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## Deception

Deception means to be deceived by a devilish trickery or a wrong idea, such as spending the usurped property in fields of charity. It causes many people to believe in the validity of their acts, but if they examine them precisely, they will understand that their deeds were only delusion. Thus, deception is the most dangerous snare, weapon, and trickery of the Devil.

There are however different forms of deception varying according to the trends of the deluded individuals. Some people are deluded by the charming pleasures of this world and others are deluded by knowledge, leadership, wealth, worship, and the like.

### Forms of Deception

#### Worldly Deception

Faithless individuals are mostly deceived by the false charms of this world. They neglect the inevitable termination of this world and forget that there is an endless life to come; therefore, they put two inaccurate reasons as the justification of their being deceived by this world:

FIRST, they claim that this world is cash while the life to come is credit.

SECOND, they claim that the pleasures of this world are certain, while the pleasures of the world to come are uncertain.

This is in fact a big mistake. Regarding the first claim, it is true that cash is better than credit if they are equal in the measurement of benefit. But when the credit is preponderant to the cash, it becomes preferable. This is the big difference between the pleasures of this world and these of the world to come. As a matter of fact, the pleasures of this world will come to an end, while those of the world to come are everlasting.

Regarding the second claim, it is also inaccurate to doubt the life to come. The prophets, their

successors, scholars, and many nations proved undoubtedly the existence of the life to come. Hence, to doubt it is insanity denied by religion and reason.

In the same manner, the sick believes in the benefit of the medicine that is prescribed unanimously by physicians. If he belies them, he is then dull and foolish.

***“Know that the worldly life is only a game, a temporary attraction, a means of boastfulness among yourselves and a place for multiplying your wealth and children. It is like the rain, which produces plants that are attractive to the unbelievers. These plants flourish, turn yellow, and then become crushed bits of straw. In the life hereafter there will be severe torment or forgiveness and mercy from Allah. The worldly life is only an illusion (59:20).”***

***“The example of the worldly life is like the water sent down from the sky, which becomes mixed with the earth's produce that people and cattle consume. When the land becomes fertile and pleasant, people think that they have control over it. At Our command during the night or day, the land becomes as barren as if it had no richness the day before. Thus, do We explain the evidence (of the truth) for the people who reflect. (10:24)”***

***“Those who have rebelled and preferred the worldly life, Hell will be their dwelling. However, those who had feared their Lord and restrained their souls from acting according to its desires, Paradise will be the dwelling (79:37–41).”***

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: “For him who begins and ends his day considering this world as his main concern, Allah will put poverty between his eyes, scatter his affairs, and he will not gain anything of this world except that which is decided for him. For him who begins and ends his day considering the world to come as his main concern, Allah will install richness in his heart and will manage all his affairs<sup>1</sup>.”

Imam al-Kadhim (a) said: “Husham, the intelligent have abstained from the worldly pleasures and desired for the world to come because they have known that world, as well as the world to come, is demanding and demanded<sup>2</sup>. This world will surely trace the seeker of the world to come to give him his provisions perfectly. The world to come will trace the seeker of the worldly pleasures when death overcomes him to deprive him of the pleasures of this world and the world to come<sup>3</sup>.”

## **The Everlasting Law**

Unanimously, people have complained about this world, because they suffer its pains. Any pleasure in this world is roiled by grieves and any rest is roiled by sufferance. It does not conform to anybody and no man can find true happiness in it. However, they have different courses about it. Some loved it maniacally, rushed madly upon its transient wreckage; therefore, they lived in states of enmity and wrangle. Others disregarded it and sought the refuge of the temples and places of worship escaping its charms and pleasure; therefore, they changed into scattered groups that lived in the margins of life.

In the midst of such two different tendencies, Islam, out of its comprehensive reformation, came to enact the everlasting law that combines the world and religion and unites the purposes of this life with the spiritual desires in such a high method befitting man's nature and guaranteeing pleasure and comfort.

In some situations, Islam has warned the adorers of this world against its deceptions so that they will be freed from slavery. In other situations, Islam has brought gradually the extremists who escape the charms of this world near its innocent sweets and pure desires so that they will not withdraw from the caravans of life and become the subject of poverty and humility.

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: "He who dedicates his worldly life totally to the world to come is not one of us, and he who ignores his world to come for sake of enjoying his worldly life is, too, not one of us<sup>4</sup>."

One of the Imams (a) said: "Work for your worldly life as if you will live forever, and work for the world to come as if you will die tomorrow<sup>5</sup>."

