

GREATER SINS (Volume II)

Shaheede Mehraab Ayatullah-ul-Uzma

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Preface

By the Grace of the Almighty we take pleasure in presenting the English Translation of the book, “*Gunahane Kabira.*”

As we have already stated in the Preface to the Gujarati Edition of this book, Islamic Study Circle was established specially for publishing Gujrati and English translations of “*Gunahane Kabira.*” The permission for accepting Sehme Imam was also obtained from Ayatullah Al-Uzma Ali Husain Seestani.

Dedication

*Our sin strikes him like an arrow.
When he examines the scrolls of deeds
He weeps at our sins.
We dedicate the book
To this same Infallible Personality.
May Allah hasten his Reappearance.*

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful

Translator's Preface

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

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

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

The learned Aalim, Ayatullah Dastghaib was one of the greatest *Muallim-ul-akhlaq* (Teacher of Moral Science). Some of his important books are *Gunahane Kabira*, *Qalbe Saleem*, *Maad*, *Barzakh* etc. His books cover various moral and ethical issues.

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

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

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

Wassalaam

Syed Athar Husain S.H.Rizvi

The Sixteenth Greater Sin: Singing

The sixteenth Greater sin is singing songs. It is absolutely clear from the traditions that it is a mortal sin. This fact is also apparent from the narration of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) as quoted by Amash. Muhammad Ibne Muslim says that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) said,

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

Since it is evident from numerous reports that whichever sin has been promised Hell as its punishment, is a Greater Sin it could be derived from the above tradition that singing is a sin of the same category.

What is Singing?

Sayyed Murtuza, in his book, “Waseela” says,

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

Most of the Shia Mujtahids and the experts of Arabic language hold the opinion that “singing” means turning and rotating of one’s voice in the throat. These types of strains are invariably found in classical music and *Qawwalis*. A prolonged tune of a-a-a is produced. In the dictionary, “*Sihah*” it is mentioned that Singing is a sound which produces a strange type of sorrow or pleasure in the listener. The other dictionaries are more or less unanimous upon this point. In brief, singing or song is a sound that makes a man unusually sad or joyful.

The book “Zakheeratul Ebad” says:

“Every sound that is produced for entertainment and is capable of exciting passion is known as “singing.” It could be produced by making it emanate from the throat like in classical music or by any other means. In brief whatever is understood by common sense as a song is haraam. Then it is sinful even to recite couplets, the Holy Quran or Nauha or Marsiya in the tune of songs. In fact this is more sinful than singing ordinary songs. For this tantamount to insulting and degrading the Quran and Nauha or Marsiya. It is for the very reason that this type of sin is deserving of double the punishment.

About Singing

1. Singing is A Greater Sin.

When Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) said,

“Singing is that Sin which has been promised the penalty of fire (Hell) by Allah” he (a.s.) had also recited the following verse of the Holy Quran.

“And of men is he who takes instead frivolous discourse to lead astray it for a mockery; these shall have an abasing chastisement.”

(Surah Luqman 31:6)

2. “Frivolous discourse” implies Singing.

According to the above Verse and also the tradition of Imam Baqir (a.s.), singing is one of the “frivolous” and “evil” acts. Other useless acts are aimless talk or action, or the poetry which is of no benefit to people; all these deprive man of some benefit.

In other words anything that restrain from following the truth and the Holy Quran is a “Frivolous discourse.” Anything that leads one astray is “Frivolous discourse.” All those things that create passion and sensuality, Sin and transgression are “Frivolous discourse.” It is the same whether one sings or listens to a song. The Quranic verse quoted above is followed by:

“And when our communications are recited to him, he turns back proud, as if he had not heard them, as though in his ears were a heavens, therefore announce to him a painful chastisement.”

3. The exegesis (Tafseer) of the term “False Words.”

In addition to the phrase “frivolous discourse,” the Holy Quran also refers to singing by the term, “False words.” Abu Basir inquired from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.), the Tafseer of the following ayat:

“... and avoid false words.”

(Surah Hajj 22:30)

The Imam (a.s.) replied,

“ (It denotes) singing.”

Similarly the following verse was recited in the presence of Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.),

“And they who do not bear witness to what is false, and when they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly.”

(Surah Furqan 25:72)

Then, Imam (a.s.) was requested to explain this ayat.

Imam (a.s.) remarked,

“ (Vain means) singing.”

(Refer “Amali” of Shaykh Tusi and also the book “Al Kafi.”)

In another tradition, when Muhammad Ibne Uthman asked the meaning of this ayat, Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) said,

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

4. “False words” denote singing

The later portion of the same verse says,

“... and when they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly.”

(Surah Furqan 25:72)

Thus according to Quran when the righteous people pass by when songs are being played, they avoid being influenced by them and continue on their way in a dignified manner.

A similar kind of Verse is present in Surah Mominoon:

(Surah Mominoon 23:3)

Both the above verses describe the qualities of a believer and this fact was pointed out to Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and later to Imam Reza (a.s.), both of them explained the term “vain words” as follows:

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

(Al Kafi).

5. Singing and hypocrisy.

The sixth Holy Imam, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said,
“Listening to music, songs and useless words cultivate hypocrisy in the heart, in the same way as algae grows in water.”

(Al Kafi)

The same book, “*Al Kafi*” contains a tradition of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) that,
“Singing and music is a nest for the bird called hypocrisy.”

Singing programme

The venue of a singing programme is the place of the descent of divine retribution. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

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

The same Imam (a.s.) is reported to have said,

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

(Al Kafi and Mustadrakul Wasael)

It has been established in the preceding chapter that when the divine punishment descends, it does not discriminate. The excuse is not valid if one says, “Though we go to places where there is music and song, but we dislike it by our heart.” Dislike should be expressed by ones action. Songs and music must be discouraged.

7. Singing causes poverty

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says,

“Singing creates hypocrisy and causes poverty.”

(Mustadrakul Wasael, chapter 78)

8: Punishment for Singing

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said,

“When the singer shall emerge from his grave on the day of the Judgement, he shall be blind, deaf and mute.”

(Jameal-Akhbaar)

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

Another tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is as follows:

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

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

Deprived of the Divine Mercy

Qutub Rawandi has recorded from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) that he said,

“The singer is among that group of people which would not be looked upon with mercy by Allah on the day of judgement.”

Being a fan of a singer

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

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

(Furu Al Kafi)

It is also narrated from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said,

“Whenever a person begins singing, two satans alight upon his shoulders and continue to hit their heels upon his chest, till the time he continues the song.”

Thus how can the one who is kicked by satans deserve to be loved and admired.

Melodious sounds of Paradise

Hazrat Imam Ali Ibn Musa ar-Reza (a.s.) said,

“One who avoids songs shall be provided by Allah with a tree which will produce such a melodious sound as has never been heard by anyone. But one who has not kept himself aloof from songs will not be able to hear this sound.”

(Al Kafi)

Beautiful songs in Heaven

The following tradition of Allah's Messenger (s.a.w.s.) is recorded in the book *Tafseer Majmaul Bayan*,

“One who has listened to too many songs will not be able to hear the “Ruhaanis” on the day of Qiyamat.”

“Who are the Ruhaanis, O Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.s.)?,” someone asked.

The Prophet (s.a.) replied,

“They are the melodious singers of Heaven.”

Similarly, Hazrat Ali (a.s.) says in *Nahjul Balagha*,

“Hazrat Dawood (a.s.) shall be the chief of the singers of Paradise.”

(Nahjul Balagha).

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

Strict prohibition

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

“Calamities will befall my Ummat as sinking of the earth and rain of stones.”

The people asked, “When would it happen?”

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

they will be engrossed in singing girls, and make frequent use of intoxicants, they will devour interest and shall be wearing silk clothes.”

Singing and fornication

Singing instigates one to commit fornication. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said:

“Singing is the step-stone to fornication.”

(Al Mustadrakul Wasael)

Songs are responsible for awakening the latent sensual desires of man, which soon become apparent. It is same whether one sings a song or just listens to it. The afflicted person forgets Allah and is prepared to commit any kind of indecency.

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“And all those wasteful pastimes are haraam that make one forgetful of Allah. For example, songs and playing musical instruments.”

Yes! Music not only destroys shame and self-respect but it also annihilates feelings of love, humanness and mercy. As a result the society is converted into a kind of Hell.

Prohibition regarding songs and singing

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

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

Reciting Quran in tune of songs

As we have stated earlier it is haraam to recite Quran in a style of singing songs. Similarly it is also haraam to recite navhas, Marsiya or Azaan in this way. In this matter, there is no difference whether it is poetry or prose that is being recited. Rather, rendering of the sacred compositions into songs carries double punishment. One for the sin of singing songs and the other for causing disrespect to a hallowed text.

Reciting Quran in a melodious voice

Every melodious sound is not a song. If Quran or nauha is recited in a pleasant voice without unduly turning it in the throat it is not haraam, rather it is desirable to do so. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) is reported to have said,

“Recite the Quran in a pleasant voice, in the style of Arabs. You are ordered to avoid the transgressors and doers of greater sins. Certainly, such people will appear in the world that will recite the Quran in a singing

manner to make the listeners emotional. It is not allowed to go near these people or to call them near you. The hearts of these people have deviated and those who are influenced by them shall also have their hearts deviated.”

(Wasaelush Shia).

Pleasant voice and singing

While describing the signs of the arrival of the Day of Judgement, the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said:

“Such kind of people shall appear in the world that they would learn the Quran for worldly benefits and will recite it in a singing tune.”

However there are many traditions to the effect that reciting the Quran in a pleasant voice is Mustahab (recommended). However we must be sure that it is not in a singing tune.

Singing and music in the daughter’s wedding

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

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

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

The singing must not be accompanied by any kind of music.

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

However, precaution is much desirable and hence on the occasion of weddings too women must not sing, nor should the tambourine be played. Shaykh Ansari (r.a.) quotes Shaheed-e-Sani in the book, *Makasib* and Sayyid Murtuza says in his book *Waseela* that “Precaution is the way to salvation.”

The Seventeenth Greater Sin: Lying

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

“Lying is haraam according to common sense and it is also haraam according to the revealed religions, especially Islam. The Quran is explicit in this regard and the corpus of hadith (opinion of the majority of the jurists) and reason also sustain this assertion.”

Lying is among the list of greater sins as quoted in the tradition of Fazl ibne Shazaan from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.).

Lying is one of the greatest sins

There is a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) that he said,
“*Beware I inform you regarding the greatest of the mortal sins: Associating anything with Allah, disobeying parents and lying!*”
(Wasaelush Shia).

Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) has similarly been quoted as saying,
“*All the evils have been locked in a room and its key is lying.*”
(Mustadrakul Wasael).

Angels curse the liars

The Prophet of Islam says in one of his utterances:
“*When a believer utters a lie without a valid excuse, he is cursed by seventy thousand angels. Such a stench emanates from his heart that it reaches the sky and because of this single lie Allah writes for him a sin equivalent to that of committing seventy fornications and such fornications that the least of them is fornication with ones mother.*”
(Mustadrakul Wasael).

Doubtlessly, lying is the worst of sins. It is obvious that the evils of lying are more dreadful than those of adultery. Some lies lead to war between two tribes or two communities. Some lies are such that they cause the destruction of life and honour of thousands of people. Or at least lead to economic disasters. One kind of falsehood is that which is attributed to Allah, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) or the Holy Imams (a.s.). Obviously this is the worst kind of falsehood. Due to certain lies some innocent people are sent to the gallows and their families destroyed. It is for this very reason that the traditions state:

“*Lying is a greater evil than drinking wine.*”

Quranic verses denounce lying

Allah the Almighty says in Surah Nahl, verse 105:
“*Only they forge the lie who do not believe in Allah’s communications, and these are the liars.*”

And in Surah Zumar it is mentioned:
“*Surely Allah does not guide him aright who is a liar, ungrateful.*”
(Surah Zumar 39:3)

In the same way one could surmise from some of the verses that the liar is eligible for divine curse and Allah is extremely angry with him.

For example:

“... and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars.”

(Surah Ale Imran 3:61)

And also:

“... the curse of Allah be on him if he is one of the liars.”

(Surah Nur 24:7)

A large number of Quranic verses and traditions denounce the sin of lying and describe its evil consequences. The late Haji Noori has collected these verses and traditions and classified them into forty points for easy reference and recollection. We shall quote these for the benefit of our readers.

1. Lying is transgression

Allah says in Surah Baqarah:

“...there shall be no intercourse nor transgression nor quarreling amongst one another (during Hajj).”

(Surah Baqarah 2:197).

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

Again in Surah Hujarat it is mentioned:

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

(Surah Hujarat 49:7)

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

2. Meaning of the term “false words”

Alongwith the prohibition of worshipping idols it is ordered by Allah to abstain from falsehood.

“...therefore avoid the uncleanness of the idols and avoid false words.”

(Surah Hajj 22:30)

In this verse the term ‘false words’ refer to lying.

3. The liar is not a believer

One of the verse quoted above (Surah Nahl 16:105) proves that the liar is not a believer and one who is a believer never utters a lie. The actual translation of this verse is as follows:

“Only those people forge lie, who do not believe in the signs of Allah.”

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

4. Lying is an evil and a sin

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

“Falsehood is absolutely an evil and a sin.”

5. The Liar is accursed

The liar becomes eligible for divine curse and Allah causes His retribution to descends upon him.”

For example:

“...the curse of Allah be on him if he is one of the liars.”

(Surah Nur 24:7)

6. The blackened face of the liar

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

“Beware of falsehood! Because falsehood blackens the face.”

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

There is an interesting incident in the book, *“Habibus Sayr”*:

Sultan Husain Mirza was the king of Khorasan and Zaablistan. He sent one of his envoys to Sultan Yaqoob Mirza the king of Azerbaijan and Iraq. The envoy carried with him a lot of books and other gifts. The Sultan had ordered the book *Kulliyat-e-Jami* to be included in them. It was a very popular book in those days. The envoy by the name of Ameer Husain Abeeravi was in a great hurry and instead of *Kulliyat-e-Jami* he packed the book *Futoohat-e-Makki*. When he reached Iraq, the ruler of Iraq was very hospitable. He said, “You must have been bored during this long journey?”

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

Sultan Yaqoob was eager to see the book. When he ordered for it, it was not found among the collection. Now this envoy was in a fix and felt much humiliated.

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

The envoy says, “I left the court feeling utterly ashamed and without taking the reply of the Sultan’s letter returned home. I did not even halt or rest during the journey to Khorasan. I felt it would have been better for me to be dead, rather than utter such a lie.

7. Sin of lying is worse than drinking wine

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says:

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

(Usoole Kafi)

Although wine disables the reason and sense of the one who drinks it, lying is such a sin that it kills the reason and makes one so completely insensate that he becomes ready to commit any kind of satanic act. When the alcoholic is under the influence of wine and is not in his proper senses, it is not possible for him to act with cunning and treachery but the liar could cause untold mischief in the society through his cunning; much more than the drunkard can.

8. The foul-smelling mouth of the liar

It is recorded in a tradition that on the day of judgement the mouth of the liar would exude a terrible stench.

9. The Angels abhor the liars

The smell of the liar’s mouth would be so terrible that even the Angels will not go near them. They will keep away from the liars. This is not only for the day of judgement. Even in this world, the Angels could feel the foul odour of the mouths of the liars. In a prophetic traditions it is said,

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

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

10. Lying is disbelief (kufr)

The Almighty Allah sends curse upon the liars, as is evident from the verse of Mubahela (3:61) and the verse of 'Laam' (24:7).

This has been mentioned in the foregoing discussion.

11. The stenches of the liar's mouth reaches to the skies.

12. It is also recorded that the Angels of the sky curse the liars.

13. Falsehood spoils faith. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says:

"Lying destroys Faith"

(Al Kafi)

14. Falsehood deprives the liar from the taste of faith.

Imam Ali (a.s.) says:

"Every believer is deprived from the taste of faith till he gives up lying in jest and also seriously."

(Al Kafi)

15. According to some traditional reports, lying causes enmities and hatred between people.

16. Due to this vice of speaking lies, the character of a liar becomes much worse in comparison to others. A tradition of the Prophet (a.s.) says:

"The least fore-bearing is the one who is a liar."

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

17. The traditions of Masoomeen (a.s.) inform us that all the evils are locked in a room and the key for that room is lying.

18. Lying is a sin and transgression. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is reported to have said.

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

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

19. According to certain reports, seventy thousand Angels curse the liar.

20. Lying is a sign of a hypocrite. The following tradition of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is present in the book of *Mustadrakul Wasael*:

"The three signs of the hypocrite are:

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

21. The Islamic shariat does not consider a liar's advice to be of much use. In this regard the Holy Prophet (s.a.) remarked:

"The advice of a liar has no value."

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

22. Falsehood is the worst of the psychological ailments. Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says:

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

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

23. Lying is an embellishment of the Satan's hands. A narration of the Prophet (s.a.) is as follows:

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

24. The worst earning of a man is falsehood.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.) says:

“The worst of the profit is from the trade called ‘lying’.”

(Wasaelush Shia).

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

25. A man came to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and asked.

“Which action makes the greatest number of people the inmates of Hell?”

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) replied,

“When a believer speaks a lie, he becomes prone to commit every other sin; and when this happens, he commits kufr (disbelief) which then makes him enter Hell.”

(Mustadrakul wasael)

Lying causes forgetfulness

27. Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) is reported to have said,

“One of the divine punishments for too much lying is that Allah makes the liar afflicted with forgetfulness.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

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

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

28. Falsehood is one of the doors of hypocrisy and the hypocrite.

Terrible punishment for the liars

29. Various kinds of punishment befall the one who has lied. Aqa Rawandi has quoted a lengthy tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in his book *Dawaat*. The Prophet (s.a.) is describing the spectacles of Meraj (Ascension), when he says:

“I saw a man, who laid flat on his back. Another person mounted upon his head. The one who was standing upon the head had a pointed iron rod. He repeatedly injured the person lying flat. The face of the victim is shattered upto the neck. But when the rod is lifted it returns to its original form. Again the rod strikes the face and he suffers the same retribution.”

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says that he inquired,

“Why is this man punished?”

He was told, “This is a man who left home in the morning and uttered such a lie that it caused harm to the people. So he shall be punished in this manner (after death) till the day of Qiyamat.”

30. The liar is deprived of Namaz-e-Shab and in this way he is also deprived of the benefits that occur from Namaz-e-Shab and one of these benefits is the increase in sustenance. Sharifi narrates from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said,

“Doubtlessly, when a man speak a lie, he is not able to get the opportunity of (performing) Namaz-e-Shab. And when he doesn’t get this opportunity (to perform Namaz-e-Shab) he does not get an increase in his sustenance.”

31. Falsehood deprives the liar from true guidance and causes him to deviate. The Quran says:

“...Surely Allah does not guide him aright. Who is a liar, ungrateful.”

(Surah Juma’ 39:3)

32. Politeness and civility are removed from the one who lies. Hazrat Isa Ibne Maryam is reported to have said,

“Civility abandons the one who is a frequent liar.”

(Al Kafi)

Then no one is attracted towards him and no one feels an emotional attachment with him.

33. Falsehood is the most terrible kind of an evil and an abomination.

34. We have proved Falsehood to be a Greater sin.

35. Lie is poles apart from belief. In fact a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

“Falsehood is inversely proportional to belief.”

That is when falsehood increase, belief decreases.

36. The greatest sinner is the one who has lied. The Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.s.) said:

“The greatest of the sins is talkativeness and falsehood.”

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

37. The liar is doomed because of the lie that he utters. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) says:

“Avoid falsehood. For it may seem to be a way of salvation whereas in reality it leads to destruction.”

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

38. The liar does not deserve friendship and brotherhood. The Chief of the believers, Ali (a.s.) says:

“Every Muslim is supposed to avoid friendship and brotherhood with a compulsive liar. Because one who befriends a liar is himself considered a liar. Even if he speaks the truth, he is not believed.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

39. ***“...Surely Allah does not guide him who is extravagant, a liar:”***

The liar is kept away from truth and reality.

40. The liar has a human form only in this world. In Barzakh he does not retain the human form. While describing the scenes of Meraj, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) told Janabe Fatemah Zahra (s.a.):

“On the night of Meraj I saw a woman whose head resembled a pig and her body was like that of a donkey. It was due to the fact that she spread discord and told lies.”

(Oyoon Akhbare-Reza)

Various grades of lying

Even though, Shaheed-e-Sani and many other Mujtahids consider every kind of falsehood to be absolutely haraam and a great sin we find in traditions that falsehood is of different grades. Among these different kinds of lies, are some that are certainly greatest of the sins and some are among the greater sins. There are also some types of lying about whom there exists

a doubt whether they are “greater” or not. Let us examine each kind of falsehood.

Falsehood against Allah, the Prophet (s.a.) and the Imams (a.s.)

The worst kind of falsehood is what one utters against Allah the Almighty, His Prophet (s.a.) and the Imams (a.s.). The divine book, Quran says:

“And, for what your tongues describe, do not utter the lie, (saying) this is lawful and this is unlawful, in order to forge a lie against Allah; surely those who forge a lie against Allah shall not prosper. A little enjoyment and they shall have a painful punishment.”

(Surah Nahl 26:116-117)

The sixth holy Imam, Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“To attribute falsehood to Allah and this Holy Prophet (s.a.) is the greatest sin.”

(Al Kafi)

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) also told Abu Noman:

“Do not attribute falsehood to us. Such a lie will expel you from the upright faith (Islam).”

(Al Kafi)

This means that even if a single falsehood is attributed to the Imams (a.s.) the light of faith is extinguished from the heart. It is such a serious sin that if one intentionally commits it during the fast of Ramzan, his fast is invalidated.

Every type of falsehood

Every kind of lie and every method of speaking an untruth is haraam. As it is haraam to speak a lie with the tongue it is similarly haraam to write something false. Even if a finger is pointed in expressing a lie, it is “haraam.” For example if a person who does not pray is asked by another, “Have you performed Namaz?” and he nods his head. This is tantamount to lying and is a sin. Similarly if one propagates the statement of a liar knowing fully well that it is falsehood and to support the liar is also haraam.

Interpreting the Quranic verses and Traditions to suit oneself

Attributing falsehood to Allah (a.j.), the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and Imam (a.s.) means that one concocts a false statement and says that it is said by one of these personages. For example to say that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has said such and such thing. While knowing that it is an absolute lie. Or to say that such and such is a Quranic verse, when it is certain that the Arabic sentence is not a part of the Holy Quran. Similarly, it is haraam to distort the apparent and the true meanings of the Quranic verses and traditions to suit ones desire or to prove ones point. Incorrect translation is also a falsehood.

It is not an easy job

It is for this very reason that most of the people are incapable of speaking from the pulpit. It is not an easy task to translate the ayats and traditions and

explain and elaborate upon them in the speech. There is a need to exercise utmost caution in such risky situations. One who has not studied the rules of Arabic grammar properly will not be able to avoid falsehood to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the Holy Imams (a.s.). Because while explaining even the apparent meaning he is sure to err. Therefore the speakers must make it a point to say only the apparent meaning of the ayats and the traditions. They must especially abstain from the exegesis of the ambiguous verses.

A kind of falsehood attributed to Allah (a.j.)

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

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

There is a saying of Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

“One who says, “Allah knows,” where as Allah does not (That is the He know the opposite of it), the heaven shudder at the might (and the anger) of Allah (a.j.)”

(Al Kafi)

In another tradition, Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“When a man says, “Allah knows” while what he says is a lie, Allah tells him, “Didn’t you find anyone else to attribute a falsehood to?”

(Wasaelush Shia)

In some traditions it is mentioned that when a person makes Allah a witness for a falsehood Allah says, “Didn’t you find anyone weaker than me to be a witness for your falsehood?”

Falsehood against the Prophet (s.a.) and Imams (a.s.)

It implies the fabrication of a tradition and then attributing it to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) or the Imams (a.s.). In the same way it is haraam to knowingly propagate a weak tradition. However if one is sure of the proper references then he can quote the tradition and attribute it to the Masoomeen (a.s.).

Traditions must be quoted with the chain of narrators

Numerous traditions are found in the books and one is not sure whether they are authentic or not. In this case one can give the name of the narrator and also provide the title of the book as reference. However one must be certain that the tradition is not against the Zururiyat-e-deen, (the necessities of Faith). If there is anything against the basics of principles of religion it is most certainly a fabricated tradition. Similarly there must not be any sort of disrespect to the Masoomeen (a.s.). Also the tradition must not be against reason. Lastly as a precautionary measure one must quote only from the reliable books.

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

“And do not quote (a tradition) except from a reliable authority, otherwise you will fabricate a great falsehood. And falsehood debases you (in the sight of Allah and his creatures).”

(Kashful Muhajja)

The Sermon of Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) to Haris-e-Hamad also contains the following advice:

“Do not quote everything circulating among the common people. It suffices to be a falsehood.”

(Nahjul Balagha)

Hence whenever quoting a tradition it is necessary to prefix it was “from” and “by.” Not a single word must be deleted or added from our side, and not even a single word must be replaced, because in all such cases it would amount to attributing falsehood to the Masoomeen (a.s.).

The honourable Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is reported to have said:

“One who attribute something to me, which I have not said, shall sit in the Fire.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Aqa Noori writes in his book *“Darul Salaam”*:

“A person came to the pious scholar and author of the book, *Magame*, Aga Muhammad Ali at Kerman Shah and said:

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

Aga Muhammad Ali pondered a while and then said:

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

The man replied, “Yes.”

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

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

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

Relating the contents of the narrations

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

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

2. False oath and avoiding testimony

Another grade of falsehood is a false oath, false witness and intentional avoidance of testifying in an Islamic court. This type of falsehood is also a

confirmed greater sin. Each one of these shall be described in detail in the following pages.

3. The evil effects of falsehood

The lie is surely a great sin, which has obvious harmful effects and causes harm to others. If the harm is more the sin is greater. For example a lie causing monetary loss is definitely lesser than the one which causes the loss of a human life.

4. Lying in jest and pleasantry

Lying in jest is another kind of falsehood. For example to tell a simpleton that, "A certain lady wants to marry you," or "that person has invited you for dinner tonight," when actually there is no such thing. This type of falsehood is also haraam as proved conclusively from the traditions.

However, certain Mujtahids are of the opinion that if something untrue is said in a zestful manner and it is clearly understood to be a joke, then it is permitted. For example a bachelor is told, "See, there goes your wife!" It may be allowed because the listener could never misunderstand. In such a case it is not haraam. Certain Mujtahids regard even a falsehood in jest to be absolutely haraam. Whether it is an apparent joke or not. This is the precautionary method and the traditions also confirm that lying even in jest is not permitted.

Total abstinence from lying

Hazrat Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s.) says,

"Avoid falsehood, whether it is small or big, in solemnity or jest."

(Al Kafi)

Hazrat Amirul Momineen (a.s.) said,

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

(Al Kafi)

It is also related from Amirul Momineen (a.s.) that he said:

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in his advice to Abu Zar Ghaffari (r.a.) says:

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

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

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

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

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) replied:

“The sin shall be erased by Isteghfir (seeking forgiveness) and by the five-times prayers.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

The Prophet of Allah (s.a.) has also said:

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

It is also narrated from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) that he remarked,

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

(Khisaaal)

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

Exaggeration is not falsehood

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

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

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

No falsehood should be regarded as insignificant

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

Asma Binte Umais says:

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

“Do not bring together hunger and falsehood.”

Asma asked the Prophet (s.a.),

“O Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.), if we desire something but verbally state that we do not want it, is it a lie?”

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said,

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

(Safinatul Behaar)

If a person, just for the sake of formality, says:

“Please come, and visit us sometimes,” even when he does not actually want him to visit, it is not a lie. Because the word “come” is conditional and uncertain. It is neither a truth nor falsehood but it is better to refrain from

such a show of politeness. Because to say something and have something else in the heart is a sign of hypocrisy.

One day, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) was seated with his son Ismail when one of his followers arrived, saluted him and sat down. When the Imam (a.s.) arose and walked towards the ladies portion this man also followed till the door. Imam (a.s.) bid farewell to him from here. Later, Ismail asked his father, "Why didn't you invite him inside just for the politeness sake?"

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said,

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

(Behaarul Anwaar)

A False dream

One type of falsehood is that a person says:

"I had such and such dream." Or attributes falsely a dream to someone else when it is not correct. This is also falsehood.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says that the worst types of falsehood are three:

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

To relate a dream that one has not seen.

Or to say something which is not said by me.

One kind of falsehood is to concoct imaginary stories, which are not based on reality but are considered true. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

"The worst of the narrations is to narrate a false (story)."

Falsehood in examples

Examples are used to explain, understand and remember some intellectual concepts. Sometimes, animals are shown as conversing among themselves. (For example, there is a poem by Allama Iqbal where a squirrel advises the mountain to give up pride). Now everyone knows that such things are not possible so there is no risk of anyone having a misunderstanding. On the other hand they serve a useful purpose. Hence such examples are permitted. We find such types of examples in the narrations of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

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

Imam Hasan (a.s.) mentions a simile

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

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

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

The tree replied, "I don't even know since when you had perched upon me. So how can your flying away affect me?"

Listening to a lie is haraam

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

"(They are) listeners of a lie."

(Surah Maidah 5:42)

Shaykh Sadooq (r.a.) has recorded that Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked,

"Is it allowed to listen intently to a liar?"

Imam (a.s.) replied,

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

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

The Quran says,

"...and avoid false words."

(Surah Hajj 22:30)

And also,

"And they who do not bear witness to what is false..."

(Surah Furqan 25:72)

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

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

What is "toriya"? (concealment of truth without uttering a lie)

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

Or if an oppressor is asking you the whereabouts of a person whom he intends to oppress. In this case you can say, "I do not know his whereabouts"; signifying by the pronoun "his" someone else whose whereabouts you really do not know. In the same way if one has committed a greater sin and someone asks him, "Have you committed this sin?" The

person could save his honour by saying, “I shall seek forgiveness from Allah if I ever committed it.”

Similarly you can use uncertain terms and also rhetorical sentences.

For example to say, “Do you expect me to commit such a grave sin?”

Or he can also say the following prayer,

“O Allah protect me from such a sin.”

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

“Toriya” is commanded

“Toriya” is of three kinds:

First type

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

Second type

The next type of ‘Toriya’ is the one when a person intends to harm or insult someone else. There is no doubt that such a kind of ‘Toriya’ is ‘haraam’.

Third type

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

However, the precautionary method is to resort to ‘Toriya’ only when it is certain that it permissible.

Circumstances when lying is permitted

1. Whenever there is a danger to life, honour and property and if the danger is removed by lying, one is allowed to lie. The danger could be to ones own life, honour and property or that of someone else’s. So much so that it is also permitted to take a false oath in this situation and in some cases it becomes wajib (obligatory) to speak a lie. For example like the risk to ones life. In this case it is wajib to save oneself by lying and taking a false oath. For example if an oppressor intends to kill a Muslim or to beat him up, dishonour him, seize his property or imprison him and if he enquires from you of his whereabouts, it is obligatory not to tell the truth. Even if one has to take a false oath and say that one does not know of his whereabouts.

In the same way if you have someone’s trust in your possession and if

someone intends to seize it. It is your duty to protect the trust even if you have to take the help of falsehood or a false oath.

False oath to save the Muslims

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

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

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

Ismael Ibne Saad records a correct tradition, wherein he says that he asked Imam Ali Reza (a.s.) concerning the person who takes a false oath to save his property from the unjust ruler.

Imam Reza (a.s.) replied,
“There is no harm (in it).”

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

Imam (a.s.) said,
“Yes! It is allowed.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Also Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

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

Monetary loss and falsehood

Two points must be remembered on this juncture. One is that even though it is permitted to lie, to save oneself from every type of monetary loss, yet it is Mustahab (recommended) not to lie if one is capable of bearing the loss. Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says,

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

(Nahjul Balagha)

If one is compelled he must limit himself to ‘toriya’

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

Reconcile two believing people by using falsehood

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

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

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

Imam (a.s.) replied:

“You hear something about something and change it, and then tell the other person that the former was saying such nice things about you. (Where as the reality is something else).”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Conveying of a harsh message:

It is clear that if in order to bring about reconciliation one has to resort to lies, he is ordered to do so, to remove the tense feelings between two people. Then the one who brings about reconciliation shall not be termed as liar. This kind of lying is not lying but it is known as causing reconciliation. If man communicates the harsh message from one to the other it will only increase the tension between the two.

In the same way if a husband and wife have separated, and divorce is about to take place, then it is allowed to speak a lie to bring about a reunion. For example the husband could be told, “Your wife is very much troubled by the separation. She is having such intense feeling about your love that she may fall ill.” Or the wife may be told similar kinds of unreal things so that they may reunite.

Reconciliation among people

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has said,

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

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) said that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has said at the time of recording his will and testament.

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has also said,

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

Abu Hanifa Saeq Al Haj says that there was an inheritance dispute between my son-in-law and me. Our dispute was in process when the agent of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.), Mufazzal happened to pass by. He stopped to listen for a while then called us at his house where he gave us four hundred dirhams and solved the dispute.

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

This shows the importance of peace and reconciliation. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has also stated that it was better than prayers and fasting, even though this action is Mustahab (recommended) whereas the former are wajib (Obligatory). The reason for this could be that due to prayers and fasting an individual is reformed. Whereas the peacemaker reforms the whole society and consequently prayers and fasting also become popular among the people. Unity among the Muslims is not only beneficial for the Hereafter, but it is very much needed from the worldly point of view also.

When the hearts of the believers unite for the sake of Allah, such a power is achieved that not only the apparent enemies could be faced but even the hidden enemies, like the self and shaitan, could be easily deflected.

Kur water and the united hearts

The unity and understanding among the people could be compared to Kur water (more than 377 litres). That is if water is divided by putting it in different vessels and each of them is less than a kur, then whenever an impurity (Najasat) falls into one of it, it becomes Najis (impure) but if all the water is collected in one place and it becomes more than a kur and if an impurity falls into it, it does not make the kur water Najis. On the contrary the kur water is capable of purifying the impurity of a Najis Object. Exactly, in the same way when the people unite together, the divine mercy descends upon them and each one benefits by it. Secondly due to the unity among the Muslims the honour of Islam shall also be doubled in the eyes of the people.

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

Falsehood in the battle-field

It is surmised from some traditions that if there is a war against the kafirs, and if by using falsehood, victory could be achieved upon them, then it is permitted to do so.

Promise to a wife

The man can promise his wife something when he does not intend to fulfill it. For example if a wife asks for something, her husband can give her a false promise.

However, whether such a promise is permitted or not is difficult to prove. Some weak traditions do state that such a false promise is allowed.

But if one thinks that if he does not promise falsely to his wife, then there will be discord in the family and disputes will arise, or that his wife will be extremely unhappy. Or if he does not speak a lie it could lead to a divorce, then under compulsion the false promise is permitted.

Fear of retribution and good deeds

Hazrat Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.) says:

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

(Al Kafi)

Imam Ali (a.s.) explains the above tradition, that, if one sincerely desires the pleasure of Allah he must strive for it by refraining from lies. For a

sincere hope necessities that one perform good deeds. Falsehood is a haraam act and extremely evil. In the same way if one really fears divine retribution, he must keep aloof from sins, for sins incur punishment. If a person merely claims that he hopes for divine rewards and fears the divine punishment, but does not refrain from sins nor perform good deeds; he is a liar.

The following saying of Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) is recorded in Nahjul Balagha:

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

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

Thus if one claims to be fearful of Allah and hopeful of divine rewards, but his actions do not confirm his claim, such a person is a liar. In the same way one who claims to have the traits of patience, thankfulness, contentment and resignation etc. but it is not shown in his behaviour, such a person is also a liar.

Your speech must conform to your thoughts

Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

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

It is regretful that people verbally say “Allaho Akbar” but their actions say “Allaho Asghar” (Allah is the smallest). For if they are told to do something for the sake of Allah or to refrain from something for the sake of Allah they do not pay any heed but if you fine them a hundred rupees they will obey you at once. Thus the hundred rupees are greater in their eyes and “Allah is not great”! There are such people who perform particular actions or restrain from others only due to the fear of harm by some human but if they are told to do so only due to the fear of Allah, they will not be prepared to do the same.

A show of submission

If a person says to Allah, ‘Thee only do we worship and only thee we ask for help, ’ but his actions are such that day and night he is involved in the worship of Mammon and is preoccupied in the satisfaction of carnal desires, can we consider this man to be truthful?

Does this man really worship Allah? In the same way if man regards the apparent means to be the sole authority and he relies on them alone, and seeks their help, can he remain a truthful person? To say “Thee only do we worship and only thee we ask for help” but to act contrarily is also falsehood.

Falsehood in supplications

Quite often people are prone to make false statements in invocations and supplications. For example if one says, “I am pleased with my Lord and Cherisher, He the sole cherisher of all the creatures. I am satisfied with him.”

Now if one is not satisfied by the Divine decree, and does not submit to Allah’s destiny; and when something happens against his wish, he becomes unhappy and sad, and begins to complain. The wording of his complaints prove that he is a liar.

Confession of Belief in the Imams (a.s.)

Similarly if one says, “I am pleased that Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) is my Prophet; and Quran is my Book and Ali is my Imam; and all of them are for my guidance,” but when it comes to putting this into practice he makes his sensuous desires and shaitan to be his guides, and only follows them. He does not even give any thought to the Quranic Laws. He ignores the sayings of the Imams (a.s.). Then such a person is also a liar.

Do you speak the truth?

If a man is to pray, “(O Allah) when I look at my sins, I weep and when I see your mercy and forgiveness I become hopeful and happy in anticipation that you will forgive me,” but does not worry about committing more sins. When he comes across a sinful act, even if he considers it an evil he dares to perform it without any qualms! He does not even wish for the forgiveness and mercy of Allah! Is such a person truthful? Isn’t his falsehood absolutely clear?

In the same way if a person says, “I weep due to (the fear of) the agony of death, due to the fear of questioning of the grave, due to the fear of Qiyamat,” while he is not fearful of any of these! His falsehood is obvious. It could be this very kind of falsehood that is referred to in Dua Abu Hamza Thumali of Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s.):

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

It means that the supplicant has followed the selfish desires and does not know where they will lead him.

Lying to the Imams (a.s.)

The example of lying to the Imam (a.s.) is when a person recites the Ziarat he says, “(O Imams) I accept your sayings and act upon your commands and obey you,” but does not do so in reality. In fact he obeys his selfish desires. Such a person is nothing but a devil! He is lying to the Imams (a.s.).

Another example of such a falsehood is when he says in Ziarat, “We make peace with those who are at peace with you and we make war with those who are at war with you.” Even though he verbally claims this but in practice he is friendly with the enemies of Islam. Also, he is inimical to the believers and the Imams (a.s.). He also claims, “I keep aloof from your

opponents,” whereas he does not act upon it. Isn’t such a person lying to the Imams (a.s.)?

Then how should we pray?

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

Although a detailed reply to this is beyond the scope of this book, we can say in brief that the manner of praying denounced by us is when the supplicant invokes Allah, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the Imam (a.s.), he becomes proud of his supplications.

This is not to be. One must beware of pride and arrogance and must begin not to have a high opinion about oneself. Now if a believer says that since it is not possible to avoid falsehood in prayers it is better not to pray. This type of despair is a satanic instigation. The shaitan desires to keep him away from the divine rewards, because no one is hundred percent truthful right from the beginning. He strives to achieve perfection in a gradual manner. Then Allah helps him in achieving the ultimate aim.

Either a person could understand the meanings of duas and Quranic verses (as those quoted above) or not. Even if one recites them without following the actual meaning the duas and Quranic verses will illuminate his heart by their light. He will also be eligible for the divine rewards. One who recites the duas but could not understand the meanings could certainly not be termed as a liar.

Every person has a different position

Those who are able to understand the meaning of Quran and Duas must know that people of their class are having different grades.

The highest grade is of the Masoomeen (a.s.), who have the complete understanding of these and most of the believers could not reach this stage. Then how can it be said that these believers are lying? Therefore, we can only say that, “believers are not lying.” For example all the believers fear Allah; as stated in the Holy Quran:

“And fear (only) Me if you are believers.”

(Surah Ale Imam 3:175)

In the same way all the believers repose hope in Allah but it must be noted that the fear and hope of the believers with respect to Allah is having different grades of intensity and they could never reach the stage of the Masoomeen (a.s.).

