

A Discourse Analysis of the Descriptive Parts in Religious Discourse Type in Classical Arabic

Lecturer: Firas Abdul-Mun'im Jawad

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Abstract:

The present study offers an attempt to apply the rules of genre analysis on the descriptive parts in a religious discourse in Classical Arabic. The methodology of a move-based model offered by Swales (1990) is adopted to investigate the scheme of the targeted discourse. The findings show that the moves constituting the discourse under study are as follows: 1) Pre-opening, 2) Opening, 3) Establishing A Territory, 4) Establishing A Nitch, 5) Detailed Characterization : a) Describing Actions, b) Describing Personal Traits, 6) Closing and 7) Post-Closing.

The present study tries to offer an attempt to investigate the scheme of the descriptive parts in the religious text type in Classical Arabic (CA, henceforth). Although schemata of various text types such as narrative and argumentative or persuasive have been investigated, descriptive scheme in the limitation mentioned above has not been focused on extensively as far as the researcher's knowledge. It seems that descriptive scheme has received just a little interest since description is used for various ends and as a part of any tale which can be the core of a novel, play, story or any other narrative text type. In argumentation, for example, description could be used as a part of an argument in any argumentative genre. Dijk (2009), in a personal communication, says that "I did a search for the term 'descriptive text' in my Big Bibliography (of more than half a million titles) and there is only ONE item that mentions it which is enough proof that it is not a common term or genre."

Trying to shed some more light on the descriptive scheme in religious text type in CA seems to be of various kinds of significance. Some theoretical significance seems to be possible to be achieved through trying to explore the structure of descriptive parts of the religious text type. Enriching the discourse structure description takes part in consolidating the basis of the theoretical theorization of discourse

analysis. This kind of significance could be resulted from offering some, though little, contribution to studying the structure of the descriptive parts of the text type mentioned above.

Another kind of significance that could be achieved by this paper is the pedagogical one. Teachers and learners deal with the descriptive parts of religious text type in teaching and learning the skills of comprehension and production i.e., writing or speaking descriptive piece(s) of writing or discourse. It seems to be quite helpful to begin with the scheme of that text type.

This paper is limited to the descriptive parts of religious text type rather than other ones. The text or discourse under study is extracted from CA. It is basically a persuasive discourse which relies on the strategy of description. It was delivered originally in CA and translated into English after that. It is taken from the book of Nahjul-Balaghah (Peak of Elloquence), a well-known collection of pieces of discourse made by Imam Ali bin-abi-Talib (610-673A.D). These discourses were collected by Al-Shareef-Al-Radhy (816-860A.D) and translated by Sayyid Ali Reza.

The basic objective of the present study is to propose a model useful to describe the underlying structure or scheme of the descriptive discourses of the CA under study. This model is intended to be move-based classifying the discourse under study into moves and offering even further classification through classifying the proposed moves into steps whether obligatory or optional when necessary.

A given discourse in CA will be analyzed according to the move-based approach to propose a workable model in order to investigate its scheme. This approach is taken from Swales (1990) who has investigated a number of academic papers and come up with a move-based model workable for academic articles genre. The present study tries to adopt the same approach with a different discourse of a different text type arriving at proposing a new and workable move-based model.

Theoretical Background:

After the flourishing of the transformational generative grammar in the middle of the twentieth century, discourse analysis starts to take the lead in the 1970s. During that period of time, discourse

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analysis shifts the linguistic interest from the micro level to the macro one. The interest of analyzing language at the micro level adopted in the transformational generative grammar when working within the sentence limits has shifted to the macro level as adopted in discourse analysis when adopting analytical units larger than separate or single sentences, i.e., a text or discourse as a whole.

