

Egotism – the Root of all Evils

The scholars of ethics have defined egotism as the mother of corruption (*Ummul Fisad*), the root of all vices and sins, and in order to attain self-refinement one must seriously struggle against it. Here, in the beginning, its meanings shall be explained and then the evil influences of this characteristic and confrontation methods against them shall be discussed.

Meanwhile, it must be understood that each living existence by nature is an egotist and shows keen interest about his essence, characteristics, actions, effects, and perfection. Therefore, egotism cannot be condemned something as absolutely undesirable, but requires further explanation.

Earlier it was pointed out that a human existence consists of two stages and possesses two selves or two mines, i.e. animal-self and human-self. The human-self consists of a Celestial Spirit, (blown by God-Almighty), descended from Heavenly Kingdom to become God's Vicegerent upon earth. From this point of view it belongs to the category of knowledge, life, power, blessing, benevolence, perfection, goodness, and by nature aspires towards these ideals.

Therefore, if a person recognizes himself (the human-self) and discovers the values incorporated therein, considers them as honorable, strives to achieve the nearness of the Fountainhead of Absolute Perfection, which results in his revival of moral decencies, virtues, and goodness.

Considering the above, this type of egotism could not be regarded as undesirable, rather is something good and praiseworthy, because this characteristic is not egotism rather in reality it is God-seeking. This matter has already been explained earlier and a detailed discussion shall be presented later.

The second stage of human existence consists of his animal-self, and in this stage he is like an animal exactly, possessing animalistic desires and passions. Although, in order to remain alive in this world and to sustain a living, a human being is supposed to provide his animalistic means of living up to a moderate limit, and up to this extent there does not exist any prohibition and reproach.

But the most important and determining factor is that whether the body should be ruled by the wisdom

and celestial human spirit or by the imperious–self and his animal–self. If wisdom and human–self rule, then the animal–self and his passions are adjusted, optimized, and all of them are mobilized for journeying on the path of exaltedness and perfection leading towards God's Nearness.

In this case the human–self which is the same existence attached to God – assumes his authenticity, whereby revival of moral excellence in conduct and God's Nearness become the primary goal, and taking care of one's animalistic requirement will become a secondary aim. Therefore, egotism and love for self not only has not been condemned, on the contrary have been praised.

But if the imperious–self and animal–self took over control of bodily affairs, the wisdom and human–self are subdued and become isolated, in which case a man gradually takes distance from God and human values, falling ultimately into deep and dark valleys of ignorance. He forgets his human–self (i.e. humanism) and recognizes in his place his unconscious self (*Na–khud*) (i.e. animalism). And these are the meanings of egotism which is called as the mother of all evils and is therefore, undesirable.

An egotist sees only his own animal–self and nothing else. All his actions, efforts, talks, and character revolves around the axis of satisfying his animalistic passions and desires. He practically considers himself as an animal and does not recognize any goal in life except meeting his animalistic requirements.

In order to accomplish these base animalistic objectives considers himself as independent or renegade and justifies all his actions. His animal–self is the only thing which he considers something sacred and honorable.

He demands every thing for his own sake, even truth and justice, which should back up his animalistic desires, and if they are not on his side, does not need such justice, rather gives himself the right to wage combat against them.

He even interprets and comments religious commands and obligations as he pleases, assigning authenticity to his own opinions and thinking, whereby the religious laws and obligations are supposed to adopt themselves in accordance with his whims and passions.

Since an egotist is deprived of real human dignity, virtues and moral perfection; he keeps himself amused with whimsical, false, and futile affairs such as: seeking false publicity, ambitiousness, covetousness, snobbishness, eating, drinking, sexual pleasures, and remains totally ignorant from God's Remembrance and self–perfection.

Because an egotist is infatuated and obedient to his imperious–self, he does not have any other aim except satisfying the demands of his passions in the best possible manner; in order to meet this animalistic objective is not ashamed of performing the most shameful deeds and consider them as justified and permissible.

He wants to accomplish his animalistic goals, and in order to achieve them does not refrain from indulgence in lying, accusing, oppressing, and breach of commitments, deception, treachery, and any other acts of transgression.

