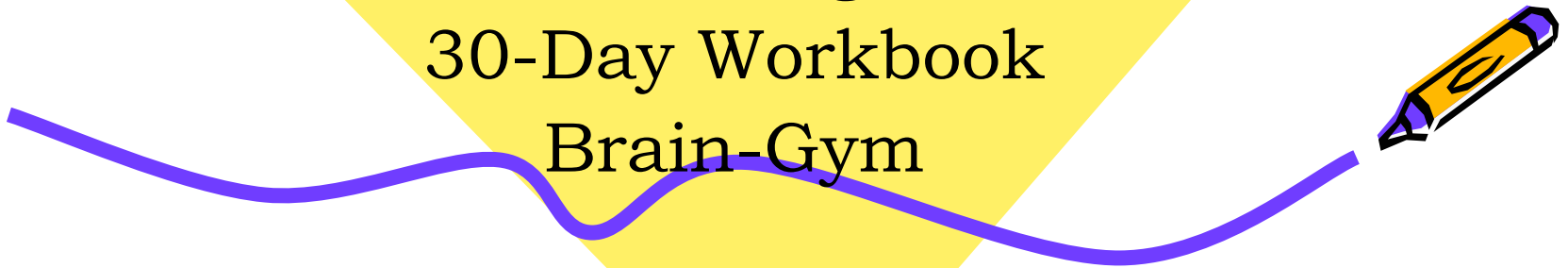




CONCENTRATION IN PRAYER

Certificate Course – TWO

25 Strategies
30-Day Workbook
Brain-Gym



Prayer and Concentration

It is written in the Torah:

'O son of Man, if you "empty" yourself (i.e. disengage yourself from all other preoccupations to make yourself available) for My worship, I will fill your heart with richness and I will not abandon you to what you seek and long for.

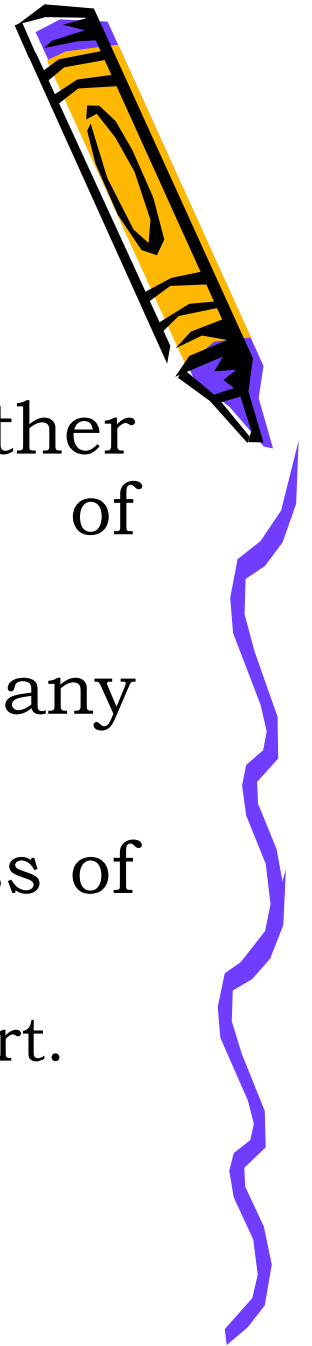
And it will be upon Me to close the door of poverty upon you and to fill your heart with awe for Me. And if you don't "empty" yourself for My worship, I will fill your heart with preoccupation with the world and I will not close upon you the door of poverty and will abandon you to what you seek.'

(Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, "kitab al-'iman wa al-kufr", "bab al-'ibadah", hadith no. 1)



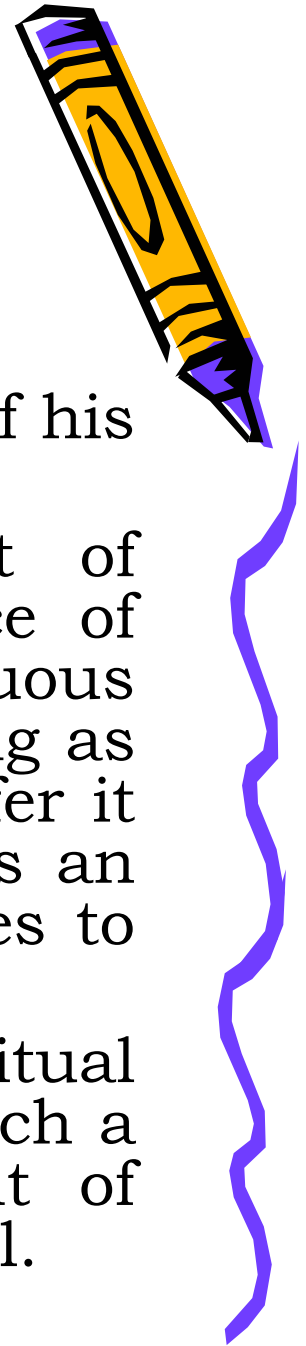
Significance of Prayer

- The possibility of freedom from other preoccupations for the sake of absorption in worship.
- Significance of prayer is greater than any other activity.
- That which brings about attentiveness of the heart consists of two matters.
 - unoccupied time and an unoccupied heart.
 - making one's heart understand the importance of worship.



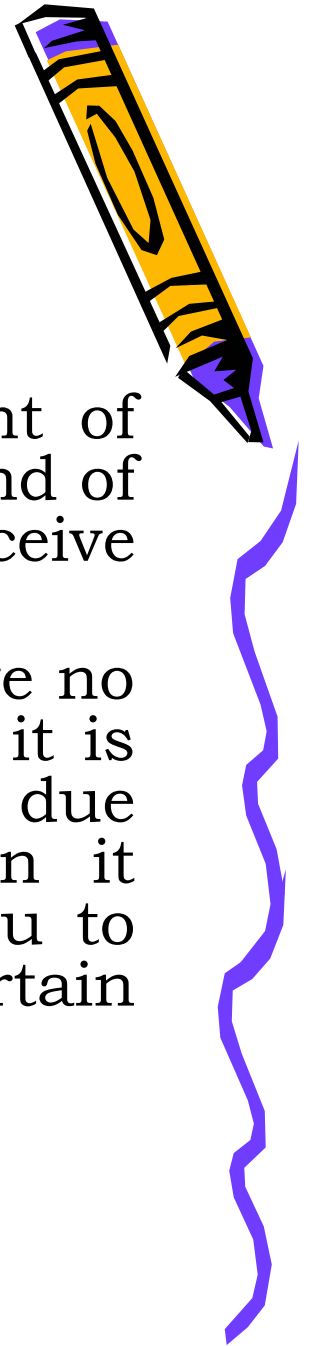
Significance of Prayer

- A devout person is observant of the times of his worship under every circumstance.
- If one were to offer his prayers out of compulsion and consider the performance of the worship of the Lord as a superfluous matter, he would, of course, delay it as long as it can be delayed and when he offers it offer it in a perfunctory manner, considering it as an impediment in the way of what he imagines to be important tasks.
- Such a worship has not only no spiritual brilliance, it deserves Divine wrath, and such a person is one who makes light of *salat* and neglects it as something trivial.



