

مقدمة السيد الشريف الرضي

Preface by the Compiler of Nahj al-Balāghah - al-'Allāmah ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī (r.a.)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

أَمَّا بَعْدَ حَمْدِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الْحَمْدَ ثَمَنًا لِنِعْمَاتِهِ، وَمَعَاذًا مِنْ بَلَاءِهِ، وَسَبِيلًا [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسْخِ: وَوَسِيلًا] إِلَى جَنَانِهِ، وَسَبَبًا لَزِيَادَةِ إِحْسَانِهِ.

So now, praise is due to Allāh who has held praise as the price of His bounties, protection against His retribution, a pathway to His paradises, and a means for the multiplication of His good treatment.

وَالصَّلَاةِ عَلَيَّ رَسُوْلِهِ نَبِيِّ الرَّحْمَةِ، وَإِمَامِ الْأُئِمَّةِ، وَسِرَاجِ الْأُمَّةِ، الْمُنْتَخَبِ مِنْ طَيْبَةِ الْكُرْمِ، وَسَالَةِ الْمَجْدِ الْأَقْدَمِ، وَمَغْرَسِ الْفَخَارِ الْمَعْرِقِ، وَفَرْعِ الْعَلَاءِ الْمُثْمِرِ الْمَوْرِقِ.

And blessings be upon His Messenger (ﷺ), the Prophet of Mercy, the leader of leaders, the torch of the Ummah, the chosen one from the lineage of nobility and the family of long-standing honours, the plantation of all-engrossing glory, and the branch of sublimity, full of fruits and foliage.

وَعَلَيَّ أَهْلَ بَيْتِهِ مَصَابِيحَ الظُّلَمِ، وَعَصَمِ الْأُمَمِ، وَمَنَارِ الدِّينِ الْوَاضِحَةِ، وَمَثَابِلِ الْفَضْلِ الرَّاجِحَةِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ، صَلَاةٌ تَكُونُ إِزَاءً لِفَضْلِهِمْ، وَمُكَافَأَةً لِعَمَلِهِمْ، وَكِفَاءً لَطَيْبِ فِرْعِهِمْ وَأَصْلِهِمْ، مَا أَنَارَ فَجْرَ سَاطِعِ، وَخَوَى نَجْمَ طَالِعِ.

And may mercy be upon the members of his family (a.s.), who are lanterns in the darkness, a means of protection for the Ummah, brilliant minarets of the religion, and lofty standards of excellence. May Allāh shower upon them all blessings befitting their distinction, as a reward for their deeds, and in accordance with the purity of their lineage, so long as the radiant morning dawns and the twinkling stars rise and set.

فَإِنِّي كُنْتُ فِي عَنُقْوَانِ السَّنِّ [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسْخِ: شِبَابِي]، وَغَضَاضَةِ الْغُصْنِ، ابْتَدَأْتُ بِتَأْلِيفِ كِتَابٍ فِي خِصَائِصِ الْأُئِمَّةِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ: يَشْتَمِلُ عَلَيَّ مَحَاسِنَ أَخْبَارِهِمْ، وَجَوَاهِرَ كَلَامِهِمْ، حَدَانِي عَلَيْهِ غَرَضٌ ذَكَرْتَهُ فِي صَدْرِ الْكِتَابِ، وَجَعَلْتَهُ أَمَامَ الْكَلَامِ، وَفَرَعْتُ مِنَ الْخِصَائِصِ الَّتِي تَخْصُ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلِيًّا عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَعَاقَتُ عَنْ إِتْمَامِ بَقِيَّةِ الْكِتَابِ مُحَاجَزَاتِ الزَّمَانِ، وَمِمَاطَلَاتِ الْأَيَّامِ. [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسْخِ: وَعَاقَتُ عَنْ إِتْمَامِ بَقِيَّةِ الْكِتَابِ مُحَاجَزَاتِ الْأَيَّامِ، وَمِمَاطَلَاتِ الزَّمَانِ.] وَكُنْتُ قَدْ بَوَيْتُ مَا خَرَجَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ أَبُوَابَا، وَفَصَلْتُهُ فِصُولًا، فَجَاءَ فِي آخِرِهَا فَصْلٌ يَتَضَمَّنُ مَحَاسِنَ مَا نَقَلَ عَنْهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ مِنَ الْكَلَامِ الْقَصِيرِ فِي الْمَوَاعِظِ وَالْحِكْمِ وَالْأَمْثَالِ وَالْآدَابِ، دُونَ الْخُطْبِ الطَّوِيلَةِ، وَالْكَتَبِ الْمَبْسُوطَةِ.

