(Patience (Sabr

Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni (R) from a group of his teachers, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, from his father, from 'Ali ibn al-Nu'man, from 'Abd Allah ibn Muskan, from Abu Basir, who says, "I heard Abu 'Abd Allah (A) say, 'A free human being is free in all circumstances. Should a misfortune befall him he bears it with patience (sabr). If calamities strike him, they don't shatter him. If taken captive and subdued; he turns hardship into ease, as was the case of Joseph, the truthful and trustworthy (A). His freedom saved him from harm, although he was enslaved, subdued, and imprisoned. The darkness of the pit, the dread and whatever befell him did him no harm, until God favored him and made the insolent tyrant, who had been his master, his slave. Then God made him His apostle and through him was merciful to a people. In this way patience is followed by good. So be patient and reconcile yourself to patience in order to be rewarded."[1]

Exposition

Naibah' is the singular of nawa'ib, which means 'events' and 'accidents' and according to al-Sihah means misfortune (musibah). Dakka is synonymous with daqqa, which means 'to is conjoined to pound', crush', 'grind', and 'to knock'. Al-Sihah says:دَكَكْتُ الشَّيْءَ أَدُكُّهُ دَكّاً إِذَا ضَرَبْتَهُ وَكَسَرْتُهُ حَتَّى سَوَّيْتُهُ بِالأَرْضِ It also remarks, تَدَاكَّتْ عَلَيْهِ: أَيْ تَدَاقَّتْ.

This world also gives the sense of swarming, crowding and pressing together (ijtima' and izdiham), as mentioned in al-Nihayah. In a hadith, Amir al-Muminin (A) is reported to have said:[2] ثُمَّ تَدَاكَكْتُمْ عَلَيَّ تَدَاكُكَ الإبِلِ الهِيمِ عَلَى حِياضِها means, إزْدَحَمْتُمْ.

According to al-Nihayah, dakka also means casara (to break). In the present noble tradition, following it, although the لَمْ تَكْسِرْهُ the former meaning is more appropriate in view of the phrase وَقُهِـــرَ signifies wusliyyah and is وإنْ أَسِـــرَ in وsecond meaning also fits here. The preposition in some manuscripts, وَاسْتُبْدِلَ بِاليُسْرِ عُسْراً conjoined to it. Al Majlisi (M) states that it is وَاسْتُبْدِلَ thus making it the result of sabr. , لَمْ تَكْسِرْهُ and is accordingly conjoined to is the active subject of the verbal لَـمْ يَضُـرُّ is the passive participle and أَنْ اسْـتُعْبِدَ The phrase in Wasa'il al-Shi'ah. It seems اسْـتُعْبِدَ and appears as , اسْـتُعْبِدَ sentence. In Mir'at al Uqul it is that it is a calligraphers error in the manuscript of the Mir'at , although its meaning is not totally invalid. However, that which is in Wasa'il is more in agreement with the totality and content of implying that Joseph was not harmed by ,ظُلْمَةُ الجُبِّ is conjoined to وَمَا نَالَهُ .the noble tradition

that which he suffered at his brothers hands, nor by grief and adversity.

As to the phrase أَنْ مَـنَّ اللهُ, it appears that it involves the ellipsis of إلـى (and relates to لَـمْ until) in two possible yet conflicting ways. Al-Majlisi (M) has mentioned several possible تَضْـــــــرُرْ meanings of it whose description is not devoid of prolixity. The meaning of the master of Joseph (A) becoming his slave is that he became subservient and obedient to him (A).

Desire, The Source Of All Bondage

Let it be known to you that in a man subjugated to the domination of lust and carnal desire, his servitude, servility and indignity increase in proportion to the intensity of their domination; for servitude means complete submission and obedience. The man obedient to lusts and subjugated to the carnal self is their obedient slave. He submissively obeys whatever they command and is a humble and obedient servant and slave in front of them. This obedience reaches a limit when he prefers obedience to them to obedience to the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He prefers their service to the service of the real King of kind.