Discourse analysis witnesses some dramatic expansion and starts dealing with many linguistic aspects and phenomena. One of these phenomena is the scheme or underlying structure of discourse. Scheme plays an important role in comprehending and producing discourse since processing a given discourse begins with a mental plan. This mental plan, which is also called macrostructure, functions effectively in getting coherence of a discourse. Dijk (1983:46) defines macrostructure as being "introduced to provide an abstract semantic description of the global content and then the global coherence of discourse." An explicit relationship between macrostructure and coherence is established and recognized here. Widdowson (2007:132) also refers to the important role of the mental plan in ordering reality as well as communication when defining a scheme. The concept of 'scheme' has been more elaborated on by Widdowson (ibid.) who defines it as "a mental structure taken for granted assumptions about how reality is ordered (ideational schemata) and how communication is managed (interpersonal schemata)." Richards, Platt J. and Platt H. (1992: 323) focus on the role of the mental or underlying structure in deciding the text / discourse organization. Scheme is defined as "the underlying structure which accounts for the organization of a TEXT or DISCOURSE" (ibid.). Dijk (1983: 48) claims that scheme plays an important role in discourse comprehension since it "provides the reader with a basis for interpreting the text ... Text bases are the result of this marriage between schema knowledge and text."

Expecting major parts of a discourse results in recognizing its scheme. Such an expectation enables the listener/reader to recognize the missing information as well as irrelevant information or deviations if

there is any. Recognizing these different kinds of information enables the addresser consider their value. Dijk (1983: 48) says that "missing information can be assigned default values if it appears insignificant, or it can be actively looked for in the text. Deviations from the scheme either may be accepted and registered, or if they appear to be major ones, may become the basis for a problem-solving effort trying to account for them."

Discourse schemata differ according to discourse /text types. The descriptive scheme will be focused on in the present study adopting Swales' (1990) model for analyzing genre. Swales (ibid.) defines 'genre' as follows:

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community. The genre names inherited and produced by discourse communities and imported by others constitute valuable ethnographic communication, but typically need further validation.

In his definition of genre, Swales (1990) refers to the communicative events having some communicative purposes recognized by a given discourse community. These purposes constitute a set of needs to be met through adopting a relatively fixed schematic structure preserving the genre scope and offering some similarity in structure, style, contents and intended audience. Swales (ibid.) concentrates basically on the academic writing although the communicative purposes within these limits are much wider than the academic ones. That's why Bhatia (1993) expands the genre analysis (GA, henceforth) limitation to include language use in professional settings. GA is a new methodology which fulfills the requirements of considering a discourse as a genre for the sake of description as well as explanation. GA, as described by Bhatia (1993:11), is "an insightful and thick description of academic and professional texts

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[which] has become a powerful and useful tool to arrive at significant form-function correlations which can be utilized for a number of applied linguistic purposes."

The present study tries to exceed the limits of the academic as well as professional fields and investigate religious discourse. What the present study aims to do is to investigate the schematic structure of the descriptive parts of religious text type in CA. This aim is tried to be achieved through investigating the way by which the communicative purposes of discourse under study can be achieved. These purposes are intended to be achieved in certain communicative events of a given discourse community.

Swales did the first genre-based analysis in 1981 as mentioned in Bhatia (1993:30). He investigated forty eight research article introductions from various scientific branches such as physical, biological as well as social sciences in addition to linguistics. His work offered an analytical model consisting of four moves that appeared in a predictable order. Every single move consisted of several optional and/or obligatory steps. A move, since it is the principle unit of analysis, is to be obviously recognized and defined. Swales (1990), as quoted in Ding (2007:369) states that a move is "a functional unit in a text used for some identifiable purpose." Although the move's functional side is recognized as a means for identifying a given communicative purpose, there is still some areas of the definition to be covered. The size of the move within a text or discourse has not been clarified in the definition above. Hiranburana (2000) has dealt successfully with that problem defining a move as "the smallest functional free unit or element of discourse and schematic structure." In addition to the functional side of the move the size being 'the smallest unit' is also recognized here.

Some further clarification to the move is offered by shedding some more light on the move realization. Hiranburana (ibid.) points out that a move "can be realized by steps or stages and options to

achieve the overall functional goal of each genre." The step is further elaborated on by Hiranburana (ibid.) by stating that it is "a means or act, sometimes sequential sometimes optional, used to achieve the move and it is manifested or embodied by linguistic realizations or exponents." Some additional point is to be added here about the move concerning optionality and obligatory whereas some other ones are optional. Hiranburana (ibid.) defined obligatory moves as those which "can be identified by their presence in the schematic structure or patterns of expectancy, and they define the types of genre."