Therefore, egotism is the mother of all evils which makes all acts of abjectness justified and permissible, or in other words, it can be said that all acts of transgressions in reality are the by-products of egotism which are manifested in different manners at different occasions-. For example, oppression and trampling over the rights of others could not be anything other than self-centeredness.

Likewise, lying, backbiting, ill-speaking, fault-finding, jealousy, and revenge all are the vices of egotism which have been manifested in these manners. It is because of this reason that self-centeredness is called as the root of all transgressions.

Self-centeredness consists of various degrees and stages the highest of them leads to the state of self-adoration a self-worshipping. If this ugly characteristic is not confronted strongly, it gradually becomes so intense whereby the imperious-self becomes an object of worship, whose commands must be obeyed absolutely, and a person becomes submissive to his whims and passions to the extent of adoration. God-Almighty said about such a person in the Holy Qur'an:

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ

“Seest thou such a one as taketh for his god His own passion (or impulse)?” (25:43).

Is worship means any thing else except that a worshipper in front of his object of worship humbles and bows down, and should be submissive to his commands absolutely without raising least objection? Similar is the case with an egotist person because he regards his self as an object of worship and humbles and prostrates in front of him by obeying his commands without any question. Therefore, an egotistic cannot be considered as a Monotheist.

1. Worldliness, the Source of all Sins

In Islamic narrations and Heavenly verses the world has been defined as a place of amusement, and an object of arrogance which has been severely condemned; its attachment is not worthy of the lofty status of believers, and therefore, they should strictly refrain themselves from being attached to its adornments. Following are few examples:

The Holy Qur'an said:

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

“For the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception (3: 185)

And said:

افلا تعقلونيتقونَ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ ﴿٤﴾ وَاللَّدَارُ الْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ

“What is the life of this world but play and amusement but best is the home in the Hereafter, for those who are righteous. Will ye not then understand? (6:32)

And said:

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ وَزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ ﴿٤﴾ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا ﴿٤﴾ وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ

“Know that the life of this world is only play, and idle talk, and pageantry, and boasting among you and rivalry in respect of wealth and children: as the likeness of vegetation after rain, whereof the growth is pleasing to the husbandman, but afterward it drieth up and thou seest it turning yellow, then it becometh straw. And in the Hereafter there is grievous punishment. (57:20)

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

اما بعد فانى احذركم الدنيا فانها حلوة خضرة حفت بالشهوات وتحببت بالعاجلة وراقت بالقليل وحلبت بالآمال وتزينت بالغرور. لاتدوم حيرتها ولا تؤمن فجعتها، غرارة ضرارة حائلة زائلة نافذة بائدة اكاله غوالة

“So now, certainly I frighten you from this world for it is sweet and green, surrounded by lusts, and liked for its immediate enjoyments. It excites wonder with small things, is ornamented with (false) hopes and decorated with deception. Its rejoicing do not last and its afflictions cannot be avoided. It is deceitful, harmful, changing, perishable, exhaustible, liable to destruction eating away and destructive.”¹

And said:

والدنيا دار منى لها الفنا ولاهلهلها منها الجلا وهى حلوة خضرا وقد عجبت للطالب والتبست بقلب الناظر

“The world is a place for which destruction is ordained and for its inhabitants departure from here is destined. It is sweet and green. It hastens towards its seeker and attaches to the heart of the viewer. So depart from here with the best of provision available with you and do not ask herein more than what is enough and do not demand from it more than subsistence.”²

There are plenty of narrations [3](#)and verses in which the world has been reproached, and the people .are warned to refrain from being attached to its adornments. Especially, in the precious book of Nahjul-Balagha (the Path of Eloquence), the world and worldly have been reproached severely, and it has been emphasized that the people should not be attached to this perishable transient world, and should pay more attention towards the Hereafter.