In that state, honor, dignity and freedom depart from his heart on which then settle the dusts of indignity, destitution and servitude. He becomes humble before worldly people and his heart bows down in prostration before them and before the possessors of worldly power and glory. In order to achieve the objects of his carnal desires and to satisfy the craving of his belly and underneath, he submits to all kinds of disgrace and indignities.

As long as he remains in the bondage of lust and the carnal self, he does not abstain from violating the demands of honor, freedom and chivalry. He readily submits to the obedience of anyone, and is willing to accept favor from any insignificant person, as soon as he sees the probability of attaining his objective through his means, even if that person is the meanest and basest of all creation and even if the probability involved is something imaginary. And it is said that mere fancy is the proof of the greedy.

The servants of lust and mundane ambition have put on the shackles of slavery to carnal desire. They are ready to be slaves of anyone whom they know or imagine to be of worldly benefit to them. If verbally they declare themselves to be chaste and honorable, such lip service to honor is mere deception, for their words and deeds contradict such a declaration. This servility and captivity is a thing which always causes man to undergo suffering, pain, dishonor and distress. Hence a man with a sense of honor and dignity should seriously strive to cleanse himself of this abomination by all means and deliver himself from this bondage. Such purification and emancipation can only be attained through a fundamental treatment, which takes place through curative knowledge and action.

As to curative action, it consists of religious exercises and opposition to the carnal self. Over a period of time these free the soul from excessive love of the world and the pursuit of carnal lust and desire, until it becomes accustomed to virtues and moral excellences. As to curative knowledge, it lies in making oneself understand and causing this to enter into his heart that other creatures are as weak, needy, dependent and impoverished as himself. He should tell his heart, “Since all other creatures are, like me, dependent, in matters big and small, on Him Who is absolutely Able and Powerful, they are not capable of fulfilling anyone’s needs. They are too insignificant to deserve the soul’s attention or the heart’s humbleness. The same Powerful Being that has bestowed honor, dignity and riches upon them is capable of bestowing these on anybody. In fact, it is a matter of shame that man should submit so much to dishonor and indignity for the sake of his belly and his lusts as to accept the favor of an insignificant, impoverished, powerless and lowly creature devoid of wisdom and vision. If at all you should seek anyone’s favor, then seek the favor of the Absolutely Self-Sufficient, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, for if you pay attention to His sacred Essence and make your heart humble in His presence, that will liberate you from both the worlds and emancipate you from the servitude of creatures, as it has been said:[3] That is, the inner, invaluable essence of servitude to God is freedom and lordship. Thus servitude to God, attention to the unique focus of all being, and subjugation of all powers and dominations to the Sovereignty of God create such a state in the devotee’s heart that he comes to wield power and kingdom over all the worlds. His spirit rises to such heights of sublimity that he does not pay obeisance to anyone except the Sacred Divine Essence, and even if, accidentally, he should be under the domination and power of anyone, that does not shake his heart, which preserves its independence and freedom, as in the case of Joseph (A) and Luqman (A) whose apparent subservience and servitude did not harm their free and freedom-seeking character. And there may be many a powerful despot and king, who having no trace of inner freedom, dignity and honor in their character, are base servants and obedient slaves of lust and carnal desire and who obsequiously ingratiate themselves to creatures.

Imam ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn (A) is reported to have said in the course of a discourse: I am ashamed to ask anything of worldly things from their Creator, so how can I seek them from creatures like myself?[4]

My dear, if you are not ashamed of seeking the world, at least don’t ask for it of weak creatures like yourself. Do understand that creatures have no power to do anyone any worldly good. I admit that you might have succeeded in attracting someone’s attention through a thousand indignity and cajolery, but his will has no effect in the kingdom of God and no one has any role

in the dominion of the King of kings.

Hence do not degrade yourself so much by flattering insignificant creatures for the sake of a passing world and for passing and paltry desires. Don't forget your Lord and preserve your freedom. Remove the shackles of servitude and captivity and never forget Him under any circumstance, for, as stated in the noble tradition: The freeman is free in all circumstances.

