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## Chastity

Chastity is the abstention from whatever is unallowable and unsuitable, such as excessive food and carnal appetites. It is among the noblest traits and highest features that indicate elevation of faith, self-honoring, and dignity:

The Prophet (S) said: “The two hollow things the stomach and the genitals, are the main reasons beyond my umma’s<sup>1</sup> being in Hell<sup>2</sup>.”

Imam al-Baqir (a) said: “The best worship in the sight of Allah is the chastity of the stomach and the genitals<sup>3</sup>.”

A man said to Imam al-Baqir (a) that his practices of worship were weak and his prayers and days of fasting were few; however, he hope he would eat and copulate only in legal ways. The Imam answered: “No jihad is better than the chastity of the stomach and the genitals<sup>4</sup>.”

### Reality of Chastity

Chastity does not mean to deprive oneself of the legal desires of food and sex. It only represents the moderation in the use of such desires. As a matter of fact, negligence and excess are always harmful to humankind. The excessive desires for food and sex cause gross dangers to which we will refer in our discussion of gluttony. Shortage in such desires also causes deprivation of the life enjoyments and legal pleasures. It also causes bodily weakness as well as feebleness of energies and morale.

### The Sought Moderation

It is difficult to identify the moderation in the desires for food and sex because of the different needs and energies of individuals. Moderation of an individual may be considered as exaggeration or shortage for another. The relative moderation is to have only the quantity that is sufficient, away from greed and fill. The best criterion in this regard is that which was stated by Amirul- Mu'minin:

“Son! May I instruct you four words after which you will no longer need medicine? Do not eat unless you are hungry. Stop eating while you are still hungry. Chew food deliberately. Before sleeping, go to toilet. You will not need medicine if you follow.”

“In the holy Quran, there is a Verse gathering the whole matter of medicine. It is:

***“Eat and drink but do not be excessive.” (7:31)***[5](#)

## **Advantages of Chastity**

Chastity achieves happiness on both levels of individuals and communities. It beautifies man, raises him above gluttony, guards him against flattery to the mean ones, and enjoins him to gain the means of living and desires of life through legal ways.

- [1.](#) Umma stands for the Islamic community.
- [2.](#) Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 15 part 2 page 183 (as quoted from al-Kafi).
- [3.](#) Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 65 (as quoted from al-Kafi).
- [4.](#) Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 15 part 2 page 184 (as quoted from al-Barqi’s al-Mahasin. In al-Kafi, there is a similar narration).
- [5.](#) Quoted from Safinat ul-Bihar; 2/79 (as quoted from ar-Rawandi’s ad-Dawaat).

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