Following this law, the Islamic civilization flourished, and Muslims could find themselves places in the scales of perfection. In the light of this law, we can conclude the following facts:

To have the pleasures and legal desires of this world is not discommended so long as it does not contain a forbidden matter or extravagance:

***"(Muhammad), ask them, "Who has made it unlawful to maintain beauty and to eat the pure foods which Allah has created for His servants? They are made for the believers in this world and are exclusively for them in the life hereafter." Thus do We explain Our revelations to the people who have knowledge. (7:32)"***

Amirul-Mu'minin (a) said: "Know, creatures of Allah, that the God-fearing have shared the joys of this transient world as well as the next coming world, for they shared with the people of this world in their worldly matters while people did not share with them in the matters of the next world. They lived in this world in the best manner of living and ate the choicest food and consequently they enjoyed herein all that the people with ease of life enjoyed, and secured from it what the haughty and the vain secured. Then, they departed from it after taking provision enough to take them to the end of their journey and after doing a profitable transaction<sup>6</sup>. "

☞ To have the precious acquisitions of this world is not discommended unless they are usurped, ill-gotten, or diverting from the reference and the acts of obedience to God. To acquire such things for dispensing with people or seeking the contentment of God, such as regarding the relatives, aiding the poor, or establishing charitable projects like schools, mosques, and hospitals, is among the best acts of obedience.

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: "He who does not collect fortunes legally for dispensing with people, repaying his debts, and regarding his relatives is worthless<sup>7</sup>."

As a man said he sought the worldly pleasures and hope he would collect them for sake of spending them on his dependants and himself, regarding others, and performing the hajj and umrah, Imam as-Sadiq (a) commented:

“This is not the seeking for this world. It is surely the seeking for the life to come<sup>8</sup>.”

☞ The desire to survive in this world is not discommended at all, since its purposes are acceptable. He who desires for survival in this world so as to provide more acts of obedience to God or have more virtues is praised, but he who desires for survival so as to commit sins is surely dispraised.

Imam as-Sajjad (a) said: “(O Allah) give me long life in this world so that I will spend it in the fields of Your obedience. But if it will be a hotbed for the Shaitan, then grasp my soul.”

### Disadvantages of the Worldly Deception

- The most serious danger of deception is that it casts a screen between the intellect and reality and, therefore, the defects and shortcomings, such as gluttony, greed, madly rushing upon the false pleasures that cause disrespect, cannot be noticed.
- Deception causes unhappiness because it pushes into the midst of the life sufferance and closes the eyes before satisfaction.
- Deception is on the top in the list of the matters that distract from being ready for the life to come and taking along provisions of righteous deeds:

***“Those who have rebelled and preferred the worldly life, Hell will be their dwelling. However, those who had feared their Lord and restrained their souls from acting according to its desires, Paradise will be the dwelling (79:37-41).”***

### Treatment of the Worldly Deception

It is recommended to keep in mind the Quranic texts and narrations that dispraise this world and display its horrible dangers, and to keep in mind the unanimous agreement of the prophets, their successors, and people of wisdom upon the inevitable termination of this world and the certain immortality of the life to come. Hence, man of reason should prefer that which will last forever to that which will inescapably come to an end, and should get ready for the everlasting pleasure and bliss:

***“However, (the disbelievers) prefer the worldly life even though the life hereafter will be better and will last forever. This is what is written in the ancient heavenly Books; the Scriptures of Abraham and Moses (87: 16-9).”***

It is also recommended to benefit by the sermons, maxims, and expressive stories that show the regret of the tyrants because of their having been deceived by this world. The most effective sermon in this

regard is the word that Amirul-Mu'minin addressed to his son al- Hasan (a):

“Enliven your heart with preaching, kill it by renunciation, energize it with firm belief, humiliate it by recalling death, make it believe in mortality, make it see the misfortunes of this world, make it fear the authority of the time and the severity of some changes during the nights and the days, place before it the events of past people, recall to it what befell those who were before you and walk among their cities and ruins, then see what they did and from what they have gone away and where they have gone and stayed. You will find that they departed from (their) friends and lodged in the house of loneliness. Call in their houses: empty houses, where are your habitants? Then stop on their graves and say: ragged bodies and separated organs, how have you found the lodge in which you are living? Shortly, you too will be like one of them. Therefore, plan for your place of stay and do not sell your next life with this world<sup>9</sup>.”