In this book the people have been divided into two groups: the worldly and the one who is attached to the Hereafter. Each one of these groups follows their own special program. God–Almighty has said in the Holy Qur’an:

وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْآخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا

“Whoso desireth the reward of the world, we bestow on him thereof and whoso desireth the reward of the Hereafter, we bestow on him thereof. (3: 145)

And said:

الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمْلاً

“Wealth and children are an ornament of life of the world. But the good deeds which endure are better in the Lord’s sight for reward and better in respect of hope. (18:46)

2. What is World?

Anyhow, Islam considers world something as undesirable and demands from its followers to practice asceticism. Here, it would be appropriate to throw some light about the Islamic concept of this world, and why it has been reproached?

Does the world consist of worldly existence such as: earth, sun, moon, stars, animals, plants, trees, mines, and human beings? Therefore, the life of this world can be defined as working, eating, drinking, sleeping, marrying and other related acts of living. Does Islam refrain from these things? Do earth, sky, animals, vegetables, and trees are bad things that a human being should avoid them?

Does Islam prohibits earning a living, acquiring of knowledge, business and production, and sexual relationship? Absolutely this is not the case, because all of the above things have been created by God–Almighty, and in case they were bad, He would not have created them. God–Almighty regards them as His Beautiful Bounties which should be conquered by human beings and should be utilized for their advantages. The wealth and property not only is not reproached but on the contrary has been introduced as blessing in the Holy Qur’an as follows:

إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةُ لِلْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ

“If he leaves wealth, that he bequeath unto parents and near relatives in kindness. (2: 180)

Earning a genuine living by lawful means not only has not been reproached, rather has been regarded as one of the best kind of worship.

Following is an example:

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: العبادة سبعون جزءا افضلها طلب الحلال

“Worship consists of seventy acts and the best among them is the act of earning a genuine living through lawful means.”⁴

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) has said:

عن ابي جعفر (ع) قال: من طلب الرزق في الدنيا استعافا عن الناس وتوسيعا على اهله تعطفوا على جارة لقي الله عز وجل يوم القيامة ووجهه مثل القمر ليلة البدر

“Whoever endeavors sincerely for earning a genuine living (through lawful means); becomes self-sufficient in taking care of his expenditures; maintains a reasonably comfortable standard of living for his family; shows benevolence to his neighbors –such a person will meet God–Almighty in the Hereafter, while his face will be shining like the full moon.”⁵

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

عن ابي عبدالله عليه السلام قال: الكاد على عياله كالحماهد في سبيل الله

“Whoever strives for earning a living for his family is tantamount to a warrior engaged in Holy War for the sake of God.”⁶

The Islamic traditions emphasize the importance of work, farming, agriculture, trade, and even marriage. The life styles of Prophet (S) and Infallible Imams (a.s.) indicate that they too have worked for earning a living. Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) the leader of the pious also made endeavors and worked hard for earning a living in his life.

Therefore, what is really meant with this reproached world? In the opinion of some people it is not the

world which is reproached rather it is the attachment to world which has been strictly condemned. e.g. the Holy Qur'an said:

زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَاٰبِ

“Beautified for mankind is love of the joys (that come) from women and offspring, and stored-up heaps of gold and silver, and horses branded (with their mark), cattle, and land. That is comfort of the life of the world, God–Almighty ! With Him is a more excellent abode. (3: 14)

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: اياك وحب الدنيا فانها اصل كل خطيئة ومعدن كل بليه

“Be careful not to attach your self from this (transient) world, because love of world is the root of all sins and origin of all catastrophes.”⁷

Imam al–Sadiq (a.s.) said:

عن ابي عبدالله عليه السلام قال: راس كل خطيئة حب الدنيا

“Attachment to World is the basis of all sins and transgressions.”⁸

From these types of traditions it could be inferred that what is condemned is the attachment to these worldly affairs and not the affairs in themselves. Here the question arises whether absolute attachment and love to worldly affairs is condemned and should not a man have any attachment to his wife, children, house, wealth, and food? How could such a thing be expected?

Because, the attachment to these affairs is a natural thing for a human being; God–Almighty has incorporated these attachment within his primordial nature, and that is the way human beings have .been created by Him. Is it possible for a man not to love his wife and children?

