah* (p.202#622).
6. Mundhirī, *at-Tarhīb wat-tarhīb* (1:473-4).
7. Subkī, *Shifā’-us-siqām fī ziyārat khayr-il-anām* (pp.123-4).
8. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (4:559).
9. Suyūtī, *al-Khasā’is-ul-kubrā* (2:201).
10. Qastallānī, *al-Mawāhib-ul-laduniyyah* (4:594).
11. Zurqānī, *Commentary* (12:221-2).

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1. Hākim graded it *sahīh* (sound) in *al-Mustadrak* (1:526-7) according to the conditions of Imām Bukhārī and its authenticity has been acknowledged by Dhahabī as well.

Mahmūd Sa‘īd Mamdūh has also expressed his views in his book *Raf‘-ul-minārah* (p.123):

*“All these chains are sound which have been certified by persons who have committed the traditions to memory. Among these are also included Imām Tirmidhī, Tabarānī, Ibn Khuzaymah, Hākim and Dhahabī.”*

This sacred tradition clearly indicates that the creature is imploring Allāh Who alone can help him and provide relief to him. He alone has the power to transform non-existence into existence, non-entity into entity. But the point to be noted here is that the words of the supplication are being taught by the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) himself in which God’s attention and help are being invoked for its acceptance through his own mediation. It may be further noted that it is not only his person that is being relied upon for the acknowledgement of the supplication, but also the quality of his mercy that he has been vested with through Allāh’s kindness. Thus the prayer boils down to the fact that the petitioner is saying: ‘O Allāh, I appeal to You through the mediation of the Prophet (ﷺ) whom You have Yourself vested with infinite mercy that You should restore my lost eyesight and return light to my eyes which they have lost.’

Since the supplication was processed through the Prophet’s mediation, the Lord’s mercy gushed forth instantly as it is against the divine will that some petitioner should invoke His mercy through the mediation of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and his petition should not be granted. In this case the grant of the supplication was neither delayed nor was the phenomenon of cause-and-effect allowed to interfere in its acceptance. It was the blessing of the Prophet’s mediation, which returned the eyesight instantly as if it had never been lost.

## Companions' appeal for rain

The books on tradition are riddled with the proofs of beseeching the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for help and its confirmation by the practice of the Companions. An unbroken chain of authentic traditions proves that whenever the Companions faced a problem or a calamity, they came rushing to the holy Prophet (ﷺ) to beseech his help. They supplicated before Allāh through his mediation and beseeched his help for the fulfilment of their needs. As a result, Allāh waived the calamity dangling over their heads. Anas bin Mālik has related:

1. *The holy Prophet (ﷺ) was delivering his sermon on a Friday that a man went up to him and said: 'O Messenger of Allāh! There is extreme scarcity of rain. So pray to Allāh that He should bless us with rain.' The Prophet (ﷺ) prayed for it and before we reached our homes, the rain had started which continued down to the next Friday. (Anas) says that (the next Friday) the same person or someone else stood up and said: 'O Messenger of Allāh! Pray to Allāh that He should push this (rain) away from us.' The Prophet (ﷺ) prayed: 'O Allāh, it should be around us and not over us.' So I saw that the clouds had rolled away to our right and left and started pouring down rain and the rain ceased over the residents of Medina.<sup>1</sup>*

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1. Bukhārī related it in *as-Sahīh*, b. of *istisqā'* (to invoke Allāh for rain at the time of drought) ch.7 (1:344-5#969); Muslim, *as-Sahīh*, b. of *salāt-ul-istisqā'* (prayer to invoke Allāh for rain at the time of drought) ch.2 (2:614-5#10/897); Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il-un-nubuwwah* (6:140); Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (4:472-3); and 'Asqalānī in *Fath-ul-bārī* (2:508).

2. That a person entered the mosque through the door in front of the pulpit and the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) was delivering the sermon while standing. So that person took a position right in front of him. Then he said: 'O Messenger of Allāh, the cattle have died and the paths are disconnected. So pray to Allāh that He should send rain on us.' The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) raised both of his hands and addressed (Allāh): 'O Allāh, send us rain; O Allāh, send us rain; O Allāh, send us rain.' Anas said: 'By God! We could see neither a cloud in the sky, nor even a fragment of a cloud, and there was neither a house nor any other building between us and the mountain. Then a piece of cloud, that was the size of a shield, appeared from behind the hill. It started floating in the sky and then it spread out, and it started raining. By God! For six days we did not see the sun in the sky. Then the next Friday a person entered through the same door while the Prophet (ﷺ) was delivering the sermon in the standing posture. He positioned himself in front of him and said: "O Messenger of Allāh, the cattle have died and the paths are disconnected, so pray to Allāh that he should stop the rain." Anas relates that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) again raised his hands and addressed (Allāh): 'O Allāh, (the rain) may fall around us, and not on us; O Allāh, (the rain) may fall on the hills, hillocks, valleys and the places where the trees grow.' Anas says that the rain stopped and we came out (of the mosque) and we were walking in the sunshine. Sharīk said,

'I asked Anas: was it the same person who had come before?' He said, 'I don't know.'

3. Once during the time of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) famine gripped Medina. The Prophet (ﷺ) was delivering the Friday sermon to us that a person stood up and said, 'O Messenger of Allāh, the horses and the goats have died. So pray to Allāh that He may send us rain.' The holy Prophet (ﷺ) raised his holy hands and prayed. Anas relates that (at that time) the sky was as (transparent as) cutglass. (But on account of the Prophet's prayer,) the breeze blew instantly and the clouds came over. Then they grew quite dense and then the sky opened its mouth wide (that is, it started raining in torrents). We came out from there and (drenched in rain and) almost drowning in water, we reached our homes. The rain did not stop till the next

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1. Bukhārī related it in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of *istisqā'* (to invoke Allāh for rain at the time of drought) ch.6,5,7,8,9,10,11, 20,23 (1:343-6,348,349#968,967,969-73,983, 986), b. of *jumu'ah* (Friday prayer) ch.33 (1:315-6#891); Muslim, *as-Sahīh*, b. of *salāt-ul-istisqā'* (prayer to invoke Allāh for rain at the time of drought) ch.2 (2:612-4#8/897); Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, b. of *istisqā'* (3:154-5, 159-60, 161-3); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, b. of *iqāmat-us-salāt was-sunnah fihā* (establishing prayer and its sunnahs) ch.154 (1:404#1269); Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (3:256); Mālik bin Anas, *al-Muwattā*, b. of *istisqā'*, ch.2 (1:191#3); Abū Ya'lā, *Musnad* (5:416#3104); Ibn Khuzaymah, *as-Sahīh*, (3:144,147#1788, 1792); Ibn Hibbān, *as-Sahīh* (3:272-3#992); Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan-ul-kubrā* (3:354-5) and *Dalā'il-un-nubuwwah* (6:139 -40); Baghawī, *Sharh-us-sunnah* (4:412-5#1166-7); Zayla'ī, *Nasb-ur-rāyah* (2:238-9); Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (4:472); Qastallānī, *al-Mawāhib-ul-laduniyyah* (4:265-6); and Zurqānī in his *Commentary* (11:120-5).

*Friday. The same day the same person or someone else stood up and said, 'O Messenger of Allāh, the houses have collapsed, so pray to Allāh that this may stop.' He smiled and then prayed (to Allāh) that rain may fall around us, and not on us. So I saw that the clouds had rolled away from Medina (and Medina appeared) as if it was crowned by the sky.*

*In another tradition, Anas relates that Allāh shows to the people the blessing of His Prophet (ﷺ) and the acceptance of his supplications.<sup>1</sup>*

The proof of appeal for help by the practice of the Companions and the Prophet's encouragement of their practice establishes the fact that it is not tainted with even a spot of disbelief. It is impossible that a Companion should commit disbelief, and it is still impossible that the Prophet (ﷺ) should condone his disbelief. In this case the Prophet (ﷺ) is encouraging them in their act, which speaks volumes for its validity.

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1. Bukhārī transmitted it in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of *manāqib* (virtues) ch.22 (3:1313#3389), b. of *jumu'ah* (Friday prayer) ch.32 (1:315#890), b. of *istisqā'* (to invoke Allāh for rain at the time of drought) ch.13 (1:346-7#975), b. of *adab* (good manners) ch.68 (5:2261#5742), b. of *da'awāt* (supplications) ch.23 (5:2335#5982); Muslim, *as-Sahīh*, b. of *salāt-ul-istisqā'* (prayer to invoke Allāh for rain at the time of drought) ch.2 (2:614-5#9/897); Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, b. of *istisqā'* (3:165-6); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, b. of *salāt* (prayer) 1:304-5 (#1174); Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (3:271); Abū Ya' lā, *Musnad* (6:82#3334); Ibn Khuzaymah, *as-Sahīh* (3:145-6#1789); Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan-ul-kubrā* (3:353-4, 356, 357) and *Dalā'il-un-nubuwwah* (6:140); Baghawī, *Sharh-us-sunnah* (4:415-6#1168); and Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (4:474).

### **Amīr Hamzah — the remover of troubles**

‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd says that the holy Prophet (ﷺ) cried so bitterly over the martyrdom of his uncle Hamzah in the battle of Uhud as he had never cried before. He says that he placed his coffin in the direction of *qiblah* and burst into tears until he started hiccupping. Then he addressed Hamzah and said:

*O Hamzah! O the uncle of the  
Messenger of Allāh! O Allāh’s lion! O lion  
of the Messenger of Allāh! O Hamzah! O  
doer of good deeds! O remover of troubles!  
O protector of the radiant face of the  
Messenger of Allāh!*<sup>1</sup>

The use of the collocation *yā kāshif al-kurubāt* (O remover of troubles) in this tradition for a dead man deserves our special attention. The articulation of these words not only validates the act of beseeching the help of the saints, but it also validates the act of help by the saints in response to the petitioner’s appeal. It also indicates that it is quite consistent with true Islamic belief that the person whose help is being sought should also help the petitioner. That is why he addressed Amīr Hamzah as the ‘remover of troubles.’ Here the status of Hamzah as helper is only derivative because the real helper is Allāh Himself. The fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) declared Amīr Hamzah as a helper and addressed him after his death by the word “*yā*” (O) clearly indicates that the classification of helper into real and derivative is quite legal; otherwise it would have been incompatible with the Prophet’s act.

### ***Yā Muhammadāh* — Battle-cry of the Companions**

Imām Ibn Kathīr says that on the occasion of the battle of Yamāmah, *yā Muhammadāh* (O Muhammad, help us) was

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1. Qastallānī related it in *al-Mawāhib-ul-Iaduniyyah* (2:104); and Zurqānī in his *Commentary* (4:470).

the battle-cry of the Muslims. He adds that during the war, Khālīd bin al-Walīd picked up the flag, and passing through the army positions, set out towards the mountain of Musaylimah, the Liar. He waited there for him to turn up so that he could kill him. Then he returned and, standing between the two armies, he shouted:

*I am the son of al-Walīd. I am the son of 'Āmir and Zayd.*

Ibn Kathīr further adds:

*Then he raised the battle-cry current among the Muslims, which was 'yā Muḥammadāh' (O Muḥammad, help us).<sup>1</sup>*

In this tradition the Muslims are relying on the Prophet's means and calling him for help, and the Muslims who are committing this act are the Companions. Thus to call the Prophet (ﷺ) for help and rely on his means was a practice of the Companions.

### **Appeal to the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for forgiveness**

Allāh has honoured the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) with the highest status among His creatures. Appeal to him and intermeditation through his person was valid during his earthly existence and it is equally valid after his death. The two phases of his existence do not modify in any sense the quality of appeal to and intermeditation through him and there is no legal and rational argument that militates against their validity after his death.

We should not also brush aside the fact that the correct belief does not elevate the intermediaries to the level of Allāh's partners. They essentially remain His creatures, and it is in fact a deep realisation of their creaturely status that has prompted the Creator to raise them to the superlative degree of excellence among His creatures.

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1. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (5:30).

Therefore, how can those, who claim to be the humble servants of the Lord, ever aspire to be His partners or rivals? Thus they are neither Allāh's partners nor His equals. Allāh has no rival or partner. He is unique in every respect, both in terms of His personality and the attributes that define His personality. No prophet or saint, dead or alive, can be His partner because He alone has the power to grant or turn down our petitions. Thus in all forms of appeal for help and intermediation, the intermediary himself acts as a humble servant of the Lord and he relies on the divine mercy as much as the petitioner does. In no sense whatsoever he treats himself as His equal. As a matter of fact, his help is being sought because his status as an intermediary owes to the divine favour. Allāh says:

*(O beloved!) And if they had come to you, when they had wronged their souls, and asked forgiveness of Allāh, and the Messenger also had asked forgiveness for them, they (on the basis of this means and intercession) would have surely found Allāh the Granter of repentance, extremely Merciful.<sup>1</sup>*

To restrict the efficacy and operational range of this verse to the earthly existence of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), as some people believe, is to indulge in exegetical misapplication and reflects their unawareness and lack of understanding. Both the exegetes and the traditionists consider intermediation through and appeal to the holy Prophet (ﷺ) as valid acts whether they were done in his earthly existence or after his death.

Ibn Kathīr comments on the Qur'ānic verse:

*(In this Qur'ānic verse) Allāh is exhorting the sinners and evildoers that when they commit sins and errors they*

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1. Qur' ān (*an-Nisā'*, Women) 4:64.

should call on the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and ask forgiveness from Allāh. They should also request the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) to pray for them. When they do so, Allāh will turn to them and show mercy to them and He will forgive them. That is why He used the words *la-wajadullāha tawwāb-ar-rahīmā* (they (on the basis of this means and intercession) would have surely found Allāh the Granter of repentance, extremely Merciful). Many have stated this tradition. One of them is *Abū Mansūr as-Sabbāgh* who writes the famous narration in his book that, according to *‘Utbī*, once he was sitting beside the Prophet’s grave when a bedouin came and he said: ‘Peace be on you, O Allāh’s Messenger! I have heard that Allāh says, “(O beloved!) And if they had come to you, when they had wronged their souls, and asked forgiveness of Allāh, and the Messenger also had asked forgiveness for them, they (on the basis of this means and intercession) would have surely found Allāh the Granter of repentance, extremely Merciful.” I have come to you, asking forgiveness for my sins and I make you as intercessor before my Lord and I have come to you for this purpose.’ Then he recited these verses: ‘O, the most exalted among the buried people who improved the worth of the plains and the hillocks! May I sacrifice my life for this grave which is made radiant by you, (the Prophet,) the one who is (an embodiment of) mercy and forgiveness.’ Then the bedouin went away and I fell asleep. In my dream I saw the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). He said to me: ‘O

‘*Utbī, the bedouin is right, go and give him the good news that Allāh has forgiven his sins.*’<sup>1</sup>

We come to learn from the words *jā’uka fastaghfarullāha* of the Qur’ānic verse that sinners and wrong-doers should ask Allāh’s forgiveness through the means of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) while the words *wastaghfara lahum-ur-rasūlu* furnish a proof of his intercession. In *lawajadullāha tawwāb-ar-rahīmā* the proof of intermediation is embedded in a precondition: seek forgiveness through the means of the Messenger (ﷺ) and it is clear when the Messenger (ﷺ) asked forgiveness for his follower, the act of intermediation turned into an act of intercession and through intercession the grant of forgiveness itself becomes a means of forgiveness.

Some people treat means and intercession as two different things. Therefore, it should be noted that when the Prophet (ﷺ) is elevated to the office of intercession, he can claim it as his right while this very act serves as a means in favour of his follower.

The happening of the bedouin has been recorded by the following:

1. Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab-ul-īmān* (3:495-6#4178).
2. Ibn Qudāmāh in *al-Mughnī* (3:557).
3. Nawawī in *al-Adhkār* (pp. 92-3).
4. Ibn ‘Asākīr in *Tahdhīb tārīkh Dimashq al-kabīr* popularly known as *Tārīkh/Tahdhīb Ibn ‘Asākīr* as quoted by Subkī in *Shifā’-us-siqām fī ziyārat khayr-il-anām* (pp. 46-7).
5. Ibn Hajar Haythamī in *al-Jawhar-ul-munazzam* (p.51).

Besides, all scholars of repute have described in their books, in chapters on ‘visiting the tomb of the holy Messenger (ﷺ)’ or ‘the rituals of *hajj*,’ ‘*Utbī*’s tradition

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1. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr-ul-Qur’ān al-‘azīm* (1:519-20).

that the villager visited the tomb of the Messenger (ﷺ) to ask for forgiveness.

In addition, Imām Qurtubī in his famous exegesis *al-Jāmi‘ li-ahkām-il-Qur’ān* (5:265-6) has related another happening similar to ‘Ut bī’s tradition. He says:

*“Abū Sādiq has reported it from ‘Alī. A villager came to see us three days after the burial of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). He placed himself near the Prophet’s grave, sprinkled its earth over his body and said: ‘O Messenger of Allāh, you said and we have heard from you. You received commands from Allāh and we received commands from you, and one of these divine commands is wa law annahum idh zalamū anfasahum. It is true that I have wronged myself, therefore, you should pray for my forgiveness.’ (In response to the villager’s act of imploring) he was called out from the grave: ‘there is no doubt that you have been forgiven.’”*

Muhammad bin ‘Alawī al-Mālikī has reproduced these two occurrences in his book *Mafāhīm yajib an tusahhah* (pp.157-8) and then offered a sizzling review which is quite relevant to our context. He writes, “This episode has been reproduced by Imām Nawawī in the sixth chapter of his famous book *al-Īdāh*, Abū al-Faraj bin Qudāmah in his book *ash-Sharh-ul-kabīr* and Mansūr bin Yūnus al-Buhūtī in his book *Kashshāf-ul-qinā‘* which is a popular book in Hambalī school of thought.”

Muhammad bin ‘Alawī al-Mālikī expresses in his review an ambivalent attitude towards the traditions. He said: ‘I cannot positively certify their authenticity, but in spite of their lack of certainty, most of the traditionists have relied on their credibility. We may only ask if these heavy weights (traditionists and exegetes) have reproduced disbelief and infidelity, or they have

reproduced something that tempts people towards idolatry or worship of the graves? If (may God forbid) this happens, then it would become almost impossible to sort out the genuine books from the spurious ones, leading to unmanageable chaos and confusion.’

## Appeal to the Prophet (ﷺ) for rain during ‘Umar’s tenure

Mālik ad-Dār has related:

*The people were gripped by famine during the tenure of ‘Umar (bin al-Khattāb). Then a Companion walked up to the Prophet’s grave and said, “O Messenger of Allāh, please ask for rain (from Allāh) for your Community who is in dire straits.” Then the Companion saw the Prophet (ﷺ) in a dream. The Prophet (ﷺ) said to him, “Go over to ‘Umar, give him my regards and tell him that the rain will come to you. And tell ‘Umar that he should be on his toes, he should be on his toes, (he should remain alert).” Then the Companion went over to see ‘Umar and passed on to him the tidings. On hearing this, ‘Umar broke into a spurt of crying. He said, “O Allāh, I exert myself to the full until I am completely exhausted.”<sup>1</sup>*

www.MinhajBooks.com

1. Related by Ibn Abī Shaybah in *al-Musannaf* (12:31-2#12051); Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il-un-nubuwwah* (7:47); Ibn ‘Abd-ul-Barr, *al-Istī‘āb fī ma‘rifat-il-ashāb* (2:464); Subkī, *Shifā’-us-siqām fī ziyārat khayr-il-anām* (p.130); ‘Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz-ul-‘ummāl* (8:431#23535); and Abū Ya‘lā Khalīl bin ‘Abdullāh Khalīlī Qazwīnī in *Kitāb-ul-irshād fī ma‘rifat ‘ulamā’-il-hadīth* (1:313-4), as quoted by Mahmūd Sa‘īd Mamdūh in *Raf‘-ul-mīnārah* (p.262).

Ibn Taymiyyah has endorsed its authenticity in his book *Iqtidā'-us-sirāt-il-mustaqīm mukhālifat ashāb-il-jahīm* (p.373). Ibn Kathīr has confirmed the soundness of its chain of transmission in *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (5:167). Ibn Abī Khaythamah narrated it with the same chain of transmission as quoted by 'Asqalānī in *al-Isābah fī tamyīz-is-sahābah* (3:484), while the latter writes in *Fath-ul-bārī* (2:495-6): "Ibn Abī Shaybah transmitted it with a sound chain of transmission and Sayf bin 'Umar Tamīmī has recorded it in *al-Futūh-ul-kabīr* that the dreamer was a Companion known as Bilāl bin al-Hārith al-Muzanī." Qastallānī has remarked in *al-Mawāhib-ul-laduniyyah* (4:276) that Ibn Abī Shaybah has narrated it with a sound chain of transmission while Zurqānī has supported Qastallānī in his *Commentary* (11:150-1).

It is quite surprising that some people have tried to dub even this soundly transmitted tradition as weak and, therefore, lacking the sinews to face a rigorously probing analysis, though this is far from the truth, they have marshalled in their favour the following objections:

**First objection:** One of its narrators is A'mash who is a double-crossing impostor (*mudallis*).

**Reply:** Though A'mash is an impostor, his tradition is popular for two reasons whether its soundness is proved or not:

1. A'mash is regarded as a second-grade impostor, and this is a class of impostors from whom our religious leaders recorded traditions in their authentic books. Therefore, it is proved that this tradition narrated by A'mash is accepted.

2. If we accept this tradition only on the basis of its transmission by A'mash, as is the practice in the case of third-grade or even lower-grade impostors, even then the tradition by A'mash is likely to retain its popularity as he has copied it from Abū Sālih Dhakawān Sammān. Imām Dhahabī comments: 'when A'mash begins a tradition with the word 'an (from; through) there is

a possibility of imposture and deception. But if he relates it from his elders like Ibrāhīm, Ibn Abī Wā'il, Abū Sālih Sammān, etc., then it is presumed to possess sound linkage (*ittisāl*).<sup>1</sup>

In addition, Imām Dhahabī has also described him as trust worthy (*thiqah*).

**Second objection:** Albānī in his book *at-Tawassul, ahkāmuhū wa anwa'uhū* observes, "I do not acknowledge it authentic because the credibility and memory of Mālik ad-Dār is not known and these are the two basic criteria for any authentic narrator of traditions. Ibn Abī Hātim Rāzī in *Kitāb-ul-jarh wat-ta'dīl* [8:213(4/1/213)], while discussing Mālik ad-Dār, has not mentioned any narrator except Abū Sālih who has accepted any tradition from him, which shows that he is unknown. It is also supported by the fact that Ibn Abī Hātim Rāzī, who himself was a leading figure of Islam and a memoriser of traditions, has not mentioned anyone of them who has pronounced him trust worthy (*thiqah*). Similarly Mundhirī has remarked that he does not know him while Haythamī in his *Majma'uz-zawā'id*, has supported his observation..."

**Reply:** This objection is refuted by the biographical details which Ibn Sa'd has furnished while discussing him among the second-grade Medinan Successors: 'Mālik ad-Dār was a slave freed by 'Umar bin al-Khattāb. He reported traditions from Abū Bakr as-Siddīq and 'Umar, and Abū Sālih Sammān reported traditions from him. He was known.'<sup>2</sup>

In addition, this objection is also cancelled by Khalīlī's (d.446 AH) comment on Mālik ad-Dār:

1. Dhahabī, *Mīzān-ul-i'tidāl* (2:224).
2. Ibn Sā'd, *at-Tabaqāt-ul-kubrā* (5:12).

‘Mālik ad-Dār’s trustworthiness and reliability is generally accepted and the group of Successors has eulogised him.’<sup>1</sup>

Besides, the biographical sketch provided by ‘Asqalānī also serves to neutralise this objection:

“Mālik bin ‘Iyād, a slave freed by ‘Umar, was known as Mālik ad-Dār. He had seen the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and heard traditions from Abū Bakr. He has taken traditions from Abū Bakr as-Siddīq ‘Umar Fārūq, Mu‘ādh and Abū ‘Ubaydah, and Abū Sammān and the two sons of this (Mālik ad-Dār) — ‘Awn and ‘Abdullāh — have taken traditions from him.

“And Imām Bukhārī in *at-Tārīkh-ul-kabīr* [7:304-5 (4/1/304-5)], through reference to Abū Sālih, has acknowledged a tradition from him that ‘Umar is reported to have said during the period of famine: ‘I do not shirk responsibility but I may be made more humble.’

“Ibn Abī Khaythamah has reproduced a long tradition along with these words (which we are discussing), ... and I have copied a tradition narrated by ‘Abd-ur-Rahmān bin Sa‘īd bin Yarbū Makhzūmī with reference to Mālik ad-Dār, in *Fawā'id Dāwūd bin ‘Umar* and *ad-Dabī* compiled by Baghawī. Mālik ad-Dār said that one day ‘Umar called him. He had a gold wallet in his hand, which had four hundred dinars in it. He commanded him to take it to Abū ‘Ubaydah, and then he narrated the remaining part of the happening.