Swale's model (1990):

Swales proposed a three move model with their obligatory and / or optional steps. It is called then the CARS 'Create A Research Space' model. This model is illustrated below:

Move 1 Establishing a territory

- Step 1 Claiming centrality and /or
- Step 2 Making topic generalization(s) and /or
- Step 3 Reviewing items of previous research

Move 2 Establishing a niche

- Step 1A Counter-claiming or
- Step 1B Indicating a gap or
- Step 1C Question-raising or
- Step 1D Continuing a tradition

Move 3 Occupying the niche

- Step1A Outlining purposes or
- Step 1B Announcing present research
- Step 2 Announcing principal findings
- Step 3 Indicating article structure

This new branch of discourse analysis i.e., GA has witnessed rapid expansion. Several genres have been analyzed by applying the same approach adopted by Swales .i.e., the move-based approach to investigate the schemata of those genres. In the genre of academic writing, Swales (1990) studied academic article introductions. As indicated in Connor (1996:134), Najjar (1990) analyzed article introductions in Arabic in agricultural sciences whereas John (1993) examined experiment-based disciplines such as biology. Brett (1994) considered the results section of sociology articles , as referred to

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in Jordan (1997) while Ismat (2003) investigated book review. The analysis of journal research article genre was also made by Prince (2008).

Genres of professional writing have also been focused on by some linguists. Bhatia (1993) studied job applications, promotion letters as well as legal discourse. Later on, some other studies shedding light on various genres have been studied, as indicated in Bhatia (2002). They are as follows: fund raising discourse by Bhatia (1998a), academic job and course advertisement by Fairclough (1993). Connor (2004) stated that sales letters and business request letters were examined by Zhu (1997) and Kong (1989) respectively in addition to letters of recommendation which were studied by Precht (2000). Hiranburana (2000) shed some light on the generic structure of business correspondence whereas Clynes and Henry (2004) dealt with Malay Wedding. Genre analysis has also been made in the application essays to medical and dental schools by Ding (2007).

As a starting point the researcher has approached my analysis adopting Swales (1990) methodology in analyzing genres. The analysis begins from the macrostructure, i.e., the discourse as a whole moving to the microstructure, i.e., the discourse components.

Analysis and Discussion:

Swale's model (1990) and the modified one of the present study need some discussion especially concerning similarities and differences. Swales' model (1990) deals with the genre of the academic article introductions which is expository as well as persuasive. It is expository because it tries to expose the different kinds of the academic material objectively. It is also persuasive since the reader is tried to be persuaded by its validity. It is expected to have some points of similarity between exposition and persuasion since both of them use description as a strategy for achieving their communicative purposes. Points of difference are also expected since Swale's model (1990) and the modified one work in two,

though partially, different areas. Although this paper is limited to the descriptive parts in the genre under study, the analysis of the other parts of the discourse is also considered in order to have an overall view of the discourse.

Move (1): The discourse under study is preceded by the following part:

It is related that a companion of Amir al-mu'minin called Hammam who was a man devoted to worship said to him, "O Amir al-mu'minin, describe to me the pious man in such a way as though I see them [him]." Amir al-mu'minin avoided the reply and said, "O' Hammam, fear Allah and perform good acts because 'Verily, Allah is with those who guard (themselves against evil), and those who do good (to others)' " (Qur'an, 16: 128). Hammam was not satisfied with this and pushed him to speak. Thereupon, Amir al-mu'minin praised Allah and extolled Him and sought His blessings on the Holy Prophet and then spoke:

The discourse part above is a co-text since it refers to what is defined by Yule (1996:128) as "the linguistic environment in which a word [or discourse] is used." The above part of discourse functions as a textual environment located before the discourse under study. Halliday (1978:133) considers a co-text as "the relevant textual environment at any point." In this case, the co-text is located before the discourse. Since the co-text mentioned above plays an essential role in facilitating the comprehending of the discourse it could be considered as a '**move**'. This move is considered obligatory because the discourse message could not be easily understood without it. A further proof of considering the move obligatory would be the fact that it identifies the discourse genre. Although the co-text is an obligatory move, it is still not a direct and original part of the discourse. Since it is located before the opening one it could be called a '**Pre-opening**' move. It is not unusual for religious discourses to have a '**Pre-opening**' move represented by a co-text. The reason behind that is related to the fact that religious discourses have been delivered in the beginning of Islam fourteen centuries ago. These religious discourses were delivered in CA within particular linguistic and non-linguistic contexts. This particularity makes the religious discourses in need for some introduction represented by a pre-opening move. The matter is different with the genre of academic article introductions written in the present time. The necessary introductory pieces of information are included in the first original part of the article introductions represented by 'Establishing A Territory' move.

