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***Tasbīḥ* and Moderation in the Knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (as):
 An Approach to Rejecting Exaggeration (*Ghuluw*) and Deficiency
 (*Taqṣīr*)**

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Abstrac

Avoiding Exaggeration and Deficiency is considered a fundamental principle for examining the narrations transmitted in relation to the knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). Since any person may, in the process of transforming narrational data into belief and conviction, fall into errors such as excess or Exaggeration, and Deficiency or lowering their status, the existence of a clear criterion and a reliable standard is necessary in order to remain safe from falling into the trap of Exaggeration and Deficiency by relying upon it. This criterion and judgment is connected with the human capacity, which is gradational and capable of development, for attaining correct belief. The *tasbīḥ* of God, which is the declaration of His transcendence from negative attributes, plays a fundamental role in purifying the heart in acquiring correct knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them); on the one hand, it rejects deifying the Ahl al-Bayt, and on the other hand, it removes Deficiency in failing to recognize their true virtues.

Keywords: *Tasbīḥ* of God, rejection of Exaggeration, rejection of Deficiency, true knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them).

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Introduction

The two great afflictions on the path of true knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), namely «Exaggeration» and «Deficiency», and the various dimensions of this subject, such as its lexical root and technical meaning, its background, and its examination in the verses and content of the narrations, have been examined and scrutinized by many scholars.¹ For Most of these works have revolved around the issue of Exaggeration, and insufficient attention has been paid to the issue of Deficiency in the matter of knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) in relation to Exaggeration. Perhaps it can be concluded that a considerable number of researchers, in presenting narrations related to the knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), have, out of fear of falling into excess and Exaggeration in this matter, fallen into Deficiency and, consequently, fewer studies have been conducted in this field. Historical examination and the study of narrations show that Exaggeration has its roots in the political motives of the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), whereas Deficiency has more often affected their devotees and Shiites, an issue that has largely resulted from observing principles such as *taqiyyah* as a defensive strategy under conditions of political oppression. The path to knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), which according to the narrations is the same as the knowledge of God and lies along its path, is a moderate statement and judgment that is lower than Exaggeration and excess and higher than Deficiency and shortcoming. In religious teachings, the heart is the locus of beliefs and the place of knowledge of God; and just as it must be purified of impurities and vices for the acceptance of true monotheism, the path to correct knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) must likewise be purified of obstacles such as Exaggeration and Deficiency. The *tasbīḥ* of God, in addition to purifying the human heart of obstacles and vices, provides a pure foundation for true knowledge of the oneness of God and moderation in knowing the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), and therefore occupies a central position in the human epistemic journey, because through *tasbīḥ*, a person declares God free from attributes that are unworthy of Him, and this practical declaration of transcendence has a direct effect on purifying the heart and removing vices from it.

• 1 See: Safarī Forūshānī, *Ghālīyyān: A Study of the Movements and Outcomes up to the End of the Third Century*, Mashhad: Astan Quds Razavi, Islamic Research Foundation, 1378 AH (solar calendar) / Anṣārī Būyir Aḥmadī, 'Alī, *Ghulū from the Perspective of Shi'ism*, Āshiyāneh-ye Mehr, Qom, 1390 AH (solar calendar) / Ḥaydarī, Kamāl, *Al-Ghulū: Its Reality and Types*, Mash'ar, translated by the Research Center for Hajj and Pilgrimage, 1391 AH (solar calendar).



Statement of the Problem

The human heart is the locus of love and hatred and, consequently, the place where beliefs are formed in accordance with human nature. Nevertheless, because divine knowledge is infinite and the means of human cognition are limited, this path is accompanied by numerous slips and afflictions. The narration perspective considers acceptance of the authority of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) the sole condition for embarking upon the path of the *tawhidi* knowledge of God and attaining the rank of the «sincere servants»; therefore, constant care for the heart and its purification from every impurity is a central obligation for believers on the journey toward God. The two afflictions of «Exaggeration» and «Deficiency» are among the most important epistemic obstacles that threaten the seeker on the path of correct knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). The Qur'anic verses and the narrations of the Infallibles, which originate from divine revelation and explain the truth of the verses, offer solutions for observing moderation on this path. One of the most prominent of these spiritual solutions is the *tasbīḥ* of God, which, on the one hand, purifies the heart of impurities and, on the other hand, prepares the heart for attaining moderate knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) and, consequently, *tawhidi* knowledge of God. This article first addresses the issue of Exaggeration and Deficiency, then seeks to arrive at a relative definition of the *tasbīḥ* of God, and finally examines the effect of the *tasbīḥ* of God in purifying the heart of these obstacles.

The present article seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1- How is the relationship between knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) and knowledge of God explained in the narrations?
- 2- What are the most important obstacles on the path to knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), and upon what factors does observing moderation in this knowledge depend?
- 3- What role does the *tasbīḥ* of God play in removing obstacles and attaining true knowledge of God and moderate knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them)?

In response to the aforementioned questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- 1- It seems that knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) lies along the path of knowledge of God and is considered an essential condition for *tawhidi* knowledge of Him.
- 2- It seems that Exaggeration and Deficiency, which have been the two main obstacles to acquiring correct knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), are rooted in spiritual vices, and that correct and moderate



knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) depends on the extent to which the heart is purified of these vices.

3- It seems that the *tasbīḥ* and declaration of God's transcendence, by purifying the heart of impurities and epistemic obstacles, plays an effective role in attaining *tawhīdī* knowledge and moderate knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them).

Research Background

Safarī Forūshānī states on this subject: «From the very beginning of the emergence of the sects of the exaggerators, many books were written against them by the great Shiite scholars and the companions of the Imams, peace be upon them, as well as by some Sunni scholars. Unfortunately, many of those books have not reached us. Some of the lost books written by the companions of the Imams are as follows:

1- al-Radd ‘alā al-Ghāliyah al-Moḥammadiyyah, written by Faḍl ibn Shādhān ibn Khalīl al-Nayshābūrī, one of the companions of Imam al-Jawād, peace be upon him.

2- al-Radd ‘alā al-Ghāliyah, written by Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Faḍḍāl al-Kūfī, who died in 224 AH.

3- al-Radd ‘alā al-Ghāliyah wa Abī al-Khaṭṭāb, written by Abū Ishāq Kātib Ibrāhīm ibn Abī Ḥaṣṣ, one of the companions of Imam al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī, peace be upon him.

4- al-Radd ‘alā al-Ghālāt, written by Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Mahziyār al-Ahwāzī, one of the companions of Imam al-Riḍā, peace be upon him, through Imam al-Hādī, peace be upon him.

5- al-Radd ‘alā al-Ghālāt, written by Abū Ja‘far Moḥammad ibn Ūmah al-Qummī, one of the companions of Imam ‘Alī al-Naqī, peace be upon him.

6- al-Radd ‘alā al-Ghālāt, written by Yūnus ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qummī». (Safarī Forūshānī, 1378 SH, vol. 1, p. 19)

Regarding the issue of Deficiency, apart from the narrations transmitted on this subject, no study was found. Numerous writings by scholars and mystics have been produced on the concept of *tasbīḥ* in Qur'anic sciences, theology, philosophy, and mysticism, but the subject of «the effect of *tasbīḥ* on the purification of the heart» has not so far been studied and examined.

Lexical Examination

At the beginning of this article, it seems necessary to explain the lexical meanings of the three key words «Exaggeration», «Deficiency», and «*Tasbīḥ*» on the basis of what the lexicographers have written, since these words constitute the main framework of the subject under discussion.