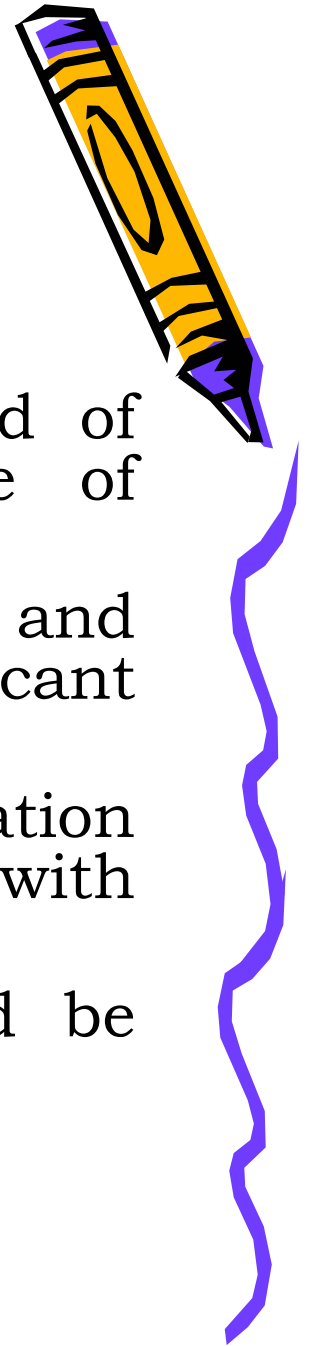
Significance of Prayer

- The Prophet (S) and those who make light of prayer – will not reach him safely at the Pond of al-Kawthar, neither will he or she receive intercession.
- God, the Most Exalted, and His *awliya'* have no need of the works of yours and mine, but it is feared that if you fail to give it its due importance, it will lead you to abandon it altogether and that will ultimately lead you to deny it as duty, bringing you to certain damnation and everlasting wretchedness.
- Unoccupied HEART and TIME.



Significance of Prayer

- According to al-Khumayni (AR), this kind of worship is a disgrace and this mode of supplicating with the Lord is shameful.
- On comparing talking to Allah with talk and conversation with one of His insignificant creatures.
- Is conversation with the insignificant creation of Allah more valuable than supplication with Allah, The Fulfiller of Needs.
- The faith of Sayyid ibn Tawus-may God be pleased with him.
- Ali (AS) and the pierced arrow in his foot.

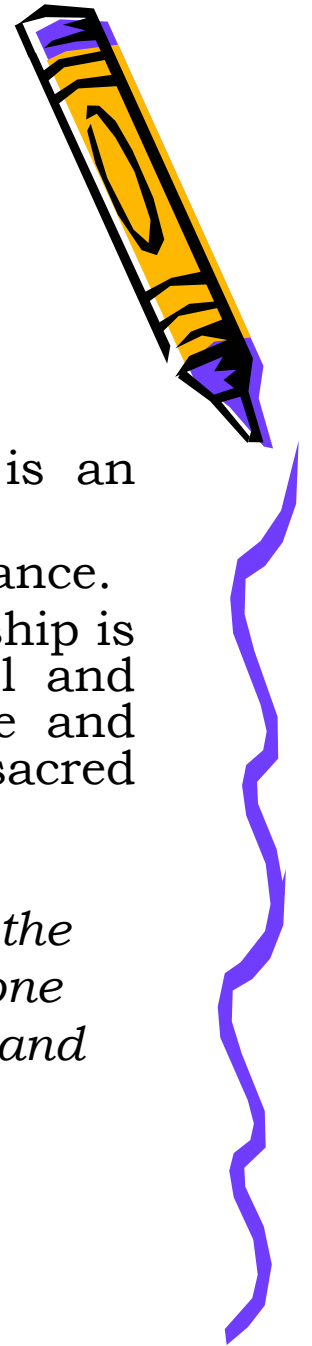


Significance of Prayer

- Full attention in prayer is NOT impossible.
- Detachment of the heart from everything except God is an important matter.
- It can be achieved with the exercise of some care and vigilance.
- Of foremost importance amongst the prerequisites of worship is the attention of the heart, on which depends the soul and essence of worship and without which it has no value and acceptability near God, the Exalted, as mentioned in sacred traditions.

"The reward that you derive from your salat is limited to the extent that you offer it with an attentive heart. And if someone should vitiate all of it or neglect its etiquette, it is wound up and thrown at the face of its offerer."

