

NATURAL AVENUES OF GOD-KNOWING

LECTURE SIX

BENEFITS OF SELF - KNOWLEDGE

In an effort to seek and attain self-knowledge, it is man himself who benefits. The more his mind opens up as a result of meditation and self-search, the more he realizes the true status of himself, the clearer it becomes of his relationship with Allah.

A. MAN'S LIMITATION & WEAKNESSES

Man is entirely dependent upon Nature, life giving heat, comfortable temperature, water to drink, food to eat, night to sleep, air to breathe. Nothing is really his own.

When man considers his origin, how he was born out of a sperm-a tiny life-germ, how dependent he was on his parents for his upbringing till he could stand on his own feet. When he considers how short his life-span is in this world, how a sudden death unforeseen by him, can bring an end to his life thus returning him to dust, when he considers his inability to accomplish everything he wants, his weaknesses and ailments, he is likely to give up arrogance and pride and feel his nothingness before the Might and Glory of Allah.

In eloquent words as recorded in Nahjul Balagha (No.428), Ali Bin Abi Talib A.S. described the weaknesses of man:

"How wretched the son of Adam (man) is, his death is hidden (from him), his ailments are concealed, his actions are preserved, the bite of a bed-bug pains him, choking causes his death and sweat gives him a bad smell"

B. FAILURE OF HUMAN INTENTIONS

One of the weaknesses of mankind is his inability to have absolute control over his plans and resolutions. He has no control over the seasonal unexpected changes and loss to agriculture - too little or too much rain, storms, earthquakes that devour cities in minutes.

Take example for one who makes all plans and preparations for a journey on a particular day and time. At the last moment, something unforeseen and unexpected happens whereby all his

plans fail and he is obliged to cancel them. This shows that there is an unseen Power over us which has a final hold over our affairs and can do or undo things as He wishes. To Imam Ali Abi Talib (A.S.), this is a sign of God-knowing. To a person who had inquired from him as to how he recognized God, the Imam said:

"I have come to know my Lord by cancellation of resolutions and breaking of courage"

C. SELF - KNOWLEDGE LEADS TO GOD-FEARING

The more one meditates and understands his origin, the short span of his life, his inability to control all his affairs and the unknown time of his death, the more fear of God he would cherish in his heart.

When man recognizes his true value, his divinely endowed superiority over other creatures, he would naturally hate to spend his life in the same way as sheep and cow do. Through his faculty of thinking and differentiating between good and bad, provided he thinks and understands, he would realize that he has not been sent to this world just to eat, drink, sleep like animals do. That he has to live a purposeful life and attain the pleasure of his Creator. On the result of this self-awareness, Ali Bin Abi Talib A.S. says:

"Of the people, the one who is more aware of his own self, is more God-fearing"

D. RESTRAINT FROM SINFUL LIFE

In worldly matters, we notice that one does not use a valuable object for lowly cheap purpose. For example, we would never think of getting a shovel made of gold and use it in digging our garden. Why, because we consider gold to be much more valuable and for higher use for adornment and decoration.

Likewise when one becomes fully aware of his own self, the purpose of his life, his relationship with Allah as the

supreme of all creatures, he would hesitate to lower his status by committing sins and disobey his Creator. And that is why this realization of oneself leading to restraint from sins is described by Ali Bin Abi Talib (A.S.) as the best achievement of success in life:

"The best of triumph-victory is for the one who has succeeded in attaining self-knowledge"

SUMMARY

1. Realization of man's general weaknesses leads to understanding the Power of Allah.
2. Failure of man's plans is a sign of God's absolute controlling Power.
3. Self-knowledge leads one to God-fearing.
4. Self-knowledge restrains one from sinful acts.