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Move (2): "Now then"

Since this move functions as a declaration of the starting or opening it could be labeled as the **'Opening'** move. It is also considered obligatory since it shows the addressee that the discourse has been just given a start. Move (2) i.e., **'Opening'** exists in the modified model because the discourse under study is basically spoken. Since some listeners may not be sufficiently attentive to the addresser they need a move to make them pay more attention. Concerning the academic genre of Swale's (1990) the addressees are all attentive and willing to follow the researcher in his academic paper. That's why they do not need an 'opening ' move.

Move (3):

Allah the Glorified, the Sublime, created (the things of) creation. He created them without any need for their obedience or being safe from their sinning, because the sin of anyone who sins does not harm Him nor does the obedience of anyone who obeys Him benefit him. He has distributed among them their livelihood, and has assigned them their positions in the world.

Identifying the discourse limits of the intended territory of the discourse plays an essential role for both the addresser as well as addressees to recognize what is relevant to be well covered and irrelevant to be avoided.

After the **'Opening'** move there is a need for the addressor to establish the limits of the discourse area or territory to the addressees. The communicative purposes are tried to be achieved within the established limits. Move (3) above performs the task of establishing the limits by introducing 'the creation' as the field or territory within which the discourse events take place. Thus, a suitable label for this move could be that one of Swales (1990) i.e., **'Establishing A Territory'**. However, this move is realized by a step

that could be labeled as 'making topic generalization', as chosen by Swales (ibid.).Allah has talked about the relationship between Him and the 'creation' meaning 'people' in general. This move is available in Swales (ibid.) as well as the present study making it a mutual area of similarity. It has also the necessary qualities to be considered obligatory.

Move (4):

After establishing the discourse territory a new need emerges. That need is how to specify a given part of the discourse territory for the sake of discourse development. In the discourse under study one can see the specification mentioned above. In Move (2) the territory establishment is concerned with the (creation) whereas in Move (3) only one group of the (creation) has been selected and specified i.e., the (God-fearing). Since the move is concerned with specifying a limited area of the whole (established) territory, it could be labeled as **(Establishing A Nitch)** making another point of similarity to Swale's model (ibid.)

Move (5):

This move makes the core of the description process in the discourse under study. The different kinds of characteristics are recognized in details in this move. That is why it could be labeled as **'Detailed Characterization'**. Making some close investigation reveals the fact that there are two kinds of characteristics or aspects described in details here. This move is realized by two steps which will be illustrated in the examples below. The first step is concerned with the actions of the people described in this move. Thus, it could be labeled as **'Describing Actions'**. Actions can be categorized into two categories: positive and negative. Positive actions are those actions which are done by the people under description whereas negative actions are those actions which are avoided deliberately by the addressees. Below are selected examples of the positive actions:

- 1) They keep their eyes closed to what Allah has made unlawful for them, and they put their ears to that knowledge**

- 2) During a night they are upstanding on their feet reading portions of the Qur'an and reciting it in a well-measured way, creating through it grief for themselves and seeking by it the cure for their ailments.
- 3) If they come across a verse creating eagerness (for Paradise) they pursue it avidly, and their spirits turn towards it eagerly. And when they come across a verse which contains fear (of Hell) they bond the ears of their hearts towards it.
- 4) He performs virtuous deeds but still feels afraid.
- 5) He transfuses knowledge with forbearance, and speech with action.
- 6) He forgives him who is unjust to him, and he gives to him who deprives him. He believes well with him who behaves ill with him.

The second category of actions, i.e., negative actions is exemplified by a group of examples as follows:

- 1) They are not satisfied with their meager good acts, and do not regard their major acts as great.
- 2) If his self refuses to endure a thing which it does not like he does not grant its request towards what it likes
- 3) He does not commit excess over him, whom he hates,
- 4) and does not commit sin for the sake of him whom he loves.
- 5) He does not misappropriate what is placed in his custody,
- 6) and does not forget what he is required to remember.
- 7) He does not call others bad names,
- 8) He does not cause him harm to his neighbour,
- 9) He does not feel happy at others misfortunes,
- 10) He does not enter into wrong and does not go out of right.
- 11) He is silent, his silence does not grieve him,
- 12) If he laughs he does not raise his voice.