Let it be known to you that contentment comes from the heart and the absence of neediness is a spiritual state, unrelated to external matters that lie outside the human self. I have myself seen certain persons amongst rich and wealthy classes who say thins which no honorable poor man would say and whose statements are shameful. The hearts of those wretches were covered by the dusts of dishonor and destitution.

The Jews, who, in proportion to their number, are the richest and wealthiest of all people on the earth, have faces that manifest debasement, poverty, indigence, beggarliness, hunger and wretchedness. They spend all their lives in hardship, indignity, destitution and squalor. This is nothing but their inner poverty and spiritual abasement.

I have seen amongst pious and darvish-like persons some individuals whose hearts are so magnanimously free of want and need that they look at the entire world with indifference and consider none except the Sacred Essence of God Almighty as deserving of making a request. You too study carefully the conditions of worldly and ambitious people and you will find that their lack of self-respect and their degradation in flattering others is greater than that of others and their obsequiousness in front of people is greater.

Those (pseudo mystic masters) who are in pursuit of disciples and claim to guide others, suffer indignities and put up with degrading flattery and ingratiation for some day's satisfaction of their carnal lusts. The heart of the seeker of disciples and adherents is humbler in front of the disciple than that of the latter in front of him. This is because of the difference in the character of their respect for one another. While the disciple's humbleness and affection is of a spiritual and godly character, the master's affection has a mundane and satanic character: These that have been mentioned are the worldly forms of these evils and indignities. But were the curtains to rise, the real spiritual forms of these servitudes, bondages and chains of carnal lusts and desires will reveal themselves. Perhaps the seventy-cubit chain, of which God Almighty has informed us, a chain with which we shall be shackled and bound in that world, is the Hereafterly form of this very servitude and subjugation to the domination of Passion and Anger. And God Almighty declares: And they shall find all they wrought present. (18:49)

And He also says: (God charges no soul save to its capacity;) standing to its account is what it has earned, and against its account what it has merited.(2:286)

That is, that which we obtain in the other world is a form of our own deeds. Therefore, break away the lengthy chains of lust and desire. Remove the locks that bar the heart's entrance and set yourself free from bondage. Live like a free human being in this world so that you may be free in the other world; otherwise, you will encounter there the intolerable Hereafterly form of this bondage. The hearts of the saints of God, despite their absolute and total freedom from bondage, were so much dreadful of the final outcome and so much full of lamentations that it amazes all minds.

I am aware that the matters mentioned in these pages are of a common and repetitive character. However, there is nothing wrong in such repetition, for constant reminding of the self and repetition of the truth is a desirable thing. This is why repetition has been considered desirable in prayers, supplications, worship and rituals. The main purpose is to accustom the self by means of repetitive exercises.

My dear, don't be deluded; understand that as long as man remains in the bondage of the carnal self and its desires and as long as the lengthy chains of Passion and Anger are around his neck, he cannot attain to any of the spiritual stations; the inward authority of the soul and the domination of its higher will shall not manifest itself. Also, the station of spiritual independence and dignity, which is one of the highest of spiritual stations, shall not be realized. Rather, this bondage and slavery restrains man from revolting against the authority of the carnal self. And when the authority of the carnal self and Satan becomes consolidated in the inward realm and all the faculties of the self become their obedient slaves, becoming submissive and humble in front of them, they do not remain satisfied with mere sins. Little by little, they draw man from minor to major sins and from there to weakening of beliefs, from there to darkening of the intellect, from there to the constricted path of denial and contestation (of the truth), and from there to the hostility and enmity of the prophets and the awliya'. Throughout these stages, the self, which is their slave and under their domination, cannot disobey them. At last this obedience and captivity becomes so severe that it may take man to the most dangerous point.