As the believers have not reached that station they are sometimes instigated by their selfish motives and fall prey to the sins and disobey Allah. The following lines of Dua Abu Hamza Thumali explain:

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

Firm conviction and disobedience

Even though the belief in Allah and the fear of His retribution is present in man, he is still prone to commit sins. It is not that one who believes in

Allah cannot sin. For example who does not know that a dead body cannot cause any harm. Everyone firmly believes in it. Yet how many people can stay alone with a corpse at night? Here a firm belief is unable to rid the man of his fear of dead. Hence, even a firm belief cannot guarantee one's actions. It is for this reason that we recite in Dua, "*Bestow upon me such a firm conviction that I can worship you sincerity.*" There is no doubt that if one prays to Allah for a true fear; that is a fear which restrain him from committing sins; Allah will surely create such a fear in his heart.

Also the magnitude of his fear increases in the same way as the grades of piety and obedience are achieved due to constant efforts.

It is been mentioned in the traditions:

"Whoever desires something and strives for it, finds it."

Truly! Being absolutely truthful seems appropriate only for the Masoomeen (a.s.). As the Holy Quran states,

"And be with the Truthful One!"

(Surah Tauba 9:119)

The "Truthful Ones" referred to in this ayat are the Ahul Bayt (a.s.).

The Eighteenth Greater Sin: False Oath

The traditions mention that ‘false oath’ is one of the greater sins. To convey a false report under a false oath is a greater sin. Especially, to swear by Allah for a false thing is an extremely dirty sin. According to the traditions such a person shall be sunk in depravity, and surrounded by fire in hell. The traditions state that false oaths remove belief from the sinner in the same way as a sharp-edged blade shaves the hair from the body.

False swearing is a greater sin as mentioned in a correct tradition recorded by Abdul Azeem and also in the tradition of Imam Reza (a.s.) as quoted by Fazl Ibne Shazaan. There is a report from Imam Ja’far-e-Sadiq (a.s.) in the book ‘*Tuhafful Uqool*’:

“False swearing causes destruction of the faith.”

(Behaarul Anwaar)

Punishment for a false oath

“(As for) those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their own oaths-surely-they shall have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will he look upon them on the day of resurrection nor will he purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement.”

(Surah Ale-Imraan 3:77)

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

The Prophet (s.a.) orders the taking of oath

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

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

He replied, “No!”

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said,

“Then your opponent should take an oath.”

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

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) replied,

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

When the litigant heard these statements he was filled with horror and gave up his false claim to the property of Imrul Qays.

Hazrat Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) is reported to have said:

“One who knowingly takes a false oath had made war upon Allah.”

(Al Kafi)

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said:

“Refrain from false oaths, because it destroys inhabitations and makes the sinner helpless.”

(Al Kafi)

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

Evil consequences of false oaths

Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“One who swears falsely becomes poor within forty nights” (means forty days).

(Al Kafi)

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

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

And Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) also remarks,

“When a person say, “Allah knows!” when in fact he is speaking a lie; then Allah tells him, “Didn't you find any one other than Me to ascribe the falsehood to?”

(Al Kafi)

The Holy Imam (a.s.) also says:

“When a person says ‘Allah knows’ and the fact is that Allah knows contrary (to what he alludes), the heavens shudder due to the might and Divine anger.”

Types of oaths (something is proved by swearing and some action becomes compulsory due to the oath)

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

Wajib (Obligatory).

Mustahab (Recommended).

Makrooh (Detestable).

Haraam (Prohibited).

When does it become wajib (obligatory) to swear?

If there is a danger to life or honour of self or of another Muslim, it becomes wajib to take an oath to ward off the same. In the same way to protect the property when it is wajib to protect it. In this case too swearing becomes wajib. So much so that in some cases even a false oath becomes wajib. However in all such situations, the person should first try his best to employ ‘Toriya’ instead of a false oath as a precautionary measure.

Mustahab oath

There are situations when it is Mustahab to take an oath and sometimes it becomes Mustahab to refrain from taking it. In case a situation concerning the property of self or of another Muslim is such that it is not wajib to swear. Then in this case it shall be Mustahab to do so. Property worth thirty Dirhams and less is usually considered to come within this type of oath.

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

Imam (a.s.) said,

“Take such oaths! Such oaths are more sweet than dates and butter.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

However if the property is not worth much especially, that which is valued less than thirty Dirhams then it is Mustahab not to swear falsely even if it may be necessary for saving oneself from the oppressor.

Hazrat Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has quoted the following tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.):

“Respecting the Greatness of Allah if one refrains from swearing, Allah shall give him much better than whatever he has lost.”

(Furu Al Kafi)

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

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

(Furu Al Kafi)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

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

Imam Sajjad (a.s.) avoids swearing

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

Imam (a.s.) replied,

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

Swearing for the sake of emphasis

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

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

(Masaalik)

Another example of an oath is the following saying of Amirul Momineen (a.s.):

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

(Masaalik)

There are numerous Quranic verses and the traditions of Masoomeen (a.s.) where oath is taken. All of them are of this same type. They are for emphasis and for proving particular facts.

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

Imam Baqir (a.s.) wrote the following reply,

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

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

Swearing is makrooh

We have already describes the wajib and Mustahab oaths. Apart from these in all other situations, it is Makrooh (detestable) to swear. It is same whether it is for something past, present or future. In ordinary situations, for ordinary matters, taking an oath is Makrooh. If one unnecessarily swears that, “such and such happened, or “at present it is this” or “it will be like that,” it is Makrooh to say so and it is Makrooh to swear for something which is true. Swearing for a false thing is certainly Haraam. It is the command of Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

“Do not swear by the name of Allah, whether you are speaking the truth or lying.”

(Furu Al Kafi)

“Because Allah says in the Holy Quran”:

“And make not Allah because of your swearing (by Him) an obstacle to your doing good...”

(Surah Baqarah 2:224)

Hazrat Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) also says,

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

(Furu Al Kafi)

The above quoted traditions could be simply explained thus:

To swear falsely in the name of Allah is definitely a greater sin and one who indulges in a greater sin, falls down from the highest position of Faith. Due to this some amount of disbelief comes to his heart. Imam (a.s.) has also called a true oath a sin and he has used the word “Ithm” (sin). Since it

is well known among the Mujtahids that a true oath is Makrooh the word sin would imply something which is very very undesirable.

A Lesson from Hazrat Ali (a.s.)

The book *Furu Al Kafi* also contains the following report from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

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

He (a.s.) said, “Certainly, Musa, the Prophet of Allah commanded you not to swear falsely by Allah. And I order you not to swear falsely and (nor) truly.”

(Furu Al Kafi)

Oath of the respectable objects and personalities

Wherever it is permitted to swear by Allah, it is also permitted to swear by other honourable personalities or respectable objects. In such situations it is allowed to take an oath by the Quran, the Kaaba, the Prophet (s.a.) or the Imam (a.s.). In the same way oath upon any other respectable object is also permissible. For example a person may swear by his father or son etc.

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

The oath that is haraam forever

The oath which is Haraam forever and which one can never take is that of dissociating with Allah and His religion. For example a man says;

“If I do not perform this particular action, I shall be dissociated with Allah and His religion.” Such an oath is certainly Haraam.

In the same way if one says:

“If I do not do this, I would have disbelieved in the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), or I would have rejected the Mastership of Ali (a.s.), or I would become a Jew,” etc.

Such a kind of vow is also Haraam. Such a thing is absolutely Haraam even if one wishes to prove the truth or to lay emphasis upon a fact, or it may be with regard to performance or avoidance of an action in the future. It may also concern the past or the present. In all such circumstances such a type of vow is prohibited.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) heard a person say, *“Woe be unto you, if you leave the religion of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) then which religion would you follow?”*

The narrator says that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) did not speak to this man till the end of his life.

(Al Kafi)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) informed Yunus Ibne Zabyan:

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

(Al Kafi)

Expiation for a haraam oath

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

(Refer Shariyatul Islam)

However, Shaykh Mufeed (r.a.) says that if one breaks the vow of dissociation then he has to feed to satiation ten poor people and must also repent. The same decree is proved from a letter of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.), which is quoted in the book *“Masaalik”*.

Imam (a.s.) says,

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

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

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

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and Mansur Dawaniqi

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

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

Imam (a.s.) replied,

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

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

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

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

Imam (a.s.) interrupted him,

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

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

Imam replied,

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

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

Is it against a prohibited oath?

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

(Jame ush-shataat)

From the explanation of this tradition by Muhaqqiq it is clear that Imam (a.s.) considered that accursed man deserving of death and his death only depended upon the oath of dissociation. It was also necessary that the position of Imam (a.s.) may not be caused disrespect. Also that the Imam (a.s.) can save himself from being killed at the hands of Mansur. Another benefit that accrued was that, Mansur for the time being refrained from oppressing the other Sadaat (descendants of Holy Prophet) and believers.

Repenting for a false oath

The method of repenting for a false oath is that one must feel extremely remorseful for it. He should know that he had considered the Divine Name of Allah to be a plaything, and that he has committed a sin. The more remorse he feels and the more serious he considers his sin, the closer he shall be to the Divine Mercy and Forgiveness. If due to this false oath some monetary loss has occurred to a believer or a believer has been insulted, the one who had taken the false oath must compensate for the monetary loss and apologise to the believer and as much as possible he should try to make up for the harm that has been caused due to his false swearing.

When is the vow correct?

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

The following are the conditions for such vows:

The vow should be with regard to a wajib or a Mustahab act. For example, he can vow that he shall not intentionally leave the Morning Prayer, or not leave the Namaz-e-Shab. In the same way if one vows to abstain from a particular thing, it has to be one of the haraam or a Makrooh thing. For example he can vow that he shall not speak a lie in future or he can vow to refrain from spitting in the mosque. A vow to refrain from

Mubah (permitted) act or thing is only correct when there is some benefit in it. For example it is Mubah to smoke. So one can take a vow in order to give up this habit.

Vows with regard to all the five types of actions, i.e. Wajib, Mustahab, Haraam, Makrooh and Mubah are correct only when the name of Allah is uttered with a firm intention to do or to refrain from a particular thing. One must not swear by Allah in jest. If one is in a habit of saying, “By Allah I shall do this.” or “By Allah I shall not do it” then unless he seriously means it, such a vow is not considered to be correct.

The Quran says:

“Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but he calls to account for the feeding of ten of the Muslim brothers. And it is proved with all its necessary conditions; then there is no way except to dismember it. Society is rendered safe due to this measure.”

(Surah Maidah 5:5)

Useless Vow

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

It is haraam if one vows to omit wajib or mustahab prayers or vows not to speak to his mother or any other relatives. It is also not allowed to vow against performing the Hajj if one capable for it. To vow that one would never mediate between two believers is also haraam. All such vows are invalid. Hence if one of us have ever taken such vows we must repent for them.

Hazrat Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

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

(Al-Kafi)

Although apparently the above tradition and other such reports imply that vow for mubah acts is invalid if it concerns something beneficial, the mujtahids are of the opinion that one must exercise caution and in case decides to act against the vow he must pay the kaffarah. According to the majority of the jurists a mubah thing becomes wajib if one takes a vow for it. Thus the best thing is to follow the path of precaution.

Saeed Aeraaj, a narrator of traditions says that he asked Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) about a person who had vowed not to do particular thing, whereas it some that was beneficial. Now that person was also worried to disregard his vow. Imam (a.s.) said,

“Have you not heard the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) say that whenever you find that you have vowed against doing something that is better to be done, you must ignore your vow.”

(Al-Kafi)

Types of Vows

In the same book, *Al-Kafi* we have a tradition of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said,

There are three types of Vows:

A vow that makes hell incumbent.

A vow that makes kaffarah wajib.

A vow that neither earns hell nor entails kaffarah.

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

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

Lastly, a vow that neither earns hell nor makes kaffarah wajib is the vow of doing qat-e-rehmi taken under duress before a tyrant ruler, the parents or ones spouse. Other vows like to do some evil act or to refrain from a wajib are also included in this. Those who wish to study the details may refer to the comprehensive books of jurisprudence.

The Nineteenth Greater Sin: False Testimony

According to the corpus of traditions false testimony is a Greater sin. It is also mentioned in the narration of Abdul Azeem quoted from Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.). Similarly the tradition of Fazl ibne Shazaan includes it in the list of Greater sins as mentioned by Imam Reza (a.s.). That it is a Greater sin is also proved by the hadith of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) as quoted by Amash. We have already mentioned in the chapter on "lying" that falsehood is a Greater sin. False testimony is also a branch of falsehood.

In the tradition narrated by Hazrat Abdul Azeem, Imam (a.s.) has proved the "greatness" of "False Testimony" on the basis of the following verse of the Holy Quran:

"And they who do not bear witness to what is false..."

(Surah Furqan 25:72)

"...These shall be regarded with high places..."

(Surah Furqan 25:75)

In this verse the word "false" signifies the action of proving a false thing true.

Another verse says,

"...therefore avoid the uncleanness of the idols and avoid false words."

(Surah Hajj 22:30)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says that,

"To testify falsely tantamounts to polytheism."

It is mentioned in *Tafseer Abdul Fath Razi* that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) repeated this statement thrice and then quoted the above ayat (Surah Hajj 22:30)

A similar kind of tradition is recorded in *Mustadrakul Wasael*, from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.).

"In the Quran Allah has compared false testimony to polytheism."

Allah mentions the "uncleanness of the idols" and "avoid false words" in a single verse, one after the other.

"False words" imply sin and false testimony

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

The punishment of hell for the false witness

Hazrat Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says,

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

(Al Kafi)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“The false witness does not move from his place but the punishment of fire already becomes incumbent for him.”

(Al Kafi)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

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

(Al Kafi)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has also said,

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

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

Hazrat Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) narrates from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) that he said,

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says,

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

The companions said, “Why not O! Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.s.)” The Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said,

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

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

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

Since we have already explained that ‘Falsehood’ includes every type of lying it also includes false testimony. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has also described ‘Falsehood’ to be a Greater sin. False testimony is a manifold sin. One, lying is a Greater sin and secondly it amounts to accusing a Muslim falsely. Which is itself a Greater sin. Thirdly, due to a false witness someone is innocently oppressed, and oppression is another Greater sin. Also, through false testimony a person tries to prove something as his own when it does not belong to him rightfully, this is another Greater sin because it amounts to making lawful a thing that is prohibited by Allah. Lastly, usurping someone else’s property is also a Greater sin. Thus we can say that many great sins constitute a single sin called, “False testimony.”

One should testify only after knowing the facts

It does not make any difference whether one knowingly gives a false testimony or he testifies without being certain of the facts. Both of these are

‘Greater sins’. It is wajib upon the witness not to testify till he is sure of the facts.

Hazrat Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“Do not testify till you are as certain as you are about the palm (of your hand)”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Some one inquired from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) as to when it is allowed to testify as a witness. The Prophet (s.a.) told him:

“Can you see the sun?”

“Yes,” he said.

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

Hazrat Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says,

“The witness should testify only for that about which he is certain. He must fear Allah. To testify without having certainty or to testify against something without being certain is also falsehood. Allah (a.j.) says,

Refrain from falsehood! And remain upright for (the sake of) Allah and do not be among the polytheists.

So, Allah has equated ‘false testimony to polytheism.’

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

One who testifies falsely is soon exposed

If a person testifies in an Islamic court and later he repents for his testimony. Then it is first determined whether he had knowingly and intentionally testified wrongly or he had done it lacking certainty. If it was an intentional lie, then that person is branded as a transgressor whose testimony is no more valid in the Shariat Court but if he had been a victim of doubt and uncertainty he is not disqualified from testifying in the future.

However, if due to the wrong testimony of a witness someone had to undergo undeserved punishment or suffer harm, it becomes wajib for this witness to make up the loss. The details of such laws could be obtained from the books of Jurisprudence.

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

The judge would also announce in the city and the surrounding areas that such and such person is a false witness so that people may not be misled by him and may not rely upon his evidence. In this way, one who testifies falsely becomes notorious for his falsehood in the society, and as result of it the wellbeing of society is maintained. Both these actions i.e. exemplary punishments and warning the people against the false witness, are put into

effect whether the judge has already passed his judgment (based upon that false testimony) or not.

They do not qualify as a witness

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) is reported to have said,

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

The Imam (a.s.) recited the following verse of the Quran:

“...and do not admit any evidence from them ever; and these it is that are the transgressors, except those who repent after this and act aright, for surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

(Surah Nur 24:4-5)

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

The narrator says that he asked Imam (a.s.), “How do we know that he has repented?”

Imam (a.s.) replied,

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

Compensating for the loss

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

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

(Masaalik)

That is, the false witness must reimburse by providing a thing similar to that which is lost or must pay the price for the same. Detailed laws are discussed in the books of Islamic Jurisprudence.

Repentance for this sin

The method of repenting for a false testimony has already been explained. The first important requirement is that the sinner must feel a deep remorse for the act committed by him. He must also seek the forgiveness of Allah for disobeying His command. The Muslim who had to suffer a loss must be compensated. As Allah Himself says,

“Except those who repent after this and act aright, for surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

(Surah Nur 24:4-5)

The Twentieth Greater Sin: Concealing Evidence

To refrain from testifying in an Islamic Court is a Greater sins. It is also clearly classified among the 'Greater sins' according to the correct tradition narrated by Hazrat Abdul Azeem. There are some situations when it becomes Wajib to prove right what is right and to prove wrong that is wrong. In the narration mentioned above, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) states that to conceal evidence is a 'Greater sin'. He presents the following verse as the proof:

"...and do not conceal testimony, and whoever conceals it, his heart is surely sinful; and Allah knows what you do."

(Surah Baqarah 2:283)

This verse mentioned the sinful heart (*his heart is surely sinful*). There are two noteworthy points in this. One: That the concealing of testimony is a sin of the heart. The heart alone commits it, and other organs are not apparently involved in it. The person hides the reality in his heart and does not speak out. Secondly, just as the heart is superior to all the organ of the body the sin associated with the heart is also greater than the sin performed with other organs. It is just like the obedience of Allah through ones heart is much superior than obeying Him in actions. It is this same heart that involves one in a great sin like polytheism. This sins of the heart are definitely more than sins associated with other organs. One of the sins of heart according to the ayat of Quran is concealing evidence. In order to emphasise, Allah says in the later portion of this ayat that, ***"...Allah knows what you do."*** So that the sinner may realise that even though people may not be aware of this, Allah is certainly cognizant of it, and he shall certainly award the punishment for the same.

Allah the Almighty also says,

"...and the witness should not refuse when they are summoned."

(Surah Baqarah 2:282)

Similarly in another verse, Allah says,

"And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah?"

(Surah Baqarah 2:140)

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

Testify for the truth even if it harms you In Surah Nisa, the Almighty Allah says,

"O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah's sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relations; if he be rich or poor, Allah is nearer to them desires, test you deviate; and if you swerve or turn aside, then surely Allah is aware of what you do."

(Surah Nisa 4:135)

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

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

Justice for the enemy

The following verse of Surah Maidah states:

“O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people invite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah; surely Allah is aware of what you do.”

(Surah Maidah 5:8)

According to this ayat the testimony should be only for seeking the pleasure of Allah, and any type of enmity should not be an obstacle for stating the truth. Allah (a.j.) say in another verse:

“...and give upright testimony for Allah.”

(Surah Talaq 65:2)

Those who conceal evidence

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) remarks,

“on the day of Qiyamat,Allah shall cut off the flesh of one who conceals evidence; then order him to eat it before all the creatures.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) also says that those who conceal evidence are described in the Quran as those whose hearts have sinned. “Hearts have sinned” actually implied the “heart have disbelieved,” according to Imam (a.s.)

Another tradition recorded from Imam (a.s.) is thus:

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

Hazrat Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) says,

“When you are asked to give evidence, give it. For Allah (a.j.) says:

“Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners....”

(Surah Baqarah 2:140)

Evidence is itself a trust. Allah (a.j.) also says,

“And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah?”

(Surah Nisa 4:135)

(Wasaelush Shia)

The following tradition of Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) is recorded in *Tafseer Ali Ibn Ibrahim Qummi*:

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

Is it wajib to testify?

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

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

(Surah Baqarah 2:282)

Hisham says that Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said,

“And the witness should not refuse when they are summoned” (Surah Baqarah 2:282) means when they are summoned to become witnesses. And in the succeeding ayat,

“...and do not conceal testimony” means concealing testimony from a shariat judge.”

Numerous traditions state that becoming a witness is wajib (obligatory). For example, Muhammad Bin Fuzail asked Imam Musa Al-Kazim (a.s.) the meaning of the above ayat (Surah Baqarah 2:282)

“And the witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned.”

Imam (a.s.) replied,

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

The Quranic command in the verse 282 of Surah Baqarah asking the witness to testify before the shariat judge implies that the person had in the first instance been a witness of the transaction etc. Only a person who had been a witness to a happening could testify in the court. Otherwise it is highly improbable that one would summon for witness such people upon whom it is not incumbent to testify.

People whose supplications are not accepted

Hazrat Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“Dua of four types of people is not answered.”

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

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

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

One who gives a loan to someone but does not make anyone witness it. Hence if the borrower refuses and the creditor prays, he is informed, “Had we not ordered you to have witnesses?”

(Iddatud Dai)

Thus when one is called to be a witness it is wajib to comply, even if he has to travel some distance. It is incumbent upon him not to be careless in this regard. He must memorize all the details or put them in writing if necessary so that there is no scope for doubt or misunderstanding in testifying in the future. So that he would be able to testify with certainty.

Testifying is wajib and concealing evidence, haraam

Sometimes it happens that a person becomes a witness by his own choice without being summoned for it. For example he may see or hear something while he is just passing by. Then if later he is summoned to testify, these are two types of situations:

One: If he testifies, he may be able to save a Muslim from some harm or enable him to secure his right and if he will not give evidence a Muslim will be harmed or will not be able to secure his right. In this type of situation it is wajib for him to testify. If the witness is not acquainted with the person who is on the right or if he has forgotten him, it is still wajib upon him to approach the shariat judge and inform him what he has seen or heard. In a situation when a Muslim is harmed or losing some right, it is haraam for the witness him to remain silent. It is wajib if one is capable to help the oppressed and prevent the oppressor from oppressing.

Similarly under the circumstance when not testifying and remaining silent is not going to cause any harm to a Muslim or not depriving him of his right then it is not wajib to give evidence. In this case even if he is ordered to testify he could refuse. Because, he had not been made a proper witness to the case. Secondly, his not testifying is not going to cause any harm to anybody.

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

Testify only if you are certain

The witness is required to pay attention to all the aspects of the matter that he has witnessed and when he is testifying he must only say that, about which he is certain. He must not mention those things, which he himself has not heard, or seen. It should be clear as the Sun, as mentioned in the tradition.

When a true testimony will oppress someone

It should be known that a testimony should not endanger the life, property or honour of a Muslim. It should also not pose a threat to the life, property and honour of the witness. It is wajib to give evidence and haraam to conceal it so that justice is established in the society and injustice is eradicated. The oppressor may be punished and the right may be restored to its owner but if the testimony itself becomes the cause of oppression it is not wajib to testify. Rather it is haraam to testify in such a case. In such a situation it is wajib to conceal evidence. For example if one knows that if he

testifies against a particular oppressor he will take revenge from him or his relatives, or he may plunder his wealth.

In this situation it is wajib to conceal evidence. In the same way if one sees that on one hand the debtor is sunk in debts and there is no way he could prove his poverty; and on the other hand the creditor is not prepared to spare him. If the witness gives evidence the poor debtor will be oppressed. In this case too it is wajib to conceal the evidence.

Hazrat Imam Musa Al-Kazim (a.s.) says:

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

Dawood Ibne Hasan says that he heard Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) saying:

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

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

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

...then let these be postponement until (he is in) ease...

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

A Tradition from Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.)

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

Imam Musa Al-Kazim (a.s.) replied,

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

(Al Kafi)

When testifying harms

When we speak about the haraam testimony that cause harm to a Muslim, we mean that harm which is a wrongful harm and a misplaced oppression but if the person deserves that harm and is deserving of the punishment, then it is wajib to give the evidence. For example a person commits a crime. The witness of this crime does not testify only because if he does so the one against whom he testifies will recall his debt. This is not a valid excuse. The criminal must be punished according to the law of shariat even if the witness has to suffer a monetary loss. If the accused is a poor man he can somehow prove his bankruptcy, either by Bayyanah (two just witnesses) or by taking an oath. However, if the hardship for the witness is more than the actual crime of the accused then the witness has a valid excise to refrain from testifying.

Harm and being deprived of benefit

It must be mentioned that to be harmed is different from being deprived of some benefit. In the examples mentioned above, if a witness refrains from testifying due to the fear that the accused will deprive him of some money, or if some benefit does not come to him it does not amount to be harmed.

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

Hence we can conclude that false oath, false testimony and concealing evidence, each of these are Greater sins if there is no risk of any harm. If there is any chance of any harm to a Muslim or an innocent witness, then they do not remain sins - they are permitted. Rather in some circumstances these actions become wajib. For example when someone’s life is in danger, but as far as possible one must give priority to the more important alternative.

The Twenty-First Greater Sin: Non-Fulfillment of a Promise

The twenty-first of the Greater sin is “Breaking of a promise.” There are authentic traditions to this effect. It is recorded in the authentic and reliable books of traditions, from Abdul Azeem when he quotes Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he has proved it to be a Greater sin with the help of the following verse of the Holy Quran:

“And those who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation and cut asunder that which Allah has ordered to be joined and make mischief in the land, (as for) those, upon them shall be curse and they shall have the evil (issue) of the abode.”

(Surah Ra’d 13:25)

The Holy Quran denounces the breaking of promise in the following ayat too:

“Yea, whoever fulfills his promise and guards (against evil) - then surely Allah loves those who guard (against evil).

(As for) those who take a small price for the covenant of Allah and their own oaths - surely they shall have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the day of resurrection nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement.”

(Surah Ale-Imraan 3:76-77)

Similarly we find another verse of the same connotation:

“Surely the vilest of animals in Allah’s sight are those who disbelieve, then they would not believe.

Those with whom you make an agreement, then they break their agreement every time and they do not guard (against punishment)”

(Surah Anfal 8:55-56)

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

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

In various places in the Holy Quran we find that fulfilling a promise has been made obligatory and it is much emphasised.

For example,

“and fulfill the promise, surely (every) promise shall be questioned about.”

(Surah Bani Israel 17:34)

Also,

“O you who believe! Fulfill the obligations.”

(Surah Maidah 5:1)

Similarly in Surah Baqarah the ayat says,

“...and the performers of their promise when they make a promise...”

(Surah Baqarah 2:117)

We also find the following verse:

***“O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do?
It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do.”***

(Surah Saff 61:2-3)

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has explained this ayat in the following manner:

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

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

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) advises Malik Al-Ashtar regarding the honouring of promises:

“Breaking a promise causes the anger of Allah.”

(Nahjul Balagha)

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

Hazrat Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

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

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

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

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

One who wants to sever relations even though the relative wishes to continue the relationship.

(Khisaal)

Abu Malik inquired from Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s.), “Inform me about all the rules of religion.” Imam (a.s.) told him,

“To speak the truth, to judge with justice and to fulfill the promise.”

(Khisaal)

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

Types of vow-breaking

There are three types of promises:

1. Promise of Allah to his creatures.
2. Promise of the creatures to Allah.
3. Promises of the people among themselves.

The promise of Allah to his creatures is that of the Aalam-e-Zar (in the spiritual plane). We come to know of this promise through the Quranic ayats as well as the traditions. According to this, Allah first created the souls of all human beings and made the following covenant: That is, they remain upon the right path, do not associate anyone or anything with Allah, obey the commands of their Prophet, and do not follow Shaitan, Allah shall recompense them by helping them, by keeping them forever in His mercy, and give them a place in Paradise but if they do not respect their covenant,

Allah will not regard His side of the promise. It is for this very fact, that Allah says.

“...and be faithful to (your) covenant with Me, I will fulfill (My) covenant with you;”

(Surah Baqarah 2:40)

Allah also says,

“Did I not charge you, O children of Adam, that you should not serve the Shaitan?”

(Surah Yaseen 36:60)

The covenant that Allah took from the people in the spiritual plane also includes the oath with regard to the Wilayat (Mastership) of Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) and the Imams (a.s.). Numerous traditions mention this fact. It is even recorded in the various heavenly scriptures, and all the prophets have conveyed the message of the Wilayat of the Fourteen Masoomeen (a.s.).

However, some scholars have rejected the Aalam-e-Arwah or Aalam-e-Zar. They try to explain away in some way or the other the traditions and ayats that deal with this subject. According to them Aalam-e-Arwah (the spiritual plane) is the nature of human beings. They say that, Allah has made the human nature subservient to this covenant so that they may obey Allah alone and not follow the Shaitan. Hence if man acts against it he acts against his nature. The reasoning capacity orders man to follow nature and obey his creator. These thinkers consider it to be the same covenant. This book is not concerned with the detail of these two theories.

Anyway, it could be Aalam-e-Zar or the created nature, if man violates this covenant he has committed a Greater sin or rather it is the Greater sin. In most of the ayats and traditions honouring of the covenants is so much emphasised that it is a confirmed wajib and the contrary is haraam. The people are also warned of dire consequences in case of default. The traditions also inform us that such a serious retribution is only for violating the first covenant, which is the greatest of the sins. Hence the people must fulfill their covenant so that Allah may also fulfill His promise.

Allah has promised to answer every prayer

One of the promises of Allah to his creatures is that He will answer every prayer of theirs, but there is a condition to it i.e. the people must keep their promise.

Jamil narrates from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said,

“When a man prays to Allah with a pure intention and a sincere heart, Allah answers (his prayer) after man has fulfilled his promise to Allah (a.j.). But if man prays to Allah without a pure intention and sincerity, Allah does not answer it. Has not Allah said, “...and be faithful to (your) covenant with Me, I will fulfill (My) covenant with you, so the promise is kept only with one who keeps his own word.”

(Safinatul Behaar)

Verbal expression of a promise

The second type of promise is the one that the man himself gives to Allah. Like a vow or an oath. It is not sufficient, merely to think about a vow or oath. It has to be worded properly. For example, if someone wants to vow to Allah and state it in Arabic language he should say ‘Aahadto Allah’ (I have vowed to Allah) or ‘Alayya Ahadollah’ (The vow for Allah is upon me). The statement of promise, oath or the vow can be in any other language also. A vow for example may consist of saying that, “If I return safe and sound from the journey, I shall give such and such amount as charity on the way of Allah.” If this statement is spoken through the tongue it becomes binding upon the one who says it but it is not binding if he has just decided it mentally.

Vow or oath for a useless thing

It must be remembered that a vow, oath or a promise should not be for a useless object. That is, it must not be undesirable from the point of view of the Islamic Law. In other words it should not be a makrooh or a Haraam thing. For example if a man takes an oath to do some makrooh or haraam action, it is invalid. Similarly if he vows that he will perform a certain haraam or makrooh action, it is invalid. In the same way, if one takes an oath, a vow or promise to abstain from a wajib or a mustahab act, it is also not correct. The vow, oath or a promise also invalidates in the condition when at the time of taking the oath the action had been wajib and its avoidance haraam, but later the conditions change, in this case the vow etc. become invalid. Let us say, for example, that a man vows to give a thousand rupees in charity if he gets well, but after he is well he becomes so poor that it is hardly possible to maintain his family. In these circumstances such a vow is considered as invalid and it is not wajib to fulfill it.

Vow should be for a useful aim

So, it is now established that an oath or a vow should be for something beneficial from the shariat point of view. Even if it is for a legal purpose, there must be some benefit in it. At least common sense must discern some useful purpose in performing that action; and also that it is better to perform it than to refrain from it. For example, Mubah (permitted) action like walking or exercise etc. In the same way if the vow is for abstaining from a mubah act then in this case too one should expect some benefit. That is, avoiding this action must be better than doing it. Smoking, is one of such actions.

Conditional and absolute covenant

Just as in the case of oath and vow, a covenant is also either conditional or absolute. For example, an absolute covenant is when a man says, “I make covenant with Allah that I shall perform such and such good action.” Then this shall become binding upon him. If he does not do so he would have committed a Greater sin. In addition to this he also has to pay the penalty. This is an absolute covenant. The conditional covenant is the one when the person attaches some conditions. For example, he may say, “If Allah gives me a son, I will perform such and such good deed.” Then that good deed

becomes wajib upon him only when he gets a son. Once the condition is fulfilled it will also be haraam for him to leave it undone. He has to pay the additional penalty also.

Expiation of a vow or a covenant

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

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

Three types of covenant with Allah

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

Breaking of promise and hypocrisy

Breaking of a promise is such a serious sin that due to it the seed of hypocrisy is sown in the heart. The man dies in a state of disbelief and is raised with the hypocrites on the Day of Judgment. The Holy Quran says:

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

(Surah Tauba 9:75-77)

This ayat proves that non-fulfillment of a promise or vows is such that it causes hypocrisy in their hearts; and it remains so till they meet death. The explanation, regarding the Shaan-e-Nuzool (circumstances of Revelation) of this ayat, according to *Tafseer Minhaj us-sadeqeen* is as follows:

“Thulbe Ibne Khatib was a very staunch and a famous Christian. One day he came to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). He began to complain of his poverty, and requested the Holy prophet (s.a.w.s.) to pray for him. The Holy prophet (s.a.w.s.) advised him, *“Do not emphasise upon this prayer of yours but be patient in your circumstances. Too much of wealth is dangerous for you. If you are grateful for this favour it is better than too much of wealth that makes you unthankful. By Allah if I pray that mountains become gold and silver and move with me, Allah shall cause it to be so but I know that an honourable hereafter is better, and those who are well provided in this world have a difficult hereafter. So, follow the Prophet of Allah (a.j.) and accept his advice.”*

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

When he insisted much, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) prayed for the removal of his property.

Allah gave much increase in his livestock and he became a Muslim. His animals multiplied and he became so busy in supervising them that he stopped praying behind the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in the congregational prayers. He prayed only the morning and the evening prayers. Then his herd became so large that the surrounding area of Madinah was not sufficient any more. He took his animals to the outskirts of the town and settled there. Now he was deprived of praying the daily prayers behind the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). Still he continued to come to Madinah for the Friday prayers. Then his business expanded beyond the valleys surrounding Madinah. Finally he could not even attend the Friday prayers.

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

“Woe be upon Thulbe, Woe be upon Thulbe, Woe be upon Thulbe!”

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

The two men went to this righteous person (of the tribe of Bani Salim) when he saw the ayat and the letter of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), he said, “I hear and I obey the command of Allah and the Prophet (s.a.).

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

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

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

The companions used to wonder why Thulbe had not accepted the advice of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and saved himself from apostasy! (Zakat is one of the Dhururiyat-e-Deen and one who says that Zakat is not wajib has

apostitised and is no more a Muslim!) The ayats quoted before his discussion were revealed for Thulbe.

Mutual covenant and agreements

The second type of promise is when people form actual covenants and agreements. The ayats and the traditions state that it is wajib to fulfill this type of promise also and it is haraam to go against them.

For example in Surah Bani Israel:

“...and fulfill the promise; Surely (every) promise shall be questioned about.”

(Surah Bani Israel 17:34)

Similarly the Quran describes the truthful and the pious people thus,

“...and the performers of their promise when they make a promise..”

(Surah Baqarah 2:177)

Also when describing those who shall be saved from Hell and earn Paradise, Allah says,

“And those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenant.”

(Surah Momin 23:8)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

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

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said:

“One who has belief in Allah and in last day (Qiyamat) must keep his word when he promises.”

(Usool-e-Kafi)

Thus keeping a promise is a condition for the belief in Allah and the day of Qiyamat. Similarly, the beginning verses of Surah Saff have also denounced the breaking of promise and clearly prove that non-fulfillment of a promise (of every type) is haraam.

Hypocrites do not keep their words

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is reported to have said:

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

One who betrays trust when he is entrusted (with something) and one who lies when he speaks and the one who promises something but goes back on his word.”

(Usool-e-Kafi)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“When one deals with people he is not unjust upon them, when he tells them something he does not lie, and when he promises, he fulfills the promise. Then he is from those who have perfect morals. And it is haraam to criticise them behind their back. Their being just (Aadil) is obvious. To maintain brotherly relations with them is wajib.”

(Usool-e-Kafi)

Thus accordingly to this tradition, one who is unjust, liar and does not keep his word is not having perfect morals, his back-biting is allowed, he is not just (Aadil) but is a transgressor (Fasiq) and it is not wajib to fulfill the rights of brotherhood towards him.

No concession

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has also remarked:

“There are three obligation where Allah does not give concession to any: To behave well with the parents, whether they are righteous or sinners; to fulfill ones promise; whether to a righteous or a sinner; and to deliver a trust (to its owner) whether he is righteous or sinner.”

(Shaykh Sadooq: Khisaal)

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says:

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

(Tahzeeb)

Treaties with the polytheists

It is an established fact that there are numerous Quranic verses and traditions for the prohibition of breaking a promise and for making obligatory the fulfillment of ones promise. The following verses are sufficient to prove this point:

“Surely the vilest of animals in Allah’s sight are those who disbelieve, then they would not believe. Those with whom you make an agreement, then they break their agreement every time and they do not guard (against punishment).”

(Surah Anfal 8:55-56)

Thus those who do not fulfill promises are the worst of creatures! They are worse than animals. It is also important to know that Allah has ordered us to honour and fulfill even the treaties and promises made with the disbelievers and polytheists. It is not allowed to disregard them.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) respected the treaty with the Polytheists of Mecca

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

“Except those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement, they have not failed you in anything and have not backed up any one against you, so fulfill their agreement to the end of their term; surely Allah loves those who are careful (of their duty).”

(Surah Tauba 9:4)

Abu Rafe says: “Quraish sent me to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). When I met him, my heart became illuminated with his countenance. I said to him, “O Prophet of Allah! I do not wish to go back to the Quraish.” He said, I would not act against the terms of treaty, and retain their messenger. Abu Rafe, go back to your people now and after this if you wish, you may accept Islam and join us.”

Honouring the terms of the treaty with Quraish

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

“We love Madinah,” we replied.

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

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

The above two traditions are recorded in the book, *“Islam and World Peace”* by Syed Qutb, Pg.264.

The Kafir father took away his son

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

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) agreed to it and surrendered Jundal to his Kafir father, but upon the condition that he would be protected and not caused any harm. He agreed to the condition but when it was time to hand over Jundal to the disbelievers, Jundal protested, “O Muslims! I have become a Muslim! How will I return amongst the polytheists?”

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) told him,

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

Sohail caught his son’s hand and led him away but he did not remain firm upon his promise and tortured his son very much.

This incident proves the importance of the fulfillment of a promise. The same incident is mentioned in the exegesis of Surah Fath in *Tafseer Minhajus Sadeqeen*.

I will stay here all my life

The following narration is recorded in Behaarul Anwaar:

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) promised a man that he would wait for him at an appointed place near a stone. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) stopped there but the man did not turn up. The morning passed away and now it was afternoon. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) stood in the blazing sun. Some of his followers saw him and said, “Please stand in some other place.”

He (s.a.w.s.) replied,

“I cannot move away from here till that man returns.”

The man arrived at last. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said,
“If that man had not come, I would have continued to stand till death!”

Janab-e-Ismail and the fulfillment of the vow

The Holy Quran refers to Prophet Ismail as the “truthful in Promise,” in the following verse:

“And mention Ismail in the Book, surely he was truthful in (his) promise, and he was an apostle, a prophet.”

(Surah Marium 19:54)

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

Violation of a promise is caused by disbelief

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) has mentioned that it is disbelief that causes one to go back on his word and break a vow. He says:

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

(Nahjul Balagha Sermon 200)

Allama Majlisi says that the one who commits greater sins is also referred to as a disbeliever in traditions. Hence every type of a deceitful person has been called a Kafir in this sermon. It is that disbelief which has its root in the heart and it takes the form of disobedience to Allah’s commands.

A Muslim is never deceitful

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) has said:

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

(Nahjul Balagha Sermon 42)

Violation of promise and falsehood

Some of the Mujtahids consider the violation of promise to be a kind of falsehood. Especially when at the time of promising one has the intention of

not fulfilling it. Thus all the verses and tradition denouncing and prohibiting falsehood also apply here.

If there are some conditions

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

Other Mujtahids state that not only is it wajib to honour the terms and conditions of a transaction but the one who has laid them may insist on the opposite side to fulfill the same. He may even enforce his rights, if it concerns the necessary terms of an agreement. For example if an employee has laid a condition that he shall be paid his salary on the first day of every month, then not only is it necessary to pay him as agreed but he can also secure his right forcibly without the knowledge of his employer, but if it is not a necessary condition and the terms are such that the parties only consider it better to observe them, then it does not constitute a right. It is not wajib to follow these terms to the letter. Also the laid condition may be totally irrelevant to the actual transaction. In this case too, the parties can enforce their rights but the one who had agreed to this condition has to necessarily fulfill it even if such a condition is not directly related to the actual transaction.