“Ibn Sa‘d has placed Mālik ad-Dār in the first group of Successors among the natives of Medina and has averred that he has taken traditions from

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1. Abū Yā‘lā Khalīl bin ‘Abdullāh Khalīlī Qazwīnī, *Kitāb-ul-irshād fī ma‘rifat ‘ulamā’-il-hadīth*, as quoted by ‘Abdullāh bin Muhammad bin Siddīq al-Ghumārī in *Irghām-ul-mubtadī al-ghabī bi-jawāz-it-tawassul bi an-nabī* (p.9).

Abū Bakr as-Siddīq and ‘Umar, and he was known. Abū ‘Ubaydah has asserted that ‘Umar had appointed him the guardian of his family. When ‘Uthmān was elevated to the office of the caliph, he appointed him as the minister of finance, and that is how he came to be known as Mālik ad-Dār (the master of the house).

“Ismā‘īl Qādī has reported it from ‘Alī bin Madīnī that Mālik ad-Dār was the treasurer of ‘Umar.”<sup>1</sup>

Ibn Hibbān has attested to the trustworthiness and credibility of Mālik ad-Dār in *Kitāb-uth-thiqāt* (5:384).<sup>2</sup>

Now if Mundhirī and Haythamī insist that they do not know Mālik ad-Dār, it means that they have not asserted anything about his credibility or lack of credibility. However there are traditionists of great repute like Imām Bukhārī, Ibn Sa‘d, ‘Alī bin Madīnī, Ibn Hibbān and ‘Asqalānī who know him. ‘Asqalānī has even mentioned him in *Tahdhīb-ut-tahdhīb* (7:226; 8:217).

It is shocking to learn that Albānī gives weight to the opinion of those who do not know Mālik ad-Dār and prefers them to those who know him. Albānī has discarded the traditions of Mālik bin ‘Iyād who was popularly known by the title “ad-Dār” while the great Companions appointed him as their minister because they relied on his trustworthiness. He was even given the portfolio of finance minister — an office that requires honesty, integrity and a huge sense of responsibility. On the contrary, Albānī gives credence to the traditions of those who enjoyed a much lower status than Mālik

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1. ‘Asqalānī, *al-Isābah fī tamyīz-is-sahābah* (3:484-5).
  2. Mahmūd Sa‘īd Mamdūh, *Raf‘-ul-minārah* (p.266). Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalānī also mentioned in his *Tahdhīb-ut-tahdhīb* (7:226; 8:217).

ad-Dār. The following examples support my contention:

1. He has pronounced Yahyā bin ‘Uryān Harawī as *hasan* (fair) in *Silsilat-ul-ahādīth-is-sahīhah* (1:49). His argument is based on the statement made by Khatīb Baghdādī in *Tārīkh Baghdad* (14:161) in which he declares Yahyā bin ‘Uryān Harawī as a traditionist of Baghdad.

This statement is quite transparent. Khatīb Baghdādī has argued neither in favour of nor against Yahyā bin ‘Uryān Harawī. His stance is neutral, as he has not tried to establish the stature of his narrations. He has not labelled them as authentic or inauthentic. In spite of his posture of neutrality, it is quite surprising that Albānī has called him fair (*hasan*).

2. Abū Sa‘īd Ghifārī has also been pronounced a fair narrator in *Silsilat-ul-ahādīth-is-sahīhah* (2:298). After stating that he is no longer unknown because two narrators have acknowledged traditions from him, he writes, “So he is a Successor. A group of those who have committed the traditions to memory have verified the authenticity of his narrations. Therefore, ‘Irāqī has declared the narrations attributed to him as authentic (*isnāduhū jayyid*), and there is no harm in it. This gave me a sense of satisfaction and I felt deeply contented.”

The question is why has he tried to discriminate between Abū Sa‘īd Ghifārī and Mālīk ad-Dār?

3. Sālih bin Khawwāt has also been pronounced credible in *Silsilat-ul-ahādīth-is-sahīhah* (2:436) because a group of people has relied on his traditions, and Ibn Hibbān has mentioned him in *Kitāb-uth-thiqāt*.

While, according to our research, ‘Asqalānī has described him as an acceptable narrator in *Taqrīb-*

*ut-tahdhīb* (1:359) and has also stated that he belonged to the eighth category of Successors. If an eighth-grade narrator is being described as credible, what justification is there to pronounce a first-grade Successor as incredible? The discrimination seems to be rooted more in prejudice than reason.

Therefore, the silence of Ibn Abī Hātim Rāzī is hardly an argument against the unknown stature of Mālik ad-Dār because his silence is based on lack of evidence about the narrator. Thus the absence of evidence and reasoning does not reflect the unknowingness of the narrator, which his silence neither explains nor indicates towards any definite interpretation. On the contrary, it opposes any attempt to establish the unknowingness of the narrator. There are a number of narrators about whom Ibn Abī Hātim Rāzī has remained silent though other scholars have argued about them and the books on tradition and related issues are riddled with similar examples.

**Third objection:** There is a suspicion of discontinuance between Abū Sālih Dhakawān Sammān and Mālik ad-Dār.

**Reply:** This suspicion is a fallacy, as it has no basis in reality. In its rejection, it is sufficient to say that Abū Sālih like Mālik ad-Dār was a native of Medina and he has reported traditions from the Companions. Therefore, he is not an impostor and a fraud. It may also be noted that only contemporaneity is an adequate guarantee for the connection of transmission as Imām Muslim has mentioned the consensus on it in the Preamble (*muqaddimah*) of his *as-Sahīh*.

**Fourth objection:** There is no justification for the soundness of this tradition because it entirely depends upon a person whose name has not been spelled out. Only in the tradition narrated by Sayf

bin ‘Umar Tamīmī, he has been named Bilāl and Sayf has declared him as a weak narrator.

**Reply:** This objection is also groundless, because justification does not depend on Bilāl but on ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb’s act. He did not prevent Bilāl from performing his act; on the contrary, he acknowledged it. He rather himself cried and said: ‘my Creator, I do not shirk responsibility but I may be made more humble.’ Therefore the person visiting the grave, whether he is a Companion or a Successor, does not affect the soundness of the tradition.

The gist of the discussion is that the tradition related by Mālik ad-Dār is sound, as I have stated in the earlier part of my exposition. Muhammad bin ‘Alawī al-Mālikī writes:

*“All those people who have made reference to this tradition or narrated it or reproduced it in their books have never labelled it disbelief or infidelity. They have not questioned the substance of the tradition and it has been mentioned by a scholarly person of high level like Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalānī who has confirmed it as a soundly transmitted tradition. Therefore his confirmation needs no apology in view of his highly distinguished stature among the hadīth-scholars.”<sup>1</sup>*

This tradition establishes the following principles:

1. Visiting graves with the intention of mediation and seeking help.
2. It is valid to visit the grave of a pious dead person during the period of one’s trials and tribulations to

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1. Muhammad bin ‘Alawī al-Mālikī, *Mafāhīm yajib an tusahhah* (p. 151).

seek help from him because if this act were invalid, ‘Umar would surely have forbidden that person to do so.

3. The Prophet’s appearance in the dream of the person who visited his grave and to give him good tidings, argues in favour of the fact that it is quite valid to seek help from non-Allāh and the dead because if it were invalid, it would have been impossible for the Prophet (ﷺ) not to have forbidden that person to do so.
4. Validation of the mode of address “O Messenger of Allāh (*yā rasūl Allāh*)” even after the Messenger’s death.
5. Call for help and the act of intermediation dates back to the early ages.
6. The holy personality of the Prophet (ﷺ) is a fountain of guidance even after his death.
7. The head of the state is responsible for administrative matters. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ), in spite of being the chief of prophets, did not break the state channel and, as a visible demonstration of his sense of discipline, he commanded the man visiting his grave to see the head of the state.
8. The man visiting the grave implored his help through the instrumentality of the Ummah. This shows the Prophet’s immeasurable love for the Community of his followers.
9. Justification for making the Ummah as a source for seeking his help.
10. Justification for making non-prophet a means of help in the presence of the Prophet (ﷺ).
11. Anyone who strengthens his link with the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) is rewarded by his sight and is showered with his blessings.
12. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ), even after his death, is aware of the weakness of his Ummah or anyone of its rulers and he issues different commands for removing these flaws.

13. To seek guidance from Allāh's favourites.
14. The acknowledgement of the Prophet's commands by the Companions after his death as just and truthful.
15. Imposition of commands received in dreams on others.
16. When intermediation was discussed in the presence of 'Umar bin al-Khattāb, he did not forbid it; rather he cried and responded to it acknowledging it as valid.
17. 'Umar bin al-Khattāb's love for the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) that he incessantly cried as someone mentioned the Holy Prophet (ﷺ).

### **Appeal to the Prophet (ﷺ) during 'Uthmān's tenure**

The famous tradition narrated by 'Uthmān bin Hunayf with reference to the Prophet's life was discussed in detail in which a blind man submitted his petition to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and his eyesight was restored through his means. Now we would like to explain that this mode was not confined to his life on earth alone, but the Companions relied on it even after his death. It is clear from Tabarānī's tradition that a person visited 'Uthmān bin 'Affān on a personal errand. 'Uthmān bin 'Affān not only was indifferent to him but also turned a deaf ear to his need. That person met 'Uthmān bin Hunayf and lodged his complaint against it. 'Uthmān bin Hunayf said to him: 'fetch an earthen pot and perform the ablution, then go to the mosque and offer two cycles of prayer and say:

*O Allāh, I beseech you and submit myself to you through the mediation of our Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), a merciful Prophet. O Muhammad! I submit to my Lord through your means so that He should fulfil my need.*

And then mention your need.’ The man went away and he did as he was told to do. Later when he arrived at ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān’s door, the porter caught him by his hand and took him to ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān who made him sit beside him on the mat and asked him: ‘what is your need?’ He mentioned the need and the caliph fulfilled his need and said to him: ‘why haven’t you mentioned your need so far?’ He told him further: ‘do come to me whenever you have a problem?’ When the man left his place, he met ‘Uthmān bin Hunayf and said to him: ‘May God bless you! He neither gave any thought to my need nor turned his attention to me until you recommended me to him.’ ‘Uthmān bin Hunayf replied:

*By God! I did not talk to him, but once I was in the company of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) that a blind man came over to see him and complained to him about the loss of his eyesight. The Prophet (ﷺ) asked him to be patient, but he said: ‘O Messenger of Allāh! I don’t have any guide and I am in great trouble.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘fetch an earthen pot and perform the ablution, then offer two cycles of prayer and implore Allāh with these praying words.’ Then (‘Uthmān) bin Hunayf said: ‘By God! We had neither gone out far away from the meeting nor had the conversation among us stretched out that the man came to us as if he had never been blind.’<sup>1</sup>*

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1. Related by Tabarānī in *al-Mu‘jam-ul-kabīr* (9:31#8311) and *al-Mu‘jam-us-saghīr* (1:183-4); Bayhaqī, *Dalā’il-un-nubuwwah* (6:167-8); Mundhīrī, *at-Targhīb wat-tarhīb* (1:474-6); Subkī, *Shifā’-us-siqām fī ziyārat khayr-il-anām* (p.125); Haythamī, *Majma‘-uz-zawā’id* (2:279); and Suyūṭī

‘Uthmān bin Hunayf taught him the supplication that had been used as the source of the Prophet’s help and succour after his death. The point to be noted is that the person was under the illusion that his need had been fulfilled on account of ‘Uthmān bin Hunayf’s recommendation to the caliph. So ‘Uthmān bin Hunayf instantly shed his illusion and related to him the tradition he had heard from the Prophet (ﷺ) and had himself put to test to prove that his need was fulfilled because he had relied on the means of the Prophet (ﷺ) by calling on him and seeking his help. He swore by God and convinced him that he had not recommended him to the caliph but it had all happened through the blessing of the Prophet’s mediation.

### **Ibn Taymiyyah’s endorsement**

Ibn Taymiyyah has related a story in the perspective of this tradition that Ibn Abī Dunyā has narrated a tradition in his book *Mujābī ad-du‘ā’* that a person came over to see ‘Abd-ul-Malik bin Sa‘īd bin Abjar. ‘Abd-ul-Malik pressed his belly and told him that he was suffering from an incurable disease. The man asked him: ‘what is it?’ ‘Abd-ul-Malik replied that it was a kind of ulcer that grows inside the belly and ultimately kills the man. It is said that the patient turned round and then he said:

*Allāh! Allāh! Allāh is my Lord. I regard no one as His rival or partner. O Allāh! I beseech You and submit myself to You through the mediation of Your Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), the merciful Prophet. O Muhammad! Through your means I submit myself to your and my Lord that He should take mercy on me in my state of illness.*

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in *al-Khasā’is-ul-kubrā* (2:201-2). Mundhirī graded it *sahīh* (sound).

It is said that ‘Abd-ul-Malik pressed his belly again and said: ‘you are cured, you are no longer suffering from any disease.’ Ibn Taymiyyah after recording the whole incident in his book, comments:

*I say that this and other forms of supplication have been taken over from our predecessors.<sup>1</sup>*

The noteworthy point is that Ibn Taymiyyah has also endorsed it that (1) it is an act of our predecessors, and (2) it is quite valid to recover from disease through this act.

### **Proof of ritualistic assignment**

The two traditions also make it clear that the practice of ritualistic assignment by the saintly people to others is a valid act because this has been the practice of Allāh’s favourites in the past. The Prophet (ﷺ) had not asked ‘Uthmān bin Hunayf, though, to pass it to other people.

### **The Prophet (ﷺ) wields authority even after his death**

Some people, on account of their ignorance and paucity of knowledge, express the view that the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) after his death wields no authority and he can neither hear us nor can he pray for us. May Allāh guard the believers against such a perverse view! No Muslim with sound belief can ever conceive such a possibility. Appeal to and intermediation through the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) are established facts supported by evidence from the Qur’ān and the *sunnah* and they are a proof of his stature and distinction. Those who do not believe in calling him or intermediation through the Prophet (ﷺ) after his death do not understand his exceptional status.

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1. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Qā’idah jalīlah fit-tawassul wal-wasīlah* (p.91).

It is part of the belief of Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah that a dead person can hear, possesses awareness, benefits from the virtuous deeds of the living and is disturbed by their wicked deeds. The point that clamours for attention is that this belief has been established through the experience of an ordinary man. When an ordinary person can exercise such power, how can we possibly deny it to the Prophet (ﷺ) who is the most superior person among Allāh’s creatures? Various authentic traditions testify to the reality that the Prophet (ﷺ) is alive even after his death. It sounds like a paradox to perverse ears but in his case it is as true as the daily sunrise. He returns our greetings, the affairs of the Ummah are reported to him, he asks forgiveness from Allāh over the evil deeds of the Ummah and praises and glorifies Him over her good deeds. It is stated in a number of traditions that once Marwān saw Abū Ayyūb al-Ansārī lying down over the Prophet’s grave and asked him what he was doing. Abū Ayyūb al-Ansārī gave a faith-freshening reply. The tradition is recorded below:

*It is attributed to Dāwūd bin Abī Sālih. He says: ‘one day Marwān came and he saw that a man was lying down with his mouth turned close to the Prophet’s grave. Then he (Marwān) said to him, “Do you know what are you doing?” When he moved towards him, he saw that it was Abū Ayyūb al-Ansārī. (In reply) he said, “Yes, (I know) I have come to the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and not to a stone. I have heard it from the Messenger of God (ﷻ) not to cry over religion when its guardian is competent.*

*Yes, shed tears over religion when its guardian is incompetent.*<sup>1</sup>

Hākim declared that it fulfils the requirements of authentic traditions as demanded by Bukhārī and Muslim, while Dhahabī has also called it *sahīh* (sound).

## Appeal to the Prophet (ﷺ) on the Day of Judgement

On the Day of Judgement the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) will act as a means of forgiveness for the believers. The Qur'ān states:

*O our Lord! Bless us with all that you have promised us through your messengers and do not humiliate us on the Day of Judgement. Surely You do not go back on Your Word.*<sup>2</sup>

In the light of this verse, the divine promise made to all the prophets is here acting as a means. All the rewards promised to other prophets carry special significance for the followers of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) through his means. On the Day of Judgement, grilled by the unbearable heat, the entire mankind will rally round the prophets but each prophet will tell them to move on to some other prophet until the whole mankind will rally round the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). The following is an agreed-upon tradition:

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1. Related by Ahmad bin Hambal with a sound chain of transmission in his *Musnad* (5:422); Hākim, *al-Mustadrak* (4:515); Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam-ul-kabīr* (4:158# 3999), *al-Mu'jam-ul-awsat* (1:199-200#286; 10:169# 9362); Subkī, *Shifā'-us-siqām fī ziyārat khayr-il-anām* (p.113); Haythamī, *Majma'-uz-zawāi'd* (5:245); 'Alī al-Hindī in *Kanz-ul-'ummāl* (6:88#14967).
2. Qur'ān (*Āl 'Imrān*, the Family of 'Imrān) 3:194.

The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'when it is the Day of Judgement, people, out of nervousness, will call on one another. First of all, they will call on Adam (عليه السلام) and request him to intercede on their behalf before Allāh but he will turn down their request by saying that today it is beyond his power to help them out and he will advise them to call on Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) because he is the Friend of Allāh. So people will call on Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) who will also excuse himself by saying that he is not in a position to help them, therefore, they should go to Mūsā (عليه السلام) because he is Allāh's interlocutor. They will go to Mūsā (عليه السلام) and he will also express his inability to help them and advise them to see 'Īsā (عليه السلام) because he is the soul created by Allāh and His word. They will go to 'Īsā (عليه السلام) and he will also tell them that he is not able to help them, therefore, they should go to Muhammad (ﷺ) (because he is the beloved of God). So all human beings will rally round me and I will tell them: 'yes, (today) I hold the office of intercession.' I will seek permission from my Lord and I will be granted the permission. Then He will inspire me to praise and glorify Him with such praises, which I cannot describe at this time. (In short,) I will praise and glorify Allāh with those praises and prostrate myself before Him. Then I will be told: 'O Muhammad, raise your radiant head, speak and you will be heard, demand and you will be blessed with it, and intercede (on behalf of your people), your intercession will be granted.' So I will implore: 'O Lord! My Ummah, my

*Ummah!* God shall command: 'go and take him out of the Hell, whosoever is left with faith even as small as the grain of barley.' So I will go and do so (I will take all such people out of Hell). Then I will return and praise and glorify Him with those praises and I will prostrate myself before Him. So I will be commanded: 'O Muhammad, raise your radiant head, speak and you will be heard, beg and you will be blessed with it, intercede (on behalf of your people) and your intercession will be granted.' I will implore: 'O Lord! My Ummah, my Ummah!' I will be commanded: 'go and take him out of Hell too, whosoever is left with faith even as small as the tiny grain of rye.' So I will go and do so. Then I will return and praise and glorify Him with the same praises and I will again prostrate myself before Him. So I will be commanded, 'O Muhammad, raise your radiant head, speak and you will be heard, beg and you will be blessed with it and intercede (on behalf of your people), your intercession will be granted.' I will implore: 'O Lord! My Ummah, my Ummah!' I will be commanded: 'go and take him out (of Hell) whosoever is left with the tiniest faith, even smaller than a grain of rye. Take such a person out of Hell.' Accordingly I will go and do so (I will take them out of Hell). (Hasan has added a few more words to the tradition narrated by Anas. The holy Prophet (ﷺ) said:) 'I will return the fourth time, and I will praise and glorify the Lord in the same way, then I will prostrate myself before Him. So I will be commanded: 'O Muhammad, raise your

*radiant head, and speak, you will be heard, beg and you will be blessed with it, and intercede (on behalf of your people), your intercession will be granted.’ At that time I will implore the Lord that I should be allowed to take out a person from Hell who has recited lā ilāha illallāhu (there is no deity except Allāh) even once in his life (from the core of his heart). The Lord will reply, I swear by My honour, glory, greatness and supremacy that I will liberate a person from the fire of Hell who has even once recited lā ilāha illallāhu (there is no deity except Allāh).<sup>1</sup>*

This tradition has proved, without any particle of doubt, that on the Day of Resurrection the process of

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1. Related through different narrators by Bukhārī in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of *tawhīd* (Islamic monotheism) ch.36 (6:2727-8#7072), b. of *īmān* (faith) ch.32 (1:24-5#44), b. of *ambiyā’* (prophets) ch.5, 12 (3:1215-6, 1226#3162,3182), b. of *tafsīr* (exegesis of the Qur’ān) ch.3,203 (4:1624-5, 1745-7 #4206, 4435), b. of *riqāq* (softening of hearts) ch.51 (5:2401#6197), b. of *tawhīd*, ch.19,24,37 (6:2695-6, 2708-9, 2730#6975,7002, 7078). Muslim, *as-Sahīh*, b. of *īmān* (faith) ch.84 (1:182-4#193); Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi’-us-sahīh*, b. of *sifat-ul-qiyyāmah* (the description of Doomsday) ch.10 (4:622-4#2434). Ahmad bin Hambal has recorded it in his *Musnad* (1:4-5, 281-2; 2:435-6; 3:116,244,247-8) in six different contexts through different narrators and all these contexts are linked through a sound chain of transmission. Dārimī narrated it in his *Sunan* (2:234-5#2807); Abū Dāwūd Tayālīsī, *Musnad* (pp.268-9#2010); Abū ‘Awānah, *Musnad* (1:171-4, 183-4); Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Musannaf* (11:444-51#11720-1,3); Abū Ya’lā, *Musnad* (1:56-9#59); Ibn Hibbān, *as-Sahīh* (14:377-9, 393-7#6464,6467); Bayhaqī, *Shu’ab-ul-īmān* (1:285-6#308-9); Baghawī, *Sharh-us-sunnah* (15:157-60#4333); Haythamī in *Mawārid-uz-zam’ān* (pp.642-3#2589) and *Majma’-uz-zawā’id* (10:373-4).

judgement and accountability will be initiated through the mediation of the Prophet's prayer, praise and glorification of the Lord. And on account of the Prophet's mediation, the process of accountability will start with his Ummah so that they do not have to stay longer than necessary in the scorching heat of the Day of Resurrection. The Qur'ān has also explained in the context of the Day of Judgement:

*(It will be the day) when Allāh will disgrace neither His Prophet nor the people who embraced faith along with him. (On that day) their light (of faith) will keep sprinting ahead of them and on their right side.<sup>1</sup>*

The Qur'ānic verse spells out in unmistakable terms that Allāh will not humiliate the followers of the Last Prophet (ﷺ) through the means of his blessing; on the other hand, He will allow them to enter Paradise, with all the glory and splendour associated with such an occasion. A visible proof of the divine concession will be the enveloping light to which they will be entitled through the means of Allāh's Prophet (ﷺ).

### **Mutual relation between appeal for help, intermediation and intercession**

Another point worth noting in the context of *istighāthah* is that when we call someone for help, it also seems to support the relevance of the related concepts of intermediation and intercession. The following Qur'ānic verse clearly links the three concepts by explaining their mutually reinforcing role:

*(O beloved!) And if they had come to you, when they had wronged their souls, and asked forgiveness of Allāh, and the Messenger also had asked forgiveness for*

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1. Qur' ān (*at-Tahrīm*, Prohibition) 66:8.

them, they (on the basis of this means and intercession) would have surely found Allāh the Granter of repentance, extremely Merciful.<sup>1</sup>

This Qur'ānic verse clearly argues in favour of intermediation. It means when people have committed sin, and they seek the mediation of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) in their supplication to Allāh and the Prophet (ﷺ) also prays for their forgiveness, then they will find Allāh Compassionate and Merciful. *Fastaghfarullāh* argues for intercession. When Allāh condoned their sin through the intercession of the Messenger (ﷺ), it means that intercession is validated by the Qur'ānic text. And the third concept of *istighāthah* is in fact a proof of seeking someone's assistance. When a man returns to the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for the forgiveness of his sins, it clearly means that he is asking for his intercession: "O Messenger of Allāh, I am a sinner. Have mercy on me and intercede for me before Allāh so that He may condone my sins." This desire of the sinner, in fact, amounts to *istighāthah* (seeking help from others) while the Prophet's readiness to implore Allāh for the forgiveness of his sins is intercession.