People of wisdom have shown a very fascinating picture that depicts man's madly rushing upon this world. They said: “The deceived by this world is like a person who is hanging in a well with a rope tied to his waist. In the depth of that well, there is a huge dragon waiting for his falling and opening its mouth for swallowing him. In the upper of that well, there are two black and white rats gnawing that rope continuously. Although that person can see that dragon and the gradual cutting of the rope, he pushes himself towards little honey found on the wall of that well and mixed with dust. In addition, there are many bees fighting for gaining that honey. In the midst of all this, that person engages himself in licking that honey and competing with those bees on it, without paying attention to the horrible situation above and under him as long as he could find sweet that licking.”

The person in the previous picture represents man, the rope is his age, the huge dragon is death, the two rats are day and night, honey that is mixed with dust is the worldly pleasures that are mixed with grieves and sins, and the bees are sons of this world who compete with each other for gaining its pleasures.

When the angel of death came to Prophet Noah (a), he was in sunlight. After greeting him, Noah asked: “Why are you here?” He answered: “To take your soul.” Noah asked: “Will you permit me to go to the shade?” The Angel did. Then Noah changed his position saying: “Angel of death! What happened to me in life is like the change of position from sunlight to shade, now perform your mission.”

In his final hours, al-Mansour; the Abbasid caliph said:

“We have sold our life to come with a single slumber.”

In his last agonies of death, Harun ar-Rashid<sup>10</sup> was repeating (God's saying about the disbelievers):

***“Our wealth has been of no benefit to us and our belief has destroyed us. (69:29)”***

In his final hours, Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan, the Umayyad caliph, was asked about his feelings. He

answered: "I am as exactly as the saying of God:

Allah will say,

***"You have come to Us alone just as We created you at first. You have left behind all those which We gave to you." (6:94)***

On the sea, Zaitoun, the wise man, saw a man excessively depressed due to the loss of worldly pleasures. He said to him, "Man, what for is this depression? Suppose you are greatly rich, and you are about to drown because the ship you have been on smashed up, will your one and only hope be salvation even if you lose all that which you have in possession?" "Yes, of course," answered the man. "Supposing you are a king," went on the wise man, "but you are surrounded by some people whose main intention is to kill you, will your one and only hope be to escape from them even if you lose all that which is under your control?" "Yes, of course," said the man. "Now," said the wise man, "you are that rich man and you, too, are that king."

These words made that man feel happy.

An expert asked a rich man about the way he had been seeking the worldly pleasures. "It has been very tense," asked the rich man. The expert asked, "Have you attained that which you want?" "No," answered the rich man. The expert said, "You have spent all your days for attaining the worldly pleasures, but you have not attained anything. How will you attain the world that you have not worked for?"

Such lessons and examples influence only the sound hearts and the aware intellects. On the other side, even the most profound sermons, examples, and lessons will not find any ground or welcome by those whom are enslaved by the worldly pleasures. A wise man said: "If a heart is sealed by the fondness of this world, any amount of sermons and admonitions will not influence it. In the same manner, any amount of medicine will not be useful for the body that is completely predominated by a malady."

## **Deception of Knowledge**

Some people feel arrogant for their scope of knowledge. Such feelings may take them beyond the limits and make them compete hideously with each other for attaining high ranks. Such ones should have believed that knowledge is not a purpose. It is a means achieving self-discipline, self-perfection, and happiness in this world as well as the world to come. If knowledge does not achieve such aims, it turns into a waste effort:

***"Those who were to carry the responsibility of the Torah but ignored, are like donkeys laden with books." (62:5)***

Knowledge is in fact like rainfall that drops on the fertile lands to change them into handsome gardens

producing goodness and beauty. But if it drops on a barren land, it will surely be useless. In the same manner, knowledge spreads brightness on the virtuous people, while it only increases the naivety of the lowly.

Man should not take pride in his knowledge since he is not the only one in this field. In the old as well as modern ages, people recognized a great variety of noble men of knowledge who achieved great feats to humankind.

Knowledge should not be a subject of pride since responsibilities of people of knowledge are gravely serious. Moreover, people of knowledge are more answerable than the ignorant. Knowledge will be curse for those who do not take it as guide and do not apply it to themselves:

The Prophet (S) said: “All my people will be virtuous if two classes of them become virtuous and will be reprobate if these two classes become reprobate: the jurists and leaders<sup>11</sup>.”

“As some people of Paradise will look at people of Hell, they will be astonished as they will find the instructors that taught them the religious affairs among them. They will ask, ‘How it is that you are in Hell while we are in Paradise only because we followed your instructions?’ They will answer, ‘That is because we did not apply these instructions to ourselves<sup>12</sup>.’”

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: “Seventy sins of the ignorant will be forgiven before a single sin of the knowledgeable is forgiven<sup>13</sup>.”

