

*I seek refuge from the accursed Shayṭān.*

*In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.*

All praise belongs to God, Lord of all the worlds. The blessings of God be upon all the prophets, messengers, and guided leaders—especially the Seal of the prophets, and the Seal of the saints (boundless benedictions be upon them both). We associate ourselves to them and disclaim their enemies in God’s presence.

We would like to welcome the special guests, the intelligentsia and all the aficionados of the Qurʾān and the Noble family [of the Prophet Muḥammad]. We would like to acknowledge the efforts of the conveners of this gathering. We are thankful for those who are on the Path and have benefited from the great figures of the past, and who are making efforts to reform themselves and their societies. We pray that God almighty gives them success in this endeavour of reform.

The main discussion of this gathering is ‘religious insight’. ‘Insight’ is well-defined in the Quran and in traditions from the Ahlul-Bayt. The Quran refers to the prophets and messengers and the saints as ‘insightful’. Prophet Abraham, prophet Isaac, prophet Jacob, prophet Ishmael (peace be upon them) are referred to in the Quran as those “who possessed both might and insight” (أُولِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ). The Noble Quran identifies insight as an asset to be used for traversing the spiritual path, reaching the Intended, and for the vision of the Intended at the destination.

Two holy sermons by the chief of the eloquent—ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him)—in the *Nahj al-Balagha* are dedicated to specifying the meaning of ‘insight’. In the Quranic ethos, ‘insight’ does not mean vision as opposed to blindness—it refers to ‘insight’ as being far-sighted and sharp-sighted as opposed to being dim-sighted, narrow-sighted, and short-sighted. The one who sees the immediate but not the distant is blind; the one who sees the outward (exoteric) but not the inward (esoteric) is blind. In the words of the *Nahj al-Balagha*—which is composed of the statements of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him) and is a compeer to the Quran—there is an explanation and exegesis for ‘insight’. He states that the blind are those whose vision is limited to only this material world. In the ethos of the Quran and *Nahj al-Balagha*, ‘blindness’ is not the inability to see, but is short-sightedness. Human beings are voyagers whose first stage is this world; the isthmus (*barzakh*) and the hereafter being their middle and final stages—they journey from the ‘transient realm’ ( دار الفرار ) to the ‘intransient realm’ ( دار القرار ). The motion will not be perpetual—perpetual motion is tantamount to no purpose and no destination; this world is the place of motion and it will inevitably culminate in the ‘intransient realm’ ( دار القرار ). The one who focuses on the center of motion but is oblivious to the place of permanence is known in the religious ethos as blind; the extent of sight for the blind ( أعمى ) is the material world. Someone who only sees this material world, its glitz and glamor, its accessories, worldly ease and comfort, worldly wealth; sees death as a decay and not a metamorphosis; sees death as non-existence and not a refuge to absolute existence—in the ethos of the *Nahj al-Balagha* they are known as blind, as “Certainly this world is the extent of the sight of the blind” ( إِنَّمَا الدُّنْيَا مَتْنَهُ بَصَرُ الْأَعْمَى ) ), since one: he is not far-sighted and two: he only sees the outward (exoteric). However, the insightful is one who beyond this world—the ‘place of motion’ ( دار الحركة )—also sees the ‘place of permanence’ ( دار القرار ), sees the objective, and is aware of the conclusion. The

difference in these two outlooks is that the worldly person merely views bitter and pleasant events while those ‘people of the hereafter’ ( اهل الآخرة ) and those with insight see the bitter and pleasant events as a proverbial school and are edified by them.

The difference between ‘edification’ and ‘viewing’ is that the blind person sees these events and is delighted for a moment or pained for a moment, but the insightful person transitions and goes beyond these events. Edification ( عبرت ) is so defined because the wayfarer *transitions* from ignorance to knowledge, from theoretical ignorance to practical intelligence, from injustice to justice, from absurdity to reality, from falsehood and untruth to truth, from evil to good, from abhorrent to admirable.