Fulfillment of promise is a must

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

To vow or pledge after saying Insha-Allah

Every vow of pledge after uttering Insha-Allah (or its translation in any other language) makes it conditional to the Divine will. Hence it is not strictly wajib to fulfill it. It is the opinion of Allama Hilli, and other Mujtahids have also endorsed it but if it is with regard to some promise or condition (of an agreement), that concerns a wajib act or it is for the avoidance of a haraam act, it has to be observed faithfully.

It must be however understood that the promise which is made conditional by saying 'Insha-Allah' is not binding only when the person intends the actual meaning of the term Insha-Allah. That is, he must really mean to subject the matter to Allah's will. If he utters Insha-Allah only for

the sake of seeking divine blessings then it is binding upon him to remain firm upon his vows.

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

The Quran says:

“And let not those of you who possess grace and abundance swear against giving to the near of kin and the poor and those who have fled in Allah’s way, and they should pardon and turn away. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you?”

(Surah Nur 24:22)

It means that Allah forgives the sins of those who forgive the wrongdoings of others.

Prophet Ayyub (a.s.) and his oath of beating his wife a hundred strokes

If an oath of inflicting some punishment is taken with utmost seriousness, and it is desired not to go against, in such a situation it is better to carry out this oath but it should be only a sort of token punishment, which would also not cause the oath to be violated. For example, Prophet Ayyub saw his wife doing something against his will. He took a vow to hit her a hundred strokes after he recovered from the illness. When he recovered, Allah ordered him,

“And take in your hand a green branch (with a hundred twigs) and beat her (your wife) with it (once) and do not break your oath;”

(Surah Saad 38:44)

The Twenty Second Greater Sin: Khayanat

The twenty-second greater sin, according to the established opinion of Quran and hadith is defalcation or misappropriation of property in ones charge. That it is one of the greater sins, is proved from the authentic tradition related by Abdul Azeem from Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) and also from other traditions from Imam Sadiq (a.s.), Imam Kazim (a.s.) and Imam Reza (a.s.)

Khayanat is itself an Arabic word. In the tradition of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) as related by Amash it is included in the list of the greater sins. Another Arabic word used for this connotation is "ghulul." 'Ghulul' is used in the narration of Fazl Ibne Shazaan when he quotes Imam Reza (a.s.). This also implies "misappropriation." According to some lexicographers 'ghul' denotes misappropriation of a property obtained as spoil of war against the disbelievers but not yet distributed among the Muslims. However other scholars maintain that 'ghulul' applies to every kind of embezzlement.

The punishment of misappropriation according to the Holy Quran

The Almighty Allah says

"...and he who eats unfaithfully shall bring that in respect of which he has acted unfaithfully on the day of resurrection; then every soul be paid fully what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.

Is then he who follows the pleasure of Allah like him who has made himself deserving of displeasure from Allah, and his abode is hell; and it is an evil destination."

(Surah Ale Imraan 3:161-162)

In Surah Tahrim we find the verse:

"Allah sets forth an example to those who disbelieve, the wife of Nuh and the wife of Lut: they were both under two of our righteous servants, but they acted treacherously towards them so they availed them naught against Allah, and it was said: Enter both the fire with those who enter."

(Surah Tahrim 66:10)

Also Allah (a.j.) says:

"... Surely Allah does not love the treacherous."

(Surah Anfal 8:58)

and

"O you who believe! be not unfaithful to Allah and the Apostle, nor be unfaithful to your trusts while you know."

(Surah Anfal 8:27)

Similarly the Quran says,

"...but if one of you trusts another, then he who is trusted should deliver his trusts, and let him be careful (of his duty to) Allah, his Lord;..."

(Surah Baqarah 2:283)

At another place the Divine Book states,

"Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners..."

(Surah Nisa 4:58)

Breach of trust denounced in the traditions

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) says:

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

Another tradition states,

“And it will be ordered to throw him in the fire; he will remain in the deep pit of the Hell forever.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

The Prophet (s.a.) is also reported to have remarked,

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

Then he (s.a.) continued,

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

The following tradition is recorded in the book *Al Kafi*:

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

This tradition had already been mentioned in the previous discussion.

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says;

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

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

Misappropriation causes misfortune

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) remarks,

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

The narrator says that I said to Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.),

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

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) remarked,

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

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

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

Thus it is these qualities that prove righteousness and piety.

Anyone could be a bailor

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

Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

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

Imam (a.s.) also says,

“Then fear Allah! And guard the trusts (placed by) the white as well as the black (people). Even if the bailor is from the khwarij (those who hate Ali [a.s.] or a Syrian.” (That is even if he is a confirmed enemy of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.)

A man inquired from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.),

“Is it allowed to misappropriate the property of a Nasibi?”

Imam (a.s.) replied,

“Honour the trust of every person who entrusts you with it or seeks your advice. Even if it is the killer of Imam Husain (a.s.).”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Another similar narration is as follows:

Husain Shabani says that he asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.), “One of your follower considers the property and blood (shed) of Bani Umayya permissible for himself. He is also in possession of some property entrusted to him by the Bani Umayya?”

Imam (a.s.) replied,

“Restore the entrusted property to its owner even if they are Majoos (fireworshippers).”

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

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

(Wasaelush Shia)

Muhammad Bin Qasim says hat he mentioned to Abul Hasan, Imam Musa Al Kazim (a.s.) regarding the person who had entrusted someone with something valuable. “The bailee is an Arab and he is competent enough not to return the trust. Whereas the bailor is a wretched Khariji (enemy of Ahlul bayt)?”

Imam (a.s.) said,

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

Hazrat Imam Zainul Abedin (a.s.) advises his Shias:

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

The Satan instigates

Satan has a tendency to instigate more if a particular duty holds a higher position in Islamic Law.

Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

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

Ameen (Trustworthy) – A Title of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.)

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

“Proclaim loudly, every morning and evening in Mecca that whoever had kept anything with Muhammad (s.a.w.s) may collect it.”

Types of misappropriations

Defalcation is the opposite of safekeeping. It is of three types: Breach of trust with Allah, with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) and the people.

1. The trust of Allah

“Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to be unfaithful to it and feared from it, and man has turned unfaithful to it; surely he is unjust, ignorant.”

(Surah Ahzaab 33:72)

What is meant by Divine trust? The scholars have a variety of opinions in this regard. Some opine that it denotes intellect. The safekeeping of this means that man should employ it to recognise and obey his Creator. According to other scholars this trust consists of the laws of Islam that Allah has sent through His Prophet (s.a.). These laws are a Divine trust. To guard these laws means to obey them faithfully. It is obvious that the heaven, the earth and the mountains did not possess the ability to protect these trusts and

hence they refrained from accepting them but man was competent and therefore he accepted the trust. Certainly man is an oppressor and the oppressed. He allows his power of emotions to subvert his intellect and as a consequence performs a breach of Divine trust and certainly man is ignorant and foolish. He permits his desires to override reason and in this way becomes oblivious of divine retribution; he thus defalcates in the trust of Allah.

The blessings of intellect and trustworthiness

Intellect or the reasoning ability is one of the greatest trusts that Allah has bestowed upon man. Safeguarding it denotes taking it as ones guide. We must not say or do anything that is against reason. If we allow our desire to conquer reason we would have committed a breach of trust. As regards the safekeeping of trust with reference to the rules of Shariat one must make it a point to learn and understand his legal obligations. He must know the laws governing every aspect of his life. He should not be ignorant of any of the rules of religion. After learning these laws he is further obliged to accept them and follow them in all sincerity.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

“Misappropriating the trust of Allah and His Prophet (s.a.w.s) is their disobedience. As far as the breach of trust is concerned, every person is the bailee of the laws revealed by Allah.”

(Tafseer Safi)

It means that the Divine laws promulgated for men are Allah’s trust. The safekeeping of these trusts implies their obedience.

It is said that it was the time for prayers, Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) became pale and restless and his face became pale. People were shocked to see him thus, and asked him the reason for it. He replied,

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

However, it is not restricted to prayers. All the laws of Shariat are trust of Allah but prayers occupy a more lofty position.

Propagating the laws of religion

It is pathetic that most of the people in our time are committing breach of Divine trust. People are so busy with the materialistic world and envy that they have no time to learn the basic laws of religion. Leave alone acting upon them. Day by day religion is becoming inconspicuous and less and less respect is given to the Divine laws. More than ever before, it is the necessity of the day that people should not only learn about religion but they must also propagate it to others. We must act upon the laws of shariat faithfully and also exhort others to do the same.

2. Trust of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s)

Both Shias as well as Sunnis agree that before his passing away the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) had said,

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

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

“On the day of Qiyamat I will question you concerning them” (as to how you have safeguarded them).

According to *Tafseer Majmaul Bayan*: The Quran and the Progeny have been referred to as “two weighty things” because to follow them is very difficult (or has much weightage). To guard them is also not an easy task. The true Muslim is one who is able to carry the weight of this responsibility. A Muslim must obey the Quranic orders and follow the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). Alas! The followers of Muhammad (s.a.w.s) did not safeguard the important trusts.

“And the Apostle cried out: O my Lord! Surely my people have treated this Quran as a forsaken thing.”

(Surah Furqan 25:30).

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

Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) are the Trust of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.)

Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) are themselves a trust that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) had left with us. To honour this trust is to love them (Ahlul Bayt). We must believe in their truth with a sincere heart. We must obey their commands. We must consider their orders to be the commands of Allah (a.j.) and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s). They must be regarded as the Hujjat (proof) from Allah. By sending them Allah has completed the proof. We cannot say that there was no one to lead us after the death of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s). They should be considered to be the link between Allah and us. We must also respect the Sadaat (the sayyeds) as they are from the Progeny of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). We should fulfill the needs of the Sadaat, for in his way we would be safeguarding the trust of their ancestors. On one hand the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) are themselves the trustee of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) after his passing away. They are the trustees of Divine laws and knowledge from the time of his death till the Day of Judgment and on the other hand they themselves are a trust of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) upon us. They are a trust like the Holy Quran. One of their rights upon us is that we consider their grief and sorrow as our own and their happiness and joy as our own. If they are alive we must go to meet them and if they pass away we should go for the ziarat of their tombs.

3. Trusts of the people.

This type of trust is also further divided into two:

- (1) Trust of Property and
- (2) Trust of the Shariat.

The first one denotes any goods or property that a person keeps with someone for safe custody. This again is of various forms. Sometimes one keeps a valuable with another person solely for its safekeeping. Sometimes a thing is given for use and that it may be returned after the use is over. This is also known as Ariya or Musta’ar. Another kind of trust is when a

particular thing is given on hire and it's rent is collected. For example a house. This is also a kind of property trust. Sometimes a valuable is pledged as the surety for some loan. This is also a kind of trust. If the loan taken against this surety is not repaid this item is sold to recover the dues. In the same way in transactions of Mudarabba (partnership) the property is given out for trading purpose. A loan is also a trust. Thus all these are different property trusts.

Trusts of Shariat

By trust of shariat we mean the property which is in possession of a person not its actual owner. The owner may not have handed it over to the trustee. For example, a strong wind blew a cloth from our house to the neighbours, or someone sold to us a stray goat belonging to someone else, or we buy something but when we unpack the parcel we find that the seller has given us an extra item by mistake, or the buyer may pay the seller more than the prescribed rates, or we may find some money on the way, or one may come to acquire some stolen goods or those belonging to someone else. All these things are considered as trusts according to the shariat. It is wajib to restore them to the rightful owners. Those who have them in their possession should not use such things. Another example of this is a letter addressed to another person. It is wajib upon the person to send it to its rightful addressee. It is haraam to open or read a letter addressed to someone else.

Misappropriating other's property

If one is in possession of a person's property, it is haraam to embezzle it. As we have already stated, it is a greater sin. Misappropriation is a compound of three sins:

- (1) Injustice
- (2) Disregard of an obligatory act and
- (3) Illegally using someone's property

1. Illegally using someone's property

It is a sort of injustice to use the property or a thing belonging to someone else without his permission. It is haraam even to borrow something without the permission of the owner. It is haraam to use the thing even for a moment. In fact, even displacing a thing without permission is haraam if there is no religious excuse but if one expects that the owner will permit it, its use is allowed but if some loss occurs or if the thing is spoilt, the user is liable for it.

But if the user has tried his best to safeguard the thing and in spite of it, it is lost or damaged, then he is not accountable.

He does not have to make good the loss but if he had been careless he has to pay for the damage. Similarly one who uses a thing without the owner's permission is liable for any loss. Rather, he has to restore the thing immediately or obtain permission for it. The 91st verse of Surah Tauba says,

“...there is no way (to blame) against the doers of good;...”

This ayat shows that the trustee who has done a good deed by guarding a property will not be made to pay to the owner if there is any loss or damage. The bailor has no lawful recourse against the bailee.

Carelessness in guarding the trust

If according to common sense the bailee had not taken reasonable care of the goods or had kept them in an unsafe place, he shall be made to pay in case of loss or damage. It is also not allowed to hand over the property in ones trust to someone else for safekeeping. In this case it is necessary to seek the owner's permission. If the trust is transferred to another person and a loss occurs, then the first trustee shall be held responsible. It will amount to be a sort of carelessness on his part. Thus even if he considers someone else to be a better trustee he cannot move the goods to him without the permission of the owner. In the same way the trustee cannot carry the trust with him when he goes on a journey. The owner's permission has to be sought in this case too. If the bailee intends to travel, he can keep the property in a safe place, but he can hand it over to another person only with the permission of the owner. However if there is a risk of loss or damage in his absence he must return the trust to its owner or his representatives. If the owner or his representatives are also not available, he can surrender the trust property to the Mujtahid or the religious judge. Or he may avoid travel altogether. But if the journey is more important than the safe-keeping of this trust; and the owner, his representative nor a Mujtahid is present then he can, to ensure its safety keep it with someone reliable. He may even carry it with himself on the journey in such circumstances.

If one is sure that he will not be able to take care of the trust, it is wajib for him to refuse to accept it. If such a person has already taken it, it is wajib for him to return it but if in spite of his inability to safeguard the trust property, the owner insists to hand over the property, it is allowed to accept it. For in this case the owner would bear the loss in the event of the goods being lost or damaged. The bailee cannot be held responsible, and also if one is compelled to become a trustee against his wish, it is better to try to take care of the goods entrusted, even in this case.

It is apparent that this transaction of (bailor and the bailee) is a legal transaction. Either party may terminate the agreement whenever he or she desires. That is, the owner may ask for his property whenever he likes. In the same way the bailee can return the goods in his trust to the owner when he wants. However, it is wajib for the bailee to return the trust when the owner demands it and the bailor cannot insist upon the bailee to continue to safe-guard his goods when he (the bailee) wishes to relieve himself from the responsibility.

3. Delay in returning the trust

If the bailor is a Kafir not living under the protection of an Islamic government, under special circumstances it is permitted to appropriate his property, but if he entrusts this same property to us, it is not permitted to take it for ourselves. However, if a thief has stolen something, or if

something is acquired illegally and kept in safe custody, it is wajib to accept it and restore it to its rightful owner.

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

In the same way if the owner learns that the trustee is dead, it is wajib for him to go and collect the things that he had deposited as trust. If the heirs of the deceased do not recognise him he can describe the distinguishing features of the trust property and obtain it from them. Similarly if the owner dies the trustee is under obligation to return the trust to the heirs of the deceased.

Transactions of hire, ariya (free loan), mortgage and partnership

As we have already mentioned, all the goods that are the basis of the above transactions constitute a trust. Whenever the owner demands the property it has to be restored immediately. However, if a period had been agreed upon, the owner cannot demand his property before the end of the stipulated period. For example, the landlord cannot expel his tenant before the expiry of the agreement of tenancy. Similarly the pledged article cannot be taken back without the repayment of loan. The same is the case with a loaned article.

At the end of the stipulated period the trustees are obliged to return the property that had been in their possession even if the owner has not demanded it back, but if the owner extends the period it is allowed to retain it.

However, 'Ariya' is a transaction where the owner is at liberty to demand back his property whenever he likes. For example, someone has borrowed a book for a week but the owner demands it the same day. The borrower, in this case, is obliged to return the book immediately. 'Ariya' is just like the keeping of some trust. The owner can ask for it whenever he wants. Even though he may have given it for some time, he can demand it whenever he likes.

Search for the owner - Sadaqah on his behalf

The above discussion was regarding the property trusts. If someone is in possession of a sharaii trust he must return it. If the owner is not known, the finder of a property has to search for him for one whole year. He must publicise it from masjids etc. If the owner is still unlocated he must give all of the found property in charity on behalf of the owner.

The bailor and the bailee should be adults

A transaction of trust is valid only when both the parties are sane and adult. So it is not allowed for a child or an insane person to entrust his property to someone and neither is it allowed to entrust them with something. However, if the guardian of a child or an insane person permits it, it is allowed to hold their property in trust but whether the guardian permits or not, if a property of a minor or an insane is held in trust and some loss or damage occurs the trustee has to make good the loss. He has to return it to the guardian and not directly to the minor or insane person but if one finds a minor child or an insane person in possession of something and there is a risk of it being lost or damaged, he can take it from him and deliver it to his guardian.

These are thus some laws regarding trusts. For detailed laws one can refer to the books of jurisprudence. The important thing is to understand the significance of trusts and to avoid the pitfalls of a sin like misappropriation. We shall present one more ayat and a few traditions before closing this chapter.

Trustworthy people praised in the Quran

It is mentioned in Surah Aale Imraan:

“And among the followers of the Book there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a heap of wealth, he shall pay it back to you; and among them there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a dinar he shall not pay it back to you except so long as you remain firm in demanding it; this is because they say: There is not upon us in the matter of the unlearned people any way (to reproach); and they tell a lie against Allah while they know.”

(Surah Aale Imraan 3:75)

This verse praises those Christians who do not embezzle when something is entrusted to them by non-Christians and it denounces the Jews who consider it permissible to misappropriate the property of anyone who is not a Jew. They falsely claim that they have been given a licence by Allah to do so.

When the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) recited this ayat, he said:

“The enemies of Allah lie! I have corrected every custom and belief of the age of Jahilya (ignorance) but (the matter of) trust is as it was. Whether the trust belongs to a righteous person or an evil one, it has to be returned.”

(Tafseer Majmaul Bayan).

This shows that the embezzlers are like those Jews who defalcated and if a Muslim considers embezzlement to be permissible, he is included among the enemies of Allah.

Recovery of damages from a property in trust

The Quran and Hadith clearly state that under no circumstances is it allowed to pilfer a property held in trust. Shaykh Tusi in his book, ‘Nihaya’ and other Mujtahids have also mentioned this fact.

Narrators of traditions have mentioned the following from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

“One person sends another with money to purchase a cloth. When the latter goes to the market he sees that he already has the same type of cloth at home. So can he come back and without saying anything give him the cloth that he was already having and retain the money?”

Imam (a.s.) continued, “He should not even think of doing this and make himself contaminated with such a sin.” Then Imam (a.s.) recited the 72nd ayat of Surah Ahzaab:

“Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to be unfaithful to it and feared from it, and man has turned unfaithful to it; Surely he is unjust, ignorant;”

Then the Imam (a.s.) further said:

“Even if this man has something better than what is available in the market, he must not give it to the buyer without informing him of the fact.”

(Tafseer Safi)

This is because the actual transaction consisted of taking the person’s money to the market and purchasing a cloth. Anything contrary to this is ‘Khayanat’.

Sulayman Bin Khalid says,

I inquired from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.): “A man had borrowed some money from me. Not only did he not repay the loan but he also took an oath that he did not owe me anything. Later he kept some of his money with me as a trust. Can I recover my debt from this money?”

Imam (a.s.) replied,

“Certainly that person has betrayed you but you should not betray trust. You must not commit the same sin.”

(Nihaya of Shaykh Tusi)

As we have already mentioned, Shaykh Tusi and the other great Mujtahids have given a clear verdict in the light of the Quranic verses and unambiguous ahadith, that Khayanat is totally prohibited.

But in the book *Milhiqat Urwatul Wuthqa*, the late Kazim Tabatabai says, “It is commonly believed by the Mujtahids that to recover one’s legal dues from a property held in trust is permitted.”

The fatwa of Late Kazim Tabatabai was also to this effect, but precaution dictates that one must refrain from such a course of action.

Similarly if a person gives some money to another for giving it to a poor sadaat, and the latter himself happens to be a sadaat and poor, he cannot keep the money for himself without the permission of the owner; but if it is certain that the owner will agree to it there is no harm in it.

The burden of khayanat and the Day of Judgement

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has said,

“Beware! One should not commit Khayanat of even one camel! Otherwise, he will be summoned on the day of Qiyamat riding the same camel and bleating like a camel.

“Beware! One should not commit khayanat of even one horse! Otherwise he will be summoned on the day of Qiyamat riding the same horse and neighing like a horse.

He would be call me for help, 'O Muhammad! O Muhammad!' I will tell him that I had already warned. Now I have no responsibility concerning you against Allah."

(Al Kafi)

Allama Majlisi has recorded a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s):
"You must return even a needle and thread. For khayanat will cause untold degradation and exposure of defects on the day of Qiyamat."

A man came to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) with a needle that he had taken without permission. He said, "I had taken this needle to sew a pack saddle for my camel."

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) told him,

"If this needle belongs to me I have forgiven you. However, if it belongs to the other Muslims you must pay for it so that it could be included in the public treasury for equal distribution."

"I was not aware that it was such a serious matter," the Arab remarked, "If it is so, I will not keep the needle with me." He handed over the needle to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) and went away.

The guilty shall be recognised by their marks

According to Allama Majlisi, on the day of Qiyamat the sinner shall carry the pilfered property on his shoulders. Every type of sinner would have such distinguishing marks. Everyone will know what sin the sinner had committed. One who commits a greater sin and dies without repenting for it, the Almighty Allah will deal with him with justice on the day of Qiyamat. So much so that a mark of sin that he committed most shall be attached. For example, the drunkard would be holding a wine bottle, the terrible stench of it will cause discomfort to the people. Similarly, the musician would have the instrument stuck to his hands. The gamblers would be having the instrument of gambling with him. The same thing is alluded to in the verse:

"The guilty shall be recognised by their marks."

(Surah Rahman 55:41)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) and his trustworthiness

One day a poor man came to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) and told him of his poverty. The Prophet (s.a.) said,

"Sit down! Allah is most Powerful."

Another beggar came and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) told him to sit down too. Then a third destitute arrived and the Prophet (s.a.w.s) told him to sit down in the same way. After some time a person came and presented four saa (approximately 12 kilos) of wheat as Zakat to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s). The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) distributed one saa (3kilos) of wheat to each of the poor men. One saa of it remained. After the Maghrib and Isha prayers the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) announced that a saa of wheat is remaining with him. Any needy person can come and collect it from him; but no one came forward. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) was compelled to take this trust home. Ayesha says that, that night the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) was very restless. When she inquired the reason of his restlessness he replied,

“I am fearful of the consequences in case I die today and this trust not delivered to a deserving person.”

It is also mentioned that when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) was on his deathbed, he had some amount of six or seven dinars for the poor and the needy. He sent for the money and after counting it said,

“It is possible that Muhammad (s.a.w.s) may reach the presence of his Lord while these are dinars are still in his custody!”

Then he (s.a.w.s) summoned Amirul Momineen Hazrat Ali (a.s.), and gave him the dinars for the poor and the destitutes and then said,

“Now I can rest in peace.”

(Naaseekhut Tawarih Vol.3, Pg544)

Secrets are also trusts

Sometimes a person is told a secret and restrained from divulging it to others. This secret is also a kind of trust. It may also be that one learns of a secret regarding another person and feels sure that that person would not prefer it to be made known to others. This secret is a trust according to Shariat. To divulge a secret that one has seen or heard is Khayanat. The following saying of Ali (a.s.) is present in *Ghurarul Hikam*:

“To divulge a secret that you are supposed to guard is Khayanat and betrayal.”

It is absolutely haraam to betray a secret when it becomes a trust, whether of a friend or an enemy, of a righteous person or an evil one.

Private discussion is also a trust

It is mentioned by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s):

“People who sit together must be careful of safe-guarding the trust. It is not permitted for a believer to expose a secret of his believing brother.”

(Behaarul Anwaar Vol.16)

Abu Zar has related from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) that he said:

“O Abu Zar, one who sits in company must be cautious of safeguarding trust. For if you expose a secret of your believing brother, you would have committed Khayanat. So, keep away from such things.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Whatever is discussed in a meeting is also a trust with the participants. Anything that is to be kept confidential must not be divulged. It is recorded in the traditions:

“One who sits in company must be careful of maintaining the trust but it is not haraam to expose the secret of three kinds of meetings: One, where an unlawful murder is planned; two, where fornication is planned; three, where it is planned to loot someone’s property. The facts of such meetings could be presented in the court for proving someone’s right. In some cases it assumes such importance that it becomes necessary to expose a secret.”

(Behaarul Anwaar)

In Surah Tahrim the Almighty Allah flays some of the Prophet’s wives (Ayesha and Hafasa) for betraying a secret of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s). Allah has advised them to repent.

“If you both turn to Allah, then indeed your hearts are already inclined (to this);”

(Surah Tahrim 66:4)

The same chapter also mentions the wives of Hazrat Lut (a.s.) and Hazrat Nuh (a.s.) in the following words:

“Allah sets forth an example to those who disbelieve the wife of Nuh and the wife of Lut; they were both under two of Our righteous servants, but they acted treacherously towards them so they availed them naught against Allah, and it was said: Enter both the Fire with those who enter.”

Divulging secrets is khayanat

Abdullah Ibne Sinan says that he inquired from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.), “Is it haraam for a believer to expose some things of another believer that deserve to be kept secret?”

“Yes,” the Imam (a.s.) replied.

The narrator further asked, “Do you mean by this the ‘private parts’?”

Imam (a.s.) explained,

“It is not what you think, (Though it is also haraam to view the ‘private parts), what I meant were the confidential matters.”

(Al Kafi)

Imam (a.s.) has also said:

“One who washes a dead body of a believer and observes caution with regard to the trust is absolved of all his sins.”

Someone asked, “How can one maintain secrecy with regard to the washing of a believer’s corpse?”

The Imam (a.s.) answered,

“He must not tell anyone of the deformities that he might see in the dead body.”

(Amaali)

From the foregone discussion we surmise that exposing a secret amounts to committing Khayanat. Whether the concerned person himself takes you in confidence or you come to know of the secrets by yourself. Under all circumstances a secret is a trust, and it is haraam to betray it. If the one with whom the secret is concerned does not wish that his secret should be divulged, then it is haraam and a kind of Khayanat to expose it. Such types of trusts that involve secrets have various grades and are of different types. Certain types of Khayanat are termed as tale telling and others are called backbiting. Each of these shall be elaborated ahead.

Informing disbelievers about the military secrets of the Muslims

Khayanat with Allah, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) and all the Muslims is of various grades. One type of Khayanat is when a person commits Khayanat to his own self. All these different grades of Khayanat come together when a person reveals the military secrets of Muslims to the disbelieving opponents.

If a Muslim acts as an informer for the disbelievers he has committed Khayanat not only with Allah and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) but also towards his own self. He becomes the cause of strengthening the enemy and

of the Muslim's defeat. It could be this type of Khayanat that is alluded too in the following ayat:

“O you who believe! Be not unfaithful to Allah and the Apostle, nor be unfaithful to your trusts while you know.”

(Surah Anfal 8:27)

In the Shaane Nuzool (circumstances of revelation) of this verse Jabir Ibne Abdullah Ansari says that, “One day Jibraeel (a.s.) informed the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) of the fact that Abu Sufyan is camping at a particular place with an army of polytheists. The Prophet (s.a.) must be prepared to fight with him. He must also keep it a secret so that they would be taken by surprise. However, one of the hypocrites wrote to Abu Sufyan and informed him of the Muslim's plan. The explanation of the above verse mentions the Khayanat of Abu Lababa and his subsequent repenting.

Divine mercy upon those who maintain trusts

Maintaining secrecy is however, a formidable task. Those who possess a sense of honour perform this job successfully and they unflinchingly maintain secrets. Keeping secrets invite Divine blessings. Very few actions are so much deserving of such high rewards. The person is protected from fear on the day of Qiyamat. On the day when all the people will be gathered for accounting the trustworthy people shall be placed at the safest and the best place under the shade of Divine mercy.

Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) says,

“Three types of people will be under the shade of Divine mercy when there will be no other shade:

One, the person who arranges the marriage of his believing brother. Two, the person who procures a servant for his believing brother. Three, the person who has maintained a secret of his believing brother.”

Restrain from divulging your own secrets

According to the traditions we must not inform anyone of our own secrets. Even if those people are our closest relatives or friends. It is possible that their friendship may not last forever. They might become our enemies in the future. It is very rare for an enemy not to expose the secrets of his opponents.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has advised one of his followers:

“Do not tell your secrets even to your friend. But only tell him those things that will not cause any harm even if your enemy comes to know of it. Because even a friend could become your enemy one day.”

(Behaarul Anwaar)

A reliable and pious person has related that when he intended to divorce his wife, he was asked of the defect that existed in her; that had made him take such a decision. He replied, “An intelligent person never exposes his wife and never reveals her secrets.”

Subsequently the divorce was completed and even the Iddah came to an end. Again some people asked him, “Now she is no more your wife. What was the actual defect in her, that you had to divorce?” He said, “I am not concerned with the other women.” It means is that it is the right of a wife

upon her husband that he maintains her secrets even after separation and divorce.

Revealing a secret is a kind of Khayanat and every type of people consider it to be evil. It is mentioned in the book “*Uqudul Farid*” that even a filthy man like Ziyad (May Allah’s curse be upon him) had criticised Umar ibne Saad (May Allah’s curse be upon him too) for revealing the last wishes and the secret of Hazrat Muslim ibne Aqeel. Ibne Ziyad (l.a.) had written to Umar ibne Saad. “O Umar ibne Saad! Because you yourself have revealed the secret of Husain’s coming towards Kufa, you would have to go and fight against him.”

The book *Nafsul Mahmoom* and other books of Islamic history contain the following incident:

When Ibne Ziyad had Muslim Ibne Aqeel arrested, Muslim asked, “Would you murder me?”

“Yes,” replied Ibne Ziyad.

“Give me some time so that I can express my last wishes to a relative of mine.”

The accursed Ibne Ziyad permitted him to do so. Muslim searched among the people present in the court and saw Umar Ibne Saad. He told Umar Ibne Saad, “O Umar! We are related to each other. I wish something from you. It is obligatory for you to fulfill it and it is a secret that I cannot reveal to everyone.”

Umar Ibne Saad tried to shirk the responsibility but Ibne Ziyad told him, “Do not try to avoid this. Listen to what your cousin wishes.” So Umar Ibne Saad and Muslim Ibne Aqeel went into a corner.

Muslim said, “There is debt upon my neck. When I had reached Kufa, I had borrowed seven hundred Dirhams. Please sell my armour and repay the loan. When I am killed take my last remains from Ibne Ziyad and perform a proper funeral and bury me. You must also send someone to Imam Husain (a.s.) so that he can stop him from coming to Kufa. I had myself invited him towards Kufa and written that the people of Kufa are on his side. So he must have started his journey towards Kufa. Inform him of my arrest and execution so that he may turn back.”

Umar Ibne Saad immediately told Ibne Ziyad all the three things (the debt of Muslim, the burying of his corpse and the warning for Imam Husain (a.s.)). Ibne Ziyad (l.a) said to Muslim Ibne Aqeel, “A trustworthy person can never betray you but the thing is that you have considered a betrayer to be your confidant.”

An exemplary confidant

It is appropriate to mention an exemplary trustworthiness at this point. When Hazrat Imam Husain (a.s.) reached a spot called, ‘Haajiz’ he wrote a letter to Muslim Ibne Aqeel and the Shias of Kufa. He wrote:

“From Husain Ibne Ali (a.s.) to his Muslim and momin brothers. Peace be upon you all. Praise be to Allah besides Him there is no deity. I have received Muslim’s letter. He has informed me of the glad news that you all are united to support me and prepared to fight for my right. I pray to Allah for your favourable consequences. May He reward you for this stand of

yours. I have left Mecca on Tuesday the eighth of Zilhajj and started moving towards you. When my messenger reaches you, you must become serious and concerned in your mission. I shall come to you within a few days, InshaAllah. Peace be upon you and the Divine Mercy.”

Imam Husain (a.s.) gave this letter to Qays Ibne Musher Saidawi who set out immediately and soon reached the outskirts of Kufa. An officer of Ibne Ziyad, by the name of Haseen Ibne Tamim tried to arrest him there. He at once tore up the letter of Imam Husain (a.s.). He was then taken to Ibne Ziyad. When Ibne Ziyad told him to surrender the letter he said, “I have torn it into pieces.”

“Why?” asked Ibne Ziyad.

“So that you may not come to know what was written in it.”

“To whom was it addressed?”

“To some people I am not familiar with.”

Ibne Ziyad ordered, “If you do not reveal the name, you shall have to mount the pulpit and invoke curse upon the liars.” (Ibne Ziyad was actually referring to Imam Husain (a.s.).

Qays Ibne Musher went to the pulpit and announced, “O people! Husain Ibne Ali is the best creature of Allah, and the son of Fatemah (s.a.) the daughter of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s). I am his messenger. I have left him at place called ‘Haajiz. I have come to you so that you may respond to his call and support him wholeheartedly.”

Then Qays invoked curse upon Ibne Ziyad and his father. He then showered praises upon Amirul Momineen Hazrat Ali (a.s.).

Ibne Ziyad ordered that Qays be taken to the wall of the palace and then thrown down. When Qays was thrown from such a height, his bones shattered but he was alive when Abdul Malik Ibne Amir beheaded him.

When Imam Husain (a.s.) learnt of Qays’s murder, his eyes were filled with tears. He recited the following ayat of the Quran:

“Of the believers are men who are true to the covenant which they made with Allah: so of them is he who accomplished his vow, and of them is he who yet waits, and they have not changed in the least.”

(Surah Ahzaab 33:23)

An interesting incident of trustworthiness is also recorded in the book, *Riayzul Hikayaat*:

A man was having one thousand Tumans in a bag. He was going to the public bath, early in the morning. On the way he met a friend. He was also heading towards the public bath. When they came to a junction this person separated without informing his companion. Perchance a robber was pursuing them with the intention of stealing the moneybag. When this man reached the bath the robber followed suit. The man deposited the moneybag with the bath keeper and went inside to take a bath. The bath-keeper himself thought of taking a bath. He thought that the robber who had followed the man was the latter’s friend. So he handed him the money bag and said,

“Keep this in your custody till I return after taking a bath.”

The thief remained sitting till the bath-keeper returned. Then he gave back the moneybag to him. When the bath-keeper learnt that he was not a friend of the first person he asked, "Then who are you?"

He replied, "I am a thief."

"Then why did you not steal the money bag?"

The thief answered, "I may be thief, but betraying trust is against manliness. While safeguarding this trust I have also remained aloof from robbery."

The owner of the moneybag was impressed by this magnanimity and he opened the bag and gave some money to the robber as a reward.

However, stealing is also haraam and it shall be discussed in the forthcoming chapter. The object may be expensive or it may be worthless, but stealing it is absolutely haraam.

The Twenty Third Greater Sin: STEALING

The twenty-third sin which is certainly a Greater one is stealing or thievery. Imam Reza (a.s.) has included stealing among the Greater sins according to the tradition reported by Fazl Ibne Shazaan. Amash says that Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has related from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) that he said,

“A believer cannot commit fornication and a believer cannot steal.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Thus one who fornicates or steals is not a believer. Such a person is devoid of faith. Such a person lacks belief in Allah and the day of judgement. If such a person dies without repenting for his sins, he does not die a believer. Some of the ayats and traditions are critical of Khayanat but side by side they also flay stealing. Stealing is absolutely haraam even if it is for a worthless object. To steal even a needle is haraam. However, the hands of the thief are cut only if in addition to all the necessary conditions the value of the stolen goods exceeds a quarter misqal of gold.

Muhammad Ibne Muslim says that he inquired from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

“What is the minimum amount, stealing which can make one liable to have the hands amputated?”

Imam (a.s.) replied, “A quarter of a dinar.”

“And on stealing two dirhams?”

“Any number of dirhams may exceed the quarter of a dinar. In all cases the hands are severed.”

Muhammad Ibne Muslim further asked, “Then if one steals less than a quarter of a dinar, is he called thief?”

Imam (a.s.) told him,

“Every such person is a thief in the eyes of Allah who steals the property of the Muslims and keeps it for himself.” (That is, Allah will punish him with the punishment that is reserved for all those who steal.)

“But (in this world) his hands are not cut off. However if he steals a quarter dinar or more his hands are severed. If the hands of those who steal less than a quarter dinar were also to be cut then we would find most of the people with their hands severed.”

Punishment for theft

The Almighty Allah says in Surah Maidah:

“And (as for) the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands as a punishment for what they have earned, an exemplary punishment from Allah, and Allah is Mighty. Wise.

But whoever repents after his iniquity and reforms (himself), then surely Allah will turn to him (mercifully), surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

(Surah Maidah 5:38-39)

The book *Burhanul Quran* mentions on page 170:

“The opponents of Islam have raised objection against the penal code of Islam. They label such penalties to be primitive and inhuman and not acceptable in the twentieth century. The criticism is especially severe with

regard to the punishment of theft and fornication. They trump up their arguments saying that such crimes are a result of psychological disorders and could not be cured by heavy penalties. Counselling the criminals with moral lessons can eliminate them. We admit that moral advice is one of the ways of reforming individuals. Certainly, moral lessons have a profound effect upon the people in the society. We also do not reject the fact that most of the crimes are due to psychological and moral ills.

Islam has not overlooked the moral training as a factor in the development of character but we also say that one who is unaffected by moral preaching will not reform without being inflicted with such punishments. Allah has made even a three or four year old child capable of controlling himself. For example he can control his urine and avoid wetting the bed. In spite of this and the restriction of his parents he becomes careless, the parents have to be strict with him.

Even in the countries that criticise Islam we find that the criminals are not let off with a sermon on moral values. In those places too the criminals are imprisoned and awarded various punishments. We do not deny the fact that poverty causes many crimes. We agree that destitution sometimes makes a man immoral. Due to which the germs of criminality take a hold of his being. Selfishness encourages him to usurp the rights of others. One is more inclined to Khayanat and stealing when he is in difficult economic conditions. In order to acquire something he is prepared to commit any sin; but we cannot accept that poverty and destitution are the sole causes of crime. We see quite a few people who in spite of their straitened circumstances are not at all inclined towards injustice and crime. They prove their integrity by fulfilling their obligations with a sincere heart. We find that crimes are prevalent even in the affluent countries and areas. Even communism has failed to eradicate inequity. The prisons of Russia and other communist countries are filled with criminals of all types.

Those who are critical of Islam to be primitive and inhuman are ignorant of their own selves. Those who are proclaiming independence and humanity have forgotten their own crimes. Forty thousand people were butchered in North Africa just because they were protesting for their basic rights. Is this nor barbaric?

The newspaper Kahyan of 14th April 1960 reports:

“The valiant people of Jazaer have struggled for six years against the tyrannical rule of France upon their country. To date, around one million people from the total population of ten million have laid down their lives in this struggle.”

Coming back to our point we would like to point out that Islam has considered each and every aspect. On one hand Islam lays down heavy penalties but on the other it prescribes rules and regulations that improve morals and ameliorate poverty and enhance the economic development. Islam strives to eliminate as much as possible the causes of crimes. It tries the utmost to prevent any crime from spreading in the society. In spite of such provisions if someone is bent upon criminality there is no other venue except to mete out a severe punishment. Islam also keeps in mind the excuse of the one who has committed the act. For example if someone steals due to

poverty and hunger, he is not liable to have his hands amputated. At the most he is let off with a severe warning so that he may not repeat the act.

It is the duty of the Islamic government to provide every citizen with suitable employment. If some people still remain unemployed they are paid a stipend from the public treasury till they can secure a job. When such conditions exist, there is no question of anyone stealing anything. In spite of this if someone steals, he surely deserves the punishment. Similarly it is seen if the person had been forced by anyone to steal. If it is found that someone had forced the person to steal then he is not rewarded the punishment. Also, Islamic laws are not applicable in the non-Muslim countries. So the objection itself is baseless. In the four hundred years of Islamic rule it was seen that the corporeal punishment had been awarded only six times.

