A Brief Commentary on Dua al-Iftitah

Du' al-iftutah was taught by or twelth Imam (a) for Shi'as to recite every night during the month Ramadhan, The Du'a is excellent for moulding man's attitude towards his Creator as it discusses many aspects of the wrethedness of the human being, and the grace of Allah. The Du's can be divided into two parts:

1) Man's relationship with Allah,

2) Divine leaders.

The first section of the Du'a describes different qualities of Allah, and reveals the graciousness and love of Allah for the human being. This section of the Du'a can further be divided into the following parts:

a) Praise of Allah: As is the etiquette of Du'a al-Ifttah begins with the raise and glorification of Allah. This is not because Allah needs to be praised before He answers our Du'as, but to remind the supplicant of the Supreme Being he is addressing, good consequently put the awe of Allah into hearts which are often heedless. The beginning of the Du'a also places the supplicant between hope and fear the ideal attitude while praying. Allah is most merciful, but Is also severe in punishment. Humans are not to despair, nor to be too confident butconstantly strive in His way.

b) Emphasis on the Oneness of Allah: Allah has no partner nor son, and has complete, undivided power and control over creation. the inhabitants of theskies and the heavens depend on Him. This Is to strengthen reliance of the supplicant on Allah, as there is none else he can turn to.

c) The Generosity of Allah: The treasures of Allah do not cease, and are always liberally bestowed on His creatures. The needs of the human beings are enormous, and by placing open the door of Du'a Allah has given them the keys to His treasures. His doors are always open, and no supplication to Him is rejected without some answer.

But man is often ungrateful, and always greedy. He expects that his du'as will always be immediately granted. When such Gratification is not forhtcoming, he turns away, instead of reminding himself of all the favours he enjoys.

d) Relationship of Allah an the human being. A strange relationship Indeed! Although it is the human who need Allah, and should strive towards Him, it is Allah who invites and encourages him to come, who shows love and mercy and continues to favour him in many ways.

As the 4th Imam says in Du'a-e-Abu Hamza Shimali:

Praise be to Allah who answers me when I call Him, although I am reluctant when He calls me, and Praise is for Allah who gives me when I ask Him, although I am miserly when he asks me. This is worth pondering over for those who think of Allah as a tyrannical master imposing his rules over humans.

This section of the Du'a is an excellent lesson in the Islamic view point of the qualities of Allah. The God of Islam is a loving, gracious God who treats the human being better than he deserves. The root of the relationship between Allah and man is the love of the creator for His creatures. It is on man to search his heart for a reciprocal response.

The second section of the Du'a send blessings on the Holy Prophet (S) and The M'asumeen, and then discusses the role of the twelth Imam (a).

a) Salawat on the Prophet(s): After faith in Allah, the next most important part of religion is faith in His sent ones. Thus after acknowledging the greatness And graciousness of the creator, the Du'a teaches us to acknowledge the divine leaders as our guides towards Him. Blessings are sent to the Prophet(s) As a sign of love and appreciation for the Prophet(s) and as an acknowledgement that he is a human being and needs mercy and blessings from Allah. It also strengthens remembrance of the Prophet(s) and the inspiration to follow his path.

b) Blessing on the M'asumeen: After the Holy Prophet(s), his successors are remembered and prayed for. These are the true leaders of the Muslim ummah who were Divinely appointed by Allah. Belief in them, and love for them, is an important part of the Shi'a faith.

c) Role of the Twelfth Imam (a): In every era Allah has His representative who guides His creatures towards establishing truth and justice on earth. The Twelfth Imam is the leader of our time, who will come an Allah's religion on earth. The last part of Du's al-Iftitah talks about his coming, preparing believers for the anticipated establishment of the rule of Allah on earth. Praying for help and victory for the twelfth Imam reminds us that we are waiting for him, and need to prepare for his coming. We become aware of our responsibilities in his ghaybat, and the importance of training ourselves as his helpers. We pray for the ultimate dream of a Muslim, a state in which the religion of Allah is paramount, and disbelief an hypocrisysre degraded.

Du'a al-Iftitah reminds us that both faith and action are necessary to be a true believer. Faith in Allah entails acting on His message brought by His messenger, and establishing His religion on earth. While that can only be done through the Imam, we should work and pray for his arrival. Human beings can only enjoy true justice and peace, and a fulfillment of all their needs under the leadership of a Divine leader.

Du'a al-Iftitah is not only a supplication for our needs, but a teaching of the roots of faith, and a

planning for a way of life. It remains on us to plot the chart of our life as we recite this beautiful du'a during the nights of Ramadhan.