Exaggeration

Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, in defining this word, has stated:



غَالَ النَّاسُ فِي الْأَمْرِ، أَيْ: جَاوَزُوا حَدَّهُ

“The people exceeded the limit in the matter; that is, they went beyond its limit.” (Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, 1409 AH, vol. 4, p. 446)

Ibn Fāris says:

الغَيْنُ وَاللَّامُ وَالْحَرْفُ الْمَعْتَلُ أَصْلٌ صَحِيحٌ فِي الْأَمْرِ يَدُلُّ عَلَى ارْتِفَاعٍ وَمَجَاوِزَةٍ قَدْرٍ. يُقَالُ: غَلَا السَّعْرُ يَغْلُو غَلَاءً، وَذَلِكَ ارْتِفَاعُهُ. وَغَلَا الرَّجُلُ فِي الْأَمْرِ غُلُوًّا، إِذَا جَاوَزَ حَدَّهُ

“The letters ghayn, lam, and the weak letter constitute a sound root indicating elevation and exceeding the proper measure. It is said: ghala al-si‘r yaghlu ghala’an, meaning that its price rose; and ghala al-rajul fi al-amr ghulūwwan, when a person exceeds its limit.” (Ibn Fāris, 1404 AH, vol. 4, pp. 377–378) The root gh-l-‘ is a sound root containing a weak letter and indicating elevation and exceeding the proper measure. Ghala al-si‘r means that the price rose, and ghala al-rajul means that a person exceeded the limits of a matter. Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī presents exaggeration as meaning exceeding the limit: when it concerns the price and value of an object, it is called «ghalā’», and when it concerns the worth and status of a person, it is called exaggeration:

الْغُلُوُّ: تَجَاوَزُ الْحَدَّ، يُقَالُ ذَلِكَ إِذَا كَانَ فِي السَّعْرِ غَلَاءً، وَإِذَا كَانَ فِي الْقَدْرِ وَالْمَنْزِلَةِ غُلُوًّا

“Exaggeration means exceeding the limit. This is said when it concerns price as *ghalā’*, and when it concerns worth and status as Exaggeration.” (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1412 AH, p. 613)

Deficiency

القَافُ وَالصَّادُ وَالرَّاءُ أَصْلَانُ صَحِيحَانِ، أَحَدُهُمَا يَدُلُّ عَلَى أَلَّا يَبْلُغَ الشَّيْءُ مَدَاهُ وَنَهَائِيَّتَهُ، وَالْآخَرُ عَلَى الْحَبْسِ. وَالْأَصْلَانُ مُتَقَارِبَانِ

“The letters qāf, ṣād, and rā’ have two sound roots. One indicates that something does not reach its extent and end, and the other indicates confinement. The two roots are close to one another.” (Ibn Fāris, 1404 AH, vol. 5, p. 96) Ibn Fāris considers the root q-ṣ-r to have two sound meanings: one indicating that something does not reach its full extent and ultimate end, and the other indicating confinement and restriction. Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī identifies the root of the word Deficiency as the opposite of length or height, and as indicating inability to reach the end and conclusion of a matter or falling short in an action:

قَصُرٌ: خِلَافُ الطُّوْلِ وَالتَّقْصِيرِ: اسْمٌ لِلتَّضْجِيعِ

“*Qaṣura*: the opposite of length; and Deficiency: a term for causing to fall short.” (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1412 AH, pp. 672–673)

Thus, in light of the points stated, the word «Exaggeration» originally means a matter indicating elevation and rising beyond the limit, and

technically means going beyond the boundaries of a matter and exceeding those limits. As indicated, this word is used to refer to the rise in the price and value of an object and to raising the status of a person beyond his actual limit. Deficiency, too, has two meanings: remaining confined within the limits of a meaning or thing, and falling short or being unable to reach the ultimate end or goal. Consequently, the meaning of the word «Exaggeration» can be understood as excess and going beyond specified limits, while the meaning of «Deficiency» can be understood as falling short in a matter and presenting it below its proper level.

Tasbīḥ (تَسْبِيح)

Ibn Fāris identifies two meanings for the root of the word *tasbīḥ* — that is, the letters *sīn* (س), *bāʾ* (ب), and *hāʾ* (ح). The first meaning denotes a type of worship, and the second denotes a type of striving. The first meaning, *al-subḥah* (السُّبْحَةُ), refers to prayer, and is specifically applied to supererogatory (*nāfilah*) prayers, not obligatory ones. The word *al-tasbīḥ* (التَّسْبِيح) in this same context also means the exaltation (i.e., declaring far removed) of God from anything unbefitting Him. He also mentions other derivatives of this root, such as: expressing astonishment, swimming in water, and a swift horse. He also interprets the word *subuḥāt* (سُبُحَات) in the narration as meaning the majesty and grandeur of God. (Cf. Ibn Fāris, 1404 AH, vol. 3, pp. 126–127).

Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī takes the root of the word *tasbīḥ* to mean rapid movement through water or air. He attributes this movement, in light of the noble verses, to various creatures. In the noble verse: "*wa kullun fī falakin yasbaḥūn*" (وَ كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ) — "and each, in an orbit, are swimming" (al-Anbiyāʾ, 21:33) — this meaning is applied to the rapid movement and passage of stars in space; in the verse: "*wa al-sābiḥāti sabḥan*" (وَالسَّابِحَاتِ سَبَّحًا) — "and by those that glide with ease" (al-Nāziʾāt, 79:3) — to the swift movement and running of horses; and in the noble verse: "*inna laka fī al-nahāri sabḥan ṭawīlan*" (إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا) — "indeed, for you by day is prolonged occupation" (al-Muzzammil, 73:7) — to rapid and hasty movement in one's daily affairs and activities. (Cf. Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1412 AH, vol. 1, pp. 392–393).

Explanation of the Approach of the Verses and Narrations in Prohibiting Exaggeration and Deficiency



Historical examination of the issue of Exaggeration and Deficiency shows that this concept has held a special position not only in theology and philosophy, but also in the revealed sources, namely the verses and narrations. Ṣāliḥī states: “Islam, which is the religion of all the prophets, has always had as one of its principal programs the struggle against religious exaggeration and the effort to guide excessive and extremist individuals. For example, the Noble Qur'an has shown great sensitivity regarding the exaggeration of Christians, and in many verses, including verses 59 of Āl 'Imrān; 171 and 172 of al-Nisā'; 72, 73, 75, 77, 116, and 117 of al-Mā'idah; and 30 and 31 of *al-Tawbah*, it has strongly criticized the belief of Christians in the exaggeration concerning Jesus and his mother, to the extent that regarding “They say, ‘The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is the son of God’” (al-Tawbah 9:30), it has used the expression “May God destroy them” or “May God curse them.” (Ṣāliḥī Najafābādī, 1384 SH, vol. 1, p. 20)

The content of this group of noble verses commands the People of the Book not to say anything but the truth about God, His religion, and Jesus son of Mary (peace be upon him), and not to go beyond the truth that has been stated. The call to observe moderation in knowledge of God and the prophets is an instruction given by God to the followers of religions and between the two phenomena of «Exaggeration» and «Deficiency».