Is it possible not to love clothing, delicious foods, and other beautiful things of this world? If love of these things was prohibited, God would not have created human being with these tendencies. A human being in order to keep himself alive requires these things, and accordingly he has been created in such a manner that he should feel a natural inclination towards these affairs. The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: الناس ابنا الدنيا ولايلام الرجل على حب امه

“The human beings are the children of this World and they should not be blamed for loving their mother.”⁹

The Islamic traditions recommend that one must love and show affection towards his wife and children. The Holy Prophet (S) and Infallible Imams (a.s.) too had shown affection towards their wives and children. Some of them liked foods and showed interest in them. Therefore, sky, plants, trees, mines, animals, and similar other God's bounties are neither bad nor condemned.

Similarly, wife, children, wealth and property, affection shown towards these things and life of this world, are not only not condemned, rather in some of the traditions, the world even has been praised. Following is the example:

In reply to a person who has condemned the world, the Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

ان الدنيا دار صدق لمن صدقها ودار عافية لمن فهم عنها. ودار غنى لمن تزود منها ودار موعظة ولمن اتعظ بها. مسجد احبا الله ومصلى ملائكة الله وحيب وحى الله ومتجر اوليا الله، اكتسبوا فيها الرحمة ورحبوا فيها الجنة.

“Verily this world is a house of truth for those who look into it deeply and carefully, an abode of peace and rest for those who understand its ways and moods, and it is the best working ground for those who want to procure rewards for Hereafter. It is a place of acquiring knowledge and wisdom for those who want to acquire them, a place of worship for friends of God and for angels.

It is the place where prophets receive revelations of the Lord. It is the place for virtuous people and saints to do good deeds and to be given rewards for the same, only in this world they could trade with God's favors and blessings and only while living here they could barter their good deeds, with His Blessings, and rewards.”¹⁰

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

عن ابى جعفر عليه السلام انه كان يقول: نعم العون الدنيا على الاخرة

“The world is the best support for the Hereafter.”¹¹

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

قال ابو عبدالله عليه السلام: لا خير فى من لا يحب جمع المال من حلال، ويكف به وجهه ويقضى به دينه ويحصل به رحمه.

“Anyone who does not like earning a living by lawful means to maintain his prestige, to pay his

obligations and to take care of his relatives, then –such a person lacks any merit and goodness.”¹²

Therefore, what is meant by the condemnation of world and its love and attachment which is the roots of all evils? From the over all collection of these verses and traditions it could be inferred that, what is condemned is the worldliness and becoming infatuated with it, and not the creatures of the world, its life, and genuine liking of worldly affairs in themselves.

Islam, demands people to recognize the world the way it is and then they should appraise its worth accordingly; they should also discover the exalted Divine Goal behind their own creation as well as the world, and should move in that direction. If they acted in this manner –they belong to the Hereafter, otherwise they belong to the worldly group.

3. World's Reality

In order to explain this matter in the beginning we would discuss the reality and nature of world from Islamic point of view and then a conclusion could be reached. Islam believes in the existence of two worlds: The first one is the same material world where we live and is called world. The other one is where we will be transferred after death and is called Hereafter and Next World.

Islam believes that the life of a person does not terminate at his demise; rather he will be transferred after death to an eternal abode known as the Next World. Islam regards the world as perishable, transient, and a temporary abode, while considers the Hereafter and Next World as a permanent and eternal abode.

Men has not came to this world in order to live for a short while and finally to die and be destroyed, rather he has come to achieve self perfection through acquiring knowledge, good deeds, and training –and to live happily forever in his eternal abode in the Next World. Therefore, the world is like a form land for cultivation of fruits for Hereafter, place for acquiring knowledge, and a place for making arrangements for provisions of a journey.

However, man for the sake of his survival and in order to live in this world has no other choice except to utilize Divine Bounties which have been created for his consumption. But utilization of these Divine Bounties should be regarded as a mean and not an end in itself.

