

THE UNIQUE DISTINCTION OF ISLAM

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Imam* of the Age, reminds us that as man is created weak (“*Allah desires to make light your burdens and man is created weak*” – Holy Qur’an, 4:28), he is in constant need of Divine assistance and the way to gain this is by making continuous *du‘a* (supplication) to the Almighty for without doing so man will deprive himself of a powerful means of attaining moral, intellectual and spiritual elevation. The Holy Qur’an itself warns us: “*Say: My Lord would not care for you were it not for your prayer (du‘a)*” (25:77).

He continues by saying that supplications and hard, purposeful striving will bring rewards that no other religion can give to us and thus he strongly affirms that the chief characteristic of Islam is *du‘a*. He writes (in *Malfuzat*, Vol. 7, pp. 193-198):

One should know for a fact that this weapon and this grace have been granted to Islam alone and that all other religions are bereft of this special bounty. Why should the Arya Samaj people make *du‘a* when it is their belief that man cannot escape the endless cycle of reincarnation and so forgiveness for any sin is a futile affair? Therefore, what need or necessity is there for them to make *du‘a* and what benefits would they derive from it? From this, it is abundantly evident that according to the Arya Samaj religion *du‘a* is a fruitless exercise.

Similarly, why should the Christians make *du‘a* when they are sure that their sins would not be forgiven twice for their Messiah cannot be put on the Cross again (allegedly to die for their sins)?

Thus, these singular blessings are reserved for Islam alone and that is why this *Ummah* (community of the Holy Prophet [*sas*]) is so mercifully blessed. However, if we ourselves should deprive ourselves of this grace and close this door with our own hands, then who can we blame? When there is an ever-present life-giving spring from which we can satisfy our thirst whenever we desire then to spurn this opportunity to quench our thirst is tantamount to courting death and destruction from lack of water. The wise thing to do is to put one’s lips to this fountain and drink to satiation. This is my advice which I consider to be the pith and kernel of all Qur’anic counsels. The Holy Qur’an is divided into thirty parts which all abound with excellent admonitions and advice. However, not everyone knows from all of these exhortations which is the single most important counsel that can guide him on all the spiritual pathways disclosed by the Holy Qur’an and which unlawful things he can avoid, provided he adheres strictly to that special advice and acts steadfastly according to it. However, I say to you that the key and power to everything good and pure is *du‘a*. Take hold of *du‘a*, therefore, with all your strength. I aver with total confidence and it is also through my own experience that I affirm that Allah, Most High, would smooth all our difficulties but there is one drawback – people are unaware of the essence and reality of *du‘a*.

Du'a is not just the mumbling of a few words, for this amounts to nothing whatsoever. The true meaning of *du'a* is to beseech Allah, Most High, sincerely for His assistance. This petition becomes perfect and efficacious only when man surrenders his all to Allah, Most High, with total anguish of heart, perturbation and heart-burning and makes supplication so fervently that his soul melts like water and flows at the threshold of Divine Unity. For example, look at how a person who is embroiled in a misfortune importunes people for help in moving terms and see what a wonderful change and transformation his appeal undergoes – the tone of his voice becomes full of anguish which attracts the mercy of people.

Similarly, when a person makes *du'a* to Allah, Most High, the tone of his voice changes also and is filled with tenderness and pain that causes the fountain of Divinity to gush forth with mercy. When *du'a* is being made the modulation of one's voice should be such that every limb of the body is affected and meekness and humility issue from the tongue. The heart must also be filled with softness and agony and the limbs must surrender with total submission to the Creator.

Over and above all this, one must have consummate faith in Allah's mercy and generosity and entertain complete hope of acceptance of one's entreaty. If one should fall at the Divine threshold in such a state he will never be disappointed and in this condition he should beseech the Almighty over and over in the following manner:

“Dear Master, I am nothing but a weak, helpless sinner. Without Thy support and mercy I can never amount to anything. Please have pity on me and cleanse me of my sins for without Thy kindness and grace there is no one else who can purify me.”