It can be concluded from the words of Imam al-Riḍā, peace be upon him:

إِنِّي أَبْرَأُ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا فِيْنَا مَا لَمْ نَقُلْهُ فِي أَنْفُسِنَا، إِنِّي أَبْرَأُ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا فِيْنَا مَا لَمْ نَقُلْهُ فِي أَنْفُسِنَا، اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا لَسْنَا لَهُمْ بِحَقٍّ

“I declare before You my disavowal of those who have said about us what we have not said about ourselves. O God, we are not what they claim us to be.” (Ibn Bābawayh, 1414 AH, p. 99) That the exaggerators are those who do not speak the truth about the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) and go beyond what they themselves have stated in introducing themselves; the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) have declared their disavowal of them. Shaykh al-Mufīd defines the exaggerators as follows:

و يكفى فى علامة الغلو نفى القائل به عن الأئمة سمات الحدوث و حكمه لهم بالإلهية و القدم

“It is sufficient as a sign of Exaggeration that the one who holds it denies the attributes of temporally originated existence in the Imams and judges them to possess divinity and pre-eternity.” (Shaykh al-Mufīd, 1414 AH, p. 136) The belief of the exaggerators is that they deny the attribute of being created in time for the Imams (peace be upon them) and judge them to possess divinity and pre-eternity. ‘Allāmah Majlisī also speaks of the instances of Exaggeration:



اعلم أن الغلو في النبي والأئمة إنما يكون بالقول بألوهيتهم أو بكونهم شركاء الله تعالى في العبادة أو في الخلق والرزق أو أن الله تعالى حل فيهم أو اتحد بهم أو أنهم يعلمون الغيب بغير وحى أو إلهام من الله تعالى أو بالقول في الأئمة أنهم كانوا أنبياء أو القول بتناسخ أرواح بعضهم إلى بعض أو القول بأن معرفتهم تغنى عن جميع الطاعات ولا تكليف معها بترك المعاصى. والقول بكل منها إلحاد وكفر وخروج عن الدين كما دلت عليه الأدلة العقلية والآيات والأخبار السالفة وغيرها وقد عرفت أن الأئمة ع تبرءوا منهم وحكموا بكفرهم وأمرؤا بقتلهم وإن قرع سمعك شيء من الأخبار الموهمة لشيء من ذلك فهي إما مؤولة أو هي من مفتريات الغلاة

“Know that Exaggeration regarding the Prophet and the Imams, peace be upon them, consists in claiming their divinity; considering them partners with God Almighty in worship, creation, or provision; claiming that God Almighty has indwelt them or united with them; claiming that they know the unseen without revelation or inspiration from God Almighty; claiming that the Imams were prophets; claiming the transmigration of the souls of some of them into others; or claiming that knowledge of them renders all acts of obedience unnecessary and that there is no obligation to refrain from sins. Holding any of these beliefs is heresy, disbelief, and departure from religion, as indicated by rational proofs, verses, previous reports, and other evidence. It is known that the Imams, peace be upon them, disavowed them, judged them unbelievers, and ordered that they be killed. If you hear a report that appears to imply any of these matters, it is either subject to interpretation or is one of the fabrications of the exaggerators.” (Majlisī, 1403 AH, vol. 25, p. 346)

He considers Exaggeration regarding the Prophet and the Imams to include the following: claiming their divinity, considering them partners in worship, creation, and provision, claiming God's indwelling or union with them, claiming knowledge of the unseen without revelation, claiming the prophethood of the Imams, the transmigration of souls, and claiming that knowledge of them makes religious obligations unnecessary. He considers these beliefs, on the basis of rational and transmitted evidence and the verses and narrations, to be heresy and disbelief, and states that the Imams of guidance (peace be upon them) have disavowed such people, judged them unbelievers, and ordered their killing. Accordingly, if something is heard in this regard, it has either been interpreted or is among the fabrications of the exaggerators. In confirmation of this statement, Riḍwānī says:

“Opposite these kinds of beliefs are beliefs for which definitive rational or transmitted evidence has been established, such as belief in the infallibility of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), the designation and



immediate succession of the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him), followed by the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), belief in the Return, the Imam's divinely bestowed knowledge, and other Shiite beliefs for each of which firm and reliable proofs have been established. Therefore, they cannot be called Exaggeration (غلو) or transgression beyond the limit; rather, they are the very truth and reality.” (Riḍwānī, 1391 SH, vol. 1, p. 18)

It is evident that while our narrations call us to avoid Exaggeration, they likewise, to the same extent, prohibit Deficiency and falling short in acquiring true knowledge of the Imams of guidance (peace be upon them) and in expressing their virtues. Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) complains about this situation in a particular manner¹, and the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) presents the middle path and moderation in the following manner:

وَأَمَّا الْمُسْتَقِيمُ فِي الدُّنْيَا فَهُوَ مَا قَصَرَ عَنِ الْعُلُوِّ وَارْتَفَعَ عَنِ التَّقْصِيرِ

“As for the straight path in this world, it is that which falls short of Exaggeration and rises above Deficiency.” (Ibn Bābawayh, 1403 AH, text, p. 33) In other words, the greater part of the narrations that contain a prohibition against Exaggeration also contain a prohibition against Deficiency in knowledge of them. Unfortunately, however, for reasons such as observing the principle of *taqiyyah*, the issue of Deficiency has not received attention to the extent that the issue of Exaggeration has. It seems that, in addition to observing *taqiyyah*, there are other reasons for not presenting the narrations concerning the knowledge and virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). One of these reasons can be considered to be the existence of different levels in the acceptance of these beliefs, since the Imams of guidance (peace be upon them) spoke to each person according to his capacity. Evidence for this claim is the noble statement of Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him):

مَا كَلَّمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) الْعِبَادَ بِكُنْهِ عَقْلِهِ قَطُّ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص): إِنَّا مَعَاشِرَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ أُمِرْنَا أَنْ نُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ عَلَى قَدْرِ عُقُولِهِمْ

“The Prophet never spoke to the servants according to the full depth of his intellect. He said: The Prophet said: We, the community of prophets, have been commanded to speak to people according to the measure of their intellects.” (Kulaynī, 1407 AH, vol. 1, p. 23)

Examination of the Position and Levels of Knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt in the Narrations

1. “And the others went to excess in our regard.” (Majlisī, 1403 AH, vol. 27, p. 193)



Complementing the above statement is attention to narrations indicating the impossibility of attaining true knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), and that the virtues that have been narrated constitute far less than one-tenth of the reality of their existence¹ and that their creation differs from that of other creatures, because their outward is human while their reality is beyond possession, and the inner dimension of their authority is a hidden and incomprehensible unseen reality.² Analysis of the collection of related narrations leads us to the conclusion that understanding the position of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), like tawhidi knowledge of God, has levels, and human beings in this domain possess various ranks, from lower levels to higher degrees. Abū al-Qāsim Ṭehrānī introduces the levels of knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) at four levels: first, encompassing their rank as it truly is, which lies beyond our understanding; second, becoming informed of the secrets of their inner secrets and gaining awareness of their inward realities and consciences to the extent of human capacity, which itself has degrees, and this is the rank of the specially chosen Shiites and the truthful among the saints; third, becoming informed of the levels of their perfections and the degrees of their exalted stations and believing that they possess authority over all that exists, and this is the rank of believing scholars and jurists among philosophers and mystics; and fourth, acknowledging their Imamate and possession of perfections, which, in general, is the share of the common people. He also believes that these levels apply to knowledge of their friends and saints according to their respective ranks. (Cf. Ṭehrānī, 1376 SH, pp. 324–325.)