(Furu` al-Kafi, iii, 363)



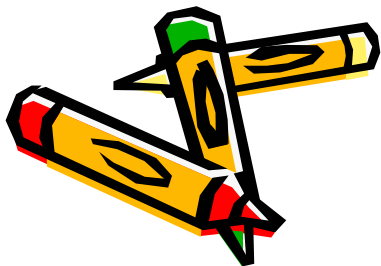
Significance of Prayer

- al-'Imam al-Sajjad (AS) and the displaced cloak during prayer. And his reply:

'Woe to you, don't you know before whom I stood? Nothing is accepted of a devotee's prayer except what he offers with the proper attention of his heart.'

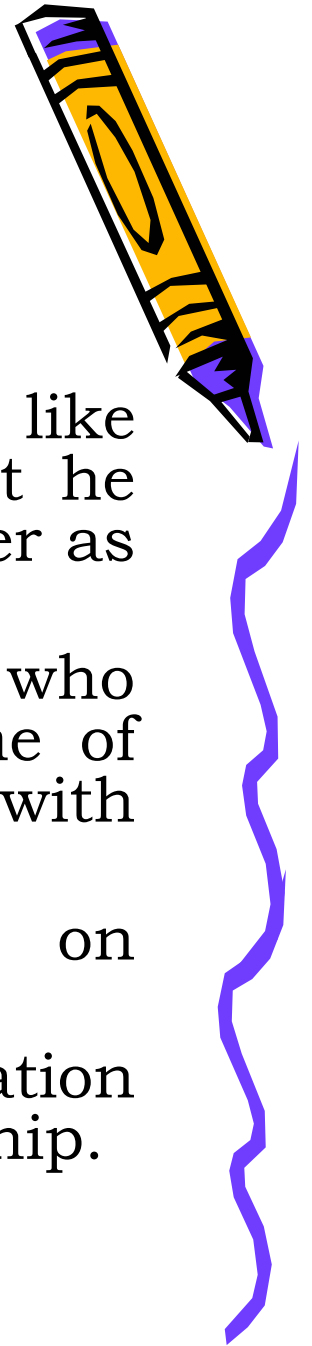
"None of you should ever stand for salat in a lazy or drowsy state, nor should you let (random) thoughts pass through your mind (in the state of salat). For, in that state, you stand before your Glorious and Almighty Lord. Verily, the reward a devotee derives from prayer is equal to the extent of it that he offers with an attentive heart."

(Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, iv, 687, 688)



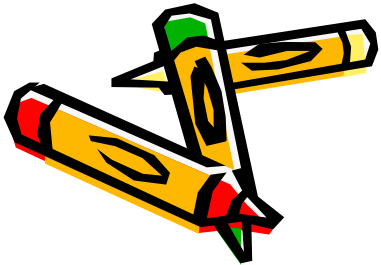
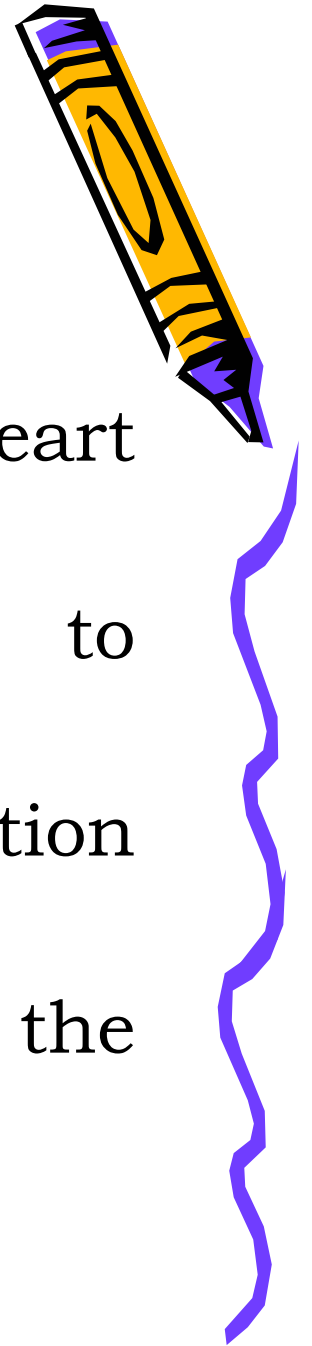
Significance of Prayer

- Al-Sadiq (AS) and his tradition on pray like someone who bids farewell and fears that he will never return (i.e. pray in such a manner as if it were the last prayer of your life).
- Dear to him is the believer from among you who attends to God with his heart at the time of prayer and does not preoccupy his heart with any mundane matter.
- Ali (AS)'s invocation in *Sha'baniyyah* on attention and prayer.
- Two light *rak'ahs* offered with contemplation are better than a whole night spent in worship.