In my early age, at the dawn of youth, I commenced writing a book on the characteristics of the Imāms (a.s.), covering the account of their virtues and the masterpieces of their utterances. The purpose of the compilation was stated by me in the preface of the book. Therein, I completed the portion relating to the account of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (a.s.), but I could not complete the part concerning the other Imāms due to the impediments of the time and the obstacles of the days. I divided the written portion into several chapters and sections, arranging the last section to comprise whatever had been related to 'Alī's (a.s.) short utterances, such as counsels, maxims, and proverbs, but not long lectures and detailed discourses.

فَاسْتَحْسِنَ جَمَاعَةً مِنَ الْأَصْدِقَاءِ [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسَخِ: الْأَصْدِقَاءُ وَالْإِخْوَانُ] مَا اشْتَمَلَ عَلَيْهِ الْفَصْلُ الْمَقْدَمُ ذِكْرَهُ، مَعْجِبِينَ بِبِدَائِعِهِ، وَمَتَعْجِبِينَ مِنْ نَوَاصِعِهِ. وَسَأَلُونِي عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ أَنْ أَبْدَأَ [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسَخِ: أَيْتِدَأَ] بِتَأْلِيفِ كِتَابٍ يَحْتَوِي عَلَى [مَخْتَارِ كَلَامِ مَوْلَانَا أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فِي جَمِيعِ فَنُونِهِ، وَمَتَشَعِبَاتِ غُصُونِهِ: مِنْ خُطْبٍ، وَكُتُبٍ، وَمَوَاعِظٍ وَأَدَابٍ [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسَخِ: وَأَدَبٍ]. عَلِمَا أَنَّ ذَلِكَ يَتَضَمَّنُ مِنْ عَجَائِبِ الْبَلَاغَةِ، وَغَرَائِبِ الْفِصَاحَةِ، وَجَوَاهِرِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ، وَثَوَاقِبِ الْكَلِمِ الدِّينِيَّةِ وَالدُّنْيَوِيَّةِ، مَا لَا يَوْجَدُ مَجْتَمِعًا فِي كَلَامٍ، وَلَا مَجْمُوعِ الْأَطْرَافِ فِي كِتَابٍ؛ إِذْ كَانَ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ مَشْرَعِ الْفِصَاحَةِ وَمُورِدَهَا، وَمَنْشَأِ الْبَلَاغَةِ وَمَوْلِدَهَا، وَمِنْهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ ظَهَرَ مَكْنُونُهَا، وَعَنْهُ أَخَذَتْ قَوَائِمُهَا، وَعَلَى [أَمْثَلْتَهُ حَذَا كُلِّ قَائِلٍ خُطْبِي، وَبِكَلَامِهِ اسْتَعَانَ كُلُّ وَاغِظٍ بَلِيغٍ. وَمَعَ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ سَبَقَ وَقَصُرُوا، وَتَأَخَّرُوا، لِأَنَّ كَلَامَهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ الْكَلَامَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ مَسْحَةُ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ الْإِلَهِيِّ، وَفِيهِ عِبْقَةُ مِنَ الْكَلَامِ النَّبَوِيِّ.

A number of my friends and brothers-in-faith, while marveling at its delicate and blossoming expressions, admired the contents of this particular section and desired me to compile a book that would encompass all the forms of the utterances of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī (a.s.), including diverse materials such as sermons, letters, counsels, ethics, etc. They were convinced that such a work would comprise wonders and rarities of eloquence and rhetoric, brilliant gems of the Arabic language, and radiant expressions concerning faith and worldly matters—expressions neither collected in any other work nor found together in any other book. This is because Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.) was the fountainhead of eloquence and the source of rhetoric. Through him, the hidden subtleties of eloquence and rhetoric came to light, and from him were learned its principles and rules. Every speaker and orator had to follow in his footsteps, and every eloquent preacher benefited from his words. Yet, none could ever equal him, and the laurel of precedence and superiority remained eternally upon his head. This is because his words carry the reflection of Divine knowledge and the fragrance of the Prophet's (ﷺ) speech.