Hence, the intelligent man with sympathy for himself must try by all means to liberate himself from this slavery, and as long as there is opportunity and his powers are intact and his life, health and youth are there and his faculties have not been totally subjugated (by Satan and the carnal self), he must rise to undertake this task. For some time he must exercise vigilance over himself, study his own inner states, reflect about the conditions of those who have passed away and faced an evil fate, and make his heart understand the passing character of worldly life. He must awaken his heart and inform it of the truth narrated from the Holy Prophet (S)

who said: The world is the farm of the Hereafter.[5]

That is, if we do not sow the seeds of righteous deeds in the few days of our life here, the opportunity will be lost for ever. When we reach the threshold of the other world and death seizes us, deeds come to an end., hopes are extinguished. If, God forbid, we continue to remain in the slavery of lusts and the captivity of various carnal desires until the Angel of Death arrives, it is possible that Satan may achieve his ultimate objective of wresting away our faith. He may treat us in such a fashion and metamorphose our hearts to such an extent that we may depart from the world as enemies of God and His prophets and awliya'. If that happens, God knows what calamities, what darkness and what terrors await us.

So, O base self! O negligent heart! Awake from thy sleep and arise to confront this enemy who for years has subdued you and made a captive of you, who drags you whenever he wants and commands you to perform every ugly and destructive deed! Arise and break these bonds! Sever these chains! Seek thy freedom and throw away this disgrace and indignity. Wear the girdle of servitude to God, the Almighty and the Glorious, that you may be free from every kind of servitude and slavery, that you may attain to the absolute kingdom of God in both the worlds.

My dear, although this world - being the believer's prison - is not the abode of Divine award and the place of the manifestation of God's kingdom, but should you come out from the captivity of the carnal self and submit to the servitude of God, make your heart a true monotheist and clear the dusts of plurality from the mirror of the spirit, and turn your heart's attention to the focal point of Absolute Perfection, you will witness its effects in this world itself and your heart will attain such an expanse that it will become the realm of the manifestation of God's total sovereignty, thus becoming greater than all the worlds. Hence He has said: Neither [the vastness of] My earth, nor [that of] My heaven can contain Me. Indeed it is the heart of the man of faith which can contain Me.[6]

Such richness and contentment will then pervade your heart that all the outward and inward realms will become worthless in your eyes and your will, will become so mighty that it shall not attach itself to the corporeal and the celestial realms; rather it will not even consider them worthy of itself.

You have watched the bird's flight; But should you remove the shackles of lust, You will witness .the flight of man

Sabr, The Outcome Of Freedom From Lust

One of the great results and precious fruits of this freedom and emancipation from servitude to

the carnal self is patience in calamities and misfortunes. Now it remains for us to explain briefly the meaning of sabr, the kinds of its fruits and its relation to freedom.

As defined by the researcher of the righteous sect, the explorer of the subtleties of the confirmed creed, the perfect in knowledge and deed, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (Q)[7] sabr means restraining the self from agitation when confronted with undesirables. And the famous, confirmed 'arif (Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari), says in Manazil al-sa'irin: Sabr means restraining the self from complaint about hidden anguish.

And let it be known to you that sabr has been considered as one of the stations of those in the middle group (mutawassitun), for as long as the self regards misfortunes and calamities as detestable and feels inward anguish on their account, its marifah is deficient. Thus the station of rida in regard to Divine destiny and satisfaction at the turning up of misfortunes represents a higher station, although we consider this also to be one of the stations pertaining to the mutawassitun. So also sabr in regard to abstinence from sins and in regard to fulfillment of duties (ta'at) is also related to deficient knowledge of the secrets of ibadat and the Hereafterly forms of sin and obedience.

For if one were to understand the reality of ibadah and to believe in the purgatorial forms of worships and sins, sabr in regard to these has no meaning for him. Rather, the contrary becomes true here, and if a joy or comfort causes him to neglect worship or commit a sin, they (such joys and comforts) become detestable for him and his inward anguish becomes greater than that of those who bear misfortunes and calamities patiently.

