

## Muqqadama of al-Kafi

All praise is due to **Allah** (SWT) who is worthy to be extolled for his bounties, who is worshipped for his Omnipotence, who is obeyed in His authority, who is Feared for His majesty, and for whom all yearn on account of what is with Him; His command is executed in all His creation; He is the most High, and He is in proximity to everything: yet He is exalted above all and is beyond the vision of His creation

He who is without beginning and without end, who existed before all other things, who is Eternal and through whom subsists everything. The Subduer, who tires not of guarding his Creation. The All powerful, unique in His Greatness in the realm of Malakut (the world of Unseen forms) and distinguished by His power in the realm of Jabarut (the world of Divine Power). Out of His wisdom, He advanced his proofs to His Creation.

He who (effortlessly) brought into existence all things without reliance on any cause, and who originated all things without reliance on any prior form, solely through his power and wisdom. Had he created through the means of some other agency or cause, His claim to be the sole creator would have been nullified. He creates whatever He wills and however he wills . Through His Uniqueness in this act of creation, He manifests His Wisdom and the reality of His Divinity.

The intellect cannot comprehend Him and the imagination cannot approach Him- nor can Perception observe Him. No measurement can contain Him and no words can fully define Him. Indeed, any attempt to describe him results in bewilderment; for He is hidden without a veil and screened without a screen.

He is known without vision and is described without the attribution of a form or body. There is no deity other than Him, the Great and the Almighty. Imagination errs and blunders when seeking to fathom His essence. The mind is baffled and confused when it attempts to understand His limits. The boundaries of imagination cannot contain Him nor can the acute discernment of Perception comprehend Him. Yet He is the all-hearing and all-knowing.

Through the agency of His messengers He advanced irrefutable arguments unto His creation and clarified all matters through clear proofs. He sent messengers as warners and bringers of glad tidings; so he that perishes does so on account of clear proofs and he that lives does so on the basis of clear signs. He sent messengers so that His servants could know about their Lord what they had been ignorant of and thus recognise Him through His Divinity and uphold His unique status as Deity, and this after they had held beliefs to the contrary.

I extol Him with praise that cures (afflicted)souls and meets with His good pleasure and offers gratitude for that which has reached us from the outpourings of His blessings, His abundant favours and His sublime Grace.

I bear witness that there is no Deity except Allah alone and that He has no partners; the One and Unique Allah, the Eternal and Everlasting and He has not taken for Himself a spouse or a child. I (also) testify that Muhammad, may Allah send His peace and Blessings on him and his family, is a bondsman of Allah chosen by Him, and a Messenger sent by Him after the period of Fatra (the period after Isa (a.s) until the coming of the prophet Muhammad). An era when nations were in a state of heedless slumber, a time of widespread ignorance, of dissension and civil strife, of the loss of moral values. An age which turned a blind eye to truth, leading to oppression and injustice. In short an age in

which religion was almost wiped out.

In such conditions Allah revealed to him the Book, containing clear expositions and explanations, namely, the Quran in the Arabic tongue, without any crookedness or deviancy-so that they may grow in Allah consciousness. He expounded its meanings to mankind and clarified it through knowledge set out in detail and a Religion clearly explained. He made certain duties incumbent upon His servants and disclosed and revealed manifold mysteries to His creatures. In it lies clear pointers to attain salvation and signs that invite to the path of true guidance.

The Messenger of Allah preached what was revealed unto him and carried out what he was commanded to do -fulfilling the responsibilities of Prophethood that he shouldered. He bore with patience the hardships he endured for the sake of his Lord and strove in His path counselling his people and calling them to salvation; urging them to absorb themselves in His remembrance.

The Prophet directed his followers on how to continue on the path of Guidance after he would pass away, by establishing for them principles and procedures of a manifest and plainly apparent way (manhaj), and a beacon of light whose banners he raised for them. This so that they may not go astray after him, since he was exceedingly generous and extremely compassionate towards them. .

When the appointed term of the Emissary of Allah transpired and his life was accomplished, Allah raised him up. His works he found pleasing, and his reward with him was abundant and his station elevated. The messenger of Allah passed away, bequeathing to the Umma two things: the book of Allah and his heir, Commander of the Faithful, Prince of the Righteous, ( ImamAli ), Allah's blessings be upon him. Two complementary companions: each testifying to the veracity of the other. The Imam discoursing by Allah's authority on the Quran and detailing matters Allah has made incumbent upon his bondsmen, the most important of which is Submission to Allah's will, obedience to the Imam and his authority, and the fulfilment of the due rights of the Imam. This is Allah's will to perfect his Deen by these means, to make plain his command, to advance his proofs and to provide illumination through His Light.