فَأَجَبْتُهُمْ إِلَى [الْإِبْتِدَاءِ بِذَلِكَ، عَالِمًا بِمَا فِيهِ مِنْ عَظِيمِ النِّفْعِ، وَمَنْشُورِ الذِّكْرِ، وَمَذْخُورِ الْأَجْرِ. وَاعْتَمَدْتُ بِهِ [أَنَّ أَيْبِينَ مِنْ [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسَخِ: عَنْ] عَظِيمِ قَدْرِ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فِي هَذِهِ الْفَضِيلَةِ، مِضَافَةً إِلَى الْمَحَاسِنِ الدُّنْيَوِيَّةِ، وَالْفَضَائِلِ الْجَمَّةِ. وَأَنَّهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ أَنْفَرْدٌ بِلُغَايَتِهَا عَنْ جَمِيعِ السَّلَفِ الْأَوَّلِينَ الَّذِينَ إِنَّمَا يُوَثِّرُ عَنْهُمْ مِنْهَا الْقَلِيلُ النَّادِرُ، وَالشَّاذُّ الشَّارِدُ. وَأَمَّا [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسَخِ: فَأَمَّا] كَلَامَهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فَهُوَ الْبَحْرُ الَّذِي لَا يَسَاجِلُ، وَالْجَمُّ الَّذِي لَا يَحَافِلُ. وَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ يَسُوغَ لِي التَّمَثُّلُ فِي الْإِفْتِخَارِ بِهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ بِقَوْلِ

Accordingly, I acceded to their request, knowing that it entailed great benefit, a noble reputation, and a treasure of reward. The purpose of this compilation is to highlight the greatness and superiority of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.) in the art of rhetoric, in addition to his countless qualities and innumerable distinctions, and to demonstrate that he had ascended to the highest pinnacle of this attainment. He stands unique among all the predecessors whose utterances are sporadically quoted here and there, whereas his own words are like an onrushing stream whose flow cannot be withstood and a treasure of excellences that cannot be matched. Since I proudly trace my lineage back to him, it is both fitting and delightful for me to quote a couplet of al-Farazdaq as an example:

أُولَئِكَ آبَائِي فَجَعَنِي بِمِثْلِهِمْ *** إِذَا جَمَعْتَنَا يَا جَرِيرُ الْمَجَامِعُ

These are my forefathers, O Jarīr! When gatherings bring us together, can you present their equals? [1]

وَرَأَيْتُ كَلَامَهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَدُورُ عَلَيَّ □ أَقْطَابِ ثَلَاثَةَ:

In my view, the utterances of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.) are divisible into three categories:

أُولَاهَا: الْخُطْبُ وَالْأَوَامِرُ؛

Firstly, Sermons and Decrees;

وِثَانِيهَا: الْكُتُبُ وَالرَّسَائِلُ؛

Secondly, Letters and Communications;

وِثَالْتِيهَا: الْحِكْمُ وَالْمَوَاعِظُ.

Thirdly, Maxims and Counsels.

فَأَجْمَعْتُ بِتَوْفِيقِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَعَالَى □ عَلَى الْإِبْتِدَاءِ بِاخْتِيَارِ مَحَاسِنِ الْخُطْبِ، ثُمَّ مَحَاسِنِ الْكُتُبِ، ثُمَّ مَحَاسِنِ الْحِكْمِ وَالْأَدَبِ، مُفْرِدًا لِكُلِّ صِنْفٍ مِنْ ذَلِكَ بَابًا، وَمُفَصَّلًا [فِي بَعْضِ النُّسخِ: وَمُفَصَّلًا] فِيهِ أَوْرَاقًا، لِتَكُونَ مَقْدِمَةً لِاسْتِدْرَاكِ مَا عَسَاهُ يَشُدُّ عَنِي عَاجِلًا، وَيَقَعُ إِلَيَّ آجِلًا. وَإِذَا جَاءَ شَيْءٌ مِنْ كَلَامِهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ الْخَارِجِ فِي أَثْنَاءِ حِوَارٍ، أَوْ جَوَابِ سُؤَالٍ، أَوْ غَرَضٍ آخَرَ مِنَ الْأَغْرَاضِ - فِي غَيْرِ الْأَنْحَاءِ الَّتِي ذَكَرْتَهَا، وَقَرَّرْتُ الْقَاعِدَةَ عَلَيْهَا - نَسَبْتُهُ إِلَى □ أَلْبِقِ الْأَبْوَابِ بِهِ، وَأَشْهَدُهَا مَلَاحِظَةً لِعَرَضِهِ. وَرَبَّمَا جَاءَ فِيمَا أَخْتَارَهُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَصُولٌ

غَيْرُ مُتَّسِقَةٍ، وَمَحَاسِنُ كُلِّ غَيْرٍ مُنْتَظَمَةٌ؛ لِأَنِّي أُورِدُ النَّكْتَ وَاللَّمْعَ، وَلَا أَقْصِدُ التَّتَالِيَّ وَالنَّسْقَ.