The progressive countries in the Second World War alone killed Thirty five million people. Two million were crippled. Seventeen million liters of human blood was spilt. There were twelve million miscarriages. Was this not barbaric? Then if six criminals are given corporeal punishment in a period of four hundred years it is labelled as savage! As far as the Shia faith is concerned amputing of hand implies cutting only the four fingers of the right hand. The palm and the thumb are left untouched.

If someone says that in those days the people were savage and it had not been possible to reform them without such punishment; but in the modern age people are quite receptive of sermons. Hence they could be reformed without punishments. Now this is a foolish argument. If the people nowadays are so much cultured then why is there such a high incidence of crime in the developed countries? It is only because of the lenient penal code! The strict Islamic penalty itself compels the people to conclude that stealing is really a serious crime. They, therefore, keep aloof from such an act.

It is obvious that the Quranic ayat quoted above is not explanatory. It does not give the details of the type of robbery that makes one liable to for having the hands cut. How much of the hand is to be severed, etc. All these details are to be found in the traditions. Numerous traditions elaborate upon the topic of stealing and the punishment of theft.

Conditions when the corporeal punishment is awarded

Before amputing the hands of the thief the following conditions must be fulfilled. Even if one of them is absent, the punishment is not carried out:

1. The thief must be an adult. The signs of adulthood according to shariat are the completion of fifteen lunar years for a boy and nine lunar years for a girl. Another sign of maturity is the growth of pubic hair. The third sign is the ejaculation of semen in boys and the beginning of the menstrual cycle in the girl. Even if one these signs are present the concerned person is an adult. So if the thief is not an adult his hands cannot be amputated. At the most the judge releases him after issuing a stern warning so that he may not dare to repeat this act.

Abdullah Ibne Sinan relates the following tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

“When a minor child steals for the first and the second time he is forgiven. If he does it for the third time he is issued a strict warning and beating. If he persists in his crime, the tips of his fingers are slightly cut and if he repeats the act, some more of his fingers are cut away.”

2. Another condition is that the thief must be sane. So if an insane person robs, his hand is not amputated. He may be suitably warned and scolded.

3. Thirdly the thief must not have resorted to stealing under duress. If he had been compelled to do so, the penal code is not applied.

4. The stolen thing must be something that is worth ownership. Hence, if ones freedom is restricted it cannot be called a theft.

5. The value of the stolen object must not be less than one-fourth misqal of pure gold. One misqal is equal to eighteen grams. One-fourth misqal is four and a half gram.

6. The son or the slave of the thief must not own the thing that is stolen. So if a father steals from his son, he is not punished. On the contrary if a son or a daughter steals from the father or mother their hands are amputated. The same rule applies to the master and the slave. If the master robs his slave he is not punished. On the other hand, whether the slave who steals from his master is to be awarded the punishment of theft is a matter where exist a difference of opinion. Some Mujtahids are of the opinion that if a servant steals from his office or employer, he not meted out the full penalty. Other Mujtahids have issued a decree that there is no difference between the servant, a workman and other people. They shall be deserving of the penalty. There is also a difference of opinion with regard to the theft committed by a guest from his host. The most prevalent verdict is that the guest must be punished.

7. The stolen goods must not be some eatables during the time of famine. It is narrated from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said:

“In the time of famine and draught the hands of a thief are not cut off for stealing edible items like bread and meat etc.”

8. If a soldier participates in a raid and steals from the plundered goods obtained in war before they are distributed, he is exempted from the punishment.

9. If one of the parties to a transaction steals a property and claims that it rightfully belongs to him. Then he is not liable for the punishment of theft.

10. If a person is accused of theft and his theft is not yet proved to the judge, and before the verdict he pays the owner the value of the goods, he is not penalised. Similarly, if a son steals from his father but before the verdict is issued the father dies, the son is not punished, as stolen goods now comprise his inheritance.

11. If the use of the stolen things is haraam (e.g. wine or pork), there is no penal action against the robber.

12. If the thief claims that he had not taken a particular thing with the intention of stealing it, and the judge considers otherwise, there shall be no punishment for it.

13. Another necessary condition is that the object should be stolen from a place where the owner's permission is required to enter. So if a theft takes

place in a public mosque or public bath, the thief does not have his hand amputated.

14. Also the thing should be stolen from a secure place. If something is not kept in a safe place and left open, the theft of it does not incur punishment. Hence jewellery should be kept under lock and key. The fruits should not have been stolen from the trees. They should have been already picked and stored in the orchard. The four-footed animals have to be stolen from the stables. Wares have to be stolen from inside the shop. The pocket that is picked must be an inside one and not one that hangs outward. Money should be stolen from a safe etc. The shroud is to be stolen from the grave.

15. Another condition is that the thief must himself take the stolen goods from its proper place. If one takes out the thing from its safe place and another one takes it away, none of the two can be awarded the punishment of theft. This is so, because, the one who has taken out the thing from its safe place has not stolen it and the one who has stolen it has not done so from its place of safety. We have already mentioned in the previous point that one who steals something from other than its proper place is not given the punishment of theft. Only that thief is punished who removes the thing from its proper place and also takes it away. If more than one person are involved in stealing something from its proper place and taking it away, then the value of the stolen property is divided by the number of people involved. If the share of each person is more than one-fourth misqal all their hands are amputated but if their individual shares are less than this then none of them are punished in this fashion.

If a thief removes the stolen object and loads it on his animal, or gives it to an insane man or a minor child for taking it away, he cannot remain immune from the penalty. This is because the animal, the insane person and the child are mere carriers of the goods.

16. Severing of the hand is a punishment for theft. That is if someone takes away something without anyone's knowledge and it is later realised that the thing has been stolen. Hence if a person forcibly loots some goods from its owner he is not punished for theft. The bandit is beaten up and issued a warning, so that he may not repeat the act. However if the goods are looted on the point of a gun, the punishment is equal to that of warring against the Muslims. (This punishment is described in the thirty-third ayat of Surah Maidah. Either the criminal is killed or crucified, the left and the right foot is amputated, or he is to be exiled: The judge can award one of these punishments.)

17. If before a theft can be proved, the thief goes to the judge and repents and promises not to steal in the future he is saved from the punishment but after the theft is proved, repentance is of no consequence.

18. In order for a theft to be proved two just witnesses must have seen the thief stealing. It may also be that there is one witness and the owner also testifies that robbery has taken place. The thief may himself confess twice of his theft; and he qualifies for the penalty. If he confesses once the stolen goods are taken away from him and restored to the owner he is not punished for theft.

19. Cutting his hand only when the owner of the goods implores the judge to award this punishment punishes the thief. Hence, if the owner takes back his goods or allows the thief to keep it before the matter is reported to the Qazi and does not press for a penalty, the thief is not punished. However if the crime is proved before the judge even the owner cannot save the thief from punishment.

Some Mujtahids believe that if two just people have not witnessed the theft and it is only proved by two confessions of the thief, the judge has the prerogative to condone him. It is mentioned in the book *Tahzeeb* that a person came to Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) and confessed of having stolen something. Hazrat Ali (a.s.) asked him,

“Can you recite some portions of the Quran?”

He said, “Yes, Surah Baqarah.”

Ali (a.s.) said,

“I have respited your hand in exchange of Surah Baqarah.”

Ashath said, “O Ali (a.s.)! Have you overlooked the Divine penalty?”

Ali (a.s.) replied,

“What do you know? Awarding the penalty is only necessary when two just witnesses have testified. But if the crime is confessed by the thief himself, the Imam can condone him.”

If the crime is consonant with the above conditions, the amputing of the hands could only be carried out by the just ruler or judge. No other person is qualified to award the penalty or carry out the punishment. The Qazi is responsible for recovering the stolen goods and restoring them to the owner. If the goods are used up or lost, the thief has to make good the loss. The order for the returning of stolen goods is the same, whether the theft is proved according to shariat or not. If a thing belonging to someone else is taken, it has to be returned.

In some cases the theft is not proved but the Qazi issues a warning for picking up the property of other people. The Qazi may scold or beat the person so that he may not repeat the act. The quantum of scolding and beating is also left to the discretion of the judge. For example, if the goods are stolen from an unsafe place, or a bandit has looted the goods, or a forger has forged a signature and wrongfully acquired someone’s money; in all such cases the property is restored to the owner and the accused is scolded and beaten. In the same way if someone digs up the grave containing a corpse, but does not steal the shroud, he is also scolded and beaten up. Even if he steals the shroud but its value is less than one-fourth misqal of gold he is similarly beaten up and scolded.

Protection of property and honour

If the thief is seen stealing, he becomes a bandit. The owner can, with the intention of protecting his property fight with him. If the thief dies, his killing is condoned and no blood money is payable. Similarly the attacker could be killed in defence of ones life and honour. However the actual aim must be defence. If defence is possible without killing, killing is haraam. Only the least necessary measures are permitted.

The Islamic laws with regard to theft are numerous and there is a difference of opinion among the Mujtahids upon many of the points. Keeping in mind the scope of this book, we feel this much is sufficient for our purpose.

How is the punishment awarded?

After the crime is proved the judge cuts off the four fingers of the right hand. He leaves the thumb and the palm untouched. The penalty is the same if the thief is convicted of multiple thefts; and if he had not been punished before. If a thief has already had his four fingers cut and he steals again; and again the theft is proved, his left foot is cut from the front. The heel is left so that he can walk. If he steals for a third time and again the theft is proved the robber is imprisoned for life. If he steals in the prison too, he is put to death.

The hand which is supposed to be lifted up for prayers. The hand which expresses the submission to Allah. The hand which must be used to solve the difficulties of people, to help the oppressed and the orphans, to attack the enemies of faith. If the same hand is used to steal the property of the Muslim brothers and it is proved with all its necessary conditions; then there is no way except to dismember it. Society is rendered safe due to this measure.

Diyat (penalty)

If someone's hand is amputated without any fault of his, the one who cuts the hand is made to pay five hundred misqal of gold to the victim. Whereas if someone robs one fourth of a misqal of gold his hand is amputated. This shows that one who steals a fourth of a misqal of gold is worse than the one who cuts off the hand of an innocent person. Hence we realise the value of trust.

The Twenty Fourth Greater Sin: SHORT-WEIGHING AND CHEATING (In Business)

The twenty-fourth Greater Sin according to the traditions and Quran is short weighing or cheating in business. It is haraam according to the Holy Quran, the traditions and also common sense. The tradition of Amash related from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) includes it among the list of Greater Sins, as also in the narration of Imam Reza (a.s.) as reported by Fazl ibne Shazaan. Imam (a.s.) says: "*Decreasing (fraudulently) in measure and weight.*" (is also a Greater Sin). If the seller gives less than the specified quantity or if the debtor repays less than what is specified, it is haraam to do so.

A terrible punishment awaits the doer of this grievous sin, according to the book of Allah. A complete chapter of the Holy Quran deals with this topic. It says:

"Woe to the defrauders. Who, when they take the measure (of their dues) from men, take it fully, But when they measure out to others or weight out for them, they are deficient. Do not think that they shall be raised again, For a mighty day, The day on which men shall stand before the Lord of the worlds?"

(Surah Mutaffefeem 83: 1-6)

Deed in Sijjin

"Nay! Most surely the record of the wicked is in the sijjin. And what will make you know what the sijjin is? It is a written book."

(Surah Mutaffefeem 83: 7-9)

Sijjin is either the name of that register which contains the account of deeds of disbelievers and transgressors. Or it is a special corner of Hell where the disbelievers and sinners will be consigned. Hence the translation of the ayats will be as follows:

"They should be fearful for it is written down that the transgressors will go to sijjin. And what can explain to you what sijjin is? It has already been written about it (And a decision has been taken which cannot be changed).

Hazrat Shoeb (a.s.) was preaching to his people:

"O my people! Serve Allah, you have no god other than He, and do not give short measure and weight. Surely I see you in prosperity and surely I fear for you the punishment of an all-encompassing day. And O my people! Give full measure and weight fairly, and defraud not men their things, and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief."

(Surah Hud 11: 84-85)

It is but natural that if people resort to defrauding, there would be widespread confusion and disorder in the world.

We understand from the Quranic ayats that one who resorts to shortweighing and defrauding has no faith in the Hereafter and the Day of Judgement. If he has a firm belief in Qiyamat or even if he just supposes it to be true he will know that he will have to account for whatever amount he earns by way of fraud on the Day of Judgement. He shall have to make good

the loss. If he has faith he will never commit such a kheyanat. If he has belief he will be sure that even if he can fool people and cheat them he cannot hide his fraud from the Lord of the Worlds.

A butcher who was an idol-worshipper used to give more than the prescribed weight. When people asked him the reason for this he pointed up towards the top of the wall and said, "I give more because of him." When people looked up they saw an idol installed there. Another idol-worshipping shopkeeper was well known for his habit of casting a glance at the idol before he proceeded to weigh some goods.

When Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) and Zulekha were alone in the room, Zulekha covered the idol with a cloth. Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) asked her,

"Why have you covered the idol?"

She said, "I feel ashamed before it!" Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) said,

"You feel ashamed before a lifeless idol created by men, when it has no power of understanding. How can I not feel ashamed before the Almighty Lord who is ever present and all-Seeing?"

Saying this he fled from that place and saved himself from fornication.

What we mean to explain is that even though the idol-worshippers respect their idols and feel ashamed to commit sins in the view of the lifeless objects it is a matter of great regret that Muslims have no qualms in performing shameful deeds in full view of Allah!

Five sin and their punishments

The following tradition has been recorded from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in the book '*Tafseer Minhajus Saadeqeen*' According to this tradition five types of sins invite five types of calamities.

"When the people of a community break promises and oaths, Allah makes their enemies to reign upon them.

When people order against the revealed Divine commands, poverty (certainly) is widespread.

When immorality is practised openly the deadly diseases certainly increase.

When people short-weigh and short-measure then there is a decrease in agricultural output. (Decrease in livelihood) and there is less rainfall."

Advice of Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) for the businessmen

Whatever Ali (a.s.) found himself free from the administrative work, he used to go to the market place and announce,

"O people! Fear Allah! Weigh and measure with justice. Do not cheat people (by giving less) and do not spread corruption in the earth."

One day Ali (a.s.) saw a saffron seller short-weighing. He had applied oil to his hand and very cunningly he applied it to the pan of the balance which held the saffron. Ali (a.s.) picked up the saffron from the balance and said,

"First rectify your balance, then if you like you can give more than that."

Between mountains of fire

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

“One who does *Kheyanat* in weighing and measuring is thrown into the lowest section of Hell. There he shall be placed between two mountains of fire. He will be told to weigh those mountains. He will be busy in this forever.”

The following incident is recorded in the book ‘*Tafseer Minhajus Saadeqaen*’.

A person by the name of Malik went to visit a friend who was sick. Malik says, I saw him in a deplorable condition. He was screaming “Two Mountains’ of fire are going to crash upon me” I told him, “It is only an illusion!” He said, “No, it is true! Because I have two different balances. With one of them I used to short-weigh while selling and with the other I weighed more while buying. I am punished for this so soon!”

Short changing is also haraam

As it is haraam to short-weigh and short-measure in the same way it is also haraam to short-change. Those things, which are sold by measure, must not be short measured. It is absolutely haraam. In the same way those items which are sold by number, like eggs or fruits; if someone sells them to a person and gives less than the specified quantity, he is counted among those who short-weigh and short-measure. Shaykh Ansari has mentioned it in his book *Makasibul Muharrama*.

The Seller who cheats is a debtor of the buyer

The amount of goods given less by the seller is owed to the buyer. It is obligatory to give the balance amount to the buyer. If the buyer is dead he must give it to his heirs. If he does not know the buyer he must with the permission of the Jurist pay a similar amount as *sadqa* on behalf of the buyer.

If the seller does not know how much he has given less he must give him some amount and obtain his satisfaction. If the buyer is dead he must earn the satisfaction of his heir. If the buyer is unknown the *Mujtahid* must be satisfied.

Defrauding is like selling short

It is Short weighing and short measuring when the seller gives less without the knowledge of the buyer. The buyer does not realise that he is being given less than the stipulated quantity but it is defrauding when the seller sells some goods of an inferior quality and makes it out to be of a good quality. In this case too the buyer is unaware of being cheated. The seller may also adulterate the goods. In this case there is no short weighing but yet it is haraam, because it is a kind of a fraud. For example if a grainseller adulterates 95 kg of wheat with 5 kg of mud and sells it as a hundred kilo of wheat. Or if a milkman adulterates milk by adding water. Similarly a shopkeeper sells a kilo of ghee but surreptitiously puts a quarter kilo of stone beneath the layer of ghee.

In the same way the butcher commits a fraud if he adds more than a reasonable amount of bones while selling meat. Vegetable sellers increase the weight by pouring water over the vegetables more than what is required.

All these types of frauds are included among the sin of underweighing. They are all Greater Sins even if the seller is weighing the adulterated goods accurately.

Adulteration is haraam

In the same way to sell something whose weight is decreased is also haraam. Hence to mix an inferior quality of wheat with one of a good quality or to mix pure ghee is also haraam.

Shaikh Ansari says in his book *Makasibul Muharrama*, “The tradition prohibiting adulteration is Mutawatir.”

Shaikh Sadooq has recorded the prophetic tradition:

“One who sell adulterated goods to Muslims is not from us. He will be raised with the Jews on the day of Qiyamat, because an adulterater is not a Muslim.”

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said,

“One who gives us adulterated goods is not from us.”

He repeated this sentence thrice then said,

“And Allah will remove barakat from the livelihood of the Muslim brothers. (Allah) will destroy his economy and leave him upon his own condition.”

(Iqaabul Aamaal)

An edifying incident is mentioned on page 309 of the book *Daarus Salaam* by Aqae Iraqui: “The respected Aqae Abdul Husain Khawansari has related to me the following incident: “An honest perfume seller of Karbala had fallen sick. He tried the treatment of every doctor in the town but it was of no use. He spent all his property for his treatment but he was not cured. One day I went to pay him a visit. I saw him perturbed. He was instructing his son to sell off a particular thing to run the household. He was thus compelled to sell each and every household item. He was saying, ‘Sell off everything! I do not want anything. Either I will die or be cured!’ I asked him, ‘What do you mean?’ He sighed and answered, ‘At the beginning of my career I was not so rich. During that time an epidemic fever broke out in Karbala. The doctors prescribed lime juice as its cure. Since the disease was widespread there was a great demand of limejuice. I began to adulterate limejuice by mixing yoghurt in it. I sold it at a very high rate. Gradually the stocks of limejuice with the other shopkeeper were finished. They began to direct their customers to me. Soon the stock of limejuice in my shop was also sold out. Now I began to sell only yoghurt by adding colour and a sour material to it. Hence I sold this concoction as limejuice. My coffers became full and I continued to amass wealth. Now, today I find that all this property is of no use to me. My disease is incurable. So I wish to get rid of all the things that I obtained in the haraam manner, with the hope that after this I may be cured.’ Not much time had elapsed after this incident when the perfume seller departed from this world. He was definitely indebted to those whom he had sold the adulterated limejuice.”

Hazrat Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

“One day the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) was passing through the bazaar of Madinah. He (s.a.w.s.) told a wheat seller, “Your wheat is of a good

quality.” Then he put his hands inside the pile and found inferior quality of wheat below He said, “I see that you have gathered the provisions of kheyanat and adulteration.”

(Iqaabul Aamaal)

Allama Hilli says that a man asked Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.), “If a person has two types of goods one is of a superior and expensive quality and the other is of inferior and cheap quality, can he mix these two and sell at a special rate?”

Imam (a.s.) replied,

“It is not correct for him to sell the adulterated goods to Muslims. However (there is no harm) if he informs them (of the adulteration).”

(Iqaabul Aamaal)

Dawood ibne Sujaan asked Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.): “I was having two varieties of musk. One was wet the other dry I sold the wet and fresh musk but no one was prepared to buy the dry one at the same rate. Is it permitted for me to make it so that it is sold out?” Imam (a.s.) told him,

“It is not allowed. However if you inform the buyer that you have made it wet, it is another matter.”

Giving less in the rights of Allah and Prophet (s.a.w.s.)

The people have been ordered not only to refrain from defrauding the people, but they must also not cheat and defraud while fulfilling their obligations towards Allah, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), the Holy Imams (a.s.) and all the creatures.

Allah is not deficient while fulfilling the rights of people. He had taken upon himself to give sustenance to men. He bestows men with unlimited favours. He listens to his entreaties and fulfills his wishes only in keeping with the well being of man. So it is incumbent upon man to be faithful in fulfilling his duties towards Allah. Man should thank Allah for His blessings. He must not disobey Allah and should carry out all his legal obligations. Thus one, who obeys Satan and the selfish desires, has disobeyed Allah and turned away from Him. He has not fulfilled Allah’s right. He must be under the impression that as soon as he says “O Allah!” Allah will answer him. When some of their prayer is not answered immediately, people become impatient and do not consider the fact that they themselves had been deficient in fulfilling Allah’s rights. Whereas Allah Himself says,

“...and be faithful to (your) covenant with Me, I will fulfill (My) covenant with you.”

(Surah Baqarah 2:40)

If inspite of our failings Allah listens to our prayer. It is nothing but His Beneficence.

Hazrat Imam Zainul Aabedeem (a.s.) says in Dua Abu Hamza Thumali:

“All praise be to Allah who responds to my call. Whereas when He calls me, I am lazy in my response. All praise be to Allah who gives me whatever I ask Him. Though when He asks me for a loan I am stingy. (All the good deeds are a loan to Allah. he shall repay men on the day of Qiyamat).

And all praise for that Allah who sees my infamies but acts magnanimously (He does not send immediate punishment). He is so forgiving as if I have not committed a single sin.”

What you desire for yourself

Saadi Shirazi says in a couplet,

“You usurp the property of Muslims but when someone usurps yours you protest and claim that no one is a Muslim anymore.”

If one desires not to be cheated by others he must similarly act honestly with the people. Justice demands this. The traditions also state that one must wish for others what he desires for himself.

Justice and equity is best

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“Three actions are the best. People should receive complete justice from you so much so that you desire for them what you desire for yourself. You must co-operate monetarily with your brothers in faith. You must remember Allah in every condition. That remembrance is not merely Subhanallah (Glory be to Allah) or Alhamdo Lillah (Praise be to Allah), (it is remembering Allah, always). When some duty comes upon you which Allah has ordered you must fulfill it, and when some prohibited act comes before you; leave it.”

(Al Kafi)

The scales of justice

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) advises his son Imam Hasan Mujtaba (a.s.) in his will:

“O my child, make yourself the measure (for dealings) between you and others. Thus, you should desire for others what you desire for yourself and hate for others what you hate for yourself. Do not oppress, as you do not like to be oppressed. Do well to others, as you would like good to be done to you. Regard bad for yourself whatever you regard bad for others. Accept that (treatment) from others which you would like others to accept from you.”

(Nahjul Balagha)

Everything has a measure

In Surah Hadid, Allah, The Almighty says:

“Certainly We sent Our apostles with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the balance that men may conduct themselves with equity.”

(Surah Hadid 57:25)

By the word ‘Balance’, Allah means justice and Allah has appointed a ‘balance’ for everything. The belief of men and the truth and falsehood is also tested this way. The good and bad morals and qualities are also evaluated on the scales of justice. If men conform to justice in their speech and actions and belief and deeds they would be able to establish true justice in the world.

Ali (a.s.) is the scale of deeds

In one of the Ziarat of Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) we read:

“Peace be upon the balance and the scales.”

Hazrat Ali (a.s.) is the measure for distinguishing truth and falsehood. He is the touchstone for differentiating between good and evil. He is the scale for evaluating morals and deeds. After the demise of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), the Holy Quran and Ahle Bayt (a.s.) especially Ali (a.s.) is the channel for and the criterion of faith. By comparing the deeds and faith with the speech and actions of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) we distinguish good from evil. If our belief and actions conform to the standards of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) they are correct and if not then they are of no use.

Justice demands that we must not go to the extremes. We should neither exceed the limits nor remain deficient. The scales of justice are very accurate and can detect even the weight of a single strand of hair. After recognising the path of justice it is a formidable task to remain firm upon it. One who is successful in recognising the true path and wishes to follow it, is bestowed Divine help. It is this person who is proved correct by the scales of justice on the Day of Judgement. He crosses the difficult bridge of Sirat with ease and swiftness. One who is not just in this world is proved wrong in the Hereafter. He will stumble from the bridge of sirat and drop into hell. The noble Quran says:

“And there is not one of you but shall come to it, this is an unavoidable decree of your Lord. And We will deliver those who guarded (against evil) and We will leave the unjust therein on their knees.”

(Surah Marium 19: 71-72)

May Allah guide us upon the way of justice and equity. May Allah include us among the pious and enable us to be saved from falling into the Hell.

The Twenty-fifth Greater Sin: Consumption of Haraam

Consumption of Haraam is a sin and it is the twenty-fifth Greater Sin in the view of Quran and hadith. The tradition of Imam Reza (a.s.) in the book *Oyoon-e-Akhbare Reza* mentions this, and the tradition of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) as related by Amash also includes this sin among the greater ones. It is one of the characteristics of Jews, according to the following ayat of Surah Maidah:

“And you will see many of them striving with one another to hasten in sin and exceeding the limits, and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired; certainly evil is that which they do. Why do not the learned men and doctors of law prohibit them from their speaking of what is sinful and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired? Certainly evil is that which they work.”

(Surah Maidah 5: 62-63)

“*Akal-e-soht*” means eating of that which is acquired unlawfully, and it is a Greater Sin. To “eat” unlawfully acquired things means to use them. The use can be eating, drinking or having a dress made out of unlawfully acquired cloth or construction of a house with unlawful money. Even if a person acquires something illegally and just keeps it with himself and does not restore it to the lawful owner, it is said to that he has “eaten” haraam. To take interest, or to usurp the property of an orphan also amounts to the same. In short, every type of use of unlawfully acquired is called “*Soht*” in this ayat. The dictionary meaning of ‘*Soht*’ is ‘to be finished’ or ‘to be lost’. The thing that becomes ‘*soht*’ is that which is finished off or used up. Anything that is acquired unlawfully does not carry ‘*barkat*’. Hence one who uses such things is deprived of increase (barakat) and cannot derive any benefit. It is due to this fact that Quran has termed it as the ‘eating of ‘*soht*’. ‘*Soht*’ signifies each and every type of haraam thing. That is, things which are acquired by unlawful means.

Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi writes in his book *Islam and the Economic Problems*: “Islam permits the people to obtain their livelihood in anyway they choose. They have their freedom to choose their occupation and obtain the necessities of life, but Islam does not allow them to earn in a manner that is harmful for him. It should also not endanger the social equilibrium. Islamic laws not only prohibit the consumption of wine and intoxicants and gambling, but it also prohibits any action that causes these sinful things to come into being. For example to undertake cultivation of grapes for wine making, to manufacture wine, to transport, to buy or sell wine, to give it and to use it. All these are haraam too. Islam does not consider free-sex to be a human activity. Islam has prohibited dancing. It does not consider singing and playing musical instruments lawful professions. Any activity that is beneficial to one person but harmful to someone else or the society is considered haraam in Islam. All such types of actions carry a heavy punishment in this world and a dreadful retribution in the hereafter. For example bribes, stealing, interest-taking, adulteration and frauds, unlawful hoarding of edible items to hike their rates even if it makes life difficult for the poor. In the same way all such actions that instigate wars. Also those

occupations that do not require effort and the person becomes rich by luck, such as lottery. All these occupations are haraam.”

It is haraam to use something acquired unlawfully. However, the use of some is more sinful than others. One who takes interest is equated to the one who has made war against Allah and the Prophet (s.a.w.s.). Shaikh Sadooq (r.a.) has narrated a tradition from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said,

“Any action of Kheyanat with the Imam is ‘Soht’.

‘Soht’ is of various kinds. One of these is that which is received from the tyrant rulers. It includes the bribe to Qazis, the payment for prostitution, wine, alcoholic nabad (a kind of wine), and also interest. All these are *soht* and they are all haraam according to the clear (Islamic laws).

“To bribe a Qazi (for giving a favourable judgement) is to disbelieve in Allah the Almighty.”

(Khisal of Sadooq)

A similar kind of tradition is to be found in the book *Al Kafi*, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says:

“‘Soht’ means the payment for non-hunting dogs and wine. It also denotes the fee paid to a prostitute, the bribe of a judge and the money earned by passing of information of the unknown acquired with the help of jinns.”

(Wasaelush-Shia)

Such traditions indicate that the consumption of every type of haraam is ‘soht’. Though some of them are denounced more emphatically and their punishment is more severe. The worst of these is the taking of bribe. One who accepts bribe is just like a disbeliever and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has cursed him.

Types of bribe

There are three types of bribes: (1) Bribe paid to a judge for a favourable judgement. (2) Bribe for ‘haraam’ work. (3) Bribe for permitted things.

The first kind of bribe comprises of money etc. paid to a judge so that he may give a favourable judgement. The judge may also be bribed for pointing out the loopholes whereby one could weaken the position of the opposite party. It is absolutely haraam even if the one who is paying the bribe is on the right and the judge delivers the right judgement. The paying and receiving of this type of bribe or whatever may comprise this bribe is also haraam and a Greater sin. A person who pays or accepts such a bribe deserves the curse of Allah.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

“May Allah curse one who gives a bribe, one who accepts it and one who acts as an agent between them.”

(Safinatul Behaar)

Elsewhere, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

“Beware of bribe! It is nothing but disbelief. The one who is involved in bribe will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise.”

(Safinatul Behaar)

Bribe is not only a sin but it constitutes assisting the sinner. However if one is compelled to bribe and without it he cannot obtain his rights, it is

another matter, but it will be still haraam for one who accepts it. Similarly it is also haraam to reach someone by bribing. Also who one acts an arbitrator or agent and takes an active part in negotiating the amount of bribe is also a sinner.

This type of bribe is absolutely haraam whether paid in cash or kind. It may also comprise of offering some services to the judge like stitching free of cost his clothes or constructing his house etc. Bribe can even be paid in words. That is, praising the judge unduly so that he is attracted towards us and rules in our favour. There is no doubt whatsoever that all such types of bribes are haraam.

Bribe in the name of khums and gift

Even if a bribe is paid in the name of khums and gift it is. For example to give someone a gift or a present with the intention of bribing him. That is with the intention that by giving this the beneficiary will do something for us. Similarly the payment of khums and zakat with the intention of paying it as a bribe is also haraam. It will not be considered as Khums or zakat. It is obligatory for him to pay the khums or zakat once more, because the pure intention is a necessary condition. The intention should be achieving nearness to Allah and there should be no other motive. One of the signs of Qiyamat is mentioned by the traditions in the following words:

“Bribes will be accepted as gifts.”

The second kind of bribe is the bribe paid for some haraam consideration. For example if one bribes a tyrant or an oppressor for inflicting some harm on a third person. There is no doubt that it is also a haraam bribe. As the Holy Quran says:

“And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by false means, neither seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know.”

(Surah Baqarah 2: 188)

Two things are pointed out in this ayat. First of all the believers are warned against using something obtained illegally and secondly they must not use their wealth to bribe the rulers for obtaining something unlawfully.

Paying a bribe for obtaining ones rights

The third type of bribe is one that is paid for something lawful. Like paying someone in order that he may help in obtaining ones rightful property or to escape from a tyrant. Bribing for lawful things is allowed.

In a tradition Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) was asked about the person who bribes the occupant of a house to vacate it so that the owner may himself use it as his residence. Imam (a.s.) said that there was no harm in it. However the house mentioned in this hadith does not belong to the person who pays the bribe. It is a trust property or a public place like, the mosque, madrasa, lane, by-lane, and bazaar etc. Thus if someone is occupying a place in the mosque or a student is living in a room in the public hostel, he can be bribed to vacate it.

Hafsul Amr enquired from Imam Ali an-Naqi (a.s.): “The ruler has appointed agents to purchase an agricultural produce. Is it allowed for us to bribe those agents so that we may remain safe from the ruler’s tyranny?”

Imam replied,

“There is no harm in it. You may pay whatever you think fit.”

Then Imam (a.s.) asked:

“Do you have to supply less grain to the ruler after you have paid the bribe to these agents?”

‘Yes, said the questioner.

“You have invalidated your bribe.” Imam told him.

(Wasaelush-Shia)

Thus it is clear that bribing for causing someone to be oppressed is haraam but it is permitted in order to save oneself from oppression.

Accepting a bribe for doing something lawful

It must however be made clear that though it is permitted to gift something for lawful acts or to save oneself from oppression, it is detestable to accept such gifts. Because these gifts bear a close resemblance to bribe. Also, the habit of bribing for lawful things may make a man habitual and he may be inclined to pay bribes for unlawful purposes too. One is prone to error. If a pious person refrains for Makrooh (detestable) bribe he will never be prone to the haraam type of bribing. The following tradition supports this fact.

“Those who are excessive devourers of haraam.”

(Surah Maidah 5:42)

(Allah does not intend to purify their hearts from those sins). Explaining this ayat, Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says:

“It is that person who fulfills the wish of his believing brother but does not accept any gift in return.”

Shaikh Ansari says in the book, *Makasibul Aamaal*: “There are many explanations of this traditions. One of it is that we must absolutely refrain from accepting gifts from the poor people so that they may never fall into paying a haraam bribe.”

Characteristics of those who eat haraam

One of his characteristics is that there is no barakat in his money and wealth. It is narrated from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said,

“The madness of buildings, mud and water occupies the head of one who earns by unlawful mean.”

(Behaarul Anwaar)

It means that such a person is constantly worried about his wealth and strives to convert it into landed property so that it is not lost. The buildings of mud or water neither benefit the owner in the Hereafter nor they do provide perfect peace in this world. Such a person spends every bit of his wealth for pieces of land. Finally, Allah orders the land to swallow all his wealth.

On one hand the unlawful gains are harmful from the worldly point of view. That is, they cause the ‘barakat’ to be lost. On the other hand they become an obstacle in the acceptance of worship acts.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

“When a single morsel of haraam enters the stomach of a person and becomes a part of his body, the angels of the sky and the earth curse him.”
(Safinatul Behaar)

The Messenger of Allah has also said:

“Worship acts accompanied with the acquiring of haraam is like a buildings that rests on (crumbling) sand.”
(Safinatul Behaar)

They lack a firm foundation and hence are of no use. Such a building can never remain intact and is soon destroyed.

Invocations are not accepted

The noble Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has remarked,

“Prayers are not accepted for forty nights of the one who eats a single morsel of haraam. And his invocations are also not accepted for forty days. And every piece of flesh that grows by consuming haraam is most deserving of being burnt in hell-fire. And even a single morsel causes some growth of flesh.”

(Safinatul Behaar)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has also stated,

“One who wishes to have his invocations accepted must keep aloof from haraam food and unlawful earnings.”

(Al Kafi)

A man asked the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.):

“I wish for the acceptance of my deeds.” The Prophet (s.a.w.s.) told him, “Keep your food purified from haraam and do not let any unlawful thing to enter your stomach.”

(Al Kafi)

The Almighty Allah revealed to Janabe Isa ibne Maryam (a.s.):

“Inform the oppressors of Bani Israel that they must not call Me and invoke Me as long as they are involved in unlawful earnings. And if they call Me and invoke Me in this condition, I will curse them.”

(Al Kafi)

Hardening of the heart

Whatever man eats is like a seed sown in the earth. If the seed is good it will bear sweet fruits. If the seed is bitter and poisonous so is the fruit that grows from it. If the food is good and lawful it has beneficial effects on the heart. It is purified from every blemish and impurity. The organs of this person perform good deeds, but if one consumes food obtained through unlawful means it causes the heart to harden. The symptoms are soon obvious. When the heart is of stone it is unaffected by every kind of preaching and absolutely impenitent. Such a man is not moved even when he sees clear injustice. No good can be expected from him. Not a trace of goodness is visible in the dark heart. The same aspect is pointed out by Imam Husain (a.s.) in his address to the troops of Ibne Saad:

“You bellies are filled with unlawful (wealth). Now you will not accept the truth. Why don’t you deal with justice? Why don’t you listen to me?”

(Nafasul Mahmoom)

In other words, when a person's heart becomes hard and darkness occupies it, he refuses to accept what is right. He is immune to every kind of moral advice. He is rather prone to commit even the worst of the sins. The tragedy of Karbala is the perfect example of this phenomenon.

During the rule of the Abbasid King Mahdi, there was a Qazi named Shareek bin Abdullah. He was an honest and upright Judge, till the time he was summoned by the king. The Abbaside King forced him to choose from three things (1) Either he should accept the post of the Royal Qazi (2) He should become the teacher of the King's son (3) or he should dine with the king, at least once.

The Qazi thought that easiest of the three was to eat with the king once, so he agreed to dine with King Mahdi. The ruler ordered the royal chef to prepare the best of the dishes. When the Qazi had eaten the food, the cook remarked to his companions, "Now, Qazi Shareek will never achieve salvation."

The prediction came to be true. The haraam food affected the Qazi to the extent that he also accepted the other two conditions. He became the special Qazi of the King and the tutor of his children. It is said that Qazi Shareek used to be very strict and unflinching with the treasurers while obtaining his share from the royal treasury.

One day the treasurer protested, "You have not sold me grain that you act so ruthless in recovering its price." Qazi Shareek replied, "Yes, I have sold something more valuable! I have sold my religion."

One day a tray filled with delicious dishes was sent by Haroon al Rasheed for Bahlool. Bahlool did not accept it. The servants of the king said, "It is not possible to reject the present of the Caliph." Bahlool, the wise, pointed towards the stray dogs and said, "Give it to the dogs."

The servants became angry and said, "You have insulted the royal gifts." Bahlool became silent then said, "Be quiet, if the dogs learn that this food is sent by the king, they will not touch it."

A morsel of halal food

Eating haraam gives rise to every type of infamy. Whereas, the halal morsel is the cause of every kind of goodness and charity. Numerous traditions praise the acquisition of livelihood through lawful means. For example the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says,

"Worship consists of seventy parts and the best part is earnings by lawful means."

(Safinatul Behaar)

The Messenger of Allah has also said,

"When a man eats halaal food an angel stands over his head and prays for his forgiveness till he finishes eating."

(Safinatul Behaar)

The Prophet has remarked in a similar vein,

"One who strives to earn his livelihood in a lawful manner from morning till night, achieves salvation."

(Safinatul Behaar)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) states that Allah has said:

“I will not care on the day of Qiyamat from which door he enters Hell, the person who does not care from which door he earns money in this world.”

(Behaarul Anwaar)

The Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has also mentioned the following tradition:

“If a man gives sadqa from the unlawful earnings, he is not rewarded (for it). There is no increase (barkat) in his wealth if he spends from the unlawfully earned money. If a man leaves behind his unlawful wealth, it leads him more towards the fire (Hell).”

(Behaarul Anwaar)

Allah does not provide unlawful livelihood

Maybe, those who refrain from unlawful earnings think that if they give up this chance they may be deprived of the gains and consequently their economic condition will deteriorate causing poverty. This is just a false notion. It is merely a satanic thought. Not only is this against reasoning it also goes against the Divine promise of lawful sustenance repeatedly mentioned in the Quran. It is also contrary to the numerous traditions of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). The Almighty Allah has promised to provide sustenance to each and every creature. The Divine promise is never unfulfilled. Allah only tests the believers to see if they strive patiently on the path of acquiring lawful livelihood or they act impatiently and deviate. Whatever sustenance is decreed is surely received. It is only the impatience of the people and weakness of their faith that they leave the path of lawful earnings and stray to the illegal occupations. When a person does this he fails the test. Allah deprives this person of the lawful sustenance that was in his destiny. It is not that Allah has decreed for anyone unlawful sustenance.

No one dies without receiving his decreed sustenance

On the occasion of the last Hajj, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) addressed the Muslims in the precincts of the Masjidul Haraam:

“Know that, the trustworthy Spirit (Jibraeel) has informed that no creature dies till he is has received his destined sustenance.

Then fear Allah and do not vie among yourself in earning your livelihood. If there is some delay in receiving your sustenance, it must not be that you pursue it in disobedience to Allah. Verily, Allah has distributed only halaal sustenance to every creature. He has not destined haraam sustenance to anyone.

Hence one who fears Allah and acts with patience, Allah shall bestow upon him His sustenance though lawful means. But one who abandons purity and takes up haraam methods, a similar amount shall be decreased from his lawful sustenance. He shall be made to account for his haraam earnings on the Day of Qiyamat. Allah the Almighty has prohibited it in the following words: “...and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones)...”