The righteous servant and the knower of the duties of servitude, the possessor of noble stations and miraculous characteristics, 'Ali ibn 'Tawus (Q) is narrated to celebrate the first day of his becoming mukallaf. He gave feasts and festivated in commemoration of that day, for God, the Blessed and the Supreme, had blessed him with the permission to perform duties on that day. Can anyone say that that sublime spirit exercised sabr in regard to worship and duties considering them as inwardly unwelcome?

What a difference between us and those obedient servants of God! We think that God Almighty has burdened us with duties; we consider them troublesome and view them as a botheration. If one of us attempts to offer his prayer at the outset of its time, he says that it is better to be done with it and the sooner one relieves oneself the better! All our misfortunes are due to ignorance and foolishness and on account of the lack or absence of faith.

In any case, sabr is concealed anguish. And that which has been said about the great prophets and the Righteous Imams - who have been characterized with sabr - that could mean forbearance in regard to physical sufferings, which are painful as a matter of human nature; or

it could mean sabr in regard to separation from the Beloved, which is one of the great stations of the lovers --and to this we shall return later. Otherwise, sabr in regard to obedience or misfortune or sin is not only inapplicable in regard to them but also in regard to their followers (shi'ah).

The famous 'arif 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani, in Sharh Manazil al sa'irin, says: The intent of the Shaykh, when he says that sabr means abstinence from complaint, is complaining to creatures. Otherwise, complaining to God Almighty and beseeching Him for relief is not opposed to sabr. Hadrat Ayyub complained to God and said: Behold, Satan has visited me with weariness and chastisement. (38:41)

And God yet praises him, saying: Surely We found him. a steadfast man. How excellent a servant he was! He was penitent. (38:44)

And Hadrat Ya'qub (Jacob) said: I make complaint of my anguish and my sorrow unto God, (12:86)

Although he was one of the forbearing. Rather, to quit complaining to God is a manifestation of the hardening (of the heart) and a sign of grudgefulness.

The accounts of the lives of the great prophets and the Infallible Imams - upon all of whom be God's benedictions- reveal that although their stations were over and above the stations of sabr, rida and taslim (surrender), they never stopped supplicating lamenting and confessing their impotence before the Worshipped One. They expressed their needs to God Almighty and this is not contrary to their spiritual stations.

Rather, remembering God, cherishing the intimacy of solitude with the Beloved, and expression of servitude and humility in front of His absolute perfection and greatness is the ultimate end of the hopes of the mystics ('arifun) and the final destination of the journey of the wayfarers ((salikun.

Results of Sabr

You should know that sabr produces many results, among which is the soul's training and discipline. If a human being bears patiently with misfortunes and calamities for some time, if he seriously endures the hardships entailed by worship and rites and the bitterness arising from the renunciation of carnal pleasures, and if he does all this for the sake of obedience to his Lord and Provider, his soul gradually becomes accustomed to these things. Then it becomes disciplined and docile and relinquishes its earlier recalcitrance. To bear with hardships and difficulties becomes an easy thing for it. There develops within it an enduring luminous faculty through which he can rise over the station of sabr to reach other higher

spiritual stations.

Sabr in regard to sins is the source of the self's taqwa. Sabr in regard to obedience (ta'at) is the source of intimacy with God. And sabr in misfortunes is the source of rids or contentment with Divine destiny and decrees. These are the stations of the faithful (ahl al- iman) or rather those of the gnostics (ahl al-'irfan). In the noble traditions of the Infallible Ahl al-Bayt we find forceful emphasis on sabr. The following is a tradition of Imam al-Sadiq (A) from the noble al-Kafı, in which the Imam says: Verily, sabr is to faith what the head is to the body. The body perishes without the head, and so also when sabr goes faith also disappears?[8]

In another tradition whose isnad reaches Imam al-Sajjad (A), he is reported to have stated: Verily, sabr is to faith what the head is to the body: one who has no sabr has no faith.[9]

There are many traditions relating to this topic and we will mention some of them later in relevance with the context.