By the grace of Allāh, I have decided to compile first the Sermons, then the Letters, and finally the Maxims and Counsels, whilst proposing a separate chapter for each category. I have left blank pages in between each chapter so that if any material has been omitted and comes to hand later, it may be inserted therein. As for any utterance that is part of routine conversation, a reply to a question, or serves some other purpose and does not fit into the aforementioned categories or my established framework, it should be included in the chapter most suitable or akin to its subject matter. In this compilation, some sections and sentences have crept in whose arrangement reflects disarray and disorderliness. This is because I am solely focused on collecting the most profound and brilliant utterances, and arrangement or organization is not my primary goal.

وَمِنْ عَجَائِبِهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ الَّتِي أَنْفَرِدُ بِهَا، وَأَمِنْ الْمِشَارِكَةِ فِيهَا، أَنَّ كَلَامَهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ الْوَارِدَ فِي الزُّهْدِ وَالْمَوَاعِظِ، وَالتَّذْكِيرِ وَالزَّوْاجِرِ، إِذَا تَأَمَّلَهُ الْمُتَأَمِّلُ، وَفَكَّرَ فِيهِ الْمُتَفَكِّرُ، وَخَلَعَ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ أَنَّهُ كَلَامٌ مِثْلُهُ مِمَّنْ عَظُمَ قَدْرُهُ، وَنَفَذَ أَمْرُهُ، وَأَحَاطَ بِالرِّقَابِ مَلِكُهُ، لَمْ يَعْتَرِضْهُ الشُّكُّ فِي أَنَّهُ مِنْ كَلَامٍ مِنْ لَّا حِظَّ لَهُ فِي غَيْرِ الزَّهَادَةِ، وَلَا شِغْلَ لَهُ بِغَيْرِ الْعِبَادَةِ، قَدْ قَبِعَ فِي كِسْرِ بَيْتٍ، أَوْ انْقَطَعَ إِلَى سَفْحِ جَبَلٍ، لَّا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا حِسَّهُ، وَلَا يَرَى إِلَّا نَفْسَهُ، وَلَا يَكَادُ يَوْقِنُ بِأَنَّهُ كَلَامٌ مِنْ يَنْغَمِسُ فِي الْحَرْبِ مَصْلِتًا سَيْفَهُ، فَيَقْطُرُ الرِّقَابَ، وَيَجْدِلُ الْأَبْطَالَ، وَيَعُودُ بِهِ يَنْظِفُ دِمَا، وَيَقْطُرُ مَهْجَا، وَهُوَ مَعَ تِلْكَ الْحَالِ زَاهِدٍ الزَّهَادِ، وَبَدَلَ الْأَبْدَالِ.

Among the wonders and miracles of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.), [2] in which he stands unparalleled and unique, is that his words on asceticism, admonition, remembrance of Allāh, and guidance are such that when a thoughtful person examines them with deep reflection and removes from their heart the notion that these teachings belong to a man of great stature, whose commands are enforced and whose authority encompasses the necks of this world, they will have no doubt that these are the words of a person who is devoted solely to asceticism and piety, and whose only occupation is the expression of servitude to Allāh. They would imagine him to be a recluse, confined to the corner of a hut or secluded in the valley of a mountain, hearing nothing but his own whispers and seeing nothing but himself. How could they believe that these are the words of one who plunges into the depths of battle with a drawn sword, severing heads, overthrowing champions, and returning with his sword dripping with blood and his heart shedding tears? Yet, despite all this, he was distinguished among ascetics and preeminent among saints.

وَهَذِهِ مِنْ فِضَائِلِهِ الْعَجِيبَةِ، وَخِصَائِصِهِ اللَّطِيفَةِ، الَّتِي جَمَعَ بِهَا بَيْنَ الْأَضْدَادِ، وَأَلْفَ بَيْنَ الْأَشْتَاتِ، وَكَثِيرًا مَا أَذَاكَرُ الْإِخْوَانَ بِهَا، وَأَسْتَخْرِجُ عَجَبَهُمْ مِنْهَا، وَهِيَ مَوْضِعٌ لِلْعِبْرَةِ بِهَا، وَالْفِكْرَةِ فِيهَا.