(Surah Nisa 4:2)

It should not be that in a hurry to obtain livelihood you obtain it through illegal ways, before Allah provides you with the halaal sustenance that He had decreed for you.”

(Al Kafi)

Deprived of halaal food

One day, Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) reached the mosque and alighted from his mule. He entrusted his animal to a person and entered the mosque. The man pulled out the rein and ran away leaving the mule unattended. When Ali (a.s.) returned, he was holding two dirhams. He intended to give them to the man who had looked after the mule. He found the mule sans the rein. After reaching home he gave the same two dirhams to his slave for the purchase of another rein. The slave went to the bazaar found the same rein. It came to be known that the thief had sold the stolen rein for two dirhams. It was the same amount that he could have earned in a lawful way. When the slave related the whole incident to Ali (a.s.), he said,

“By abandoning patience man converts his halaal sustenance into haraam. Though he does not receive more than what is in his destiny.”

(Lailail-Akhbaar).

The Twenty Sixth Greater Sin: USURPING THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS (without a valid excuse) OR NON-FULFILLMENT OF RIGHTS

The twenty-sixth among the sins according to Nass (i.e. Quran and hadith) is non-fulfillment of rights; when there is no valid excuse. It means that if a person has some right upon someone and if he demands his right but the one on whom the obligation rests does not fulfill the right, even though he is capable of it, then this person has committed a greater sin. The frequently quoted tradition of Amash from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and the other hadith of Imam Reza (a.s.) as narrated by Fazl ibn Shazaan also includes the non fulfillment of rights to be a greater sin.

Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“One who does not fulfill the rights of a believer (and does not repay what he owes to him), on the Day of Judgement, Allah will make him stand on his legs for five hundred years, blood or sweat will ooze from him, an announcer from Allah will announce, ‘This is the oppressor who had not fulfilled the right of Allah.’ then after being admonished for forty days it will be ordered for him to be thrown into the fire (those who admonish him will be either believers or prophets).

In the explanation of this hadith, Allama Majlisi states that if the sinner has oppressed less, sweat will flow from his body and if his oppression is more, blood will seep out of him.

(Miratul Oqool page 361)

Allama Majlisi further says, “This proves that the right of a believer is the right of Allah.” It could be because Allah has ordered for restoring a believer's right. Disobeying this command is just like usurping the right of Allah. The tradition further states:

“On the Day of Qiyamat a caller will announce, ‘Where are those who oppressed and tortured the friends of Allah?’ Some people will stand up. They would not be having any flesh on their faces. It will be said, ‘These are the ones who tortured the believers, bore enmity towards them, dealt harshly with them due to their belief.’”

It will be ordered that they may be thrown into Hell. After this, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) swears by Allah the Almighty and says that these people were having the same belief as the believers, but they did not respect their rights and they also used to expose the secrets of the believer.

(Wasaelush Shia)

And Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has remarked:

“A believer who has something and another believer is in need of it. But if the former does not fulfill the need of the needy momin he will not never taste the food of Paradise nor drink the Raheeq-al-Makhtoom (A drink of Paradise).”

(Behaarul Anwaar)

Demand for fulfillment of rights on the Day of Qiyamat.

Hazrat Sajjad (a.s.) says:

“On the Day of Qiyamat a person will be caught by his hand and the people of Mahshar (Gathering) will be told that if anyone has any claim upon him may secure his right.”

(Layali Al Akhbaar)

On the Day of Qiyamat, this sort of situation would be the most difficult one. When they will meet any of their relatives whom they owe something they would be in constant dread that it will be demanded that moment. It could be the same fact that is alluded to in the following ayat of the Holy Quran:

“The day on which a man shall fly from his brother, And his mother and his father, And his spouse and his son..”

(Surah Abasa 80:34-36)

Every person would avoid his acquaintances in the fear that they might claim their rights from him.

Actual poverty

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) asked his followers,

“Do you know who is the actual destitute?”

“One who has no money, property or treasure,” they replied. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) said,

“There is no destitute in my Ummat except the one who has performed the prayers, kept fasts, paid the Zakat, performed Hajj but on the Day of Judgement a person will come whose property he has usurped, and a person whose blood he had shed and another one whom he had beaten. Then the good deeds of this man will be transferred to those who have rights upon him. If his good deeds are exhausted before all the rights are fulfilled then the sins of those who have rights upon him will be added to his sins. Then he shall be thrown into Hell.”

Non-payments of debts and transgressing of rights.

Anything owed by a person is debt, like a monetary loan. The full amount of the loan money is considered as a debt. The amount has to be paid as per the agreed payment schedule. The same applies to an item that is sold but not delivered. The seller is obliged to deliver the goods to the buyer on time. Similarly the one who has taken something on hire is responsible for it. A husband is indebted to his wife till he pays the dower amount. The husband is also responsible for the maintenance of his permanent wife. The laws of guarantee are numerous and available in the books of jurisprudence. We shall only discuss the topics that are relevant for our purpose.

Loan for a fixed period and loan without time limit

Loans are of two types. One is that is not bound by a time limit. Or when the date of payment has already expired. The second type of loan has a fixed time of payment and the creditor cannot demand the loaned property before the due date. If the loanee dies all debts owed by him become due immediately. For example if a person has borrowed something for a year, but dies before the end of the year. Then his legatees must pay his loan before anything else. They cannot say that the time of payment has not

come, but if the loaner dies his legatees do not have the right of recalling the loan before time.

It is Compulsory to repay a Debt

If the time of payment has arrived or if the creditor demands back his loan the loanee is obliged to repay immediately. Even if he has to sell his excess belongings. Even if he has to sell his things at less than the market value; but he must repay the loan. However if he is compelled to sell at a throwaway price and the transaction would result in the waste, then it is not obligatory for the debtor to sell those things. If the debtor does not have anything like a carpet, clothes, household items, shop etc. that he can sell and repay the loan, then he must take up a job that is suitable for his position. In any case he is under an obligation to clear his due.

Carelessness and sloth with regard to the repayment of loan is absolutely haraam; and not fulfilling the rights is a greater sin. If the loanee possesses only those things that are necessary for his life; like a modest house, carpets and clothes etc, then it is not necessary for him to sell them to repay his loan. The creditor cannot compel the debtor to sell off these things. However, it is permitted for him to sell them if he so wishes. If he does so, the creditor is allowed to accept the loan but it is desirable that the creditor respites the debtor till the time Allah makes him capable to repay his debts.

It is related through Uthman bin Ziyad that he said: "I informed Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) that a person owed money to me and wishes to dispose off his residence to repay me. Upon hearing this Imam (a.s.) said thrice:

"I seek Allah's refuge for you." (that you cause this poor man to sacrifice his dwelling place to pay).

Many traditions of similar import have been recorded in books of hadith. Moreover, it is narrated that a famous companion of Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) and Imam Reza (a.s.), by the name of Muhammad bin Abi Umair traded in cloth. It so happened that mounting losses pushed him to the brink of poverty. One of his debtors owed him 10,000 dirhams. When he learnt of the companion's misfortune he sold his house and brought the money to repay the amount that he owed. Muhammad bin Umair inquired if he had received the amount of 10,000 dirhams as inheritance. When he replied in the negative he asked if he had received it as a gift from someone. Again he replied, "No, but I have sold the house where I lived, so that I can repay my debt to you."

Muhammad bin Umair related a saying of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.), prohibiting a creditor to force his debtor to sell his dwelling house and said, "By Allah, at present I am in need of each and every Dirham but I cannot take a single dirham from this."

Actually Muhammad bin Abi Umair was a rich man having assets worth over 500,000 dirham. His current state of poverty was because of his closeness to Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.). Due to this he was imprisoned for four years and lashed mercilessly and the tyrant Caliph confiscated whatever he had. May Allah have mercy upon such oppressed people. It is an established fact that if someone deprives a person of his rights then each day

that passes makes him liable to a sin which is equal to collecting Ethesher (it was a 1/10 tax collected on orders of tyrant ruler).

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says:

“The martyr in Allah’s way is absolved of every sin. Except for the unpaid debt; which has no substitute. Repaying the debt is a must; or the creditor may forgo it. (otherwise even the martyr will be interrogated regarding his debts).”

(Wasaelush Shia Chap 4, vol.13, page 83)

Moreover, he (a.s.) has remarked:

“As soon as the first drop of a martyr’s blood is spilled all his sins are forgiven. Except for the unpaid debt, which is not excused. Its forgiveness can be achieved only by repaying (the debt).”

(Wasaelush Shia chap.4, Vol.13, page 85)

The gravity of all this can be ascertained from the incident when a person from the Ansars departed from this world. He had left behind an unpaid debt of two dinars. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) refused to pray the namaz-e-Janaza till some of the relatives undertook the responsibility to repay the deceased’s debt.

When Muawiya bin Wahab questioned Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) regarding this tradition, he (a.s.) replied:

“This is an authentic tradition and the Prophet’s saying conveys the same meaning that people should derive lesson from it and understand the seriousness of debt. They should not regard it insignificant and must make it a point to repay their debts.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s), Hazrat Ali (a.s.), Imam Hasan (a.s.) and Imam Husain (a.s.) were all having some debts when they departed from this world but they appointed their legatees who repaid their debts after their passing away. This hadith means that it is not prohibited to be in debt but to ignore or to delay the repayment of debt is haraam. It is not even permitted to travel (for pilgrimage) to Mecca and Madinah without first having repaid one’s debts.

Abu Samaniya asked Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) regarding this, “I wish to go and settle down in Mecca or Madinah but I am in debt to some of the people here.” Imam (a.s.) replied:

“Go home! First repay your debts. It must not be that you die in this condition and meet your Lord while you are in debt. For a believer never does Kheyanat (misappropriation of trust).”

(Al Kafi vol.5 page 94).

Not repaying debts is kheyanat to all

The above hadith makes it amply clear that not fulfilling someone’s right or delaying the repayment of debt is equal to Kheyanat. Consequently, all the traditions that are recorded in the chapter on Kheyanat are equally applicable here and the Prophetic traditions have described Kheyanat as a kind of oppression.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s) has announced:

“A Muslim who inspite of being capable delays the repayment of debt has committed oppression upon all the Muslims.”

(Wasaelush Shia Vol.13 page 97).

Not repaying debt is a kind of oppression upon the creditor. But it is also an oppression upon the Muslims because upon seeing that inspite of being capable this person is not repaying the debt, others who are having excess money will not lend to others. As they will fear a similar fate. Thus all people would be disinclined to lend; though lending is a meritorious deed. Hence one who is responsible for discouraging such a deed has indeed oppressed all the Muslims.

Hazrat Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has said:

“May Allah curse the one who closed the door of good actions. And it is the one who is not thankful to the one who has done some good towards him. Consequently the doer of good refrains from doing the same favour towards someone else in the future.”

(Behaarul Anwaar, Wasaelush Shia)

Certainly, lending a good deed. Undue delay in the repayment of debt is disregarding this favour. This results in the creditor to avoid lending his money to anyone else in future.

Method of lending and borrowing

Authentic traditions have greatly emphasised the rewards that are promised for the one who lends. On the other hand, those who avoid this good deed have severe punishment in store. Sometimes it is neither obligatory nor prohibited to lend and sometimes it is neither Mustahab (recommended) nor Makrooh (detestable).

However it is detestable to borrow when one is not having a genuine need but if there is a real need the detestibility is scaled down. The magnitude of detestibility is directly proportionate to the actual gravity of the situation. So much so that under some circumstances it becomes obligatory to borrow. For example it becomes obligatory to borrow if one’s life or honour depends on it. If one knows that he will not be able to repay them, then on the basis of precaution he should refrain from borrowing even if he is in dire need.

Rewards for lending-punishment for not lending

The blessed Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.s) said:

“One who lends to his believing brother and gives him respite till he is capable of repaying it, the amount that he has lent is considered as zakat and the Angels pray for him and seek Divine mercy for him till this (amount) is returned.”

(Wasaelush Shia Chap.6 Vol.13 page.86)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has also remarked:

“If one lends to his Muslim brother, it is for his own (good). Every Dirham that he lends will qualify him for a reward equivalent to Mount Ohud (which is in Mecca) and Mount Sinai. And if he is lenient in collecting his debt he shall cross the bridge of Sirat like a stroke of lightning. And if a Muslim brother relates his woes before a person and this person does not

lend him any money, the Heaven shall be denied to him on the Day of recompensing the good doers.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

It is obligatory to have the intention of repaying ones debt

The debtor who is not in a position to repay his debts.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“Three actions are the best. People should receive complete justice from you so much so that what you desire for yourself you must also desire for others. You must co-operate monetarily with your brothers in faith. You must remember Allah in every condition. Remembrance is not merely Subhanallah (Glory be to Allah) or Alhamdo Lillah (Praise be to Allah), (it is remembering Allah, always). When some duty comes upon you which Allah has ordered you must fulfill it, and when some prohibited act comes before you; leave it.”

(Al Kafi)

The scales of justice

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) advises his son Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.) in his will:

“O my child, make yourself the measure (for dealings) between you and others. Thus, you should desire for others what you desire for yourself and hate for others what you hate for yourself. Do not oppress as you do not like to be oppressed. Do good to others as you would like good to be done to you. Regard bad for yourself whatever you regard bad for others. Accept that (treatment) from others which you would like others to accept from you.”

(Nahjul Balagha)

Everything has a measure

In Surah Hadid, Allah, The Almighty says:

“Certainly We sent Our apostles with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the balance that men may conduct themselves with equity.”

(Surah Hadid 57:25)

By the word ‘Balance’, Allah means justice and Allah has appointed a ‘balance’ for everything. The belief of men and the truth and falsehood is also tested this way. The good and bad moral qualities are also evaluated on the scales of justice. If men conform to justice in their speech, actions, belief and deeds they would be able to establish true justice in the world.

Ali (a.s.) is the scale of deeds

In one of the Ziarat of Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) we read:

“Peace be upon the balance and the scales.”

Hazrat Ali (a.s.) is the measure for distinguishing truth and falsehood. He is the touchstone for differentiating between good and evil. He is the scale for evaluating morals and deeds. After the demise of the Holy Prophet

(s.a.w.s.), the Holy Quran and the Ahle Bayt (a.s.), especially Ali (a.s.), is the channel for and the criterion of faith. By comparing deeds and faith with the speech and actions of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) we distinguish good from evil. If our belief and actions conform to the standards of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) they are correct and if not, they are of no use.

Justice demands that we avoid the extremes. We should neither exceed the limits nor remain deficient. The scales of justice are very accurate and can detect even a weight of a single strand of hair. After recognising the path of justice it is a formidable task to remain firm upon it. One who is successful in recognising the true path and wishes to follow it, is bestowed Divine help. It is this person who is proved correct by the scales of justice on the Day of Judgement. He crosses the difficult bridge of Sirat with ease and swiftness. One who is not just in this world is proved wrong in the Hereafter. He will stumble from the bridge of sirat and drop into hell. The noble Quran says:

“And there is not one of you but shall come to it, this is an unavoidable decree of your Lord. And We will deliver those who guarded (against evil) and We will leave the unjust therein on their knees.”

(Surah Marium 19: 71-72)

May Allah guide us upon the path of justice and equity. May Allah include us among the pious and enable us to be saved from falling into Hell.

The Twenty Seventh Greater Sin: FLIGHT FROM JEHAD

According to the Quran and hadith, to flee from a holy war is a Greater Sin. It is the twenty seventh sin and is termed as a greater one. It is with regard to running away from a confrontation with unbelievers when they are less than twice the number of Muslims. The following verse of Surah Anfaal is clear:

“O you who believe! When you meet those who disbelieve marching for war, then turn not your backs to them. And whoever shall turn his back to them on that day- unless he turn aside for the sake of fighting or withdraws to a company then he, indeed, becomes deserving of Allah’s wrath and his abode is hell; and an evil destination shall it be.”

(Surah Anfaal 8:15-16)

Hazrat Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says:

“Those who flee from the battlefield should know that they have angered their Lord and have damned themselves to destruction. Because fleeing from the battle causes Allah’s anger. And one who flees from the Holy war will be certain to face calamities and eternal degradation. And his fleeing will not prevent death, and his life cannot be prolonged. That is, if the time of his death has arrived, his fleeing will not delay it. He will die due to some other reason. On the other hand, if the time of his death has not yet arrived and he participates in Jihad he will not die. Thus it is better for one to pledge his life to Allah rather than live in Allah’s anger, degradation and dishonour.”

Initiated Jihad and Jihad in defence

Jihad is of two types:

(1) Initiated Jihad (2) Jihad in defence

The first kind is that when the Muslims undertake a war against the unbelievers to invite them to Islam or for establishing justice. However, the permission of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.), the Holy Imams (a.s.) or their special representatives is a necessary prerequisite of this type of Jihad. Since the present period is of Major occultation this type of Jihad is forbidden.

Jihad in defence, as the name applies, pertains to circumstances when unbelievers attack the Muslim territories or areas for obliterating Islamic heritage or for plundering the wealth and honour of Muslims. Under such conditions it is wajib-e-Kifai to undertake jihad and repel their attack. For this type of jihad the express permission of the Imam (a.s.) or his special deputy is not necessary.

There is a difference of opinion regarding the topic of our discussion; i.e. flight from the battlefield. That whether it refers to the first kind of Jihad or the second type? Some scholars are of the opinion that it pertains only to those wars that have been waged against the unbelievers under the order of the Holy Imam (a.s.) or his special deputy. (For example, exemption from Ghusl and Shroud to the martyr also pertains to this jihad). Other doctors of religion maintain that the decree applies to both the kinds of Jihad. Thus

those who wish to study this problem in detail can refer to the books of jehad or the books of jurisprudence.

While discussing the prohibition of flight it would be most appropriate to discuss the steadfastness of Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) on the battlefield. Such incidents have been included in discussions extolling the merits of Ali (a.s.). Neither the Shia nor the Sunni historical books can boast of even a single instance when Ali (a.s.) turned his back from a battle. Even in the battle of Ohud he was the only one who did not flee. In the ninth volume of *Behaarul Anwaar*, under the chapter of “Bravery” a narration has been recorded from Ibne Masud, concerning Ali (a.s.). Four of those who had run away from the battle of Ohud returned and again came to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). They were Abu Dajana, Miqdad, Talha and Musayb. After this the rest of the Ansar came back. Thus it were these people who had deserted the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). All the companions had left the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) alone on the battlefield except Ali (a.s.). Ali (a.s.) was fighting in the midst of the polytheists to defend Islam and the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.s.).

During the battle of Ahzaab, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) bestowed Ali (a.s.) with the titles of “The vicious attacker” and “the non-receder.” That is, the one who attacks the enemies with vengeance and does not recede an inch. There is no doubt that Ali (a.s.) was imbued with all these qualities. Whereas, history is a witness that other companions like Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman had fled from numerous battlefields like Ohud, Khaibar, Hunain and Dhat-Salaasit. Ibne Abil Hadid the Mutazalite has penned the following couplet in his famous book:

“It is not surprising that Abu Bakr fled from Hunain.
He had also deserted the battle in Khaibar and Ohud.”

The Twenty Eight Greater Sin: BECOMING ATRAB AFTER HIJRAT

The twenty eighth sin, that is labelled as a Greater Sin, is to become Atrab (Bedouin, gypsy etc) after Hijrat (migration).

It is recorded in Usool-e-Kafi under the chapter of Greater Sins that according to the Sahih of Ibne Mahboob when he wrote a letter to Imam Musa Ibne Ja'far (a.s.) he (a.s.) replied and this sin was included among the Greater Sins. Moreover, Muhammad bin Muslim has quoted Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and stated that he (a.s.) has included this sin among the greater ones. *The book of Ali (a.s.)* also includes this sin in the list of Greater Sins.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“Becoming Atrab after Hijrat and polytheism is one and the same (sin).”
(Usool-e-Kafi chapter of Greater sins)

What is meant by becoming atrab after hijrat?

Atrab denotes the wild Arabs or Bedouins who are absolutely ignorant of religion and rituals connected with faith. Hijrat signifies the migration of these desert Arabs to the Muslim centre, their acceptance of Islam at the hands of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) or his rightful successor, and their consequent adherence to faith, and adherence to religious rules and regulations.

Becoming Atrab after Hijrat is the condition when a desert Bedouin before acquiring the necessary knowledge of religion turns back to his ignorant ways.

In the early period of Islam it was incumbent upon them to migrate towards the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in order to learn whatever was necessary for being a Muslim. Similarly it was prohibited for Muslims to stay in an area populated mostly with unbelievers; where it was not possible for them to pray and fast and perform other religious duties.

‘Why don’t you migrate?’

It is recorded in *Tafseer Minhajus Saadeqeen* that there were some people among the Muslims like Qays bin Waleed, who were outwardly Muslims and had recited the confession of La ilaaha illallah but in spite of this and their ability to do so, they did not accompany the Muslims in their Hijrat from Mecca to Madinah, and when the Quraish of Mecca marched to attack the Muslims in the battle of Badr these people accompanied them and were ultimately killed at the hands of the Muslims. A Quranic verse was revealed on this occasion:

“Surely (as for) those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to their souls, they shall say: In what state were you? They shall say: We were weak in the earth. They shall say: Was not Allah’s earth spacious, so that you could have migrated therein? So these it is whose abode is Hell, and it is an evil resort.”

(Surah Nisa 4:97)

The above verse emphasises the fact that it is the duty of a Muslim to leave the place where he cannot adhere to his faith and rituals.

In a tradition, the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) says:

“One who migrates from a place to another for the sake of religion, even if it is as less as a span (of hand), Allah makes Paradise incumbent upon him. (Wherein) his companions will be Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.) and Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.).”

(Minhajus Saadeqeen)

“Except the weak from among the men and the children who have not in their power the means nor can they find a way (to escape); so these, it may be, Allah will pardon them, and Allah is Pardoning, Forgiving.”

(Surah Nisa 4:98-99)

It is narrated from Akrama that many of the Meccans who had embraced Islam were not capable to migrate to Madinah, but when the Quranic verse deploring such people was revealed and they became aware of it; one of them Junda bin Zumra told his sons:

“Even though I have become extremely old and sick, I am not among those helpless people who have been deprived of migration by Allah. I have yet some strength left and I also know the way to Madinah. I fear that if I am to die suddenly, my failure to migrate would be a blemish on my perfect faith. So, you all lift up the bed on which I lie and carry me outside towards Madinah.”

Thus, his sons lifted the bed and carried him outside, but they had reached only a short distance when the signs of his death became apparent. Junda bin Zumro kept his right hand on his left hand and said: “O Allah! This hand is for You and this for Your Messenger. I pledge allegiance to You for those things on whom Your Messenger had pledged.”

After this his soul escaped from his body. When the news of his death reached Madinah, some companions remarked that, “it would have been better if Junda bin Zumro had reached Madinah. In this way he would have derived the sawaab of Hijrat.”

The Almighty Allah revealed the following ayat on this occasion:

“And whoever flies in Allah’s way, he will find in the earth many a place of refuge and abundant resources; and whoever goes forth from his house flying to Allah and His Apostles, and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

(Surah Nisa 4:100)

Becoming atrab after the passing of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s)

During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) it was incumbent upon every person to migrate towards him (s.a.w.s.) to obtain instruction in religion and faith. In case he lived in the midst of unbelievers where he could not perform the obligatory acts of prayers and fasting, it was all the more necessary to migrate.

Failure to migrate a return to nomadism is decreed to be a Greater Sin and the Almighty has promised Hell fire for such people.

After the passing away of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) it became wajib to turn towards the Holy Imams (a.s.) and to obtain the compulsory knowledge

of faith and articles of Islamic acts. [Most important being the Ma'refat of Imam (a.s.). That is, it was incumbent to have knowledge of one's Imam and also to learn the matters of belief and acts. It was also prohibited to turn back to paganism after the acceptance of Islamic faith. After knowing Imam (a.s.), to be aloof from him is similarly Haraam. Thus, Shaykh Sadooq narrates from Huzaifa bin Mansoor that he has reported from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) who said:

"To become Atrab after Hijrat is to recognise Imam (a.s.) and then be aloof from him."

(Maani al-Akhbaar)

Since the present age is the age of occultation of Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.) the same rules apply.

It is necessary to migrate towards the jurist

Hijrat is incumbent on two types of people. The first type are those who are absolutely ignorant of the rules of religions. There is no religious scholar in the area of their residence, whom they can refer to in their religious problems. Then, it is compulsory for them to shift to a place where they have access to religious scholars for the solution of their problems.

The second types are those Muslims who live in the midst of unbelievers. Due to the oppression of these infidels they are unable to perform their religious duties. Then it is incumbent for them to migrate to an area where freedom of religion is available. The Shia jurists have explained this matter clearly.

Order for migration is forever

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has told us:

"Hijrat is wajib till the doors of repentance close. The doors of repentance will not close till the sun rises from the west." (I.e. the order for migration will be in force till Qiyamat).

(Masalik)

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says:

"The order for Hijrat will be in force till Allah demands obedience from the inhabitants of the earth in the same way as the order was first promulgated in the time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.)."

It means that Hijrat will remain a compulsory duty till the time other religious duties remain obligatory on the people.

'They could not migrate from Mecca'

In the book of '*Masalik*', the second martyr writes that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has explained the meaning of the tradition of migration saying that it is specifically concerned with the migration from Mecca. Hence when Mecca was liberated from the domination of the unbelievers there was no need for the Muslims to migrate elsewhere. The order applies to only those Muslims who are unable to perform their religious duties. According to some scholars after the conquest Mecca there was no merit in migration from Mecca. Just as there was a greater merit in Jihad and struggle for Islam before the conquest.

“...not alike among you are those who spent before the victory (of Mecca) and fought (and those who did not): they are more exalted in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards...”

(Surah Hadeed 57:10)

In order to understand the purport of this ayat let us study the following points:

Wajib, mustahab and mubah hijrat

The respected scholar Allama Hilli writes in his book ‘*Mumtahi*’ that there are three kinds of Hijrat (Migration), wajib (obligatory), Mustahab (recommended) and Mubah (permitted).

Wajib hijrat

Hijrat is wajid on a Muslim who lives in the midst of infidels where he can neither reveal that he is a Muslim, nor can he perform his religious duties. He should not be restrained by old age or disease etc.

Recommended hijrat

For those Muslims who live among infidels but who are not restricted in their faith neither are they compelled to forgo their religious duties; and if they are capable to migrate to some other area, it is recommended (Mustahab) for them to do so. However, if they have some legal excuse, migration is Mubah (Permitted) for them; it is not even Mustahab.

No migration from areas of ahle sunnat

According to *Sharhe Lumah* and *Jameal Maqasid*, the first Martyr is believed to have said: “It is incumbent for a Muslim to migrate if he is living in the midst of infidels and is unable to follow Islam or perform his religious duties. In the same way a Shia who is living among the Ahle Sunnat and is not able to perform the ritual acts of Shias is similarly required to migrate to the areas populated with Shia people.” However this view which is attributed to Shaheed Awwal (the first martyr) is not compatible with the general Islamic principle. Because if a Shia is living among Sunnis he does not need not to forgo all his religious obligations. He can follow taqayya (dissimulation) and fulfill his ritual acts. He can perform the Islamic acts in the same manner as the Sunnis if he fears for his life or property. We do not have any tradition exhorting such people to migrate to another area. On the other hand the Holy Imams (a.s.) have time and again emphasised upon the adherence to dissimulation under such circumstances.

Support of the Martyr’s view

Some scholars have supported the view of Shaheed Awwal and they present the following tradition as proof: Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) was requested to explain the Islamic order for a person who during travel reaches a place where there were no stones or sand, all the area was covered with snow and the person was mujnib (semen had been discharged from him and he had to perform the wajib Ghusl for prayers). So how can he do

tayammum (substitute of Ghusl) in absence of mud or stone? Imam (a.s.) replied,

“Let him do tayammum with snow and pray. And I do not consider it proper for him to go such a place where he has the risk of losing his faith.”

According to those who support the view, since Imam (a.s.) has prohibited his followers to go to a place where it is impossible to perform ghusl and wuzu, the prohibition also applies to a place where it is not possible to perform wuzu and ghusl according to Shia methods.

However, this is not a sufficient argument because the tradition prohibits going to a place where one is *sure* to be unable to perform some obligatory acts. On the other hand it is only a possibility that in areas of Ahle-Sunnat a Shia will be compelled to practise taqayya, and if he practices taqayya and performs the obligatory acts like the Ahle-Sunnat his acts will be considered correct. Moreover, if there is no constraint it may even be recommended for him to migrate from the area of Ahle-Sunnat. However, if he is unable to express his love for Ahlul Bayt (.a.s.) it will be certainly Mustahab.

Propagating wilayat in areas of kuffar

Samaad says that he told Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.), that he was travelling to an area populated by polytheists and that he would have to stay there for some time. Some of the Momineen had told him that it was not advisable to travel there because if he were to die in that place he would be counted as a polytheist. Imam (a.s.) asked him if he would be able to propagate the wilayat of Ahlul-Bayt and invite people towards truth in that place? Samaad said, “Yes, master, there is total freedom of expression and religion. The people there, are receptive of truth.” Then Imam (a.s.) asked whether such a freedom was possible in an Islamic area. Samaad said, “No! On the contrary we have to practise extreme taqayya, and none of us can even dare to utter the names of one of you (Imams).” Imam (a.s.) told him,

“If death overcomes you in such a place you would be counted as monotheist community.” [I.e. he will be equal to a whole community of monotheists; like Hazrat Ibrahim (a.s.)]. The light of belief will emanate from your face.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Allama Majlisi (r.a) writes in the *Sharh of Al-Kafi* that it is possible that Atrab means to become a nomad again and to forgo Hijrat after the order of Hijrat has been revealed. Like the prohibition of interest, which came into force only after the Divine command was revealed. Nevertheless, since the early period the failure to migrate without a valid reason or to migrate and then revert to nomadism; both of these are Greater Sin and promised the fire of Hell by the Almighty Allah.

Quranic view of nomadism and apostasy

We had already mentioned at the beginning of our discussion that nomad specifically applies to the desert Arabs who were away from the centre of Islam and could not learn the Islamic rules and regulations; nor could they remember and follow the articles of faith. It was for this very fact that the following verse was revealed in the Quran:

“The dwellers of the desert are very hard in unbelief and hypocrisy, and more disposed not to know the limits of what Allah has revealed to His Apostles; and Allah is Knowing, Wise.”

(Surah Tauba 9:97)

The Almighty also says:

“And of the dwellers of the desert are those who take what they spend to be a fine, and they wait (the befalling of) calamities to you; on them (will be) the evil calamity; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.”

(Surah Tauba 9:98)

Also:

“And of the dwellers of the desert are those who believe in Allah and the latter day and take what they spend to be (means of) the nearness of Allah and the Apostle’s prayers; surely it shall be means of nearness for them; Allah will make them enter into His mercy; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

(Surah Tauba 9:99)

Ignorance of Islamic acts is a kind of nomadism

The above two verses which flay the infidel Bedouins are apparently clear regarding the fact that the nomads are deserving of criticism not because of their being dwellers of desert. It was because of their ignorance of articles of Islamic acts and belief. For those Bedouins who followed the Islamic religion, the Holy book has praised them in the third verse. They have been promised Divine Mercy.

On the basis of this, people who avoid learning Islamic rules and regulations and those who keep away from the centres of religious knowledge are in fact, nomads, and the verse denouncing the desert Arabs also applies to them even though they are living in cities.

The respected Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) remarked:

“Learn the rules of religion. Those of you who do not learn about religion are nomads. As the Almighty Allah says in His book, ‘Why does not a company from you goes to learn about religion so that when they come back they can warn their people in order they may become fearful (of disobeying Allah).’”

(Behaarul Anwaar, Book of Aql)

Thus one who does not try to learn about religion and articles of faith is a desert dweller. The Imam (a.s.) also told his followers:

“Knowledge of the Divine religion is incumbent on you. And do not become a nomad. Because if you fail to understand a religious act, Allah will not look upon it with Mercy on the Day of Qiyamat and He will not purify that deed.”

(Shaheed-e-Thani)

One who learns but does not act upon it is also a nomad

Muhaddith Faiz writes in *Waqfi* that it is possible that the above pronouncement may also apply to those who learn about the Islamic rituals and practices but fail to act upon them. He also quotes a tradition from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) to prove this point. Allama Majlisi (r.a.) states in

the *Sharh of Al-Kafi* that some scholars are of the opinion that being a nomad in the present time applies to those who after acquiring religious instruction, do not act upon it and remain aloof from Islamic knowledge.

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says:

“A man says that he has migrated, though in fact he has not. Because a migrant is the one who abandons sins and does not even go near them. And a person says that he has fought in the way of Allah but in reality he has not, because Jihad is the leaving of sinful acts and a war against enemy inside our own self. Whereas many people go out to fight not for the obedience and satisfaction of the Lord. Their motive is only to gain fame so that people may praise their bravery and fearlessness.”

(Behaarul Anwaar vol.15)

Desert of ignorance and negligence

From the Quranic verses, the traditions and writings of the Islamic scholars we can conclude that nomadism implies the condition of a person who ignores religious knowledge and inhabits the desert of ignorance. Thus he deprives himself of salvation and eternal bliss. He considers the worldly life to be everything and remains involved in satisfying his carnal desires. He is oblivious to righteousness and does not care to acquire knowledge (Ma'refat). He does not refrain from committing any type of sin and evil that make him liable to Divine punishment in the Hereafter.

He does not pay attention towards good deeds that he may earn eternal rewards in the life hereafter. This is nomadism. On the other hand Hijrat (migration) is the opposite. Nomadism after Hijrat (migration) implies that a person migrates to Islam and obtains knowledge of religion and then revert to his former ways. It can be said that performing some good actions for some time and then leaving them is also a kind of reverting to nomadism.

The denouncement is valid only if the person does this due to laziness and sloth and not due to some real hindrance or helplessness. It is necessary to continue the performance of good actions once we have begun. As far as possible we should not discontinue them.

Jabir Johfi quotes Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) to have said:

“I like to continue good actions so that I become habitual in them. If I could not perform a particular deed in the day I make up for it during the night and if I do not perform an action during the night I make up the following day. Certainly the best of the deeds near Allah is those which one continues. Hence all the deeds of the week are presented to Imam (a.s.) every Thursday and the deeds of the month at the end of the month and all the deeds of the year at the middle of Shabaan. So if you begin a good ritual, keep at it for the whole year.” (i.e. continue it for at least a year).

Neglecting religious knowledge

It is considered reverting to nomadism by some if a person begins to acquire religious knowledge but later discontinues. However, it is Haraam if only if his religious education is obligatory (that is if he leaves it, he will go astray). However, it is incumbent to continue acquiring knowledge till the end of life. As the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has said:

“Acquire knowledge from the cradle to the grave.”

So that he can continue to perform good deeds with purity of intention and sincerity in order that he may become righteous and gain the rewards for his good deeds in this world as well as the hereafter.

The Twenty Ninth Greater Sin: HELPING THE OPPRESSORS

The twenty-ninth sin, that is classified as a Greater Sin is ‘Helping the oppressors’. Fazl ibne Shazaan has narrated from Imam Reza (a.s.) that he said concerning the Greater Sins:

“And helping the oppressors and bending (leaning) towards them.”

In the narration of Amash from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) the following is mentioned, *“Not helping the oppressed people is a Greater Sin.”* In other words helping the oppressors is also a Greater Sin.”

Imam Musa ibne Ja’far (a.s.) says:

“To participate in the activities of the oppressors and to endeavour to achieve their evil objectives and to help them is equal to infidelity and to knowingly lean towards them is a Greater Sin and deserves Hell.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) similarly says:

“On the night of ascension (Meraj), I saw the following inscription on the doors of Hell, ‘DO NOT BE A HELPER OF THE OPPRESSORS.’”

(Wasaelush Shia)

It means that if one does not wish to enter Hell he must refrain from co-operating with the oppressors. Moreover, this is a sin that is promised Divine punishment by the Almighty in the Holy Quran.

“And do not incline to those who are unjust, lest the fire touch you, and you have no guardians besides Allah, then you shall not be helped.”

(Surah Hud 11:113)

According to *Tafseer Minhajus Sadeqeen* ‘do not incline’ means we must not lean towards the oppressors even a little bit. Hence we must not remember them honourably nor mix with them freely or express our affections for them. We must neither be greedy of their gifts, nor should we praise them and obey their orders. All these actions are included in the prohibition. Therefore how can it be lawful to help them whole-heartedly and co-operate with them in oppression?

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) remarks,

“One who prays for the long life of an oppressor is as if he likes the opposition of Allah on the Earth.”

(Minhajus Sadeqeen).

There is an interesting incident in the book *Rawzaatul Jannat* concerning the author of *Maqasikul Ahkam*, Sayyed Muhammad. Once the Sayyed and another respected teacher, Shaykh, planned a pilgrimage to the Holy tomb of Imam Reza (a.s.) at Mashad, but when they learned that Shah Abbas Safavi was staying at Mashad they decided to cancel their visit.

Similarly under the biography of Sayyed Bahrul Uloom it is mentioned that when Waali Shustaraan behaved with utmost respect with him, he says, “Before I could develop some liking for him and come under the denouncement of the Quranic Verse, I fled from that place.” Thus he shifted from ‘Dezful’ and settled down in Iraq for the rest of his life.

When we study the life histories of some scholars we realise how much they refrained from meeting, mixing with or communicating with the

oppressors. So that there was not even a remote chance for them to befriend them and help them in their activities.

Muhaddith Jazaeri writes in the book *Fawa'id ur Rizvia* that there was a person who committed some blunder in the presence of Shah Abbas Safavi and in order to escape his wrath took refuge in Mashad. Then he approached the late Mulla Ahmed (Muqaddase Ardebeli) and requested him to write to the Shah that he may forgive his mistake. Muqaddase Ardebeli wrote as follows:

“Founder of a kingdom obtained through asking, Abbas! Know that even though this man was initially an oppressor, but he is now an oppressed one. So, overlook his mistake. I hope Allah will forgive some of your mistakes.”

Signed: From the slave of the king of Wilayat, Ahmed Ardebeli.

The Shah replied to his letter:

“You have been grateful upon me for ordering those things which you did (in your letter). Do not neglect me in your invocations.”

Signed: Dog of the House of Ali, Abbas.

It is quoted from *Tarikh Bahire* that Khwaja Nizamul Mulk the Prime Minister of Malik Shah the Seljuq, was very much thoughtful of the Hereafter and the Day of Judgement and he used to be fearful in this regard. During the tenure of his ministry he was a supporter of the helpless, a patron of intellectuals and steadfast in following the religious obligations. He thought of obtaining a certificate from the scholars and intellectuals, certifying his good morals. So that the document can be kept inside his shroud before burial. He hoped to achieve salvation by this. He drafted a certificate and sent it to various scholars and intellectuals for their signatures. When it reached Baghdad and was presented before the respected teacher of Nizamiya Madrassa, Shaykh Abu Ishaq, he wrote, “I witness that Shaykh Nizamul Mulk is a better oppressor from among the oppressors.”

When Khwaja saw the remark of Abu Ishaq, he wept and said: “Whatever Abu Ishaq has written is true.” There is no doubt that helping the oppressors in any way is Haraam and a Greater Sin. There is an Islamic law for every kind of oppressor and the ways of helping the oppressors, and it is incumbent to learn these rules and commands.

Types of oppressors

‘Zulm’ the Arabic word for oppression and injustice implies disregard for Divine commandments and also to oppose whatever is compatible with reason and logic. There are two types of such oppression:

Crossing the limits of religious law is equal to polytheism. As the Almighty says,

“...most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity.”

(Surah Luqman 31:13)

Belying the Divine signs is the second type as stated in the Holy Book,

...and the unbelievers- they are the unjust.”

(Surah Baqarah 2:254)

In short, we can say that all the religious laws that we are supposed to follow according to reason or religious commands must be obeyed in

totality. Not accepting them or not believing them is a kind of injustice. Apart from this, not accepting of the Divine commands or not acting upon them or disregarding the limits specified by the Almighty, neglecting a Wajib act or doing a Haraam one; all of them constitute injustice.

Thus the Almighty Lord says,

“...and whoever exceeds the limits of Allah these it is that are the unjust.”

(Surah Baqarah 2:229)

This also applies to injustice upon ones own self. As Allah (a.j.) mentions:

“These are the ones who are unjust to themselves.”

(Surah Fatir 35:39)

Various kinds of oppressions includes hurting someone physically, or imprisoning him or to insult a person, abuse him, backbite about him, accuse him falsely or degrade him. To usurp someone’s property or, obtain it without the owner’s permission. Not returning the rights to its owner. Other kinds of usurpation are to forcefully occupy the position reserved for someone else. The supreme example of this being the usurpation of the position of Wilayat when it is clear that it belongs to the Holy Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). The tyrant rulers of Bani Umayya and Bani Abbas had committed such a kind of injustice.

