

Evacuation or Self-refinement (Takhliyeh)

Self-refinement

At this stage the following three acts should be performed:

- A. Refinement of self from all sort of false beliefs, evil thoughts, and superstitions.
- B. Refinement of self from vices and moral indecencies.
- C. Quitting all kind of sins and transgressions.

False beliefs and superstitions are ignorance and deviations that result in self's darkness and deviation from following the straight path of perfection and God's Nearness. Because, the believers in false beliefs never recognize the straight path of human perfection and wander aimlessly and confused in the darkest valleys of deviations and vices never reaching to their undefined final destination. How come the heart which is full of intense darkness can witness the ever shining sacred Divine illumination?

Also, moral indecencies strengthen the animalistic habits gradually silencing the light within the celestial human soul. Such a deviated person will never succeed in accomplishing the most exalted human objective of reaching the nearness of the supreme source of beauty and absolute perfection, i.e. God-Almighty.

Similarly, sinning and transgressions makes the human self dark and contaminated, thus, causing him further to deviate from the exalted path of human perfection and God's Nearness. Naturally, such a person will never reach to its ultimate cherished goal.

Therefore, self-refinement determines our final destination and should be considered as an extremely important matter. We must, therefore, first identify the moral indecencies and sins and then must take remedial actions for cleansing and purifying our self from these impurities.

Fortunately, in the first part we do not have any problem because the physicians of the self or God's assigned human specialists –Prophet's and Infallible Imams have thoroughly defined moral indecencies, and even have given the prescription for their treatment; have counted various kinds of sins and taught us how to relinquish them. We all recognize moral indecencies and understand their ugliness.

We know that hypocrisy, arrogance, jealousy, revenge, anger, slander, treason, egotism, malevolence, backbiting accusation, ill-speaking, wrath, oppression, fear, stinginess, greed, fault-finding, lying, love of the world, ambitiousness, deceit, cheating, suspicion, cruelty, snobbery, self-weakness, and other such habits are bad and undesirable.

Apart from the fact that by features we understand and realize their ugliness, hundreds of Qur'anic verses and traditions also confirms their ugliness and indecencies. Our traditions in this field are extremely vast, rich and comprehensive that there does not exist the least shortage. Also, all forbidden acts and sins and their relevant punishments have been explained explicitly and comprehensively in the Holy Qur'an and traditions, and we do know about all of them.

Therefore, as far as the identification of minor and major sins are concerned, we do not have any problem at all. But at the same time it must be frankly admitted that we all are captive of Satan and imperious self (*nafse- ammarah*), and unfortunately do not find the grace for purification of self from sins and moral indecencies. This is our real problem for which a solution must be found.

In my opinion these are two important factors relevant to the above problem:

First: We don't understand our moral diseases and do not have the courage to admit this sickness within ourselves.

Secondly: We regard them a minor thing and are negligent about the severe painful and catastrophic consequences arising thereof, and because of this reason are not concerned for their treatment. These are the two factors responsible for our negligence towards self-refinement. Therefore, these should be discussed in detail and the method of treatment should be discovered.

1. Negligence from the Disease

We probably understand the moral sicknesses and do appreciate their ugliness but only in others, and not within ourselves. If we encounter impoliteness and moral indecencies in others we are quick to observe them immediately. While it is quite possible that the same moral indecency or may be worst than that might exist within ourselves, but we do not pay the least attention and ignore it completely.

For example, we may regard transgression of others rights as something bad and might hate the transgressor, but at the same time it is possible that we ourselves might be transgressor, and may not realize it at all.

We do not consider our own act as a transgression, and on the contrary it is quite possible, that we might present it something as a glorious or virtuous act before ourselves, thus, by this means making it justified. Similar might be the case with other moral shameful deeds, and in this manner we never think about our own improvement.

Because, if a sick person does not consider himself sick naturally he will never worry about his treatment. Since, we do not consider ourselves as sick, we are not concerned about our treatments either, and this happens to be our biggest problem. Therefore, if we care about our happiness and prosperity we must think for the remedy of this problem and by all possible means must endeavor to identify for internal psychological diseases.

2. Diagnosis of Self-sickness

Here it would be appropriate to describe the ways and means which could be useful for identifying the self-sickness.

2.1. Strengthening of Reason

The most exalted, celestial distinction of human beings, and the most perfect parameter of his existence distinguishing him over all other creatures, which in the terminology of the Holy Qur'an and traditions has been called by different names such as: spirit, self, heart, and intelligence, all are manifestations of one single reality, but because of different considerations have been given different names. But the fountainhead and origin of all thinking, rationalization, and intelligence have been named as reason. [1](#)

In the books of tradition the reason (*aql*) has been treated with special distinction, and special chapters have been assigned for its detailed explanation. Reason in traditions have been titled as the most noble existence which is the source of all obligations, rewards, and punishments.

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

عن أبي جعفر عليه السلام قال: لما خلق الله العقل استنطقه. ثم قال له: أقبل، فاقبل. ثم قال له: أدبر. فادر ثم قال:
تعزتى وجلالى! ما خلقت خلقاً أحب إلى منك ولا أكملتك إلا فيمن أحب. أما أني أياك آمر وأياك أنهى وأياك أثيب

"When God Almighty created the reason, it was blessed with the power of speech. Then it was ordered by Him to come and it obeyed; then it was commanded by him to return and again it obeyed. Then God-Almighty said:

"By the oath of My Honor and Glory ! I have not created any existence which is superior and dearer than you. You will not be perfected in anyone except the one who is dearer to me. Be aware! That obedience and transgression of My Commands depends upon you, and you will receive the rewards and punishment accordingly." [2](#)

Also the Holy Qur'an said:

لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ

"Thus, God expoundeth unto you His revelations so that ye may understand. (2:242)

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا

"Have they not traveled in the land, and have they hearts wherewith to feel and ears wherewith to hear." the Holy- Qur'an (22:46)

And said:

يَعْقِلُونَ إِنَّ شَرَ الدَّوَابِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُ الْبُكُمُ الَّذِينَ لَا

"Lo! The worst of beasts in God's Sight are the deaf, the dumb, who have no sense. (8: 22)

Those who possess ears, tongue, and reason, but do not utilize them in discovering the realities are introduced by God-Almighty in the Holy Qur'an in the category of beasts and even worst than them, because they have not used their minds. God-Almighty said:

وَيَجْعَلُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

"...He hath set uncleanness upon those who have no sense. (10: 100)

Whatever goodness is possessed by a human being it is due to his reason; he recognizes God-Almighty by means of reason and worships him; accepts the Day of Resurrection and makes him readied for it; accepts the prophets and obeys them; understand the good moral conduct and trains him accordingly; identify the vices and evil and therefore, avoids them. It is because of this reason that the reason has been praised in the Holy Qur'an and traditions e.g. Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) replying to a beggar said:

بعض اصحابنا رفعه الى ابي عبدالله عليه السلام قال: قلت له ما العقل؟ قال: ما عبد به الرحمن واكتسب به الجنان.

"It is because of the existence of reason that God-Almighty gets worshipped, and one makes his entry into Paradise." ³

He also said:

قال ابو عبدالله عليه السلام: من كان عاقلاً كان له دين ومن كان له دين دخل الجنة.

*"Whoever is wise and intelligent possesses religion, and whoever has religion will enter into the Paradise."*⁴

Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) said to Hasham:

قال ابوالحسن موسى بن جعفر عليه السلام (في حديث): يا هشام! ان الله على الناس حجتين: حجة ظاهرة وحجة باطنية فاما الظاهرة فالرسل والانبياء والايام. واما الباطنة بالعقل.

"God-Almighty has blessed the human beings with two proofs:

*One is apparent and the other one is hidden. The apparent proofs are Prophets and Imams, and the hidden proof is the reason and intelligence within our existence."*⁵

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

قال ابوعبدالله عليه السلام: اكمل الناس عقلاً احسنتهم خلقاً

*"The most perfect human beings from the point of view of reason are those who are the best in moral conduct."*⁶

قال ابوعبدالله عليه السلام: العقل دليل المؤمن

*"The reason is the guide of a believer."*⁷

Imam al-Ridha' ⁸ (a.s.) said:

قال الرضا عليه السلام: صديق كل امر عقلة وعدوه جهله

*"The reason is the friend of everyone and the ignorance is his enemy."*⁹

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

قال امير المؤمنين (ع): اعجب المرء بنفسه دليل على ضعف عقله

“Egotism of a person is the indication of his wisdom's weakness.”[10](#)

Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) said to Hasham:

قال موسى بن جعفر عليه السلام: يا هشام! من اراد الغنى بالامل وراحة القلب من الحسد والسلامة في الدين فليتضرع الى الله في مسالته بان يكمل عقلة. فمن عقل قنع بما يكفيه ومن قنع بما يكفيه استغنى ومن لم يقنع بما يكفيه لم يدرك الغنى ابداً.