### Seek his help today

The gist of the discussion is that it is a futile exercise to prove arguments against appeal to the Prophet (ﷺ) for help and to establish authentic traditions as weak and invalid through self-concocted strategies. According to the Prophet's own statement, the benefit of his blessings is still a tangible reality as it was during his earthly life; his death has not changed this reality. And it is further reinforced by the tradition with an impeccable chain of

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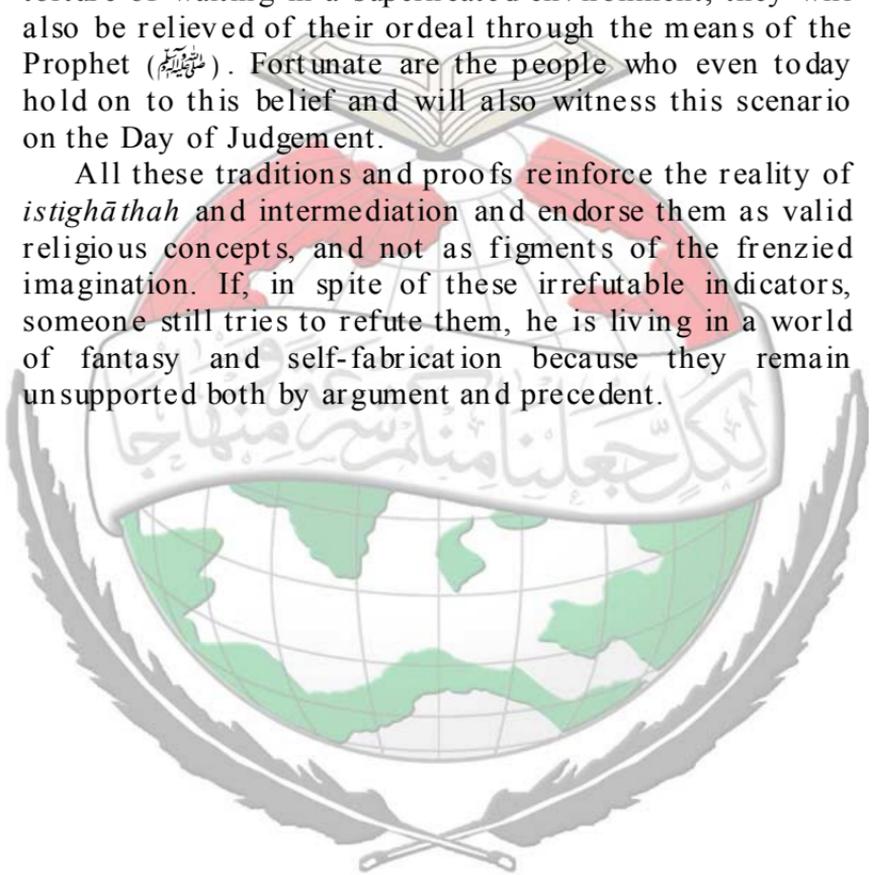
1. Qur' ān (*an-Nisā'*, Women) 4:64.

transmission that on the Day of Judgement, the process of accountability will be initiated on his recommendation.

Let's briefly speculate on the Day of Judgement. The heat and warmth will be at its climax. The people will face deep distress. The Lord will be present in His chair. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) will also honour the gathering with his presence and all the prophets will accompany him. The earlier believers and the later ones will also form part of the audience. In this scenario, when these people, presuming Adam (عليه السلام) as the first ancestor, will call on him and request him to help them out of their trouble, but he will send them on to Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام), who will refer them to Mūsā (عليه السلام), who will direct them to see 'Īsā (عليه السلام) and finally he will send all of them to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), the intercessor of mankind. During the whole process, none of the honoured prophets will say: 'what disbelief are you perpetrating and what have you come to us for? Allāh Himself is there, why don't you go to Him?' On the other hand, they will despatch them willingly and expectantly to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) so that he may intercede on their behalf before God. Thus we come to realise that appeal for help and intermediation is a continuous process, uninterrupted by the exigencies of space and time and unaffected by the laws of physical existence, and on the Day of Judgement a consensus among the prophets will emerge on the conceptual and practical relevance of *istighāthah*. The subtle point to note is that when the first personality in the world of humanity committed error, he offered to the Lord the mediation of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and as a result his error was condoned. The Prophet's mediation relieved him of the agony he had been suffering from as a consequence of his error. Similarly on the Day of Judgement when life on earth will come to an end and the people will experience the agony of waiting in uncertain anticipation of the process of accountability, they will call the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for help and will be liberated from their torture only through the means of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ).

It is now transparent from these examples that the first man in the world of humanity was relieved of his agony through the mediation of the Prophet (ﷺ), and the world is drawing to a close and mankind is passing through the torture of waiting in a superheated environment, they will also be relieved of their ordeal through the means of the Prophet (ﷺ). Fortunate are the people who even today hold on to this belief and will also witness this scenario on the Day of Judgement.

All these traditions and proofs reinforce the reality of *istighāthah* and intermediation and endorse them as valid religious concepts, and not as figments of the frenzied imagination. If, in spite of these irrefutable indicators, someone still tries to refute them, he is living in a world of fantasy and self-fabrication because they remain unsupported both by argument and precedent.



## Chapter 3

### Justification of *Istighāthah* after Death

Some people, in spite of their awareness of the injunctions of Qur'ān and *sunnah* and the practice of the Companions, believe that it is possible to help one another in the earthly world and therefore, it is valid to seek and extend help, but after death the creature has no control over his body, so how can help be sought from him? Since it is beyond his control to help others, seeking help from him is a form of disbelief.

This pig-headedness needs a twofold elaboration. First of all, it is an established fact that the creature, whether he is alive or resting in his grave, has absolutely no control over his body in both cases. These powers are only conferred on him by Allāh, which we exercise during our worldly existence to handle a variety of matters. It, in fact, is Allāh's blessing on the creature and, if Allāh decides to withdraw it from him during his earthly life, he will be deprived even of the capacity to pull a straw. So, just as in this world of cause-and-effect, Allāh has absolute control over all the powers of the creature, and yet it is not a kind of disbelief to seek help from him, similarly Allāh does not condemn it as disbelief if someone seeks help from another creature after death. Just as in life it is disbelief to regard the creature as the real helper but his help can be derivatively invoked, similarly it is quite valid to regard the prophets and saints, as derivative helpers after death and to beseech them for help. Disbelief whether it is associated with a living

person or a dead person remains disbelief. But to seek help from someone in his derivative capacity whether he is dead or alive is quite valid and does not amount to disbelief. Islam does not believe in double standards that an act is a form of belief if you perform it in a mosque and it turns into disbelief if you perform it in a temple. Islamic injunctions and the consequences that follow from them display a consistent pattern. Thus, if we treat a medical expert as the true helper and seek his assistance, it will be considered a form of disbelief. On the other hand, if we regard Allāh as the true helper and seek the help of a virtuous person as a form of treatment, it is quite valid and is in no way inconsistent with Islamic *sharī'ah*.

The real purpose of a man's life is to be included among the favourites of God and to acquire as much knowledge of the divine springs of Power as is consistent with human limitations. Therefore, to realise this purpose, human beings rely on the saints and the virtuous people because they not only themselves have cultivated divine consciousness but also develop it in those who are closely associated with them. This is the reason we find Ibrāhīm(عليه السلام) praying to God to include him among His favourites so that he could persuade his followers to pursue a similar goal:

*O my Lord! Make me perfect in knowledge and conduct and include me among those whom You have rewarded with Your nearness.<sup>1</sup>*

Here, the word *hukman* means the acme of human capacity for knowledge and conduct. Qādī Thanā'ullāh Pānīpatī says:

*That is, to bring knowledge and conduct to such a climactic point that one develops the complete ability to represent the sublime office of divinity and to provide*

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1. Qur'ān (*ash-Shu'arā'*, the Poets) 26:83.

*unflawed guidance and political leadership to humanity.<sup>1</sup>*

Imām Rāzī writes:

*“When acquisition of knowledge as the meaning of hukman has been established, it is equally established at the same time that he (the Prophet Ibrāhīm) prayed to Allāh for the kind of knowledge that guaranteed his total absorption in the divine qualities and attributes, a knowledge whose purity serves as a self-adjusting filter to drive out all impurities.”*

He further comments:

*And this knowledge proves that the divine knowledge or consciousness develops in the heart of a creature by Allāh’s will and Ibrāhīm’s supplication — and include me among those whom You have rewarded with Your nearness — is a pointer to the fact that for a creature to be saintly or virtuous is exclusively the outcome of Allāh’s will.<sup>2</sup>*

Therefore, the acquisition of divine knowledge is made possible only by means of the virtuous and pious people. To be associated with them and to acquire divine knowledge through their mediation has been the practice of the prophets. And any creature who desires the favour of Allāh through the means of the pious and the saintly people, never feels frustrated and his prayer is invariably granted, and he is included among the virtuous people. Then he attains divine consciousness as is declared by Allāh:

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1. Qādī Thanā’ullāh Pānīpatī, *at-Tafsīr-ul-mazharī* (7:72).
  2. Rāzī, *at-Tafsīr-ul-kabīr* (24:148).

*And surely (even) in the Hereafter, they will be in the ranks of the righteous.<sup>1</sup>*

There is irrefutable evidence of reliance on these righteous people for the fulfilment of their needs and the relief of their pains and troubles. In its support, the Qur'ānic verse in which Allāh is commanding the believers to associate themselves with the righteous is quite sufficient and conclusive. Allāh says:

*O believers! Fear Allāh, and remain in (the company of) the truthful.<sup>2</sup>*

In this verse, Allāh, on the one hand, is instructing the believers in the uniqueness and immutability of His Power; on the other hand, He is enjoining upon them to adopt the company of the truthful in order to elevate themselves to a position which the truthful have already attained. At another place, Allāh says:

*And follow the path of the (person) who turned towards Us.<sup>3</sup>*

Similarly, the prophet Yūsuf's supplication is also recorded in the holy Qur'ān:

*Take my soul at death as a Muslim and unite me with the righteous.<sup>4</sup>*

The holy Prophet (ﷺ) himself prayed to Allāh using similar words.<sup>5</sup>

Some people might object to the authenticity of the tradition, picking out flaws in its chain of transmission or coming out with some other frivolous remarks, but no

1. Qur' ān (*al-Baqarah*, the Cow) 2:130.
2. Qur' ān (*at-Tawbah*, Repentance) 9:119.
3. Qur' ān (*Luqmān*, Luqmān) 31:15.
4. Qur' ān (*Yūsuf*, Joseph) 12:101.
5. Ahmad bin Hambal transmitted it in his *Musnad* (5:191); Hākim, *al-Mustadrak* (1:516); Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam-ul-kabīr* (5:119,157 #4803,4932); and Haythamī in *Majma'uz-zawā'id* (10:113).

believer can deny the credibility of the supplication by Yūsuf (عليه السلام) as it is recorded in the holy Qur'ān which is nothing but absolute truth. Thus it is established that it has been the practice of the prophets to mediate their supplications through the virtuous and the righteous. The recording of these forms of supplication in the Qur'ān is most probably intended to persuade the believers to follow the practice of the prophets.

Ibn-ul-Firāsī narrates that Firāsī said to the Prophet (ﷺ): 'O Messenger of Allāh! Shall I beg you for something?' He replied:

*No, and if you can't help begging, then you should beseech the pious and the righteous (for help).<sup>1</sup>*

Some people believe that the supplication of the pious and the virtuous is granted during their lifetime, but after death they cannot help anyone, as they themselves are helpless. They believe that the righteous are a source of help but only during their earthly existence, and it is disbelief to rely on them for help after their death.

The supporters of this view are victims of a grave misunderstanding because the reality is just the reverse. It is true as the green of the grass and the blue of the sky that Allāh is the only source of blessing and no creature can arrogate this exclusively divine prerogative to himself. If he does so, he is committing unabashed disbelief. Therefore, to think that the supplication is mediated through one of His favourites in his life and He turns a cold shoulder to his supplication when he is dead smacks of a self-contradiction, as it tends to identify the saint with Allāh as the source of help. The fact is that God

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1. Abū Dāwūd narrated it in his *Sunan*, b. of *zakāt* (obligatory charity) 2:122 (#1646); Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, b. of *zakāt* (5:95); Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (4:334); Bukhārī, *at-Tārīkh-ul-kabīr* [7:138 (4/1/138)]; Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan-ul-kubrā* (4:197); Ibn 'Abd-ul-Barr, *at-Tamhīd* (4:107); and 'Alī al-Hindī in *Kanz-ul-'ummāl* (6:502#16721).

Alone has the power to fulfil the needs of the creatures through the mediation of the saints whether they are dead or alive.

Those who object to making saints and the pious as means of help and assistance after death are obviously in the wrong groove. They are only fumbling in the dark and smashing their cluttered heads against the slippery walls of an unlighted tunnel, which leads into an even darker dungeon. Their objections are grounded in the misconception that reliance on the saints and the pious for the acquisition of Allāh's blessing is contingent on their manifest life while Allāh's dispensing of His blessings to His creatures through the saints and the pious is absolutely unrelated to the fact of their being dead or alive. The traditions and the quotes of the Companions that follow are purported to eliminate the doubts raised by these deniers. A wide spectrum of evidence is marshalled to prove the fact that it is not only valid to rely on the saints and the pious for help after their death but it has also been the practice of the prophets and Allāh's favourites. These are the people who can truly guide us and lead us to our salvation. Ibn Taymiyyah sums up the controversy at the end of his book *al-'Aqīdat-ul-wāsiṭiyyah*:

*Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah are aligned (cling) to the faith of Islam, guarding themselves gingerly against all forms of doctoring. This includes the truthful, the martyrs and the pious (according to their grades). It also includes the people who are the source of guidance and the minaret of light. These are the people who have achieved distinction on the basis of a consistently virtuous mode of living. The Substitutes and the Imāms of dīn also belong to this category who rallied the Muslims to (the path of) their guidance. This is the group who received divine*

*patronage to remain (truthful) and it was about this group that the holy Prophet (ﷺ) had said: 'a group of my Community, who have been divinely guided to stick to the path of truth, will not cease to exist till the Day of Judgement, and those who oppose them or degrade them will never be able to do them any harm.'*<sup>1</sup>

The second point revolves around the objection that the dead lack the capacity for help. This conclusion is also based on perverse reasoning. Allāh Himself has referred to the purgatorial life of His favourites at various places in the Qur'ān. There is no difference of opinion among the followers of any ideology or religion about the life of the martyrs. What luxuries must grace the purgatorial life of the Prophet (ﷺ) whose most lowly follower is guaranteed not only life till the Day of Judgement if he dies a martyr but who also receives all the requisite divine blessings! Therefore, by regarding the Prophet (ﷺ) as a derivative helper, it is quite valid to seek his help and assistance after his death as it was valid during his earthly existence. Rather, his purgatorial life is as active and dynamic as his other life because his followers are sending salutations on him in a spirit of matchless devotion and angels have been appointed to convey these messages of sincerity and deep attachment to the Prophet (ﷺ). This symphony of sound and voice, which his followers play every second and every minute is a living proof of the blessings Allāh has conferred on him even in his purgatorial life.

If the acts of intercession, beseeching the Prophet's help and his mediation were acts of disbelief, then they should be indiscriminately pronounced as forms of disbelief everywhere; they should apply equally to his earthly existence, purgatorial life and his life in the

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1. Muhammad Khalīl Harās, *Sharh al-'Aqīdat-ul-wāsitiyyah* (p.153).

Hereafter, because disbelief is condemned by Allāh in every colour and hue. But the facts point in the opposite direction: Islamic teachings unambiguously reveal that the Companions beseeched the Prophet (ﷺ) for help and relied on his mediation at various occasions in their life and besought him for help and they will also seek his help and intercession even on the Day of Judgement, and as a result of this reliance on his means and appeal for help, the Prophet (ﷺ) will reward his followers by interceding before Allāh for their salvation. Thus, when it is valid during the earthly life and after-life of the Prophet (ﷺ) how can it be declared invalid and a form of disbelief during his purgatorial life?

### **Proof of purgatorial life**

The teachings of Qur'ān and *sunnah* prove the reality of life after death or life in the grave as clearly as they depict the reality of resurrection of the dead on the Day of Judgement. Allāh says in the holy Qur'ān:

*How can you reject the faith in Allāh?  
Seeing that you were without life, (and) He  
gave you life; then He will cause you to die  
and will again bring you to life; then again  
to Him will you return.<sup>1</sup>*

The Qur'ānic verse makes an explicit reference to two kinds of death, two kinds of life and finally the return of all mankind to Allāh on the Day of Judgement. In the light of the holy verse, the first kind of death was our state of non-existence when we had not stepped into the world of existence. The life that followed this state is our life on earth. Then death will overreach us and people will accordingly perform our funeral rites and bury us. The life that will follow is called the purgatorial life, which is given to man in the grave or in his capacity as a dead person. The angels interrogate him and open a window in

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1. Qur'ān (*al-Baqarah*, the Cow) 2:28.

the grave leading either to Paradise or Hell. After the second life, we will be returned to God Almighty on the Day of Resurrection. Thus the purgatorial life spans the arrival of the angels in the grave for interrogation and the divine breath blown into the dead bodies for their resurrection. This relates to the purgatorial life of an ordinary human being whether he is a believer or a non-believer.

Now let us examine another verse about the life of the martyrs:

*And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allāh that they are dead, (they are not dead) but they are living though you are not conscious (of their life).<sup>1</sup>*

The same theme is expressed in different words:

*And those who are slain in the way of Allāh, do not (even) think of them as dead. But they live in the presence of their Lord, they find their sustenance (in the blessings of Paradise).<sup>2</sup>*

The followers of all religious sects believe in the life of the martyrs. However, besides the Qur'ānic verses, a number of traditions draw our attention to the fact that there is life after death even for the non-believers and infidels and they are endowed with the capacity to respond to the words of the living. For example, after the battle of Badr, the Prophet (ﷺ) himself called the slain infidels by their names and asked them:

*Surely, we found the promise of our Lord absolutely true. (O infidels and non-believers!) Did you also find the promise of your lord true?*

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1. Qur' ān (*al-Baqarah*, the Cow) 2:154.

2. Qur' ān (*Āl 'Imrān*, the Family of 'Imrān) 3:169.

At this juncture ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb said to the Prophet (ﷺ): ‘O Prophet! You are addressing bodies which have no soul in them.’ To make it clear, the Prophet (ﷺ) addressed the Companions:

*I swear by the Power Who has in His control the life of Muḥammad! The words I am speaking to these (infidels and non-believers), they far excel you in their power to listen to them.<sup>1</sup>*

This agreed-upon tradition attests not only to the purgatorial life after death of the infidels and non-believers, but it also attests to their power of listening which excels even that of the Companions.

Similarly, the Prophet (ﷺ) taught every person passing by a graveyard of the Muslims to address the residents of the grave by the particle “yā (O)” and send salutations on them. This is the reason that Muslims teach their children to say *as-salāmu ‘alaykum yā ahl-al-qubūr* (O residents of graves, peace be on you) whenever they pass by a graveyard.

When the life of the infidels and non-believers, the life of the ordinary believers, and the life of the martyrs and the saints have been confirmed by the Qur’ān and the *sunnah*, how is it possible to deny the life of the prophets, particularly the life of the holy Prophet (ﷺ)? Especially, when he himself has repeatedly and explicitly declared:

*Allāh has declared it forbidden for the earth to eat the bodies of the prophets. So*

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1. Bukhārī narrated it in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of *maghāzī* (military expeditions led by the Prophet) ch.7 (4:1461#3757); Muslim, *as-Sahīh*, b. of *jannah wa sifat na’īmihā wa ahlihā* (Paradise, attributes of its and natives) ch.17 (4:2203#77/2874); Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (3:145; 4:29); Tabarānī, *al-Mu’jam-ul-kabīr* (5:96#4701); Baghawī, *Sharh-us-sunnah* (13:384#3779); Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (1:210); ‘Asqalānī, *Fath-ul-bārī* (7:301); and Haythamī in *Majma’-uz-zawā’id* (6:90-1).

*the prophets are living and they regularly receive their sustenance.*<sup>1</sup>

This *sahīh* (sound) tradition conclusively proves that the absolute and incomparable power of Allāh keeps the prophets alive in their graves. Another tradition records that the affairs of the Ummah are regularly presented to the Prophet (ﷺ) who expresses his gratitude to Allāh for their good deeds and prays to Allāh to forgive their misdeeds. The words of the tradition are as follows:

*Your deeds are presented to me. If they are good, I express my gratitude to Allāh, and if the deeds are not good, then I pray to Allāh for your forgiveness.*<sup>2</sup>

1. Ibn Mājah narrated this *sahīh* (sound) *hadīth* in his *Sunan*, b. of *janā'iz* (funerals) ch.65 (1:524#1636-7), b. of *iqāmat-us-salāt was-sunnah fihā* (establishing prayer and its sunnahs) ch.79 (1:345#1085); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, b. of *salāt* (prayer) 1:275 (#1047); Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, b. of *jumu'ah* (Friday prayer) 3:92; Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (4:8); Ibn Hibbān, *as-Sahīh* (3:191#910); Dārimī, *Sunan* (1:307#1580); Ibn Khuzaymah, *as-Sahīh* (3:118#1733); Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Musannaf* (2:516); Hākim, *al-Mustadrak* (1:278); Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam-ul-kabīr* (1:217#589); and Bayhaqī in *as-Sunan-ul-kubrā* (3:249).
2. Haythamī transmitted it in *Majma'uz-zawā'id* (9:24) and said that that tradition had been reported by Bazzār (in his *Musnad*) and its sub-narrators are all of *sahīh* (sound) *hadīth*. 'Irāqī has confirmed the soundness of its chain of transmission in his book *Tarh-ut-tathrīb fī sharh-it-taqrīb* (3:297). Ibn Sa'd has recorded it in *at-Tabaqāt-ul-kubrā* (2:194). Qādī 'Iyād has inscribed this tradition in *ash-Shifā* (1:19); and Suyūtī, recording it in *al-Khasā'is-ul-kubrā* (2:281) and *Manāhil-us-sifā fī takhrīj ahādīth ash-Shifā* (p.3), has commented that Ibn Abī Usāmah in his *Musnad* has reproduced it through Bakr bin 'Abdullāh al-Muzanī and Bazzār in his *Musnad* who have relied on its narration by 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd with a sound chain of transmission. It has been endorsed by Khafājī and Mullā 'Alī Qārī in their commentaries on *ash-Shifā*, i. e. *Nasīm-ur-*

The Lord, who has the power to give life and sustenance to the whole mankind both in this world and the Hereafter, also has the power to keep the prophets alive in the graves and give them sustenance. The unnatural and unscientific Greek philosophical discussions, which have percolated into Islamic literature, are no match to the natural and immutable principles of Islam. The injunctions of Islam clearly explain different kinds of life and the modes of addressing people in their purgatorial life and declare categorically that the prophets, martyrs, saints and ordinary Muslims, even infidels and non-believers, are alive in their graves. As far as the martyrs are concerned, the Qur'ān itself is a witness that they regularly receive their sustenance. Therefore, those who acknowledge appeal for help and intermediation in the earthly existence as valid but treat it as invalid, even as a form of disbelief after death, should remember that death is the taste of a moment, which passes away. According to Iqbāl, death is “a message of awakening behind the smokescreen of dream.”

Purgatorial life is a midway house between the earthly life and the life after death, which will be conferred on people on the Day of Judgement. Just as it is valid to beseech the help of a person during his earthly life and during his life after death, it is also an equally valid act to

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*riyād* (1:102) and *Sharh ash-Shifā* (1:36) respectively. *Hadīth*-scholar Ibn-ul-Jawzī has reproduced it in *al-Wafā bi-ahwāl-il-mustafā* (2:809-10) from Bakr bin ‘Abdullāh and Anas bin Mālīk. Subkī has copied this tradition in *Shifā’-us-siqām fī ziyārat khayr-il-anām* (p.34) from Bakr bin ‘Abdullāh al-Muzanī, and Ibn ‘Abd-ul-Hādī in *as-Sārim-ul-munkī* (p.266-7) has authenticated its veracity. Bazzār’s tradition has also been recorded by Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (4:257). ‘Asqalānī narrated it through Bakr bin ‘Abdullāh al-Muzanī in *al-Matālib-ul-‘āliyah* (4:22-3#3853). ‘Alī al-Hindī copied Ibn Sa’d’s tradition in *Kanz-ul-‘ummāl* (11:407#31903) and from Hārith (#31904). Nabhānī related it in *Hujjatullāh ‘alal-‘ālamīn fī mu’jazāt sayyid-il-mursalīn* (p.713).

besech his help and to rely on his means in his purgatorial life. This does not border on disbelief, because in all the three kinds of life, earthly, eternal and purgatorial, Allāh is the real Helper and the creature whose help is being sought is the derivative helper. This is in consonance with the Islamic teaching and does not even remotely smack of disbelief. To treat the creature as the real helper in all the three categories of life is tantamount to disbelief. It should be noted that the cause of disbelief is not located in the categories of life but in the division of real and derivative.