Another example is of the unjust jurist who assumes the seat of Qazi. This is also of two kinds. One is that committing oppression may be the profession of the unjust, like the tyrant rulers and vicious kings. Secondly, it could be that once in a while a person commits injustice upon someone. We shall study all these types of injustices in four sub-topics.

Helping the oppressor in oppression

Helping an oppressor whose profession is to oppress is without any doubt a Greater Sin. For example to hand him a cane so that he can beat an innocent person, or kill him and put him in the prison. In any way whatsoever, helping the oppressor is totally Haraam.

The renowned Shaykh Ansari writes in *Makasib* that the prohibition of co-operating with the oppressors is proved by all four proofs (that prove the Islamic laws). That is Quran, reason, Sunnat and Ijma.

According to logicl if there is no one to help the oppressor he may not oppress and hence it proves that it is Haraam to assist him. From the point of view of accountability reason considers equal both the actual oppressor and one who helps him. In other words, reason prohibits the helping of an oppressor.

Ijma: If we refer to books of jurisprudence we realise that according to all the jurists, co-operating with the unjust people is Haraam. All of them are unanimous on this point.

Quran: The Quranic verse

“And do not incline to those who do injustice,”

is sufficient to prove the illegality of helping the unjust. Because when even a slight inclination to unjust people is prohibited, then how can helping

them be permitted. As helping them would be the greatest form of inclining towards them.

Moreover, the Almighty says:

“...and do not help one another in sin and oppression; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah; surely Allah is severe in requiting evil.”

(Surah Maidah 5:2)

The Traditions of Ahlul Bayt against helping the oppressors

Numerous traditions have reached us in this connection. Shaykh Ansari has also recorded the following tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in his book *Waraam*:

“If one knowingly goes to help an oppressor, he has apostasied from Islam.”

(Majmua Waraam)

Naturally an act that makes a person bereft of the Islamic faith must be a sin that results in his destruction.

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“When Qiyamat occurs an announcer will call: Where are the unjust, the helpers of Unjust and those like the Unjust? So much so that even if one has procured pen and ink for the oppressor to write the order of oppression; all these people would be bundled up in a cage of iron and thrown into Hell.

(Wasaelush Shia)

The Messenger of Islam (s.a.w.s.) says:

“If a person even hangs up a cane for the tyrant king so that he can beat the oppressed one, Allah will change that cane into a snake, seventy thousand yards long and place it in the Hell fire (to torment him).”

(Wasaelush Shia)

“Those who take the affairs of oppressors in their hands and help him in oppression will, at the time of death, be conveyed the Divine curse and news of Hell fire by the angels of death. (And Hell) is an evil resort. One who guides the oppressor will be considered at par with Hamaan (the minister of Firon). And the punishment of those who help the unjust and the oppressors themselves will be more grievous than other punishments of the inmates of Hell. And if a person backbites about his believing brother to the ruler, and even though the Muslim may not have to suffer any injury from it, the backbiter will have all his good deeds nullified. But if on the other hand he had to suffer oppression at the hands of the ruler, the back-biter will be kept by Allah in that section of Hell where Hamaan is confined.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Praising the oppressor is also haraam

To praise an oppressor so that his power and glory may increase, or he may become more daring, is Haraam. All the arguments that have been mentioned, and also the proofs concerning the forbidding of evil (Nahy Anil Munkar) prove that it is one of the Greater Sins.

Shaykh Ansari has specifically related a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.):

“One who shows respect to a rich man and in the greed of his wealth considers him good; the Almighty Allah becomes angry on him and puts him in a cage of fire at the lowest part of Hell where Qarun is confined.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

We know that this tradition applies to all types of people, but if the praised one is unjust the one who praises will become eligible to severe retribution. Moreover the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has said,

“If one praises a tyrant king or shows humility due to greed (of his rewards) then he will be in Hell with him (the King).”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Another prophetic tradition states,

“Whenever a transgressor is praised, the heavens shudder and the Divine Anger envelopes the one who has praised.”

(Safinatul Behaar)

We must not accept any honour from oppressors

The most common way of helping the oppressors is to accept some post or position from them. That post should not be a cause for any type of oppression. For example the post of maintaining law and order. Actually the necessary qualification of this post is injustice and oppression. So if a person assumes the assignment from the oppressors to maintain law and order and as a result unleashes oppression on innocent people, such an appointment and such an acceptance of the post is a Greater Sin. If as a result of it innocent people are subjected to hardships, the doer of such actions is sure to have a severe punishment from the Almighty.

There is one very well known tradition of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and it is quoted here from *Tohful Oqool*. Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“The Haraam post is the post of an oppressive ruler and the posts of those who are busy in the assignments entrusted by the tyrants. Hence it is Haraam to fulfill the duty of this post. One who takes up this post will become involved in Divine punishment. Whether the job is significant or paltry, any attempt to help the oppressor is a Greater Sin. Because accepting a post from an oppressor will result in the trampling of rights, the manifestation of injustice, the spread of corruption and disturbance, the destruction of heavenly books, the murder of Prophets, the demolishing of mosques and the interpolation of religious laws. Therefore it is Haraam to work with them. Except when there is a condition of utter helplessness, like when it becomes permissible to drink blood and eat the flesh of dead.”

(Tohful Oqool)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has also said:

“Those who accept some assignment from the oppressors; the minimum punishment for them on the Day of Judgement would be that Allah would make them stand near fire till He does the accounting of rest of the people. After that He will decide about them.”

In the last portion of the book *Darus Salaam* there is an incident concerning Sayyed Muhammad Ali Iraqi. He was one of those who had the honour of seeing Imam-e-Zamana (a.s.). He says that during the time of my youth I was staying in my native village in Iraq. The name of that place was

Karharood. In those days a person whom I knew by his name and lineage passed away and was buried in the graveyard opposite to our house. For forty days, at the time of sunset a fire arose from his grave, and wails and screams were heard. On one of those nights the wailing of that dead man became more intense and I was very much troubled. I became so much frightened and was trembling uncontrollably as if the punishment was on myself; so much so that I eventually began to lose consciousness. When my friends came to know of my condition they came and carried me to their house and I remained there till I was well again. Afterwards I came to know that the dead man was working in the local court. One day he had demanded some tax from a Sayyed but he was unable to pay. So this man put the Sayyed in prison. He hung him from the ceiling of his house for quite some time. It was due to these deeds that he was punished after death.

Another similar incident is related by a reliable person that, some time ago there was a person by the name of Aaqa Muhammad Ali. He was a dealer in perfumes and was also in some way connected with the law courts. He had promulgated an order banning all the people from any kind of trade in perfumes. During that period a Sayyed purchased a quantity (mound of) of perfume and sold it to some other trader. When this tyrant came to know of this he met the Sayyed in the market and abused him excessively slapped him too. In reply to this the Sayyed said, "My ancestor will repay you for this." When the tyrant heard this he turned back and ordered his slave to catch hold of the Sayyed. Then he beat the Sayyed with a staff or a cane. After this he said, "Go and tell your ancestor to cut off my arms." Very next day the oppressor had high fever and his arms began to pain severely during the night. On the third day the arms had swollen terribly and puss began to ooze from them. On the fourth day the surgeons amputated his arms in a way that only the stubs remained. He died on the seventh day.

Therefore, it is important to know that acceptance of an assignment or a post from an oppressor or a tyrant is a great help to that unjust man. Because one has to employ terror for such purposes and it is impossible to remain just and non-violent.

It is mentioned in the *Sahih* of Dawood bin Zarbi that one of the followers of Imam Sajjad (a.s.) told him that he had requested Imam Sajjad (a.s.) to recommend to the ruler of Madinah, Dawood bin Ali for an appointment in the governmental post. Imam Sajjad (a.s.) replied: "*I will never do such a thing.*"

On hearing this he thought that Imam (a.s.) was unwilling to recommend him because he might be worried that some injustice would be caused by him. So he approached Imam (a.s.) and began to promise and take oaths that he will never do any kind of unjust act and said that he will not do anything except help the people. Imam (a.s.) looked to the sky and began to weep. Then he said that going to the sky was easier than that. It was apparent that Imam (a.s.) meant to say that once a person accepts employment of an oppressor it was impossible for him not to oppress.

When is it permitted to accept rulership

Now let us study those situations where it is allowed to accept appointment in the service of oppressors and rather in some cases it becomes Wajib to do so. First of all, if a person is forced to accept it or if he is practising Taqayya. That is, if he refuses, his life property or honour will be in danger. Permissibility of accepting employment under tyrants is proved in many ways.

As the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has said,

“My people will not questioned for what they are forced to do.”

(Khasael)

And Imam Sadiq (a.s.) has mentioned:

“There is nothing that Allah has not made permissible for one who is helpless.”

Imam Reza (a.s.) has been reported in *Wasaelush Shia* to say that his acceptance of heir-apparency of Mamun was under duress and taqayya. When Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) was asked about working for a tyrant king, he replied,

“It is not allowed, except when a person is not able to obtain his livelihood from any other means or if his life is in danger and his life depends on accepting some work from the tyrant. In that case it is allowed. But if he receives any remuneration from the tyrant he must pay Khums from it.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

The second condition when such appointments are valid is when the job involves only peacekeeping and maintaining of law and order. Like posts in armies whose only aim is to defend the borders of Muslim countries, the welfare of believers and the down-trodden people, the restoring of rights to those who were deprived of it. Accepting service under tyrants is allowed in these circumstances provided one has a firm intention of dealing in a just manner. If the intention is to help the Shias specifically, it is more meritorious. Ziyad ibn Abi Salma says that he went to meet Imam Musa Al Kazim (a.s.). Imam (a.s.) asked him if he was employed with the government? He replied, ‘Yes’. Imam (a.s.) asked,

‘Why?’

He replied, “I am benevolent and helpful to the needy so I cannot leave this job. Apart from this I have a family and children and I have no other means of livelihood.” Imam (a.s.) said,

“O Ziyad if I am taken to the top of a high mountain and thrown from it and my body is shattered to pieces. I would prefer it to do some job of these people or even to step inside their threshold. Except for one condition. Do you know what that is?”

Ziyad said, “May my life be sacrificed for you; I don’t know.”

Imam (a.s.) continued,

“Except that I rescue the believers from grief and hardships or liberate an imprisoned believer, or repay the debts of a believer.” After this Imam (a.s.) went on to say, “O Ziyad! If you are employed under a tyrant work for the welfare of your believing brothers so that it will recompense for the sins that you may happen to commit during your service period.”

Fazl Ibn Abdul Rehman says that I wrote a letter to Imam Musa al Kazim (a.s.) asking, "Please permit me to work on a governmental post." Imam (a.s.) replied,

"You are permitted, provided you do not change my religious command or cross the limits laid down by Allah. The compensation of your action will be your fulfilling the needs of your believing brother."

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

Ali Ibn Yaqteen, who was the Prime Minister or Caliph Haroon, wrote to Imam Musa Al Kazim (a.s.): "Please give me permission to resign from this post." Imam (a.s.) replied to him,

"I do not consider it permissible for you to leave this governmental post because in the courts of tyrants there are people through whom Allah removes the difficulties of His loved ones. And they are the ones whom Allah has made immune from the fire of Hell. Hence fear Allah with respect to your brothers."

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

Muhammad bin Ismail Bazee was also a minister in the court of Haroon. He had the honour of meeting three Imams, Imam Musa al Kazim (a.s.), Imam Ali Reza (a.s.) and Imam Jawad (a.s.). The last whom provided his own garment to serve as his shroud. He relates from Imam Reza (a.s.) that he said,

"There are people in the courts of tyrants through whom Allah manifests His proof and they are appointed in specific cities. Allah removes the difficulties of His loved ones through them and by them He brings about the welfare of Muslims. The believers take refuge with them in calamities. The needs of our needy Shias are fulfilled through these very people. And the Almighty Allah through their means imposes the fear and dread of the believers upon the houses of oppressors. These are the true believers who are trust bearers of Allah on this earth. Congratulations to them for their position and post!"

Then Imam (a.s.) asked,

"Wouldn't it be better that at least one of you reach that position?"

Muhammad asked, "May my life be sacrificed for you. How can a person reach such a position?" Imam (a.s.) replied,

"Being with the tyrants, he makes the heart of our Shias happy; that makes us happy. O Muhammad! after you do this you will be considered among those people who have lofty positions."

(Behaarul Anwaar vol.15)

Accepting employment under a tyrant ruler becomes wajib in one condition

For some people it becomes Wajib to accept rulership or a post in government and that is only when one is sure that if he assumes that post he will be able to uproot a great evil. Or he will be able to prevent at least one sinful ritual or system but such a situation is rare because it is based on personal confidence. That is after he assumes authority, he will never commit any sort of injustice or sinful act. That he will never go against justice and the Divine commands. It is obvious that such a proposition is

very difficult. Because there are numerous dangers that lurk behind the facade of governance. It is most difficult to save oneself from them.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) replied to the letter of Abdullah Najjashi the ruler of Ahwaz:

“It has come to my knowledge that you assumed the rulership of Ahwaz. I am happy by news and aggrieved too. Happy because I hope Allah will remove the difficulties and the problems of the Progeny of Muhammad and help them through you. And through you the fire of opposition will cool down on them. I am aggrieved on account of the fears, the least of whom is that you may become a cause of injury or difficulty to our followers and thus be deprived of even the fragrance of Paradise.”

(Makasib Muharrama)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

“One who assumes the leadership of a community will be raised on the Day of Qiyamat in a way that both his hands will be tied to his neck. Then if he had dealt with the people according to Shariah; Allah will free him. But if he had been unjust he would be thrown into Hell. And what an evil resort it is. If a leader of a community does not deal with justice and goodness with the people for each day that he ruled, he would be made to stand at the boundary of Hell for a thousand years. While both his hands would be tied behind his neck. Thus if he had dealt with equity he will be freed if not, he would be thrown into Hell, to a depth of seventy thousand years.”

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“If a person has authority in a particular affair of the people and he deals with justice with them. And the doors of his house are open for those who refer to him and seek his help. And he does not remain aloof from the people. Then the Almighty Allah will keep him safe from dread and fear on the Day of Qiyamat. And make him enter Paradise.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

It must be remembered, however, that this is a vast subject and it is not possible to discuss all the facets. Hence those who wish to study in detail may refer to books of jurisprudence.

Helping the oppressors in other matters

Helping the oppressors or tyrants in matters other than oppression; like to work as his personal assistant, to stitch clothes for him, or build a house or guard his treasury or other property. All these types of jobs can be classified into three categories:

(1) In some cases these jobs pave the way for oppression. For example if the tyrant had usurped a piece of land and orders a mason to build a house on it. Or that cloth which has been obtained forcefully is given to a tailor to stitch a dress out of it. Or a person may be ordered to guard the money exorted from innocent people.

There is no doubt that all such kinds of jobs are Haraam. Because the use of things acquired by illegal means is Haraam by the one who has acquired them or anyone else. That is provided he is aware of their contraband nature.

(2) The second category is of those preoccupations which are not direct acts of oppressions or which do not help in oppressing, but since the one who is involved in them is associated with the tyrants, and the common people consider him to be a part of that oppression; it is Haraam. His presence may encourage the tyrants. Consequently his name is also included in the list of oppressors. He is also counted among those who usurp the rights of people. All these are Haraam according to numerous traditions. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“One who has his name registered in the office of Bani Abbas will be raised on the Day of Qiyamat in the form of a pig.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

In another tradition he says that such a person will be brought in the form of a black pig. Imam (a.s.) has also said,

“Do not help the oppressors in the construction of mosques.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Ibn Abi Yaafur says that I was in the company of Imam Sadiq (a.s.) when one of the Shias came and spoke to Imam (a.s.). He said, “May our lives be sacrificed for you! Some of our people have problems in obtaining livelihood whereas there are vacancies in the establishments of Bani Abbas for construction of buildings and digging of canals. So what is your opinion regarding this?”

Imam (a.s.) replied:

“I don't like to tie even a knot, or the mouth of a water bag or the strap of a purse for them. Even if they were to pay me with Madinah and whatever is in it. I do not like that I help them even as little as the ink at the tip of a pen. Without any doubt, the oppressors will remain standing at the verge of Hell-fire till the time Allah decides about you all.”

Muhammad bin Azaafar says that Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) told my father,

“I have come to know that you deal freely with Abu Ayyub and Abu Rabie. Then what would be your condition when your name will appear in the list of the helpers of tyrants?”

Hearing this command my father became aggrieved. When Imam (a.s.) saw the restlessness of my father he said,

“I have only warned you of that about which the Almighty has warned me.”

My father remained sorrowful for the rest of his life.

(Wasaelush Shia)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says that it is incumbent upon Allah to raise you on the Day of Qiyamat with the same group from which you derived benefits in this world. The Imam (a.s.) has also mentioned the incidents when some of the followers of Hazrat Musa (a.s.) decided to support Firon for worldly benefits and secretly planned to change sides when Musa (a.s.) was about to win. They enrolled as his supporters, but it so happened that when Firon and his soldiers were about to be drowned and these people made a bid to cross to Hazrat Musa's side, the Almighty Allah caused their horses to perish and they also drowned with Firon and his army.

(Wasaelush Shia)

Our beloved Imam (a.s.) has the following advice for us:

“Fear Allah strengthen your faith with an uncomparable taqayya and avoid presenting your needs to the ruler. And if a person is respectful to an irreligious man, Allah will degrade him and will consider him His enemy and leave him on his own. And if he receives any monetary benefit from this man, Allah will remove barakat from it. And if he uses this money to perform Hajj or emancipate slaves, or any other benevolent deed, he will not get any reward for it.”

(al-Kafi)

Ali bin Abi Hamza says that one of my friends was a scribe in the employ of Bani Umayya. One day he requested me to take him to Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.). I took him to Imam (a.s.). He saluted and said, “May my life be sacrificed upon you, I had been in the employ of Bani Umayya as a scribe and have earned a huge amount of wealth without giving any thought to the right or wrong of it. Imam (a.s.) said,

“If people like this had not been in the service of Bani Umayya to write letter for them, collect their wealth for them, fight their enemies and attend their assemblies, they (Bani Ummaya) would not have usurped our rights. And if they had been left alone they would not have able to accumulate any wealth more than what they had.”

The man said, “May I be sacrificed for you, can I attain salvation after what I have done?” Imam (a.s.) said,

“Separate whatever wealth you have earned from them and try to return it to the rightful owners if you know them. Whatever you cannot deliver should be given as charity (sadaqa) on their behalf. So that I can guarantee that Allah will send you to Paradise.”

Upon hearing this, the young man bowed his head thoughtfully for sometime. Then he raised his head and said, “May I be sacrificed on you, I will do as you have ordered.” After this he accompanied me to Kufa and returned all his wealth to the rightful owners as much as it was possible; the rest he gave away as Sadaqa. He even gave up the dress he was wearing. I procured some money for him and bought him a dress and gave him some amount for his expenses. After some months he fell ill and I paid him a visit. I found that he was in a very serious condition. He opened his eyes and told me, “Ali ibn Abi Hamza, by Allah, your Imam (a.s.) has fulfilled his promise.” He died soon after. I supervised his final rites and returned to Madinah to meet Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.). Imam (a.s.) said,

“O Ali! I have fulfilled my promise to your friend.”

I said, “May I be sacrificed upon you! You speak the truth, because my companion testified to it at the time of his death.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Assistance which is not construed to be an encouragement and is not haraam

(3) The third type of help is that which has no Haraam aspect and neither does it serve as an encouragement to the oppressor. It is also not considered as help to the oppressor in common parlance. For example, to hire vehicles or carry the load of permissible goods and eatables etc. Or working in

construction of buildings etc; all these types of actions are not totally Haraam but some elders have mentioned that on the basis of precaution it is necessary to avoid even these actions. Because as we have stated before, by involving oneself in such matters one would be prone to incline towards the oppressors.

Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) commands Safwan Jamal

Safwan bin Mehram Kufi was a very pious companion of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and Imam Musa al Kazim (a.s.). He used to earn his livelihood by hiring out camels. He owned a large number of camels. He says that one day he came to Imam Musa al Kazim (a.s.) who said,

“Safwan every action of yours is meritorious except one.”

“May I be sacrificed for you, what action is that?” He said,

“You hire your camels to Harun al Rashid (l.a.)”

He said, “I don't give my camels for hunting or games but he takes them when he goes for Hajj and I do not serve him myself, I order my servants to accompany them on the journey.”

Imam asked,

“Do they pay you in advance or after their return?”

“After they return”, he replied,

“Don't you carry the hope that they return safe and sound from their journey so that you receive your payment?”

“Yes.”

Imam (a.s.) said,

“One who wishes them to remain alive is like them and one who is connected with them will go to Hell.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Safwan says that when he heard this he sold away all his camels. When Harun heard of this he summoned him and asked the reason for it. He said, “I have become old and weak and unable to take care of the camels, even my slaves are not capable of maintaining them properly.”

Haroon said, “It is not so! I know who has persuaded you to do this. You have done this on the direction Musa Ibne Ja'far (a.s.).”

“What do I have to do with Musa ibne Ja'far?” said Safwan but Haroon was not satisfied and said that if he had not had good relations with Safwan he would have got him killed.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“One who likes the oppressors to continue (to live) likes the disobedience to Allah (to continue) on this earth.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

While explaining the Quranic verse,

“... and do not incline to those who are unjust, lest the fire may touch you.”

Imam (a.s.) says,

“If a person comes to a ruler and wishes for him to live if only for as long as it would take for him to put his hand inside his money bag and give some amount.”

Thus it is apparent that wishing for the life of an oppressor even as less as this is the same as being inclined towards him.

Helping an oppressive person who is not an oppressor by profession

To help a person, who is not always oppressive, but he happens to commit oppression like killing somebody or usurping someone's property, is absolutely Haraam. That is, if one knowingly helps a person who is an oppressor in that particular situation has committed a Haraam action. Rather, it is a Greater Sin. Because oppression is a sin, promised Divine punishment in Quran:

"...Surely We have prepared for the iniquitous a fire, the curtains of which shall encompass them about; and if they cry for water, they shall be given water like molten brass which scald their faces, evil the drink and ill the resting place."

(Surah Kahf 18:29)

Oppressing and helping someone in oppression is one and the same.

As Imam Sadiq (a.s.) has remarked:

"The oppressor, the one who helps an oppressor and the one who is satisfied with it, are all partners in oppression."

(Wasaelush Shia)

It means that all three of them are equally responsible. A similar type of tradition has been narrated from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) who says that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said:

"One who breaks allegiance to the Imam, or raises a standard of misguidance or conceals a piece of knowledge which is obligatory to be imparted or usurps some property or helps an oppressor knowingly; then he has deserted the religion of Islam."

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

On the night of ascension (Meraj) the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) saw the following inscriptions on the door of Hell:

"Allah degrades the one who insults Islam, the one who insults the Holy Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) and the one who helps an oppressor in oppression."

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

In this way the Quranic verses and traditions prove that oppression is a Greater Sin and helping an oppressor is the same. Moreover, one who helps an oppressor has also acted against the Divine commandments of forbidding evil. He is actually a hypocrite because he has in fact ordered an evil and this is one of the characteristics of a hypocrite. As the Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"The hypocritical men and the hypocritical women are all alike; they enjoin evil and forbid good..."

(Surah Tauba 9:67)

Preventing oppression is necessary

If a Muslim sees an oppressor trying to oppress someone and if the conditions of forbidding evil are also present, it becomes obligatory on him to prevent the oppression. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) says:

“Help your Muslim brother whether he is an oppressor or the oppressed one.”

People asked, “O Messenger of Allah! We shall help the oppressed ones but how is it possible to help the oppressor?” He replied,

“Hold both the hands of the oppressor so that he cannot oppress. If you do it, it is as if you have helped him. And such an action is a help to your brother (in faith).”

(Anwaarun Nomaniya)

Helping a person who is not a professional oppressor

Helping such a person is permitted, beyond any doubt but if he will become more audacious and repeats his oppressive behaviour or if he does not repent of the past misdeeds; then it is Haraam to help him. On the basis of the order of forbidding evil it becomes Haraam to help him any other way too. Thus if the order of forbidding evil is not applicable, helping a tyrant in other ways will also be Haraam.

We must not co-operate in sinful deeds

It is also Haraam to help an oppressor whose oppression is not directed to others; but he is unjust to himself. For example to omit prayers and avoid fasting, to drink wine, commit adultery, gambling etc. Every type of sinner is being unjust to himself. Hence helping him in being unjust to himself is also prohibited. One who helps him is his partner in sin. The Almighty Allah has mentioned:

“...help one another in goodness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and oppression, and be careful (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is severe in requiting (evil).”

(Surah Maidah 5:2)

Sin (*ithm*) is limited to the one who commits it and aggression (*udwaan*) affects others too.

All the proofs and arguments that are applicable to the obligation of forbidding evil also apply.

Helping in sins-Two ways

To procure even one of the necessary requisites of a sinful act is Haraam.

For example to sell grapes that they may be used for the manufacture of wine.

On the other hand a person may help in some way but he does not intend that the means provided by him to lead to a sinful activity. That is he sells the grape to a wine-maker not with the intention that wine should be prepared from it.

But since his action will directly contribute to wine-preparation and moreover his refusal to sell grapes will result in the inability to produce wine we can say that there is a direct connection between the selling of grapes and making of wine. In such a condition it is absolutely Haraam.

Helping a sinner in some other way

Is it allowed to help a sinful person, like to lend some money to one who does not pray or an alcoholic man? Sometimes it is very difficult to decide as to what is the proper course of action in such circumstances. Because it has also been emphasised to maintain a distance from lewd people. Thus Ali (a.s.) says:

“The Messenger of Allah has ordered us to be unfriendly with the sinful people.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Hazrat Imam Sadiq (a.s.) rebuked his followers:

“It may happen that in your social circle one of your Shias does evil, and you do not prevent him and neither dissociate with nor hurt him, till he gives up his evil deeds.”

(Tehzeeb)

There are severe traditions regarding certain specific sins. For example:

“One who helps a person who does not pray, with a morsel of food or a piece of cloth, is as if he has murdered seventy Prophets, the first of whom being Adam (a.s.) and the last, Muhammad (s.a.w.s.).”

(Layali Akhbaar)

In another tradition the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

“One who smiles to a person who does not pray, is as if he had demolished the Holy Kaaba seventy times.”

(Layali Akhbaar)

The Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.s.) also says:

“One who helps a person who does not pray, with a drought of water, is as if he has made war upon me.”

(Layali Akhbaar)

Other traditions of this kind are against associating with alcoholics, with those who cut off relationships and the liars. On the other hand we have traditions that emphasise the respecting of a believer’s rights, helping and socialising with the followers of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.), the Sayyads, the neighbours etc.

The latter kinds of traditions are not conditional. For example it is obligatory to do Sileh Rahem with one’s kindered and it is not a necessary condition that the relatives should be pious. We have discussed this matter in the chapter of Sileh Rahem and the rights of parents. Even if they are unbelievers we have to fulfill our duties towards them. In the same way the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says regarding Sayyads:

“Respect my descendants, be kind towards the righteous of them for the sake of Allah and towards the non-righteous for my sake.”

Imam Reza (a.s.) says the following with regard to the devotees of the Progeny of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.):

“Be a friend of the Progeny of Muhammad even if you are a transgressor and befriend their friends even if they are transgressors.”

As far as the rights of neighbours are concerned we are told that if your neighbour is a Muslim he has double rights upon you and if he is an infidel he has the rights of neighbour on you.

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

On the basis of this it is incumbent to befriend the followers of Ahlul Bayt, help them and fulfill their needs even if they are not pious. We must respect the Sayyads and fulfill our rights towards the kindered even if they are sinners.

After studying both types of traditions it is difficult to decide our course of action in such circumstances. Hence we must try to fulfill both the duties or prefer the more important of the two.

For example when one is faced with a situation when he is keeping an obligatory fast and a child is drowning in a pond. If he jumps into the pool his head will submerge and the fast will become invalid, but since it is more important to save a human life it becomes Wajib for him to jump into the pool. According to Shariat breaking a fast is a lesser evil than allowing the death of a human. A fast can be made up later but a life will perish forever. Hence he must jump and save the child. By doing this he would not become liable for the punishment of breaking a Wajib fast. On the other hand he will be deserving of Divine reward for saving a human life.

Preventing others from evil is most important

From the above discussion we conclude that enjoining good and forbidding evil are the Divine commands, which are obligatory to be followed. They are of so much importance that in case of their clashing with other duties; they are to be preferred. For example if the mother, father, son or some relative is doing something sinful, like not praying; and if kindness is withheld from them or they are not helped in their needs they will leave the sin; then under these circumstances it becomes Wajib according to the principles of forbidding evil to withhold kindness and help from them.

Another example can be mentioned of a Sayyad who is addicted to wine. If we stop being kind to him he will leave wine. Similar is the case of the neighbour and the follower of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). If withholding kindness and help will result in the prevention of sins then it becomes Wajib to do so but if it is not going to make any difference it is meaningless to withhold kindness and help. For these were withheld only that it may force the sinners to reform. Otherwise there is no point in employing these retaliatory tactics. Thus if one's parents and relatives are not in the habit of ritual prayers and dissociating with them will not change their behaviour; then it is Haraam to dissociate with them or disobey them.

We must discriminate between different ranks and positions

We must remember that Nahy Anil Munkar (Forbidding evil) is more important than the rights of relatives, Sayyads and neighbours. Hence we should first try to fulfill the duty of Forbidding evil even if it necessitates the non-fulfillment of latter duties but there should be scope of improvement among the sinners. If it is not so, then it is not required to dissociate with them or withhold kindness etc. from them.

And as far as possible we should try the easiest option. Hence if it is possible to reform a sinner through love and help we must try it before we can change to the more difficult method. For example a son who is not steadfast in prayers. If the father is to exhort him gently, he has more

chances of improvement. Therefore this gentle option must be tried before the ultimate cure. Finally, if that is also not effective then there is no point in withholding kindness or dissociating with him.

In other words, when there is no connection between withholding kindness and the giving up of sins, we find that there is no prohibition in being kind. Moreover, in some conditions it becomes incumbent and its omission a Haraam act.

The Thirtieth Greater Sin: NOT HELPING THE OPPRESSED

The thirtieth sin, which is mentioned as a Greater sin, is ‘not helping the oppressed people’ and ‘warding off oppression from them’. In the tradition of Amash Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“...and not helping the oppressed (is a greater sin).”

Actually the defence of the oppressed is helping them from evils; and not performing such a task is shirking a great duty which Allah has made incumbent upon us.

Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) says:

“If a person due to some difficulty takes refuge with his Muslim brother but in spite of being capable of helping him does not do so then he has for his own self cut off the Divine help.”

(Al Kafi)

It means Allah, who is the helper of believers, does not help this person and leaves him on his own.

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) has mentioned that,

“A believer who in spite of being financially capable does not help another believer will be degraded by Allah in this world as well as the Hereafter.”

Similarly Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says:

“None of you should go to a place where a tyrant ruler is oppressing, and killing innocent people, if you are not capable of helping the oppressed. Because in event of a believer being present in such a place it would be his religious duty to help his believing brothers. But if he is not present at that place the obligation will not exist.”

(Safinatul Behaar)

Umroo bin Qays says that, “My cousin and I went to meet Imam Husain (a.s.) when he was surrounded by the army of Yazid (l.a.). Imam (a.s.) conversed with us briefly and then asked,

“Would you like to help me?”

I replied, ‘I have a family to look after, besides I also have some trusts of some people with me. I don’t know what my end would be and I don’t want that the property of those people, which I have as trust should be destroyed.’ My cousin also offered the same explanation.”

Imam Husain (a.s.) said,

“If you cannot offer your assistance to me you must go far away from this desert so that you may not be able to hear my plaintive cry for help. Because if anyone is to hear our cry for help and does not respond, it would be incumbent upon Allah to throw him in the fire (Hell).”

(Safinatul Behaar).

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“A Jewish scholar was punished with fire maces in his grave with such severity that the flames leapt upon from inside. This was because he had prayed without Wuzu and once he was passing by an oppressed person who called for help but he did not respond.”

(Safinatul Behaar)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

“It is necessary to help a believer whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed one. If he is an oppressor he should be restrained from oppression if he is oppressed he should be helped in obtaining his rights. He should not be deserted and left on his own.”

(Darus Salaam)

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“He is not a believer who inspite of being capable avoids helping his brother in need. Allah also leaves him on his own and does not help him in this world nor the Hereafter.”

(Behaarul Anwaar)

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) says:

“A person before whom the defects of his Muslim brother are mentioned; and he does not try to remove those defects inspite of being able to do also; then Allah will expose (his defects) in this world as well as the Hereafter.”

From the above tradition and other similar narrations it seems that oppression is not confined to physical harm or difficulty. It is also with regard to the injury to one’s honour and respect. Because the honour of a believer is as precious as his life and wealth. Defiling the honour of a believer is also Haraam like usurping his wealth or taking his life. The traditions emphasise on this aspect and as it is necessary to defend the life and property of a believer it is also incumbent to protect his honour and respect. It is Wajib to assist him in defending his honour.

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“If a person tells something (misleading) to a believer by which he intends to make him an evil man and due to this his respect and shame will be destroyed and he will be degraded in the eyes of common people. People will not trust him anymore nor respect him. Then such a person is deprived from the Guardianship of Allah and left for the Shaitan who also refuses to own him.”

(Al Kafi)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) says:

“If a person hears of the defects of his believing brother in an assembly and tries to defend him, Allah closes a thousand doors of evil from him in the world and the Hereafter. But if inspite of being capable he does not refrain the one who is speaking about the defects of a believer; his sin will be equal to that of seventy back-biters.”

(Makasib)

Shaykh Ansari says that this sin is equated to that of seventy backbiters probably for the reason that if the one who is mentioning the defects is not restrained he may repeat this act with more audacity. The Shaykh further says that preventing the backbiter is not sufficient but one should also endeavour to clear the believer from all such accusations and defects. For example if the defects pertain to some worldly matter he should say, “After all he has not committed a sin.” If the defects are with regard to some religious obligation he should try to somehow prove that the accusation is false. As an example, if a believer is said to have omitted prayers one can defend him by suggesting that may be he had forgotten it. If a believer is accused to be an alcoholic one can suggest that he must have been seen

drinking something else or as a last resort one can say, “He is after all not a masoom (infallible). A man is prone to sin sometimes, so instead of backbiting about him you should try to reform him and help him in his difficulties.”

Thus one should make every effort to defend his believing brother from such dishonour and the details shall be discussed in the chapter of backbiting.

It is not necessary that only those who request for help should be assisted

We should know that helping an oppressed does not become Wajib only when they request for help. Every person who is capable of removing difficulties of a believer must do so and if the needy person has entreated for assistance it becomes all the more important. As the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) says,

“One who hears the entreaty of a man, O Muslims! Come for my help.” and does not assist him, is not a Muslim.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“If a person requests his Muslim brother to help him and the latter does not do so inspite of being capable enough; the Almighty Allah installs a huge snake from (the snakes of) Hell on his grave so that it continue to bite him.”

(Mustadrak)

In another tradition we have that such a person will continue to receive this punishment till Qiyamat even if he had been pardoned (for other sins). Moreover, Imam (a.s.) also said,

“No person refrains from helping and pleasing his Muslim brother unless there is no personal benefit in it.” (i.e. his helping becomes sinful instead of rewarding).”

There are many traditions of this type from the Holy Imams (a.s.). Imam Sajjad (a.s.) says:

“The sin which results in the descending of calamities is when one does not respond to the call for help of the helpless people.”

(Maani al Akhbaar)

Then the Imam (a.s.) invocated Allah saying,

“O Allah! I plead for forgiveness for the time when someone is oppressed in my presence and I do not help him. I seek refuge in you for not helping an oppressed and a needy person.”

(Saheefa-e-Sajjadia)

Traditions on this subject are numerous and widespread. Let be content with the ones we have discussed.

Helping the oppressed is not only for believers

Helping the oppressed is Wajib. This does not mean that it is Wajib only to help the oppressed believers. The commands of helping the oppressed in the light of Quran and traditions are only conditional as far as the capability of the helper is concerned but even if the oppressed people are not Shias,

they belong to other sects of Muslims, it is still Wajib to help him. Even if a non-offensive infidel is being oppressed, the command of enjoining good and forbidding evil dictates that he should be helped and evil must be eradicated. There is an incident in *Muntahiul Aamaal* that Mansur Dawaniqi was in Mecca when an expensive diamond was brought to him. It was for sale. When Mansur saw the diamond he recognised it; that it had belonged to Hisham bin Abdul Malik and it should have been surrendered to him (Mansur). Since Muhammad a son of Hisham was still alive he must have brought it for sale. So he ordered his guards to close all the doors of the Holy Mosque after morning prayers the next day allow the people to leave from a single door after scrutinizing everyone who leaves the mosque. When Muhammad bin Hisham is found he should be arrested and brought to him.

When the next day after the morning congregational prayers all the doors were shut and it was announced that people should leave from one particular exit, Muhammad bin Hisham realised that it was a plot to arrest him. He became fearful and looked here and there in confusion and worry. He did not know what to do. Just then Muhammad bin Zaid bin Ali bin Al Husain (a.s.) came towards him and asked, “Who are you? And why are you so frightened?”

“If I reveal my identity, would my life be safe?”

“Yes!” he replied, “I take an oath to remove this danger from you.”

“I am Muhammad, the son of Hisham ibne Abdul Malik, Now tell who you are?”

“I am Muhammad ibne Zaid bin Ali bin Al Husain (a.s.) and certainly your great grandfather Marwan had killed my father unjustly, but do not worry your life is safe. Taking your life will not avenge the innocent blood of my father and you had not killed my father yourself. Now I will try my best to save you from this danger. I have thought of a way out of this. I want you to co-operate with me and promise me that you will be absolutely fearless and repose your trust in me.”

Thus, Muhammad bin Zaid covered the head and face of Muhammad ibn Hisham with his own robe and pulled him towards the exit beating him at every step. When they reached the exit he told the guard loudly, “This wretched man is a camel driver from Kufa. He had hired a camel to me but it ran away and he gave it to someone else. I also have two just witnesses to support my claim. You send your deputies with me and I will take him to the Qazi for judgement. Rabi, the chiefs guard ordered two of his deputies to accompany them and they came out of the Holy Mosque together. When they had walked for some distance Muhammad ibn Zayd told Muhammad bin Hisham, “There is still time for you to repent and promise to return my money, I will not trouble these guards and the Qazi if you assure me.”

Muhammad bin Hisham picked up the cue and said, “O son of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) I promise to do as you say.”

Muhammad bin Zayd told the guards that since the fellow has repented there was no need for them to take more trouble. The guards left them. Muhammad bin Hisham took off the robe from his face and kissed the face

and head of Muhammad bin Zayd and said, “Allah the Almighty knew well where to put his message that he appointed the prophet from your family.”

Then he took out an expensive diamond from his pocket and requested Muhammad bin Zayd to accept it as a reward for saving his life but Muhammad bin Zayd declined saying, “I belong to a family that does not accept anything in return of a good deed. When I had condoned the murder of my father what value this diamond has for me? I cannot take it.”

The worshipper sinks in the ground

Shaykh Tusi has related from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that, “There was an old man of Bani Israel. He was praying when he saw that two children had caught a fowl and were pulling its feather. The fowl was shrieking in pain but he remained engrossed in prayers and did not help the poor bird by having it released from the clutches of the naughty children. So the Almighty ordered the earth to swallow this man and sucked him to the lowest depths.”

The worldly and the heavenly rewards for those who help the believers

A large number of traditions have reached us which emphasise the necessity of helping and assisting the believer and the rewards that are earned by those who do so. Let us study some of these traditions:

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

“One who responds to the entreaties of his believing brother in difficulties and makes him glad and helps him and fulfills his needs; then seventy two bounties become incumbent for him from Allah. One of these bounties are given to him in this world so that it can solve his worldly problems and the other seventy one are stored for him to remove the dread and difficulties of the Hereafter.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

He (a.s.) has also said:

“If a person tries to fulfill the need of a believer and he completes it, the Almighty Allah writes in the scroll of deeds the rewards of a Hajj and Umra and Ihtikaaf of two months in Masjidul Haraam and fasts of two months. But if the need is not completely fulfilled the reward of one Hajj and Umra is written.”