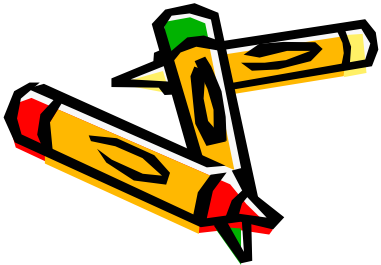
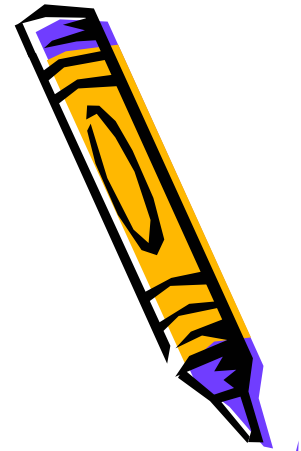
Various Levels of Attention

- An attentive heart is the soul and heart of worship – and its dependence?
- Some of these levels are special to Aimmah and The Prophet.
- Other lower levels of attention attainable by humans.
- attention of the heart to worship and the other is attention of the heart to God.



Attention to Worship

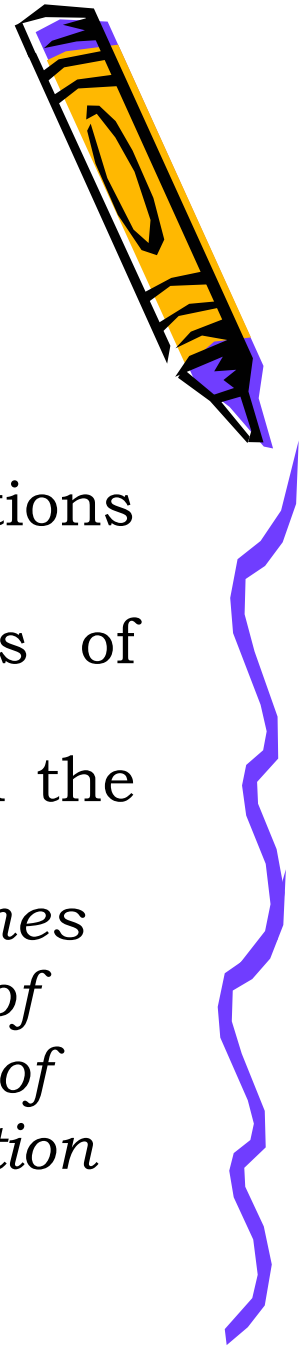
- Degrees:
 - Attention of an incomplete and summary character.
 - Detailed attention to worship; its complete attainment is not possible for anyone except the sincere *awliya'* and the gnostics.



Attention to Worshipped ONE

- Degrees:
 - Concentrating the heart, on revelations (*tajalliyat*) of Divine Acts.
 - concentrating the heart on revelations of Names and Attributes.
 - The third consists of concentrating with the heart on revelations of the Essence.

Each of these levels consists of four planes that may be generally put as the plane of knowledge, the plane of faith, the plane of direct experience, and the plane of absorption (or annihilation, fana').



Attention to Worshipped ONE

It has been narrated that our master, Ja'far ibn Muhammad al Sadiq ~~may~~ peace be upon him was once reciting the Qur'an in his salat.

He went into a swoon, and when he emerged from it he was asked, "What was that that led you into that state?" He gave a reply, which meant,

"I continued repeating verses of the Qur'an until I reached a state wherein it was as if I heard them directly from Him Who had sent them down. And it is beyond human power to witness Divine glory."