Sabr is the key to the gates of felicity and the main means of deliverance from mortal perils. Sabr makes man bear calamities with ease and face difficulties with composure. It strengthens the will and the power of resolution. It brings independence to the dominion of the soul. Anguish and anxiety on the other hand, aside from their shameful character, are symptoms of the soul's weakness. They deprive one's being of its stability, weaken the determination, and enfeeble the intellect. The informed researcher Khwajah Naqir al-Din al-Tusi (Q) states: Sabr restrains the inner being from anguish, the tongue from complaint and the bodily members from untoward movements.

On the contrary, the inward being of the impatient person is full of anxiety and alarm. His heart is full of tremors and shaky, and this. is itself the greatest calamity that can befall a human being and deprive him of peace. But sabr diminishes misfortune and makes the heart overcome hardship and assists the will to overpower calamities. In the same way, the impatient person complains of his troubles to everyone, and this, aside from causing disrepute among people who look down upon him as a weakling of instable character, makes him lose his standing in the court of the Holy Lord and in front of His angels.

What faith in God and what surrender to the Holy Lord has the servant who cannot bear an adversity that visits him from his Beloved, the Absolute, after having received thousands upon thousands of His bounties and while being immersed in the sea of His favor, and opens his mouth in front of people to complain as soon as an adversity strikes him? So it is right if it is said that one who has no sabr has no faith.

If you have faith in your Lord and believe all the affairs to lie in His mighty hands, if you believe none else to have any say in the matters, of course you will not complain of the hardships of

life and the adversities that strike you before God Almighty. Rather you will accept them willingly and thank Him gratefully for His bounties.

Hence that inner agitation, those plaintive utterances, those unbecoming bodily movements - all these bear testimony to our lack of faith. As long as we find ourselves amid favors, we are grateful, with a gratefulness that is formal and lacking inner substance, a gratefulness that is offered in greed of further favors. However, when a tragedy occurs or a pain or disease strikes us, we take our complaints against the Blessed and the Almighty Lord in front of the creatures. With a plaintive tongue and a tone brimming with taunts and cynicism, we complain about Him to all and sundry. Gradually those complaints, anxieties and misgivings sow the seeds of hostility towards God and His decrees inside the self. Slowly they sprout and grow, making the once passing feeling into an enduring trait.

Thereupon, God forbid, the form of one's inward being assumes the form of enmity towards God and His ordainments. When that happens, things go out of one's control and one is no longer able to check his thoughts and feelings. His inward and outward being becomes colored with the hostility towards God Almighty, and he departs from this world to face eternal wretchedness and gloom, with a spirit infused with the enmity and hatred of the Lord of Bounties. I seek refuge in God from the evil of a disastrous end and from a provisional faith (iman mustawda'). Hence it has been truly said that when sabr goes faith also departs.

And so, my dear, the matter is of great importance and the road is full of perils. Muster all the strength at your command and be patient and forbearing throughout the ups and downs of life. With manly courage stand against adversities and calamities. Make your self understand that agitation and anguish, aside from involving a great shame by themselves, are futile in confrontation with sufferings and calamities. No purpose is served by complaining about the irresistible decrees and inevitable ordainments of God in front of weak and powerless creatures, as pointed out by the following noble tradition from al-Kafi: Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni reports with his chain of transmitters from Sama'ah ibn Mihran from Imam al-Kazim (A) that the Imam said to him, "What stopped you from going for hajj?" Sama'ah says that he replied, "May I be your ransom, a big debt has fallen upon me and I have lost my property. However, the debt that lies upon me weighed more heavily upon me than the loss of property. Had it not been for one of our companions, I could not have come out of it." The Imam said, "If you are patient, you will be the object of envy, and if you don't God will enforce His decrees regardless of your pleasure or displeasure."[10]

