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AYAT KURSIY

This verse is known as the Ayat ul Kursi - the verse of the seat or throne of the Almighty, omnipotent and wise authority of Allah. This verse is an ayah of protection. In it is mentioned all that we the mortals can ever know about Allah.

"Allah is He beside whom there is no god" - *please refer to the commentary of verse 1 of al Fatihah for the word "Allah"*.

Not only the denial of false gods, but also the belief in the absolute unity of Allah without any complexity of any kind, in any sense, in His ever-living and self-subsisting supreme being, is the first and the foremost doctrine of Islam. Complexity suggests an interdependence among the components which means the "whole" depends upon the performance of the components. All the prophets of Allah, before the Holy Prophet, also preached the unity of Allah, but the perfect unity made known through the Holy Prophet could not be presented to the people of earlier times because their intellect and perception had not developed enough to understand the ever-living and self-subsisting being of Allah. The following words, spoken by Isa, are quoted as an example:

There is still much that I could say to you, but the burden would be too great for you now. However, when he comes to who is the spirit of truth, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but will tell only what he hears; and he will make known to you the things that are coming.
(John 16: 12 and 13).

Every prophet of Allah preached the unity of Allah. The idea of trinity was not given by Isa. It is an after-thought of the Christian church. Please read the following quotations from the Old and the New Testaments.

Old Testament:

God spoke, and these were His words:

"I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other god to set against me.

You shall not make a carved image for yourself nor the likeness of anything in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth".
(Exodus 20: 1 to 4).

Hear O Israel, the Lord is our Lord, One Lord. (Deut 6: 4)

"I am the Lord, the Lord is my name; I will not give my glory to another god, nor my praise to any idol." (Isaiah 42: 8)

Thus says the Lord, Israel's king, the Lord of hosts, his ransom:

"I am the first and I am the last, and there is no god but me." (Isaiah 44: 6)

"I am the Lord, there is no other; there is no god beside me."

"I am the Lord, there is no other."

"There is no god but Me; there is no god other than I."

"I am God, there is no other." (Isaiah 45: 5, 18, 21, 22)

"I am God, there is no other." (Isaiah 46: 9)

"I am He; I am the first, I am the last also. (Isaiah 48: 12)

New Testament:

A false god has no existence in the real world.

There is no god but one.

Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom all beings come. (1 Corinthians 8: 4 and 6)

One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all. (Ephesians 4: 5 and 6)

Prophet after prophet came and awakened man step by step and degree by degree. Finally the Holy Prophet, the brightest light, was sent to expose and explain the ultimate truth, as promised by Allah, to enlighten the human mind and heart with the knowledge through which man can become aware of the Lord God, but comprehends only what his power of contemplation can bear.

It is reported that there are three kinds of existence;

(1) *WAJIB UL WUJUD*

The self-existing existence. The primal cause. There can never be any effect without a cause. The universe, therefore, was created by the self-existing creator, the primal cause.

(2) *MUMKIN UL WUJUD*

The creatures or created beings whose creation is possible only if the creator so wills.

(3) *MUMTANI UL WUJUD*

The impossible existence. The existence of another being like Allah is not possible because there cannot be two equals in the sense of oneness.

- If there are two equals in this sense, then there is no meaning in their being two, separated from each other. They must be one.
- If there are two such beings then there must be a dividing factor which makes the two as two and maintains their two separate entities, in which case the dividing factor will be the wajib ul wujud, therefore, such an existence is neither possible nor real.
- Wajib ul wujud, therefore, means the self-existing existence of the ever-living and self-subsisting creator.
- To maintain His self-existing existence He must be an omnipotent authority who not only owns absolute knowledge of the existence but also the will that does what it wills.
- His control is absolute.
- His attributes are His self, inseparable from Him from any point of view or in any imaginable meaning or sense, as the meaning is inseparable from a word or as equiangularity is inseparable from an equilateral triangle.
- As the limited knowledge of the finite being cannot conceive of anything without referring to its attributes, we give names to the attributes of Allah, with the help of our visualisation, to have a suggestive idea of His absolute existence.

Therefore, the Shia school holds it as a cardinal doctrine of faith not to think of any of His attributes as a separate entity from His existence. All the attributes of Allah are one absolute unity, because, if they are not, then it would mean complexity, which negates the absolute independence of the omnipotent authority. His existence means His authority, His authority means His knowledge, and likewise all His attributes are so linked together that they are one indivisible unity. Allah is a transcendental reality. He is unknowable. He is an infinite being, beyond the conceivability of our finite consciousness. He is inconceivable. He is hayyul qayyum, the ever-living, the self-subsisting (Ali Imran: 2; Ta Ha: 111, Mumin: 65).