The texts of the narrations support this classification. On this basis, several epistemic spectra can be posited, each occupying different levels according to the capacity of the audience's understanding and the extent of acceptance of the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). These narrations rest on several axes:

First group: narrations that consider the boundary separating Exaggeration and Deficiency to be the failure to attribute divinity and lordship to the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). This level may perhaps be regarded as the beginning of the epistemic journey concerning the Ahl al-Bayt. Such is the statement of the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him):

1. "The station of the Family of Muhammad is far too exalted for those who describe it and for the descriptions of those who describe." (Majlisī, 1403 AH., vol. 25, p. 172)

2. "Their outward is a matter that cannot be possessed, and their inward is an unseen reality that cannot be comprehended." (ibid., vol. 25, p. 171)



إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوفَ فِينَا وَقُولُوا فِي فَضْلِنَا مَا شِئْتُمْ

“Beware of Exaggeration concerning us, and say whatever you wish regarding our virtues.” (Majlisi, 1403 AH, vol. 25, p. 270)

• The second group includes narrations that explain higher levels and emphasize the inability of the Shiites to attain the essence of knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), such as the statement of the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him):

أَنَا عَبْدٌ مِنْ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَخَلِيفَتُهُ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ، لَا تَجْعَلُونَا أَرْبَابًا وَقُولُوا فِي فَضْلِنَا مَا شِئْتُمْ وَلَا تَبْلُغُوا كُنْهَ مَا فِينَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوفَ فِينَا

“I am a servant among the servants of God Almighty and His vicegerent over His servants. Do not make us lords, say whatever you wish concerning our virtues, and you will not attain the essence of what is within us. Beware of Exaggeration concerning us...” (ibid., vol. 26, p. 2)

Likewise, the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) states:

وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا عَبْدٌ مِنْ عِبِيدِ اللَّهِ، لَا تَسْمُونَا أَرْبَابًا وَقُولُوا فِي فَضْلِنَا مَا شِئْتُمْ فَإِنَّكُمْ لَنْ تَبْلُغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِنَا كُنْهَ مَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ لَنَا وَلَا مَعَشَارَ الْعَشْرِ

“We are only servants among the servants of God. Do not call us lords. Say whatever you wish regarding our virtues, but you will not attain all of the virtue that God has granted us.” (ibid., vol. 26, p. 6)

• The third group consists of narrations which, despite containing expressions that may give rise to the suspicion of Exaggeration, are, upon careful examination, distinct from Exaggeration, because these texts, by emphasizing that the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) are created beings, preserve the fundamental distinction between the Creator and the created, such as the rescript of Imam al-Zamān (may God hasten his noble reappearance):

فَجَعَلْتَهُمْ مَعَادِنَ لِكَلِمَاتِكَ وَأَرْكَانًا لِتَوْحِيدِكَ وَآيَاتِكَ وَمَقَامَاتِكَ الَّتِي لَا تَعْطِيلَ لَهَا فِي كُلِّ مَكَانٍ يَعْرِفُكَ بِهَا مَنْ عَرَفَكَ لَا فَرْقَ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهَا إِلَّا أَنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ وَخَلْقُكَ فَتَقُهَا وَرَتَقُهَا بِيَدِكَ بَدُوهَا مِنْكَ وَعَوْدُهَا إِلَيْكَ أَعْضَادٌ وَأَشْهَادٌ وَمَنَاءٌ وَأَذْوَادٌ وَحَفْظَةٌ وَرُودٌ فَبِهِمْ مَلَأْتَ سَمَاءَكَ وَأَرْضَكَ حَتَّى ظَهَرَ أَنَّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

“So You made them repositories for Your words, pillars for Your oneness, and signs and stations of Yours that are never suspended in any place, by which whoever knows You comes to know You. There is no difference between You and them except that they are Your servants and Your creation. Their opening and closing are in Your hand; their beginning is from You and their return is to You. They are supports, witnesses, guardians, and guides. Through them You filled Your heaven and Your



earth until it became manifest that there is no deity but You.” (Ṭūsī, 1411 AH, vol. 2, pp. 803–804)

On the basis of the findings of this section of the research, it can be concluded that the narrations related to the knowledge and virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) possess a systematic structure. These narrations begin with the expression of general virtues, proceed by explaining higher levels and emphasizing the limitations of human knowledge to point to the grandeur of their station, and finally, while employing expressions that may suggest Exaggeration, establish the limits between Creator and created by affirming that the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) are created beings and prevent falling into the trap of Exaggeration and Deficiency.

The Pattern of Moderation in Confronting the Two Poles of Exaggeration and Deficiency

On the path to knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), moving beyond the two poles of excess and Deficiency is necessary for attaining correct knowledge. The narrations of the Infallibles (peace be upon them), by drawing a precise boundary, have delineated the middle path in such a way that, on the one hand, the principle of monotheism is safeguarded through emphasizing their created nature, and, on the other hand, their exalted and distinct position in relation to other creatures is correctly recognized. The moderate pattern introduced by the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) expresses, on the one hand, the difference between their creation and that of other creatures and the impossibility of describing the essence of the reality of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) through limited human perceptions, and, on the other hand, places special emphasis on their being created beings. Without doubt, on the path to knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), care must be taken not to fall into Exaggeration on the one hand, in view of the narrations transmitted along this path, and not to fall into the trap of Deficiency and shortcoming in true knowledge of them on the other hand. It must not be overlooked that while many reports and narrations transmitted to us prevent Exaggeration in expressing the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), excess in expressing the truth of their own knowledge, and claiming divinity for them, they equally prohibit falling short in obedience, true knowledge, correctly expressing their virtues, and disseminating the sciences of the Family of Moḥammad (peace be upon them), because according to the narrations, knowledge of them, which consists of affirmation, allegiance, following, and disavowal of their enemies, lies on the path of knowledge of



God⁸ ¹and is in fact identical with knowledge of Him, while denying it is equivalent to denying knowledge of Him.⁹² A prominent example given for this form of knowledge of God concerning the people of every age is the knowledge of the Twelfth Imam by the people of every age.³

Mullā Ṣadrā, in commenting on this narration, establishes a direct relationship between knowledge of God and affirmation of the Imams and saints in two forms: the particular form and the general form. He considers the levels of the particular form of knowledge to include affirmation of God through proofs establishing His oneness, uniqueness, knowledge, power, wisdom, and other essential attributes, as well as the fact that God's essence is the source of His acts and that these acts are of the utmost beauty, order, and perfection. In Mullā Ṣadrā's view, and on the basis of the reasons he has mentioned, there must be intermediaries between God and His creation for bringing into existence. At the first rank are God's proximate angels, followed by the angels entrusted with governance. In addition to intermediaries of creation, there are intermediaries of completion and guidance between God and creatures, namely the noble prophets in the first rank and the guiding saints after them. Mullā Ṣadrā introduces this form of knowledge of God as the true and particular knowledge of the elect, through which they first know the Essence through existing proofs, His attributes

• 1 Abū Ja'far (peace be upon him) said to me: "Indeed, only one who knows God truly worships God. As for one who does not know God, he merely worships Him in this manner, in error." I said, "May I be sacrificed for you, what is the knowledge of God?" He said: "It is affirming God, the Mighty and Exalted, and affirming His Messenger (peace be upon him and his family); loving 'Alī (peace be upon him), following him and the Imams of guidance; and declaring before God, the Mighty and Exalted, one's disavowal of their enemies. This is how God, the Mighty and Exalted, is known." (Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī* (Islamic edition), 1407 AH, vol. 1, p. 180)

• 2 I asked Abū 'Abd Allāh (peace be upon him) about the Imams after the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family). He said: "The Commander of the Believers was an Imam; then al-Ḥasan was an Imam; then al-Ḥusayn was an Imam; then 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn was an Imam; then Muḥammad ibn 'Alī was an Imam. Whoever denies this is like one who denies knowledge of God, Blessed and Exalted is He, and knowledge of His Messenger (peace be upon him and his family)." (Ibid., vol. 1, p. 181)