“Whoever desires to become contented without possessing health, a tranquil heart free from jealousy and soundness in religion must cry before God-Almighty and should ask for perfection of his reason. Therefore, whoever becomes wise will be contented with modest means of livelihood, and thus, will become free from wants, and whoever is not contented with modest means of livelihood will never become free from wants.”[11](#)

Imam al Kadhim (a.s.) [12](#)said:

قال موسى بن جعفر عليه السلام: يا هشام! ان العقال تركوا فضول الدنيا، فكيف الذنوب، وترك الدنيا من الفضل وترك الذنوب من الفرض.

“A wise person avoids even extra worldly-affairs what to say about sins, while quitting extra worldly-affairs is optional and avoiding of sins is mandatory.”[13](#)

And said:

قال موسى بن جعفر (ع): يا هشام! ان العقال لا يكذب وان كان فيه هواه.

“A wise person will never tell a lie, even if his self is tempted to do so.”[14](#)

And said:

قال موسى بن جعفر عليه السلام: يا هشام! لا دين لمن لامروء له ولا مروءة لمن لا عقل له وان اعطهم الناس قدر الذى لا يرى الدنيا لنفسه خطرا. اما ان ابدانكم ليس لها ثمن الا الجنة فلا تبيعوها بغيرها.

“Whoever lacks compassion does not have religion; whoever lacks wisdom does not have compassion; the most valuable person is the one who does not consider the entire world worthy of his self Know that: your bodies could not be traded with anything except Paradise. Therefore, be careful never to trade yourselves for a price other than Paradise.”[15](#)

From the above tradition the preciousness of the reason, its important role in acquiring higher learning and sciences, accepting faith , worshipping God, recognizing and utilizing good morals, and quitting sins and other vices, could be understood well. Here, it should be emphasized that simply the existence of reason is not sufficient as far as the accomplishment of the above objectives are concerned, rather it is the commissioning and efficient utilization of the faculty of reason within human body which produce the cherished results.

Within human body the presence of reason could be compared to like a righteous judge or expert, but he could only issue the correct judgment if, the required safe and peaceful environment has been provided in which the verdict issued by him will be accepted.

Or in other words we may compare reason with an intelligent, competent, sincere and resourceful governor of a region, but he could succeed only if his governance is officially certified and backed up by the ruling administration. The reason could be like a wise, trusted, and sincere adviser but only if it is being allowed to advice and if the attention is paid to its words.

If the reason becomes the ruling authority within a human body and could control the whims and passions of the self– it will govern it in an excellent manner; will achieve an equilibrium between the supply and demands; will arrange everything in a proper order, so that they may achieve perfection by ascending towards God-Almighty. But are the whims and passions of the self going to surrender themselves so easily and accept the governance of reason?

No! They won't, on the contrary they will engaged themselves into sabotage and other destructive work against it till the reason is forced out of the field of confrontation. There is no choice except that the reason should be strengthened, because, the stronger it is the better it recognizes the internal enemies and will be able to subdue and control them easily. Therefore, it is our utmost duty to endeavor and struggle for strengthening the faculty of reason.

2.2. Thinking before Action

In order to strengthen the reason we must seriously decide that before undertaking each action its overall worldly and eternal results and ultimate consequences must be thoroughly reviewed. This should be practiced till gradually it becomes a habit. It is because of this consideration that Islam encourages us to think about the ultimate consequences of our actions. e.g.: Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

كان أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام يقول: نبه بالتفكير قلبك.

“By means of pondering deeply, make your heart aware and knowledgeable.”¹⁶

Also said:

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: ان التفكير يدعو الى البر والعمل به.

*“Pondering invites a person towards good works and actions.”*¹⁷

And said:

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: التدبير قبل العمل يؤمنك من الندم.

*“Thinking about the ultimate consequences before action makes you safe against feeling sorry later on.”*¹⁸

A man approached the Holy Prophet (S) and asked him:

ان رجلا اتى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآلـه فقال: يا رسول الله اوصني. فقال له: فهل انت مستوص ان اوصيتك؟ حتى قال ذلك ثالثا في كلها يقول الرجل: نعم يا رسول الله، فقال له رسول الله: فاني اوصيك اذا هممت بامر، فتدبر عاقبته، فان يك رشدا فامضه وان يك غيا فانته عنه.

“Oh Messenger of God! Please advise me.

The Holy Prophet (S) replied:

*“Will you follow my recommendation?” ‘Yes! I will’, Replied the man. This question and answer was repeated three times. Then the Holy Prophet (S) said: “My recommendation is that whenever you wanted to decide to undertake an action, then firstly you must ponder well about its ultimate consequences. In case you found it good then go ahead and do it, but in case you realized that it is not good, then don’t do it.”*¹⁹

Also, he said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآلـه: انما اهلك الناس العجلة ولو ان الناس تشبتوا لم يهلك احد

*“People were ruined because of being hasty. If they would have pondered about their actions none of them would have been ruined.”*²⁰

And said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآلـه: الانة من الله العجلة من الشيطان.

*“Delay and thinking about the consequences are blessings from God-Almighty while haste is from Shaitan.”*²¹

The following has been quoted from a tradition by the Infallible Imams (a.s.).

واروی: التکفر مرا آتک ترایک سیاٹک وحسناتک

*“Pondering is like a mirror which shows your goodness and evilness.”*²²

The animals in their actions follow the passions of their instincts and do not have the power of thinking and reasoning, but since a human being possesses reason, he must ponder and review the ultimate consequences before undertaking any action. Nevertheless, a man also possesses the same desires and animalistic passions, therefore, immediately reacts, gets stimulated, and absorbed as soon as he is faced with a desirable animal object of opposite sex from his own species.

In this situation animal passions do not allow him to resort to thinking, because, once reason enters the scene it will prevent the action taken in accordance with animalistic passions.

Therefore, if we become habitual of practicing thinking and rationalizing before undertaking each action, then in that case, we will be opening a gateway for the reason so that it could be present at the scene. Once it enters at the scene, it immediately diagnoses our interest and benefits by subduing the animalistic passions, and will guide us towards the straight path of human perfection if it is strengthened and becomes ruler of the country (i.e. human body).

It could diagnose the internal enemies and psychic diseases within his inner self, and accordingly may take the preventive measures and necessary treatments for their cure. It is because of these considerations that thinking pondering, and reasoning have been assigned special emphasis in Qur’anic verses and traditions.

2.3. Being Pessimistic towards the Self

If a human being takes a correct and in-depth review of his inner-self and investigate his psychic characteristics, most probably he would be able to discover his psychic diseases, because, after all, one is more knowledgeable about his ownself as compared to others. God-Almighty has said:

بِكُلِّ إِنْسَانٍ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ وَلَوْ أَلْقَى مَعَانِيرَهُ

“Oh! But man is telling witness against himself, although he tenders his excuses. (75: 14–15)

But our problem is that while judging we cannot remain impartial, because, we are optimistic about our souls; consider ourselves, our characteristics, our actions, and our opinions as faultless. The imperious-

self (*nafse-ammarah*) makes the animalistic passions so charming, attractive, and appealing before our eyes that the evil deeds committed by us appears as virtuous acts. The Holy Qur'an said:

أَفَمَنْ زُينَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا ؟ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ

"Is he, the evil of whose deeds is made fair-seeming unto him so that he deemeth it good, (other than Satan's dupe)" God verily sendeth whom He will astray and guideth whom He will. (35:8)

It is because of this reason that we do not realize our defects and faults so that we could take remedial measures. Therefore, the solution of the problem consists that we must continuously be pessimistic and suspicious about the self; should presume or even must be assured that we possess vices, plenty of diseases, and with this reality should investigate the self. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال عليه السلام: إن المؤمن لا يصبح ولا يمسى إلا ونفسه ظنون عنده فلا يزال زاريا عليها ومستزبدا لها.