(Al Amr bil Ma’roof)

Imam (a.s.) has also mentioned that it was revealed upon Hazrat Dawood (a.s.) that,

“When one good deed of one of my servants reaches me I shall grant him Paradise.”

Dawood (a.s.) asked, “O my Lord what deed is that?”

“Removing sorrow and difficulties of a believer, even if it is equal to a date!”

Dawood (a.s.) said, “It is only You O Allah! Who is of such greatness that once a person recognises you, he must never despair of your Mercy.”

It is quoted from Maimoon bin Mehram in the book ‘*Faqih*’ that, “I was sitting in the assembly of Imam Hasan (a.s.) when a person entered and said,

‘O son of the Messenger of Allah. I am indebted to such and such person and now he wants to imprison me.’

Imam (a.s.) said,

‘I do not have any money to repay your debt.’

He said, ‘Maybe you can speak to him so that he will not put me in prison.’

Imam (a.s.) arose and put on his shoes. I said, ‘O son of the Messenger (s.a.w.s.) did you forget that you are in Ihtikaaf and cannot go out of the mosque?’

Imam (a.s.) said,

‘I have not forgotten, but I have heard my father say that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) had said, “One who tries to fulfill the needs of his believing brother is as if he has for 9000 years fasted during the days and prayed during the nights.”’

Letter of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) to the ruler of Ahwaz

When Najjashi assumed the rulership of Ahwaz there was a person in his service who requested Imam (a.s.) that, “I owe certain amount to the ruler and he is a Shia, if you feel proper, please write to him regarding this matter.”

Imam (a.s.) wrote:

“In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful. Please your brother so that Allah may please you.”

(Usool al-Kafi)

The narrator says that when the person went to Najjashi, he was busy in some official matter. When he became free he handed him the letter saying that it was from Imam (a.s.). He kissed the letter and touched it to his eyes and asked, “What is the matter?” He told him that he owed to him some taxes. “How much?” he asked, “Ten thousand Dirhams,” he replied. He called his accountant and told him to note down his debt as paid and also told him to close his account in the register. Then he went further and said that for the following year too this amount of taxes should be marked as paid. Then he turned towards him and asked, “Have I made you happy?”

“Yes!” replied the man.

Then he called for a horse, and a slave brought it. He ordered for a dress and gave to the man. At each step he kept asking, “Have I made you happy? Have I made you happy? The man kept replying “Yes! Yes! May I be sacrificed for you, Yes!” At last he told him to take even the carpet on which he was sitting. Because, he said, “It was on this carpet that you handed me this letter of my Master (a.s.), and if you have any other need, tell me.” The man thanked him profusely, returned to Imam (a.s.) and related the details. The Imam (a.s.) was extremely pleased at the behaviour of Najjashi. The man asked, “O my Master are you pleased with Najjashi’s response?”

Imam (a.s.) replied,

“By Allah! Najjashi has also pleased Allah, His Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and his Progeny.”

Yaqteen the father of Ali relates that one of the accountants of Yahya bin Khalid was appointed to collect tax from their area. Yaqteen says, "At that time I was owing a considerable amount of tax and if all the tax had to be cleared I would have had to sell off all my property. Some people suggested that he was a Shia, but I was too fearful to approach him in case he turned out to be a non-Shia and that he would force me to part with all my wealth, as I was a follower of Ali (a.s.). So I decided to run away from that place and headed for Mecca. After completing pilgrimage I decided to visit Madinah and presented myself before Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and told him. 'Such and such person has been appointed as a tax collector but I was too scared to approach him for the fear that he may not be one of you adherents.' Imam (a.s.) told me that there was no cause for me to be worried and he wrote a brief note;

"In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful, there are many people in His shade whose guardians are only those who remove the grief and difficulties of their brothers or give them opportunity or do some good to them if it is as less as half a dried date and this person is your brother."

Imam (a.s.) put his seal at the end and handed me the note saying, 'Give this to him.' When I returned to my native town and went to his door, I said, 'I have been sent by Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.)' He came running to the door barefooted. When he saw me, he saluted me and kissed my forehead and asked if his master has sent me. I replied in the affirmative and he said, 'If this is so, even my life is at your disposal.' He held my hands and implored me to tell him in what condition Imam (a.s.) was when I had departed. I told him that Imam (a.s.) was well. 'By Allah? Yes, By Allah?' he asked this three times and after that I handed him the hand-written note of Imam (a.s.). He kissed it and touched it to his eyes. Then he asked me what I wanted from him. I told him that I owed several thousand dirhams in taxes and I would spend my whole life in paying them. He called for my file and condoned the taxes payable by me and gave me a receipt. After this he called for his money chest and gave half of the money. Then he called for his horses and distributed them equally between us. After this he sent for his clothes and distributed them in the same way. When he had divided all his belongings and given me half he said 'O Brother! Have I pleased you?' Yes, I replied 'By Allah!'

When it was the time of Hajj I said to myself that I could never repay his kindness except for that which is most liked by Allah and His Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). So I decided to go for Hajj in order that I may pray for him and after Hajj meet Imam (a.s.) and inform him of the kindness and request him also to pray for this noble soul. When I met Imam (a.s.) after Hajj he seemed very pleased and asked,

"O Yaqteen how did that person behave with you?"

When I described his goodness the face of Imam (a.s.) beamed with happiness. I asked whether Imam (a.s.) was pleased with his actions? (so that Allah may please the noble man). Imam (a.s.) replied:

"By Allah he has pleased my ancestors! By Allah he has pleased Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and he has pleased the Almighty Allah at the High Heaven."

Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) and Ali Ibne Yaqteen

Ibrahim Jamaal wanted to meet Ali ibne Yaqteen, the Prime Minister of Haroon the Caliph, but he was not granted an audience. The same year Ali ibne Yaqteen was honoured by Hajj and later went to Madinah and decided to meet Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) but Imam (a.s.) did not permit him to enter. Again the next day he presented himself and upon the refusal of Imam (a.s.) asked as to what sin he had committed that Imam (a.s.) did not want to meet him. Imam (a.s.) said that since he had refused to meet his brother, the Almighty Allah would not allow his efforts to succeed. Till the time Ibrahim Jamaal does not forgives. Ali ibn Yaqteen said that since he was in Madinah and Ibrahim Jamaal in Kufa how was it possible to obtain his forgiveness at that moment?

Imam (a.s.) said,

“When it is dark, go alone to, and do not let anyone know it. You will find a thoroughbred horse there. Mount that horse.”

Ali ibne Yaqteen did as instructed and in a short time found himself at the door of Ibrahim Jamaal. Knocked at the door and announced “I am Ali ibne Yaqteen.” Ibrahim Jamaal said from inside, “What do I have to do with Ali ibne Yaqteen?”

Ali ibne Yaqteen said that he had some urgent work with him and begged for the permission to enter. When he was allowed inside he said, “My Master has refused to see me till you forgive.”

Ibrahim said, “May Allah forgive you.”

Ali ibne Yaqteen fell down and implored him to put his foot on his (Ali’s) face. Ibrahim did not agree. Ali ibne Yaqteen again implored him in the Name of Allah. Ibrahim complied with his request. Then Ali ibne Yaqteen said, “O Allah be a witness” and mounted the horse again. Within a few minutes he found himself at the door of Imam (a.s.). He knocked and Imam (a.s.) permitted him to enter.

By these traditions we can judge the importance of helping our believing brothers. In spite of the fact that Ali ibne Yaqteen was one of the closest companions of Imam (a.s.) and has assumed the ministership by the order of Imam (a.s.). He was also held in such high esteem that on the day of Eid of sacrifice Imam (a.s.) said,

“I did not recall anyone else’s name. I just prayed for Ali ibne Yaqteen!”

In spite of such an honourable position he was not able to satisfy Imam (a.s.) till he had satisfied his believing brother. We must exercise utmost caution in our daily lives that we may not cause any believer’s rights to be trespassed; which may cause the anger of Allah and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.).

His own needs are fulfilled

It must be known that one who strives to fulfill the needs of a believing brother or wards off oppression from an oppressed soul, apart from the rewards of the Hereafter he is also bestowed honour in this world and his own needs are fulfilled. We have many traditions that prove this, however we shall mention only one such incident.

The esteemed scholar, Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Khalid Al Barqi who was present in the life time of Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) and also during the Minor Occultation, says in his book *Mahasin*:

I was under the patronage of the tax collector of the city of Pahencha Kootkeen. His name was Abul Hasan Madarani. He had given me a yearly endowment, which I used to collect as tax from an area at Kashaan but he was so busy that he became inattentive towards me and the demand of my own taxes was made upon me. I was much worried when one day a noble and pious man came to me. He was very weak and it seemed as if he had no blood in his body. He was like a walking corpse. He told me, “O Abu Abdillah! There is a relation of common faith and purity between you and me and the relation of devotion to the Pure Imams (a.s.). Please do something for me for the sake of pleasing Allah and for the sake of the love of Saadaat.” I asked him as to what he wished? He said, “People have falsely spread the rumour that I have given some secret information against Kootani to the Sultan. Hence, they have confiscated all my property.”

I promised to help him out and he went away. I thought to myself that if I approached the collector with two requests at the same time I would not be able to achieve them both. On the other hand if I presented the problem of only the old man then what of my own difficulty? I went inside my library and was in deep thought when a tradition of Imam Sadiq (a.s.) came to my mind. It was to the effect that if a person strives, sincerely, to solve the difficulty of a believer, his own difficulty is solved by Allah.” I got up at once and went to Abul Hasan Madarani. When I entered I saw that he was sitting on his chair with a pillow to rest his back and he held a stick in his hand. He told me to sit. At that very moment a Quranic verse came to my mind and I recited it loudly:

“And seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode, and do not neglect your portion of this world, and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek to make mischief in the land, surely Allah does not love the mischief-makers.”

(Surah Qasas 28:77)

Abul Hasan said that since I have recited this verse I must be in some need? He told me to mention it clearly. I said that people have spread false rumours against such and such person. He asked me if he was a Shia and if he was acquainted with him. I said, “Yes”! He called for the register and I saw that a large property had been seized from the old man. Abul Hasan ordered all the seized property to be restored to its owner. He also told his servants to give him a Mule and a new dress and accompany him to his family with respect. After this he said, “O Abu Abdillah you have corrected my mistake.” Then he picked up a slip of paper and wrote an order transferring the rights of the particular piece of land in my name. Again he waited for sometime then ordered the old man to be paid 10,000 dirhams extra, saying, “Because he had guided us to the correct way!”

I requested him to let me kiss his hands but he said that if I kissed his hands he would kiss my feet and said that he did not wish to waste away his

good deed. It was nothing much for him as he was holding the rope of the Progeny of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.).

The Thirty First Greater Sin: SORCERY

The thirty-first sin that is clearly stated to be a Greater Sin is sorcery. A tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has been recorded in *Wasaelush Shia* in which the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) has mentioned that Magic is a Greater Sin. The *Sahih* of Abdul Azeem (r.a) has also mentioned a tradition from Imam Jawad (a.s.) who has related through his fore-fathers from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said to the effect, *“Sorcery is a Greater Sin because the Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran:*

“And they followed what the shaitans chanted of sorcery in the reign of Sulaiman, and Sulaiman was not an unbeliever, but the shaitans disbelieved, they taught men sorcery and that was sent down to the two angels at Babel, Harut and Marut, Yet these two taught no man until they had said, “Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever.” Even then men learnt from these two, magic by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it anyone except with Allah’s permission, and they learnt what harmed them and did not profit them, and certainly they know that he who brought it should have no share of good in the hereafter and evil was the price for which they sold their souls; had they but known this.”

(Surah Baqarah 2:102)

According to *Tafseer Al-Mizan* this ayat shows that sorcery was prevalent among the Jews for a long time; and they used to ascribe it to with Hazrat Sulaiman (a.s.). They believed that Hazrat Sulaiman (a.s.) had mastered the techniques of controlling the angels, jinns and wild animals through magic, and some of these alleged methods had reached them. They also implicated the two angels Harut and Marut for other magical rites. Therefore, the Holy Quran has denounced their belief regarding Hazrat Sulaiman (a.s.) because sorcery is the method of misusing the power of human spirit in order to perform extraordinary acts. It is against the Divine law because it negates the supremacy of Allah. Since Hazrat Sulaiman (a.s.) was a Prophet and undoubtedly infallible, he cannot be blamed for such a violation of Divine Command. Therefore to ascribe sorcery to Hazrat Sulaiman (a.s.) was absolutely wrong. As the Almighty says,

“...and Sulaiman was not an unbeliever, but the shaitans disbelieved, they taught man sorcery...”

(Surah Baqarah 2:102)

Regarding Harut and Marut the Holy Quran says:

“...and that was sent down to the angels at Babel, Harut and Marut, yet these two taught no man until they had said, “Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever.” Even then men learnt from these two, magic by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it anyone except with Allah’s permission, and they learnt what harmed them and did not profit them...”

(Surah Baqarah 2:102)

We should however know that some of the commentaries of the Holy Quran by Ahle Sunnat have recorded some lewd traditions on this subject; and their lewdness itself proves their forged nature. For example they say that the Jinns stole the ring of Hazrat Sulaiman (a.s.) and with the help of its

power ruled for forty days from his throne and during this period the satans spread the practice of sorcery among the masses. They have also written that Harut and Marut were two angels and when they became seized with sensuality, they drank wine and murdered a man; later they committed adultery with a woman. The woman then ascended to the heavens; and the star Zahra on the sky is that same woman.

This is a false allegation because during his conversation on this subject with Mamoon, as mentioned in *Oyoon-e-Akhbaare Reza*, Imam Reza (a.s.) says that Harut and Marut were two angels who had taught people the method of nullifying the magic of the sorcerers so as to enable them to prevent the effect of magical rites practiced by the magicians. They did not teach any magical spell before warning them that this was a Divine test and they must not fall prey to infidelity but some people became disbelievers by misusing the spells to cause discord between husband and wife, though the proper utility of the spell was obstructing black magic.

Even the Shia scholars differ in the explanation of this verse. *Tafseer Majmaul Bayan* has also recorded different views. Some thinkers have opined that this is one of the Divine secrets and they further offer the exegesis that Harut and Marut signify the intellect and soul of man. These two entities changed their abstract form and assumed a physical body. Therefore, they were examined in their material life. They became engrossed in satisfying their carnal desires. Consequently they attached themselves solely to the material world and continued to worship their desires. In this way they committed gross injustice upon themselves and deprived themselves from eternal bounties. They also made themselves liable for a terrible punishment. Such traditions are unacceptable from their apparent import and if they are reported to have been uttered by the infallibles they should be understood in the light of their sayings only.

The honourable scholar Shaykh Sadooq says that Zahra and Suhail are two types of marine animals who are referred to in traditions by the name of Harut and Marut. They are not two stars as the Ahle Sunnat believe. Moreover, the Quranic ayat mentioned above is clear that magic is equivalent to disbelief and the sorcerer will not receive any benefit on the Day of Qiyamat.

As the Holy Quran says,

“And if they had believed and guarded themselves (against evil), reward from Allah would certainly have been better; had they but known (this).”

(Surah Baqarah 2:103)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says,

“Three kinds of people will not enter Paradise, habitual alcoholics, habitual sorcerers and those who severe relationships.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says,

“The magician will enter hell like the disbeliever.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Imam (a.s.) also says,

“If one learns magic, whether a little bit or more, he has become an infidel. And his end result is that he does not receive Divine Mercy. His punishment is that he be killed except if he repents.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says that a woman came to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and said,

“My husband is very severe and misbehaves with me, so I have prepared something for him that he may become kind to me.” (I.e. I have prepared a magical potion to change his attitude).

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said,

“Curse be upon you! You have darkened the realms of the seas and the lands, the angels of the earth and the heavens curse you.”

After going from there the woman began to fast during the days and pray during the night and she trimmed her hair and started wearing a leather garment. When the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) learnt of this he remarked that her actions would not be accepted.

(Kitab Faqih)

Muhaddith Faid mentions this hadith and comment that her apparent actions will not be accepted; in the sense that she will get exemption from the death penalty. Even if we suppose that her actions will be accepted but then too it is necessary for her to obtain forgiveness from her husband whom she had done a serious injustice. Only then we can hope for the acceptance of her good actions. Secondly it can be another way of saying that it is such a great sin that even severe penance will not compensate for the punishment because sorcery causes one to be deprived of Divine Mercy. Hence this extra worship will not be able to bring the person near Allah.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

“If a person goes to a magician a divine or liar and testifies to the truth of whatever he says, he becomes an infidel according to all the books revealed by Allah.”

(Safinatul Behaar)

Sorcery is punishable by death

A Muslim who indulges in magic and does not repent for it is liable to be killed. If however an infidel is guilty of sorcery he must not be killed. He should be punished according to the decree of a just jurist (Qazi) and his penalty is at the discretion of Qazi.

According to a tradition of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.):

“The sorcerer must be given a single blow of the sword on his head.”

(Al Kafi)

“If two just witnesses testify, it is permissible to kill him.”

(Tahzeeb)

Imam (a.s.) also said, that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) ordered,

“The Muslim sorcerer must be killed and the infidel magician must not be.”

Someone asked, “O Messenger of Allah, why shouldn’t the disbelieving sorcerer be killed too?”

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) replied,

“Because disbelief is a more serious sin than magic; and sorcery and polytheism are the same.”

It means that when a non-offensive infidel is not sentenced to death for his infidelity he cannot be killed for the sin of practising magic because infidelity is greater than sorcery. Whereas the Muslim magician is killed because he has committed polytheism.

What is sorcery?

The late Sayyad writes in *Wasila an Najaat* that magic means the writing and reciting of some special spells and charms and the burning of particular objects so that its smoke can be used for some extraordinary effects. Making a picture and blowing, or tying up knots, or buying special objects in particular places so that the person for whom the magic is intended may be affected physically or mentally may also serve the purpose. That is if he is reported lost he can be located by it or he can be put to sleep or made unconscious. It can also be used for creating love or discord between two people; like husband and wife etc.

In the exegesis *Tafseer al Mizan* very interesting points are mentioned under the explanation of the 104th verse of Surah Baqarah. We shall present them for the benefit or our readers.

A philosophical discussion

It is common knowledge that many unusual events do take place which are outside the frame of the established natural system. It is difficult to find someone who has not seen, or heard about some abnormal or seemingly supernatural events but we find after scrutiny that most of them are not enigmatic and mysterious at all; rather they rise from normal and natural causes. Often they result from practice and training, for example, eating poison, lifting heavy load, walking or dancing on a tight rope etc. Some are based on natural causes that are not known to the general public, for example, a man walks into flaming fire without coming to any harm, (he applies some chemicals like talc to his body); or sends a sheet of blank paper and the addressee understands the message it contains. (He writes with an invisible ink that becomes visible if heated by fire or treated with some chemicals). A third set depends on the sleight of hand like juggler. All these seemingly abnormal feats actually emanate from the normal causes, although the causes remain hidden from a common man's eyes; they may even be beyond his ability.

Yet there are other strange happenings that cannot be attributed to any normal physical cause. For example, giving information of the unseen, and particularly foretelling the future events; the charms for love and hate, the harmful or beneficial spells affecting man's virility; hypnotism; mesmerism; spiritualism; telekinesis and so on. It is known that such events do take place from time to time; we have seen some demonstrations ourselves; and similar reports were brought to us by reliable sources. Today there are many people in India, Iran and the western countries, who demonstrate such extraordinary feats and their authenticity is beyond doubt.

It appears from close investigation of their methods and regimen that these feats spring from the will power of the doer, and from his unshakable confidence in effectiveness of his work. The will power emanates from the confidence, which in its turn arises from the knowledge. Sometimes the will acts independently and sometimes it needs some help; for example, writing a certain charm with a certain ink in a certain place at a certain time (for the amulets of love or hate); or fixing a mirror before a certain child (in the seances of spiritualism); or chanting a certain incantation a certain number of times, and so on and so forth. When the conditions are fulfilled the will is strengthened to bring the desired effect into being. When the knowledge becomes one with the knower, it influences his senses to such an extent that he sees the end product, that is, the desired effect, with his eyes. You may verify this statement yourself. Just tell yourself that a certain person is present before you and that you are looking at him; then put your imagination to work to bring his form before your eyes; this should be raised to such a high level of certainty that you become oblivious of all contrary thoughts and ideas and then you will actually see him standing before you- as you had imagined. Many a doctor who, acting on this principle, restored to health his incurable patients- simply by creating in them the confidence that they would soon get their health back.

Taking this principle a step further, if someone's will power is extraordinarily strong, it might create an impression on other's psyche too- as it had created on his own self in the foregoing example. That impression might, or might not, depend on fulfillment of some conditions, as indicated earlier.

From the above discourse, we may deduce the following three principles:

FIRST: The appearance of such extraordinary events depends on the firm "knowledge" and strong conviction of the doer but it is irrelevant whether that "knowledge" is true to the fact or not. That explains why the conjurations of the priests of the sun god and the moon-goddess etc. seemed to work although they believed that the heavenly bodies had souls, which they claimed to bring under by their magic. Probably the same applies to the angels and satans whose names are "discovered" and invoked by many practitioners of the magic art. The same is true for spiritualism and its seance and spirit communication- and the spiritualist belief that the spirits attend their sittings. Utmost that may be claimed regarding those sessions, is that the spirit appears in their imagination or, let us say, before their senses- and this "perception" emanates from their firm belief in their art but it can never be said that the spirit actually presents itself at the sittings- otherwise all the participants in the sitting should have perceived its presence, because every one of them has the same senses as the medium has.

But accepting this principle, we may solve many problems related to the seance and spirit communication. For example:

Sometimes the spirit of living man is called to present itself at a seance, and supposedly it comes there but at that very moment, that man is busy attending to his affairs and he never feels his spirit leaving him even for an instant. The question is: As a man has only one spirit, how was it possible that his spirit presented itself to that seance without his being aware of it?

The spirit is an immaterial essence which has no relation whatsoever with space and time. How can it present itself at a certain place at a certain time?

Why is it that often a single spirit appears before different mediums in different forms?

Why is it that sometimes when the spirits are called to a seance, they tell lies and give wrong answers? And why do the various spirits sometimes contradict each other?

All these problems will be solved if the principle is accepted that it is not any spirit that presents itself to the seance; it is only the firm belief and conviction of the spiritualists and his medium that is at work, making the medium see, hear and feel the spirit. It is all a play of his imagination and will; and nothing more.

SECOND: Some of the people, holding the strong and effective will-power, rely on their own power and their own being, in bringing about the desired effect, the intended super-natural events. Such events are bound to be limited in strength, confined in their scope- in their own imagination as well as in reality.

On the other side, there are some persons, like the Prophets and the friends of Allah who, in spite of their most effective will-power, totally rely on their Lord. They truly worship Him and have full trust in Him. They do not wish anything but from their Lord, and by His permission. Theirs is a pure and clear will, untainted by any personal feeling. It does not depend except on Allah. This is a Divine Will- not limited in anyway, nor restricted in any manner.

The super-natural events that are brought into being by the first group may be of many kinds; If they are based on enquiry of, or help from, a jinn or a spirit etc. then it is called "*al-Kihanah*" (divination, sooth-saying, fortune-telling); and if it comes about by means of a charm, amulet, talisman or other such instruments or potions, then it is called magic.

The super-natural events shown by the prophets and saints are also of various kinds. If it is produced as a challenge, in order to prove the truth of the claim of prophethood, then it is called miracle; and if it is not offered as a challenge, then it is named "*al-Karamah*" which literally means nobility, mark of honour; and in Islamic terminology is used for a miraculous event shown without a challenge; and if it happens as a result of the prayer to Allah, then it is called, "answer to the prayer."

THIRD: As the whole thing depends on the will power of the doer, its strength varies according to the strength (or weakness) of the will. That is why some of them may nullify the others, as, for example, the miracle annihilates the sorcery. Also, a weak agent fails to impose his will on a stronger psyche, as is often seen at the sessions of mesmerism, hypnotism and seances.

An academic description of various kinds of magic

There are many fields of study dealing with various awe-striking feats and extraordinary deeds; and it is very difficult to classify them so as not to

leave anything out. However, we give here a list of the more commonly used branches of this art.

as-Simiya: It deals with the ways of combining the will-power with particular physical and material forces for manipulating the natural order and, thus, producing extraordinary effects. Under this head comes the manipulation of thought, also known as the eye-enchancement.

It is the most deserving candidate for the title of magic

al-Limiya: It teaches how one may establish a connection between his psyche and the higher and stronger spirits, in order that one may bring them under one's control, for example, the spirits of the stars, or the jinn, etc.

It is also called the knowledge of subjugation of the spirits.

al-Himiya: It explains how the powers of the higher spiritual world may be combined with the base elements of this world to produce awe-inspiring effects. It is also called talisman. The stars and their configuration have some relation to the material happenings of this world, in the same way as the elements and compounds and their physical qualities affect those phenomena. Supposedly if the heavenly forms, pertaining to a certain event, for example, A's life or B's death, could be combined with the relevant material forms, the desired effect would take place without fail.

ar-Rimiya: It trains one how to control and manipulate the qualities of various things, to produce seemingly super-natural effects. It is also called "ash-Sha'badhah" (sleight of hand, jugglery, magic).

These four fields of knowledge, together with the fifth, called "al-Kimiya" (alchemy, the forerunner of chemistry, primarily the attempt to transmute base metals into gold or silver) formed what the ancients called the five secrets, mysterious branches of knowledge.

Ash-Shaykh al-Bahai has said: "The best book written on these subjects was the one I saw in Herat, '*Kulah-e-sar*' (the head's cap) by name. Its name was an acronym, made of the first letters of the five subjects, that is, al-Kimiya, al-Limiya, al-Himiya, al-Simiya and ar-Rimiya."

The standard books of these subjects are the epitome of the books of *Balinas*, *Rasa'iiL*, *al-Khusraw Shahi*, *adh-Dhakhirah*, *al-Iskandariyya*, *as-Sirru'l makhtum* (by ar-Razi), *at-Taskhirat* (by as-Sakkaki) and *A'malu'l-kawakib as-Sab'ah* (by al-Hakim tamtam al-Hindi).

Supplementary of the above are the following subjects:

The knowledge of numbers (numerology): It shows the relation of numbers and letters with the desired effect. The relevant letters or numbers are filled in a magic square or triangle etc. in a particular sequence.

al-Khafiyah (the hidden knowledge): It breaks down the name of the desired effect or other relevant names, and finds out the names of the angels or the satans managing the said effect; and then composes the invocations made of those names.

Divination or Kahanat soothsaying

To predict future events is known as divining and when the prediction is made on the knowledge obtained through some groups of Jinns it is known as Kahanat. (However we shall use the word soothsaying as an equivalent of kahanat). Kahanat pertains to the prediction of future with the help of

special knowledge. For example, the soothsayer may be adept at guessing the words of the enquirer or his private affairs etc. According to the author of Nihaya this kind of soothsayer is known as ‘Aaraaf’ but according to the majority of scholars a soothsayer is the one who predicts with the help of Jinns. The Jinns inform him of hidden matters. For example, he might be able to find where a stolen thing is hidden or who is the thief, or who is the murderer of a particular person. All the jurists are unanimous that ‘Kahanat’ or soothsaying is Haraam. Like it is Haraam to learn, teach, perform magic, in the same way it is Haraam to learn soothsaying, to act upon the advice of a soothsayer and even to go for advice from a soothsayer is Haraam. Some scholars maintain that soothsaying is a kind of magic.

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says: “One who divines or the one who goes to a soothsayer for divination, (both) have renounced the religion of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.).”

(Khisal)

Janabe Haitham enquired from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.), “There is a person we know who informs about stolen property etc. Is it permitted for us to seek his advice?”

The Holy Imam (a.s.) said,

“The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) has mentioned that one who goes to a sorcerer, a soothsayer or a liar and testifies to what he says has become an infidel in the light all the divine books revealed on Allah’s Messengers.”

(Makasib Muharrama of Shaykh Ansari)

The Shaykh comments that according to this tradition, informing about the hidden matters is Haraam; whether through divination or otherwise. However, if someone guesses and conjectures or doubts; it is allowed. Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) considers soothsaying a prohibited profession and also considers it earnings Haraam. Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) is also recorded to have mentioned a similar tradition.

Ignorance about future is better for the people

We must understand that prohibition of soothsaying is beneficial for us. Allah the Almighty does not wish the people to have knowledge of the future. It is better for them. Because it is possible that if something of tremendous importance is to happen in the future and it is as per the wishes of a particular person he may die of shock. Or the event may be dependent on some act of charity or invocation. That is, if he gives Sadqa or invoke it may not materialise and thus he will be deprived of the rewards. On the other hand the foreknowledge of a tragic event will aggrieve a person. Even though it may be subject to bad’aa, Sadqa and dua etc. and may not actually materialise but if someone learns of it in advance he will be saddened for no actual reason and it is well known that many calamities are warded off with Sadqa, dua and repentance. As an example we can recall the people of Prophet Yunus (a.s.). They were to be subjected to a great disaster but their dua and repentance at the eleventh hour caused the change in their destiny. The expected calamity was avoided. The Quran has also mentioned this fact.

A tradition is quoted in the *Ihtejaj* of Tabarsi from the sixth Imam (a.s.). The gist of the same is as follows:

After the birth of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) the shaitans and the Jinns were denied access to the heavens, hence they were unable to inform about the heavenly affairs. Now they could only inform of the evil magical matters and this is unreliable because like in men there are truthful people as well as liars. In the same way there are liars among the Jinns too. Therefore the fortune telling of a diviner is unreliable.

Sorcery and soothsaying are evil

To understand the evil of magic and soothsaying it is enough if we see the numerous frauds, crimes, thefts and cheating is committed through them. The sorcerer leaves all the good actions and performs satanic rituals. He commits adultery with a married woman, sometimes he kills a person or drinks human blood. He shows disrespect to the things that Allah has made respectful. For example, he desecrates the verses of the Holy Quran. He performs actions that bring him closer to shaitans and eventually enters their company. Or rather he debases himself lower than the shaitans so that they may help him in soothsaying and sorcery.

It is certainly a great pity that a human being who is capable to do good and through his good deeds capable to rise to position equal to angels or even higher than angels. The same man debases himself by his evil deeds and becomes so lowly that he becomes even lower than the shaitans.

Shoabada-illusion

To create an illusion with fast movements of the hands etc. is Shobade. For example if a ball of fire is moved in circles it seems to be a circle of fire. In the same way a person who is travelling in a car or train feels himself stationary and feels that his surroundings are moving in the opposite direction. Some people are adept at creating illusions and the audiences perceive that it is real. All the fuqaha are unanimous that Shobada is Haraam; and that it is a type of magic. A tradition of Imam Sadiq (a.s.) in Ihtejaj also mentions that creating illusions is a kind of sorcery. Moreover, the characteristics of magic are present in Shobada hence it is a sin. Another name for this kind of act is hypnotism. The audience are made to concentrate on an object and shown unreal images. It is another fact when the illusion becomes real. Hence, the magicians of Firon used both the methods with Hazrat Musa (a.s.). First they created an illusion, then they switched over to actual sorcery. Apart from these there are many other kinds of magics and tricks; but we need not go into details.

It has been narrated about Abu Hafs Hadaad that when he was a young man he had fallen in love with a lady. He was so much enchanted by her that he was prepared to do anything to acquire her. Someone told him that there was a magician Jew in Nishapur and he would be able to fulfill his wishes. He went to the Jew and told him about his desires. The magician told him to abstain from prayers and other good deeds for forty days so that he can make his magic work for him. Abu Hafs returned from there and acted upon the instigation of the sorcerer.

After the forty days had elapsed Abu Hafs went to the Jew again and told him that so far the magic had not worked. The magician was also surprised

and he told Abu Hafs that he must have done at least one good deed in those forty days that has nullified the magic. Abu Hafs pondered and said that as far as he remembered he had not done a single good action except that as he has picked up a stone from the path so that it may not hurt a traveller. “That was it!” The magician exclaimed, “Though you disobeyed God these forty days and did not fulfill any obligation, yet He is such a Merciful God that He accepted even such a small deed from you and prevented the magic to work for you. So, it is not appropriate for you to disobey such a generous God.”

The words of the magician had such an effect on Abu Hafs that he repented for his misdeeds and became absorbed in worship and sought forgiveness from Allah. He became so pious that eventually he was bestowed miraculous power by the Almighty.

The power of the magicians is limited

When Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) had described the different varieties of magic to the one who had posed a question, the person asked Imam (a.s.) if it was possible for a magician to transform a human being into a dog or a pig etc.? Imam (a.s.) said,

“The magician cannot do this, because if he can transform the creations of Allah he will become a partner of Allah in His creation whereas no one can be a partner to Allah.”

If the magician had such powers he would have got rid of his own senility, difficulties and maladies and would not have allowed his hair to gray and removed his own poverty.

Actually the most dangerous kind of magic is connected with tale telling; which causes differences between two friends. It creates hatred and malice between those who love each other. As tale telling creates discord and dissension among the people like sorcery does; the two are closely inter-related.

Taskheraat (controlling jinns etc.)

Taskheraat can be defined as the method of controlling angels, Jinns, souls or various wild animals. This is also Haraam and considered a form of sorcery. The Shaykh has also mentioned in *Makasib* that all the characteristics of magic and sorcery are present in Taskheraat. The First Martyr (r.a) has also considered magic Haraam because it causes harm to others. It can be because one, who achieves control over Jinns and angels, does so by causing pain to them. Thus these kinds of practices are also Haraam.

Qayafa (Guess)

To mix up the destinies of two different people is Qayafa. For example a person who practices Qayafa conjecture that such and such person is the son of that one while he is not so according to the laws of Shariah. Or he may say that so and so is not the son of that person while the Shariah considers him to be a son.

This kind of Guess making and conjecture is also related to magic. It is really surprising, the kinds of things these people are able to say from the outward appearance and the inner conditions of others. It is not Haraam according to Shariah. Many astonishing incidents have been related in this regard.

An interesting incident is mentioned in *Al-Kafi* as well as the eleventh volume of *Behaar*. During the time of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.), Ali bin Huraira was a governor of the Abbasid Caliph. He had a slave named Rafeed. One day he became so angry with Rafeed that he decided to kill him. Rafeed ran away and took refuge with Imam Sadiq (a.s.). Imam (a.s.) told him to go back to his master and say that Imam (a.s.) has ordered him spare his life as he has taken refuge with him. Rafeed was horrified but Imam (a.s.) insisted that he go back. So Rafeed obeyed and when he was on his way he met a stranger Arab, the stranger said, "Where are you going? Your face is that of a dead man." Then he told Rafeed to show his hand. Again he remarked that the hands were of a person who has been killed. He looked at the legs and passed the same judgement. He said that his complete body was that of a person who has been murdered. Then he asked him to show the tongue. Upon seeing the tongue he remarked, "No harm will come to you because your tongue is that of an envoy and it carries such a message that if you were to go to huge mountains they would become soft, and become obedient to you."

Rafeed says that when he came to his master Abi bin Huraira, he at once gave the orders for his execution. His hands were tied and an executioner moved towards him with a naked sword. Then he told his master that it was not he who had got him arrested, but that he himself had returned to him. He also requested him to listen to what he had to say in privacy. He agreed to the request and Rafeed told him, "Ja'far bin Muhammad (a.s.) the master of both of us has sent you salaam and requested you to spare my life." When he heard this he could not believe it. He repeated it to him under oath. He at once untied his hands and asked him to forgive him by tying his hands in the same way. Rafeed could not make himself do this; but when he insisted he tied his hands and untied them quickly. Then he gave his seal ring to Rafeed and said that he was free to do as he wished.

Similarly, Shaykh Sadooq has related from Hisham that he went with Imam Musa bin Ja'far (a.s.) to a slave trader who had come from the west. Imam (a.s.) selected a slave girl but the trader refused to sell her. The next day Hisham went alone and bought the slave girl at a higher price according to Imam's instructions. The slave trader asked him who was that man who had accompanied him other day. Hisham acted under Taqayya and said he didn't know much, but that he was from the Bani Hashim. The slave trader said, "When I had purchased this slave-girl from a far away place in the west and was carrying her with me, a woman stopped me and asked where I was taking her. I said I had purchased her for myself. She said the girl was not made for me. She was destined for a man who was the best of the people in the world and in the near future she will give birth to a son to whom the west and east be subservient."

In consonance with the prediction, the slave girl gave birth to Imam Reza (a.s.).

Astronomy

The prediction regarding the future events; like the higher and lower price of grain, its shortage and prosperity, the scarcity and intensity of rain and all other types of good and bad happenings; based on the knowledge of the effect of heavenly bodies on earth is known as meteorology. It is permitted if the one who is predicting only considers them a possibility. If he is having indomitable faith in his calculations he would have undermined the supremacy of the Almighty. Thus there is no harm in predicting the solar and lunar eclipses and the position of stars etc. because such predictions are based on complicated calculations and such predictions are usually true unless there is a mistake in calculation. The movement of the heavenly bodies follows well-defined laws and principles, hence there is hardly any chance of a wrong prediction.

On the other hand to predict future events with a belief that only the stars and heavenly bodies (without any Divine will) govern them is Haraam and a kind of magic.

The Shaykh has concluded his discussion in *Makasib* by stating that predictions are four types:

It is not Haraam to predict the future position of heavenly bodies and other phenomena like the solar and the lunar eclipse etc.

It is also permitted to predict an occurrence if it caused by the influence of the movement of the stars or by the heavenly bodies coming near to the earth but it must not be considered a phenomenon independent of the Divine will. It should be looked upon as the will of Allah. In other words one should say that 'when the comet etc. comes near such a thing will happen by the permission of Allah.' The stars must not be considered the sole cause of the phenomena. Even if one makes such predictions by experience and without any scientific knowledge; it is allowed. One who has previous experience can predict that it will rain at night when his pet dog comes down from the terrace and comes inside the house. Because this had happened before. Hence the past experience enables some to predict a future event.

To attribute the future events solely to the influence of heavenly bodies is considered Haraam by all the jurists. Numerous traditions denounce these kinds of predictions.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says:

"One who believes an astrologer and soothsayer has disbelieved in whatever was revealed upon Muhammad (s.a.w.s.)."

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

"Accursed is the astrologer and accursed is the soothsayer and accursed is the magician."

When Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) was proceeding for the battle of Nahrawan one of his men who was an expert in astrology restrained him saying, "If you go at this time, I fear that you will not succeed in your aim."

Ali (a.s.) told him that he thought he can predict the auspicious and the inauspicious time of departure with accuracy, and that said,

“Whoever believes your prediction had denied the Quran.” (Because according to Quran success and defect all are subservient to Divine will). If a person has faith in the astrologer he will not seek Divine help and assistance when the prediction is favourable for him. In this way he will not give Sadqa nor pray for his success and hence he would consider that Allah controls nothing; thus he would become a disbeliever.

But if an astronomer predicts with the belief that his predictions are subject to the final will of Allah, there is no harm if one prays to the Almighty to help him succeed when the prediction is good; and in case of unfavourable prediction invoke Allah for safety.

Khwaja Nasiruddin Tusi during one of his journeys stayed for the night at a water mill. The water mill was situated outside the town. Since it was a hot evening the Khwaja decided to sleep in the open. The mill-owner told him that it would rain that night. The Khwaja looked at the sky but could not make out any sign of rain. The mill-owner said, “I have a pet dog who comes down to the house when it is to rain at night.” Khwaja did not heed his advice and spent the rainy night in open but he was much amused by the incident.

Four types of beliefs

To believe that stars are the supreme controllers of world is Haraam. A person who has such a belief is a Kafir whether he denies the creator or not. All the jurists are unanimous in this regard.

To believe that the heavenly bodies have been bestowed by Allah the power to control the world is not Kufr but it is a foolish notion because we have no proof that the inanimate stars have any intelligence or will to influence the world.

The third type of belief is when a person admits that the stars have no intelligence and will power but says that Allah has decreed that when the position of the stars will be such, the following event will take place. It is the law of causation like when fire is brought near something it burns it. Though such a belief is proved correct most of the time, reason does not accept it to be unchangeable.

To predict future events on the basis of heavenly occurrences is not Haraam according to most of the scholars. For example if the moon and the Saturn come in a line there would be a good rainfall. To interpret such heavenly phenomena is not Haraam but such interpretations can be accurately given only by the Infallibles (a.s.). What the meteorologists predict is based on an incomplete part of this knowledge. Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) remarks:

“The complete knowledge of stars cannot be acquired and incomplete knowledge is of no benefit.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

After enumerating the different types of astrological sciences, Shaykh Ansari says, “All these traditions imply that whatever the astrologers predict is based on deficient knowledge. They only conjecture and guess on the

basis of little knowhow. People who consult them are rarely satisfied by their predictions but it is possible that he may have experience regarding a particular event and may make an accurate prediction. Hence it is better to refrain from consulting such people and if they make a prediction, one should say, 'It is only a possibility.'"