### **The life and capacity of the soul**

After a logical and categorical proof of the reality of the purgatorial life of human soul, it is sheer irrational stubbornness to deny the reality of seeking help from others after their death. To beseech help and assistance from the souls of the prophets and the saints is as justified as to seek help from living persons or the angels. When we seek help from a living being we are, in fact, seeking help from his soul. The human body is the dressing of the real man — soul. After death, when the soul is liberated from the material constraints of the body and, on account of its freedom from impurities of the flesh, then, like the angels, even more than them, it has the power to perform non-material acts. The soul is independent of the rules and regulations of the phenomenal world because her world — the world of command — is different from the cause-and-effect world of the body. Allāh highlights this reality in the holy Qur'ān:

*And these (infidels) ask you questions about the soul. Tell them that the soul is by the command of my Lord.<sup>1</sup>*

The souls are blessed with a greater capacity of action and performance in their purgatorial life than they had

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1. Qur'ān (*al-Isrā'*, the Night journey) 17:85.

enjoyed in conjunction with their bodies. They live in the world of command and can come more easily to the assistance of those who implore them for help. If beseeking the prophets and saints for help is confined only to a string of sensations and observations, it will be in conflict with the spirit of faith and merely an expression of philosophical speculation. Old philosophical reflections cannot lead us to the secrets of faith because they operate within entirely rational grooves and hopelessly lack the spiritual apprehension. The unfolding of the secrets of faith requires love and deep emotional concern. It is not just to scratch the surface but to delve into the abyss. It may be noted that the prophets and the saints pray to Allāh for the petitioners, and in response to their supplication, Allāh fulfils the need of the concerned person. The problem is that those who deny life to the residents of the graves believe that the dead are not in a position to pray. But the true Islamic belief is that they are alive and recognise their visitors in proportion to their consciousness and understanding. The soul's awareness grows even more acute after it has been separated from the body, and by jettisoning its physical inhibitions, it is made even more powerful.

Another way to understand the meaning of seeking help from others is that the power whose help is being sought is Allāh. But the petitioner says that he covets Allāh's help through the mediation of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for the fulfilment of his need. He implores Allāh through His favourites. He says to Allāh: 'I am from among the favourites of these saints, therefore, show special mercy to me as I am very close to them and love them immensely.' Thus Allāh condones his sins for the sake of the holy prophets and also on account of his close association with the saints and fulfils his need.

The people who gather to offer the funeral prayer of a person pray for his forgiveness by Allāh on a similar basis. They, in fact, serve as a means of forgiveness for the dead person and also act as his helpers.

## **The dead as a source of benefit for the living**

The final shot fired by these deniers of seeking help from the saints and the pious is that the dead cannot benefit the living because they lack the power even to shoo away a fly sitting on their body. How is it possible that a dead person, shorn of physical power, can help the living and that the living turn to him for help?

This hypothetical objection is actually based on their unawareness of the Prophet's traditions and teachings of the religious leaders. As we have already explained, the people who die and leave this worldly life, do not in fact die, but enter another life (purgatorial life). Though they are dead in our eyes, they are not actually dead, only their mode of life has changed as they have been transferred from one kind of existence to another kind of existence.

This can be explained by another example. Suppose there are two tube lights in a room. One of them is white and the other is blue. The light of the white tube is spreading all around while the blue tube is off. Now what will happen if the off-button of the white tube is pressed and precisely at that moment the on-button of the blue tube is also pressed? The room is the same, all the things in it are in their proper place, its doors, windows and curtains, etc., are also intact, but there is a change in the inner ambience of the room, that is, in the earlier state, everything appeared in the white light in its original colour, and now everything in the room appears to wear a different complexion on account of the colour radiated by the blue tube. Now the question is: 'has the colour of everything in the room really changed? Has the material composition of the objects changed?' The answer is in the negative. Every object is present in its original state. The difference lies only in our perception. The same applies to the dead people. When the light of their worldly life is put out, we think they are dead, while, in reality, the tube light of their purgatorial life is put on. Just as the saints and the pious are relied upon during their earthly life — while the real source of help is Allāh — similarly, they

can be relied upon as a means of help to fulfil our needs and to seek the nearness of Allāh even when they have left this material world.

Suyūtī has copied in his book *Sharh-us-sudūr bi-sharh hāl-il-mawtā wal-qubūr* (pp.257-9) fifteen traditions bearing on this theme, and furnishing a proof of the reality of purgatorial life, he has affirmed that the dead can benefit the living.

Ibn-ul-Qayyim has written an exhaustive book on “the soul” which is the most authentic book on this subject. At one place he has reported from ‘Abdullāh bin Mubārak that Abū Ayyūb al-Ansārī said:

*The deeds of the living are presented to the dead. If they see virtuous (deeds), they are pleased and rejoiced, and if they see (evil) deeds, they say: ‘O Allāh! Return them.’<sup>1</sup>*

Narrating another tradition, Ibn-ul-Qayyim writes: “‘Ibād bin ‘Ibād called on Ibrāhīm bin Sālih and at that time Ibrāhīm bin Sālih was the ruler of Palestine. ‘Ibād bin ‘Ibād said to him: give me some advice. Ibrāhīm bin Sālih said:

*What should I advise you? May God make you a pious man! I have received the news that the deeds of the living are presented to their dead relatives. Now you just reflect on your deeds which are presented to the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ).*

After relating this, Ibrāhīm bin Sālih cried so bitterly that his beard became wet.”<sup>2</sup>

In addition, there are many other traditions which prove that the deeds of the living are presented to the dead. Therefore, people, who are the victims of doubt, should study them to correct their faith which, according

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1. Ibn-ul-Qayyim, *Kitāb-ur-rūh* (p. 13).
  2. Ibn-ul-Qayyim, *Kitāb-ur-rūh* (p. 13).

to Ibn Taymiyyah, is the faith of Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah as has already been explained, which leads one to the straight path and brings one increasingly closer to the pleasure of the Lord. Exclusive reliance on reason can prove disastrous as reason is a deceptive chameleon and puts on a variety of guises to deceive its own followers; it is totally undependable and those who rely on it for true enlightenment, can never be blessed with guidance as misguidance is their destiny. According to Iqbāl:

*Move beyond reason because this light is  
only the candle on the way; it is not the  
destination.*

## **Love of the friends of Allāh is an integral part of faith**

We seek help from the prophets, the righteous and the saints and offer them as a means of access to Allāh on account of our limitless love and devotion for them. The choice of means is justified only by the presence of love. It is also an established fact that to love those who are near and dear to Allāh is in itself a virtuous act and this is obviously an argument, which cannot be rebutted by any other argument, no matter how subtle or elaborate or tantalising it may be.

### **1. Love of Allāh's favourites is a virtuous deed**

The petitioner is acting for himself because he loves those whom Allāh loves. He is in fact saying: 'O Lord, I love Your friend, the holy Prophet (ﷺ), and I love the orthodox Caliphs, the Companions, the Successors and their followers, the saints and the righteous. I offer this love to You as means so that You grant my prayer and fulfil my need.' It means love of Allāh's favoured ones becomes a means of the supplication's acceptance. There is no doubt that love of Allāh's favourites is not only the fulfilment of a divine command but is also a great virtuous deed. It is narrated by Abū Hurayrah:

*Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said: when Allāh loves some person, He sends for Jibrīl and commands him: verily, I love such and such person; you should also love him, so Jibrīl loves him as well. Then Jibrīl proclaims in the heavens that Allāh loves such and such person; you should also love him. Then the residents of the heavens love him as well. Then his love is sent down to the earth (the world).<sup>1</sup>*

First of all, Allāh elevated His Own obedient servant to the status of His beloved, then He commanded Jibrīl and all other angels that they should love His servant. The angels, following the divine command, also made him their beloved. In this all the heavenly creatures shared the divine love for His beloved servant. But the matter does not end here. Allāh descended this love for His servant down on this earth and then created a niche for the love and popularity of His servant in every heart and every creature fell in love with him. It follows that to love those who are loved by Allāh is a divine command. From this point of view this act of loving is in itself a virtuous act in which Allāh is not only Himself included but He has also included His angels as well as the creatures of the earth. When this act is endorsed not only by the practice of the prophets but also a popular act performed by the creatures

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1. Muslim transmitted it in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of *birr was-silah wal-ādāb* (virtue, joining of the ties of relationship and good manners) ch.48 (4:2030#157/2637); Bakhārī narrated it at three places in his *as-Sahīh*: b. of *bad'ul-khalq* (beginning of creation) ch.6 (3:1175#3037), b. of *adab* (good manners) ch.41 (5:2246#5693), and b. of *tawhīd* (Islamic monotheism) ch.33 (6:2721#7047); Ahmad bin Hambal in *Musnad* (2:413); Mālik bin Anas in *al-Muwattā*, b. of *sha'ar* (hair) ch.5 (2:953#15); and Khatīb Tabrīzī in *Mishkāt-ul-masābīh*, b. of *ādāb* (good manners) ch.16 (3:74#5005).

of the earth and the heavens, then what could be a better virtuous act in favour of the petitioner.

## 2. Reciprocal nearness of lover and beloved on the Day of Judgement

True love is that virtuous act which draws the lover increasingly closer to the beloved. It is narrated by Anas bin Mālik:

*A person called on the Prophet (ﷺ) and said to him: 'O Messenger of Allāh, when is the Hour (the Day of Judgement)?' The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) stood up for prayer. After performing the prayer he said: 'where is the person who had asked about the Hour?' That person replied: 'O Messenger of Allāh, I am here.' He said: 'what preparation have you made for that (Hour)?' He submitted: 'O Messenger of Allāh, I have offered neither many prayers nor kept many fasts, but I know that much that I love Allāh and His Messenger (ﷺ).' On hearing this, Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) commented that (on the Day of Judgement) a person will be with him whom he loves and you will be judged along with him. It is reported that, after accepting Islam, this made the Muslims happier than anything else had made them in the past.<sup>1</sup>*

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1. Tirmidhī narrated it in *al-Jāmi' us-sahīh*, b. of *zuhd* (piety) ch.50 (4:595#2385), and graded it *sahīh* (sound); Ahmad bin Hambal in *Musnad* (3:104, 168, 178, 200); Ibn Hibbān, *as-Sahīh* (1:182, 308-9#8,105; 16:345#7348); Baghawī, *Sharh-us-sunnah* (13:60-4#3475-9). Bukhārī also narrated it with different words in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of *fadā'il-us-sahābah* (merits of the Companions) ch.6 (3:1349#3485), b. of *adab* (good manners) ch.95, 96 (5:2282-3#5815-9), and b. of *ahkām* (judgements) ch.10 (6:2615#6734); Muslim in *as-Sahīh*, b. of *birr was-silah wal-ādāb* (virtue, joining of

This tradition proves that whereas prayer, fast, *zakāt* and *hajj* are virtuous acts and their performance entitles a man to a set of rewards, similarly love is also an act of virtue, which results in nearness to his beloved. The words of the tradition themselves endorse love as a virtuous act. When the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) asked the petitioner: ‘what preparation have you made for the Day of Judgement?’ He replied: ‘O Messenger of Allāh! My acts do not include big-ticket deeds like prayer and fast, but the act of loving Allāh and His Messenger (ﷺ) is one of my deeds.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) replied that as each act has a reward, similarly the act of loving has also a reward. A person will be judged along with the man he loves and you will be judged on the Day of Judgement along with the man you love.’ It means that this man, simply on account of his love for the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), will be judged with him. He will be in the Prophet’s company and this is a promise made by the Prophet (ﷺ) himself and this is Allāh’s promise as well. Besides, this promise is not restrictive; it has a general application; it applies to the Companions, the Successors, their followers, even the entire Muslim community.

Love of Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) is an act, which not only earns the lover a number of blessings through the agency of his beloved on this earth but also brings him closer to his beloved in the next world. Since the word *hubb* (love) here is used in a generic sense, it equally applies to all forms and grades of love. Its litmus test is

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the ties of relationship and good manners) ch. 50 (4:2032-3#161-4/2639); Ahmad bin Hambal in *Musnad* (3:110,165, 167,172, 173,207,208,255,276); ‘Abd-ur-Razzāq, *al-Musannaf* (11:199#20317); Humaydī, *Musnad* (2:502#1190); Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Musannaf* (15:169#19407); Abū Ya‘lā, *Musnad* (5:144#2758; 6: 36,256#3280-1, 3557); Ibn Hibbān, *as-Sahīh* (2:323-4#563-5); Tabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam-ul-kabīr* (3:183#3061); Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab-ul-īmān* (1:380,387 #462,498; 2:130-1#1379); and Khatīb Tabrīzī in *Mishkāt-ul-masābīh*, b. of *adab* (good manners) ch. 16 (3:75#5009).

sincerity as insincere love is a travesty of true love and, therefore, not only repulsively hideous but also morally revolting. This comment is vindicated by the words of Anas bin Mālik that after accepting Islam, he had never found the Muslims happier than he found them on hearing this explanation.

This tradition conclusively proves that the love of Allāh's favoured people serves as a means for divine blessings. And when the servant prays to Allāh, he, in fact, is saying: 'my Master, the love I have for Your beloved Prophet (ﷺ), and the love I have for the Companions, the Successors and the righteous on account of You, I offer this act of love as mediation to You and request You to grant my such and such need for their sake.' The servant's love for Allāh's favoured ones is an act that enjoys Allāh's blessings and this very act becomes a means for the servant.

### 3. Love for Allāh's lovers is the cause of divine love

The servant, following the divine commands, performs all kinds of worship: he offers prayer, keeps fast, performs *hajj* and pays *zakāt*. In short, he fulfils all his obligations. These acts have twofold significance: on the one hand, he is implementing the divine commands; on the other hand, he earns the reward for these acts. The range and scope of these rewards include a place in Paradise for him. But the highest and the most cherished prize is the pleasure of Allāh. To secure this prize, he spends every moment of his life in divine love. And he does not restrict his remembrance of Allāh only to a specific schedule or timetable but it straddles his entire life. No matter where he is, or what he is doing, he never forgets the Lord. The focus of his love or enmity is Allāh alone. The following tradition is about such lovers of Allāh:

It is narrated by Mu'ādh bin Jabal that he heard the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) saying:

*Allāh the Exalted and Almighty said:  
'My love has been made obligatory for  
those two persons who love each other on*

*My count and spend time together for My sake, and see each other for My sake and give money to each other generously for My sake.'*<sup>1</sup>

Now a petitioner loves the holy Prophet (ﷺ), members of the Prophet's family, the Companions, the saints and the righteous people simply because the basis of his love is the love of Allāh. By loving these people, he himself in return is loved by Allāh. Thus all these forms are various links in the chain of love, which is ultimately the love of Allāh, and these expressions and acts of love eventually draw him closer to Allāh and he acquires a favoured status. Thus the petitioner's act of love is regarded by Allāh as a virtuous as well as a favourite act and it is graded higher than other virtuous acts mainly because in this act the Lord Himself is one of the participants and it is uncertain whether the other acts will find divine acceptance or not. But love of the saints and the favourites of Allāh is an act, which transforms the petitioner into Allāh's beloved. In this way its acceptance is guaranteed.

#### **4. Love for the sake of Allāh results in higher grades**

Love of the servants of Allāh brings one not only nearer to Him but also helps one in securing higher grades.

It is narrated by 'Umar bin al-Khattāb that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

*Among Allāh's servants there are some who are neither prophets nor martyrs but*

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1. This *sahīh* (sound) *hadīth* narrated by Mālik bin Anas in *al-Muwattā*, b. of *sha'ar* (hair) ch.5 (2:954#16), and Ibn 'Abdul-Barr said its chain is good. Ahmad bin Hambal also transmitted it in his *Musnad* (5:233); Hākim in *al-Mustadrak* (4:169), who graded it *sahīh*, and also confirmed by Dhahabī; Baghawī in *Sharh-us-sunnah*, (13:49-50#3463); Khaṭīb T abriṣī in *Mishkāt-ul-masābīh*, b. of *ādāb* (good manners) ch.16 (3:75#5011).

*on the Day of Judgement the prophets and the martyrs will envy their grades. The Companions asked: 'O Messenger of Allāh, tell us, who are those people?' He replied: 'those are the people who love one another on Allāh's count. They are neither related to one another nor do they have any property to exchange. I swear on Allāh that they will have faces of light, they will be on pulpits of light. They will not have any fear when others will be afraid, they will not have any grief when others will be aggrieved.' Then he recited the verse: Beware! No doubt, there is no fear for the friends of Allāh nor shall they be sad and sorrowful. [Qur'ān (Yūnus, Jonah) 10:62.]<sup>1</sup>*

The tradition has clearly established the fact that people who love one another simply because they love Allāh deserve high rewards and grades on the Day of Judgement and they will receive these precious gifts through the mediation of Allāh's favourites because their love of these intimate friends is based fundamentally on their love of Allāh from which basic source it draws its strength and influence.

### **5. Love of Allāh's friends is the cause of Allāh's love**

Love of holy men and saints is an act which earns the servant not only the love of Allāh but also draws him closer to Him.

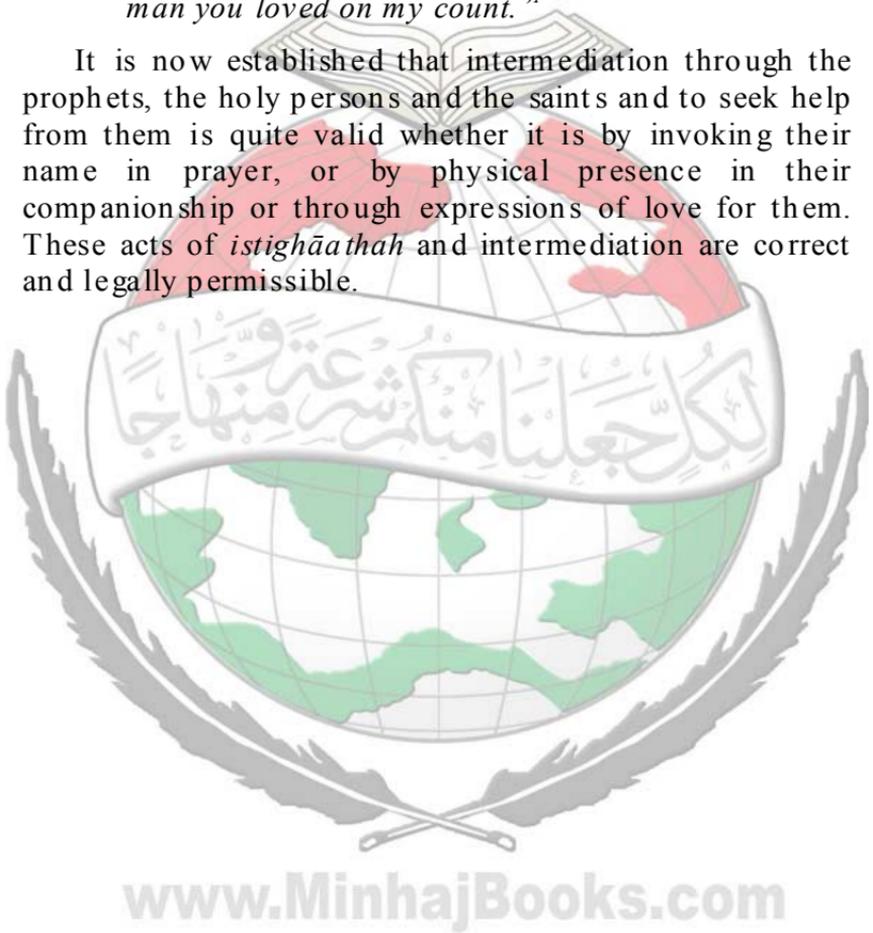
It is reported by Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said:

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1. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, b. of *ijārah* (wages) 3:288 (#3527); Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab-ul-īmān*, (6:486#8998,8999); Khatīb Tabrīzī, *Mishkāt-ul-masābīh*, b. of *adab* (good manners) ch. 16 (3:75-6#5012).

*If two persons love each other on Allāh's count, and if one of them is in the east and the other in the west, Allāh will bring them together on the Day of Resurrection and He will say: 'this is the man you loved on my count.'*<sup>1</sup>

It is now established that intermediation through the prophets, the holy persons and the saints and to seek help from them is quite valid whether it is by invoking their name in prayer, or by physical presence in their companionship or through expressions of love for them. These acts of *istighāathah* and intermediation are correct and legally permissible.



1. Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab-ul-īmān*, (6:492#9022); Khatīb Tabrīzī, *Mishkāt-ul-masābīh*, b. of *ādāb* (good manners) ch.16 (3:77#5024); 'Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz-ul-'ummāl* (9:4#24646).

## Chapter 4

### Smoothing out the Wrinkles

Though beseeching the prophets, the saints and the martyrs for help and assistance is quite appropriate and is proved both by the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*, some of its denigrators have castigated it as an act of disbelief on the basis of self-concocted reasons. In this chapter we propose to review these objections one by one and rebut them on the basis of proofs furnished by the Qur'ān and the traditions.

#### **First objection: Appeal for help is in itself an act of worship**

In order to declare appeal for help to someone other than Allāh as a form of disbelief, they, first of all, identify it with worship. Since it is an act of disbelief to worship anyone except Allāh, therefore, to appeal to someone except Allāh for help and assistance is a kind of disbelief. They put forward a battery of arguments to prove their contention:

1. *Rather, who is the one who grants the supplication of a person in distress when he calls Him and relieves the trouble?*<sup>1</sup>
2. *And those whom these (polytheists) worship besides Allāh can create nothing and have themselves been created. (They) are dead, lifeless, and they do not know*

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1. Qur'ān (*an-Naml*, the Ants) 27:62.

*(even this much) as when (people) will be raised up.*<sup>1</sup>

3. *And those you invoke besides Him, their power is even lesser than the skin of a date-stone. Even if you invoke them, they will not be able to listen to your call, and if (as a supposition) they do listen, they cannot answer your call and on the Day of Judgement they will deny your partnership, and will not tell you any news like the One Who is acquainted with all things.*<sup>2</sup>

4. *And who is more astray than the one who invokes, besides God, such (gods) as will not answer him to the Day of Judgement and who in fact are unconscious of their call.*<sup>3</sup>

5. *That (person) calls on such deities, besides God, as can neither hurt nor profit him.*<sup>4</sup>

6. *Nor worship besides Allāh any (idols): such will neither profit you nor hurt you. Then if you did so, you will certainly be among those who do wrong. And if God hurts you, there is none except Him who can remove it.*<sup>5</sup>

7. *He worships him whose hurt is nearer than his profit.*<sup>6</sup>

They rely on these Qur'ānic verses and assert that anyone who invokes any other person besides Allāh

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1. Qur' ān (*an-Nahl*, the Bee) 16:20-1.
  2. Qur' ān (*Fātir*, the Originator) 35:13-4.
  3. Qur' ān (*al-Ahqāf*, the Sand-dunes) 46:5.
  4. Qur' ān (*al-Hajj*, Pilgrimage) 22:12.
  5. Qur' ān (*Yūnus*, Jonah) 10:106-7.
  6. Qur' ān (*al-Hajj*, Pilgrimage) 22:13.

should be condemned. They argue on this basis that invoking help and seeking assistance is reserved only for Allāh. Therefore, any appeal for help to anyone else besides him is a form of disbelief. This kind of reasoning is actually based on misconception and perverse logic. In the following pages an attempt is made to pick out flaws in this mode of reasoning and to present a sound and clear picture of the true position.

### **Each appeal for help is not an act of worship**

In these Qur'ānic verses the word *du'ā'* has been used in the sense of worship. But the holy Qur'ān does not interpret the word *du'ā'* as worship in all contexts, otherwise minds which have gone astray will not refrain from casting stones even on the prophets and will marshal assorted evidence in a futile effort to prove their point of view. Allāh says in the holy Qur'ān:

1. *Say: Come! Let us call (together) our sons and your sons.*<sup>1</sup>

2. *Then (after a little while) a (girl) out of the two came to him who was walking with modesty. She said: 'my father is calling you to remunerate you for the (labour) you have done for us by feeding water (to) our (goats).'*<sup>2</sup>

3. *Then (after slaughtering them), put a portion of them on every hill and call to them, they will come to you with speed.*<sup>3</sup>

4. *When we shall call together all factions of human beings with their leaders.*<sup>4</sup>

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1. Qur' ān (*Āl 'Imrān*, the Family of 'Imrān) 3:61.
  2. Qur' ān (*al-Qasas*, the Narratives) 28:25.
  3. Qur' ān (*al-Baqarah*, the Cow) 2:260.
  4. Qur' ān (*al-Isrā'*, the Night journey) 17:71.