This distinction is one of those astonishing characteristics of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.)

through which he gathered within himself contradictory qualities and united scattered perfections. I often mention this to my brothers-in-faith, leaving them in awe and wonder. Indeed, it is a subject for deep reflection and contemplation.

وَرَبِّمَا جَاءَ فِي أَثْنَاءِ هَذَا الْإِخْتِيَارِ اللَّفْظِ الْمُرَدِّدِ، وَالْمَعْنَى الْمَكْرَرِ، وَالْعُدْرُ فِي ذَلِكَ أَنَّ رَوَايَاتِ كَلَامِهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ تَخْتَلِفُ اخْتِلَافًا شَدِيدًا: فَرَبَّمَا اتَّفَقَ الْكَلَامُ الْمَخْتَارُ فِي رَوَايَةٍ فَنَقَلَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ، ثُمَّ وَجَدَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فِي رَوَايَةٍ أُخْرَى مَوْضُوعًا غَيْرَ وَضَعَهُ [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسْخِ: مَوْضِعَهُ] الْأَوَّلِ: إِمَّا بَزِيَادَةٍ مَخْتَارَةٍ، أَوْ بِلَفْظٍ [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسْخِ: أَوْ لَفْظًا] أَحْسَنَ عِبَارَةً، فَتَقْتَضِي الْحَالَ أَنْ يَعَادَ، اسْتِظْهَارًا لِلِاخْتِيَارِ، وَغَيْرَةٍ عَلَى عَقَائِلِ الْكَلَامِ. وَرَبَّمَا بَعْدَ الْعَهْدِ أَيْضًا بِمَا اخْتِيرَ أَوْلَا فَأَعِيدَ بَعْضُهُ سَهْوًا أَوْ نِسْيَانًا، لَا قَصْدًا وَإِعْتِمَادًا.

Within this compilation, some repetition of words or subject matter has occurred, for which the excuse is that the utterances of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.) have been narrated in various forms. Sometimes, a particular utterance was found in one tradition in a specific form and was transcribed as such. Later, the same utterance was found in another tradition in a different form, either with valuable additions or with a more beautiful and captivating style of expression. Therefore, to further the purpose of this compilation and to preserve the exquisite and pure utterances from being lost, it was deemed necessary to repeat them. It has also happened that an utterance, which had already been included earlier, was repeated due to the passage of time and remoteness from memory. This occurred unintentionally, without any deliberate intent.

وَلَا ادَّعِي - مَعَ ذَلِكَ - أَنِّي أُحِيطُ بِأَقْطَارِ جَمِيعِ كَلَامِهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ حَتَّى لَا يَشُدَّ عَنِّي مِنْهُ شَاذٌ، وَلَا يَنْدُ نَادٍ، بَلْ لَا أَبْعَدُ أَنْ يَكُونَ الْقَاصِرُ عَنِّي فَوْقَ الْوَاقِعِ إِلَيَّ، وَالْحَاصِلُ فِي رِبْقَتِي دُونَ الْخَارِجِ مِنْ يَدِي، وَمَا عَلَيَّ إِلَّا بَذْلُ الْجُهْدِ، وَبِلَاغِ الْوَسْعِ، وَعَلَى اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ نَهْجُ السَّبِيلِ، وَرِشَادٌ [فِي بَعْضِ النِّسْخِ: وَرِشَادٌ] الدَّلِيلِ، إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ.

I do not claim that I have gathered every word of Amīr al-Mu'minīn's (a.s.) utterances from all sources, nor that no single sentence or stray phrase has been left out. In fact, I do not rule out the possibility that what has been missed might far exceed what has been collected, and that what has come within the scope of my knowledge and effort is far less than what remains beyond my reach. My task was to strive and exert myself to the best of my ability, while it is Allāh Subhānahu's role to make the path easy and guide me to the destination. In shā' Allāh!

