

GUIDE US IN THE RIGHT PATH ( AlFateha- 6)

Muslims recurringly utter 'GUIDE US IN THE RIGHT PATH' atleast ten times a day in their daily prayers. The question that logically arises is that if Islam is already the right path on which the Muslims are, why do they then have to pray daily imploring Allah to guide them to the right path. Since the very fact of saying the daily prayers implies the fact that they do believe in Islam, what is the point in asking God to guide on a straight path ?

It is a fact that the notion of 'guide us in the right path' has not only been formulated for the purpose of uttering it in every prayer, but because man is always in need of Divine Guidance. Why ? Because human life is not similar to the highly automated cycles of a machine or a computer that work according to certain predetermined designs or program. Man on the other hand, is ever in the process of making choice and selection, and this condition requires a constant guidance. Man is a perpetual seeker and explorer, an explorer is in ever need of ~~guidance~~ a guide. Who can be a better guide than Allah whose guidance can lead man through the complex intricacies of worldly life and invigorate and revive in him ~~of-his~~ the consciousness and awareness that can warn him of dangers and remind him of his duties. (1)

The word " IHDENA" i.e. guide- show us has a wide meaning and is not restricted to the knowledge or practice of any doctrine. Man has to be ever seeking the knowledge of the higher truths leading to the higher spiritual elevations open to his personal progress. The 'right or straight path' in this verse does not confine itself to mean only doctrine of Islam. Prayer for guidance to the right path comprehends all aspects of the life of human souls in the world viz physical, mental, moral and spiritual. In the higher sense, it is a prayer for the spiritual assistance to enable man to reach the destination in accordance with the object of his creation into this world.

It is also known phenomenon that the essential prerequisite for following the right path is the intense love of the correctly guided ones. It is to serve this necessity of man that the Holy Prophet enjoined love his Ahlul Bait who being divinely guided and have undoubtedly been always on the right path. They were sent to act as models for ordinary members of human race to copy so as to reach the various heights of divine grace (2)

For those not on a right path to pray for guidance is understandable but for those already believing with conviction in the right path of Islam to do so, sounds rather strange. In particular what could be the purpose behind the Prophet and the Imams who were perfect and infallible human beings to utter such a prayer ?



Man in the course of the right path is subject to the risk of deviation and going astray. For this very reason, he is required in every possible moment of his life to pray to God for protection to remain steadfast on the right path of Isla

Our existence can be compared with that of an electric bulb providing light in a place. When one sees the light from the bulb constantly and evenly diffusing he may think that electricity was there filled in and closely linked with the bulb. Whereas it is not so, because every moment the electricity supply is renewed from its source through the electric wires and as the bulb goes on receiving it, it continues to diffuse the light. Slight cut in the continuous supply of electricity can be seen to cause disturbance to the light resulting into a black out.

Similarly our existence is like that of an electric bulb appearing to be static but in fact in fact every moment is a new phase needing infusion of life from the original source of Divine Grace. Accordingly since every moment of our life is a fresh one, we need renewed guidance from Allah.

Secondly, the repeated prayer for guidance is to enable us to move forward on the path of perfection, gradually putting back any harmful and imperfect factors in our lives. It is meant for the attainment of yet further stages of perfection and this where the Prophet and Imams also come in. Since only Allah is an absolute Perfect Being, all the created beings without any exception are in the course of marching forward towards higher stages of elevation. So there could be no objection if they were also to pray from Allah for guidance for yet further <sup>higher</sup> stages of perfect. The holy Qura'n supports this fact by the following ayats:

"AND (as for) WHO FOLLOW THE RIGHT DIRECTION, HE INCREASES THEM IN GUIDANCE AND GIVES THEM THEIR GUARDING" (against evil) (Muhammad- 17)

"ALLAH WILL EXALT THOSE OF YOU WHO BELIEVE, AND THOSE WHO ARE GIVEN KNOWLEDGE, IN HIGH DEGREES" (Almujadilat- 11) (3)

- References: (1) Dr.S.M.Beheshti- Al Tawhid p.50  
(2) Mir Ahmedali- The Holy Qura'n p.22  
(3) Nasir Makarim- Tafsire Namona p.26