The aim of creation of human beings and world was not just to have comfortable luxurious life and to take the maximum advantage of worldly pleasures, rather there was an exalted and superior goal behind it e.g. the nourishment of the “Jewel of Humanity” (*Jowhar al-Insaniyat*) through attaining self-perfection and ascending towards God's Nearness. Following are few examples of Islamic narrations in this matter:

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

فان الدنيا لم تخلق لكم دار مقام. بل خلقت لكم مجازا لتزودوا منها العمال الى دار القرار فكونوا منها على اوفاز وقربوا الظهور للزيال

“Certainly this world has not been made a place of permanent stay for you. But it has been created as a pathway in order that you may take from it the provision of your (good) actions for the permanent house (in Paradise). Be ready for departure from here and keep close your mount for setting off.”¹³

And said:

ايها الناس انما الدنيا دار مجاز والاخرة دار قرار فخذوا من ممركم لمقرم ولا تهتكوا أستاركم عند من يعلم أسراركم واخرجوا من الدنيا قلوبكم من قبل أن تخرج منها أبدانكم، ففيها اختبرتم ولغيرها خُلقتم. إن المرء إذا هلك قال الناس: ما ترك؟ وقالت الملائكة: ما قدم؟ لله آبائكم! فقدموا بعضاً يكن لكم قرصاً، ولا تخلفوا كلاً فيكون عليكم.

“Remember that this world is a thoroughfare, a road upon which people are passing night and day, and the Next World is the abode of permanent stay. While, passing along this road make provision for the next where you will reside forever. Do not go with a burden of sins and vices before the One, Who knows everything about you. Remove vicious ambitions from your mind before death removes you from your surroundings.

Remember, that you are being tried in this world, and are created to be given a permanent residence in the Next World. When a man dies people ask what he has left behind as a legacy, and angels want to know what he has sent forward (good deeds and good words). May God have mercy upon you, send something in advance to the place where you will have to follow; it may be a sort of a deposit with God to be repaid to you on your arrival. Do not leave all of your's behind, it will be a drag upon you.”¹⁴

He further said:

الا إن هذه الدنيا التي أصبحتم تتمنونها وترغبون فيها ، وأصبحت تعظكم وترميكم ليست بداركم ، ولا منزلكم الذي خلقتم له ، ولا الذي دعيتم إليه. الاوانها ليست بباقية لكم ولاتبقون عليها وهلى وان غرتكم منها فقد حذرتكم شرها. فدعو اغرورها لتحذيرها واطماعها لتخويفها وسابقوا فيها الى الدار التلى دعيتم عليها وانصرفوا بقلوبكم عنها.

“Remember, that this world which you covet so ardently and attempt to acquire so earnestly, and which some times annoys you and some times pleases you so much, is neither your home nor a permanent destination. You have not been created for it, nor invited to it as your resting place. It shall neither remain with you forever nor will you remain in it eternally.

“If it has enticed you with its charms, it has also warned and cautioned you of real dangers lurking in its folds. Take account of the warnings it has given you and do not be seduced or deceived by its

allurements. These warnings should desist you from being too greedy or too covetous to possess it. Try, to advance towards the place where you are invited for eternal bliss, and turn your face away from the vicious world.”¹⁵

Therefore, as we can see the reality or the nature of the world in these narrations has been described such as: passage, a house of vanity, and deception etc. The human beings have not been created for this rather for the Hereafter, they have come here to nourish their humanism through knowledge and deeds and to arrange provisions for their eternal journey.

4. The Next Worlders

Islam requires that people should discover the reality, essence, and nature of this world the way it actually is and, therefore, should adopt their deeds and behavior in accordance to their own perspective. Whoever, has discovered the nature of such a world will never become infatuated or would be losing his heart for its sake. They will never be deceived by its power of wealth and other allurements.

While living in this very world, and utilizing all of its lawful pleasures and bounties, will never become slaves and prisoners of this vicious world. They will never forget God–Almighty and Hereafter even for a single moment and will endeavor continuously for accumulation of provisions for their eternal journey through performance of virtuous deeds.

While they live in this world but with their esoteric hearts eyes look towards the sublime realities of Upper Heavens. In all situations, at all times, and in all their deeds they do consider the existence of God–Almighty and Hereafter and, therefore, are able to take advantage of these opportunities for enrichment of their eternal life.

They regard the world like a form land for cultivating fruits for the Hereafter –a place for conducting business and endeavor to collect provisions for their journey to eternal abode.