وَرَأَيْتُ مِنْ بَعْدِ تَسْمِيَةِ هَذَا الْكِتَابِ بِ«نَهْجِ الْبَلَاغَةِ»، إِذْ كَانَ يَفْتَحُ لِلنَّاظِرِ فِيهِ أَبْوَابَهَا، وَيُقَرِّبُ عَلَيْهِ طَلَابَهَا، وَفِيهِ حَاجَةٌ الْعَالَمِ وَالْمُتَعَلِّمِ، وَبِغْيَةِ الْبَلِيغِ وَالزَّاهِدِ، وَبِمِضِيِّ فِي أَثْنَائِهِ مِنْ عَجِيبِ الْكَلَامِ فِي التَّوْحِيدِ وَالْعَدْلِ، وَتَنْزِيهِ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ عَنِ شَبْهِ الْخَلْقِ، مَا هُوَ بِلَالِ كُلِّ غَلَّةٍ، وَشِفَاءِ كُلِّ عِلَّةٍ، وَجَلَاءِ كُلِّ شَبْهَةٍ.

After completing the collection and compilation of this work, I decided to name this book "Nahj al-Balāghah" (The Peak of Eloquence). This is because this book will

open the closed doors of eloquence for the reader and bring the path of seeking it closer to them. Scholars and students will fulfill their needs through it, and the eloquent as well as those detached from worldly desires will achieve their objectives. In this book, one will find extraordinary discourses on Tawhīd (the Oneness of Allāh), ‘Adl (Divine Justice), and the transcendence of the Lord of the Worlds from corporeality and physical attributes. These discourses will quench every thirst for knowledge, provide a cure for every ailment of disbelief, and remove every doubt.

وَمِنَ اللّٰهِ سُبْحٰنُهٗ اَسْتَمِدُّ التَّوْفِیْقَ وَالْعِصْمَةَ، وَاتَّجِزُ التَّسْلِیْدَ وَالْمَعُوْنَةَ، وَاَسْتَعِيْذُهٗ مِنْ خَطَاۤءِ الْجَنَانِ، قَبْلَ خَطَاۤءِ اللِّسَانِ، وَمِنْ زَلَّةِ الْكَلِمِ، قَبْلَ زَلَّةِ الْقَدَمِ، وَهُوَ حَسْبِيْ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ.

I seek from Allāh success (tawfīq) and protection against straying, correctness in action, and His assistance. I seek His protection against the errors of the heart and mind before the errors of the tongue, and against the errors of speech before the errors of action. He alone is sufficient for me, and He is the best Disposer of affairs.

Notes:

[1] Al-Farazdaq, whose name was Hammām ibn Ghālib, was a member of the tribe of Banī Dārim and a renowned Arab poet. He was constantly engaged in verbal duels with another Arab poet, Jarīr ibn ‘Aṭīyah, and they displayed their talents primarily through mutual satire and boasting. The quoted couplet of al-Farazdaq is a link in this chain, wherein he addresses Jarīr, saying, “My forefathers were such as you have already heard. Now, if there were any among your forefathers like mine, name them before all of us.”

As-Sayyid ar-Raḍī (r.a.), while presenting this couplet in reference to his own forefathers, addresses everyone, challenging them to bring forth their equals, if they can. In al-Farazdaq’s couplet, the address was directed solely at Jarīr, but by presenting it here as an example, it has been generalized and universalized. The addressee is no longer a single individual; rather, every person can consider themselves addressed. Yet, despite this generality and universality, the challenge to “bring forth their like” remains unbroken, akin to the Qur’ānic challenge, “Then bring forth a sūrah like it” (Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:23).

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī (r.a.) has pointed to this relationship and distinction at such an appropriate moment that no better occasion could be imagined. The greatness of the personality (namely, Amīr al-Mu’minīn ‘Alī (a.s.)) through whom he claims pride

has already been mentioned. Eyes have been dazzled by the brilliance of his status, and minds have acknowledged the sublimity of his position. Now, hearts can easily be made to bow before the height and greatness of this individual who bears a relationship to him. Thus, at the moment when hearts and minds were already inclined, as-Sayyid ar-Rađī's eloquence-conscious eyes turned the gaze toward himself, for he is a ray of the radiant sun whose overwhelming light dazzles the eyes, and a branch of the same blessed tree whose roots are in the earth and whose branches extend to the sky. Now, who is there who would remain unaffected by this relationship and distinction and refuse to acknowledge his greatness and sublimity?