"A believer is continuously pessimistic about his self, always criticizes, and demands better deeds from him." [23](#)

In praising the characteristics of the pious, he said:

قال على (ع): فهم لأنفسهم متهمون ومن أعمالهم مشفقون واذاذكى احد منهم حال مما يقال له فيقول: أنا اعلم بنفسي من غيري وربى اعلم مني بنفسي.

"Their souls before them are always blamed' and criticized and they are always afraid of their deeds. While one of them is being praised, he is afraid of such praise and says: 'I am more aware about my own self; and God-Almighty is more knowledgeable as compared to me.' [24](#)

One of the biggest obstacle which never permits us to discover our psychic diseases and to seek treatment is our being optimistic and having a favorable opinion about our souls. Therefore, if this obstacle could be removed and the self is reviewed honestly, it would be possible to diagnose the disease and seek its treatment accordingly.

2.4. Consulting Spiritual Physicians

In order to diagnose our hidden internal faults and defects we may seek the assistance of a learned scholar of ethics who after having perfected his self has achieved a praiseworthy moral conduct. We must explain in detail the characteristics and internal behavior to him, and should request him to remind us about our psychic faults and moral indecencies.

A spiritual physician who is a psychiatrist as well as a scholar of ethics, whose belief and action coincides, and is a true manifestation of higher moral excellence is extremely useful and influential for achieving self-perfection and undertaking a spiritual journey towards God-Almighty. If, one could succeed in finding such a person one must be thankful to God-Almighty for this blessing.

Unfortunately, such persons are not available easily and are in shortage. Also, this point needs to be emphasized that the correct diagnosis of the self's disease is extremely difficult. Therefore, it is patient's duty to describe in detail his deeds and internal characteristics without reservation before such a spiritual physician to enable him to diagnose his sickness correctly. If the patient did not cooperate and concealed the realities about him, then in that case, he will not obtain the desired results.

2.5. Consulting a Wise Friend

A good friend who is wise, intelligent, and well-wisher is a great blessing of God-Almighty, and could be helpful in our efforts for achieving self-refinement and identification of moral indecencies, subjected to his being competent to identify our good and bad characteristics. Also, he should be a confident and well-wisher.

Because, if he could not diagnose the good and bad characteristics not only he can not help us, but on the contrary he may regard our weaknesses as virtues and visa versa. In case, if he is not a trusted well-wisher, it is quite possible that for the continuation of friendship and not to hurt our sentiments, might conceal our faults and defects, and even for flattering and appeasement will mislead us by branding our moral indecencies as our virtues.

If, luckily we succeeded in finding such an ideal friend then we must demand him to feel free in frankly pointing out to us all our defects and faults observed by him. We must appreciate his reminders, should utilize them for improvement of the self, should make him understand that his criticism is sincerely appreciated and that not only we are not unhappy of his reminder on the contrary are grateful and pleased.

On the other hand, the person who has been trusted for this task is obliged to prove his honesty and sincerity through his practical actions. He must review the characteristics of his friend honestly without any reservations, and should let him know about his observations in a friendly and well-wishing manner in strict confidence.

Also, pointing out defects and faults in the presence of others should be strictly prohibited. His aim should be to present out the facts and exaggeration should be strictly avoided, because, a believer is supposed to be like a mirror for another believer reflecting the later's beauty and ugliness the way they are without making any addition or subtraction.

Of course, such a friend who for the sake of reform reminds a person about his faults and defects are in shortages, but if one luckily finds such an ideal friend, he indeed has received one of the greatest

blessing. He must appreciate it, should be pleased for his comments, must thanks him, and must realize that a friend who criticizes for the sake of his improvement is one of the best and most valuable friend.

God forbids! If instead, a person feels offended with his positive criticism and for the sake of self defense starts thinking about taking revenge against him. If, someone reminded you that there are some poisonous scorpions upon your dress. Will you then feel offended with such a reminder and will take revenge or will you be pleased and thanks him?

Yes! The undesirable characteristics are like scorpions and even worst than this, because they sting and continuously strive their entries inside the soul. Some one who helps us to against them has indeed done the greatest services for us.

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

قال الصادق عليه السلام: احب اخوانى الى عيوبى.

*“The one who points out my faults to me is my best brother.”*²⁵

2.6. Learning from Other's Faults

Most probably a human being is unaware of his own defects but sees them in others clearly and feels their ugliness very well. According to a famous proverb:

“They see a tiny piece of straw in the eyes of others and makes it big like a mountain, but can not see the mountain of their own eyes.”

Therefore, one of the method for identifying our psychic defects is to detect these faults within other people. Once, a human being sees a defect of others, instead of paying attention towards it or criticizing, he should investigate his own inner-self for being contaminated with the same faults, and in case he finds it, should try for its remedial. In this manner he could learn a lesson from the faults of other people, in continuation of his efforts for achieving self-refinement. The Holy Prophet (S) said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: السعيد من وعظ بغيره.

*“Fortunate is the one who learns a lesson from the faults of others.”*²⁶

2.7. Learning from Criticism

Generally friends decline to point out the defects of a human being but opposite to that his enemies are quite eager to criticize. Of course, they are not sincere in their criticism and are motivated with their feelings of jealousy, enmity, and revengefulness but any way one might utilize their criticism to his best

advantage.

When being criticized by his enemies a man has two options:

Firstly: He may take a defending position by taking the excuse that since the criticism is uttered by his enemies who are not his well wishers, therefore, he will defend himself by every possible means, thus, silencing their voices. Such a person had not only corrected his defects but on the contrary he might contaminate himself by committing further mistakes.

Secondly: He might pay good attention to his enemy's criticism, then with the aim of truth finding may refer to his own-self by reviewing him honestly. If, he found out that the enemy was right and his own-self was at fault, he should resort immediately to his own reform.

In case, if it is feasible, he should even thank his enemy whose criticism became a means of his self-refinement- an enemy who is far better than those protecting friends who did not point out his defects, and with their flattering and appeasement kept him in the darkness of ignorance.

But if after referring to his self and reviewing, if he finds out that the defect does not exist within his self, then must thanks God-Almighty and be careful in guarding his self, lest it become contaminated with this defect later on. In this manner he could be benefited from the criticism of his enemies. Of course, this method of encounter will not be an obstacle as far as his utilization of other logical and legal means for dissipating the treacherous enemy plans are concerned.

2.8. Symptoms of Heart's Sickness

One of the best methods for diagnosing a disease is to recognize its symptoms. The bodily sickness is generally identified by means of two indications i.e. either by feeling pain or by means of weakness of a particular part of the body in dischargement of its assigned function. Every part of the body is supposed to perform a special function, which in case of being fit performs it very well.

Therefore, if a part of the body is not performing its assigned function well it means that the part is sick. For example, the human eye in sound health under particular conditions sees the object, and therefore, if in spite of having suitable conditions does not see well, indicates that it is sick.

Similarly, other organs of the body like ears, tongue, hands, feet, heart, liver, kidney, and others, each one of them is supposed to perform a particular function, which is performed by them in their being fit, and their failure to perform their relevant functions indicate their sickness.

Similar is the case with human self or heart which in accordance to his primordial nature is assigned to perform a special function. He has arrived from the Celestial Kingdom with knowledge, blessing, power , mercy, justice, love, enlightenment, illumination, and other moral virtues. By nature he is curious to discover the reasons and realities and desires God.

Belief, attention, love, attachment, and worship towards God-Almighty all are symptoms of soundness of self and heart. Likewise, attachment shown towards knowledge and wisdom, benevolence and service for the God's Creatures for the sake of God-Almighty, sacrifice, generosity, seeking justice, and other moral virtues also are indicative of soundness of the self.

If, a person discovers such characteristics within him, it means that he possesses a sound heart, but on the contrary if he realized that he does not pay attention towards God; does not enjoy prayer, supplication, and worshipping; does not like God; is ambitious for power, wealth, wife, and children; prefers sexual and carnal pleasures over God's consent; does not have any other goal in life except to safeguard his own interests; does not enjoy sacrifice, generosity, kindness, and service towards others human beings, and does not feel upset while seeing other people inflicted with calamities.