The comments made by ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Abbās on this Qur’ānic verse are as follows:

*Here the leader or Imām means the person whose invitation the people have followed, whether this invitation leads them to evil or guidance.<sup>1</sup>*

It means that each community will gather around its leader whose commands it followed during its earthly sojourn and Allāh will call them by this specific label: ‘O followers of such and such leader, your fate will be decided along with him.’

In short, if we interpret the word *du‘ā* in these verses as worship, we are more likely to open the window of disbelief rather than close it. Therefore it seems logical to conclude that if the word *du‘ā* is linked with an infidel or a non-believer, it will mean an act of worship, otherwise its meaning will change with the change of context. In the verses cited against the justification of appeal for help as arguments the word *du‘ā* is directed at the infidels, therefore, in these situations it will mean an act of worship, but they do not disacknowledge the validity of appeal for help because the favourites of Allāh whose help is being sought are not entitled to be worshipped.

## **Second objection: Appeal for help is a form of disbelief in supernatural matters**

This objection is based on a particular division. Matters are generally divided into two categories on the basis of causes:

1. Ordinary matters
2. Extraordinary matters

According to this division, it is valid to seek the help of others in ordinary matters because they fall under natural causes but it is invalid in extraordinary matters because they fall under supernatural causes and therefore

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1. Baghawī narrated it in *Ma‘ālim-ut-tanzīl* (3:126).

is a form of disbelief. Matters of cause-and-effect are generally handled on this level, but if this pattern is discarded and appeal is made through other causes, it is called appeal for help through supernatural causes, and if reliance is made only on cause-and-effect, it is called appeal for help through natural causes. The means for help adopted in this case are generally compatible with the matters for whom help is being implored. It should be kept in mind that in their opinion it is appeal for help through natural causes to cooperate with one another in worldly matters, and therefore it is a valid act as Allāh says:

*And help one another in (acts of) righteousness and piety.<sup>1</sup>*

Though they treat appeal for help through natural causes in ordinary matters as a valid act, they deny its validity in extraordinary matters.

### **Intellectual settlement of the objection**

**First point:** The division into appeal for help through natural and supernatural causes (relating to ordinary and extraordinary matters) declares the latter as an invalid act, while the holy Qur'ān makes no reference to this distinction tending to justify one and condemn the other. This is a self-fabricated division and is the result of specious logic and flawed reasoning. No Qur'ānic verse can be cited to support this division.

We should also keep in mind that extraordinary matters are engineered by factors which can be explained by some level of reasoning. But, with the exception of *kun fayakūn* (be! and it is) no event is motivated by supernatural causes. Since the causes of some phenomena are not apparently known to us, we tend to explain them through supernatural causes.

**Second point:** The verse in *sūrah al-Fātihah*, which is regarded as the fundamental link in their reasoning, makes

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1. Qur'ān (*al-Mā'idah*, the Feast) 5:2.

no mention of the causes under which this division has been forged, while the words *iyāka nasta'īnu* (we seek help only from You) are being used in the absolute sense. The rule is that the absolute has a continuous sway in its area of application, that is, the absolute cannot tolerate any fluctuation in its range of reference. This is what fundamentally differentiates the absolute from the relative, the real from the contingent, the categorical from the conditional. Therefore we cannot clamp on it self-invented meanings. We cannot say: 'O Allāh! We seek Your help only in extraordinary or supernatural matters because no one else except You can help us in these matters. As far as ordinary or worldly matters are concerned, we have no need to seek Your help because there are countless other sources which could be tapped for the acquisition of help.' A division on these lines is nothing but a reflection of their lack of knowledge and stupidity and is a one-way ticket to disbelief. Thus their own perverse reasoning boomerangs on them; they themselves are guilty of the disbelief of which they have accused others.

**Third point:** All division and classification presuppose differentiation. But the question is that in the case of *iyāka nasta'īnu* there is no need for such differentiation as the absolute is categorical and indivisible. Any effort to divide it is self-frustrating. They have divided it despite the glaringly obvious fact that it is both unjustified and unwarranted. Besides, it clearly reveals that their own thesis is marked by an inherent contradiction as they justify appeal for help through natural causes while denying it through supernatural causes. It is, in fact, nothing but a highly distorted reflection of their own squint-eyed vision. The division can be vindicated only if we think of the dichotomy in terms of real help and derivative help, which in reality, amounts to no division. If all help derives from the absolute, then the power of the derivative source of help is only contingent, and it acquires substance only through the willingness of the real

helper. Thus the only sensible way is in terms of real and derivative and not whether one kind of appeal for help is justified and the other is unjustified.

In the words of *īyyāka nasta'īnu* the creature is imploring Allāh. He is, in fact, saying: 'O Allāh! No matter which external source we tap for the relief of our immediate need, we do not regard this source of relief and help as the real helper. We treat only You as the true and real Helper because, if Your support and willingness is lacking and if Your consent is missing, no one else has the power to help us out of our trouble.' This is the unwavering core of our faith whether we are recovering through the medicine of a doctor or through the supplication of a saint; we do not consider them the real helpers. Therefore in any case and under all circumstances, Allāh alone is our real Helper because the assistance of all others is predicative, that is, it is predicated only on Allāh's pleasure and willingness. For us both the medicine and the supplication, the doctor and the saint, are only means and this is their only significance because Allāh alone is the real Helper.

**Fourth point:** In some cases, however, it appeals to our common sense to uphold the division between natural causes and supernatural causes, and its relevance is found only in terms of their application and not on the basis of their inherent differentiation. Some acts are resolved by natural means while a supernatural solution has to be explored for other acts. The causes are present in both cases. The only difference is that in the case of natural acts, the causes are visible while in the case of supernatural acts the causes are generally invisible. The natural causes may be called external and material while the supernatural causes may be called internal and spiritual, and this classification sounds more appropriate. Though material causes are discarded in the case of supernatural acts, their presence, however, cannot be denied. It means that acts are not supernatural in the absolute sense. The only difference is that the causes of

natural acts are external which are visible to the common man or perceivable by him, while the causes of supernatural acts, on account of their non-material complexion, are not visible to the common eye.

When the prophets, the saints, the pious people or any other individual is implored for help within the scope of the world of cause-and-effect, the words used as a means of help will possess real meaning but even in this case the real helper will be Allāh alone. But when help is being implored in a world beyond cause-and-effect, the words used for help will have only derivative value because even in this situation the real helper is Allāh alone, that is, in both cases, the real meaning is lacking. The only difference is that the use of words in the natural context was based on fact while in the supernatural context, the entertainment of real meaning was objectionable, therefore, the word itself was shorn of real meaning. In short, both in terms of semantics and faith, the word real is exclusively reserved for Allāh.

### **Division between real and derivative is inevitable**

A group, who denies the relevance of beseeching help from any quarter besides Allāh, however, believes that it is valid in natural matters, while there is no need to stress its real and derivative components. Now we would like to ask these people that if appeal for help through natural means and the division between the real and the derivative is disacknowledged, then who will be the real helper in natural matters? Is the real helper the doctor who is prescribing medical treatment for the patient or Allāh? If the answer is that even in worldly affairs the real helper is Allāh, then why should we retain the distinction between the natural and the supernatural means or sources of help? Why should it be allowed through the operation of natural causes and declared a kind of disbelief when it operates through supernatural causes? How is it possible to resolve the contradiction between belief in Allāh as the true helper and seeking help from others besides Allāh,

without acknowledging the distinction between the real and the derivative? The Qur'ān says:

*And our Lord is infinitely Merciful and His help alone is sought against the (vexing) words (O non-believers,) you utter.<sup>1</sup>*

On the other hand, if the answer is that in ordinary matters the true helper is not Allāh but man, it creates duality, which is a negation of belief that the helper in ordinary matters is the creature but the helper in extraordinary matters is the Creator. On the basis of this duality, if we admit the creature as the true helper, it will amount to the same kind of disbelief as was practised by the infidels of Makkah that in ordinary affairs they relied on men as helpers and in other affairs beseeched Allāh for help. If it is admitted that Allāh is also the Helper in worldly affairs, then how is it correct to seek the help of someone who is not-God.

The conclusive argument is that Allāh is the only Helper even in ordinary matters, and help from the creatures is implored only in the derivative sense, not in the real sense — then the question arises if beseeching others for help besides Allāh in ordinary matters is valid where it is only derivative, then how can it be declared invalid in extraordinary matters where its derivative status is established beyond doubt. The contradiction is simply incomprehensible.

### **Justification of help from derivative source in supernatural matters**

Reliance on the derivative source of help in supernatural matters is justified in the sense that, though apparently, the source is other than God, actually it is God whose help is being coveted. In addition, the word help is used in its derivative sense at many places in the Holy Qur'ān. The

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1. Qur'ān (*al-Ambiyā'*, the Prophets) 21:112.

frequency with which it is used is amazing. In the following pages, a few examples from the Qur'ān will be given to wash out the misconception in the minds of the believers and to bring home to them the dire consequences if the distinction between the real and the derivative is blotted out:

### Allegation of disbelief against Jibrīl (عليه السلام)?

When Jibrīl (عليه السلام), with Allāh's consent, appeared before Maryam (Mary) in the shape of a human being to convey to her the news of the birth of 'Īsā (عليه السلام), he said:

*I have only been sent by your Lord. (I have come because) I should bless you with a pure son.<sup>1</sup>*

In this Qur'ānic verse the statement by Jibrīl (عليه السلام) borders on the supernatural because the birth of a son without marital consummation is impossible in the world of cause-and-effect, and, to convey the news of the birth of a son to a chaste, unmarried woman is a graphic Qur'ānic illustration of help in supernatural matters, which is simply inconceivable without the interpolation of material causes.

The point to be noted is that if a person beseeches a saint or one of Allāh's favourites for help only as a means, some of our ignorant friends instantly clamp on him the allegation of disbelief, while if some non-God — Jibrīl(عليه السلام) — says, "I bless you with a pure son," and Allāh Himself mentions it in the holy Qur'ān, why don't they call it disbelief because both situations are substantially identical? In the case of beseeching help the petitioner is essentially a human being and remains so under all the circumstances, but the statement "I bless you with a pure son" is an encroachment on the divine powers if it is not interpreted derivatively; if it is interpreted in the real sense, then the angel acquires the status of God

1. Qur'ān (Maryam, Mary) 19:19.

which is nothing but disbelief. To bless someone with a child is a divine act and the duty of a creature is only to seek His blessing. If a person's act of beseeching help from non-Allāh is an act of disbelief, then the statement by a non-Allāh that "I bless you with a pure son" amounts to even a higher form of disbelief. The question is that Jibrīl (عليه السلام) did not commit disbelief despite his statement apparently bordering on disbelief; rather his statement proved truthful. Then how could we vindicate his statement that apparently seemed to defy the powers of divinity, as nobody has dared call him (may God forbid) a disbeliever?

Though the statement, "I bless you with a pure son," apparently belongs to Jibrīl (عليه السلام), but the "son" actually refers to the son Allāh is about to bless her with, and the angel is only a cause, a means for the act which is, in essence, divine. Thus the Qur'ānic verse (19:19) embodies only an act of help which is really an act of intermediation only and is a superb example of derivative help furnished by the Qur'ān itself.

Some people raise objection against the translation of the verse. They opine that the subject of the verb *li-ahaba* (I should bless) is Allāh Himself and Jibrīl (عليه السلام) said it reportedly. While in another recitation of the verse the verb is *li-yahaba* (He (Allāh) should bless).

The deniers accept these two translations because they cater to their temperament and pamper their mood. And they reject the preferred one that is in the holy Qur'ān and recited accordingly. So what hindrance remains there to accept the preponderant recitation and meaning of the verse that has also been narrated by the exegetes of great repute? The same meaning that we narrated is printed in the translation of the holy Qur'ān in Urdu published by Shāh Fahad Qur'ān Karīm Complex, Saudi Arabia.

### **Allegation of disbelief against 'Īsā (عليه السلام)?**

When 'Īsā (عليه السلام) articulated the divine truth publicly and tried to invite the members of his community to divine

unity and dissuade them from committing disbelief, he showed a number of miracles to them. His invitation has been phrased in the holy Qur'ān in these words:

*Surely, I have come to you, with a sign from your Lord that I make for you, out of clay, the (figure of a) bird, and breathe into it and it becomes instantly a flying bird by God's leave. And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead by God's leave, and I declare to you (all) that you eat, and that you store in your houses. Surely in that there is a sign for you if you are believers.<sup>1</sup>*

This Qur'ānic verse relates five miracles performed by 'Īsā (عليه السلام):

1. to make a flying bird out of clay
2. to heal a person who is born blind
3. to heal leprosy
4. to quicken the dead
5. to reveal news from the unseen

Allāh had blessed 'Īsā (عليه السلام) with five miracles which he used to openly declare his faith and which have been endorsed by God Himself in the Holy Qur'ān. In this Qur'ānic verse, 'Īsā (عليه السلام) says: 'I have come to you, with a sign from your Lord that I make for you, out of clay, the (figure of a) bird.' The word *akhluqu* (I create) has been used instead of the word *aj'alu* (I make). A little reflection will show you that the whole debate revolves around the distinction between real and derivative, the power that is self-generated and the power that is generated by the other's will, the non-contingent and the contingent.

In this Qur'ānic verse, the real helper is not 'Īsā (عليه السلام), but Allāh Himself. The debate is, in fact, verbal because the words have been used not in their essential meaning,

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1. Qur'ān (*Āl 'Imrān*, the Family of 'Imrān) 3:49.

but only in their borrowed sense. Though the mode of address is vocative, the real Helper is Allāh Himself and what the Prophet (ﷺ) is performing has the divine sanction behind it. This is a fine example of the verbal distinction between the real and the non-real furnished by the Qur'ān.

One can say that the entire episode relates to the miracle performed by 'Īsā (ﷺ) and a miracle is irrelevant to a discussion of appeal for help. The simple answer is that "the miracle is the healing of the sick and not the arrogation of divine powers to himself." The fact is that the supernatural acts performed by the Prophet (ﷺ) possess only a derivative meaning because both disease and its recovery are from Allāh. When it is an immutable fact that Allāh alone heals a leper and a person who is born blind, then why did 'Īsā (ﷺ) say, "I heal." In principle, he should have said that 'though I cast my hand over a leper and a blind person, I do not heal them; it is, in fact, Allāh who heals them.' It would not have reduced the impact of the miracle in any sense but he only derivatively arrogated it to himself.

The fourth statement he made was "And I quicken the dead, by God's leave." This is really an extreme case. He is not saying: 'you bring a dead person, then I shall pray to Allāh and He, on account of my prayer, shall bring him to life.' But he said, "I bring the dead to life by God's leave." It means that the use of words and the specific mode of address are only derivatively attributed to the creature, and not in the real sense. It is quite valid in the case of 'Īsā (ﷺ) because it is being used only in a reflective sense through the words *bi-idhn Allāh* (by God's leave) he is declaring only Allāh as the true Helper.

The fifth statement made by him says, "And I declare to you (all) that you eat, and that you store in your houses." He does not say that he is doing so because he has been informed by God; on the other hand, he says, "I give you the news." These words clearly embody an aspect of knowledge of the unseen because information

about what someone has eaten falls within the realm of the unseen and is known to Allāh alone. ‘Īsā (عليه السلام) does not say, “God informs me,” though the fact is that it is Allāh Who is informing him but he has not expressed it in his words and has only derivatively attributed it to himself which clearly reveals that the knowledge of the unseen can be derivatively claimed by non-Allāh, and it is valid otherwise a Messenger of Allāh would never have committed such an act.

The statement publicly made by ‘Īsā (عليه السلام) must border on disbelief in the eyes of our modern scholars who do not tire of trumpeting their faith in divine unity. Such a mode of thinking will not even exempt the prophets from the stigma of disbelief. No sane believer will subscribe to their distorted point of view because to accuse the prophets of disbelief is in itself a kind of disbelief. Therefore, this trend of speculation may prove hazardous for the entire world of Islam as it will not even spare the prophets who devoted their lives to win Allāh’s pleasure and favour.

### **Allegation of disbelief against Allāh?**

The specific verse of *sūrah Āl ‘Imrān* records the words uttered by ‘Īsā (عليه السلام), “I bring the dead to life by God’s leave and I breathe life into the figures of birds made out of clay, etc,” but in the following verse, Allāh Himself is supporting his words:

*And when you, by My leave, made (the figure) like that of a bird out of kneaded clay.*<sup>1</sup>

Allāh has not declared: ‘O ‘Īsā! I made for you birds of clay and brought them to life, for you I gave sight to the persons born blind and healed the lepers.’ Allāh could have done so for the sake of His favourites because He knew that nothing could shake them in their belief in Him.

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1. Qur’ ān (*al-Mā’idah*, the Feast) 5:110.

It is an admitted fact that breathing life into something and making it alive is exclusively an act of the Creator of the universe. But for 'Īsā (عليه السلام) He Himself declared:

*Then you breathed into it, so (the figure) became a bird by My leave, and when you healed the persons born blind and the lepers by My leave, and when you by My leave made the dead (alive by) taking them out (of their graves and) made them (stand up).<sup>1</sup>*

The verse makes it clear that these words are only derivatively applied to non-Allāh and this mode of application is valid. These words were uttered by Allāh Himself and were also used by the prophets though there was no compulsion for them to make use of such words. Their derivative use in the Holy Qur'ān by Allāh is not only the greatest justification of their delegated meaning but is also an attestation of their validity.

This discussion also furnishes a specific code for internal and external causes, that is, in supernatural causes, even though the words are directly attributed to the creature, the real driving force behind these words is Allāh Himself because He is the only real Helper and supporter.

### **Third objection: Beseeking someone other than God for help smacks of his invisible power**

Beseeking someone other than God is a form of disbelief because to seek help from a remote distance falls under supernatural causes, and this is the third reason in their armoury of arguments. Since the person whose help is being implored appears to be at an invisible distance, we invest him with supernatural power, which is only Allāh's prerogative. Through this act, we also invest him with absolute power. Since only Allāh possesses absolute

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1. Qur'ān (*al-Mā'idah*, the Feast) 5:110.

power, it is a form of disbelief to invest not-God with such power. This, in fact, amounts to creating partners for Allāh, which is a glaring negation of divine unity and therefore, in conflict with the most fundamental article of our faith which proclaims divine indivisibility.

### **Rebuttal of the self-concocted belief**

Self-concocted theories make the confusion worse confounded and therefore, ask for their instant elimination. This is entirely wrong that such persons possess power of the unseen. It is, in fact, a kind of spiritual quality, which Allāh confers on His chosen creatures. To call this spiritual power, which Allāh Himself has given to His special people, absolute is to create discord among the believers. Besides, even the non-believers seem to possess this kind of power and this does not transform them into godheads. If the non-believers can claim this virtue, why should the believers be deprived of its benefit who have a greater claim on Allāh's favours. The reference to internet, which is the latest symbol of modern scientific progress, seems to be the most appropriate way to illustrate our point. In this scientific world of material progress, where the human concept of a global village has now become a reality, distances have shrunk in the computer world. The internet has reduced the world to the level of a grain of rye. The state of progress allows man to sit in a closed room and to be in touch with the latest developments in the outside world. The question arises: 'do the internet and the computers linked with it possess the power of the unseen?' This reveals the fundamental contradiction in their line of reasoning. They do not label the computers and their mode of work as a form of disbelief, but it is difficult for them to swallow the operations of the spiritual power, which Allāh has given to His favourite people, and they dub it unashamedly as a form of disbelief. If the outcome of scientific progress has made the impossible as possible and given birth to instant communication where an event

happening in one corner of the world is instantly splashed across the whole world, and it does not clash with the concept of divine unity, then how can an expression and manifestation of spiritual causes be tagged as a kind of disbelief. If the inventions of the disbelievers and the infidels, and the invisible powers they seem to project, do not amount to disbelief, then why should the spiritual powers enjoyed through divine consent by the prophets, the pious and the saints be equated with disbelief. This, in fact, is the highest form of perversion. We do not denigrate the modern inventions and the power with which they have invested mankind, but they are no match for the spiritual power and enlightenment with which Allāh has blessed His own favourites; the prophets, the saints and the righteous. This spiritual power has been expressed by Shaykh ‘Abd-ul-Qādir Jīlānī in these words:

*I see all the countries of Allāh simultaneously as if they are like a grain of rye on my palm (in my eye).<sup>1</sup>*

Some people suffer from the doubt that when we call someone from a distance, it means that the one who is being called knows who the caller is, that is, he, in fact, knows the caller very well. On this basis, he seems to possess knowledge of the unseen, and since knowledge of the unseen also implies absolute power, therefore, on account of these two ingredients, it is a kind of disbelief as well as an illegal act. The answer to this perverse reasoning is quite simple. In this age of scientific progress, both these aspects are present in the human knowledge derived from modern inventions, while Qur’ān, the Word of God, has already anticipated and confirmed it, but being divine in origin, it is free from all pollution. The Qur’ān carries information about remote knowledge and the power over acts and phenomena. Sulaymān (عليه السلام) said during the dialogue with his courtiers:

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1. Shaykh ‘Abd-ul-Qādir Jīlānī, *Qasīdah ghawthiyyah*.

*You chiefs! Which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission.<sup>1</sup>*

The throne of queen Balqīs was at a distance of 900 miles from Sulaymān’s court which none of the courtiers had seen. In spite of it, none of them asked him: ‘O Prophet, the throne is at a distance of hundreds of miles, placed behind an invisible curtain and you are demanding that it should be brought to you immediately. Do you entertain the belief on our behalf that we, sitting here, possess knowledge of remote objects?’

### **Can creatures have remote knowledge?**

If Sulaymān (ﷺ) had believed that his courtiers had no knowledge of the location of the throne placed at a distance of 900 miles and of carrying it over such a vast distance, he would never have asked who would bring it. On the contrary, he would have implored Allāh: ‘O Allāh! Send to me the throne of queen Balqīs because You are the only one who possesses absolute power.’

In short, we learn from the Qur’ān that knowledge of distant objects does not constitute disbelief. Sulaymān (ﷺ) did not commit disbelief because he was exercising the invisible powers delegated to him by Allāh Himself. Similarly, if the present-day Muslims adopt the belief that ‘Alī Hujwīrī, ‘Abd-ul-Qādir Jīlānī, Sultān Bāhū and the other saints and virtuous people know us and possess the God-given power to help us out of our problems, they cannot be guilty of perpetrating an act of disbelief and are not out of the fold of Islam. Just as it was not disbelief in the case of Sulaymān (ﷺ), similarly, it is absolutely valid in their case, because the saints are as divinely inspired as were the courtiers of Sulaymān (ﷺ), more particularly Āsif bin Barakhyā. In both cases, these special people are blessed by Allāh to

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1. Qur’ān (*an-Naml*, the Ants) 27:38.

possess these powers, and the exercise of these powers is divinely sanctioned. When Allāh alone has the absolute power, His laws are eternal and cannot be modified by the vagaries of time and space or selectively applied on the basis of individual fluctuation or change in circumstances. If they were applied in the past, they can be applied even now. If they did not constitute disbelief during the time of Sulaymān (عليه السلام), how can they do so in the modern times? Human power wavers but God's power is absolute.

### ‘Umar Fārūq’s inspiration

The unknown is revealed to the chosen people of Allāh whom He has invested with special spiritual powers. It was a proof of these spiritual benefits that the Companions directly groomed by the holy Prophet (ﷺ) himself could issue instructions directly to their commanders in the battlefield over a distance of thousands of miles without using material means. Once, the Islamic army was arrayed in battle against their enemies under the command of Sāriyah bin Jabal. The enemy made a clever tactical move and the Islamic forces were completely besieged by them. Precisely at that time, ‘Umar Fārūq was delivering the Friday sermon from the pulpit at Medina. On account of his spiritual concentration, the battle scenario was right before his eyes. During the sermon, he proclaimed loudly:

*O Sāriyah! Go behind the mountain!*<sup>1</sup>

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1. Abū Nu‘aym narrated it in *Dalā’il-un-nubuwwah* (p.507); Khatīb Tabrīzī, *Mishkāt-ul-masābīh*, b. of *fadā’il* (virtues) ch.8 (3:318#5954); Ibn ‘Asākir in *Tahdhīb tārikh Dimashq al-kabīr* generally known as *Tārikh/Tahdhīb Ibn ‘Asākir*; Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (5:210-1) and declared its chain of authorities as excellent and fair (*jayyid hasan*); ‘Asqalānī graded its chain of transmission *hasan* (fair) in *al-Isābah fī tamayīz-is-sahābah* (2:3); ‘Alī al-Hindī, *Kanz-ul-‘ummāl* (12:571,572,573 #35788-91); ‘Ajlawnī, *Kashf-ul-khifā’ wa muzīl-ul-ilbās* (2:514#3172); and Albānī in *Silsilat-ul-ahādīth-is-sahīhah* (#1110).