They commission all the resources of this transient world to the full advantage of their Hereafter, even their working, eating, drinking, marrying, and other worldly deeds are utilized for the Next World. Such people are not worldly and belong to the Next World. Ibn abi Yafur narrated from Imam al–Sadiq (a.s.) as follows:

اين ابي يعفو رقال قلت لابي عبدالله عليه السلام: أنا لنحب الدنيا فقال لي: تصنع بها ماذا؟ قلت اتزوج منها واحج وانفق على عيالي وانيل اخواني واتصدق. قال: ليس هذا من الدنيا، هذا من الاخرة

“I said to Imam al–Sadiq:

‘We like the world.’

'What do you do with its wealth' ? Asked the Imam.

"I replied. 'By means of this wealth, we get married, go for Hajj-pilgrimage, take care of genuine family expanses, help our poor brothers and give alms for the sake of God.'

'This is not world, rather it is Hereafter.' Replied the Imam." [16](#)

The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

واعلموا عبادالله أن المتقين ذهبوا بعاجل الدنيا وآجل الآخرة فشاركوا أهل الدنيا في دنياهم ولم يشاركهم أهل الدنيا في آخرتهم سكنوا الدنيا بأفضل ما سكنت وأكلوها بأفضل ما أكلت فحظوا من الدنيا بما حظي به المترفون وأخذوا منها ما أخذت الجبابرة المتكبرون ثم انقلبوا عنها بالزاد المبلغ والمتجر الرابع. أصابوا لذة زهد الدنيا في دنياهم وتيقنوا أنهم جيران الله غدا في آخرتهم لا ترد لهم دعوة ولا ينقص لهم نصيب من لذة

"O creature of God! remember that God fearing and pious persons passed away from this world after having led a respectable and fruitful life , and they are going to be well rewarded in the Next World (when compared with worldly people, they had equal opportunities of gathering fruits of this world and utilize them to the best of their abilities, and at the same time kept away from all wicked and vicious way of life). They did not jeopardize their salvation like worldly minded persons. They led a more contended, more respectable and happier life, than those who lived wickedly."

They enjoyed the fruits of their labors, and had more gratifying, sober and healthy experience of the pleasures of life than the rich and wealthy had. They regaled and enjoined the joys, the facilities and the bliss of this world as much as tyrant and vicious people desired to enjoy.

Yet, while leaving this world, they carried with them all which will be of .use to them in the Next World. While living in this world they enjoyed the, happiness of relinquishing its evil ways. They made themselves sure that in the life to come they will be recipient of His Grace and Blessings, their requests will not be turned down, and the favors destined for them in the Heaven will not be lessened or reduced." [17](#)

Therefore, working as an employee to earn a living, being involved in trade, business and agriculture, and acceptance of positions involving social responsibilities not only are not the least incompatible of one's being a pious or man of Hereafter, on the contrary these very acts could be utilized as means of achieving God's Pleasure, and accumulation of provisions for the eternal abode.

The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) with all those serious efforts and endeavors for earning a living was the most ascetic person, but simultaneously was the ruler over his people. In the darkness of night he cried at the alter of the worship saying:

يا دنيا، يا دنيا إليك عني، أبي تعرضت؟ أم إلى تشوقت؟ لا حان حينك؟ هيهات! غري غيري، لا حاجة لي فيك، قد

طلقتك ثلاثا لا رجعة فيها! فعيشك قصير وخطرك يسير وأملك حقير. آه من قلة الزاد وطول الطريق وبعد السفر وعظم المورد.

“O world, O world ! Get away from me. Why do you present yourself to me? Or are you eager for me? You may not get that opportunity to impress me. Deceive some other person. I have no concern with you. I have divorced you thrice, where after there is no restitution. Your life is short, your importance is little, and your liking is humble. Alas! The provision is little, the way is long, the journey is far, and the goal is hard to reach.”¹⁸

Also he said:

إليك عني يا دنيا فحبك على غاربك قد انسللتُ من مخالبك وأفلتُ من حباتك واجتنبت الذهاب في مداحضك

“Get away from me O world! Your rein is on your own shoulders as I have released myself from your ditches, removed myself of your snares, and avoided walking into your slippery places.”¹⁹