Whoever's lineage does not trace back to (Imām) 'Alī (a.s.), how could they have any claim to pride in the annals of history? ('Uyūn akhbār al-Riđā, vol. 2. pg. 143)

[2] In the world, such individuals are rarely found in whom, apart from one or two virtuous qualities, any other excellence becomes prominent, let alone the convergence of all contradictory qualities. This is because not every temperament is suited for the flourishing of every excellence, nor does every quality have the capacity to emerge in every nature. Rather, every virtue requires a specific temperament, and every excellence demands a particular disposition that aligns with it. Only those qualities and virtues that harmonize with a given nature can thrive in it. Where there is contradiction instead of harmony, natural tendencies act as barriers, preventing other qualities from emerging. For example, generosity and magnanimity demand that a person possess a spirit of compassion and God-consciousness, so that upon seeing someone in poverty or distress, their heart aches, and their feelings are stirred by the suffering of others. On the other hand, bravery and combativeness require that, instead of gentleness and compassion, there be a passion for bloodshed and fierceness, prompting the individual to be ready at every moment to engage in battle, prepared to kill or be killed. These two demands are so far apart that the delicate smiles of generosity cannot be fused with the stern expressions of bravery. Just as bravery cannot be expected from Ḥātim, nor generosity from Rustam.

But the nature of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) was in perfect harmony with every virtue and fully aligned with every excellence. There was no attribute of goodness or perfection that his character lacked, nor any robe of beauty or greatness that did not fit his stature. Even the contradictory demands of generosity and bravery were found side by side in him. If he poured forth like a raincloud in generosity, he also stood firm as a mountain in battle, displaying unparalleled bravery. His generosity

and magnanimity were such that even during times of poverty and hardship, he would distribute the greater portion of what he earned through a day's labor among the needy and the starving. He never allowed a beggar to return disappointed from his door. So much so that even on the battlefield, when an enemy asked for his sword, he threw it before him, confident in the strength of his own arm.

An Urdu couplet says: The unbeliever places his trust in the sword, But the believer fights even without a blade.

And his courage and bravery were such that the onslaught of armies could not shake the firmness of his stance. In every battle, the laurels of victory and triumph rested upon his head, and even the bravest of warriors could not save their lives when they faced him in combat.

Thus, Ibn Qutaybah writes in al-Ma'ārif: Whomever he encountered, he did not leave without defeating him. (Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, vol. 1, p. 21)

The free-spirited nature of the brave is not accustomed to thinking or pondering, nor do they have any inclination toward foresight or prudence. However, in 'Alī (a.s.), along with bravery, the quality of wisdom was also found in the highest degree. Thus, Imām al-Shāfi'ī said as follows: What can I say about a personality in whom three qualities were combined with three other qualities that were never found together in any other human being: generosity with poverty, bravery with wisdom and foresight, and knowledge with practical achievements. (Fawātiḥ Maybudhī, Fātiḥah 7; Kashf al-Asrār fī Sharḥ al-Istibṣār, Vol. 1, p. 346)

It was the result of this proper thinking and correct judgment that when, after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ), some people advised him to take up the sword and promised to gather armies for him, he rejected their advice. Although on such occasions, even a slight support is enough to encourage the reckless brave, 'Alī's (a.s.) far-sighted mind immediately foresaw that if a battle were to erupt at that moment, the voice of Islām would be submerged under the clatter of swords. Even if success were achieved, it would be said that the position was attained by dint of the sword, and that there was no rightful claim to it. Thus, by withholding his sword, he, on the one hand, ensured the protection of Islām, and on the other, preserved his own right from the taint of bloodshed.

When the veins are filled with the blood of courage and the chest is ablaze with flames of anger and wrath, it is an extremely difficult trial to suppress the passion for vengeance, adopt the path of forgiveness, and, despite having power and authority, to pardon and overlook. Yet, it was on such occasions that the essence of 'Alī's (a.s.) character shone brightest, and the expanse of his forgiving nature accommodated even his bloodthirsty foes. Thus, at the end of the Battle of Jamal, he issued a general proclamation that no one who turns their back, lays down their arms, or seeks our protection would be harmed. He even let go without punishment such enemies as Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam and 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr. As for Umm al-Mu'minīn ('Ā'ishah), the kindness he showed her was a matchless manifestation of his nobility and lofty character. Despite her open enmity and rebellion, he made dignified arrangements and sent her to Madīnah under the escort of Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr.

By cloaking his personal grievances in the guise of fundamental differences, a person not only deceives others but also attempts to deceive himself. In such situations, delicate circumstances arise where one cannot distinguish between personal malice and principled disagreement, easily merging the two and convincing himself that he has obeyed the command of Allāh. In this way, he satisfies his vengeful desires as well. However, the discerning eyes of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.) were never deceived, nor did they willingly deceive themselves. Thus, on one occasion, after overpowering his enemy ('Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd) and pinning him to the ground, the defeated opponent spat on his face. As a human, his rage should have intensified, and his hand should have moved swiftly. Instead of becoming enraged, he stepped off the man's chest, fearing that his action might be tainted by personal emotion. Only after his anger had subsided did he slay him.