(Falah al a'il, 107)



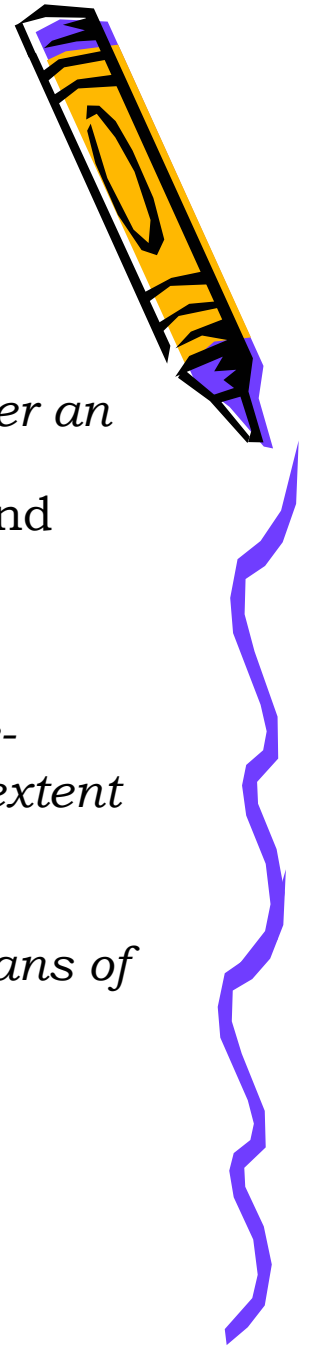
Attention to Worshipped ONE

- The Prophet - *I experience a state with God for which neither an archangel nor an apostolic prophet has the capacity.*
- Al-Sadiq (AS) and the tradition on saying prayer on time and lapsed.
- Importance of supererogatory prayers:

Out of the salat offered by a man only a half of it or a one-fourth or a one-eighth rises to heaven in accordance with the extent of his lapses therein.

However, God the Exalted, compensates for it through the means of the supererogatory prayers."

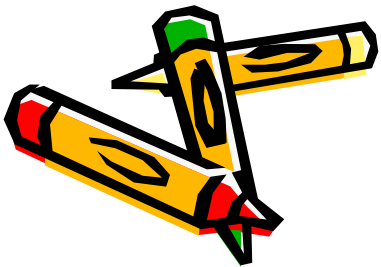
(Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, iii, 54)



Attention to Worshipped ONE

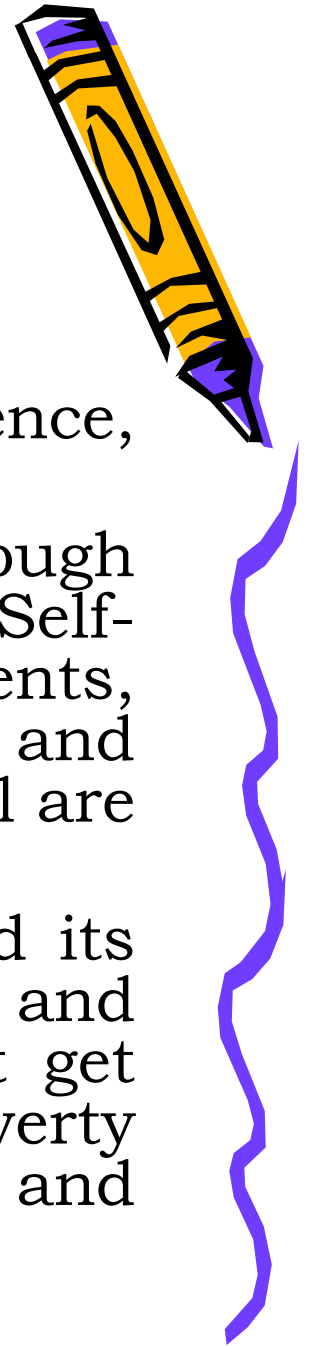
- Aimmah (AS) and their state of sadness and weeping during prayer.
- Al-Khumayni's advise:

Of course, all are incapable of worshipping like the Master of Masters (Mawla al-Mawali) and the common lot is incapable of the worship offered by the Infallible Ones. However, when one is incapable of attaining to a high station he should not give up altogether.