Whenever one imam passed away, Allah appointed in his succession another imam with clear proofs, (who was) an illuminating guide, an upright custodian , guiding with truth and judging by it. Imams who were Allah's proofs and representatives, appointed custodians of his creation. Allah's bondsmen were guided through them and the land was illuminated by their light. He made them as a source of life for mankind, lamps in the(midst of )darkness, keys to (unlock) 'speech'( i.e knowledge) , and pillars supporting Islam. Allah made the system of submission to Him and the fulfilment of His obligations to rest in compliance to the Imams, in matters known and recourse to them in matters unknown. He warned others against expressing opinions disputing on issues they are ignorant of.Allah , the blessed and most High, desired through this the salvation of whomsoever he wills from his creation, from the disasters of darkness and the veils of bestial desires.

May Allah bless Muhammad and the noble members of his household, from whom he removed all defilements and purified from all impurities.

To proceed, my brother, I have understood the concerns you have raised regarding the common acquiescence of the people of our age in ignorance ; their mutual support and striving to invigorate its pathways; in contrast to their abandoning of true knowledge and its adherents. Consequently, knowledge has almost completely been encompassed (by

ignorance) and its fundamental constituents ripped apart. This because the multitude of people have contented themselves on reliance upon unawareness and have neglected true knowledge and its devotees.

You asked: Is it appropriate for people to establish their lives upon ignorance and to follow a particular belief on the basis of unenlightenment; since one enters into a religious faith by confirming to carry out in the best possible way the totality of its teachings, to live by them and to follow the example of its forbears, its pious predecessors and its eminent personalities. In addition to supporting oneself on their (the infallible Imams) understanding in all matters great and small.

My brother, Allah have mercy on you, understand that Allah blessed and most High created His bondsmen in a form distinct from beasts in terms of reason and the ranking of intelligence between them, bestowing them with the capacity to comprehend injunctions and prohibitions. He, magnified be His mention, categorised them into two groups. The first were the people of well-being and security, and the second, the company of affliction and harm. The former He distinguished by assigning to them commands and prohibitions after having perfected for them the tool of legal responsibility (takleef).

From the company of affliction and harm(i.e the animal kingdom) he lifted this legal responsibility, since He created them without having the capacity to assimilate courteous conduct (adaab) and knowledge. He, Majestic and Great, made their continuation dependent on the people of well-being and security, hence the revocation of legal responsibility from them was permitted. [However, when applied to people] this permissibility results in the abrogation of the divine books, messengers and courteous conduct (adaab). Consequently, in the raising up of the divine books, messengers and courteous conduct lies the corruption of human thought, and recourse to the opinions of contemporaries (lit. folk of our time)

It thus became necessary in Allah's scale of balance (adl) and wisdom that he should single out from His creation those with a capacity to absorb His precepts and prohibitions. This He did to avoid mankind becoming a futile and neglected creation; and so that they may revere Him, uphold His oneness, confirm that Lordship belongs to Him; and so that they may come to realise that He is their creator and Sustainer. The testimonies of His Lordship are clear and convincing and His proofs are illuminating and apparent, and His signs are visible (everywhere). They invite them to the unity of Allah most powerful and majestic, (by) bearing witness to their creator through affirming His Lordship and Divinity. The effects of His mastery and wondrous management('ajaaibe tadbeerehee) are(all too) noticeable in His creation. He urged them to seek knowledge of Him in order not to abandon them in a state in which they were ignorant of Him , His Deen, and His commandments. For it does not befit the Allwise to be not known and for His commands(also) to be not known. He, magnified be His praise, says: Was not the covenant of the Book taken from them that they should say nothing about Allah except the truth"(al-'Araaf: 169)

" Nay they rejected that which their knowledge could not encompass"(al-Yunus: 39). For they had been instructed to comply to Allah's decrees and prohibitions, and commanded to speak the truth. They were shunned from living their lives in ignorance. Instead He instructed them to ask questions and to gain a deeper understanding of the faith. He said: "So that there should remain a party from all those who set out , who gain a deeper understanding of the deen so that they may warn their people when they return(form battle)"(al-Tawbah: 122)

He also said : " so ask the folk of remembrance (knowledge) if you do not know"(an-Nahl: 43)

Were it sufficient for the people of well-being and security( Ahl asSihati wa aSalaama) to base their lives on ignorance, Allah would not have instructed them to ask questions. Nor would there have been any need for sending messengers bearing Books and courteous behaviour. Were this not the case, then the people of well-being and security would be reduced to the level of beasts and be among the company of the people of affliction and harm(Ahl aDarari waZamaana). If mankind were to become like this, they would not last; not even for the flickering of an eye. Survival of mankind is not possible except through courteous conduct and education. Therefore it became necessary for those possessing a sound nature and mind, to have an instructor, a guide, a leader who prescribes and proscribes (i.e infallible Imams), as well as a code of behaviour, (a forum of instruction allowing) the raising of questions and discussion of issues.