The difference between blind and sighted is that the blind merely looks while the sighted transitions. This is the luminous statement of Amīr al-Muʾminīn in the 133rd and 153rd sermon where he states that the insightful are edified and upon hearing something ponder on it and transition, and the blind are merely occupied by what they see. This is one differentiation. A second is that the blind and sightless “collects provision for this world (لَهَا) ” and the insightful “collects provision from this world ; ( مِنْهَا مَتْرُودٌ ) ” both endeavor and labor, both seek to acquire provisions, however the insightful acquires provisions for the hereafter and the blind acquires provisions for this world. Because his way is limited, his provisions will also be limited: “the insightful collects provision from this world and the blind collects provision for this world ; ( وَالْبَصِيرُ مِنْهَا مَتْرُودٌ، وَالْأَعْمَى لَهَا مَتْرُودٌ ) ” the blind labors for this world, the sighted labors for this world and the hereafter—he will make good and improve this world so that he can attain a better hereafter, not only the world as it pertains to him but for others as well: firstly, he endeavors and strives not to be a thorn on the path; secondly, he tries to remove the thorns that are on the path. Neither does he go astray nor does he obstruct anyone’s path ( وَالْبَصِيرُ مِنْهَا مَتْرُودٌ، وَالْأَعْمَى لَهَا مَتْرُودٌ ). The sighted collects provisions from this world for the hereafter, he invests in this world for the hereafter, but the blind only strives and endeavors for this world.

So one key difference is in the matter of viewing and edification and another is in the matter of acquiring provision. Both are endeavoring and laboring: one for this world, the other for this world and the hereafter; both are seeing: one looks and the other is edified—the one who is edified is a person of motion in the straight path so that he can reach the ‘place of permanence’, and the one who is motionless stays in this world to rot.

Therefore you esteemed individuals who are either living in a foreign land or residing in your native land must instill the message of insight—which is the formal message of the Quran and the Ahlul-Bayt—such that it becomes part of your disposition, and also convey it to others and be a divine ambassador through your words, actions, and practice.

You are also aware that you cannot know the world by means of this world; it is never possible to know exalted wisdom by means of science and material instruments. If someone wants to know what affection is, it won’t be possible by means of science. Affection is of the modality of impetus, insightfulness is of the modality of impetus, love is of the modality of impetus, and faith is of the modality of impetus. Impetus must be understood by impetus, love must be understood by love, faith must be understood by faith, and affection must be understood by affection. Just as in knowledge there is the perspicuous and the exhibited; there is the axiomatic and the theoretical—theoretical knowledge can be understood by

means of axiomatic knowledge whether it be in the experimental sciences or mathematics, or theology, or philosophy, or other fields of study; whether it be in faith, insightfulness, practical intellect, love, friendship and affection: none of these can be known through science. Exalted and discerning insightfulness can be sampled by a basic form of insightfulness; the exalted form of love can be known through a basic form of love; the exalted form of faith can be known through a basic form of faith; the exalted form of intuition must be known by a basic form of intuition.

We must take heed that if we want to learn an theoretical concept, it is from the simple disciplines that we can know the complicated disciplines. If we want to know a practical concept, it is from a simple practice that we can know a complicated practice. Love can never be understood by [discursive] knowledge; faith can never be understood by knowledge, and affection can never be understood by knowledge. Conation can never been comprehended by cognition; only thought can be understood by thought; impetus cannot be understood by thought; this is why they say traverse this path so that you can acquire the preliminary principles, and from the preliminary principles of knowledge, faith, and impetus reach higher states.

Once more I extend a warm welcome to you all and ask Allah to place each and every one of you, your gathering, and the pioneers of the assembly of righteousness, goodness, and deliverance in this world and the next under his grace; that you all graduate, that you attain advanced studies and repatriate. If in the chapter of Repentance (سوره توبه) in the Quran the matter of a group going out and becoming learned in religion and then repatriating is discussed, this is symbolic and not specific; it is not limited to the seminary. It is the same for the universities—the dear university students set out and travel to different countries to become knowledgeable, skilled, scholarly, research fellows, and professors so that they can repatriate and serve their nation, their people, and their home. I pray for God to grant us all that is good and beneficial for us!

May Allah forgive us and you. Peace be upon you and the Mercy of Allah and His Graces.