• 3 Abū 'Abd Allāh reported: "Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī came out to his companions and said: 'O people, God, exalted is His remembrance, did not create human beings except that they might know Him. When they know Him, they worship Him; and when they worship Him, they become independent, through their worship of Him, of worshipping anyone other than Him.' A man said to him: 'O son of the Messenger of God, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, what is the knowledge of God?' He replied: 'It is the knowledge of the Imam of their time, the one whose obedience is obligatory upon them.'" (Ibn Bābūwayh, 1385 AH (solar calendar), vol. 1, p. 9)



through His Essence, and His acts through His attributes. Ultimately, they come to know the intermediaries of creation and guidance, and this knowledge draws them toward love of the Seal of the Prophets (peace be upon him) and his successors (peace be upon them). This love, in turn, leads them to obey them, love their friends, and intensely disavow their enemies in this world and the hereafter, and they will be resurrected with them. In defining the general form of knowledge, Mullā Ṣadrā considers the first thing that the legally responsible person must believe to be the oneness of God and His having no partner, and that Moḥammad (peace be upon him) is His messenger to all creation. It is appropriate to affirm the attributes of God and belief in the Hereafter according to one's understanding, and to attain certainty in the existence of an infallible Imam after the Messenger (peace be upon him) in every time and age. One should know all twelve Imams one by one until their Qā'im (may God hasten his noble reappearance), love them and their saints with heart and tongue, and disavow their enemies. All beliefs mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadīth should be accepted without additional proof. (Cf. Mullā Ṣadrā, 1383 SH, vol. 2, pp. 509–511)

From this perspective, the difference between the two particular and general forms of belief lies in the levels and in the fact that the former is demonstrative for the elect, whereas the latter is belief without consideration of proofs for the common people.

‘Allāmah Majlisī also states in this regard:

لَعَلَّه عَ إِنَّمَا فَسَّرَ مَعْرِفَةَ اللَّهِ بِمَعْرِفَةِ الْإِمَامِ لِبَيَانِ أَنَّ مَعْرِفَةَ اللَّهِ لَا يَحْصُلُ إِلَّا مِنْ جِهَةِ الْإِمَامِ أَوْ لِاشْتِرَاطِ
الِانْتِفَاعِ بِمَعْرِفَتِهِ تَعَالَى بِمَعْرِفَتِهِ عَ

“Perhaps he interpreted knowledge of God as knowledge of the Imam in order to explain that knowledge of God is attained only through the Imam, or because benefiting from knowledge of Him is conditional upon knowledge of the Imam.” (Majlisī, 1403 AH, vol. 23, p. 83) From this statement it can be inferred that knowledge of God is interpreted as knowledge of the Imam for two reasons: first, knowledge of God is not attained except through the Infallible Imam; and second, the condition for benefiting from knowledge of God is knowledge of the Infallible Imam. In reality, the condition for not falling into the trap of Exaggeration is belief that the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) are created beings, while the condition for not falling into Deficiency in knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) is expressing and believing in the content of narrations that contain knowledge of and statements concerning the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) at higher levels. It must be known that, according to the narrations, there is no essence or ultimate limit to



knowledge of God and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). The foregoing rational and narrational premises—which consist of the gradational nature of knowledge of God and its division into knowledge for the elect and the common people, the conditionality of knowledge of God upon knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), and the narrations indicating the division of the followers of those great figures into two groups, Shiites and devotees (cf. Baḥrānī, 1374 SH, vol. 4, pp. 601–606)—lead us to the conclusion that just as human beings possess different levels in tawhidi knowledge of God, they also possess different degrees in knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). In such a way, the higher level in both domains corresponds to the «elect» in Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy and the «Shiites» in the narrations; that is, those who, through profound and authority-centered knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt, have attained pure and experiential knowledge of God, and these two forms of knowledge have become so interwoven in their being that they are inseparable. In contrast, the lower and weaker level in both epistemic systems corresponds to the «common people» in Mullā Ṣadrā's view and «devotees» in the narrations; that is, those who, although they are devoted to the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) and do not deny their truth, remain at a superficial, imitative, and non-experiential level of knowledge of the reality of authority and God, and are deprived of understanding the inner dimensions of the knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them).

Examination of Fabrication in the Narrations of Exaggeration and Deficiency

One of the principal concerns of researchers in the field of Hadīth studies has always been the examination of the nature and manner of the emergence of narrations of Exaggeration. In this context, reflection on a narration from Imam al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) not only opens new horizons in this field but also provides a precise criterion for distinguishing correct knowledge from false knowledge and can clarify many existing ambiguities. The text of the narration is as follows:

إِنَّ مُخَالَفِينَ وَضَعُوا أَخْبَارًا فِي فَضَائِلِنَا يُحِبُّونَ بِهَا مَثَالِبَنَا وَثَالِثُهَا التَّقْصِيرُ فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَانِيهَا الْغُلُوُّ وَ أَحَدُهَا جَعَلُوهَا عَلَى ثَلَاثَةِ أَقْسَامٍ

“Our opponents fabricated reports concerning our virtues through which they seek to expose our defects; and they made them into three categories: one of them is making us gods, the second is Exaggeration, and the third is falling short regarding our affair.” (Ibn Bābawayh, 1378 AH, vol. 1, p. 304)

According to this luminous statement, the basis of fabricated narrations in the domain of the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) rests on three elements and foundations:



- Attributing divine status to the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them).
- Lowering their status and considering them equal to ordinary people.

- Speaking ill of the caliphs accepted by themselves and attributing such statements to the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) and their Shiites.

One of the methods adopted by opponents and enemies to harm the Imams (peace be upon them) and their Shiites was the fabrication of false narrations. In reality, in addition to hard warfare and the use of weapons against the Shiites, the enemies also used soft warfare and the engineering of public opinion through the fabrication of forged narrations, and the principal elements they used as instruments for achieving their evil objectives were addressing the issue of Exaggeration and Deficiency regarding the Imams of guidance (peace be upon them).

From this perspective, all narrations whose theme and content consist of «Exaggeration» and «Deficiency» can be placed among fabricated narrations. In confronting this strategy, the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) also engaged in explanation and clarification and, by declaring their disavowal of the exaggerators, neutralized the enemies' scheme. This can be observed in numerous narrations transmitted from them in rejection of Exaggeration and Deficiency.¹

The religious authority Sayyid Kamāl Ḥaydarī introduces the reasons for the emergence and creation of Exaggeration on three foundations: 1- political motives, 2- personal greed, and 3- intellectual decline.

He considers the principal and fundamental factor in the emergence and creation of Exaggeration to be political motives and objectives aimed at controlling the people. In this way, by attributing accusations such as claims of divinity and attributes beyond human limits to the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), the enemies sought to diminish their status and excommunicate them so as to disperse the people from around them, because the people's attention to and turning toward the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) would expose their false rule to danger and destruction. One of the clearest methods used by the enemies in bringing forth and spreading exaggerated and exaggeration-oriented claims was inserting some exaggerators and plotting among the ranks of the Muslims. (Cf. Ḥaydarī, n.d., pp. 23–27.) In addition to the foregoing discussions, examination of a collection of narrations reveals that even a group of true believers and pure Shiites have,

• See also: Chapter 10, “The Rejection of Ghulū concerning the Prophet and the Imams, peace be upon him and them, and an Explanation of the Meanings of Delegation (Tafwīd), Including What Should Not and What Should Be Attributed to Them” (Majlisī, 1403 AH, vol. 25, pp. 261–327).



to some extent, fallen into excess and Exaggeration regarding the status of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), whereas the Infallible leaders themselves have explicitly prohibited such an approach. (Cf. Majlisī, 1403 AH, vol. 25, p. 279.) Undoubtedly, the root of this phenomenon must be sought in the depth of the love that has taken root in people's hearts for the Household of Revelation, since the human heart is the principal center of emotions and the locus of love or hatred, and this increasing love sometimes crosses the boundary of moderation without conscious awareness.