When a person makes this kind of petition repeatedly and continuously and seeks Allah's assistance with patience and perseverance then at some unforeseen time a light will descend from Allah, Most High, and peace will suffuse the heart of the supplicant and thus the darkness which formerly covered his heart will be dispelled. Allah, Most High, will then endow him with a power that creates a revulsion in his heart for sins from which he will be saved. At this point he will realise that his heart which had become seized and imprisoned in low passions and carnal desires as if hundreds of thousands of chains had fettered him and were drawing him helplessly towards a life of sinfulness – at this stage he will find that these chains have been miraculously cut in a flash and he has been liberated. His former love for sin will be replaced by hatred for it and instead of fear and hatred for Allah, Most High, love for Him and a magnetic attraction in his heart for his Lord will be born as the Holy Qur'an delineates in 49:7-8: “...but Allah has endeared the faith to you and has made it seemly in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you disbelief and transgression and disobedience. Such are those who are rightly guided —A grace from Allah and a favour.”

This is a powerful truth which Islam possesses and its veracity cannot be contradicted for it is a living reality in every age. I truly affirm and proffer my personal experience as proof that if man should truly understand this matter and become cognisant of the secret

power of *du'a* he would win for himself extreme good luck and prosperity. In this regard, he should realise that all his desires would be fulfilled otherwise the immeasurable pain, grief and anxiety of this world are such that they would surely bring about his destruction.

The person whose sole concern is this world's life progresses a little and then comes up short for disappointment and futility dog him and finally lead him to perdition. On the other hand, the one whose gaze is centred on the Almighty and who employs all his faculties and powers in trying to achieve this goal and whose movements and periods of rest are all for the sake of his Lord will find that Allah, Most High, makes the world also subservient to him although there is a great difference in his case as compared with the case of the one who seeks only the pleasures of this world's life. This one becomes obsessed with this world's life whilst on the other hand the God-seeking person for whom the world has been made a slave finds no pleasure in the luxuries and comforts of this life. Instead, he develops a kind of distaste for it and he will feel as if for the first time and witness for himself that this is indeed love for his Creator and total surrender to Him. His former love, joy and ecstasy are not derived from this world but instead they descend from another source.

When man becomes a true lover of Allah, Most High, and all his comforts and pleasures are acquired from pleasing his Lord, then without a shadow of doubt this worldly life becomes his also. However, the origin of his peace and tranquillity spring from another source. He obtains no pleasure nor comfort from the pleasures of this world. It is the same way that the prophets and saints had to walk along the paths of this life but they derived no ecstasy from this earthly existence. This was because their soul was differently oriented. This is a universal law of nature: when man covets the joys of this world, he never gets them; however, when he surrenders himself totally to Allah, Most High, and forsakes the world, and there is no yearning or desire for such in his heart, then, paradoxically, the world becomes his own but now no desire for it remains in his soul. This is a fixed principle of life which we would do well never to forget – success with Allah brings in its wake success in this worldly life too! Over and over in the Holy Qur'an Allah, Most High, has maintained that if a person chooses the paths of righteousness He will remove all his difficulties for him (*“And whoever keeps his duty to Allah, He makes his affair easy for him. That is the command of Allah, which He has revealed to you. And whoever keeps his duty to Allah, He will remove from him his evils and give him a big reward”* – 65:4-5) and that He will bestow on him sustenance from whence he perceives not (*“And whoever keeps his duty to Allah, He ordains a way out for him, and gives him sustenance from whence he imagines not. And whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for him”* – 65:2-3). How magnificent are these boons and favours which can obliterate all straitness and difficulties from man and Allah, Himself, becomes the Surety for his sustenance! However, as the Almighty Himself says, this blessing can be achieved only through *taqwa* (piety) and no where does He say that this favour can be obtained through deceit and trickery in this life.

One of the signs of Allah's true devotees is that they have a great disgust for being creatures of the earth. Consequently, whoever desires to win the pleasure of his Lord and

to acquire the peace and repose of this world and the Hereafter should deliberately and consciously choose this path of *taqwa* (righteousness). On the contrary, if he should abandon this path for other ways then try as he might he will gain nothing whatsoever. There are many people who will spurn this advice and laugh at it. However, they should bear in mind that ultimately a time will come when they will realise the truth of these matters and they will manifest great regret on having wasted their lives in trifles. But by then it will be too late for regret for the opportunity will have slipped from their hands and the spectre of death will have come to them.