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) while accompanying his soldiers and marching towards the battle field showed a very old and worn out shoe to Ibne Abbas and said:

قال عبدالله بن عباس -- رضي الله عنه: -- دخلت على أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام بذى قار وهو يخصف نعله فقال لى: ما قيمة هذا النعال؟ فقلت: لا قيمة لها! فقال عليه السلام: والله لهى أحب إلى من امرتكم، الا ان أقيم خفا، او ادفع باطلا، ثم خرج فخطب الناس فقال

“If I cannot establish a regime of justice and truth and if I cannot eradicate tyranny and impiety, than the value of this Government and Caliphate is less to me than the cost of this pair of shoes.”²⁰

Such were and still are the God's most sincere servants; although, they live in this very world but they look towards the higher horizons and are the people who belong to Hereafter. Like other people they too are engaged in making serious efforts and endeavors for earning a living and sometimes even accept the highest social positions namely: commander, governor and ruler. But they accept these responsibilities solely for the sake of seeking God's Pleasure and fulfillment of their duties.

Within the lawful limits they utilize the God's Bounties, but at the same time have divorced this vicious world for three times and cleaned their hearts from its allurements. They wage war in order to take hold of the ruling power, but only for the sake of defense of truth and implementation of social justice and not simply for the sake of enjoying being a ruler.

5. The Worldly Beings

But whoever could not identify the world –the way it is; become carried away and amused with its adornments; considered it as the main goal of the creation and after that there is no accountability and Hereafter; became prisoner of wealth and property, wife and children, and position and power; took hold of worldly life firm; forgot about the existence of God and Hereafter; closed his eyes from spiritual values and made sole aim of his life satisfying animal passions and taking the maximum advantage from worldly pleasures, then such a person would be considered belonging to the worldly people.

Even though he might be a poor, destitute, monastic person, and might refrain from acceptance of positions involving social responsibilities.

God–Almighty said in Holy Qur’an.

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

“They know only some appearance of the life of this world, and are needless of the Hereafter. (30: 7)

And said:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ

“Such are those who buy the life of the world at the price of Hereafter. (2: 86)

And said:

أَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ ۚ فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ

“Take ye the pleasure in the life of the world rather in the Hereafter ? The comfort of the life of the life of the world is but little than in the Hereafter. (9: 38)

And said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنَّنُوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غَافِلُونَ أُولَئِكَ مَا لَهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

“Lo! Those who expect not the meeting with Us, but desire the life of this world and feel secure

therein, and those who are neglectful of our revelations, there home will be fire because of what they used to earn. (10: 7-8)

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

عن ابي عبد الله عليه سلام قال: ابعد ما يكون العبد من الله اذاكم الابطنه وفرجه

“The worst condition for the relationship between man and God–Almighty is the situation, when a person does not have any other aim, except satisfying the hunger of his stomach, and taking care of his sexual requirements.”²¹

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على (ع): حرام على كل قلب مطوله بالدنيا ان يسكنه التقوى

“In a heart infatuated with world, presence of piety is forbidden.”²²

Also he said:

قال على عليه السلام: وليبئس المتجران ترى الدنيا لنفسك ثمنا ولمالك عند الله عوضا

“It is the worst kind of trade, whereby one considers the world worthy of his self; and purchases the world at the expanses of Hereafter.”²³

If, the world has been condemned, it is because of the reason of its being a place of vanity and deceit which makes people its prisoners. It manifests itself sweet and attractive keeping people amused with its pleasure, thus, preventing them from God's remembrance and collection of provisions for their journey towards eternal abode.

The world has been reproached, and this act has been so explicitly publicized so that people become cautious not to be deceived by its deceitful manners, and should not allow themselves to become infatuated with its charms or becoming its prisoners forever. What has been condemned –is the attachment to transient world; forgetting the real aim of the creation; becoming totally negligent about the eternal life –and not the God's Bounties.