Thus we know that anxiety and anguish are not only futile, they are capable of inflicting terrible injuries and are followed by fatal consequences destructive to faith. On the other hand, sabr,

forbearance and restraint bring fair, plentiful rewards and have sublime and beautiful forms in the world of Barzakh. This is stated at the end of the noble tradition expounded by us: Thus the ultimate result of qabr is good in this world - as known from the example of Hadrat Yusuf (A) - and it is the cause of reward in the Hereafter. In another noble tradition of al-Kafi, whose sanad goes up to Abu Hamzah al-Thumali (M)Imam al-Sadiq (A) is reported to have said: Abu Hamzah says: Abu Abd Allah said: "Whoever of the believers that bears patiently with a tribulation that befalls him, has the reward of a thousand martyrs."[11]

There are many traditions relating to this subject and we will mention some of them in the following section. However, as to that which was said above that sabr has a beautiful purgatorial form, this is mentioned - apart from the demonstrative proofs confirming it - in the following tradition of the noble al-Kafi from Imam al-Sadiq (A): The Imam (A) said, "When the believer enters his grave, salat is on his right hand, zakat on his left, virtue faces him, with sabr taking him under its shelter. When the two angels in charge of questioning enter upon him, sabr says to salat, zakat and virtue: Take care of your companion, and if you fail to assist him I will [take care of him myself."[12

The Degrees And Levels Of Sabr

Let it be known to you that, as indicated by the noble traditions, there are various degrees and levels of sabr, and its reward and merit vary in accordance with its degree and level. This is revealed by the following tradition of the noble al-Kafi narrated by the Master of the God-fearing, Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A) from the Holy Prophet (S): 'Ali (A) said: The Messenger of Allah said: "Sabr Is of three kinds: sabr at the time of affliction, sabr in regard to obedience, and sabr in regard to disobedience. One who bears patiently with affliction, resisting it with a fair consolation, God writes for him three hundred degrees (of sublimity), the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between earth and heavens. And one who is patient in regard to obedience, God writes for him six hundred degrees (of sublimity), the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between the earth's depths and the Throne (al-'arsh). And one who is patient in regard to disobedience, God writes for him nine hundred degrees (of sublimity), the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between the earth's depths and the furthest frontiers of the Throne."[13]

This noble tradition reveals that sabr in regard to disobedience is superior to the other levels of sabr, for it not only possesses greater number of degrees but also the range between its degrees is greater than those of the other kinds. It also shows that the extent of Paradise is much greater than what can come into our imagination, for our vision is limited and confined.

That which has been said as a description of Paradise that: And a Garden the breadth whereof is as the breadth of heaven and earth. (57:21)

(The Verse) perhaps refers to the Paradise of deeds. That which has been referred to here in this noble tradition is the Paradise of character and the criterion in the Paradise of character is the strength and perfection of will. Hence its extent should not be confined within any limits. Some have stated that that which has been meant here is height. That is, it is possibly equal in breadth (to the Paradise of deeds) and different in height. But this appears to be remote, for evidently 'breadth' here refers to extent not to breadth as opposed to length, for 'breadth' in reference to heaven and earth also has no meaning when taken in the ordinary sense of something opposed to length, although they do have 'breadth' in the sense of a 'second dimension' in the terminology of natural philosophers. The Book of God, however, does not speak in accordance with any specific terminology.

The noble al-Kafı records the following tradition of the Prophet (S) with a chain of narration reaching Imam al-Sadiq (A):

The Imam (A) said: The Messenger of Allah (S) said, "A time will come upon the people wherein political authority will not be attainable without bloodshed and tyranny, nor wealth without usurpation and stinginess, nor affection without discarding religion and pursuing lust and desire. Whoever lives in such times and bears patiently with poverty despite possessing the capacity to become rich (illegitimately), and bears up with hostility despite being capable of acquiring favor and affection, and bears with humiliation despite possessing the capacity to acquire honor, God will give him the reward of fifty truthful ones, of those who confirmed me."[14]

Something close to this has been said in another tradition from Amir al Mu'minin (A) and there are many traditions relating to this theme. The few which have been quoted here are sufficient for our purpose.