Such a person must know that he is certainly sick, and if he is interested in his prosperity must resort to his reform and treatment as soon as possible.

3. Decision for Treatment

After the psychic sickness is diagnosed correctly, once we become sure that we are sick then its treatment must be started immediately, and the most important thing which matters at this stage –is to be able to take the firm decision. If, we really want and seriously decide that we must refine ourselves from the moral indecencies –it could be done.

But if we treat. it something as insignificant, and do not decide, then in that case getting cured and achieving sound health would become impossible. It is at this stage that Satan and imperious-self enter into action and by means of playing dirty tricks prevent us from taking the right decision. But we must be careful and should not become victim of their treacherous deceit.

It is possible that he may justify the self's ugliness by pointing out: Don't you want to live with the people? Others do possess the same characteristics, look at Mr. so and so, they all possess the some characteristics even greater than yours. Do you alone want to be good?

خواهی نشوی رسوا همنگ جماعت باش.

"If you don't want to be insulted then better join the crowd."

But we must take a decisive and firm stand against their treacherous deceptions and must say: The argument that the others are also contaminated has nothing to do with me; there being contaminated does not give mean excuse or justification; in any case this defect and sickness exist within me; if I die in this condition; will be inflicted with eternal doom, and therefore, must endeavor for treatment and attaining self-refinement.

Sometimes it is possible that the Satan will enter the field with time killing and delaying tricks, thus, preventing us from taking the right decision at the right time. He might tell us:

True! This defeat exists within you and must be reminded .But it is not late. Why hurry up? Take it easy and let the other important works first be completed and then with complete ease you may engage yourself in self-refinement. Right now! You are too young. This is the time for fun and enjoyment. Wait till you become old. Then you may repent. God does accept repentance any way. Then you may get yourself busy in self-perfection.

We must, therefore, be intelligent enough to understand that these are Satanic tricks. Who knows that we will be alive till our old age? Perhaps, the death might arrive before old age and we might leave this world contaminated with the psychic diseases. In that case what will be our destiny?

Any way even if we lived till that time but will the Satan and imperious self quit their treacherous filthy tricks and leave us free to pay attention towards the self-refinement? Even at that time by means of some other tricks they will prevent us from taking the right decision. Therefore, why not right now, we should take the action to subdue the rebellious imperious-self.

Sometimes, it is possible that imperious-self would tell us: You have become addicted to sinning and quitting this addiction is impossible for you. You are a prisoner of the whims and passions of your self. How could you free yourself from this imprisonment? Your self has become totally darkened by means of sins, and therefore, you do not have any chance for return. But we must better understand that the above argument is nothing but another treacherous trick of imperious-self.

In response we must tell him: quitting habit is not only impossible but on the contrary is quite possible. Of course, it is difficult but any how I must take action and must endeavor for self-refinement. If, quitting sins and bad characteristics would really have been impossible then in that case all these moral instructions, about their quitting, from the Prophet (S) and Infallible Imams (a.s.) would not have been issued. The path of repentance is never closed and is always open and therefore, we must decide and must get involved in achieving self-refinement.

Also, it is possible that the imperious-self may reflect their psychic diseases and moral indecencies as insignificant and unimportant by saying: you are committed for the performance of mandatory obligations as well as also perform such and such recommended obligations. Certainly you will receive the pardon of Merciful and Beneficent God and will be sent to Paradise.

The moral indecencies which you possess are not so important to be concerned, and anyhow they will be compensated with your performance of recommended obligations (*Mustahabbat*).

Here, too it is important to be careful and to understand that such justifications are nothing but delusions of Satan and imperious-self. We must tell them: righteous deeds are accepted only from pious people, and achieving piety without self-refinement is impossible. If, the self is not cleansed thoroughly from

evilness it could never be a place for goodness.

Unless Satan is forced out the angels will never enter. If, by means of committing sins and other carnal desires the heart becomes contaminated and dark, it will remain without illumination and radiance in the Next World.

Serious attention should always be paid about the dangerous consequences of the psychic diseases which have already been summarized earlier. Apart from that, by referring to literature of moral ethics and traditions, the dangerous effects and eternal punishments of each psychic disease must be studied thoroughly; through these means the treacherous Satanic plans must be resisted by taking a definite and firm decision for starting a program of self-refinement. If we succeed passing through the decision stage we will become closer to the stage of action.

4. Control and Domination of Self

Human-self is the origin and source of all actions, deeds, sayings, virtues, and vices. If he is reformed one's success in both worlds is assured, but if becomes contaminated, will turn into a source of vices and will bring a catastrophe for this as well as the Next World.

If, he started walking on the righteous path, might even surpass the God's most favorite angels; but if showed indifference towards the precious "Jewel-of- Humanity" (*Gowhar al-Insaniyat*), and selected the animalistic way of life would become even lower then them, falling into the darkest valleys of ignorance.

The ways and means for following either one of these two paths have been incorporated within human existence. He has reason and wisdom, and in accordance with his primordial nature is inclined towards higher moral human characteristics, but at the same time he is also a biological animal possessing animalistic passions, desires, and energies.

But it is not so that all of these animalistic characteristics are evil and damaging responsible for his eventual doom; on the contrary, their existence is necessary for the continuation of his human life; if utilized properly they even might be helpful in his journey towards attaining self-perfection and ascent towards God-Almighty.

But the problem is that animalistic passions and desires do not limit or stop themselves at certain predetermined level, and do not least care about the interests of others. Neither they offer any explanation for human requirements nor care about other desires, and do not follow any other goal except to achieve a saturation point. The sexual passions strive to achieve their own absolute climax and pursue this single goal without pursuing any other objective.

Other animalistic passion such as; pleasure of edible and drinks; ambitions for position, power, and fame; attachment to wealth, property, and other luxuries; power of revenge and wrath; and all other characteristics which arise from them do not stop themselves at a certain desired limit, rather each one

of them demands its own absolute domination.

It is because of this reason that the human-self becomes a battlefield where various passions wage war against each other continuously. This battlefield is never silent until one of them gains victory thus, taking the self into its absolute imprisonment.

But among them, reason possesses the most important position and power. By utilizing the religious guidelines might exert control over the passions and desires of self, thus, preventing their tendencies towards excessiveness or dissipation, may take control of the power center, maintain an equilibrium between the desire and passions and in this manner might rescue self's country from anarchy, disturbances and extremism, by guiding him towards the straight path of humanity and ascension towards God-Almighty.

However, taking over center of power by the reason is not an easy task, because, it is opposed by a most powerful deceitful enemy called the imperious-self, who is not alone and is supported by many of his friends and partisans. God-Almighty has said:

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبُّكَ

"The (human) soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy. (12:53)

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

قال على عليه السلام: العقل والشهوة ضدان، ومؤيد العقل العلم ومؤيد الشهوة الهوى، والنفس متنازعة بينهما.
فابهما قهر كانت في جانبه.

"The reason and lust are opposite to each other; knowledge supports reason while the lust is supported by the passions and inordinate desires, self is a battlefield where a war is waged between the reason and lust; whoever becomes victorious in this fight takes control of the self."²⁷

And, he said:

قال على عليه السلام: الشر كامن في طبيعة كل أحد فان غلبه صاحبه بطئ وان لم يغلبه ظهر.

"Evil and mischief are hidden inside every self; in case the master of self takes over his control, they remain hidden, but when opposite happens, they make themselves manifested."²⁸

Therefore, reason is a good ruler but requires support and cooperation. If, we support reason in this confrontation by attacking the forces of passions and lusts, and handover the ruling of the body to

reason then we indeed had accomplished a great victory. This is what have been de sired by all the religious pioneers, Divine Messengers, guides, leaders, and seekers of truth through out the ages, and it was to accomplish this objective that they had issued plenty of instructions to mankind. e.g.:

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

قال عليه السلام: ايكم وغلبة الشهوات على قلوبكم فان بدايتها ملكة و نهايتها هلاكة.

"Be careful! Passions do not take over control of your hearts; because in the beginning they will take you as their possessions, and will ruin you eventually."[29](#)

And said:

قال عليه السلام: من لم يملك شهوته لم يملك عقله.

"Whoever does not take possession of his passions and desires will not be the master of his reason either."[30](#)

And said:

قال علي (ع): غلبة الشهوة اعظم هلاك وملكتها اشرف ملك.