I still affirm and advise you to be solicitous in seeking the pleasure of Allah for if He is kind to you then the whole world will respond to you in the same manner. However, if He is angry at you then no one can be of any service to you. When His anger descends on a person no mercy will be there for him on earth no matter how many tricks or stratagems he may employ to win the approbation of people. He may count as many beads as he wants, chant the name of God as much as he likes and put on green robes (as a sign of spirituality) yet the world will look upon him with contempt. If he manages to deceive people for a few days, his veneer of religiosity will be ultimately exposed and his insincerity and cunning will become manifest to all. However, whoever comes from Allah, Most High, will never be overcome no matter how ferociously the world opposes him and no matter what insidious subterfuges they use. They may curse and abuse him but a time will certainly come when those same detractors will submit to him and be compelled to acknowledge his truthfulness. I say with all sincerity that if someone belongs to Allah, Most High, the world will flock to him. Of course, it is true that those chosen ones who come from Allah, Most High, are initially received with enmity by the people who visit them with all kinds of persecution and place every conceivable manner of obstacle in their way. No prophet or messenger ever came to earth and failed to suffer pain and adversity nor failed to be branded as a trickster, a charlatan and a self-seeking opportunist. However, notwithstanding the multitudes who wished to shoot all kinds of arrows at them, to stone them and to abuse them, they paid not the slightest heed to them and no impediment could stand in their way. They persisted in their mission to preach the word of the Almighty to the people and they strained every nerve and sinew in propagating the message they brought from their Creator. The slings and arrows of persecution and torment from their enemies slowed them down not a bit but instead opposition made them more keen and enthusiastic to the point that there came a time when Allah, Most High, made those difficulties easy for them and the opponents came to their senses and those very people fell at their feet and gave public testimony to their veracity and rectitude: the heart of man lies in the hand of the Almighty Who can cause it to change whenever He wills.

Know for a fact that all prophets met with difficulties in the dissemination of their message. The Holy Prophet (*sas*) himself was the most pre-eminent and the greatest of all the prophets of God to such an extent that the chain of prophethood came to an end with him, that is, the excellences of prophethood reached a natural culmination in him. Nevertheless, despite the grandeur and magnificence of his status everyone is aware of the difficulties and impediments he faced in propagating his message and to what limit the unbelievers tormented and persecuted him. Even his own people and his paternal

uncle and other leaders of the society also took a most prominent role in their opposition to him. The period of his torment and persecution lasted so long that for thirteen years he suffered all kinds of torture from his people. In this condition, no one could have predicted his eventual success for opposition waxed warm in every quarter and even his relatives were thirsting for his blood. As a matter of fact, when his own family and ancestral relations refused to accept him it became more difficult for others to believe in him.

In short, the period of the Holy Prophet's trials and tribulations seemed interminable.

Note from Translator on why the righteous are bound to face trials and hardships and opposition

Maulana Muhammad Ali in his book *Muhammad, The Prophet*, chapter 4, answers this question thus:

"Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and will not be tried" (29:2).

Whenever the Divine will inspires a band of righteous people to work as torch-bearers of Truth to a corrupt humanity, there never fails to appear at the same time a band of those who pitch themselves in deadly opposition to them, and inflict upon them all kinds of trouble and torture. And in truth the storm of opposition is absolutely indispensable. The persecutions to which they [righteous people of God] are subjected serve as a crucial test of the sincerity of their motives. They unhesitatingly put up with humiliations, endure hardships and cruelties, but never for a moment give up the truth for which they stand. In fact, they live if they can, for the Truth; and die, if they must, for the Truth. Besides, afflictions constitute the only training ground for fostering virtues of steadfastness and perseverance, without which man cannot attain to moral perfection. Unless one is hemmed in on all sides by overwhelming obstacles and visited with hardships and privations, one cannot cultivate these qualities. Adversities that befall such people are in fact blessings in disguise, which conduce to their moral advancement. Over and above these, there is a third object. The Almighty God wants to bring home to mankind that a plant tended by the Divine hand, however slender it may look survives the most furious blasts of hostile winds. Consequently, in accordance with this Divine law, the Holy Prophet and his companions had to suffer untold troubles at the hands of the opponents."