Thus, people of knowledge must be good examples for others and must apply the high standards to themselves. In addition, they should do their best to avoid the slips of deception.

## **Deception of Authority**

High rank and power are strong incentives of deception; therefore, we notice men of authority treat people arrogantly out of their feelings of pride. All over ages, people suffered so painfully such arrogance from the reigning authorities who missed the fact that Islam has denied the excessive conceit and selfishness and threatened horrible forms of torment for the conceited in this life as well as the life to come.

However, the high ranking people should employ their authorities for attracting the others’ attentions and admirations and increasing their popular accounts.

The strongest factor that alleviates the intensity of such category of conceit is to ponder deeply over the vicissitudes of time. In fact, the powerful is as same as the rider of a lion: he cannot expect the time it becomes angry and wild.

Abdullah Ibn Abdurrahman narrated:

On Eid ul-Adha day<sup>14</sup>, I visited my mother and found an old lady with ragged clothes with her. That old lady was so eloquent. When I asked my mother about her, she answered that she was the mother of Ja'far Ibn Yahya the Barmakid<sup>15</sup>! Thus, I greeted her so warmly and said, 'How is it that time made you be in such a manner?' She answered, 'Yes, son. We were enjoying the loans of time, but it demanded us with them.' I then asked her to narrate to me some of her story. She said, 'Let me tell you in brief. On one of the past days of Eid ul-Adha, there were four hundred maidens in my service. At that time, I was claiming that my son was treating me impiously. Today, I am before you just for begging you for two skins of ewes so that I will use one as bed and the other as cover.'

I felt pity for her and gave her few dirhams that made her so happy<sup>16</sup>.

Harun ar-Rashid asked the preacher who visited him for an advice. The preacher asked, 'Supposing you are very thirsty and you cannot find water, how much will you buy a single drink of water?' 'I will buy it even with half of my kingdom,' answered the caliph. The preacher then asked, 'Supposing you cannot emit that drink of water, how much will you pay just for making that drink of water be emitted?' The caliph answered, 'I will pay half of my kingdom.' The preacher then said, 'Hence, you should not be deceived by the kingdom whose value is a single drink of water<sup>17</sup>.'

With no going back, the intelligent should realize that all the matters in which he takes pride, such as wealth, knowledge, and authority, are only graces the source of which is Almighty God. Consequently, gratitude, not pride, should be shown for them.

### **Authority between Praise and Censure**

Seeking for authority is not absolutely deniable, since it varies according to its purposes. To seek authority for legal purposes, such as supporting the wronged, aiding the weak, and defending oneself, is a praised thing. On the other hand, to seek authority for overwhelming and controlling others is something dispraised.

### **Deception of Wealth**

Wealth stimulates the latent of conceit and reflects the hideous pictures of cruelty that the wealthy hold in the hidden. It charms the wealthy seekers of authority and encourages them to give their ill-gotten wealth in fields of generosity, thinking they are doing well, whereas, in fact, they are only deceived.

Other wealthy individuals may show sympathy toward the needy in public while, in hidden, they treat them so niggardly for obtaining good reputation. In fact, such individuals are deceived by their fortunes.

Others refrain from defraying the fiscal rights, while they satisfy themselves with performing the rites of worship that do not need any expenditure, such as prayers and fasting. Deceptively, they convince themselves that the performance of such rites is sufficient. Such individuals are also deceived. Like acts of worship, it is unavoidably obligatory upon every individual to defray the fiscal rights of the Sharia. In

the world of the belief and Sharia, each act of worship has its individual significance.

The Prophet (S) said: “Dinars and dirhams have terminated those who lived before you. In the same manner, they shall terminate you [18](#).”

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: “Eblis says: Son of Adam may triumph over me in every situation except three: seizing a fortune illegally, abstaining from defraying a fortune in an obligatory field, and exploiting a fortune in an unsuitable field [19](#).”

## Wealth between Praise and Censure

Besides disadvantages, wealth has many advantages. It may be a means of happiness or a means of grief, according to the ways of its acquisition and the fields in which it is spent. It is the active means that achieve good livelihood. It is also the strong reason achieving dignity and disdain against the mean. Finally, wealth can be exploited for achieving religious goals.

On the other hand, there are many disadvantages that wealth brings about it is a strong reason causing involvement in suspicions and commitment of sins.

Furthermore, wealth is the strongest means that takes away from the reference to God and discourages readying for the life to come:

**“Believers, do not let your wealth and children divert you from remembering Allah. Whoever is diverted will suffer a great loss (63:9).”**

From the previous, we conclude that wealth is not something dispraised at all so long as its means of acquisition and fields of spending are noble. It becomes a subject of denial only when its means and purposes are ill. Because man’s nature is fondness of collecting wealth, it is important for the faithful believer not to be deceived by its glittering appearances. It is also proper for him to learn lessons from those who are excessively charmed by the collection of wealth to the degree that they become deprived of the rewards of the life to come.

