Allah’s Help the Best

One of the companions of the Holy Prophet (s) found his financial conditions in a critical state and sat wondering how he could improve them. His wife suggested he visit the Holy Prophet (s) and seek his help. He decided it was the best option he had. Next day, he arrived at the mosque and sat down, waiting for a chance to speak to the Holy Prophet (s).

While mentally rehearsing what he should ask for, he suddenly heard the Holy Prophet (s) say, “I shall certainly help anyone who asks for my help, but he who refuses to ask any man for help is actually made self-sufficient by his Creator.” Hearing this, the man found he could not make any request for help, and returned home hoping to find a miraculous change of circumstances. Unfortunately, things were as he had left them.

Next day he gathered courage to speak up and appeal for help, but no sooner had he entered the mosque he heard the Holy Prophet (s) repeat what he had said the day before. Discouraged, he returned home to find the situation as dismal as ever. Depressed, he decided that, come what may, he would definitely place his plea the next day. This time, he went straight to a place close to the Holy Prophet (s) and sat down only to hear an exact repeat of the same advice.

He thought to himself, ‘This is not mere coincidence, it must be true, it must mean something for me,’ and, immediately, a strange sense of relief overcame him. He got up and walked away, deciding that he would never ask for human help. He wondered how he could use the physical and mental faculties he had been provided by his Creator to earn a living. The easiest would be to cut wood from the forest trees and sell it in the market. He went to his neighbour and asked him to lend him his axe.

Taking it, he reached the forest, cut a huge pile of wood, strapped it and went to the marketplace. He sold all the wood in good time and held enough money in his palm to feed and clothe his children. In a short while, he became self-sufficient, bought his own axe and enjoyed the fruit of his labour. He soon became a wealthy tradesman with slaves to assist him. However, he did not give up cutting wood himself. He had learnt the value of work.

One day the Holy Prophet (s) came to meet him and smiling, said, “Did I not tell you that I would definitely help anyone who asked for my help, but he who refuses to ask for human help finds self-sufficiency from his Creator?”

Remember! Allah Provides

It was the wide, open territory of Mina during the Hajj season. Imam Jafar al- Sadiq (‘a) was sitting in his corner surrounded by his friends, other Hajjis, eating grapes.

A poor man passed by and asked for help. The Imam offered him a handful of grapes, but the beggar refused them and demanded money. The Imam (‘a) said, ‘I do not have money to give you. The poor man went away, disappointed. After walking away, he decided to accept the grapes and returned. ‘O.K, I’ll accept the grapes.’ The Imam (‘a) said those offered to him were no longer there.

After some time, another poor man passed by and begged for alms. The Imam (‘a) took another bunch of grapes and offered them to him. The poor man took them and said, ‘Thanks to Almighty Allah for providing me with fresh sustenance.’ Hearing the words of the poor man the Imam (‘a) stopped him, and offered both palms full of grapes to him. The poor man took them happily and thanked the Almighty once again.

The Imam (‘a) stopped him again, and asked the companion sitting next to him how much money he had. His companion came up with 20 dirhams. The Imam (‘a) ordered him to give them to the poor man.

The poor man, overwhelmed, said, ‘O Lord, the Almighty! All praise is due only to You, for You alone bestow blessings on us, and You have no Partner.’

The Imam(‘a) immediately took off his cloak and handed it over to the poor man. This time he started thanking the Imam (‘a) for his generosity. The Imam (‘a) bade him farewell and asked him to move on.

The companions wondered why their Imam (‘a) refused to give him anything after he stopped thanking God and began thanking him. They were suddenly reminded of the Ayah, ‘Only You do we Worship and only You do we ask for Help.’

The Guided One

Hisham ibn e Abdul Malik went to Mecca to perform Hajj. He was the ruling Umayyad caliph of the time. After Hajj, he ordered his officers to bring all those people who had been the companions of the Holy Prophet (s) or lived during that period. He was informed that no such person could be found, because they had all died. He then asked for those who had been the companions of the Holy Prophet’s (s) companions, called ‘tabe’een’, so that he could have a soul-stirring discourse with them. Taoos e Yamani, a tabe’ee, was summoned, henceforth.

Taoos entered the room where the caliph was sitting, and greeting him with ‘Assalam o Alaikum’, took his shoes off and sat down. Everything he did, from the moment he entered, was

against the monarchical culture of the Umayyads. Finally, he looked at the caliph and said, 'Hisham, how are you?' That acted as the last slash of the chips on Hisham's shoulder. He flew into a rage and said, 'Do you not know how to behave in the presence of a caliph?'

'What do you mean?' enquired Taoos.

'Why did you take your shoes off in front of me, greet me without saying Ameer ul Momineen, sit down without my permission, and audaciously ask after my welfare as my equal?'

Taoos replied. 'Everyday, I take my shoes off five times in front of the Almighty, yet He is never enraged with me. I did not address you as Ameer ul Momineen, because quite a few believers are disgruntled with your caliphate and rule, so you are certainly not the Ameer of all believers. I called you by your name, because the Almighty, while recalling the events of His Prophets, calls them by their names, thus: Ya Daood, Ya Yahya, Ya Eesa.

On the contrary, He mentions Abu Lahb by his title in the Holy Quran. Why I sat down without seeking permission is because I heard Imam Ali ('a) affirm, 'If you wish to see an inhabitant of hell, then look at that person who, while he himself is seated, everyone around him is standing.'

Hisham was visibly shaken by Taoos' reply. He urged him to advise him further.