The second step deals with another kind of characteristics or traits to be described. Since these traits are personal, the second step could be labeled as '**Describing Personal Traits**'. These traits under investigation are also of two kinds: positive and negative. Positive personal traits are those which the people under description have. The following examples are illustrative:

- 1) Their hearts are grieved,
- 2) They are protected against evils,
- 3) Their bodies are thin, their needs are scanty,
- 4) And their souls are chaste.
- 5) The peculiarity of anyone of them is that you will see that he has strength in religion, determination along with leniency, faith with conviction, eagerness in (seeking) knowledge in forbearance, moderation in riches, devotion in worship, gracefulness in starvation, endurance in hardship, desire for the lawful, pleasure in guidance and hatred from greed.
- 6) His virtues are ever present,
- 7) His good is a head and mischief has turned its face (from him).

8) He is dignified during calamities, patient in distress, and thankful during ease.

The other kind of personal traits is the negative one which the people under description lack. This kind of traits is illustrated by the following examples:

- 1) Indecent speech is far from him,**
- 2) His utterance is lenient,**
- 3) His evils are non-existent,**
- 4) His keeping a way is not by way of vanity or feeling of greatness, nor his nearness by way of deceit and cheating.**

Personal actions and traits are targeted by description in the modified model whereas academic details in academic introductions are targeted to be exposed in Swale's model (1990). Since the process of description is done basically in Move (4) it is considered obligatory.

Move (6):

The following move is realized by an action described by the writer in the following co-text: **('it is related that Hammam passed into a deep swoon and then expired.')**

There is no explicit sign in the discourse under investigation referring to the addressee's intention to close his discourse. However, the discourse is closed because of the action of the addressee's sudden death. This discourse could be considered completed or closed since the process of description has been done convincingly. Furthermore, the communicative purpose, i.e., persuasion targeted through adopting the description strategy, has been achieved. That is why this move could be labeled as the **'Closing'** move. On the one hand, the occurrence of the 'sudden cut ' within the delivering of the discourse is oral rather than written. On the other hand, Swale's model (1990) deals with the written texts which means that the process of editing has been considered by the author of the academic articles.

Move (7):

The last move of the discourse is a co-text delivered after the **'Closing'** move. That's why it could be called the **'Post Closing'** move.

Then Amir al-mu'minin said: Verily, by Allah I had this fear about him. Then he added: Effective advices produce such effects on receptive minds. Someone said to him: O' Amir

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al-mu'minin, how is it you do not receive such an effect? Amir al-mu'minin replied: Woe to you. For death there is a fixed hour which cannot be exceeded, and a cause which does not change. Now look, never repeat such talk which Satan had put on your tongue.

This co-text is a short debate between the addresser and an unknown listener who was not the direct and major addressee. Although this debate is not an original part of the discourse, it could not be delivered apart. Thus, it is a part of the oral discourse, though indirect. In written texts, i.e., those considered in Swales's (1990), the author is the only addresser where no addressee is able to participate directly. Finally, this move is seen optional since its role in structuring the discourse is not principle, i.e, the discourse could be considered completed without it.

The modified model:

It is clear that Swales model (1990) needs some modification to meet the specific needs of the discourse under study. The modified model looks as follows:

Move (1): **Pre-opening**

Move (2): **Opening**

Move (3): **Establishing A Territory**

Move (4): **Establishing A Nitch**

Move (5): **Detailed Characterization**

Step (1): **Describing Actions** and

Step (2): **Describing Personal Traits**

Move (6): **Closing**

Move (7): **Post Closing**

Conclusion

Although the researcher thinks that the modified model is by no means exhaustive and applicable for all religious discourses, the following findings have been recognized:

1- Religious discourses in CA, since they are historical, need to be produced by a **pre-opening** move represented by a co-text sometimes.

2- Spoken discourses differ from written texts in their need to the '**opening**' move. The addresses of the spoken discourses are basically the listeners available in the time and place of delivering the discourse. Since it is uncertain for the all addressees to be attentive, there is a need to make them so, by using the

'opening' move. The addressees of the written texts are the readers who read the texts intentionally needing no external motive to make them attentive.