After saying this, he resumed delivering the sermon. He was performing two acts simultaneously: he was delivering the Friday sermon at the Prophet's Mosque, and at the same time he was directly issuing instructions to his commander at the battlefield. He neither possessed the radar system nor the mobile phone, which could inform him about the events at the battlefield. It was a miracle of the spiritual power Allāh had blessed him with, which helped his inner eye to survey all that was happening at such a vast distance. Sāriyah bin Jabal actually received the message from 'Umar Fārūq and immediately led his force behind the mountain and achieved victory over the enemy. The enemy attack fizzled out, and when the Islamic forces hit back, the enemy was trounced.

### **Difference between spiritual inspiration and knowledge of the unseen**

Another misconception needs to be removed which tends to confuse inspiration with invisible knowledge. The two phenomena are, in fact, poles apart. As opposed to knowledge of the unseen, divine inspiration is a kind of revelation; it means to unravel something that is concealed; it is a curtain-raiser as it lifts the curtain on something that is hidden, and it applies only to the creatures. Allāh transcends these reservations as He embodies in Himself the knowledge of the unseen. Since nothing is hidden from Him, the question of raising the curtain or lifting the veil does not arise in His case. It is the prerogative of the saints of Allāh, which He Himself has awarded to them. It is by virtue of this power that the secrets of hidden things are revealed to them and this knowledge does not amount to disbelief because it comes about in exercise of the power conferred on them by Allāh Himself. The curtain is raised on hidden things for the saints and Allāh lifts their veils and this strikes the saints with the force of revelation. Here the two powers merge: the direct and original power of Allāh and the indirect and reflected power of the saint, but the merger cannot be

willed by the saint as it can be sanctioned by Allāh alone. This is what the concept of divine unity boils down to. The allegation of disbelief can be justified only if we arrogate the attributes of Allāh to not-Allāh. There is nothing in the depths of the earth and the immensities of the heavens that is hidden to Allāh. He knows everything that is unknown to His creatures, and He knows all that is revealed to them too. The Lord says:

*Surely, there is nothing on the earth  
and in the heavens that is hidden to Allāh!*<sup>1</sup>

This Qur'ānic verse expressly states that to attribute inspiration to Allāh who is the source of all inspiration is to limit the divine powers and to confine knowledge of the unseen within narrow grooves, which certainly violates the concept of divine unity because *kashf* means to unravel what is hidden while nothing is hidden to Allāh. Since things are concealed to human beings, Allāh conferred on His chosen people, as a mark of their distinction, the power of inspiration, which revealed to them the near and distant objects. [For a detailed study of the unseen, please refer to our Urdu book '*Aqīdah 'ilm ghayb* (Doctrine of the Knowledge of the Unseen).]

### **The Prophet's question is an argument for the power of the questioned**

In the event related in the holy Qur'ān, Sulaymān (عليه السلام) had conveyed his wish to the courtiers to bring to him the throne of queen Balqīs, and qualified it by the condition "before they come to me in submission." Queen Balqīs and a number of other people along with her had already set out to visit Sulaymān's court with a view to embracing Islam, but he was insisting that the throne must be brought to him before their arrival.

If Sulaymān (عليه السلام) had not possessed the belief in the knowledge of distant things for not-Allāh and the requisite

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1. Qur'ān (*Āl 'Imrān*, the Family of 'Imrān) 3:5.

power to transform this knowledge into reality, he would never have asked such a question. The courtiers would also have spoken out: ‘O Prophet! How is it possible for the creatures to perform such an act? You turn to Allāh and beseech Him for help as He alone has the power over this supernatural matter.’ But none of the courtiers dared ask the question, but in response to the question, one of the jinns stood up and said:

*I can bring it to you before you rise  
from your place and indeed I am powerful  
(to bring) it (and) I am trustworthy.<sup>1</sup>*

It may also be noted here, how can something that is valid for the jinns, turn into an article of disbelief for the favourite people of Allāh who constantly bow before Him. Disbelief is actually predicated on those attributes and qualities specifically associated with Allāh and are not available to others. It will be disbelief only if they attribute to themselves these specific divine qualities which is obviously inconceivable for a true believer because it is equivalent to a negation of their faith.

Sulaymān (عليه السلام) did not accept the offer made by that jinn. Then one among the men stood up who possessed knowledge of the Book. He was among the knowledgeable and the spiritualists. He said to Sulaymān (عليه السلام) while standing:

*I can bring it to you before your eye  
returns to you (this is, in the twinkling of  
an eye), then when (Sulaymān) found that  
(throne) placed before him, he said: ‘this is  
by the grace of my Lord.’<sup>2</sup>*

The denigrators say that Sulaymān (عليه السلام) was the person who brought the throne. While the celebrated and well-known view is that it was his writer or minister who

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1. Qur’ ān (*an-Naml*, the Ants) 27:39.
  2. Qur’ ān (*an-Naml*, the Ants) 27:40.

brought the throne to Sulaymān (عليه السلام) and his name was Āsif bin Barakhyā.

Imām Qurtubī writes:

*Most exegetes agree upon it that surely the person who had the knowledge of the Book was Āsif bin Barakhyā, and he was truthful. He knew Allāh's ism-ul-a'zam (exalted name) that whenever he was asked for something he gave through it and whenever he was called he answered through it. And 'Ā'ishah narrated: the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Ism-ul-a'zam of Almighty Allāh through which Āsif bin Barakhyā prayd is yā hayy (O, the Living!) yā qayyūm (O, the Self-Subsistent!)."*

Imām Ibn Kathīr, while commenting on the verse (27:40) writes:

*Ibn 'Abbās said, "And he was Āsif, the writer of Sulaymān (عليه السلام)." And similarly Muhammad bin Ishāq narrated through Yazīd bin Rūmān, "Certainly he was Āsif bin Barakhyā, and he was truthful and knew ism-ul-a'zam." And Qatādah said, "He was a believer from human beings and his name was Āsif." Similarly, Abū Sālih, Dahhāk, and Qatādah said that he was a human being. Qatādah added that he belonged to Banī Israel. Mujāhid said, "His name was Ustūm." And Qatādah said in another tradition that his name was Balīkhā. And Zuhayr bin Muhammad said, "He was a man from human being and called Dhū an-Nūr." And 'Abdullāh bin Lahī'ah supposes*

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1. Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' li-ahkām-il-Qur'ān* (13:204).

that he was Khadir (عليه السلام) but this (assumption) is extremely unfamiliar.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn Kathīr mentioned the topic in his *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (1:472) and said:

“The well-known fact that he was Āsif bin Barakhyā and he was the cousin of Sulaymān (عليه السلام). And it is also said that he was a jinn believer as it is said about him that he knew ism-ul-a‘zam. And it is said that he was a scholarly man from Banī Israel and it is also said that he was Sulaymān (عليه السلام), but this is extremely unfamiliar. And Suhaylī weakened this statement because it is not according to the context.”

Ibn ‘Abbās narrated the same point in *Tanwīr-ul-miqbās* (p.318).<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr-ul-Qur‘ān al-‘azīm* (3:364).
  2. The following scholars also narrated that Āsif bin Barakhyā had the knowledge of the Book and he brought the throne of Queen Balqīs to Sulaymān (عليه السلام):
    - (i) Ibn Abī Hātim Rāzī, *Tafsīr-ul-Qur‘ān al-‘azīm* (9:2885-6#16376-16381).
    - (ii) Ibn Jarīr Tabarī, *Jāmi‘-ul-bayān fī tafsīr-il-Qur‘ān* (19:103).
    - (iii) Ibn-ul-Jawzī, *Zād-ul-masīr fī ‘ilm-it-tafsīr* (6:174).
    - (iv) Baydāwī, *Tafsīr* (3:280).
    - (v) Rāzī, *at-Tafsīr-ul-kabīr* (24:197).
    - (vi) Tha‘ālabī, *Jawāhir-ul-hisān fī tafsīr-il-Qur‘ān* (3:162).
    - (vii) Nasafī, *al-Madārik* (3:213).
    - (viii) Khāzin, *Lubāb-ut-ta‘wīl fī ma‘ānī at-tanzīl* (3:385-6).
    - (ix) Abū Hayyān Andalusī, *Tafsīr-ul-bahr-il-muhīt* (7:75).
    - (x) Mahallī, *Tafsīr-ul-jalālayn* (p.320).
    - (xi) Suyūtī, *ad-Durr-ul-manthūr* (5:109).
    - (xii) Sābūnī, *Qabas min-nūr-il-Qur‘ān al-karīm* (9:176).
    - (xiii) Ibrāhīm bin ‘Umar Biqā‘ī, *Nazm-ud-Durar fī tanāsib-il-āyāt was-suwar* (14:164-5).

The Qur'ānic verse furnishes a contrastive study of two kinds of creatures: on the one hand are the jinns who pride in their extraordinary power, on the basis of which he expresses his sense of determination to bring to him the throne placed at a distance of hundreds of miles before the rising of the council; and on the other hand is being described the glory and nature of the man of Allāh who possesses the power to perform this job in the blinking of an eye. In this situation, Sulaymān (ﷺ) speaks up:

*So that He should test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful, and whosoever expressed gratitude (to Allāh), so he offers gratitude for his personal benefit, and whosoever was ungrateful, then my Lord is All-Transcending, Merciful.<sup>1</sup>*

Their goony explanation of the unseen sometimes takes on a different configuration. They say that it is not valid to demand from a creature the performance of an act which is beyond his creaturely status. In order to justify their contention they suggest that to demand from the prophets, the saints and the pious something, which is not in their control and which is only in Allāh's control is an expression of disbelief. The answer to this question has already been provided at length. The fact is that this mode of reasoning is based on a misunderstanding of the meaning of the word *istighāthah*. No Muslim, when he is

(xiv) Abū Sa'ūd 'Amādī, *Irshād-ul-'aql-is-salīm ilā mazāyā al-Qur'ān al-karīm* (6:287).

(xv) Ismā'īl Haqqī, *Tafsīr rūh-ul-bayān* (6:349).

(xvi) Shawkānī, *Fath-ul-qadīr* (4:139).

(xvii) Qadī Thanā'ullāh Pānīpatī, *at-Tafsīr-ul-mazharī* (7:117).

(xviii) Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf 'an haqā'iq ghawāmid-it-tanzīl* (3:289).

(xix) Khatīb Shurbīnī, *as-Sirāj-ul-munīr* (3:60).

(xx) Ālūsī, *Rūh-ul-ma'ānī* (19:203).

1. Qur'ān (*an-Naml*, the Ants) 27:40.

beseeking the prophets and the saints for help, believes in his heart that our helpers (the prophets and the saints) will help us on their own, but we believe that they will serve only as a means of fulfilling our needs before Allāh, as has been explained in the case of the blind Companion and the request for rain. The Companions in these traditions had based their appeal for help on the absolute power of Allāh and mediated it through the qualities and attributes of the Prophet (ﷺ). And as a result, the Prophet (ﷺ) who was, better groomed in the secrets of divine unity, did not discourage them by saying that in this way they were committing disbelief but prayed for them and, Allāh in response to his supplication, fulfilled their needs. If beseeching help from not-Allāh had been disbelief, then,

**first**, the Companions would never have implored the Prophet (ﷺ) to perform this act,

**second**, the Prophet (ﷺ) would have discouraged them by telling them it was disbelief, and would have forbidden them to press him with such imploring,

**third**, Allāh would have forbidden His beloved to help them and protected him against committing disbelief.

The Companions, beseeching the Prophet (ﷺ) for help, the act of the Prophet (ﷺ) and Allāh's approval of the act — all these three factors collectively prove that *istighāthah* is not only valid, but is a practice of the Companions and popular with Allāh. Demand for miracles also falls in this category. When the non-believers and the infidels demanded from the holy Prophet (ﷺ) a miraculous expression of his power, he did not call it disbelief. Instead, he performed the required miracles with his hand (splitting the moon etc). If these supernatural acts had been disbelief, how could the Prophet (ﷺ) have possibly perpetrated them? When the act of the Prophet (ﷺ) does not amount to disbelief (even to think of it expels one from the fold of Islam), then how can the act of Ummah, in conformity to the practice of the Companions, be declared a form of *shirk* (polytheism).

The Muslims only expect mediation for help from the saints and the prophets, and not their help because Allāh is the only true Helper. They can only recommend us to Allāh, they can't help themselves. When they do help, it is only with divine sanction behind it and God has given power to His favourites over supplication and recommendation, though this power is only derivatively used, as Allāh says in the holy Qur'ān:

*Pure is He Who has created couples of everything which the earth causes to grow.<sup>1</sup>*

Allāh Himself in the Qur'ān has attributed the growth of grass to the earth although to cause the grass to grow is not in earth's power because in this act of growth it serves only as an instrument and a means. This Qur'ānic verse proves that there is no harm in referring to the means or instrument of mediation as subject because it cannot lead to any misunderstanding or confusion as both the Qur'ān and the traditions contain countless references to the difference between real and derivative power. Statements made by the Muslims in this sense are as devoid of disbelief as are the holy Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet (ﷺ).

#### **Fourth objection: There is no helper except Allāh**

They make the Qur'ānic verses which negate the attainment of power and victory through not-Allāh as the basis of their negation of seeking help through any person other than Allāh. It is said that all power and victory flow from Allāh alone and to transfer what belongs only to Allāh to someone else is nothing but disbelief as Allāh has repeatedly declared in the holy Qur'ān:

*1. And except Allāh you have neither a friend nor a helper.<sup>1</sup>*

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1. Qur'ān (Yāsīn, Yāsīn) 36:36.

2. *And they shall not find any friend or helper besides Allāh.*<sup>2</sup>

3. *And He is the Protector, worthy of all praise.*<sup>3</sup>

4. *For you there shall be neither any friend nor any helper to guard you against Allāh.*<sup>4</sup>

5. *And Allāh is sufficient (as) Protector and Allāh is sufficient (as) Helper.*<sup>5</sup>

6. *And (in reality) there is no help from any (other) place except from Allāh.*<sup>6</sup>

7. *And grant me victory and power from Your Own side to aid me.*<sup>7</sup>

8. *And your Lord is sufficient to guide and help you.*<sup>8</sup>

In all the Qur'ānic verses they give preference to the figurative meaning over the real meaning, and basing their argument on the figurative meaning they assert that in these verses the words *walī* (friend), *sultān* (power), *hādī* (guide) and *nasīr* (helper) have been used for Allāh, and to ascribe these attributes to anyone besides Allāh is to commit disbelief.

### Fallacious reasoning

If a few words are expressly related to Allāh in the Qur'ān, it does not imply that they cannot be related to anyone else as such a relation will amount to disbelief. A

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1. Qur' ān (*al-Baqarah*, the Cow) 2:107.
  2. Qur' ān (*al-Ahzāb*, the Confederates) 33:17.
  3. Qur' ān (*ash-Shūrā*, Consultation) 42:28.
  4. Qur' ān (*al-Baqarah*, the Cow) 2:120.
  5. Qur' ān (*an-Nisā'*, Women) 4:45.
  6. Qur' ān (*al-Anfāl*, Spoils of war) 8:10.
  7. Qur' ān (*al-Isrā'*, the Night journey) 17:80.
  8. Qur' ān (*al-Furqān*, the Criterion) 25:31.

battery of examples can be produced to support this view. So, in the Qur'ān where the words *walī* and *nasīr* have been used for Allāh, there Allāh has used these words figuratively for His servants. In order to short-circuit the debate, we will base our argument on the verses in which the words *walī* and *nasīr* are used, while in addition to these, a number of other divine qualities have been jointly used for Allāh and His creature. The Qur'ān states:

1. *And raise for us from You one who will protect, and raise for us from You one who will help.*<sup>1</sup>

2. *Indeed, your (helper) friend is only Allāh and His Messenger and (with them) are the believers.*<sup>2</sup>

3. *And if you back up each other against the Messenger (if you both behave in a manner that annoys the Prophet) then (remember that) Allāh is his Protector (Helper) and Jibrīl and the righteous believers and after that even the angels will assist him.*<sup>3</sup>

4. *And the men who believe and the women who believe are each other's protectors and helpers.*<sup>4</sup>

These Qur'ānic verses make it clear as daylight that *walī*, *nasīr* and other similar words which portray the attributes of Allāh, are used not only for His creatures with identical semantic shade but is also the divine practice and to equate Allāh's practice with disbelief is a deviation from the cardinal principles of Islamic teaching and Islam does not permit it.

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1. Qur' ān (*an-Nisā'*, Women) 4:75.
  2. Qur' ān (*al-Mā'idah*, the Feast) 5:55.
  3. Qur' ān (*at-Tahrīm*, Prohibition) 66:4.
  4. Qur' ān (*at-Tawbah*, Repentance) 9:71.

## **Fifth objection: Begging and beseeching help from Allāh alone is valid**

To negate the validity of beseeching others than Allāh for help is based on a fallacious deduction from a tradition narrated by ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Abbās as an argument in their favour in which it is enjoined upon the believers to beg only Allāh for help. The words of the tradition are as follows:

*When you beg you should beg it from Allāh alone, and when you ask for help, you should ask it from Allāh alone, and note that even if the entire Ummah collectively wishes to benefit you, it cannot do so against what is predestined. (Similarly) if the entire Ummah collectively wishes to harm you, it cannot succeed against what is predestined (because) the pens (of the writer of fate) have been taken away and the writings have dried up.<sup>1</sup>*

We will elaborate in the following pages that to conclude from this tradition that begging and beseeching Allāh for help is valid and begging and beseeching not-Allāh for help is invalid, sounds perverse.

### **Begging for help is Allāh’s command**

This false reasoning is a complete negation of all that is fundamental to Islam and is a clumsy attempt to impose the principles of some alien faith on the simple and

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1. Tirmidhī transmitted it in *al-Jāmi‘-us-Sahīh*, b. of *sifat-ul-qiyyāmah* (the description of the Day of Judgement) ch.59 (4:667#2516) and graded it *hasan* (fair) *sahīh* (sound). Ahmad bin Hambal narrated it in his *Musnad* (1:293, 303, 307); Tabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam-ul-kabīr* 12:184-5#12988-9); Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab-ul-īmān* (1:217#195); Ibn-us-Sunnī, *‘Amal-ul-yawm wal-laylah* (p.136#419); and Mizzī in *Tuhfat-ul-ashrāf bi-ma‘rifat-il-atrāf* (4:382#5415).

straight tenets of Islamic faith. This kind of reasoning betrays a glaring unawareness of the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*, lack of understanding of the purpose of revelation of the Qur'ān, and a superficial study of Islamic teachings. Its primary motive is to accuse the collective Muslim Ummah of disbelief and infidelity. The actual position is that the purpose of the tradition is not to dissuade people from seeking help from others except Allāh, as it appears at first glance; but its real purpose is to deflect the attention of the creature from the causes and direct it to the Creator of those causes so that the creature, embroiled in the convolutions of causes, may not lose sight of the real Helper. So the actual meaning of this tradition, in the light of Islamic teachings, may be summed up in these words: 'O man! When you beg and beseech anyone of Allāh's creatures for help and assistance, you should have complete faith in the glory and power of Allāh, and beg for help regarding Allāh as the real Helper lest these secondary causes should divert your attention from the Creator and become the stumbling blocks for you.' The Prophet (ﷺ), endorsing the contents of the tradition said that there is no help against Allāh's will but it does not negate the act of beseeching someone's help to persuade Allāh to fulfil one's need. There is a huge difference between acts, which are incompatible with Allāh's will and those, which are compatible with His will. The last words of the tradition (the pens have been taken away and the writings have dried up) clearly point out that beseeching not-Allāh for help against God's will is forbidden but it, in no way forbids the act of begging and beseeching help from others because seeking the help of others has been endorsed by Allāh Himself. For example:

*So you should ask people of knowledge  
if you yourselves do not know (about  
something).<sup>1</sup>*

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1. Qur'ān (*an-Nahl*, the Bee) 16:43.

In this Qur'ānic verse the believers are being urged to ask those who possess knowledge. A large number of other traditions support the contents of this verse that the words 'when you beg you should beg it from Allāh alone,' do not forbid the act of seeking help from others absolutely. On the contrary, it means that the believers should not beg the rulers and the affluent, out of sheer greed, to help them financially or socially. They should beseech Allāh's blessings alone. To infer from this tradition that it is invalid to beseech the help of others than Allāh is an unfair inference. These words do not argue against beseeching the help of others than Allāh. On the contrary, a large number of traditions clearly suggest that the Prophet (ﷺ) himself prompted the Companions to beg from him and then responded to them. (The details with examples have already been given in the earlier pages.) If begging help from others is regarded as disbelief, then a large number of routine affairs which form the basis of practical life will be declared forbidden, for example, a student asking a teacher for explanation, a patient soliciting treatment from a doctor, a needy person begging help from a person of means and a creditor demanding his money back from someone who has borrowed it from him.

### Ask for some more

One of the fortunate Companions, Rabī'ah bin Ka'b, one evening called on the Prophet (ﷺ). He filled water for his ablution and helped him perform the ablution. Pleased with his solicitude, the Prophet (ﷺ) said to him: 'ask for anything you want.' Overwhelmed by such a big offer, the Companion asked for his eternal companionship, which the Prophet (ﷺ) readily agreed to. Rabī'ah bin Ka'b relates in his own words:

*I spent a night with the holy Prophet (ﷺ) (and towards the tail-end of the night) I brought water for his ablution and toilet. He said: 'ask (for) whatever you*

want.' I said: 'I want your (eternal) companionship in Paradise.' He said: 'anything else?' I said: 'this is sufficient.' He said: 'then help me with plenty of prostration.'<sup>1</sup>

In this tradition the Prophet (ﷺ) himself commanded the Companion to beg from him. If begging for help from not-Allāh were forbidden, the greatest champion of divine unity would never have done it. In the last words of the tradition, the Prophet (ﷺ) himself begged him to help him with greater frequency of prostrations. This proves that begging help from someone other than Allāh is quite consistent with the Prophet's practice and anyone who levels allegations of disbelief against him is himself violating his belief in divine unity. Such religious concepts are in fact a product of ignorance about the universal message of Islam.

### **Beseeking help from others is Islamic command**

It is Allāh's command to seek help from Him through His favourite servants for the fulfilment of needs and the relief of worries and problems, which constantly nag one's mind and cannot be resolved by ordinary means or by one's personal efforts. A few examples from the Qur'ān and the Prophet's traditions are given below:

1. The Qur'ān says:

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1. Muslim narrated it in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of *salāt*, (prayer) ch.43 (1:353#226/489); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, b. of *salāt*, 2:35 (#1320); Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, b. of *iftitāh* (opening) 2:227-8; Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (4:59); Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan-ul-kubrā* (2:486); Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam-ul-kabīr* (5:56#4570); Baghawī, *Sharh-us-sunnah* (3:149#655); Mundhirī, *at-Targhīb wat-tarhīb* (1:249); Khatīb Tabrīzī, *Mishkāṭ-ul-masābīh*, b. of *salāt* (prayer) ch.14 (1:271#896); Haythamī, *Majma'uz-zawā'id* (2:249); Mullā 'Alī Qānī, *Mirqāt-ul-mafātīh sharh Mishkāṭ-ul-masābīh* (2:323); and 'Alī al-Hindī in *Kanz-ul-'ummāl* (7:306#19006).

*And seek (Allāh's) help through patience and prayer.<sup>1</sup>*

Here it is Allāh's command to seek help and support by means of the virtuous acts of patience and prayer. These acts are only the means because it is Allāh alone who can help us out of our troubles and tribulations. But the act of begging for help through these means is being issued as a divine command.

2. Similarly, here is another verse from the Qur'ān in which Allāh commands to seek help for fighting equipment and for the preparation of *jihād*:

*And (O Muslims!), to (fight) them you should keep ready the force (of weapons and other instruments of war) as much as possible and (a large number of) tied horses.<sup>2</sup>*

3. In addition, the Qur'ān is a witness to the help which Dhū al-Qarnayn sought from his nation to fight the enemy:

*You should help me with the might of your arm, (that is, with labour and rigorous, hard work).<sup>3</sup>*

4. Similarly, it is narrated by 'Abdullāh bin 'Abbās that Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

*Undoubtedly, there are some of Allāh's angels on the earth who are in addition to the guardian angels. They note down each leaf that falls down from a tree. If anyone of you is being tortured in the jungle, you should cry, 'O servants of Allāh, help me.'<sup>4</sup>*

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1. Qur' ān (*al-Baqarah*, the Cow) 2:145.
  2. Qur' ān (*al-Anfāl*, Spoils of war) 8: 60.
  3. Qur' ān (*al-Kahf*, the Cave) 18:95.
  4. Haythamī narrates it in *Majma 'uz-zawā'id* (10:132) and says that its men are trustworthy.