"The domination of passions is the -worst kind of catastrophe, and triumph over them is -one of the most precious possessions."[31](#)

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

قال الصادق عليه السلام: من ملك نفسه اذا رغب و اذا رهب و اذا اشتوى و اذا غضب و اذا رضى حرم الله جسده على النار.

"Whoever at the time of seduction, fear, lust, wrath, and consent, is in control of his self; God-Almighty will make the Hell's fire forbidden for his body."[32](#)

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

قال عليه السلام: غالبو انفسكم على ترك المعاصي يسهل عليكم مقاومتها الى الطاعات.

"Take control of your self and do not allow him to indulge in sins, so that it is easier to guide him towards

worships.”³³

Therefore, domination over the self and controlling his whims and passions is a matter of utmost importance and pre-requisite for achieving self-refinement. Human self is like a mulish horse; if by means of hard training he becomes disciplined, you have the control of his straps in your hands, and is mounted upon his back, then in that case you may be benefited from his commissioning.

But if he is not disciplined and wants to run away freely here and there without any control, then there is absolutely no doubt that you will have a crash. Of course, to discipline the rebellious self is an extremely difficult task; although, in the beginning he will offer resistance against you, but if you persisted patiently, he will be subdued eventually.

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

قال عليه السلام: اذا صعب عليك نفسك فاصعب لها تذلل لك وخداع نفسك عن نفسك تنقد لك

“If self showed stubbornness and did not surrender against you, then deal harshly till it becomes tame. Act deceitfully against him until it becomes obedient.”³⁴

And said:

قال عليه السلام: الشهوات اعوال قاتلات افضل دوائهما اقتتنا الصبر عنها

“Lusts and passions of self are most fatal diseases, and the best medicines are patience and perseverance against them.”³⁵

1. “For God's-worship there is nothing superior than the reason. A believer is not wise until and unless he possesses the following ten characteristics:

1. The people should expect goodness from him.
2. They should feel immune from his wickedness.
3. He must evaluate the good deeds of others as too much even if they are small.
4. Should regard his good deeds as insignificant even if they're too much.
5. Should never be tired from acquiring knowledge throughout his life.
6. Should never be annoyed while people approach him demanding fulfillment of their wants.
7. Should prefer seclusion and obscurity more than outwardly fame and popularity.
8. Poverty in his sight should be more dearer than the richness.
9. He must rely upon only one single power in the world.

10. The tenth characteristic which is more important than all is –that while seeing others he must say: 'He is more better and pious than me.' Because, the people belong to two categories: Either they are better or re worst than him.

"While encountering the better ones he must show humility and be courteous so that he could be associated with him. Regarding the latter who outwardly does not appear good, he must say: 'May his inner self is better than my own inner self or may be he will become ashamed from his devotion and may return towards God-Almighty through repentance and thus, might attain a prosperous end.

"If some one pays need to these dimensions he has indeed discovered his dignity and exaltedness and will be successful over his contemporaries." –Nasayeh, Ayatullah Mishkini, p-301.

[2.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p-10.

[3.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p-11.

[4.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p-11.

[5.](#) al Kafi, vol. 1, p-16.

[6.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p-23.

[7.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p-25.

[8.](#) Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha' (a.s.): was born in Medina on Thursday, 11th Dhul'-qı'dah 148 A.H. He lived in a period when the Abbasids were faced with increasing difficulties because of Shi'ite revolts.

After al-Mam'un the seventh Abbasid caliph and a contemporary of Imam al-Ridha' (a.s.) murdered his brother Amin and assumed office, he thought he would solve the problems by naming Imam as his own successor hoping thus, to insure him in worldly affairs and turn the devotion of his followers away from him. After encouragement, urging and finally threats, Imam accepted on condition that he be excused from dismissals, appointments, and other involvement in matters of state.

Making the most of this circumstance, the Imam extended guidance to the people, imparting priceless elucidation of Islamic culture and spiritual truths, which have survived in numbers roughly equal to those reaching us from the Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.), and in greater number than those of any other Imam.

Finally after al-Ma'mun realized his mistake, for Shi'ism began to spread even more rapidly he is said to have poisoned him; he died at the age of 55 in Mashhad Khurasan on Tuesday, 17th Safar 203 A.H.. He is buried in Mashhad Iran.

[9.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p-11

[10.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p-27.

[11.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p-18.

[12.](#) Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.): The son of sixth Imam J'afar al-Sadiq was born in Abwa' (between Mecca and Medina) on Sunday 7th Safar 128 A.H. He was contemporary with four Abbasid Caliphs as al-Mansur, Hadi, Mahdi, and Harun.

Because of the sever oppression, the necessity of taqiyya grew more stringent, and since he was under close surveillance, he admitted only a few elect Shi'ites. Finally he was martyred –poisoned by owner of the second Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur on 25th Rajab 183 A.H. He is buried in Kadhimayn in Iraq.

Despite of most stringent need for caution and taqiyya, he enjoyed in promulgating the religious sciences and made many prophetic sayings available to the Shi'ites, to the extent that he left more teaching on Jurisprudence than any other Imam with the exceptions of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) and al-Sadiq (a.s.) [Tr].

[13.](#) al-Kafi, vol. I, p-17.

[14.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p-19.

[15.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p-19.

[16.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-54.

[17.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-55.

[18.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, p-338

- [19.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, p-339.
- [20.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, p-340.
- [21.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, p-340.
- [22.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, p-325.
- [23.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon 176.
- [24.](#) Nahjul al-Balagha, sermon 193.
- [25.](#) Tohof al-Aqool, p-385.
- [26.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, p-324.
- [27.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-96.
- [28.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-105.
- [29.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-16.
- [30.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 2, p-702.
- [31.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 2, p-507.
- [32.](#) Wasail al-Shi'a, vol. 6, p-123.
- [33.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 2, p-5-8.
- [34.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-319.
- [35.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-72.

Self-Struggle

Self is our biggest and most staunch enemy who is permanently and continuously at war with reason; by listening to Satanic whispers he attacks the reason together with his soldiers to get it isolated and ultimately silenced, so that he becomes the sole-contender in the battle-field. His single goal is to force out God's favorite angels from the heart's kingdom and helping Satan to take over his absolute control.

Naturally, defeating such a treacherous enemy is not an easy task, but requires determination, resistance, perseverance, and even struggle –a struggle not only for once or twice, for a few days and few years but continuous one till the last breath of life, which is a hard, difficult, and serious struggle.

In order to defeat the self and to control passions we must fight hard by strictly following the commands of Prophet (S) and Infallible Imams (a.s.); with the help of reason must march forward preventing transgressions and encroachment of the self, and destroying the roots of his forces, so that reason could take over the power, and by taking inspirations from religious law could guide us upon the path of human perfection leading towards God's-Nearness.

We must know while confronting self, compromise and piece settlement is not possible, and what is required is a devastating blow making him crippled permanently from plotting any further conspiracies. In order to achieve happiness and salvation there is no other alternative except to follow this course, and because, of this reason struggle against the self has been called in traditions as –"Greater-Struggle" (*Jihad al-Akbar*).

Here we would quote few examples from the Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.):

قال على عليه السلام: املكونا انفسكم بدوام جهادها.

“Take over the possession of yourself--through continuous struggle.”¹

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: اغلبوا اهوائكم وحاربوها فانها ان تقييدكم توردهم من الهمكة ابعد غاية.

“Fight and dominate over self’s whims and passions. Because otherwise if they succeeded in making you their prisoner –they will treat you in a most humiliating manner destroying you eventually.”²

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: الا ان الجهاد ثمن الجنة فمن جاهد نفسه ملكها وهى اكرم ثواب الله لما عرفها

“Be aware! That Paradise is purchased through self-struggle. Therefore, who is engaged in self – struggle will be victorious. Paradise (or self) is the greatest reward for some one who really appreciates their worth.”³

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: جاهد نفسك على طاعة الله مجاهدة العدو عدوه، وغالبها مغالبة الضد ضده فان القوى الناس من قوى على نفسه.

