Meditation

One of the disciplines of reciting the Qur'an is the presence of heart, to which we have already referred in this book, when we discussed the general disciplines of the acts of worship; so, there is no need to repeat it.

Another one of its disciplines is meditation, by which we mean that the reciter of the noble ayahs should look for the destination and the objective. Now as the objective of the Qur'an, as the very luminous Book says, is guiding the people to the ways of safety, bringing them out of the stages of darkness into the world of light, and leading them to the straight path, one must, by way of meditating on the noble ayahs, attain to the stages of safety, from its lowest stage, which belongs to worldly dominion, up to its final stage, which is the realization of a sound heart [qalb-i salim], according to the explanation received from Ahlul Bayt (AS) saying that a sound heart meets Allah when it is occupied by none other than Him.[1]

The soundness of the worldly and heavenly powers should be the quest of the reciter of the Qur'an, as he will certainly find it in this heavenly Book if he meditates on it. When the human powers become safe from Satan's intrusion, and when the way to safety is found and followed, man, in each stage of safety, will be saved from a degree of darkness, and the bright light of Allah will inevitably shine in him. If he gets rid of all sorts of darkness, the first one of which is the darkness of the world of nature, with all its affairs, and the last of which is the darkness of being inclined to multiplicity with all its affairs, the absolute light will shine in his heart, leading him to the straight path of humanity, which is, in this instance, the path of the Lord: "Surely my Lord is on a straight path."[2]

Contemplation is very much invited to, praised and applauded in the Glorious Qur'an. Allah, the Exalted, says : "And We have revealed to you the Remembrance that you may explain to mankind what has been sent down to them and that haply they may reflect."[3] In this noble ayah reflection is strongly applauded, because the aim of sending down this great heavenly Book, the great luminous paper, is that "haply they may reflect". This is quite significant that the mere possibility of reflection causes the revelation of this great generosity [karamat]. In another ayah He says: " Therefore, narrate the narratives [qasas] that they may reflect. "[4] There are so many ayahs of this like or almost the like, as well as narratives [riwayat] which invite to reflection. The Messenger of Allah (SA) is quoted to have said, on the revelation of the ayah "Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day there are signs for men of understanding,"[5]: "Woe to the one who reads it and does

not reflect upon it"[6] An important point in this respect is that one should know what the commended reflection is, as there is no doubt in the fact that it is praiseworthy to think about the Qur'an and the hadiths.

The best expression for it is that of the Khajah `Abdullah al-Ansari [may Allah sanctify his soul]. He says: "Do know that reflection is the insight's attempt to understand the purpose."[7] That is, reflection is a seeking by the "insight" [basirat], which is the eye of the heart, wanting to attain to the aim and the result, which are the utmost perfection. It is quite clear that the destination [maqsad] and the aim [maqsud] are the absolute happiness, attainable through theoretical and practical perfection.

Therefore, it is man's duty to obtain the humane objective and result, being happiness, from the noble ayahs of the divine Book and from its stories and tales. And, since happiness is to attain to absolute safety, the world of light and the straight path, man should find through the honoured Qur'an the ways to safety, the source of the absolute light and the straight path, as was stated in the previously mentioned noble ayah.

When the reciter gets the aim, he becomes clear-sighted in getting to it, and the door of being benefited by the Qur'an opens to him, and with it the doors of the mercy of Allah open, too. He, then, would not spend his dear and short years and his capital for obtaining happiness on matters which are not intended by the Message, preventing himself from indulging in useless discussion and talk about such an important subject.

Having directed his heart's eye for some time to this purpose, neglecting other matters, the eye of the heart gets sharp in observing, and meditating on the Qur'an becomes common to him, and the ways of utilization open to him, and there open to him such doors that had not already been open to him, and he obtains from the Qur'an such matters and knowledge that he had never obtained before. At that time he can understand the meaning of the Qur'an being a cure for the spiritual ailment, as is confirmed by the noble ayah: "And We reveal from the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers, and it adds only to the perdition of the wrongdoers,"[8] and the meaning of the saying of Imam `Ale (AS): "Learn the Qur'an, for it is the spring [rabi`] of the hearts; and seek cure with its light, since it is the cure for the hearts."[9] He does not seek from the Qur'an the cure of only the physical ailments, but regards the main aim to be the cure of the spiritual ailments, which is the very objective: of the Qur'an. The Qur'an has not been sent down to cure the physical ailments, although such ailments do get cured by it. The prophets (AS), too, did not come to cure physical ailments, although they did cure them. As a matter of fact, they were the doctors for the souls, and the curers of the hearts and the spirits.

Notes:

[1]. Usulul Kafı, vol. 3, p.26, "The Book of Faith and Disbelief", ch. On "Sincerity", hadith 5.

[2]. Surah Had: 56.

[3]. Surah an-Nahl: 44.

[4]. Surah al-A'raf: 176.

[5]. Surah Al-i'Imran: 190.

[6]. Nuruth-Thaqalayn, vol.l, p.350 (with a slight literal difference).

[7]. Manazilus-Sa'irin, section "The Beginnings", ch. on "Reflection".

[8]. Surah al-Isra': 82.

.([9]. Nahjul Balaghah, sermon No. 109 (with some change in the wording