Here, the Prophet (ﷺ) instructs the Muslims to seek angels' help. He is advising us not to delink ourselves from those who not only believe in Allāh but also practice their belief. In case there is no human figure to come to your rescue, you should call angels for help. They will fulfil your need. This universe is not a meaningless vacuum as many atheists in their ignorance tend to assume; it is filled with flights of angels though they remain invisible to the naked eye and whenever human beings under duress invoke the help of Allāh, the angels practically demonstrate the merciful presence of Allāh by meeting human exigencies. Thus the words *falyunād a 'īnū 'ibād Allāh* are a clear proof that to call someone for help is permissible.

5. *Salāt-ul-khawf* (fear prayer) also implies seeking help from others for the elimination of fear.

6. In a number of his sayings, the Prophet (ﷺ) has urged the believers to help one another:

*Anyone who is busy in fulfilling the need of his brother, Allāh Himself fulfils his need.<sup>1</sup>*

7. The same theme is stressed in another tradition:

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1. Bukhārī narrated it in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of *mazālim* (oppressions) ch.4 (2:863#2310), b. of *ikrāh* (coercion) ch.7 (6:2550#6551); Muslim, *as-Sahīh*, b. of *birr was-silah wal-ādāb* (virtue, joining of the ties of relationship and good manners) ch.15 (4:1996#58/2580); Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi 'us-sahīh*, b. of *hudūd*, ch.3 (4:35#1426); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, b. of *adab* (good manners) 4:273 (#4893); Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (2:91, 4:104); Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan-ul-kubrā* (6:94, 201; 8:330), *Shu'ab-ul-īmān* (6:104#7614); Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam-ul-kabīr* (12:222#13137); Baghawī, *Sharh-us-sunnah* (13:98#3518); Mundhirī, *at-Targhīb wat-tarhīb* (3:389); 'Asqalānī, *Fath-ul-bārī* (5:97; 12:323); and 'Alī al-Hindī in *Kanz-ul-'ummāl* (6:444#16463).

*And Allāh is busy in helping His creature as long as he is busy helping his brother.<sup>1</sup>*

8. Imām Hākim has recorded a tradition in his *al-Mustadrak* (4:270) in which the Prophet (ﷺ) has commanded the believers to help one another and to relieve the needs of others and then he has also stressed the importance of this noble act:

*If anyone of you goes out with his brother to help him, it is better than the two months' seclusion in my mosque.<sup>2</sup>*

9. Allāh has created a special class of creatures to help the people in fulfilling their needs, relieving their problems and helping them in every possible way. The holy Prophet (ﷺ) said:

*Allāh has created a class of creatures for the fulfilment of people's needs so that people turn to them for (the fulfilment of)*

1. Muslim narrated it in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of *dhikr wad-du'ā' wat-tawbah wal-istighfār* (remembering (Allāh), invocation, repentance and seeking forgiveness) ch.11 (4:2074#38/2699); Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi'-'us-sahīh*, b. of *hudūd*, ch.3 (4:34#1425), b. of *birr was-silah* (virtue and joining of the ties of relationship) ch.19 (4:326#1930), b. of *qirā'āt* (recitations) ch.12 (5:195#2945); Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, b. of *adab* (good manners) 4:287 (#4946); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, *al-muqāddimah* (preface) ch.17 (1:82#225); Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (2:252, 274, 500, 514); Ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Musannaf* (9:85, 86#6617-8); Ibn Hibbān, *as-Sahīh* (2:293#534); Baghawī, *Sharh-us-Sunnah* (1:273#127); Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyat-ul-awliyā' wa tabaqāt-ul-asfiyā'* (8:119); and Mundhirī in *at-Targhīb wat-tarhīb* (3:390).
2. Hākim narrated it in *al-Mustadrak* (4:270). Haythamī transmitted it with different words in his *Majma'-uz-zawā'id* (8:192) and said, "Tabarānī narrated it in *al-Mu'jam-ul-awsat* (8:160#7322) and its chain of authorities is excellent (*isnāduhū jayyid*).” Mundhirī also narrated it in *at-Targhīb wat-tarhīb* (3:391).

*their needs. These creatures are immune to Allāh's punishment.<sup>1</sup>*

In this tradition, the Prophet's words that 'people should turn to them for the fulfilment of their needs' deserve special attention. The Prophet (ﷺ) is himself recommending the people's act of seeking help from others. Therefore, those who call it disbelief appallingly lack an understanding of their own religion.

10. Another tradition related to this theme is as follows:

*Allāh has blessed His servants with (a large reservoir of) His blessings. These servants are engaged in fulfilling the needs of the people until they are weary of them. And when they wear out, (the same duty) is assigned from them to others.<sup>2</sup>*

11. 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd has narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

*When you lose your means of transport in a jungle, you should call: 'O creatures of Allāh! Help me, recover my transport! O creatures of Allāh! Help me, recover my transport!' There are many of Allāh's creatures on this earth. They will help you recover it.<sup>3</sup>*

Mahmūd Sa'īd Mamdūh writes in *Raf'-ul-minārah* (p.225):

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1. Haythamī narrated it in *Majma'-uz-zawā'id* (8:192); and Mundhiī in *at-Targhīb wat-tarhīb* (3:390).
  2. Tabarānī narrated it in *al-Mu'jam-ul-awsat* (9:161#8346); Mundhiī, *at-Targhīb wat-tarhīb* (3:390); and Haythamī in *Majma'-uz-zawā'id* (8:192).
  3. Tabarānī narrated it in *al-Mu'jam-ul-kabīr* (10:217#10518); Abū Ya'lā, *Musnad* (9:177); Ibn-us-Sunnī, *'Amal-ul-yawm wal-laylah* (p.162#502); Haythamī, *Majma'-uz-zawā'id* (10:132); and 'Asqalānī in *al-Matālib-ul-āliyah* (3:239#3375).

*“The tradition, being narrated from different quarters, transformed itself from a weak tradition into a sound one which the Muslims have invariably followed.”*

The traditions prove that it is quite compatible both with the will of Allāh and the Prophet (ﷺ) to seek help from other creatures and to help others in their hour of trouble and distress whenever they beseech you for help. So when Allāh and the Prophet (ﷺ) have approved it, who are we to disapprove it, and to label it as a form of disbelief and condemn it. The point to be noted here is that these verses and traditions are not only a justification for beseeching help from others; they are in the nature of commands and therefore, like other commands, they should be strictly followed by all the believers. Those who not only disregard them but also condemn them as self-fabricated innovations are automatically out of the fold of Islam.

### **Sixth objection: Negation of beseeching the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for help**

During the earthly life of the Prophet (ﷺ) a hypocrite used to torture the Muslims and spared no opportunity to tease them. Abū Bakr said to the Companions: ‘let’s collectively beseech the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for help and assistance against this hypocrite.’ When the Prophet (ﷺ) heard this, he said:

*Appeal for help is not made to me and appeal for help is made only to Allāh.<sup>1</sup>*

Some people have misinterpreted this tradition as a negation of beseeching help from anyone except Allāh on account of their ignorance and unawareness of its background. Basing their conclusion on a misunderstanding of its meaning, they believe that beseeching help

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1. Related by Haythamī in *Majma ‘uz-zawā’id* (10:159).

from not-Allāh is disbelief because the Prophet (ﷺ) himself has condemned it as an un-Islamic act.

### Correct meaning of the tradition

If we only confine ourselves to this tradition and its decontextualised meaning, then we will have to discard a large number of other verses and traditions in which both Allāh and the Prophet (ﷺ) have stressed the need and relevance of seeking the help of others in trouble and distress. Besides, to focus exclusively on this tradition and to sweep all other traditions under the carpet will violate the basic principles of interpretation and inference. It is an established legal principle that any tradition negating what is affirmed by other traditions must be placed in perspective because a final inference is drawn only through a coordination and collation of their meaning and substance to abrogate the discordant elements. The same principle must be followed here to bring out the correct meaning of this tradition.

The tradition means to affirm the reality of divine unity as part of true faith. That is, it seems to suggest that the real Helper is Allāh alone and the creature is only a means in seeking help from Allāh.

The tradition does not argue in favour of seeking help only from the living, as is erroneously supposed by some people. On the contrary, it does not discriminate between the living and the dead and stresses the fact that it is forbidden to beseech anyone for help except Allāh as we have already discussed in the early pages. Imām Ibn Taymiyyah has also mentioned it in his *Fatāwā* (1:110) and has made it clear that some people draw wrong conclusions from the divine injunctions and the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) when other contexts seem to refute their conclusions. The hypocrite's torment and Abū Bakr's beseeching the Prophet's help against him fall into this category. If this tradition is not explained away, it will throw a negative light on other Qur'ānic verses and traditions as well as the acts of the Companions. It is

recorded at various places in books of tradition that the Companions requested the Prophet (ﷺ) to supplicate for them, offered prayer for rain through his mediation and they excelled all the other followers in beseeching his help in a variety of situations. ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Umar’s statement is recorded that at many occasions when he looked at the Prophet’s face, he used to remember Abū Tālib’s verse which means that whenever he prayed for rain, the rain water started flowing from the gutters before he came down the pulpit. The verse is as follows:

*And that handsome (person), by means of whose radiant face, rain is implored, and who is the guardian of orphans and the support of widows.<sup>1</sup>*

The fact that ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Umar hummed out this verse on many occasions shows the Companions’ intensity of love for the Prophet (ﷺ). Whenever they were in trouble or faced a calamity, they were involuntarily drawn towards him to beseech his help. When the conduct of the Companions is belying the content of this different tradition, and it is also in consonance with the teachings of the Qur’ān and the *sunnah*, then how can we agree with the explanations and interpretations of these ignorant friends as confirmations of divine unity, which in fact border on disbelief. The Qur’ānic concept of divine unity

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1. Bukhārī narrated it in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of *istisqā’* (to invoke Allāh for rain at the time of drought) ch.3 (1:342#963); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, b. of *iqāmat-us-salāt was-sunnah fihā* (establishing prayer and its sunnahs) ch.154 (1:405#1272); Ahmad bin Hambal, *Musnad* (2:93); Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan-ul-kubrā* (3:352), *Dalā’il-un-nubuwwah* (6:143); Ibn Hishām, *as-Sīrat-un-nabawīyyah* (1:281); Subkī, *Shifā’-us-siqām fī ziyārat khayr-il-anām* (p.127); Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (4:471); Mizzī, *Tuhfat-ul-ashrāf bi-ma’rifat-il-atrāf* (5:359#6775); ‘Aynī, *‘Umdat-ul-qārī* (7:29); ‘Asqalānī, *Fath-ul-bārī* (2:494); Qastallānī, *al-Mawāhib-ul-laduniyyah* (4:271); and Zurqānī in his *Commentary* (11:140).

does not permit it that we should focus only on one exceptional tradition and accuse the entire Ummah of disbelief, while casting aside all other Qur'ānic verses and traditions which attest to the reality of beseeching help from others as a valid act and which is explicitly urged by both the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*.



## Chapter 5

### Religious Leaders and *Istighāthah*

It is an established fact that on account of the distinction Allāh has conferred on His favourites and the blessings He has showered upon them, it has been the practice of our religious leaders and scholars to rely on them to resolve their worldly problems, attain salvation in the Hereafter, make their graves and tombs the focus of their supplications and seek help and assistance from the chosen people of Allāh who are buried in them and seek their help for spiritual and inner benefits and blessings. These acts, which shaped the conduct and mode of living of the saints and the scholars in the past, are now the granite foundation of the concepts and beliefs of Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah. Moreover, they had not moulded their attitudes and deeds on a superficial, unconscious or sentimental basis. A great deal of reflection and reasoning laced these modes of conduct and were framed by comprehensive experimentation, observation and practical orientation. Therefore, on the basis of investigation, and not mere sentiment, it can be affirmed that their statements were sound and authentic and on account of their immunity from doubt and ambiguity, they furnish a cogent argument for all those believers who are blessed with sufficient wisdom and intelligence to appraise the depth and truth of these statements.

Religious scholars, enlightened saints and our spiritual leaders have pronounced the tombs of these favourites of Allāh as inexhaustible fountain-heads of light and blessing where our supplications are acknowledged and robed as

destinies. Reliance on these sanctified persons opens the shuttered avenues of success. Their attention and response unravels the tangles of the Hereafter and their spiritual help serves as a source of salvation for our worries and all forms of distress. To cap it all, their statements are consistent with the criterion of experience and observation, which is the basis of the modern inductive method of all scientific progress. Therefore, they cannot be brushed under the carpet as mere hearsay and deserve our positive response as they are grounded in facts and proved by experience.

This world is inhabited by two sets of people. The first set of people are those who are rebellious and disobedient, and on account of their law-breaking tendencies, they form a coterie of persons who are hell-bent to protect and promote the interests of the devil and are a cause of constant torture for Allāh's creatures. On the other hand, are those who are good-natured, pure, and well-behaved and with a positive outlook and are determined to promote the welfare of the people. Such noble persons and untainted souls form their own fraternity and come closer to one another through mutual interaction, following the axiomatic principle that "birds of a feather flock together." These courageous, highly determined and spiritually motivated people, through sheer hard work and concentration, leave behind indelible tales of sincerity and honesty, patience and steadfastness, love and sacrifice that the readers are simply stunned by their exceptional nature.

These holy personages have graced every period of human history. Outwardly, they live on the sidelines but they are easily placed on account of their habits and manners, their character and mode of conversation. Their love and concern for the creatures of Allāh is so gushing that it cannot be contained like the perfume of flowers. The chain of their blessing is continuous, because it goes against the divine grain that His creatures are deprived of the benefit and blessing of His chosen people in any era of human history. Therefore, these favoured servants of

Allāh are not only a source of blessing for the people in their manifest life but also benefit them after death; rather their blessings acquire greater frequency and intensity when they are transferred to another mode of existence after leaving this phenomenal world. They bless the seekers of their help as effectively as they did during their earthly sojourn. The one who seeks their help instinctively knows that he has been helped by them.

The secrets of the worlds of purgatory, angels and divinity are revealed to Allāh's saints in a manner and style that is denied to the common run of people. Their opinion is authentic in all human and non-human fields of activity and it can neither be challenged nor any flaws found in its inherent cogency. Therefore, it is quite rational, and a recognition of human limitations, to believe in their opinions because their statements are not based on any inanity or triviality but have been derived through extraordinary observation and supported by the ballast of divine sanction, as no one can deny that "what is heard cannot equal what is seen."

In the context of *istighāthah* and intermediation, we propose to cast a cursory glance at the conduct, experiences and observations of these righteous people who have provided glimmers of light and guidance to the creatures of Allāh groping in the amorphous shades of darkness and depression:

### 1. Imām Zayn-ul-‘Ābidīn

Imām Zayn-ul-‘Ābidīn supplicates to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) for help and intercession in these words:

*O mercy of the worlds! You are the intercessor for the sinners. On account of your infinite generosity, mercy and magnanimity, intercede for us on the Day of Judgement.*

*O, who has come to all the worlds as a source of mercy, help Zayn-ul-‘Ābidīn! Who*

*is caught in trials and tribulations by the party of the oppressors (and beseeches your help).*

## 2. Imām Mālik

Imām Mālik's prominence as one of the four jurists of Islam is well-established. Once Caliph Abū Ja'far Mansūr visited Medina and he asked Imām Mālik: 'while supplicating, should I turn my face to the prayer niche [and turn my back to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ)] or should I turn my face to the Holy Prophet [(ﷺ)] and turn my back to the prayer niche?' On this interrogation, Imām Mālik replied: '(O caliph!) Why do you turn your face from the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), as he is the means for you and for your ancestor Adam (عليه) on the Day of Judgement? Rather you should (pray and supplicate by) turning towards the Prophet (ﷺ) and seek his intercession so that he intercedes for you before Allāh on the Day of Judgement. Allāh has declared:

*(O beloved!) And if they had come to you, when they had wronged their souls, and asked forgiveness of Allāh, and the Messenger also had asked forgiveness for them, they (on the basis of this means and intercession) would have surely found Allāh the Granter of repentance, extremely Merciful.'*<sup>1</sup>

This incident has been narrated by Qādī 'Iyād in his *ash-Shifā* (2:596) with a sound chain of transmission. Besides, it has been related by a number of other traditionists of impeccable credibility. Subkī in *Shifā'-us-siqām fī ziyārat khayr-il-anām*, Samhūdī in *Khulāsat-ul-wafā*, Qastallānī in *al-Mawāhib-ul-laduniyyah*, Ibn Jamā'ah in *Hidāyat-us-sālik* and Ibn Hajar Haythamī in *al-Jawhar-ul-munazzam*.

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1. Qur' ān (*an-Nisā'*, Women) 4:64.

### 3. Imām Qurtubī

He has mentioned *istighāthah* in the interpretation of the verse 64 of *sūrah an-Nisā'* in his *al-Jāmi' li-ahkām-il-Qur'ān* (5:265-6).

### 4. Qādī 'Iyād

He has, in his book, *ash-Shifā* (2:596) narrated Imām Mālik's statement to the Caliph Abū Ja'far Mansūr, which we have mentioned before. He also narrated Adam's intermediation through the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) with the help of sound and famous traditions in *ash-Shifā* (1:227-8). In addition, in the chapters on "visiting the Prophet's grave," "virtues and merits of the Prophet (ﷺ)" and in many other chapters in his book he has referred to the qualities and attributes of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ).

### 5. Imām Subkī

He has discussed at length the question of *istighāthah* and intermediation in his book *Shifā'-us-siqām fī ziyārat khayr-il-anām* and has proved their relevance as vibrant concepts in Islam.

### 6. Imām Ibn Kathīr

Imām Ibn Kathīr has commented on verse 64 of *sūrah an-Nisā'* in his book *Tafsīr-ul-Qur'ān al-'azīm* (1:519-20) and raised the issue of *istighāthah*. He has not levelled any objection against 'Utbī's tradition in which a bedouin supplicates at the Prophet's tomb for his intercession. Imām Ibn Kathīr has related in *al-Bidāyah wan-nihāyah* (5:167) the episode of the man who visits the Prophet's grave and calls him to pray for rain, and he has pronounced this tradition quite sound. In addition, he has also related in the same book (5:30) that during the battle of Yamāmah, the battle-cry of the Muslims was *yā Muhammadāh* (O Muhammad! Help us).

## 7. Hāfiz ‘Asqalānī

He has in his books *al-Isābah fī tamyīz-is-sahābah* (3:484) and *Fath-ul-bārī* (2:495-6) narrated the incident of the man who visited the Prophet’s grave for rain through his means and called him for help.

## 8. Imām Qastallānī

The qualities and accomplishments of a special group of saints are recorded in the traditions. The blessing of their supplication causes rain and brings victory and triumph to the Muslims. Qastallānī’s views about them are given below:

*When ordinary people fall into trouble, first of all, the Heralds supplicate for them, then turn by turn the Nobility, Substitutes, the righteous and the ministers (supplicate for them). If their supplication is granted, well and good, otherwise, the saint of the highest rank — ghawth (who is all the time engrossed in Allāh’s worship) — supplicates for them, and before he winds it up, his prayer is granted. (This is Allāh’s special blessing on them.)<sup>1</sup>*

## 9. Imām Ibn Hajar Haythamī

Ahmad Shihāb-ud-Dīn Ibn Hajar Haythamī Makkī, who possesses an eminent position among experts on Islamic jurisprudence and tradition, has proved on the basis of the experience and observation narrated by Abū ‘Abdullāh Qurayshī that Allāh’s favourites help people after death as they help them during life and the value of their benefit is not in the least reduced. Produced below is an incident attributed to Abū ‘Abdullāh Qurayshī:

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1. Qastallānī, *al-Māwāhib-ul-laduniyyah* (2:726); Zurqānī, *Commentary* (7:487).

A severe drought had enveloped Egypt in its grip and the people's distress caused by hunger and thirst remained unrelieved in spite of their prayers and supplications:

*So I journeyed towards Syria, when I reached near Allāh's friend (Ibrāhīm's) tomb, he met me on the way. I said to him: 'O Messenger of Allāh! I have come as a guest. You should show your hospitality in the form of a supplication for the natives of Egypt.' He prayed for them, so Allāh drove their famine away from them.<sup>1</sup>*

In this extraordinary reference, the description of the face-to-face meeting with Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) has been commented upon by Imām Yāfi'ī in these words:

*The statement made by Abū 'Abdullāh Qurayshī that he had a face-to-face meeting with the Friend is based on truth. Only an ignorant person can deny it who is unaware of the mode of living and status of the saints because these people observe the earth and the heavens and see the prophets in their living condition.<sup>2</sup>*

## 10. Imām Nabhānī

He has written an irrefutable book *Shawāhid-ul-haqq fī al-istighāthah bi-sayyid-il-khalq* and proved the validity of appeal to the Prophet (ﷺ) for help.

## 11. Imām Ālūsī

Commenting on the earlier verses of *sūrah an-Nāzi'āt*, he explains in these words the justification of reliance on Allāh's favourites and seeking help and support from them:

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1. Ibn Hajar Haythamī, *al-Fatāwā al-hadīthiyyah* (pp.255-6).
  2. Ibn Hajar Haythamī, *al-Fatāwā al-hadīthiyyah* (p.256).

*(In the introductory sentences of this sūrah,) the separation of the souls of pious persons from their bodies at the time of death is described and Allāh has sworn by these different states of the souls. These souls have to be wrenched out of the bodies because, on account of their long and deep association with their bodies, they are disinclined to leave them. The reason for this disinclination is that, in order to earn virtues, the body acts as a means of transport, and it is on this count that there is a greater possibility of adding to the score of one's virtues. Then these souls fly to the world of angels and reach the sanctuary of purity, and on account of their force and nobility, they blend with the elements that help decide the destinies of the creatures, that is, they are included among the angels, or they acquire administrative capability. That is why it is said: 'when you are invaded by troubles, you should seek help from the residents of the tombs, that is, from the favourites of Allāh who are embodiments of virtue and purity, and those who have left us.' There is no doubt that a person who visits their tombs, receives spiritual help by virtue of their blessings, and on many occasions, the knots of difficulties unwind through the mediation of honour and reverence they enjoy.<sup>1</sup>*

He adds:

*(In these verses) Allāh has sworn by these good-natured people, who step into*

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1. Ālūsī, *Rūh-ul-ma'ānī* (30:27-8).

*the field of virtue and sanctity and try to purify both the inner and the outer self through worship, persistent practice and a concerted confrontation with the evil and, as a result, are permeated with immediate divine consciousness. (These verses may be applied to these holy persons in the sense that) they control their own instinctive cravings and concentrate all their energies on the world where holiness prevails, and finally achieve perfection after passing through the evolutionary phases so that they can guide those who are stuck up in their flawed schedules and invest their lives with a sense of purpose and direction.<sup>1</sup>*

## **12. Shāh ‘Abd-ul-Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawī**

Shāh ‘Abd-ul-Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawī comments in his exegesis of Shaykh ‘Abd-ul-Qādir Jīlānī’s book *Futūh-ul-ghayb* that when the saints cross into the area of divine knowledge and consciousness, which is immune to the exigencies of mortality, they are blessed with a special power which enables them to perform acts unmediated through external causes, and they are transformed into embodiments of exceptional light and cognizance as they have arrived from the mortal world into the the world of immortality. In this way they achieve that level of perfection which the common believers will receive in Paradise.

## **13. Shāh Walī Allāh Muhaddith Dihlawī**

He was one of those great saints who, on account of his God-given vision and divine knowledge, could see the inner reality with his naked eye and then proclaimed it publicly. He has written a matchless book *Fuyūd-ul-*

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1. Ālūsī, *Rūh-ul-ma‘ānī* (30:28).

*haramayn* based on observations. The gist of its ninth and tenth chapters is as follows. He says:

“We called at Medina, and we clearly saw with our own eyes the soul of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) and on that day this reality was revealed to us that the pure soul can also be seen like the body and the secret of the life of prophets after death was also disclosed to us.

“On the third day we called and sent salutations on the Prophet (ﷺ), and also visited the graves of Abū Bakr as-Siddīq and ‘Umar Fārūq.

“Then we humbly submitted: we have called on you with great expectations to receive your mercy and blessing. Have mercy on us.”

He adds:

“The holy Prophet (ﷺ) expressed great joy and I felt that the sheet of his kindness had wrapped and covered me. Then he embraced me, and appeared before me, disclosed many secrets and personally informed me and briefly helped me and told me how I could seek his help for my needs.”

#### 14. Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī

Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī, commenting on the blessings of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) in his book *Nashr-ut-tīb*, writes: ‘it was transparently reflected from the foreheads of his ancestors. It was his universal light that persuaded Allāh to accept Adam’s repentance; again it was his light that salvaged Nūh (عليه السلام) from the tempestuous waves and transformed the glowing coals of fire into the blossoms of flowers for Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام).’