The prediction did not materialise

The deficiency and inaccuracy of astrological predictions can be gauged from the doubts and wrong predictions of the astrologers. The books of history are replete with such examples. In the second volume of *Tatmatal Muntahi* it is mentioned that in 582 A.H. seven stars came together in one constellation. Abul Fazl Khwarizmi and other astronomers gave the prediction that the whole world will be destroyed in a cyclone. The people took shelter in the caves and protective spots and also stored their rations to escape the fury of the cyclone. At the last the predicted date of 9th of Jamadi ul Aakhar arrived but there was no sign of cyclone. Not even a soft wind blew. People lit candles and they burnt without even being blown out by a breeze. The poets jumped to the amusing occasion and composed couplets on this incident.

A few years ago there was a similar threat that had the people of the whole world worried. It was predicted that the whole earth would be shaken due to the impact of collision of a meteor. Some people dived underwater to escape the shock but nothing happened at the appointed time. (The meteor missed the earth by thousands of miles).

Magic and miracles are of two types

If a person is able to perform extraordinary acts due to his extreme piety and abstinence it is known as Karamat but if the said person is a Prophet or an Imam, he is bestowed with this high station by the Almighty and subject to three conditions his act will be construed as a miracle (Mojiza).

His claim should be acceptable to reason but if his claim is illogical, whatever action he performs is magic. Whether one can perceive the mechanics of this act or not. For example it is a proven fact for every Muslim that prophethood came to an end with Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.s.) and that his shariah will be in force till Qiyamat; there will be no prophet after him. Hence if someone claims that he is a prophet; his extraordinary acts to prove his claim will not be believed. He would be a cunning magician. Or a person claims Imam, when according to the proven belief of Shias Imams are only twelve. The first being Hazrat Ali ibne Abi Talib (a.s.), and the last Hazrat Hujjat ibnil Hasan (a.s.), who will remain in occultation till the time of his reappearance. Hence the claimant will be an imposter even if he shows some curious act. Similarly the position of special representative of Imam (a.s.) who were four, the last being Ali ibn Muhammad Saymori. If someone comes and says that he is a special representative (Naib-e-Khaas) he cannot be believed and whatever 'miracles' he shows will be considered magical tricks.

The person should possess the necessary qualification for being a prophet or an Imam. For example one of the necessary quality of a Prophet or Imam

is infallibility (Ismat). That is he must not commit either a greater or a lesser sin before his declaration or after it. He must be the most righteous and knowledgeable person of his time. One of the signs of such character is his indifference to material wealth. Thus if there is a claimant who commits sins and lacks knowledge and covets material wealth, then if he exhibits special acts, they are a magic.

It is necessary that the extraordinary act performed by the incumbent should be through the might and power of the Almighty. If he uses some tools and instruments or if undertakes training for performing the said acts it is obvious that they are not miracles. Miracle is performed by the power of Allah and without having prior practice and training. This aspect has been analysed in great detail in scholastic theology.

Countering magic

Many jurists are of the opinion that it is allowed to counter one magic spell by another. That is if an imposter claims prophethood by performing magical tricks; magic can be used to expose his falsehood. Or if a sorcerer casts a spell on someone or binds him, it is permitted to break this spell and unbind the victim with the help of magic.

It is related that Isa bin Saqafi came to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and said, "May my life be sacrificed for you, I am a magician and magic is my occupation. With the earnings of magic I have even performed the Hajj and now the Almighty has honoured me by your meeting but now I am regretful of my deeds; is there any way I can achieve salvation? Imam (a.s.) said, "Untie and do not tie." The apparent meaning of Imam's remark is that he can use his powers to counteract the magical spells of others magicians but he must not himself initiate sorcery, but some jurists are of the opinion that magic can be used only under special circumstances when there is no other alternative. First of all invocations and amulets must be tried to nullify magical spells.

Let us see a couple of such incidents in the book *Behaarul Anwaar*.

A person came to Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) and complained that a spell has been cast on him. Ali (a.s.) told him to write a dua on the skin of a deer and keep it with him. The spell will not affect him.

Moreover he advised reciting a dua seven times to safeguard against magic and the tyranny of the ruler. The same dua can be recited seven times after namaz-e-shab and before the morning prayers. It will protect one from the evils of magic.

In the book *Qisasul Ulama* there is an anecdote of the period of Abbas the Safawid. A Christian king sent a messenger to Abbas with the message that he may be given a chance to debate with Muslim scholars and if he defeats the Muslim scholars they must all accept Christianity. Now the person sent by the Christian king had some powers by which he was able to guess accurately what others held in their fists. The scholars were invited to debate with him and they included Mulla Mohsin Faiz. When the debate began Mulla Mohsin remarked that the Christian king has sent an ordinary man instead of religious scholars for debate. The envoy brushed the remark

aside and told him to hide something in his fist so that he can prove his miraculous powers.

Mulla Mohsin kept the tasbih made of dust from Imam Husain (a.s.)'s grave in his fist and challenged him to guess. The man thought for sometime but kept quiet. When Mulla urged him to speak up he said, "According to my knowledge there is a piece of Paradise soil in your hand but I am astonished as to where it was and how it came into your hands."

Mulla Mohsin said, "You are correct! It is the dust from the grave of Imam Husain (a.s.) who was the grandson of our Prophet (s.a.w.s.). Your statement itself proves that the Imam of Muslims was on the right. Hence, you must accept Islam."

The Christian folloed his conscience and became a Muslim. A very suitable method was employed by the late Mulla Faiz to guide the Christian towards salvation but we must remember that in such circumstances even if a person has more powers than the Christian; but if he is not having the three necessary qualifications, he is nothing but a sorcerer.

The Thirty Second Greater Sin: Israaf or Wasteful Expenditure

The thirty-second sin, which has been recorded in the traditions and the Quran as a Greater one, is Israaf or wasteful expenditure. Hence, we find Israaf among the Greater Sins in the tradition of Fazl ibne Shazaan from Imam Reza (a.s.) and also in the tradition of Amash from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.). The Quranic verses and traditions, both, imply that wasteful expenditure is a Greater sin. First we shall quote these ayats and traditions and then examine the various aspects of this sin. The Holy Quran says,

“...and eat and drink and be not extravagant; surely He does not love the extravagant.”

(Surah Araaf 7:31)

The above ayat shows that the Almighty Allah is inimical towards the extravagant people. According to some exegesists of the Quran one who is not loved by Allah is doomed to perdition because the love of Allah implies Divine rewards.

According to *Tafseer Majmaul Bayan*, Bakhti Shoa was the personal physician of Haroon al-Rashid. He was a Christian. One day he asked Waqidi, “Does your Holy book contain any medical knowledge?” Waqidi said, “The Almighty Allah has condensed the complete medical knowledge in a single verse,

“...And eat and drink and do not be extravagant.”

“Did your Prophet mention anything about this branch of knowledge?” “Yes,” said Waqidi he has described the medical sciences in a brief sentence. “The stomach is the house of pain and abstinence is the most important medicine. Everyone should be given the amount (of food) he needs.”

Upon hearing this, the Christian remarked, “Your Book and your Prophet has not omitted any thing from medical science and Galen (the Greek physician) has nothing more to say.”

The Almighty Allah says in the Quran,

“...eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay the due of it on the day of its reaping, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant.”

(Surah Anaam 6:141)

In Surah Momin there is a verse,

“Thus does Allah cause him to err who is extravagant, a doubter.”

(Surah Momin 40:34)

Similarly,

“...the extravagant are the inmates of the fire.”

(Surah Momin 40:43)

Also,

“And thus do We recompense him who is extravagant and does not believe in the communication of his Lord; and certainly the chastisement of the Hereafter is severer and more lasting.”

(Surah Taha 20:127)

Allah the Almighty again says,

“...and do not squander wastefully, surely the squanderers are the followers of the shaitans and the Shaitan is ever ungrateful to his Lord.”

(Surah Bani Israel 17:26-27)

Tafseer Minhaj mentions the fact that pre-Islamic Arabs were so extravagant and prodigal that when the rich among them invited someone for dinner they used to slaughter several camels just to show off their wealth. The Almighty Allah has denounced their extravagance and says that they squander their wealth like the insane.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“Certainly, moderation is liked by Allah and He dislikes extravagance, upto the extent of throwing away a date-seed, because it can be used too. (Arabs feed date-seeds to camels). And in the same way, is the throwing away of water left after drinking.” (Because even this can be put to some use).

(Wasaelush Shia)

The Imam (a.s.) has also said:

“Fear Allah and neither be extravagant nor a miser. Be moderate. Verily, extravagance is waste. The Almighty Allah says, ‘And do not waste!’ Certainly Allah has never punished the people who practise moderation.”

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

It means that the Divine punishment is reserved for both the squanderer as well as the miser. Bushr ibne Umar says, “I went to Imam Sadiq (a.s.) and he placed some dates before us. We began to eat the dates and some of us were throwing the seeds away. He stopped them and said,

‘This is waste, Allah does not like corruption.’”

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

There is a tradition from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) in the book *‘Faqih’*. He (s.a.w.s.) describes the various prohibited acts and states that the house one builds extravagantly and for show-off will be raised to seven floors by the Almighty Allah on the day of Qiyamat. Allah will kindle that building and make it into a necklace and place it on the neck of that person. Then He will toss him into the fire. The people requested the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) to explain how a person can build a house for show-off. The Prophet (s.a.w.s.) explained that it denotes a house, which is more than needed, and one that is constructed to show the superiority of the owner over other Muslim brothers.

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says:

“Whenever Allah intends goodness from His servants, He reveals to him to live moderately and spend his life in the best way and keeps him away from extravagance and prodigality.”

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“Do you think if Allah has bestowed someone with wealth, it is because he is His beloved? And if He has given less to someone it is because he is low? No! It is not so. Whatever wealth is there, it all belongs to Allah. Allah gives it to whomsoever He does as a trust and He has permitted the trustee to eat, drink, wear clothes, marry, and ride from it, (but) in moderation. If he has excess he must distribute it among the poor and fulfill their needs.

Then whoever follows the Divine commands, whatever he has eaten, drunk, wore, married and rode from it in moderation; all this is lawful for him and if he does not act upon it, everything is Haraam.”

Then Imam (a.s.) recited the ayat,

“And do not be extravagant, Allah does not love the squanderers.”

Then he continued,

“Do you think it proper that a person purchases from the wealth which Allah has entrusted him, a horse costing 10,000 dirhams when he could have bought an animal worth 20 dirhams?; and it would have sufficed for him or if he purchase a slave-girl at a cost of a thousand dirhams when he could have got one in twenty dinars and quite sufficient for him? When the Almighty says,

‘Do not spend wastefully.’

(One who wastes and squanders money has done Khayanat in the trust of Allah).

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

Abbasi says that he asked Imam Reza (a.s.) as to how much he should spend on his family? Imam (a.s.) replied,

“Between the two which are disliked.”

I said, “I don’t know what those two are?”

“Certainly Allah hates extravagance and He hates miserliness.”

Imam (a.s.) then recited the ayat,

“And (the people are) those who are neither extravagant nor miserly. They are the moderate (people).”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has said that if a person is extravagant and later becomes poor due to it, his invocations will not be accepted. Then if he says “O Allah grant me health,” Allah (a.j.) says, “Had I not ordered you moderation?”

The meaning of extravagance and its types

Extravagance means crossing the limits or spending wastefully. It depends upon the circumstances. Like spending for something, which is useless, is Haraam even if a person spends only a single dirham. Or it can be from the aspect of the amount spent; like spending on a proper occasion. Also, if a dress of one hundred rupees is sufficient we cannot purchase one costing five hundred. According to certain scholars spending at the wrong place is squandering and spending more than necessary is extravagance.

Hazrat Ali (a.s.) says,

“The extravagant have three qualities; he eats more than required, he wears more than is suitable for him and buys something needlessly.”

(Behaarul Anwaar)

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“If you wear a formal dress where it is not required, it is extravagance.”

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

Extravagance depends upon the capacity of every person

It is necessary to know that extravagance depend upon the honour and respect of different people, their health and sickness, youth and old age, poverty and richness, income etc. It is possible an expensive dress may not constitute extravagance for a person who holds a respectable position in society and is within his means. Whereas for one who is not having the same position and income, if he wears the same dress it will be extravagance.

Kulayni (r.a.) has recorded a tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said,

“There are some poor people who squander more than the rich. Because the rich squander from the wealth Allah has given whereas the poor squanders what he has not.”

(Furu Al Kafi)

Thus such poor people are always involved in economic problems and debts. They do not consider their circumstances and spend beyond their means. All this is extravagance. It is a result of competing with those who are more affluent than we compete. One strives to keep up with them and indulges in extravagance and thus spends his life in misery, sorrow and grief. If people instead look at those who are less privileged than them; as ordered by Islam; they would never fall prey to wasteful expenditure. Thus, bankruptcy is often caused by extravagance. If people obey the rules of Islam and act upon common sense and reason they will always practice moderation and keep aloof from this sin; they will be satisfied with whatever they have and live within their means. Consequently, they will be aware of the goodness of this world and the Hereafter.

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says:

“No one can taste true belief till he cultivates three qualities

- 1. Love of the knowledge of religious rules and regulations.*
- 2. Patience in calamities and*
- 3. Realistic estimation of his expenses.”*

(Safinatul Behaar)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says:

“When a person practices moderation I guarantee that he will never become a destitute.”

(Wasaelush Shia)

Imam Muhammad al- Baqir (a.s.) says:

“Three things facilitate salvation: Fearing Allah, practising moderation in poverty and affluence, to say only the rightful thing even when angry or displeased.”

(Safinatul Behaar)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) explains the ayat

“We will certainly make him like a happy life.”

(Surah Nahl 16:97)

and says that,

“‘A happy life’ is contentment.”

Abu Zar repels greed

Uthman gave two hundred gold coins to his servants and told them to take to Abu Zar and say, “Uthman has sent you his salaam with a request to accept these coins. You can use them for your needs.”

When the servants brought the gold coins to Abu Zar and conveyed Uthman’s message he asked, “Has Uthman given a similar amount to every Muslim?”

“No”, they replied

“Then am I superior to all the Muslims to be given these?”

The servants told him, Uthman has said that, “these gold coins are from his personal property and by Allah they are Halaal.”

“I do not need them because I am needless,” said Abu Zar

“But we don’t see anything in your house, that shows you are needless?”

Abu Zar pointed towards a utensil and said, “There are two pieces of barley bread in it and hence I am needless.”

(Safinatul Behaar)

In another narration of the same type, Muawiya sends two of his slaves with some money for Abu Zar and when he refused to accept them, the slaves said, “O Abu Zar! Muawiya had promised to free us if you accept the money. Please accept it for our sake.”

Abu Zar said, “If I take it you would be free from Muawiya’s slavery but I will become his slave, because then I will be forced to obey him.” (It would be selling my religion for material wealth).

Sayyad Abu A’laa Maududi writes in his book, *Islam and the Economic Problems* that all the evils in the world are due to the wasteful expenditure of rich people and vain pastimes. These people consider extra-marital sex a necessity. Due to this thousands of women become prostitutes and dancers; thousands of men are converted into shameless pimps. These people consider singing, dancing, music, acting etc. as necessary entertainments. Hence they have bought over the various professionals of these vices. The entertainment industry progressed as these professionals took deep interest in this field. Their madness in promoting the vices attracted more and more people to these evils. Thus, the number of dancers, actors and prostitutes increase day by day.

This has resulted in the development of entertainments, which are not at all necessary for respectable human life, on the contrary such vices are destroying the morals and humanity. Hunting and excursions become a common past time for the affluent class. Hundreds are employed as guides and scouts for these extravagant people. If these vices had not developed they would too have followed their parental and family professions. These misguided people have instigated a section of society to indulge in producing wines, drugs and other intoxicants. They have employed their wealth in various evil ways. They have spent their wealth in building posh apartments, palaces, multi-storeyed houses and gardens. They have acted blatantly against humanity and against the Islamic principles by their prodigality. They built huge mansions so that they may be buried in them after they die. They built magnificent mausoleums for themselves; whereas they should have spent the same wealth in constructing houses for the poor and the houseless people. The height of their extravagance is such that they

have special rooms for their dogs and have golden collars and leashes for them. Trainers are employed to train these dogs. In this way unlimited wealth is being wasted. A magazine in 1962 mentioned that Americans spend three million dollars on their pet dogs and puppies.

They should have spent this excess wealth to meet the needs of the poor people and for the alleviation of poverty. On one hand are the destitutes and deprived masses who cannot even have their basic needs fulfilled and on the other hand we see the Qaruns (profligates) of the world who spend the wealth for expensive jewellery, dresses and other embellishments to show off their affluence. They have covered the walls of their homes with precious paintings.

A point must be clarified at this juncture. Extravagance depends on the capacity of a person and what is extravagance for a poor man may not be considered lavishness in relation to a rich man. However, it does not mean that the affluent people are free to spend their wealth in any way they like. He cannot spend the money in sensual vices and entertainments.

On the contrary there are more stern rules for the rich people. That is, when he has been bestowed with wealth, house, clothes and carpets he has to live in a manner suitable for him. Whatever amount remains is not for hoarding. Any excess wealth has to be utilised in the manner stated by religion. First of all he has to deduct Khums (1/5) of the extra wealth and deliver it to those who are qualified for it. Secondly he must pay zakat if it is obligatory for him.

If he has some close relatives who are poor he has to give them some amount otherwise he will be considered to have done Qat-e-Rahem. If some of his surplus money is needed by his destitute and poor relations, he must help them and if they are in debt he must help them repay the debts. If they are sick he should provide medicines for them and provide the other necessities of life. Rather, if he is aware of any Muslim who needs monetary help but does not help him, he will be like the one described in the following words of Quran,

“...and (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah’s way, announce to them a painful chastisement. On the day when it shall be heated in the fire of Hell, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it; this is what you hoarded up for yourselves, therefore taste what you hoarded.”

(Surah Tauba 9:34-35)

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) explains,

“If a person hoards wealth and does not fulfill the rights (if he sees a poor and needy person and he does not spend it in the way of Allah); then on the Day of Qiyamat he will be branded with it and it will be told to him, ‘This is your wealth which you collected with miserliness.’”

(Tafseer al-Mizan)

Numerous ayats and traditions have emphasised spending in the way of Allah and prohibited against hoarding of wealth. The former is considered most deserving of Divine rewards and the latter earns degrading punishment. However, if we quote these verses and narrations we would be straying from our topic.

It would not be out of place to mention a few facts of modern world. Some rich people, who feel they are Muslims, hoard up all their surplus wealth in foreign banks, in secret accounts. Only when they exit from the world do we learn of their legacies.

These apparently religious people are looked upon by the masses to be perfect Muslims but Allah knows how they shall justify their actions. If they offer the excuse of ignorance of the matter they will be confronted with the question as to why did they not try to learn about religion, attend majlis, lectures etc?

If they had known everything why did they not act upon it. It is a pity these wealthy people do not realise that spending in the way of Allah is its most appropriate utility. It is the only beneficial way to spend it. The money spent in the way of Allah has been called as the 'righteous wealth' by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.). The person who spends in the way of Allah will deserve praises in this world and also earn the eternal rewards of the Hereafter. Those who do not, will be fraught with regret and bitterness forever.

Extravagance depends on prevailing conditions at different times

Extravagance differs from person to person, it also depends on the prevailing conditions. It is possible that spending a certain quantity may not be extravagance in times of prosperity but if the similar amount is spent in the times of famine when people are starving to death; it will be counted as lavishness and squandering. It would be obligatory for those people to avoid spending like usual times and instead distribute it among those who are in need.

Moatab, a servant of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says. "There was an acute shortage of food when Imam (a.s.) asked me, 'What is the position of our stocked grains?'

'We have sufficient to last us months, I replied. Imam (a.s.) said, *'Take it out and sell it.'*

I said, 'There is a shortage of wheat and barley in Madinah.'

When I had sold it all, Imam (a.s.) told me that I should buy the daily requirements from the market like the common people and said,

'Fix a diet of half wheat and half barley for my family, Allah knows that I am capable of feeding them all pure wheat bread but I like it that Allah sees me fulfilling duties of my life faithfully.'"

The same order applies to the matter of dressing. Some stupid people have accused Imam Sajjad (a.s.), Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) and Imam Reza (a.s.) for wearing fine clothes whereas their fathers, grandfathers, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) all wore humble clothes. The Holy Imam (a.s.) have always refuted this accusation by saying that those times were different. In those days the majority of the people dressed in very ordinary clothes but now there was prosperity and affluence in society.

"If we were to wear the same types of clothes today, people would insult us."

(Wasaelush Shia)

In an incident connected with the same subject we find Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) asking his critic to come near. When he came near, Imam (a.s.) opened his outward garment and the man saw an old tattered shirt inside. Imam (a.s.) said,

"This is the dress I wear to show humility to Allah and the other (outward) dress is for you and people like you to see."

(Wasaelush Shia)

Extravagance that is haraam at all times

We must know that three types of extravagance is Haraam at all times and in all circumstances. Its prohibition is not conditional. The first kind of extravagance is when a person spends something wastefully; even if the thing wasted is of not much significance; like throwing the date seed away when it could be put to some use. Or throwing away water left over after drinking when there is a shortage of water and someone else could use the same. Tearing up and throwing away old clothes is also a waste; because they can be given to less privileged people. Having a light on when there is enough sunlight. Handing over something valuable to a child or a foolish person who does not understand its value; and who will spoil the same. All these are a kind of wasteful expenditure or extravagance.

Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) saw some half-eaten fruits that had been thrown out of a house. He said,

"What have you done? If your bellies are full there are many people as yet unsatiated. So you should give it to those needy people."

(Mustadrakul Wasael)

Whatever is left after eating must never be thrown away. Very many traditions have emphasised on the giving away of leftovers to animals, especially leftover bread.

During the time of Prophet Daniyal wastage of bread was rampant. The people were used to throw away the leftover bread and it could be seen lying everywhere on the streets. Prophet Daniyal invoked Divine punishment for these people and hence they were inflicted with such a severe famine, that they were prepared to eat each other.

The book *Wasaelush Shia* has mentioned that once Imam Baqir (a.s.) entered the toilet and saw a piece of bread lying on the floor. He picked it up and handed over to his slave. When he had finished, he called the slave to produce that piece of bread. The slave said that he had cleaned it properly and then ate it. Imam (a.s.) said,

"I emancipate you in the way of Allah."

The Imam (a.s.) was told, "The slave had not performed any such deed that he deserved to be freed?"

Imam (a.s.) said,

"It was because he had respected a great bounty, like bread and ate it; hence Paradise became incumbent upon him. I do not like to enslave a person for whom Allah has ordained Paradise."

A similar type of tradition has been narrated from the chief of the martyrs, Imam Husain (a.s.).

As regards the wastage of clothes we have already quoted a tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) where he has remarked about the wearing of fine clothes in common place situations. he (a.s.) himself wore the fine clothes to protect his respectability.

Eating or drinking harmful things is also a waste

The second type of extravagance is spending on eatables and drinks that cause harm to the body. Like eating when one is already full. It is harmful to eat on a full stomach and hence it is a waste. However, spending upon those things, which are good for the body, is not Israaf.

Al Kafi has a tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) when one of his followers approached him and said, "When we head for Mecca (for Hajj) we have to halt at a point to wear the Ehraam and we also feel the need to anoint our bodies with a pack made from flour husk. Since we do not have flour husk we use the flour instead, but it makes me feel very guilty; though our Lord knows better."

Imam (a.s.) said,

"Whatever is necessary for the body is not Israaf. Quite often we mix sieved flour with olive oil and apply it to our body."

The narrator then asked Imam (a.s.) to distinguish extravagance from stinginess. Imam (a.s.) told him,

"Bread, meat, milk, vinegar and ghee; whatever you wish you can eat (But do not eat all of them at one time)."

Spending on haraam things is Israaf

The third type of extravagance or wastage is spending on things and vices that are haraam according of Shariah. Like wine or purchasing items used in gambling; paying to singers or prostitutes, bribing government officials, spending money to obtain unlawful gains or usurping someone else's property by force, paying for oppressing a Muslim. All these ways of spending are Israaf. One who indulges in these activities commits two wrongs; one is the action itself and secondly he is also guilty of Israaf.

Tafseer of Ayyashi records a tradition through Abdul Rahman bin Hajjaj who asked Imam (a.s.) the meaning of ayat

"...and do not squander wastefully."

Imam (a.s.) said,

"If one spends in any other way than what Allah has ordered, it is squandering and if one spends in the way of Allah, it is moderation."

Charity is never extravagance

Some of the ayats that deal with the subject of charity emphasise it to such an extent that if one gives away all his belongings while he himself is in need of them, he has not committed any sin. On the contrary it is one of the recommended actions and is liked by Allah. As the following ayat of Quran states:

"...and prefer (them) before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones."

(Surah Hashr 59:9)

Preferring others to ourselves means that even though we are in need of something and we have it with us; we give it to someone else who needs it and deprive ourselves as a result. This is the spirit of sacrifice mentioned in the Holy Quran. In another place we have

“And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive...”

(Surah Insan 76:8)

Majority of the Mufasssireen (commentator of Quran) agree that the above verse was revealed in praise of Ali (a.s.), Fatemah Zahra (s.a.), Imam Hasan (a.s.), Imam Husain (a.s.) and their maid, Fizza when they had fasted for three days consecutively and every day at the time of breaking the fast they gave the bread in the way of Allah and contended themselves by ending the fast with plain water.

A person enquired from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.), “What is the best charity?” Imam (a.s.) replied,

“One who himself does not possess anything but toils and earns and gives it in the way of Allah. Have you not seen the ayat of Quran:

“And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive...?”

(Al-Kafi)

A report from a Sunni narrator Asim bin Kaleeb is mentioned in *Tafseer Minhajus Sadeqeen*. He reports that a beggar came to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and requested him for something. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.s.) sent someone to his residence to get something for the beggar but he was informed that there was nothing at home. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) announced among the companions as to who will render help to this poor man. Ali (a.s.) volunteered, saying,

“This destitute shall be my guest tonight.”

He (a.s.) took him home and informed Hazrat Zahra (s.a.) about his condition. Janabe Fatemah Zahra (s.a.) said,

“O Ali! We have food enough for only one person and I had kept it for my daughter Zainab but you may do as you wish.”

Imam (a.s.) said, “It would be better to put the children to sleep and put out the lamp because such a less quantity of food will be insulting before the guest.”

Janabe Fatemah (s.a.) did as instructed and the food was placed before the guest. He began to eat and the food was not yet finished when he said, “I am full and the Almighty Allah has given barakat in your food.” Thus he departed happily.

In another narration it is mentioned that afterwards Ali (a.s.), Janabe Fatemah (s.a.), Imam Hasan (a.s.), Imam Husain (a.s.), Janabe Fizza and Janabe Zainab satiated themselves with the remaining food and the happenings were reported to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) the next day, and the following verse was revealed:

“...and prefer (them) before themselves though poverty may afflict them, and whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones.”

(Surah Hashr 59:9)

It is recorded in *Al-Kafi* that Samaa enquired from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.): "If a person has just enough food to sustain him for a day, is it incumbent upon him to give from it to a needy person? Or if one has provisions for a month, only enough for him; is he required to give to those who are destitute? Similarly the one who has stocks for a year or any appointed period. Is it in any way incumbent for him to curtail his own needs and give a part of it to the needy? Would he be implicated if he doesn't?"

Imam (a.s.) explained,

"There are two aspects of this matter, one is that the best of you are those who do good and prefers others over oneself. They are inclined towards sacrifice and charity. Regarding them Allah says,

"...and prefer (them) over themselves."

The second point is that though one who keeps only the necessary quantity for himself is not blamed, yet the hand of one who gives is better than the hand of one who takes. You must take precedence in helping those who depend upon you."

Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) says,

"Selflessness is one of the highest degrees of belief."

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says,

"There is no goodness in Israaf and there is no Israaf in goodness."

(Safinatul Behaar)

We must always practise moderation

In addition to these verses we also have ayats that emphasise moderation in spending. For example:

"And do not make your hand to be shackled to your neck nor stretch it forth to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth, to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth, lest you should (afterwards) sit down blamed, stripped off."

(Surah Bani Israel 17:29)

The above ayat is commanding the believers not to exceed limits in spending and to avoid its ramifications. The Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"And they who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and (keep) between these the just mean."

(Surah Furqan 25:67)

Ibn Abi Umani has related that a person asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) the meaning of ayat,

"...and pay the due of it on the Day of its reaping, and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant."

(Surah Anam 6:141)

Imam (a.s.) explained,

"There was a man from the helpers (ansaar) who was a cultivator. When he received his income he spent it all on the helpless and distributed it among the poor. As a result nothing remained for his family. So the Holy Quran has termed it as extravagance and said that he should pay the fixed

taxes from farming but he must not be extravagant because Allah did not like extravagant people.”

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“One who spends all his wealth in charity has certainly done Israaf.”

(Faqih)

Reconciling the two types of verses

In order to reconcile the differing verses, the scholars have mentioned some causes. In the *Sharh of Al-Kafi* we find that according to Tabarsi it is possible that the proofs in favour of selflessness pertain to the time of poverty, for example the initial period of Islam and the arguments emphasising thrift pertain to prosperous times. Or they may differ according to the economic condition of one who seeks help. That is some people deserve to be helped even by sacrificing thriftiness and there are some people who might not be helped within the limits of thrift. It also depends upon the person who is being charitable. If he possesses complete and perfect faith there is no harm if he exceeds the limits of thrift in spending to fulfill the needs of people, but if an ordinary person donates everything and is himself impoverished; and he will not be able to bear it, then it is advisable for him to stay within limits even in charity. Thus except for the divine personalities and extremely pious people the masses can be said to belong to the latter category. Therefore the ayat,

“And do not make your hand...”

(Surah Bani Israel 17:29)

is addressed to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) but it is meant for the edification of the common Muslims too. The First Martyr was of the opinion that the rules of charity vary with person to person. The traditions, which imply extreme selfness, are only for those who give their personal belongings to the needy and the traditions that hint at thriftiness even in charity are meant for those who have wife children and family etc. This person cannot prefer others to his own children. That is, he cannot give whatever is necessary for his family to other needy people as charity. Hence sacrifice from our own side is allowed but it is not permitted on behalf our family and children. The honourable scholar has also stated that it is makrooh (detestable) for a man to donate his total wealth in charity unless he is sure he will be able to bear the consequences and also that he should not be having the responsibility of a family or children.

(Darus Salaam of Noori)

Sayyed Muhammad Kazim Yazdi also remarks that according to the Holy Quran, sunnat of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the unanimous opinion of the scholars, Israaf is Haraam, there is no objection against this verdict. Israaf is the expenditure on useless things which is considered as wasteful by common sense; whether the amount spent is appropriate to the occasion or not. Is Israaf possible in charitable deeds? Some of the scholars including Sayyed Muhammad Kazim Yazdi believe that it is possible. On the other hand well-known jurists have stated on the contrary and it is also mentioned that the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said,

“There is no goodness in Israaf and no Israaf in goodness.” But we should know that the former opinion is more precautionary on the basis of other traditions on this subject. After quoting the traditions of Ibn Abi Umair and Sahih of Bazanti and other sources, the late Sayyed says that, “The ayats and narrations denouncing wasteful expenditure revoke (mansookh) the ayat of selfless sacrifice, hence it is difficult to accept as correct the gifts and sacrifice which are not appropriate to the status of the donor; and those that the common sense perceives to be beyond limit and useless. There is no logic behind the giving and taking of such gifts and donations.” In the same way wasteful spending in necessary matters is prohibited. However some traditions state that the expenses of Hajj and Umra are not subject to any limits. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) says,

“No spending is more likeable to Allah than one which is moderate and except for over-spending in Hajj, He dislikes all types of extravagance.”

(Safinatul Behaar)

No extravagance in charitable acts

According to the author of the present work the most well known opinion is the strongest one. There is no extravagance in charity. Even if a person gives his total wealth with the intention of achieving Divine blessings he does not do anything unacceptable and the ayats and traditions of over-spending do not apply to this situation.

Since it would make the discussion too lengthy we refrain from replying to all the objections, and limit ourselves to a few examples. First of all the ayat, ***“And do not move your hand...”*** is a lenient prohibition. It is neither Haraam nor Makrooh. Also from the ayat, ***“and (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it”***, we can assume, it pertains, to household expenditure; and it may not be for that which is spent in the way of Allah. It may also mean that those who are not stingy and also not extravagant are the obedient creatures of the Beneficent Lord and this is enough for their being the obedient servants. As regards the ayat, ***“eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, ...and do not act extravagantly”*** and ***“surely He does not love the extravagant...”*** we can say that both these sentences form a single statement. The tradition, which explains the ayat also shows that the two are interrelated. Though it is true that if a person donates the entire crop in charity and does not keep anything for his family and children has certainly committed Israaf. Because charity and selflessness is permitted, but feeding and clothing his dependents is Wajib upon him. One who deprives his dependents of the basic needs and gives everything in charity has committed a sin. He has acted against Divine commands but if he feels assured that he will be able to fulfill the needs of his family from other sources or that his dependents will not claim their rights from him, it is permitted for him to give everything away for the sake of Allah. This can be supported by the examples from the lives of the Holy Imams (a.s.). For example, Hazrat Amirul Momineen Ali (a.s.) had time and again performed such sacrifice of his total belongings. Once he sold his orchard for twelve thousand Dirhams and distributed the complete amount among the poor and needy. He did not save anything for his family, but Ali (a.s.) and other great

personalities never deprived their own dependents. Whenever they performed such charitable deeds they had faith in themselves that they would be able to provide their families from some other means. Whatever has been stated with regard to the ayats prohibiting over-spending can also be supported with the tradition of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) wherein he denounced the person who spends all his wealth and dies leaving nothing for his minor children and leaves them absolutely helpless. It is prohibited for a person to spend his complete wealth in charity when he knows that after him his children will be in need of it. If he leaves a legacy for his children who have no other source of income; the legacy shall also be in the way of Allah.

It is for this reason that drawing a will for more than a third of one's total property is prohibited. It is also commanded for those who have young children to will for less than a third of their wealth.

The traditions of selflessness apply to only special circumstances. Extreme generosity is not prohibited and whatever has been said about the meaning of the ayats explains the tradition of Ibn Abi Umair. The narration of *Sahih* of Bazanti may imply that, it is not proper to over-spend where Imam (a.s.) has prohibited extravagance. The tradition of Faqih may concern those people who spend in recommended ways, where it is incumbent for them not to spend. The tradition of Imam (a.s.) may also be a refutation of the Sufis' assertion that extreme selflessness is incumbent and the Imams (a.s.) have also pointed out that spending for one's family's needs is also like spending in the way of Allah. The words of tradition also imply that thriftiness in ways of charity is emphasised with a gentle command. In other words over-spending in charity is only a soft prohibition whereas we know the incomparable charitable acts of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) and the Imams (a.s.). We also take note of the verses that were revealed in the praise of these deeds for example the ayat of 'Hal ataa' and the verse of 'Najva'. Moreover, we see that Imam Hasan (a.s.) thrice in his life gave half his wealth in charity to the poor and needy. The charitable deeds of Imam Husain (a.s.) and other Imam (a.s.) are also well known. Like when Imam Reza (a.s.) donated his total wealth in charity at Khurasan on the day of Arafat. Fazl ibn Sahl also pointed out that Imam (a.s.) has suffered such a great loss. Imam (a.s.) replied that,

"Whatever I received as my share is sufficient."

Again on the day of Navroz when he assumed the seat of heir apparent of Mamoon under duress he gave away all the presents and gifts to a single poet who had recited an elegy in praise of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

Hazrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) has been reported to have said that,

"If all the world becomes my property and becomes a single morsel and I place it in the mouth of a single believer; I will not consider myself extravagant."

Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) says:

"If all the world becomes a morsel and I give to a true worshipper of Allah I will feel I have not fulfilled his rights completely and if I give even a gulp of water to a starving disbeliever; I consider myself extravagant."

These two narrations expound the fact that even if the whole world is gifted to a sincere and a pious believer it will not be extravagance, because he deserves it. On the other hand even if a mouthful of water is given to a disbeliever, it can be considered extravagance because it is not advisable to be generous to such a person.

Numerous instances of selflessness of the pious scholars have been recorded. Some of these righteous people have seen the rewards of their charity in their worldly life. *Rawzaatul Jannat* contains an incident regarding Muhaqqiq Ardebeli that during the times of famine he used to give away to the poor whatever he had. He used to live a poor life himself. One day when he had donated all his possessions his wife became angry with him that he has deprived his children in such times when food is scarce. He left his home and went to the mosque and sat there in Ihtekaaf. An unknown person arrived at the door of his house and handed sacks of wheat and flour saying that it was sent by master Ardebeli and that he is in Ihtekaaf at the mosque of Kufa. When Muhaqqiq Ardebeli returned home from Ihtekaaf his wife told him that he had sent very fine wheat and flour. When he learnt of the details he realised that it was a Divine favour upon him and fell down in prostration to thank the Almighty. Many times it was seen that the Muhaqqiq left home with an expensive turban but if he encountered a beggar he tore a piece from it and gave it in alms.

On numerous occasion he returned home bare head.

Thus we can conclude that spending any amount in charitable deeds is not Israaf but the spending should not be subject to any prohibition. Or if the expenses are more than the amount appropriate for the occasion.

Israaf in belief and actions

Until now we have discussed extravagance in monetary terms but since the dictionary meaning of Israaf is “exceeding limits” and “extremism” the same laws apply to the beliefs and actions. Israaf in belief implies believing about oneself or others something that is untrue and inappropriate. For example the belief of Firon that he was God. As he told the people, ‘I do not know any of the gods except myself. The Almighty Allah has mentioned him as one who crossed the limits.’

“...surely Firon was lofty in the land; and most surely he was of the extravagant.”

(Surah Yunus 10:83)

Similarly not to have the correct belief about Allah, Prophethood, the Imams, the belief of Qiyamat etc. is also a deficiency.

The Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran,

“And thus do We recompense him who is extravagant and does not believe in the communications of his Lord; and certainly the chastisement of the Hereafter is severer and more lasting.”

(Surah Taha 20:127)

Israaf in actions denote performing the unnecessary acts and avoiding the compulsory deeds. For example the homosexual inclinations of the people of Prophet Lut (a.s.) have been termed as extremism:

“Most surely you come to males in lust besides females; nay, you are an extravagant people.”

(Surah Araaf 7:81)

All the sins of actions and speech are a kind of extremism and every sinner is said to have crossed the limits. Thus, the Almighty says:

“Say: O my servants! Who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the Mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether; surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.”

(Surah Zumar 39:53)

We must not despair of Divine Mercy. If we turn to Allah He shall certainly forgive us but we must endeavour not to be wasteful in our daily life. For example, we must be moderate in eating, sleeping and talking. As the tradition says,

“Verily Allah hates the one who eats excessively and the one who sleeps excessively.”

In other words we must not exceed the limits in whatever we are engaged in. For those who wish to study the subject in more detail we can recommend the book *Me’raju Sa’adat*. This book discusses the method of living in accordance with Islamic principles.

Thus we must understand that any qualities of the creatures are not of their own but given to them by the most powerful and Almighty Allah.

3 - Tawheed and shirk in acts of Allah

Tawheed in deeds construe that we have conviction that the lord and master of every form of life whether material or spiritual is Allah. He alone controls and regulates life. We must also have the conviction that Allah does not have anyone to share in His lordship and control. His authority extends over the entire earth and the skies. No one is an accomplice of Him in this regard.

As the Quran says:

“Allah is He who created seven Heavens, and of the earth the like of them; the decree continues to descend among them, that you may know that Allah has power over all things and that Allah indeed encompasses all things in (His) knowledge.”

(Surah Talaq 65:12)

We must acknowledge that Allah is the creator of the Heavens. We must have a firm belief that He has created the uncountable stars.

Diyat (penalty)

If someone’s hand is severed without any fault of his, the one who cuts the hand is made to pay five hundred misqal of gold to the victim whereas if one robs one fourth of a misqal of gold his hand is cut. This shows that one who steals a fourth of a misqal of gold is worse than the one who cuts off the hand of an innocent person. Hence we realise the value of trust.