Finally, such people will depart this life without taking anything of their fortunes with them. In other words, they will leave this world completely bankrupt! Hence, they are only honest keepers who suffered very much for collecting such fortunes, but they left them for their heirs who gained them so peacefully. The result is that the collectors of such fortunes will be completely responsible for these fortunes, while their heirs will enjoy them completely delightfully.

## Deception of Lineage

Some people may feel conceited for their high lineage and their being the descendants of a noble family, such as the family of the Prophet (S). Such people may feel they are right and they will be saved only for

their being the descendants of a noble family, even if they disregard following and imitating the acts and morals of their forefather. This is in fact an illusion.

God honors him who obeys Him even if he is 'Abyssinian' slave, and humiliates him who disobeys Him even if he is 'Koreishite' celebrity. The Ahlul-Bayt (a) have won such unparalleled ranks and everlasting virtues only because they worked diligently in the fields of obedience to God and devoted all their lives and efforts to seeking the satisfaction of Him.

To be deceived by the forefathers' reputation, without imitating them, is no more than daydream. It has never happened that an ignorant individual turns into knowledgeable only because he is the descendant of a knowledgeable man. God never accepts to treat the obedient and the disobedient equally, or regards the mujahid and the coward as the same.

The holy Quran tells about the story of Prophet Noah (a) when he implored to God to save his son from the sweeping flood that covered all the disbelievers on this earth. Nevertheless, such imploration came to nothing, because his son was disbeliever:

***"Noah prayed to his Lord saying, "Lord, my son is a member of my family. Your promise is always true and you are the best Judge." His Lord replied, "He is not one of your family. He is a man of unrighteous deeds. Do not ask me about that which you have no knowledge. I advise you not to become an ignorant person." (11:46)"***

The Prophet (S) also taught his family a never-ending lesson in the field of obeying and fearing God and avoiding depending upon their family relation to him:

Abu Ja'far Imam al-Baqir related that the Prophet (S) stood on Safa Mount and said: "O sons of Hashim and sons of Abdul-Muttalib, I am the messenger of Allah to all of you. I feel pity for you. I have my own deeds and you have your own deeds. Do not depend on the fact that Muhammad is from you and that you will be taken to wherever he is taken. By Allah I swear, my followers, whether they are from your clan or any other clan, are only the God-fearing. I will not admit you on the Day of Resurrection if you come to me burdened with the worldly disadvantages while others come with the advantages of the world to come. I am excused regarding my mission to you and the commandments of Allah for you<sup>20</sup>."

<sup>1</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 154 (quoted from al-Kafi).

<sup>2</sup>. The world is demanding because it tracks its people till they reach the day on which they will depart it the world-. It is also demanded because people wish to have more than what is limited for them. The world to come is demanding people till trap them when the day on which they depart this life falls. It is demanded because everyone longs for winning the pleasure there.

<sup>3</sup>. Quoted from Tuhaf ul-Uqoul.

<sup>4</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 10 page 9 (quoted from al-Kafi).

<sup>5</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 10 page 9 (quoted from al-Kafi).

<sup>6</sup>. Quoted from Nahj ul-Balagha

<sup>7</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 10 page 9 (quoted from al-Kafi).

<sup>8</sup>. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 10 page 9 (quoted from al-Kafi).

- [9.](#) Quoted from Nahj ul-Balagha.
- [10.](#) Harun ar-Rashid (763-809) is the fifth Abbasid caliph of Baghdad 786-809.
- [11.](#) Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; 1/83 (as quoted from Sheikh as-Saduq's al-Khissal).
- [12.](#) Quoted from al-Wafi; (In the Prophet's commandment for Abu Dharr).
- [13.](#) Quoted from al-Wafi; page 52 (as quoted from al-Kafi).
- [14.](#) Eid ul-Adha: Feast of sacrifice. A festival marking the culmination of the annual pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca.
- [15.](#) Ja'far ibn Yahya the Barmakid was the second personality, after the Abbasid caliph, in the state.
- [16.](#) Quoted from Safinat ul-Bihar; vol. 2 page 609.
- [17.](#) Quoted from at-Turkani's al-La'aali.
- [18.](#) Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 152 (as quoted from al- Kafi).
- [19.](#) Quoted from as-Saduq's al-Khissal.
- [20.](#) Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 60 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

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