

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ كَمَا هُوَ أَهْلُهُ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى سَيِّدِ وَلَدِ آدَمَ كَمَا يُحِبُّ وَيَرْضَى بِأَنْ يُصَلَّى عَلَيْهِ

Allah *azza waja*, in Whose Name we begin, The Most Compassionate,
The Most Merciful

All Praise is due to Allah *azza waja*, Countless Peace and Blessings be upon
His Beloved Messenger *Sallal Laahu 'Alayhi Wasallam*

The Test of Old Age

When a person reaches very old age, when his physical abilities disappear and become useless, when a person has no strength and very little common sense, and becomes a like a small child, and he becomes so helpless that he cannot stand up on his own and even sit on his own - is certainly something which is extremely testing to any human.

Expressing this in Surah Nahl (16) verse 70, the Qur'an declares that:

وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرَدُّ إِلَى أَوَّلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْ لَا
يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيمٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

“Allah has created you. Then He will cause you to die. And some of you are turned
towards

the worst part of life. So that they know not after having knowledge. No doubt.

Allah is All Knowing. All Doing.”

This period which is termed as the “worst part of life” is something which has no specific age bracket. In history, people sometimes develop these symptoms when they are only seventy years old. Sometimes people even reach a hundred and they do not display these symptoms. However, Imam Qatadah *Radi Allah ‘Anhu* has mentioned that when a person reaches the age of ninety, his strength, his ability to perform anything himself, his thinking, etc. becomes extremely weak. He is not able to work, or earn his own livelihood, not able to perform the Hajj, etc. When a person looks at others in this condition, he should seek the Divine Protection of Allah *azza wajal* from this state.

In the Hadith shareef, the Holy Prophet *Sallal Laahu ‘Alayhi Wasallam* is reported to have sought the Divine Protection of Allah *azza wajal* from seven things. It is reported that he once made Du’a, “O Allah! I seek protection in You from being miserly, laziness, extreme old age, from the punishment of the grave, from the fitnah of Dajjal, from the fitnah of this life and from the fitna during death.”

This is the reason that a very famous scholar and wise person, namely Hadrat Mohammed bin Ali Waasiti *Radi Allah ‘Anhu*, once declared in a form of a Du’a the following words, “O Allah! Do not keep me alive so long so that I might become a burden on someone. Before this, assist me so that (I may be saved) from asking everyone I meet to hold my hand when I rise.”

In the Hadith Shareef it is mentioned and some have said that these are the words of Hadrat Sayyiduna Ikramah *Radi Allah ‘Anhu* who has mentioned that, “When a person continues to recite the Qur’an, he will not reach this age of ‘helplessness.’ The same with that person who always studies the Qur’an, practises upon the Qur’an. They will not reach this stage of ‘being useless.’” (Ruhul Bayan, 5/55)

There is no doubt that little age or more age is something which is in the Divine Control of the Allah *azza wajaal*. If He wishes, He gives someone more age and He gives someone less age. A person has no say or control on this issue. At the same time, a person should always be satisfied with the Divine Decision made on his behalf and always display patience and contentment.

However, he should always make Du'a that the Allah *azza wajaal* gives him the strength to live a pious and good life and that he is protected from all sins and transgressions. If he lives in this manner and becomes old in the process, imagine the reward in store for him! If he reaches old age and does not live like this, then this is certainly a great test on him. At the same time, we should always be careful about disrespecting old people.

Once a person approached the Holy Prophet *Sallal Laahu 'Alayhi Wasallam* and complained about poverty and hunger. The Holy Prophet *Sallal Laahu 'Alayhi Wasallam* replied, "Perhaps you had walked in front of an old person all the time and this is the consequence of this action." (Ruhul Bayan, 5/6)