He has written a panegyric in which he besought the Prophet (ﷺ) for help in his trials and tribulations and requested him to remove them. He stated:

*O, the intercessor of the people, help me. You are the one whom I can trust in crisis.*

*I have no shelter except you. Help! My master, difficulties besieged me.*

*O Ibn ‘Abdullāh, public is against me. Be my supporter, because you are my helper.*

*I have no good deed or any submission. But I have your love in my heart.*

*O Messenger of Allāh! I have only your door (to knock at the time of necessity). The clouds of teething troubles never surround me.*

Moreover he wrote another panegyric in which he discussed the theme of calling the Prophet (ﷺ) for help.

Besides, Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī, has named the thirty-eighth part of his book as “intermediation through the Prophet (ﷺ) at the time of supplication.” In this part, after mentioning a tradition attributed to ‘Uthmān bin Hunayf, he writes, “It proves that just as intermediation through someone’s supplication is valid, similarly, reliance on someone in the supplication for intermediation is also valid.” When during the period of ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān, ‘Uthmān bin Hunayf asked a petitioner to utter the same supplication which the Prophet (ﷺ) has taught to the blind Companion, Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī makes it the basis of establishing the validity of intermediation after death. In addition, he has proved the relevance of intermediation through someone other than a prophet (ﷺ) by ‘Umar’s intermediation through ‘Abbās. Mawlānā Thānwī has also declared the act of intermediation through the Prophet’s grave during the time of ‘Ā’ishah as valid.<sup>1</sup> Finally, after reproducing ‘Utbī’s tradition in which a bedouin had called on the Prophet’s grave for the repentance of his sins, as we have explained in reference to the 64<sup>th</sup> verse of *sūrah an-Nisā*, he writes: ‘as it

1. For details of the tradition see our book *Islamic Concept of Intermediation*.

happened in the early days, and there is no contradiction of it, it has acquired the status of a proof.’

### 15. Imām Ahmad bin Zaynī Dahlān

A Makkan jurist of Muslim law, Ahmad bin Zaynī Dahlān in his journal *Fitnat-ul-Wahhābiyyah*, has established the legality of beseeching the prophets and saints for help, intermediation and intercession, and he has cogently refuted the doubts and allegations of those who are opposed to these perfectly legal acts.

### 16. Imām Muhammad bin ‘Alawī al-Mālikī

A well-known contemporary religious scholar posted at Makkah, Muhammad bin ‘Alawī al-Mālikī, in his book *Mafāhīm yajib an tusahhah* has conducted well-documented research on the concept of *istighāthah*.

### 17. Shaykh Muhammad Hishām Kabbānī

He is a famous contemporary religious scholar and he has written a book, *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine*, comprising seven volumes on the beliefs of Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah. In the fourth volume of his book he has justified the belief in *istighāthah* on the basis of a vast array of historical and rational arguments.

### A brief summary

These are a few of the observations, experiences and sayings, which span centuries of human existence. They clearly prove that the graves and tombs of the chosen people of Allāh are a steady source of divine blessings and benefits for mankind. The discerning persons do not treat these spots of the saints as worthless or as mere heaps of mud and mortar; rather they believe that they are men of distinction and Allāh has specially rewarded them for their piety and human service. Some of these saints are looked upon as ultra-magnanimous. Therefore, no one should

entertain any doubt or reservation about their purity and exceptional status.

A person, who himself is stripped of spiritual vision, has no right to misguide people about these favourites of Allāh. He has no right to say that these people are dead, lying inert and lifeless in their graves, and therefore, lack the power and the energy to help anyone. His statement is completely baseless and is justified neither by historical precedent nor by rational argument.

An important point to be noted in this context is that only those residents of the tombs deserve our reverence who had attained access to the nearness and the pleasure of Allāh and whose pious acts and virtuous deeds had made them popular during their lives. Only such persons are to be implored for help. This point has been clarified by Shāh ‘Abd-ul-‘Azīz Muhaddith Dihlawī in unmistakable terms. He said:

*Help should be sought only from the famous saints.*

as the public opinion is the litmus test of the popularity or unpopularity of a saint. He has also prescribed a method for discovering the stature of a saint and for seeking help from him. This can be looked up in *Fatāwā ‘Azīzī*.

## Chapter 6

# Line of Demarcation between Belief and Disbelief

### Purging disbelief in Muhammad's followers

Allāh has conferred infinite blessings on the followers of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). One of these blessings is their impossibility to return to disbelief after embracing Islam. It happened in the past that the followers of a particular prophet returned to their earlier state of ignorance and disbelief after his death. But this shall not happen to the followers of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). The Prophet of Allāh (ﷺ) in the last days of his earthly sojourn had himself declared that he had no fears that his followers will relapse into disbelief after his death. As Muslims, we should reflect on his words. The Prophet (ﷺ) who was sent to this world to quash disbelief and all forms of impermissible innovation, who is our primary source of guidance and who is our ultimate means of salvation, is saying that he has no doubts lurking in his mind about our steady and irreversible belief, while we are hurling allegations of disbelief at one another to cater to our false sense of superiority or to pamper our egotism based on prejudice and sheer stubbornness. What could be more unfortunate than this mutual incrimination?

It is narrated in a tradition:

'Uqbah bin 'Āmir has narrated: The Prophet (ﷺ) one day went (to Uhud) and offered prayer for the natives (martyrs) of Uhud as it is (generally) offered for the dead. Then he returned to the pulpit and said: 'I am your forerunner and I am a witness on you. By Allāh! I am right now seeing the basin of my fountain (kawthar), and I have been handed over the keys of the treasures of the earth (or the keys of the earth). I swear on Allāh, I have no fears that after me you will return to disbelief but I am apprehensive that you will try to outdo each other in acquiring worldly goods.'<sup>1</sup>

This is a statement made by the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. He has sworn on Allāh about his followers that they will not revert to disbelief. The Prophet's words call for deep reflection and serious soul-searching. We brush aside the Prophet's statement when we accuse one another of disbelief. This tradition has been reproduced by Imām Muslim<sup>2</sup> and Imām Ahmad bin Hambal<sup>1</sup>. Repeated

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1. Bukhārī narrated this tradition in his *as-Sahīh* with different words at six various places, i.e. b. of *janā'iz* (funerals) ch.71 (1:451#1279); b. of *manāqib* (virtues) ch.22 (3:1317#3401); b. of *maghāzī* (the military expeditions led by the Prophet) ch.14, 25 (4:1486, 1498-9 #3816, 3857); b. of *riqāq* (softening of hearts) ch.7, 53 (5:2361, 2408#6062, 6218); Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam-ul-kabīr* (17:278-80#767-70); Bayhaqī, *as-Sunan-ul-kubrā* (4:14); Baghawī, *Sharh-us-sunnah* (14:39-41#3822-3); and 'Alī' al-Hindī in *Kanz-ul-'ummāl* (14:416#39122).
  2. Narrated in his *as-Sahīh*, b. of *fadā'il* (virtues) ch.9 (4:1795 #30/2296).

references to this tradition by people of such calibre and prestige, and our dogged defiance of its contents are nothing but harrowing unawareness of the real spirit of our faith.

*Istighāthah*, which has been established as a valid act in Islam by countless Qur'ānic injunctions and authentic and certified traditions and which has been practised by the large majority of Muslims, is now turned into a matter of dispute and controversy, and is now being used as a convenient ploy to not only indulge in incriminating one another in disbelief but also to give vent to our personal frustrations. If we care to reflect on his words and statements, we will come to realise that to insist on the illegality of beseeching for help, either as a doctrine or in some of its actual applications, especially when its legality has been conclusively established both by the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*, is nothing but religious perversity. Tens of statements made by the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) are witness to the fact that to call someone for help other than Allāh is quite consistent with Qur'ānic commands and the Prophet's statements.

As it is reported by 'Amr bin Shu'ayb that his grandfather says: we were present in the company of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) when messengers from Hawāzin tribe came and said, "O Muhammad! We belong to the same origin and tribe, and the trouble we are facing is not hidden from you, therefore, have mercy on us." The holy Prophet (ﷺ) replied, "Opt one of the two choices; either take away your property and wealth or have your women freed." They opted for their women and children. Then the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) added: as far as my share and the share of 'Abd-ul-Muttalib and his children (in the spoils) is

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1. Narrated in his *Musnad* (4:149, 153-4).

concerned, I have already given it to you. But when I have performed the noon prayer, you should all stand up and say:

*Through the means of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) we seek help for our women and children from believers (or Muslims).<sup>1</sup>*

The narrator says that when people had finished their prayer, they repeated the same words as the Prophet (ﷺ) had advised them. These words were uttered by the sacred tongue of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) himself and he uttered them in the form of a command. Therefore, this tradition furnishes a cogent justification for the act of beseeching for help.

### **Figurative relation between belief and disbelief**

To hold the holy Prophet (ﷺ) and the saints and pious people of Allāh in reverence and to beseech them for help is quite compatible with the basic principles of Islamic faith. But sometimes the petitioners, while addressing these favourites of Allāh, employ words, which are reserved only for Allāh and, therefore, according to some religious scholars, commit disbelief. This conclusion is based on a fundamental misconception as these scholars fail to draw the vital distinction between the literal and figurative sense of these words. They interpret these modes of address or the vocative forms in a literal sense and thus wring a perverse conclusion from them. It is an admitted fact that these modes of address are used only for Allāh in their absolute sense, therefore, to use them for any other creature is obviously disbelief and for a Muslim it

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1. Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, b. of *hibah* (gifts) 6:262-3.

is simply inconceivable. Thus a basic distinction must be drawn between their literal and figurative meaning. The literal sense applies to Allāh alone and no creature, whether he is a prophet or a saint, can arrogate to himself this exclusive divine prerogative. Therefore, the petitioner is using the words only figuratively and it is in this sense alone that they are generally interpreted. The allegation of disbelief against these people is quite misplaced; it reflects rather the twisted consciousness of those who hurl such malicious allegations against them. The petitioners are, in fact, immune to disbelief. For instance:

1. *O, the most reverend (Prophet) of all creatures! I have no one else as my (helper) except you whose help should I seek at a time when I am engulfed by troubles and calamities.*

2. *There are five (friends) for me with which I extinguish the intensity of a lethal epidemic. (These are:) the holy Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), 'Alī, both of his sons (Hasan and Husayn) and Fātimah.*

3. *All this is an expression of your mercy and magnanimity that I am still surviving in the midst of trouble and turmoil.*

4. *I beg the charity of your magnanimous eye as there is no one except you to bail me out in this hour of distress.*

5. *All people have some support to rely upon when they are down and out, but I have no one else except you to turn to when I am in trouble.*

Similarly, some Muslims in different situations, while addressing the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) use these words like “O Messenger of Allāh! We have no other shelter except you.” If we interpret these words in their literal sense, obviously we would like to conclude that the person using them is committing disbelief. But the fact is that a Muslim is not using them in their absolute sense. Any Muslim who uses these words is fundamentally motivated by the belief that the power of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) is only derivative as it is contingent on divine will. He is in fact saying through his mode of address: ‘after Allāh, the Prophet (ﷺ) is my place of shelter, and after Allāh, it is his support that can serve as a means of help and salvation for a sinner like myself.’ Thus he is not equating the Prophet (ﷺ) with Allāh Who is unique and from Whose favour the Prophet (ﷺ) derives his exceptional status among the creatures of Allāh. So he is saying: ‘I have no one else except you among Allāh’s creatures and I have no expectations from other creatures except you.’ Thus he is not elevating the Prophet (ﷺ) to the level of divinity, he is only stressing his exceptional status among the creatures. Though we normally do not use these ambiguous words during intermediation or at the time of beseeching help from others, nor do we encourage others to make use of them to pre-empt even the slightest suspicion of disbelief, we also regard it as necessary to propose that a person using these words figuratively and derivatively should not be accused of disbelief in a fit of misplaced enthusiasm or an overplay of religious sentiment.

It is more pertinent to realise that we should not entertain unnecessary suspicions about the integrity of their faith; instead of making them hostages of our crude sense of justice, we should

display a reasonable degree of open-mindedness to give them the benefit of doubt. Before hurling at them the accusation of disbelief, we should try to probe into their real intentions; before convicting them, we should presume them innocent and refrain from equating their figurative expressions with literal statements. We all know, and only a sense of perversion can contradict this gut feeling, that these petitioners seeking help from others believe in divine unity, which is quite consistent with the basic postulates of Islamic faith and attested by the Messengership of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). They offer prayer and pay *zakāt*. When they follow the basic tenets of Islam, not as an eyewash but as a demonstration of commitment, then it will not be an act of wisdom to drive them out of the fold of Islam simply because they use a string of ‘undesirable’ expressions in their supplications in a figurative sense. Truly speaking, they are “more sinned against than sinning”<sup>1</sup> as the punishment seems to exceed their innocuous act. Anas bin Māik has reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

*Anyone who prays like us and makes our qiblah as his qiblah and eats our slaughtered meat, so he is a Muslim for whom Allāh and His Messenger (ﷺ) are both responsible. So do not break Allāh’s responsibility.*<sup>2</sup>

In view of this sound tradition, there is hardly any scope left to level the allegation of infidelity against the Muslims who use these words

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1. Shakespeare, *King Lear*.
  2. Bukhārī narrated it in his *as-Sahīh*, chs. of *qiblah*, ch.1 (1:153#384); and Nasā’ī in his *Sunan*, b. of *aymān wa sharā’i’ahū* (8:105).

figuratively. This figurative application is sanctioned by the Qur'ān and the *hadīth* and demonstrated by the practice of the Companions, not sparingly but frequently and therefore, its reality cannot be denied. And there is no harm to declare their application as a valid act if a believer uses them figuratively. According to the correct Islamic belief, a person who believes that Allāh alone is the Creator and the Master, and He alone has empowered His creatures to perform different acts, and He is absolutely independent of the leanings and cravings of the living and the dead, that is, it is the exclusive divine privilege to grant or reject the wish of a creature, no matter how highly placed he is, such a person is a true believer and a true Muslim. This is precisely what is meant by divinity and this is exactly what Islam stands for. It is proved by Jibrīl's dialogue with Maryam (Mary) in which he had stressed his derivative power in relation to the absolute power of Allāh. It meant that his act was not self-prompted but both sanctioned and sanctified by the will of the Lord who is One and Unique. The Qur'ān declares it in these words:

*So that I should bless you with a pure son.<sup>1</sup>*

When the chief of Allāh's creatures of light can attribute these figurative words to himself, and Allāh Himself is reinforcing them in the Qur'ān, then if a creature of flesh and bone attributes them to the holy Prophet (ﷺ), then what crime has he committed or what sin has he perpetrated? What is urgently needed is to understand the essence of the Qur'ān itself so that the Muslims stop condemning one another, inflating one set of beliefs while

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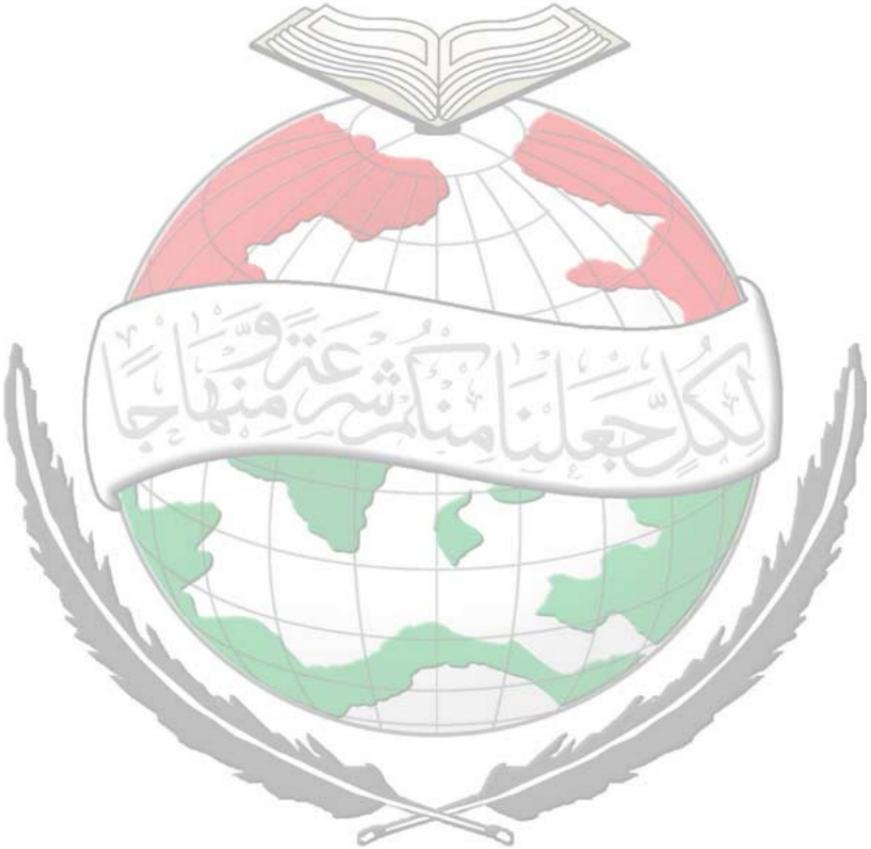
1. Qur'ān (*Maryam, Mary*) 19:19.

deflating others, and in the process giving a bad name to their faith. This is the only way to preserve the integrity of our religion and to retain the purity of our faith.

### **The last word**

Here, summing up the discussion, we would like to rephrase the vital point stated earlier that, in the present times, some people have cast aside the basic difference between the literal and figurative meanings in the interpretation of Qur'ānic verses. Moreover, their interpretation is marked by imbalance and extremism, which blatantly violates the basic principles of Qur'ānic exegesis. They prop up their interpretation on the literal sense and are not willing to concede the figurative sense. This is the reason that their interpretations are deflected from the established and authentic consensus of the traditions and the early religious leaders and scholars deeply charged with the true spirit of their faith and make sheer opinion and speculation as the basis of their conclusions. This is nothing but individualism gone haywire. They are interjecting undesirable innovations into our religious fabric and disfiguring its texture by their insensible and insensitive deviations from certified and well-documented explanations. The other group that has discarded the sobering crutches of balance has displayed such extremism in its application and patronage of the figurative sense that it appears to have lost all sense of balance, while balance is a sine qua non of all sane interpretation. If we keep in view the Qur'ānic sense of balance, the chasm between the two extremes can be abridged and the Muslim community will be transformed once again into an indivisible unity. This is the only way to preserve

our faith and to perpetuate a correct interpretation of the nature and essence of divine unity.



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## Glossary



**athar:** pl. *āthār*. lit. relating. Generally used for a *hadīth* related by one of the Companions, as distinguished from one of the Prophet's own.

**da'īf:** an inaccurate narration which does not qualify to be either *sahīh* (sound) or *hasan* (fair), and hence cannot be used as a basis of an Islamic opinion.

**dīn:** an Arabic word for religion. It is more specifically used for the religion and revealed books of the prophets and the messengers. It is a comprehensive term covering not only religious rites and rituals but also applies to all aspects of life and provides guidance in all of its pursuits, while *madhab* (religion) is restricted to man's spiritual life and regulates its relationship with God alone.

**dīnar:** an ancient gold coin.

**du'ā':** lit. to call someone; making supplication to Allāh.

**gharīb:** a *hadīth* or version reported by one reliable or unreliable narrator which differs in context with another *hadīth* or version reported by a group of reliable narrators. A *gharīb hadīth* can be *sahīh* (sound) or *da'īf* (weak).

**ghawth:** lit. one to whom we can cry for help. A mediator; a title given to a saint of the highest order.

**hadīth:** pl. *hadīths* or *ahādīth*. The sayings, practice and approved traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

**Hāfiz:** lit. a guardian or protector. (1) one of the names of God, al-Hāfiz. (2) a governor, guardian of the Makkan temple. (3) one who has committed the whole of the

Qur'ān to memory. (4) one who has committed one hundred thousand *hadīths* to memory.

**hajj:** the yearly pilgrimage of the Muslims to Makkah.

**hasan:** a *hadīth*, narrated by a reliable chain of transmission though not approaching the grade of *sahīh* (sound) *hadīth*, but records a complete chain of narrators up to the Prophet (ﷺ).

**Imām:** one who leads people in prayers; an eminent Islamic scholar.

‘**Īsā** (عليه السلام): name of Allāh’s penultimate messenger, Jesus.

**Jibrīl** (عليه السلام): the archangel Gabriel who brought the revelations of Allāh to His messengers.

**jihād:** the word *jihād*, in terms of the acquisition of a desirable and commendable objective, carries a number of meanings. *Jihād* is striving against the evils of the self, and it is also the struggle waged for the propagation of Islam and the integrity of Ummah. For example, to launch *jihād* through tongue and pen for the improvement and development of the Islamic society; an armed struggle against the exploitive forces is also *jihād* but this is ‘minor *jihād*’ while a perpetual struggle against the evil wishes of one’s self is ‘major *jihād*’. *Jihād* is one of the cardinal articles of Islam.

**kawthar:** lit. abundance. A pond in Paradise.

**Maryam:** the Prophet ‘Īsā’s mother; Mary.

**mawdū’:** a *mawdū’* tradition narrated by a liar, a narrator whose act of lying in relating traditions has been proved.

**sahīh:** sound. A *hadīth* with an unbroken chain of narrators ranging from the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and approaching an era through reliable narrators without being *shādh* (odd) or *mu’allal* (faulty) in between the two cross relaters.

**sharī'ah:** lit. road. It is a legal modality of a people based on the revelation of their prophet/messenger. The last *sharī'ah* is that of Islam that abrogates all previous *sharī'ahs*.

**sunnah:** pl. *sunnahs*. lit. the path, way or a form, the customary practice of a person or a group of people. It has come to refer almost exclusively to the legal way or ways, orders, statements and acts of worship, etc., of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) which have become the models to be followed by the Muslims.

**sūrah:** a chapter of the holy Qur'ān. There are 114 chapters in the holy Qur'ān.

**Ya'qūb (عليه السلام):** the prophet Jacob.

**Yūsuf (عليه السلام):** the prophet Joseph.

**zakāt:** a yearly fixed percentage of wealth and property of the Muslims liable to *zakāt* to be paid to the poor and the needy of the Muslim Community. It is obligatory, as it is one of the five indispensable pillars of Islam.

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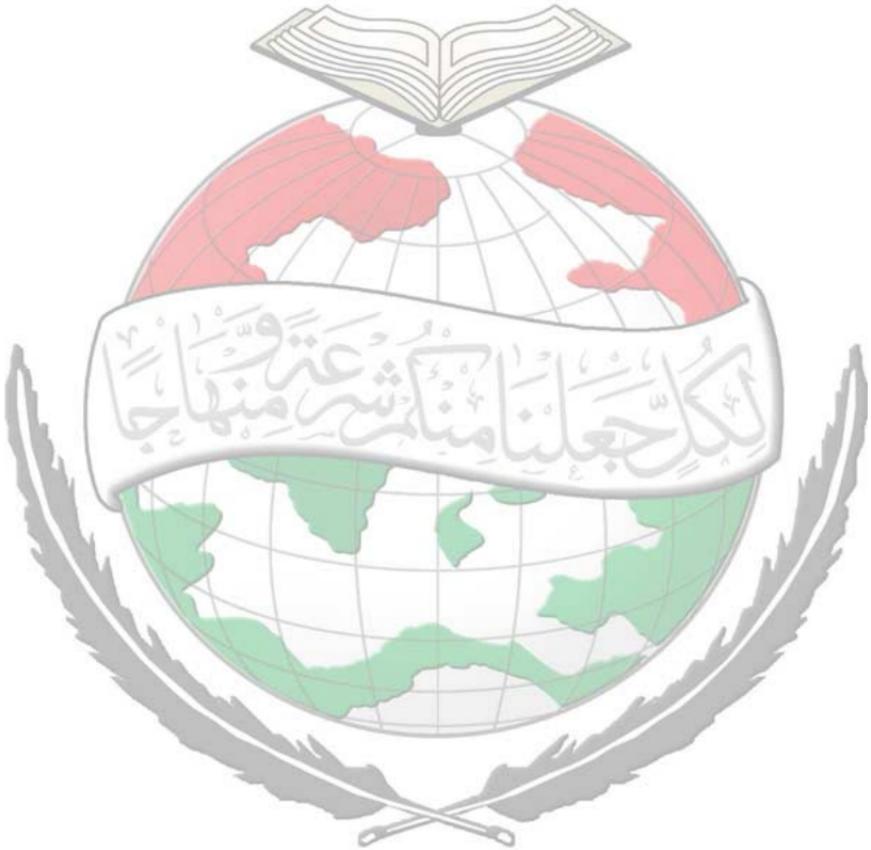
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