3- There is a mutual area between religious discourses, being persuasive, and academic texts, being expository. That area includes two moves of '**Establishing A Territory**' and '**Establishing A Nitch**'. Although religious discourses and academic research articles are two distinct genres, their addressers have the same general communicative purpose. That purpose is the addresser's intention to persuade the addressees to agree with the former.

4- The move of '**Detailed Characterization**' represented in its two steps of '**Describing Actions**' and '**Describing Personal Traits**' makes a distinctive move of the model. This move characterizes the description part in the religious discourse.

5- It is likely for religious discourses in CA to be followed by co-text since the addressees as well as some other listeners are present and able to take part through commenting.

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Appendix:*The Original Discourse in Classical Arabic*

روي أن صاحباً لأمر المؤمنين عليه السلام يقال له همام كان رجلاً عبداً، فقال له: يا أمير المؤمنين، صف لي المتقين حتى كأني أنظر إليهم. فتناقل عليه السلام عن جوابه ثم قال: يا همام، اتق الله وأحسن: ف"إن الله مع الذين اتقوا والذين هم محسنون". فلم يقنع همام بهذا القول حتى عزم عليه، فحمد الله وأثنى عليه، وصلى على النبي - صلى الله عليه واله - ثم قال عليه السلام:

أما بعد ، فإن الله - سبحانه وتعالى - خلق الخلق حين خلقهم غنياً عن طاعتهم ، آمن من معصيتهم ، لأنه لا تضره معصية من عصاه ، ولا تنفعه طاعة من أطاعه . فقسم بينهم معاشهم ، ووضعهم من الدنيا مواضعهم . فالمتقون فيها هم أهل الفضائل: منطلقهم الصواب ، وملبسهم الاقتصاد ، ومشيمهم التواضع . غصوا بأبصارهم عما حرم الله عليهم ، ووقفوا أسماعهم على العلم النافع لهم . نزلت أنفسهم منهم في البلاء كالتي نزلت في الرخاء . ولولا الأجل الذي كتب الله عليهم لم تستقر أرواحهم في أجسادهم طرفة عين ، شوقاً إلى الثواب ، وخوفاً من العقاب . عظم الخالق في أنفسهم فصغر ما دونه في أعينهم ، فهم والجنة كمن قد رآها ، فهم فيها منعمون ، وهم والنار كمن قد رآها ، فهم فيها معذبون . قلوبهم محزونة ، وشروهم مأمونة ، وأجسادهم نحيفة ، وحاجاتهم خفيفة ، وأنفسهم عفيفة . صبروا أياماً قصيرة أعقبتهم راحة طويلة . تجارة مربحة يسرها لهم ربهم . أرادتهم الدنيا فلم يريدوها ، وأسرتهم ففدوا أنفسهم منها . أما الليل فصافون أقدامهم ، تالين لأجزاء القرآن يرتلون ترتيلاً . يحزنون به أنفسهم ويستثيرون به دواء داهم . فإذا مروا بآية فيها تشويق ركعوا إليها طمعاً ، وتطلعت نفوسهم إليها شوقاً ، وظنوا أنها نصب أعينهم . وإذا مروا بآية فيها تخويف أصغوا إليها مسامع قلوبهم ، وظنوا أن زفير جهنم وشبهتها في أصول آذانهم ، فهم حانون على أوساطهم ، مفترشون لجباههم وأكفهم وركبهم ، وأطراف أقدامهم ، يطلبون إلى الله تعالى في فكاك رقابهم . وأما النهار فحلما علماء ، أبرار أتقياء . قد براهم الخوف بري القداح ينظر إليهم الناظر فيحسبهم مرضى ، وما بالقوم من مرض ، ويقول: لقد خولطوا ! ولقد خالطهم أمر عظيم ! لا يرضون من أعمالهم القليل ، ولا يستكثرون الكثير . فهم لأنفسهم متهمون ، ومن أعمالهم مشفقون إذا زكي أحد مما يقال له ، فيقول: أنا أعلم بنفسي من غيري ، وربّي أعلم بي مني بنفسي ! اللهم لا تؤاخذني بما يقولون ، واجعلني أفضل مما يظنون ، واغفر لي ما لا يعلمون . فمن علامة أحدهم أنك ترى له قوة في دين ، وحزماً في لين ، وإيماناً في يقين ، وحرصاً في علم ، وعلماً في حلم ، وقصداً في غنى ، وخشوعاً في عبادة ، وتحملاً في فاقة ، وصبراً في شدة ، وطلباً في حلال ، ونشاطاً في هدى ، وتحرراً عن طمع . يعمل الأعمال الصالحة وهو على وجل . يمسى وهمه الشكر ، ويصبح وهمه الذكر . يبيت حذراً ويصبح فرحاً ، حذراً لما حذر من الغفلة ، وفرحاً بما أصاب من الفضل والرحمة . أن استصعبت عليه نفسه فيما تكره لم يعطها سوطاً فيما تحب . قرّة عينه فيما لا يزول ، وزهادته فيما لا يبقى ، يمزج الحلم بالعلم ، والقول بالعمل . تراه قريباً أمله ، قليلاً زلله ، خاشعاً قلبه ، قانعة نفسه ، منزوراً أكله ، سهلاً أمره ، حريزاً دينه ، مية شهوته ، مكظوماً غيظه . الخير منه مأمول ، والشر منه مأمون . إن كان في الغافلين كتب في الذاكرين ، وإن كان في الذاكرين لم يكتب في الغافلين . يعفو عن ظلمه ، ويعطي من حرمه ، ويصل من قطعه ، بعيداً فحشه ، لينا قوله ، غائباً منكروه ، حاضراً معروفه ، مقبلاً خيره ، مدبراً شره . في الزلازل وقور ، وفي المكاره صبور ، وفي الرخاء شكور . لا يحيف على من يفيض ، ولا يائس فيمن يحب . يعترف بالحق قبل أن يشهد عليه ، لا يضيع ما استحفظ ، ولا ينسى ما ذكر ، ولا ينازب بالألقاب ، ولا يضار بالجار ، ولا يشمت بالمصائب ، ولا يدخل في الباطل ، ولا يخرج من الحق . إن صمت لم يغمه صمته ، وإن ضحك لم يعل صوتّه ، وإن بغي عليه صبر حتى يكون الله هو الذي ينتقم له . نفسه منه في عناء ، والناس منه في راحة . أتمب نفسه لآخرته ، وأراح الناس من نفسه . بعده عن تباعد عنه زهداً ونزاهة ، ودونه ممن دنا منه لين ورحمة . ليس تباعده بكبر وعظمة ، ولا دنوه بمكر وخديعة .