“By means of fighting against the self; incite him towards God’s worshipping. Fight him the way one must fight with his worst enemy, and dominate over him like the domination of victor over his opponent. The most powerful person is the one who is victorious over his self.”⁴

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: ان الحازم من شغل نفسه بجهاد نفسه فاصلحها وحبسها عن اهويتها ولذاتها فملكها وان للعقل بنفسه عن الدنيا وما فيها واهلها شغلا.

“A wise man keeps himself engaged in struggle against his self, thus, reforming and preventing him from indulging into passions and amusements, and in this manner subdues him ultimately taking over his

possession. Such a wise person is so must preoccupied in his self-refinement that he is totally detached with the world, whatever it contains and its dwellers.” [5](#)

Struggle against the self is the most crucial warfare which ultimately determines our destiny –a warfare upon which depends our ‘how to live’ in this world and the Hereafter. If, we do not dominate the self through struggle and take over the ruling authority in our own hands, he will take over the control of our possessions by pulling us in every direction at his will.

If, we failed to make him our prisoner, he will certainly take us into his imprisonment as his slaves; if we could not succeed in inciting him for doing good moral virtuous deeds, he will force us to indulge into most shameful evil deeds. Therefore, it must be said that the struggle against the self is one of the most important and difficult duty which has been assigned upon the shoulders of the wayfarers journeying towards God, and whatever energy is spent by them in this struggle deserves merit and is energy well spent.

1. Greater Struggle (Jihad al-Akbar)

The struggle against the self is so important that the Prophet (S) has described it as the “Greater-Struggle” (*Jihad al-Akbar*); It is so crucial that it has been described, even greater than the armed conflict. The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.). had narrated:

عن امير المؤمنين عليه السلام قال: ان رسول الله صلی الله عليه وآلہ بعث سریة فلما رجعوا قال: مرحبا بقوم قضوا الجهاد الاصغر وبقى عليهم الجهاد الاکبر. قيل: يا رسول الله! وما الجهاد الكبار؟ فقال:

جهاد النفس.

*“That the Prophet (S) dispatched his soldiers to battle front to fight against the enemy. When the soldiers returned triumphant, the Prophet said: ‘Congratulations! For those who have successfully completed the ‘Minor-Struggle’ (*Jihad al-Asghar*), but they have yet to engage themselves into Greater-Struggle (*Jihad al-Akbar*)’. He was asked: ‘Oh Prophet of God! What is the Greater- Struggle?’”*

‘Struggle against the self.’ Replied the Prophet (S).”[6](#)

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

قال على عليه السلام: ان افضل الجهاد من جهاد نفسه التي بين جنبيه.

“The best struggle is the, struggle of some one, who fights' against his self located between his two sides.” [7](#)

In his death will the Prophet (S) said to Imam ‘Ali (a.s.):

فَيْ وِصْيَةُ النَّبِيِّ لِعَلَى عَلِيهِمَا السَّلَامُ قَالَ: يَا عَلَى! أَفْضَلُ الْجَهَادِ مَنْ أَصْبَحَ لَا بَظْلَمَ أَحَدٌ.

“Oh ‘Ali! The best struggle is the struggle of some one who made his night into morning without thinking to oppress a single individual.”⁸

In these traditions the importance of struggle against the self have been described as “Greater–Struggle” or Supreme Struggle –the struggle which is even superior than the struggle for the sake of God–Almighty (*Jihad fi Sabil illah*). Considering the exalted position of struggle for the sake of God, which is considered as one of the most superior worshipping –the importance and worth of self–struggle becomes explicitly clear. In order to further explain its superiority in detail we may point out the following three reasons:

A. First Reason

Each act of worship even armed struggle required self–struggle from the following two considerations.

(i) Firstly: The performance of each act of worship with perfection and in accordance with certain requirements itself requires self–struggle.

For example:

Is the performance of daily prayer ⁹ with presence of mind as well as meeting all other conditions, so that it indeed becomes –a believers heavenly journey preventing him from fortifications and forbidden deeds –possible without efforts and self–struggle?

Is fasting with perfection satisfying all its requirements so that it becomes –a shield against Hell's fire –possible without self–struggle? Is it possible for a valiant, struggler eager for martyrdom, to appear on the battle field to fight bravely with the enemies of Islam without self–struggle? And similar is applicable to all other worships.

(ii) Secondly: Every act of worship is accepted by God–Almighty and becomes a means of attaining His Nearness, subjected to its being performed solely for the sake of His Pleasure, being purified from ,all traces of polytheism, self–deceit and other selfish passions, and performance of such acts without self–struggle are not possible.

Even the armed struggle and martyrdom are worthy of merit and become means of attaining God's Nearness –only if they are performed purely for the sake of God's Pleasure and declaration of slogan of Monotheism (*Tawhid*).

But, if this superior worship was performed with the intention of achieving fame and glory: .taking revenge from the enemy, for the sake of lasting the name in history, for showing off and deceit, for

achieving wealth and position, running away from facing life's difficulties, and other desires of the self – then in that case they lack any spiritual distinction and do not become means of attaining God's Nearness.

Therefore, self-struggle is superior than all worships and virtuous deeds, even armed struggle undertaken for the sake of God-Almighty, because, it is a prerequisite for their genuine dischargement with perfection. It is because of these considerations that this has been called as the –Greater–Struggle (*Jihad al-Akbar*).

B. Second Reason

Armed struggle becomes compulsory only under certain special times and circumstances, further it is not incumbent upon everyone (*Wajib al-aini*), rather is a collective obligation (*Wajib al-kifai*), and some people are free from this obligation. During certain periods armed struggle is not required at all, or is required to the extent of collective obligation, e.g. if required number of people had assumed this obligation, then the others are excused.

Apart from this it is not incumbent upon women, elderly men, handicapped, and sick people. But on the contrary, struggle against the self is incumbent upon everyone as an individual obligation (*Wajib al-aini*) during all times, circumstances, and situations, must be continued till the very last moments of life, and no body under any condition except the impeccable (*Masoomin*) (a.s.) will ever be free this requirement.

C. Third Reason

The struggle with self is harder than all the worships even the armed struggle in which a combatant risks his life by accepting martyrdom. Because, absolute surrender before God-Almighty, self-struggle against self's whims and passions for the entire life, and journeying towards the straight path of perfection is much more difficult than the fighting of a valiant warrior with the enemy in the battle field for a moment and ultimately achieving martyrdom.

In fact, self-struggle is so hard that except with continuous resistance, tolerance of pains and anguishes, and without God's Assistance it is not possible. It is because of this reason that we recite five times every day in daily prayers the sentence:

اهدنا الصراط المستقيم.

"Show us the straight path" 10

To follow up the straight path of perfection is so difficult that the Prophet of Islam (S) said to God-Almighty:

الله لا تكلى الى نفسي طرفة عين ابدا

"Oh God! Don't leave me at the disposal of myself even for the fraction of a second."

2. Struggle and Divine Assistance

True, that self-struggle is extremely difficult, requires resistance, perseverance, and intelligence, but any how it is possible and is something absolutely necessary for human happiness. Therefore, if one decides seriously to begin it, he will certainly receive Divine Assistance and will succeed in his efforts.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبْلَنَا

As God-Almighty has promised in the Qur'an:

"And those who strive in our cause -we will certainly guide them to our paths. For verily God is with those who do right. (29:69)

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

قال الصادق عليه السلام: طوبى لعبد جاهد الله نفسه وهو له طوبى لعبد جاهد لله نفسه وهو له ، ومن هزم جند هواء فقد ظفر برضاء الله تعالى ، ومن جاوز عقله نفسه الامارة بالسوء بالجهد والاستكانة والخضوع على بساط خدمة الله تعالى فقد فاز فوزاً عظيماً . ولا حجاب أظلم وأوحش بين العبد وبين الله تعالى من النفس والهوى، وليس لقتلهما وقطعهما سلاح وآلته مثل الافتقار الى الله والخشوع والجوع والظلم بالنهار والسهر بالليل ، فإن مات صاحبه مات شهيدا ، وإن عاش واستقامه أداه عاقبته إلى الرضوان الأكبر .