'Ameer ul Momineen, Imam Ali ibn e Abi Talib ('a) said that there are monstrous snakes and scorpions in hell, whose only duty is to bite and sting those rulers who do not treat others with justice and fair play.'

Saying this, Taoos stood up, put his shoes on and left the room.

.Hisham looked vacantly into space. Probably his soul had been stirred, even if, temporarily

In Allah's Protection

A group of Muslims migrated to Abyssinia, on the advice of the Holy Prophet (s), to save themselves from being persecuted by the polytheistic Quraysh of Mecca. They always had their ears open for any news confirming the end of persecution and polytheism in Mecca, but in vain. After some years, a rumour was heard that all the Quraysh of Mecca had given up their ignorant ways and beliefs and accepted Islam. The Muslims tried to confirm those rumours, but could not. However, some of them who were more homesick than the others, decided to go home to learn the truth. Among them was Usman ibn e Maz'oon. Later, he became one of the close companions of the Holy Prophet (s).

When he reached the outskirts of Mecca, he realized that what they had heard was false. Persecution was at its height and the Muslims were suffering badly. He was in a dilemma. He could neither return, for it was far across the sea; nor enter Mecca, for fear of greater persecution. Suddenly, an idea struck him. If he managed to get the protection of an influential

person, he would be safe, according to the Arab custom.

He entered Mecca in the darkness of the night and went straight to the house of Walid ibn e Mughayira Makhzoomi, his cousin, who was an elite Quraysh. He requested his protection and got it. Next day, Walid took Usman to the precincts of the K'aaba and announced that Usman was in his protection from that moment onwards. Anyone who harassed him would, in fact, be harassing Walid. Usman resumed his life peacefully in Mecca, his homeland. He attended the various functions organized by the citizens of Mecca and was treated with respect.

However, his conscience pricked him when he saw his fellow Muslims being treated so cruelly in public and private, while he was living comfortably, just because he was protected by an elite. When he could no longer rest in peace, he went to Walid and said, 'I am extremely grateful to you for providing me with protection. But, I want to be with my brothers-in faith and share their ordeals with them.'

'Dear nephew,' he said, 'Probably my protection did not meet your expectations.'

Usman replied,'You were most kind and truly fulfilled your pledge. The truth is that I do not want to live in the protection of anyone but Allah, anymore.'

'If that is what you want, then come with me to the same place, and renounce my protection before everyone.'

'You are right, let's go.'

They both reached the outer precincts of the K'aaba and waited for the chiefs to gather there. Then, Walid proclaimed, 'Usman has come here with me, today, to renounce my protection,'

Usman said, 'He is right. I must admit that he fulfilled his pledge most honorably and gave me no reason to complain. However, I am renouncing his protection because I do not wish to live in the protection of anyone, besides Allah.'

Thus, Usman started to live unprotected by anyone other than Allah. He noticed that nobody harassed him and life continued as before. He attended the discourses and gatherings of the Quraysh as before. Those days, the famous Arab poet, Lubaid ibn e Rabee'a, had come to Mecca. He had been invited to read his latest poem in one of the huge gatherings of the Quraysh. This poem was extremely popular and considered a masterpiece of Arab literature.

Lubaid, one night, addressing a huge audience began:

All, besides the Creator of the universe, is false, the only truth is One

(The Holy Prophet (s) praised this verse as the truest verse written by the Arabs)

Before Lubaid could recite the second line, Usman, sitting among the crowd, applauded loudly,

'Brilliant! True! Most true! Everything besides God is false'

Lubaid,elated, recited the second line:

All, everything is mortal, all blessings are perishable

Usman was heard again, loud and clear, ‘False! This statement is true for this world only. The blessings of the Hereafter are eternal.’

The crowd was annoyed by Usman’s interruptions. They were amazed how a person, who was living in someone’s protection a little while ago, dared to express his faith by contradicting a renowned poet in the middle of his elocution, in such a large gathering. Besides, it was customary to remain silent in the presence of the Elders. No one dared to speak without permission. They wondered at the audacity of Usman to interrupt and criticize their guest speaker and renowned poet while belonging to a severely oppressed minority. They all looked at him angrily, deprecatingly. They then asked Lubaid to repeat his verses.

Lubaid repeated the first line, and Usman cried, ‘True! Most true!’

Lubaid repeated the second line, and Usman repeated, ‘False! The blessings of the hereafter are eternal.’

This time it was Lubaid’s turn to get angry. He addressed the crowd, looking very grim, ‘O members of the Quraysh tribe! By god, never before did such insolent and uncouth people disrupt your functions and literary gatherings. What has happened now? Where have these people come from?’

One angry member of the audience tried to placate him. He said.’ You continue with your rendition and pay no attention to him. He’s a fool, and not the only one in Mecca. A few other fools, who have cropped up in our midst, are his brethren-in-faith. They have been thrown out of our religion and chosen a new faith.’

Usman harshly rebuked him. The angry man could tolerate no more. He turned around and gave Usman a resounding slap on his face. Usman’s eye started bleeding. Another man from the audience cried out, ‘Usman, you did not value the protection of a good man. Had you stayed with him, your eye would not be bleeding today.’

Usman said, ‘The protection of Allah is the best and strongest. His protection is accompanied by contentment and dignity. As for this eye, it has gained a status that the other eye longs for.’

Walid came forward and said, ‘Usman, I’m willing to offer you my protection again.’

‘But I have decided to never place myself in the protection of anyone besides Allah,’ replied .Usman