The Centrality of the Heart in the Emergence of Deviations and the Observance of Moderation

The perspective of the verses and narrations on the concept of the «heart» and its characteristics is one of the fundamental subjects in Islamic ethics. According to the narrations, the foundation of religion is a person's love and hatred, whose locus is the heart.¹ Numerous writings have sought to explain these profound concepts through the use of verses and narrations and to introduce the diseases of the heart and the ways of attaining a sound heart from this perspective.² In this context, in addition to reasons such as intellectual error or scholarly misinterpretation in the field of knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), the roots of the two deviations of «Exaggeration» and «Deficiency» can also be sought in the inner layers of the heart. Attention to the statement of the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him) in the Sermon of the Means concerning the materials of wisdom and their opposites in the human heart reinforces this interpretation.³ In reality, if the human heart is afflicted by worldly impurities such as deviation, heedlessness, doubt, ignorance, and fanaticism, it will fall into excess or Deficiency in accepting the truth of the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), receiving it either in an exaggerated form or in an incomplete form. From this perspective, «Exaggeration» and «Deficiency» may also arise from those same impurities of the heart, in which case their source can be sought in inner unrest and anxiety. In contrast, observing moderation can bring the heart to the shore of tranquility and reassurance. Naturally, attaining the rank of moderation is not possible merely through correcting beliefs; rather, its prerequisite is purifying the heart of impurities and establishing faith within it. Nuṣratī, referring to the verses «They say, 'We believe with our mouths,' but their hearts do not believe» (al-Mā'idah 5:41) and «The Bedouins say,

1. "Is religion anything other than love and hatred?" (Furāt al-Kūfī, 1410 AH, p. 430)

2. See also: Dastgheib, 1388 S.H.

3. "Every shortcoming in it is harmful, and every excess in it is corrupting." (al-Kulaynī, 1407 AH, vol. 8, p. 21)



‘We believe.’ Say, ‘You have not believed; rather, say, “We have submitted,” for faith has not yet entered your hearts’» (al-Ḥujurāt 49:14), and considering the reciprocal relationship between faith and the heart, believes that faith is an act of the heart. This means that in the voluntary stages of faith, a person passes beyond the stage of Islam and enters the stage of faith, while in its non-voluntary stages the heart becomes receptive. Since the heart is the house of faith, as long as faith has not entered the heart and become established within it, the expression «you have not believed» applies to such individuals and they cannot be called believers. Verbal confession without acceptance by the heart does not bring a person into the stage of faith. (Cf. Nuṣratī, 1396 SH, pp. 196–199.) It therefore seems that, in order to attain the healing of the heart and consequently observe moderation in beliefs, the heart must first be cleansed of impurities through Qur'anic and narrational methods and its true healing attained; only then can moderation in knowledge be achieved. One of the most effective of these methods is the *tasbīḥ* of God, which is recommended in numerous verses.

Conceptual Analysis of *Tasbīḥ* in the Verses and Narrations

Knowledge of God has no end or ultimate limit; consequently, complete knowledge of His creatures is likewise impossible. On this basis, the verses and words of the Noble Qur'an, and each of the concepts expressed within it, also possess an infinite scope, and this concept demonstrates the miraculous dimensions of the Qur'an in both wording and meaning. On the one hand, these concepts possess unlimited meaning, while on the other hand, human intellects are limited, and the confined capacities of human beings cannot bear and endure this heavy burden; rather, they drink from this pure water only according to the capacity of their vessels. One of these concepts, which is expressed by God through the verses of the Qur'an in summary and in the narrations in detail, is the matter of *tasbīḥ*. It can be said that the mention of *tasbīḥ* exists in the Qur'an and the explanation of *tasbīḥ* exists in the narrations transmitted from the Imams of guidance (peace be upon them), because they alone are the «interpreters of revelation». (Ibn al-Mashhadī, 1419 AH, p. 561)

The subject of *tasbīḥ* is among the fundamental concepts in the Qur'an's system of belief and worship and is reflected with considerable diversity at various levels of the verses. It can be understood along three principal axes: «God's *tasbīḥ* of Himself» (al-Isrā' 17:1 and 44; and 108), «the report of the creatures' *tasbīḥ* of God» (al-Jumu'ah 62:1), and «God's command to creatures to perform *tasbīḥ* of Him» (Aḥzāb 33:42). In some verses, God Himself performs *tasbīḥ*, while in others He commands all creatures, both in the ontological order and in the legislative order, to perform *tasbīḥ*. The



legislative command is expressed in various ways: sometimes through the imperative verb «سَبِّحْ» and sometimes through the combination «فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى» (Baqarah 2:30), and also through the combination «سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى» (Wāqī'ah 56:74 and 96; Hāqqah 69:52). The command to perform *tasbīḥ* of the Name has been revealed in only one place, with the phrase «سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى» (A' lā 87:1).

The word *tasbīḥ* is used in the Qur'an in four forms: the noun «*subhān*», the past-tense verb «*sabbaha*», the present-tense verb «*yusabbihū*», and the imperative «*sabbiḥ*». It may be said that, on the one hand, the repetition of this command and the existence of the sūrahs known as «*al-Musabbihāt*» in the Qur'an indicate the great importance of *tasbīḥ*, while, on the other hand, the use of *tasbīḥ* at all times indicates that the *tasbīḥ* of God is not confined to a particular time. Although some Qur'anic verses command the *tasbīḥ* of God every morning and evening, such as Āl 'Imrān 3:41, and others at specific times, such as before sunrise and sunset (Ṭā Hā 20:130), in the middle of the night (Ṭūr 52:48), throughout the night and at the edges of the day (Ṭā Hā 20:130), and after prostration (Qāf 50:40), upon reflection we realize that all times have been mentioned for the *tasbīḥ* of God. Although this matter may not have been stated precisely, mentioning most of the hours of the day and night and commanding the *tasbīḥ* of God may be an allusion to all times of the day and night. This meaning is supported in the *Tafsīr Kanz al-Daqa'iq* as follows: the command to perform *tasbīḥ*, which is expressed in some sūrahs in the past tense and in others in the present tense, informs us that God should be glorified at all times, and this is a natural matter that does not change with changing circumstances; and the use of the verbal noun in Sūrat Isrā' makes clear that God deserves *tasbīḥ* from everything and in every state.¹

Part of the content of the narrations includes the definition and meaning of the word *tasbīḥ*, while another part includes formulas of *tasbīḥ*. In the words of the Commander of the Faithful (peace be upon him), *tasbīḥ* of

1. "Whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Allah." This expression appears here, as well as in Sūrat al-Ḥashr and Sūrat al-Ṣaff, in the past tense, whereas in Sūrat al-Jumu'ah and Sūrat al-Taghābun it appears in the present tense. This indicates that whatever is attributed to it is characterized by glorifying Him at all times, since this is an innate form of indication that does not vary according to changing circumstances. The use of the absolute verbal noun in Sūrat Banī Isrā'īl is even more eloquent, insofar as it suggests that everything, in every state and circumstance, is entitled to glorify Him." (Qummī Mashhadī, 1368 S.H., vol. 13, p. 70)



God consists in magnifying the majesty and glory of God Almighty and declaring Him pure from everything that any polytheist says about Him, and when a servant performs *tasbīḥ* of God, all the angels send blessings upon him.¹⁶¹ Accordingly, the noble phrase «سبحان الله» in the words of Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) is explained as declaring God transcendent.²