Worship and Freedom from Need

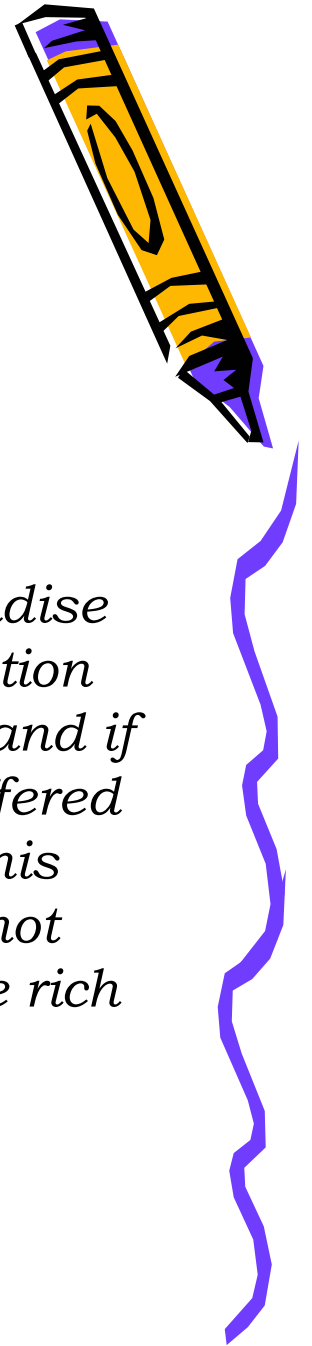
- *ghina* (self-sufficiency, richness, independence, and being without need of others).
- True richness is unattainable except through God, Glorious and Exalted, Who is Self-sufficient-by-Essence, and all other existents, from humble dust to the topmost heaven and from primal matter to the higher *jabarut*, all are 'poor' and needy.
- The more is the attention of the heart and its attachment to mundane matters and cultivation of the world, the more does it get covered with the dust of abasement and poverty and the greater become its need and darkness of abasement.



Worship and Freedom from Need

- Ali (AS) and al-Sajjad (AS) on the value of the world.
- Declaration of Najm al-Din Kubra,

"If the world's wealth as well as the other world's Paradise with its houries and palaces be offered to me on condition that I should associate only with the rich and wealthy, and if the world's adversities and those of the Hereafter be offered to me together with association with the poor-given this choice I will select the company of the poor and will not surrender myself to the disgrace of associating with the rich and 'The Fire is better than, dishonor.' "

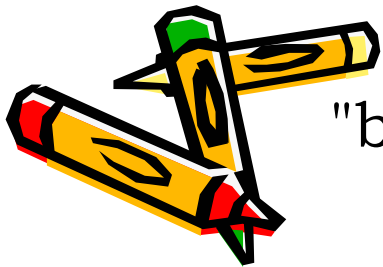


Worship and Freedom from Need



- Importance of Nawafil – supererogatory prayers:

"...And verily he seeks nearness to Me through the means of the nawafil, until I love him. And when I love him, I become the hearing with which he hears and the vision with which he beholds, and the tongue with which he speaks, and the hand by which he grasps" (and so on, until the end of the hadith)



(Usul al-Kafi, ii, "kitab al-'iman wa al-kufr"
"bab man adha al-muslimin" hadith no. 8)



Worship and Freedom from Need

- The kind of neglect that is the source of all forms of wretchedness, defects and diseases of the heart.
- Darkness and obscurity will grip the heart on account of this neglect, and thick curtains through which the light of guidance cannot pass will become an obstruction between it and God, depriving it of Divine succour and making the heart totally absorbed in the world and the pursuit of corporeal pleasures.