قال : فصعق همام صعقة كانت نفسه فيها .

فقال أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام : أما والله لقد كتّ أخافها عليه . ثم قال: أهكذا تصنع المواعظ البالغة بأهلها ؟

فقال له قائل: فما بالك يا أمير المؤمنين؟

فقال عليه السلام: ويحك، إن لكل أجل وقتا لا يعدوه، وسببا لا يتجاوزوه. فمهلًا، لا تعد لمثلها، فإنما نفت الشيطان على لسانك.

The Discourse under Study Translated into English

It is related that a companion of Amir al-mu'minin called Hammam who was a man devoted to worship said to him, "O' Amir almu'mnin, describe to me the pious man in such a way as though I see them." Amir almu'mnin avoided the reply and said, "O' Hammam, fear Allah and perform good acts because 'Verily, Allah is with those who guard (themselves against evil), and those who do good (to others)' " (Qur'an, 16:128). Hammam was not satisfied with this and pushed him to speak. Thereupon, Amir almu'mnin praised Allah and extolled Him and sought His blessings on the Holy Prophet and then spoke:

Now then, Allah the Glorified, the Sublime, created (the things of) creation. He created them without any need for their obedience or being safe from their sinning, because the sin of anyone who sins does not harm Him nor does the obedience of anyone who obeys Him benefit Him. He has disturbed among them their livelihood, and has assigned them their positions in the world.

Thus, the God-fearing in it are the people of distinction. Their speech is to the point, their dress is moderate and their gait is humble. They keep their eyes closed to what Allah has made unlawful for them, and they put their ears to that knowledge which is beneficial to them. They remain in the time of trials as though they remain in comfort. If there had not been fixed periods (of life) ordained for each, their spirits would not have remained in their bodies even for the twinkling of an eye because of (their) eagerness for the reward and fear of chastisement. The greatness of the Creator is seated in their hearts, and, so, everything else appears small in their eyes. Thus to them, Paradise is as though they see it and are enjoying its favours. To them, Hell is also as if they see it and are suffering punishment in it. Their hearts are grieved, they are protected against evils, their bodies are thin, their needs are scanty, and their souls are chaste. They endured (hardship) for a short while and in consequence they secured comfort for a long time. It is a beneficial transaction that Allah made easy for them. The world aimed at them, but they did not aim at it. It captured them, but they freed themselves from it by a ransom.