What the scholars have stated in defining the word *tasbīḥ* also indicates this same meaning. For example, Subḥānī, in addition to declaring God transcendent and free and considering Him far removed from anything that is unworthy of Him, also applies the meaning of declaring people free of blame to persons, meaning declaring them free of reprehensible attributes.³ Ṭabrisī, too, introduces *tasbīḥ* in the lexicon, with reference to the verses and narrations, as having four meanings: declaring God transcendent, exception (saying *in shā' Allāh*), prayer, and light.⁴

Examination of the Qur'anic verses, the narrations of the Infallibles, and the views of theologians reveals that the *tasbīḥ* of God possesses two dimensions, ontological and legislative, and runs throughout all creatures, whether in speech or in state, although human beings are unable to perceive it. All beings lie between non-existence and growth, and what brings them out of non-existence and directs them toward growth and perfection—which is the knowledge of and proximity to God—is their verbal and existential *tasbīḥ* of God.⁵ Although according to one view all human

1. "It is the glorification of the majesty of Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, and the declaration of His transcendence above what every polytheist has attributed to Him. When a servant says it, every angel invokes blessings upon him." (Ibn Bābawayh, 1398 S.H., p. 312)

2. "On the authority of Hishām al-Jawālīqī, who said: I asked Abū 'Abd Allāh (peace be him) about the statement of Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, 'Glory be to Allah.' What does it mean? He said: 'Declaring Him transcendent.'" (Ibn Bābawayh, 1403 AH, p. 9)

3. "Linguistically, *tasbīḥ* means declaring someone free from deficiencies and defects. Thus, when a person declares someone to be free from deficiencies and defects, it is said that he has glorified and sanctified him." (Subḥānī, 1421 AH, vol. 1, p. 243)

4. "It has been said that, in the Arabic language, *tasbīḥ*, with the intensified form, has four meanings: (1) declaring transcendence, as in the verse, 'Glory be to Him who took His servant by night'; (2) making an exception, as in the verse, 'Why do you not make an exception?'—that is, by saying 'if Allah wills'; (3) prayer, as in the verse, 'Had he not been among those who glorify Allah'; and (4) light, as mentioned in the tradition, 'Were it not for the radiance of His countenance,' meaning His light." (Ṭabrisī, 1372 S.H., vol. 6, p. 536)

5 In this regard, one may refer to a narration from Imām al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him), who said: "No bird is ever caught except when it abandons its *tasbīḥ*." (al-Kulaynī, 1407 AH, vol. 3, p. 505) The fact that birds are caught because they cease their *tasbīḥ* can be regarded as a clear example of the aforementioned meaning and of the extension of this meaning to all beings.



actions are subsumed under the *tasbīḥ* of God,¹ the narrations explicitly introduce certain specific formulas and actions independently as legislative *tasbīḥ*, some examples of which are mentioned below:

- *Tasbīḥs* recited in prayer, including the dhikr of bowing and prostration (Baḥrānī, 1415 AH, vol. 3, p. 337) or the four *tasbīḥs*. (Cf. Ibn Bābawayh, 1378 AH, vol. 2, p. 108)
- The *tasbīḥs* of Fāṭimah (peace be upon her), which are among the instances of abundant remembrance and possess great importance among the Ahl al-Bayt. (Kulaynī, 1407 AH, vol. 2, p. 500 and vol. 3, p. 343)
- The *tasbīḥ* of Fāṭimah (peace be upon her). (Ibn Bābawayh, 1413 AH, vol. 2, p. 591)
- The breath of the fasting person. (Kulaynī, 1407 AH, vol. 4, p. 64)
- The moaning of the believer. (Ibn Bābawayh, 1413 AH, vol. 4, p. 364)
- Studying and reviewing knowledge. (Ibn Shu‘bah al-Ḥarrānī, 1404/1363 AH, p. 28)

It may be said that, by performing these acts and invocations and by remaining continuously within the atmosphere of God's *tasbīḥ* throughout all the hours of the day and night that pass, the human being, in addition to fulfilling his important role in the orderly and harmonious movement of creatures toward knowledge of God, prepares the prerequisites for the effect of *tasbīḥ* upon the heart and its purification from impurities, thereby preparing it to receive the infinite knowledge of God.

It seems necessary to state that, based on the aforementioned narration of the Commander of the Faithful in his definition of *tasbīḥ*, it becomes evident that the *tasbīḥ* of creatures, in addition to its central role in strengthening the bond between the creature and the Creator, also affects the strengthening of relationships among creatures. This meaning is contained in a passage of his statement in which he says:

فَإِذَا قَالَهَا الْعَبْدُ صَلَّى عَلَيْهِ كُلُّ مَلَكٍ

“Whenever the servant says it, every angel sends blessings upon him.” (Ibn Babawayh, 1398 SH, p. 312.) Accordingly, a person's *tasbīḥ* of God creates the basis for the angels to send blessings and salutations upon him, clearly indicating the harmony and cohesion of creatures in the *tasbīḥ* of God at all levels and degrees of existence.

The Role of *Tasbīḥ* in the Purification of the Heart

¹ “And *tasbīḥ* has been made general in acts of worship, whether they consist of speech, action, or intention.” (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1412 AH, vol. 1, pp. 392–393)



In the boundless divine system of creation, human beings are not separate from the laws governing existence. The *tasbīh* of God, which has been explained legislatively in the Qur'anic verses and narrations, is not merely a devotional duty; rather, it provides the basis for the existential harmony of the human being with other creatures on the path of knowledge and perfection and of distancing oneself from non-existence and destruction. In addition to creating order throughout the realm of creation, this harmony leaves a profound effect on the heart, soul, and spirit of the human being. Based on its lexical and technical definitions, *tasbīh* means declaring transcendence and purification. Through this process, by recalling the negative attributes, the human being considers God free from every deficiency and defect that is unworthy of His مقام. Naturally, such remembrance and supplication, when accompanied by conditions such as presence of heart and the heart's being free from anything other than the remembrance of God, has a profound effect on the heart of the person who engages in remembrance and purifies it from spiritual vices. This understanding can be inferred from the meanings and semantic layers concealed within the word *tasbīh*.

Allamah Tabataba'i, while defining *tasbīh*, introduces those who are the true glorifiers of God. This matter affects both their spirit and body and purifies their hearts from impurities. In Allamah's view, the technical definition of *tasbīh* is declaring transcendence, meaning the negation of anything that entails deficiency or need and is incompatible with the realm of the perfection of The Divine¹.

The culmination of Allamah's discussion concerning the subject under consideration can be observed where he addresses the function of *tasbīh*. He considers *tasbīh* to mean emptying the heart of love for anything other than God and declaring God free from every partner that the heart absorbs through the soul, or from anything that diverts it from the remembrance of the Lord and occupies it with another matter. (See: Tabataba'i, 1390 AH, vol. 1, p. 17.) In his view, the Lord must be declared free from every partner in name or meaning, and from deficiency or non-existence in the sacred realm of the Lord. This encompasses all forms of *tasbīh*, including verbal, practical, linguistic, and heartfelt *tasbīh*; otherwise, it would be tainted by a form of polytheism. (Ibid.)