6. The Worldly and Next Worlders

Therefore, whoever works in this world for Hereafter is a man of Next World, and the one who works for this world will join the worldly group. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: الناس في الدنيا عاملان: عامل عمل في الدنيا للدنيا، قد شغلته دنياه عن آخرته يخشى على من يخلفه الفقر ويأمنه على نفسه فيفني عمره في منفعة غيره. وعامل عمل في الدنيا لما بعدها فجاءه الذي له من الدنيا بغير عمل فأحرز الحظين معاً، وملك الدارين جميعاً. فأصبح وجيهاً عندالله، لا يسأل الله حاجة فيمنعه.

“There are two kinds of workers in the world. One is a person who works in this world for this world and his work of this world keeps him unmindful of the Next World. He is afraid of destitution for those he will leave behind but feels himself safe about it. So, he spends his life after the good of others.

The other is one who works in this world for what is to come Hereafter, and he secures his share of this world without effort. Thus, he gets both the benefits together and becomes the owner of both the houses together. In this way, he is prestigious before God–Almighty. If he asks him anything He does not deny him.”[24](#)

Also, he said :

قال على عليه السلام: الدنيا دار ممر لا دار مقر. والناس فيها رجلان: رجل باغ فيها نفسه فوبقها ورجل ابتاع نفسه فاعتقها.

“This world is a place for transit, not a place to stay. The people herein are of two categories. One is the man who sold away his self (to his passions) and, thus, ruined it, and the other is the man who purchased his self (by control against his passions) and freed it.”[25](#)

The difference between worldly and Next Worlders does not consist in their being rich or poor; occupied in worldly affairs or being without job; being social or living a monastic life; holder of worldly positions or not; being a business man, a religious scholar, preacher and writer; consumer of worldly bounties or otherwise; rather, the real difference consists of ones being attached to the life of this world or the next one; paying attention towards God–Almighty or world; considering the goal of life simply satisfying the animalistic passions or perusal of superior goals of attaining self–perfection and nourishment of human virtues.

Every thing, which keeps a man occupied in itself preventing him from God is remembrance and perusal of affairs related to Hereafter is considered as world. Although, it could be acquiring education, teaching, writing, and being a preacher or Imam. Even living a monastic life, being an ascetic, and being continuously engaged in worship, if is done for the sake of other than God, will be considered as world.

Therefore, it becomes explicitly clear that all the worldly people do not possess the same position; similar is the case with the Next Worlders; some of the worldly people are completely attached to the world and are totally negligent from God and Hereafter –such people are called the servants of world or worldly. Opposite to that, there are pure sincere servants of God–Almighty who are totally committed to Him and Hereafter and do not have any other goal except seeking His Pleasure.

Among these two opposite groups there exist various ranks and positions. The degree of worldliness of each one depends to the extent of his being attached to the world and is being away from God's Nearness in the same proportion. On the opposite side, as much as one is busy in God's Remembrance and Hereafter, will be considered abandoner of the world in the same proportion, or in other words it could be said, that being worldly or being Next Worlorder are two relative acts.

- [1.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon –111.
- [2.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon –45.
- [3.](#) The dryness of eyes is the result of hard-heartedness, hard-heartedness is caused due to excessive sinning; excessive sins are the result of consumption of food which is arranged through forbidden and unlawful income; earning through forbidden and unlawful means is due to forgetting death; forgetting death is due to lengthy desires; lengthy desirers are caused because of attachment to world; and world's attachment is the root of all evils [Tr].
- [4.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 5, p-78.
- [5.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 5, p-88.
- [6.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 5, p-88.
- [7.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-150.
- [8.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 3, p-7.
- [9.](#) Nahjul Balagha, saying 33
- [10.](#) Nahjul Balagha, short saying 130.
- [11.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, p-127.
- [12.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 5, p-72.
- [13.](#) Nahjul al Balagha, sermon-123.
- [14.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon-203.
- [15.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon-173.
- [16.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, p-106.
- [17.](#) Nahjul Balagha, letter no.27.
- [18.](#) Nahjul Balagha, saying 77.
- [19.](#) Nahjul Balagha, letter no.45.
- [20.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon-33.
- [21.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, p-18.
- [22.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-383.
- [23.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon-32.
- [24.](#) Nahjul Balagha, saying 269.
- [25.](#) Nahjul Balagha, saying 133.

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