Knowledge of the Religion and what Allah has prescribed for His creatures is the highest truth attainable by the enlightened and sought after by the discerning and penetrating minds that are successful and unerring. This Knowledge comprises of the unity of Allah, His sacred laws and rulings, His prescriptions and instructions (ahkam wa Awaamir), His restrictions and prohibitions(Nahy wa Zawaajir). Now, the proof has been established and responsibility for ones actions (takleef) is made incumbent. Furthermore, life is short and delaying ones obligations to do later (in the afterlife) is not possible. Allah, exalted be his remembrance, has made it a condition that His creatures fulfil their complete obligations with understanding ('ilm), certainty(yaqeen) and insight(baseera); so that one that does so will be praised in Allah's presence, deserving of a reward and a great recompense.

However, the one who performs his duties without understanding or insight does not know what he performs nor does he know to whom he is carrying out his duties. Moreover, if he is ignorant (of what he is performing), then he has no real faith in what he has carried out: he is not a believer. No one truly believes until they know what they are attesting to without any uncertainty or doubt. For the one who doubts, he will never possess longing and awe (of Allah), nor will he feel true humility(khudoo') or closeness (to Allah), similar to what the one who knows and has certainty experiences.

This is supported by Allah, Exalted and Powerful, who says (in the quran)" except the one who bears witness to the truth with understanding"(azZukhruf :86) This shows that ones testimony of faith (shahada) becomes admissible on the basis of linking understanding with witnessing. Were understanding not linked with witnessing, ones testimony of faith would be inadmissible. The decision regarding the one who is uncertain and carries out actions without understanding and insight lies with Allah, exalted be His remembrance. He may look lightly on him and accept his actions. On the other hand He may throw his actions back to him (and not accept them). For Allah had made it a condition for him to fulfil his obligations with understanding, insight and certainty so that he could avoid being amongst those whom Allah, Blessed and most High, has described (in the quran) : "Amongst men is one who serves Allah on the edge(irresolutely) If good befalls him, he remains content, (however) if calamity befalls him, he turns on his face (away from Allah), he looses both this world and the next, that indeed is the greatest loss(al Hajj: 11)

This is because he entered it (his faith) without knowledge or certainty, and for this reason his exit from it was also without knowledge and certainty. The Sagacious (Infallible Imam) on him be peace, has indeed said:" One who enters faith with understanding, will remain steadfast in it and his faith will benefit him., (however) one who enters faith without understanding, will leave it as he entered it"

He also said : One who takes his religion(Deen) from the book of Allah and the sunnah of

his prophet, Allahs' blessings be on his family, the mountains will vanish before his faith does, whereas the one who takes his Deen from the mouths of men, will be turned away (from his faith) by men.

He(the infallible Imam), peace be on him, (also) said : the one who does not recognise that our affairs are from (governed by) the Quran, will never be able to avoid trials and tribulations (of his faith). This is the reason why the tides of corrupt ideas (adyaan) and abhorrent schools of thought (madhab mustashna) have engulfed the people of our age (Ghaiba Sugrah:Minor occultation). These ( false ideas) completely satisfy the definitions of kufr (disbelief) and shirk. This state of affairs is by the disposing of Allah and his forsaking (of them). Whomsoever Allah wills to prosper, and his faith is firm and deep rooted, he facilitates for him means that will lead him to take his belief from the book of Allah and the sunnah of His prophet, blessings be upon him and his family, with understanding, certainty and insight. Such a person is more rooted in his faith than the firmly planted mountains.

However, whomsoever Allah wills to forsake and who possesses a deficient and unrooted faith, may Allah shield us from that, He facilitates for him means leading him (to adopt) discretionary opinions (Istihsaan), uncritical following and (false)interpretations (T'aweel) without understanding or insight. Such a ones (fate) is in Allahs' will. He, Blessed and most High, may perfect his faith. On the other hand He may deprive him of it, leaving no safeguards for him. For he may awake in the morning a believer but go to sleep in the evening as an unbeliever (kafir) or he may go to sleep as a believer and awake as an unbeliever (kafir). This will be because whenever he glimpsed some influential person, he inclined towards him; and whenever he noticed anything outwardly pleasing he accepted it.