Elsewhere, Allamah, by pointing out that true *tasbīh* does not take place only through speech but includes all forms of *tasbīh*—verbal, practical,

1. "Tasbih is declaring transcendence; it is the negation of anything that entails deficiency or need, which is unbefitting of the realm of His perfection, the Exalted." (Tabataba'i, 1390 AH, vol. 19, p. 144)



linguistic, and heartfelt—discusses the effect of this spiritual process on the person who performs *tasbīḥ*, including its consequences for the heart of the spiritual wayfarer and his intellectual structure, his monotheistic knowledge of his Lord, the manner in which he performs *tasbīḥ* of God, and the role that the *tasbīḥ* of God plays in his conduct toward others. He writes:

“The first thing with which God honored His friends—namely, those in whose hearts there is no one other than God and who recognize no administrator of their affairs other than Him—is that He purified their hearts from love for anything other than Him. Consequently, those friends of God love no one other than Him and have no attachment except to Him. They declare God free from every partner toward which their hearts are drawn, causing them to turn away from His remembrance, and from everything that makes them heedless of the remembrance of their Lord and occupies them with itself. In this way, they declare their Lord free from everything that is unworthy of His sacred realm—anything that shares with Him neither in name nor in meaning, and in whom deficiency and non-existence have no place. They do not perform *tasbīḥ* of God merely through words and speech; rather, their *tasbīḥ* is verbal, practical, linguistic, and heartfelt. Anything other than this type of *tasbīḥ* is mixed with polytheism. God, who is absolute goodness, has purified their hearts from even the slightest love for anything other than Him and has filled them with love for Himself. They encounter no one except with hearts filled with goodwill and peace, unless the person confronting them intends evil and seeks to harm them. The Qur’an, too, is a source of healing for whoever seeks healing, but for those who are among the losers, it is a source of loss. With these pure hearts, they see all creation as the blessings of God, the Most Glorious, and they see within it the attributes of His beauty and the meanings of His perfection, which testify to His greatness and majesty.” (Ibid., vol. 10, p. 18.)

From the perspective of Transcendent Philosophy, the relationship between the *tasbīḥ* of God and the heart of the true performers of *tasbīḥ* is reciprocal and interactive. This means that the more a person declares God free from every deficiency and negative attribute and engages in His remembrance, the more his heart gradually becomes purified of attachments and love for anything other than God, and the grounds for receiving the lights of monotheistic knowledge are thereby prepared within it. Since the heart is the locus of contradictory emotions, namely love and hatred, it necessarily cannot simultaneously contain two contradictory loves. (See: Astarabadi, 1409 AH, pp. 440–441.) Accordingly, in the view of the narrations and also in Allamah Tabataba'i's perspective, whenever



the heart of a believer is simultaneously directed toward love for God and His friends and toward the enemies of God, this state is regarded as a form of polytheism.

Mulla Sadra also believes that eternal felicity is strongly dependent upon the intensity of love and longing for God, and that attaining such love is possible only by emptying the heart of love for anything other than God. For, according to the Noble Verse:

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِي جَوْفِهِ

“God has not made for any man two hearts within his body.” (Ahzāb/4)

The human heart therefore does not have the capacity for two simultaneous loves. For this reason, sincerity, in reality, means purifying the heart of everything other than God in order to receive knowledge of Him. This purification itself brings about the strengthening of love and, consequently, the strengthening of knowledge. (See: Mulla Sadra, 1361 SH, vol. 6, p. 103.)

According to a narration from Imam al-Sadiq, worship of meaning has been introduced as true monotheism¹. On this basis, another important point that Allamah Tabataba'i explicitly states in defining *tasbīh* and those who perform it is that, in addition to declaring God free from every defect and deficiency, one must avoid attributing any form of participation between the Creator and creatures in name and meaning and limiting monotheistic knowledge of God to such an attribution, because this is regarded as polytheism toward God. From the totality of these transmitted and rational proofs, it becomes clear that the realization of true monotheism cannot be achieved except through complete and genuine *tasbīh* of God. Only hearts that have been purified of vices and impurities through this true *tasbīh* become worthy of setting out on the path of the infinite and true knowledge of God.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what emerges from this examination can be explained on the basis of two transmitted premises and one rational premise:

1. مَنْ عَبَدَ اللَّهَ بِالتَّوَهُّمِ فَقَدْ كَفَرَ وَمَنْ عَبَدَ الْأِسْمَ دُونَ الْمَعْنَى فَقَدْ كَفَرَ وَمَنْ عَبَدَ الْأِسْمَ وَالْمَعْنَى فَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ وَمَنْ عَبَدَ الْمَعْنَى بِإِيقَاعِ الْأَسْمَاءِ عَلَيْهِ بِصِفَاتِهِ الَّتِي وَصَفَ بِهَا نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَقَدَ عَلَيْهِ قَلْبَهُ وَنَطَقَ بِهِ لِسَانُهُ فِي سِرَائِرِهِ وَعَلَانِيَتِهِ فَأَوْلَيْكَ أَصْحَابُ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَ حَقًّا

“Whoever worships the Divine through conjecture has disbelieved; whoever worships the name without the meaning has disbelieved; whoever worships both the name and the meaning has associated a partner; and whoever worships the meaning by applying the names to it through the attributes by which the Divine has described Himself, and whose heart affirms it and whose tongue articulates it in his private and public affairs—those are truly the companions of the Commander of the Faithful.” (Kulayni, 1407 AH, vol. 1, p. 87)



First Premise: Knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt is the same as knowledge of God.

Second Premise:

نَزَّلُونَا عَنِ الرَّبُّوبِيَّةِ وَقُولُوا فِي فَضْلِنَا مَا شِئْتُمْ

“Place us below Lordship and say whatever you wish concerning our

Third Premise: The *tasbīḥ* of God, in addition to purifying the heart from impurities associated with polytheism, guides the human being toward moderation in monotheistic knowledge of God and true knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt and prevents excess and deficiency.

On this basis, “ghuluw” means exceeding the limit, while *taqsīr* means falling short in expressing the truth. Ghuluw has been condemned in the Qur'anic verses, and according to the narrations, the “extremists” are those who do not speak the truth concerning the Ahl al-Bayt and go beyond the framework that they themselves have established for introducing themselves. Historical and narrational evidence indicates that the origin of ghuluw is rooted, above all, in political motives and the conspiracies of the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt. In order to advance their evil and worldly objectives and dominate the people, they resorted to every means of undermining the position of the Ahl al-Bayt and preventing their influence among the people. One such means was the circulation of narrations expressing ghuluw regarding their position.

Since the levels of knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt possess different lower and higher degrees, care must be taken not to fall into ghuluw in true knowledge and in the expression of their virtues, while also avoiding falling into the trap of *Taqsīr*. In order to attain true knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt, a path of moderation and the middle way has been delineated in the narrations. On the one hand, it negates the claim of Lordship from them and introduces them as “honored servants” of God; on the other hand, it recognizes knowledge of them as an essential condition for knowledge of God.

Given that, in the narrations, the central axis of religion is regarded as love and hatred, and the heart is considered the place where human beliefs take shape, the purity or impurity of the heart plays a fundamental role in the acceptance of these beliefs. Therefore, ghuluw and *Taqsīr* in knowing and expressing the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt arise in the heart.

Tasbīḥ in the Qur'anic verses possesses an infinite and unrestricted meaning, and its scope encompasses all beings and all of creation. It means declaring God transcendent and considering Him free from attributes of deficiency and defect in the realm of name and meaning. The effect that the *tasbīḥ* of God, in all its verbal, practical, linguistic, and heartfelt dimensions, has on the human heart is that it empties it of love for anything

other than God and purifies its realm from every form of polytheism and impurity. Since true knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt is the same as knowledge of God, *tasbīḥ* removes from the heart the impurities present on the path of knowing and expressing the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt and makes possible for the human being the path of moderation in their true knowledge, which is the same as monotheistic knowledge of God. *Tasbīḥ* of God in this realm teaches us that the relationship of the Family of Moḥammad, peace be upon them, with Almighty God is that of created beings and servants, while their relationship with the other creatures is that their creation is different from and superior to the creation of all other creatures, and their attributes are also divine. For this reason, it is not possible to reach the essence and ultimate extent of describing and expressing the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt.

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