Imam Ali says:

O He! O He whom none knows what He is, nor how He is, nor where He is, nor in what respect He is; except He.
(Dua al-Mashlul)

Aqa Mahdi Puya says:

Qayyum is a magnified form of the adjective qayam - standing, lasting, enduring. It implies He who stands by Himself, and all others stand because of His (eternal) endurance. His relation to His creatures is like the source of light to the rays of the light, or like the mind to the concepts, not like the relation of an architect or a builder to a construction he builds. It is exactly as Ali ibna abi Talib has said-

Every thing stands by means of Him.

He is the self-subsisting everlasting, therefore, He is the first and the last, and the apparent and the hidden (Hadid: 2 and 3); and He is the knower of all things, and He is with everything but is not computed with anything (Mujadilah : 7; Ma-idah: 73).

While trying to visualise His attributes, it is necessary not to be misled by the finite inferences. His activity does not at all mean movement to perform an act by employing energy as we do. Awareness of His attributes, based upon reason and contemplation, may appear pure and perfect to us, but, in fact, it remains a shadow of the reality which transcends all faculties of comprehension.

"Slumber does not overtake Him", means that He is not influenced by any change whatsoever. He is beyond time and states, for He encompasses time and all states. He is the ever vigilant, or the true and perfect vigilance itself.

"Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His" means that He is the creator of matter. If the "matter" is not created by Allah, and is said to be eternally existing as He is, then He is only a fashioner of things out of matter, in which case nothing belongs to Him. There is no propriety in this conjecture. It is unreasonable to say that there are two independent eternal equals. If matter is accepted as an independent and uncreated eternal, then Allah, to prove His existence, will need the matter to carry out His creative plan, otherwise the matter will remain idle. There is no meaning in the idea of two eternal equals, separated from each other. They must be one. If there are two such beings, then there must be a dividing factor which makes the two as two and maintains their two separate entities, in which case the dividing factor, superior in will and authority will be the ever-existing supreme being.

"Who can intercede with Him, except by His permission?" implies that though Allah is the almighty and the absolute sovereign but as He is also the merciful, the compassionate, He has given permission to "Muhammad and the progeny of Muhammad", the thoroughly purified, to intercede on behalf of the sinners. The issue of intercession has been dealt with in detail in the commentary of verse 48 of this surah. Please refer to it.

"He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases", means Allah's omniscience. The finite beings cannot hide anything from Allah. They cannot comprehend anything except what He pleases, no matter whatever knowledge and intelligence they possess. The facts which are unknown or unknowable to the finite beings are known to the infinite. Allah's knowledge is infinite and absolute. He is the knowing who knows ahead and in advance (in terms of time and space) the origin and causality of knowledge. Although the ordinary human beings do not perceive that which is known to Allah only, but those who have been endowed with the divine knowledge are aware of the secrets of the universe.

In "His kursi (seat of authority and knowledge) extends over the heavens and the earth", although kursi literally means "chair", like arsh (used in other verses of the Qur'an) means "throne", but both these words have been used metaphorically. They refer to the divine knowledge and authority of the supreme, almighty and sovereign Allah, in relation to all that which has been created by Him. His "relation" with His creation, in time and space, remains unconditionally unaffected. His control over everything, created by Him, is perfect, complete and absolute. There is no limitation to the infinity of His existence, because the ever-existing existence is only His and it is He who gives existence to whom He wills. When we say "He is here, there and everywhere", we only make use of our limited and inadequate ability to understand and express His absolute infinity. He is the creator of time and space, therefore, His infinite existence cannot be conceived by the help of the knowledge derived from the system based upon experience and induction.

According to the Ahl ul Bayt kursi or arsh, not connected with any kind of matter, is the manifestation of His knowledge and authority in relation to all that which has been created. It includes all the heavens and the earth. Arsh refers to Allah's hold and sway over all creation. In other words, the creation as a whole is the kursi or the throne of Allah from which all His divine attributes of knowledge, wisdom, might and glory manifest.

"And the preservation of them does not tire Him" means the creation, as a whole, is sustained by Him, and its continued existence is maintained by Him. The laws (created by Him), governing the operation of creation, produce fatigue, therefore, He is independent of such laws. His absolute existence is eternal and everlasting.

"He is the most high, the great", according to the Holy Prophet, is one of the most important verses of the Qur'an, which deals with the unity of Allah, His attributes, His relation to His creatures, the position of man in the order of creation, his instinctive desire to turn unto Him, his means of salvation and the ultimate reward and punishment.

In order to prevent the total seizure of mind and heart by the greatness of the kursi, mentioned in this verse, it is made clear in the end that Allah alone is the most high, the greatest.