The Sagacious (Infallible Imam) peace be upon him has said: Indeed Allah Exalted and Mighty created the Prophets on (the nature of) prophethood, so they can be nothing but prophets, and he created the vicegerents (awsiiyaa) on the nature of vicegerency so they can be nothing but vicegerents. However, others he has made to go astray : if he wills he may perfect their faith for them or he may deprive them from it altogether. He continued, they are the ones on whom applies Allah's saying : [It is He who created you from one soul (Adam a.s.)] and (for you) is a resting place (in the womb of your mothers) and a place of depositing (in your graves) (al An'aam: 98)

You mentioned that there are certain matters which you find puzzling and due to the diversity of narrations you cannot understand the reality of these issues; even though you are aware that the differences in the transmissions are because of the differences of opinion regarding the weaknesses in the chain of transmission('illa) and the circumstances of these narrations. Furthermore, you cannot find anyone whom you can consult or confer with and in whose knowledge in this field you have confidence in. So you expressed a wish for a comprehensive book in which are brought together the entire Islamic sciences, and which would satisfy the needs of the student and act as a reference for those seeking true guidance (mustarshid)

In addition, it would be used by those who seek the knowledge of the faith in order act upon ( apply it in their lives): knowledge that is based on verified reports on the authority of the truthful ones, Allah's blessings be upon them; and on established sunnahs that are practiced upon and through which the obligations of Allah, Powerful and Exalted, and the Sunnah of His prophet can be fulfilled.

You continued, would that there were such a book that I hope would be the means through which Allah, through his support and grace, would show favour on our brethren and people of our faith, and save them from destruction, taking them closer to their salvation.

My brother, may Allah guide you, indeed it is not possible for anyone to differentiate (Tamyeez) in the least on the basis of his own speculation between the narrations of the scholars regarding which there is a disparity in transmission (Riwaayah). This can only be done by following what the Sagacious, on him be peace, has said: "Examine it by the Quran, whatever corresponds to the book of Allah, take it: (however) whatever opposes the book of Allah, reject it." He, on him be peace, also said: Leave aside that which the people agree with, for indeed Guidance lies in opposing them". He (further) said: Accept that on which there is consensus (mujma' 'alayh). For indeed there is no uncertainty (Laa Raib) in that which there is a consensus (of masomeen a.s.) .

We do not know from all of this (knowledge) except the most inconsiderable amount. Nor do we find anything more comprehensive and all encompassing than referring everything to the Sagacious (Infallible Imam), on him be peace, and in accepting matters which he has expanded upon . This is based on his saying: Whatever you take by way of compliance, will broaden you (in faith).

Allah, to him belongs all praise, has certainly facilitated the composition of what you requested. I hope that it (this book) will be in accordance with the wishes you had in mind. Despite whatever shortcomings there may be in it, there are indeed no shortcomings in our intentions for it to be as a gift of good counsel(Naseeha), since it is incumbent upon us to advise our brethren and people of our community. We also wished to be counted from amongst those who take from it (guidance) and act upon it in this age of ours(Minor occultation) and in ages past, and until the end of this world. For our Lord, Sublime and Exalted, is one, the sacred law (shariah) is one, the lawful of Muhammad is lawful , and what he forbids is forbidden(haraam) until the Day of Judgement.

We have slightly expanded the (chapter)'Book of Proof', even though we were not able to complete it as it merits to be done. Indeed we sought to avoid anything that would diminish its value. I hope that Allah ,Exalted and Mighty, will smooth the path for the accomplishment of the intentions we have already presented. Moreover, if Allah defers our appointed time (of death) we shall author a book more comprehensive and wide ranging than it ( the present book) in which we hope to fully satisfy all its (the Book of Proofs) due rights, Insha Allah. With Allah belongs all might and power, and on Him rests our hope for increase in assistance and success. Blessings be upon our master, Muhammad, the Prophet, and may Allah bless his family, the pure, the noble.

The first thing that I will begin with and inaugurate my book by, is the Book of Reason (aql) and (which includes) the virtues of knowledge, the lofty rank and status of its devotees, the imperfections of ignorance , the baseness of its followers, and the lowliness of their ranks. For Reason is the pole around which (everything) revolves, and which is used to prove(a point) . To Allah belongs all reward, and with him is all retribution, and He (alone) grants success.

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