قال الله تعالى "والذين جاهدوا فينا لنهدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبْلَنَا وَانَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَعْلَمْ الْمُحْسِنِينَ" وإذا رأيت مجتهداً أبلغ منك في الاجتهد فهو ينفع نفسك ولهمها وغیرها تحثيثاً على الازيد اعليه واجعل لها زماماً من الأمر وعناناً من النهي وسفها، كالرائض الفارة الذي لا يذهب خطوة من خطواتها إلا وقد صحي اولها وآخرها . وكان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم يصلى حتى تورمت قدماه ، ويقول : أفلأكون عبداً شكوراً؟ أراد أن يعتبر به أمه . فلا تغفلوا عن الاجتهد والتعبد والرياضة بحال، ألا وانك لو وجدت حلوة عبادة الله ورأيت بركاتها واستحضرت بنورها لم تصبر عنها ساعة واحدة ولو قطعت إرباً إرباً، فما أعرض عنها إلا بحرمان فوائد السلف من العصمة والتوفيق.

"How good is a servant of God who struggles against the self and his passions for the sake of God's Pleasure. Whoever becomes victorious over the self's whims and passions has already achieved God's-Pleasure. Whoever offers resistance, and with humility in front of God, allows the reason to control imperious-self would receive the greatest blessing."

"There exists between the servants of God and Him nothing darker and horrible barrier than the

imperious-self and his passions, and in order to destroy their roots forever, the realization to seek God, humility, hunger, thirst during the day (i. e. fasting), and night awakening (i.e. engaging in night prayers and having humming communications with God-Almighty).

Such a person if dies in this course has left the world as a martyr, and if remains alive would ultimately attain the exalted position of God's Nearness. God-Almighty has promised in the Holy Qur'an that those who strive in His cause will certainly be guided towards His path and verily, God is with those who do right."

"When you encounter another struggler endeavoring in self-refinement better than your own efforts, then reprimand your self severely, and , remind him to be more careful and determined. In accordance with Divine do's and don'ts make a bridle for the self and like a master, training his inexperienced and wanton slave, encourage your self towards virtuous deeds. The Prophet (S) offered so much prayer that his feet become swelled, in response to people's complaint, replied: should not I be thankful to God-Almighty ?"

"By these serious endeavors in worship the prophet (S) wanted to teach a lesson to his community. Therefore, one should never be negligent from endeavors, worship, and ascetism. Know that! if you could witness the sweetness of worshipping and other blessings and if your heart becomes illuminated with Divine Light –you will not be ready to discontinue it for an hour, even if they cut off your body into several pieces.

Therefore, the negligence from worshipping shall never be possible except being deprived from advantages of competing for achieving immunity against sins and attaining God's -Blessings." [11](#)

Self struggle is exactly like the armed struggle. Each blow inflicted upon the enemy, and every stronghold captured by means of soldiers make the enemy weaker in the same proportion, thus, making the, forces psychologically stronger and better prepared for subsequent assaults and later victories. It is in accordance of this Divine Tradition that we are told in the Holy Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرُكُمْ وَيُثْبِتُ أَفْدَامَكُمْ

"Oh ye who believe! If you help God's cause, He will make your foothold firm. (47:7)

The same is true with self-struggle. Each blow inflicted upon imperious-self and his whims and passions being opposed, makes him weaker in the same proportion and, thus, making us stronger and better prepared for subsequent assaults and later victories. But opposite to that any amount of irresolution shown and surrender to self's whims and passions make us weaker and making him stronger and better equipped for later assaults.

If we could take the first giant step towards self-refinement, then with Divine Assistance will be able to achieve absolute domination over the self, but if we ran away from the battle field against the passions

and self's soldiers, then they will become more stronger and ultimately take over our absolute control.

3. Man, His own Physician

It is true that Prophets and Infallible Imams (a.s.) are the teachers and physicians of human souls, but the responsibility for treatment, refinement, and purification of their souls have been assigned upon their own shoulders. Although, the Prophets and Infallible Imams (a.s.) have lectured and explained to human beings in details about their psychic diseases and symptoms, issued relevant prescriptions for their treatments, so that they could become familiar with their pains and treatments, and could assume the responsibility of their own self reforms.

Because, nobody could diagnose the disease and take the necessary action for its treatment, better than the man himself. Man listens about the psychic disease and their treatments either from the tongue of a preacher, or learns through reading a book, but the one who must discover the disease within his own-self, and should use a particular medicine for its treatment –is no body except man himself.

A man could feel about his own pains, and is knowledgeable about the hidden mysteries within, far better than anyone else. Therefore, if he himself is not careful in controlling his own-self, then of course, the preaching and warning issued by others would not produce any useful outcome.

Islam believes that reforms must begin from the inner existence of human beings, they must be prepared for undertaking self-refinement, should pay attention to psychological hygiene, and should be assigned the responsibility to guard their own souls. This in itself could be considered as one of the important principle of Islamic training. God-Almighty, said in the Holy Qur'an:

بِلِ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ وَلَوْ أَلْقَى مَعَانِيرَهُ

“Oh, but man is telling witness against himself, although he tender his excuses. (75: 14-15)

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

قال ابو عبدالله عليه السلام لرجل: انك قد جعلت طبيب نفسك وبين لك الدليل وعرفت آية الصحة ودللت على الدليل
فانظر كيف قيامك على نفسك.

“You have been appointed physicians of your own self pains, prescriptions, and symptoms of sound health all have been explained for you; now let us see, how are you going to act for the treatment of your self?”¹²

And said:

..قال ابو عبدالله عليه السلام: من لم يجعل له من نفسه واعظا فان مواعظ الناس لن تغنى عنه شيئا

*“Whoever does not have a preacher within his own-self, preaching by others, will not be of any use for him.”*¹³

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

قال ابو عبدالله عليه السلام يقول: ابن آدم! لاتزال تخير ما كان لك واعظ من نفسك.

*“Oh son of Adam! So for as you have a preacher inside your self –you are bound to do good deeds.”*¹⁴

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

قال علي عليه السلام: اعجز الناس من عجز عن اصلاح نفسه.

*“The most helpless person is the one-- who is helpless in reforming his self.”*¹⁵

And said:

قال علي عليه السلام: ينبغي ان يكون الرجل مهيمنا على نفسه مراقبا قلبه حافظا لسانه

*“It is desirable that a man should assume the responsibility of supervision over his own-self He should continuously watch out his heart and control his tongue.”*¹⁶

1. Ghiraral-Hukm, vol. I, p-131.

2. Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-138.

3. Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-165.

4. Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-371.

5. –Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-237.

6. Wasail al-Shia, vol. 2, p-124.

7. Ghiraral-Hukm, vol. 11, p-124.

8. Wasail al-Shi'a, vol. 11, p-123.

9. Daily prayer: the Prophet (S) has called the prayer: the ladder of a believer carrying him higher towards the heavens.

Also, God-Almighty said in the Holy Qur'an:

“For prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds.” (29: 45) [Tr].

10. “If a man could have a superior and more vital aim than the “guidance”, certainly that would have been included in the Surah Praise –a Surah which is the Opening Chapter of the Holy Qur'an and forms an important part of the prayer , and it would have been recited as a prayer for acceptance from God.

It is by way of His direction or guidance that the intellect and experience set their course in the correct, advantageous, and suitable position widening the path of a wayfarer. Otherwise, without it, the intellect and experience would turn into alight in

the hands of a thief, or a piece of sharp blade in the hand of a mad man.” –Profundities of Prayer, Sayyid ‘Ali Khamenei, p-33 [Tr]

[11.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-69.

[12.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-454.

[13.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-70.

[14.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-64.

[15.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-196.

[16.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 2, p-862.

The Stages of Self-refinement

1. Prevention

Observance of psychological hygiene and prevention of sins and obscene moral deeds are the best and easiest stages of self-refinement. At these stages the self is not yet quite contaminated with sins, still possesses his natural purity and enlightenment, and is better prepared for performance of good deeds and acquiring of good morals.

He has not yet blackened and darkened, Satan has not yet made his entry inside him, and has not accustomed to evil deeds. Because, of these factors he is better prepared for quitting sinful deeds.

Teenagers and young people, if, decide for purifying their souls and quitting sinful and moral absence deeds, it is relatively easier for them, because, they still are at the preventing stage which is easier than quitting a chronic habit. Therefore, the youth, teens, and even childhood years are the best period for self-refinement. Likewise, so far as a man has not tasted the pleasure of a particular sin, he is in a better position not to commit it.