There is no apparent connection between warfare and asceticism, for one demonstrates courage and bravery, while the other reflects humility and submission. Yet, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.) was a rare example of the combination of these two qualities. His hands, devoted to prayer, were equally active on the battlefield, and while he would retreat into seclusion for worship, he would also frequent the field of combat. The scene of Laylat al-Harīr (the Night of Rumble) leaves human intellect in awe and wonder. Amidst the bloody chaos, he closed his eyes to his surroundings, spread his prayer mat, and engaged in prayer with complete peace of mind and heart, while arrows whizzed past—sometimes over his head, sometimes from his right, and sometimes from his left. Yet, he remained absorbed in the remembrance of Allāh, free from any fear or apprehension. When he finished, he placed his hand on the hilt of his sword, and the fierce battle that

ensued has no parallel in history. The scene was such that there was such chaos and uproar on all sides that even voices close to the ear could not be discerned. However, moment by moment, his call of Allāhu Akbar rose into the air, resonating in the ears, and each call heralded the death of a foe. Those who counted these calls of takbīr recorded their number as five hundred and twenty-three.

The pursuit of knowledge and divine wisdom does not usually combine with the activities of warfare and battle formations. Yet, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.) adorned gatherings of knowledge and wisdom alongside his martial endeavors. While he shed rivers of blood in battles, he also irrigated the fields of Islām with the springs of truth and divine knowledge.

Where there is perfection in knowledge, even if there is not a complete absence of action, there can be no doubt that shortcomings in action exist. However, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.) treaded the fields of knowledge and action with equal strides, as has already been indicated in the statement of Imām al-Shāfi'ī.

Similarly, examples of harmony between speech and action are rare, but Amīr al-Mu'minīn's (a.s.) actions came first, and his words followed afterward. As he himself said: O people! By Allāh! I do not call you to any action unless I myself first proceed toward it before you, and I do not restrain you from anything unless I first restrain myself from it. (Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 175)

Whenever we imagine an ascetic or a pious man, a face full of frowns comes to mind, for a life of piety has become so associated with a stern temperament and a harsh demeanor that even the thought of a smile on the lips of a pious and devout person is considered a sin. Yet, despite his utmost piety and self-denial, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.) always appeared in such a way that his cheerful temperament and radiant countenance shone through his features, and a playful smile danced on his lips. He never furrowed his brows or wrinkled his forehead like dry ascetics. So much so that when people could find no fault in him, this very lightness of temperament was presented as a flaw, while harshness and bitterness were regarded as virtues.

If a person possesses liveliness and a cheerful temperament, their awe and authority over hearts may diminish. However, the radiant face of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.) was so full of majesty and dignity that eyes could not rise to meet it. Once, Mu'āwiyah said mockingly, "May Allāh have mercy on Abū al-Ḥasan. He was a man of cheerful taste." To this, Qays ibn Sa'd retorted: By Allāh! Despite his

cheerful disposition and radiant countenance, he was more awe-inspiring than a hungry lion, and this awe stemmed from his piety, unlike the awe that a few ruffians of Shām feel for you. (Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, vol. 1, p. 25)

Where there is power and authority, there is usually a crowd of servants and attendants, guards of grandeur and pomp, and the trappings of pageantry. However, Amīr al-Mu'minīn's (a.s.) period of rule was an example of utmost simplicity. In him, the world always saw a worn-out turban in place of a royal crown, patched garments in place of regal robes, and the bare earth in place of a ruler's throne. He never favored grandeur and majesty, nor did he tolerate displays of external pomp. Once, while passing by on horseback, Ḥarb ibn Shuraḥbīl began walking alongside him and engaged in conversation. Then Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.) said to him: Turn back, for a person like you walking on foot alongside me is a source of temptation for the ruler and humiliation for the believer. (Nahj al-Balāghah, Maxim 322)

In short, he was such a multifaceted personality in whom diverse and contradictory qualities had converged, and all the virtues of morality shone in their full brilliance. It was as though his single life embodied many lives, and each life was a rare masterpiece of perfection, revealing the flawless contours of virtue, leaving every observer in awe of his every achievement.

A Persian couplet says: From head to toe, wherever I gaze upon her form, Each spot beckons my heart, claiming, "This is the most enchanting place."