The 'Urafa's Degrees of Sabr: Let it be known to you that that which has been said hitherto relates to the condition of ordinary people and the mutawassitun. We stated at the beginning of this exposition that sabr has been considered as something pertaining to the stations of the mutawassitun. But Sabr hays other levels which belong to the wayfarers of the path of perfection and the awliya'. One of such levels of sabr is sabr fi Allah (Sabr in God), and it means steadfastness (thabat) in spiritual endeavor (mujahadah) and abstinence from objects of love and attraction. Rather it means the renunciation of selfhood in the path of the Beloved. This stage belongs to the wayfarers (ahl al-suluk). Another level is that of sabr ma'a Allah (sabr with God). It belongs to those blessed with the Presence and the Beatific vision, which

comes at the time of exit from the garment of manhood, and freedom from the curtains of deeds and attributes, and irradiation upon the heart of the lights of the Names and Attributes, and entry into the state of intimacy and awe and safeguarding of the self against changing from color to color and absence from the station of intimacy and vision.

Another level is that of sabr 'an Allah (sabr from God) which pertains to the stations of lovers of God and piners for Him, of those blessed with epiphany (ahl al-shuhud wa al-'ayan) at the time of returning to their own world, the world of plurality and sobriety (after intoxication with God). This is the hardest and the most difficult of the stations, and to it has referred the Master of the Wayfarers, the Commander of the Faithful, and the Leader of the Perfect (i.e. 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A) in the noble Du'a' Kumayl: O my God, my Master and my Lord! Even if I were able to endure Thy chastisement, how shall I bear Thy separation?

The following is narrated about al-Shibli: It is narrated that a youth from among the Lovers questioned al-Shibli about sabr. "Which kind of sabr is the hardest?" He asked. "The sabr for God," replied al-Shibli. "No," said the youth. "The sabr by God," answered al-Shibli. "No," said the youth. "The sabr over God," said al-Shibli. "No," said the youth again. "The sabr in God," said al-Shibli. "No," came the answer. "The sabr with God?" said al Shibii, and the youth said "No," again. "Woe to you, which one is it?" said al-Shibli, exasperated. "The sabr from God," came the answer. Al-Shibli gave a cry and swooned.[15]

Another level is that of sabr bi Allah, which is for those blessed with stability and steadfastness, which is attained after the state of sobriety and endurance with God (baqa' bi Allah) and after moulding oneself in accordance with Divine norms (takhalluq bi akhlaq Allah). It is something attained by none except the perfect, and since we have nothing to partake of those stations, to elaborate further about these matters is not appropriate for these pages.

And Praise is God's at the beginning and the end, and may God's benedictions be upon Muhammad and, his immaculate Progeny.

Notes:

[1] Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, ii, Kitab al- iman wa al-kufr, bab al-sabr, 128. hadith No. 6.

[2] Ibn al-'Athir, al-Nihayah, ii, 128.

[3] Misbah al-Shariah, bab 100.

[4] Ilal al-Shari'ah, i, 165; Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, x, 29.

[5] Ihya' al-ulum, iv, 14.

[6] Ghwali al-lia'ili, iv, 7.

[7] For maintaining readability, (Q) which is an acronym for "Quddisa sirruh" is used throughout

the book to denote “May God sanctify his/their soul(s).” It is used for the deceased ulama, urafa, and awliya.

[8] Usul al-Kafı, ii, bab al-sabr, 128, hadith No. 2.

[9] Usul al-Kafi, hadith No. 3.

[10] Usul al-Kafi, hadith No. 10.

[11] Usul al-Kafı. hadith No. 17.

[12] Usul al-Kafi, hadith No. 8.

[13] Usul al-Kafi, hadith No. 15.

[14] Usul al-Kafı, hadith No. 12.

.[15] Sharh Manazil al-sa’irin, bab al-sabr, 88. No.28