During a night they are upstanding on their feet reading portions of the Qur'an and reciting it in a well-measured way, creating through it grief for themselves and seeking by it the cure for their ailments. If they come across a verse creating eagerness (for Paradise) they pursue it avidly, and their spirits turn towards it eagerly, and they feel as if it is in front of them. And when they come across a verse which contains fear (of Hell) they bond the ears of their hearts towards it, and feel as though the sound of Hell and its cries are reaching their ears. They bond themselves from their backs, prostrate themselves on their foreheads, their palms, their knees and their toes, and beseech Allah, the Sublime, for their deliverance. During the day they are enduring, learned, virtuous and God-fearing. Fear (of Allah) has made them thin like arrows. If any one looks at them he believes they are sick, although they are not sick, and he says that they have gone mad. In fact, great concern (i.e., fear) has made them mad.

They are not satisfied with their meager good acts, and do not regard their major acts as great. They always blame themselves and are afraid of their deeds. When anyone of them is spoken of highly, he says: "I know myself better than others, and my Lord knows me better than I know. O' Allah do not deal

with me according to what they say, and make me better than they think of me and forgive me (those shortcomings) which they do not know." The peculiarity of anyone of them is that you will see that he has strength in religion, determination along with leniency, faith with conviction, eagerness in (seeking) knowledge in forbearance, moderation in riches, devotion in worship, gracefulness in starvation, endurance in hardship, desire for the lawful, pleasure in guidance and hatred from greed.

He performs virtuous deeds but still feels afraid. In the evening he is anxious to offer thanks (to Allah). In the morning his anxiety is to remember (Allah). He passes the night in fear and rises in the morning in joy-fear lest night is passed in forgetfulness, and joy over the favour and mercy received by him. If his self refuses to endure a thing which it does not like he does not grant its request towards what it likes. The coolness of his eye lies in what is to last for ever, while from the things (of this world) that will not last he keeps aloof. He transfuses knowledge with forbearance, and speech with action.

You will see his hopes simple, his shortcomings few, his heart fearing, his spirit contented, his meal small and simple, his religion safe, his desires dead and his anger suppressed. Good alone is expected from him. Evil from him is not to be feared. Even if he is found among those who forget (Allah) he is counted among those who remember (Him), but if he is among the rememberers he is not counted among the forgetful. He forgives him who is unjust to him, and he gives to him who deprives him. He behaves well with him who behaves ill with him. Indecent speech is far from him, his utterance is lenient, his evils are non-existent, his virtues, his virtues are ever present, his good is a head and mischief has turned its face (from him). He is dignified during calamities, patient in distress, and thankful during ease. He does not commit excess over him whom he hates, and does not commit sin for the sake of him whom he loves. He admits truth before evidence is brought against him. He does not misappropriate what is placed in his custody, and does not forget what he is required to remember. He does not call others bad names, he does cause not cause him harm to his neighbour, he does not feel happy at others misfortunes, he does not enter into wrong and does not go out of right.

If he is silent his silence does not grieve him, if he laughs he does not raise his voice, and if he is wronged he endures till Allah takes revenge on his behalf. His own self is in distress because of him, while the people are in ease from him. He puts himself in hardship for the sake of his next life, and makes people feel safe from himself. His keeping away from others is by way of asceticism and purification, and his nearness to those to whom he is near is by way of leniency and mercifulness. His keeping away is not by way of vanity or feeling of greatness, nor his nearness by way of deceit and cheating.

It is related that Hammam passed into a deep swoon and then expired. Then Amir al-mu'minin said: Verily, by Allah I had this fear about him. Then he added: Effective advices produce such effects on receptive minds. Someone said to him: O' Amir al-mu'minin, how is it you do not receive such an effect? Amir al-mu'minin replied: Woe to you. For death there is a fixed hour which cannot be exceeded, and a cause which does not change. Now look, never repeat such talk which Satan had put on your tongue