Therefore, children, youths, and those people who not yet been contaminated with certain sinful deeds must appreciate this stage as something very important, guard themselves not to commit sin at all, and should maintain their state of purity and cleanliness, because prevention is always better than cure.

They should better understand this important point that if they sinned and acquired obscene moral characteristics within their existence, than in that case they would have opened the gate for Satan's entry within their hearts, and onward, quitting a sin for them would become extremely difficult as compared to earlier.

Satan and imperious-self, therefore, always try to present sinning for once and twice, something as minor and insignificant, so that by this mean they could increase their influence and make the self addicted to sinning.

Therefore, a man who is seriously concerned about his salvation and welfare must seriously resists self's whims and passions and should not allow his self to commit a sin even for once. The Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: لا ترخص لنفسك في شيء من سوء الأقوال والاعمال.

"Don't let your self allow to make an evil commitment or indulgence into evil deeds." [1](#)

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: غالب الشوّة قوة ضراوتها فانها اقوى ملکوت واستقادتك ولم تقدر على مقاومتها.

"Dominate the passions of your self, before he becomes stronger, because, once he becomes stronger, he will take-over your control pulling you in every direction as he pleases, and in that situation you will not be able to offer resistance against him." [2](#)

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: العادة عدو متملك.

"Habit is like an enemy who prefers his hegemony over you." [3](#)

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: العادة طبع ثان.

"Addiction becomes second nature for a man." [4](#)

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: غالب الهوى مغالب لنصم خصم وحاربه محاربة العدو عدو لعلك تملكه.

"Dominate your self's passions like an enemy dominates his enemy; wage a war against him like an enemy attacks his enemy; may be, through these means you might be able to dominate him." [5](#)

And said:

قال أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام: ترك الخطيبة أيسر من طلب التوبه وكم من شهوة ساعة اورثت حزنا طويلا و

الموت فضح الدنيا فلم يترك لذى لب فرحا.

*"Not to commit sin is better than repentance, because, many a times, an hour of carnal pleasures results in perpetual anxiety and distress. Death is a mean for discovering the scandalous nature of this world, which does not leave any pleasure left for an intelligent and aware person."*⁶

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

قال ابو عبدالله عليه السلام: اقصر نفسك عما يضرها من قبل ان تفارقك واسع فى فكاكها كما تسعى فى طلب معيشتك فان نفسك وهينة بعملك.

*"Before the soul departs from your body, do not allow your self to perform harmful deeds,. endeavor for achieving self's freedom the way you make efforts for earning your living. Because, the same self will be mortgaged against the deeds (on the Day of Judgement)."*⁷

God-Almighty has said in the Holy Qur'an.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسُ عَنِ الْهَوَى فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى

"But as for him who feared to stand before his Lord and restrained his soul from lust. Lo! the Garden will be his home. (79:40-41)

Any how, the path of prevention is the best as well as the easiest path, and therefore, as much as a man endeavors seriously in this path is worthy of merit. How blessed is a young man, who subdues his imperious-self, does not allow him to indulge in sinful deeds, and with a purified and refined self follows the straight path of human exaltation ascending towards God's Nearness, till the very end of his life.

2. Sudden Renunciation

If the self has already crossed the preservation stage by becoming contaminated with sins and moral vices, the alternative is to resort to cleansing, which consists of several methods. One of the best method of cleansing is the internal revolution and a complete sudden renunciation. A person who has become contaminated with sins and other moral vices may decide once to return towards God-Almighty through repentance –washing and purifying the heart from all sorts of sins and vices.

With a single bold definite decision, one force out devils from the heart by shutting the doors for their entry forever, thus, making the heart's dwelling readied for the descend of God's favorite angels and Divine illumination.

Having inflicted a devastating severe blow the imperious-self and Satan should be subdued thoroughly,

and the power to rule over the self must be taken into hands firmly and forever. There were many such lucky individuals who were blessed with Divine Favor of attaining self-refinement by means of internal revolution within their inner existence, and remained faithful to their commitment till the last breath of their lives.

This internal spiritual revolution or awakening (or being reborn) occurs in the lives of peoples sometimes hearing a short sentence of a preacher and scholar of moral ethics, hints given by a Divine Guide, happening of an unusual shattering tragedy, participation in a gathering of prayer and supplication, and listening to verses, traditions, and pondering for a few minutes. Sometimes, a minor incident like a sparking illuminates the heart's dwelling.

There were individuals who were blessed to receive Divine-Grace to attain self-refinement through internal spiritual revolution in their lives, and thus, joined the ranks of wayfarers journeying towards God-Almighty. Following are few examples:

Bashar Hafi, was one of the most famous pious and religious personalities of his period. In his biography it has been written: Earlier he was an aristocrat who was continuously busy in world amusements and sexual pleasures round the clock; his house was the center of carnal pleasures, drinking, dancing, and loud music. But later on repented and joined the ranks of most distinguished ascetic and pious persons. Following is the story of his repentance:

"One day, a maid came out side the door of his house for emptying the garbage can; coincidentally at the same time Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) was passing by through the alley near his house and the sound of loud music reached to his ears. He asked the maid:

'Does the owner of this house is a free man or servant (of God)?'

'Of course! He is a free man as well as a master.' Replied the maid.

'You are right, because if he was a servant -must have been afraid of his master and should not have been so bold in committing sins'. Replied the Imam.

"The maid returned back to the house. Her master, who was busy in drinking asked the maid:

'What is the reason of your delay?'

"The maid narrated for her master the encounter outside with an unidentified person and the details of questions and answers exchanged between them. 'What he said ultimately?' Asked the master. His last words were: 'You are right! Your master is a free man, because if he would have considered himself God's servant, then he would have been afraid of his Master and would not have shown such boldness in committing sins ,. Replied the maid.

"This short sentence of Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) like a sharp arrow pierced Bashar's heart and like a fresh

illuminated and metamorphosed his inner existence. He left his drinking and came out, bare footed running fast in order to reach the un-identified person. Ultimately reaching near him, he said:

"Oh my master! I beg God's as well as your pardon. Yes! I was and still am God's servant but had forgotten my servitude; because, of that acted so boldly in committing sins, but right now I have discovered my servitude, and want to repent for my past sins and omissions. Will God-Almighty accept my repentance ? I "Yes! God-Almighty, will accept your repentance, will for give your past sins, and you must quit sinning for ever. I Replied the Imam.

"Bashar repented and become one of the most famous pious and saintly personality of his time, and in order to show his thank for this blessing used to walk bare-footed till the end of his life." [8](#)

Abu Basir narrated:

"One of the agent of a tyrant king used to live in my neighborhood, who used to acquire his living through illegal means and had turned his home into a center of carnal pleasures, dancing, drinking, and music. Naturally, living next door to him was annoying and painful for me, but there was no alternative except to bear, because my repeated advises have not produced any improvement in his behavior.

Finally, one day, when I pressed him hard to change his life style, he replied:

"I am a prisoner of Satan, because of my addiction to eating, drinking, and sinning, I cannot quite them. I am sick but can do nothing for treatment. You are a good neighbor for me, but I am a bad neighbor for you. I am helpless and have become a prisoner of self's whims and passions, and don't know how to get myself out of this situation. When, you visit Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) in the near future, please plead may case with him, may be he will suggest a solution for my rescue.

Abu Basir continued: "I was deeply influenced with his words, and remained patient for a while till an opportunity aroused for me to go to Madina for seeing Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). When I saw Imam (a.s.) I narrated the story of my neighbor for him. The Imam replied: 'When you returned back to Madina, your neighbor will come to see you, then you must tell him that Jafar bin Muhammad had said:

'Do not commit sins, so that I could guarantee Paradise for you.'

Abu Basir said:

"When I returned back to Kufa after completing the pilgrimage, people came to see me including my next door neighbor. After exchanging formalities of greetings and inquiring about my trip when he wanted to leave, I gave him a hint that I have to discuss something in private. When other people left my house, I said to him that I narrated his story to Imam (a.s.), and he replied:

'Upon your return to Kufa, that man will come to see you. Tell him that Jafar bin Muhammad said:

اخرج بما انت فيه وانا اضمن لك الجنة.

'Quit sinning so that I could guarantee Paradise for you:'

"This short message of Imam (a.s.) so much touched his heart that he started crying and said to me: 'Do you swear by God that Imam said these words for me ?

"I swore by God and assured him that these are the exact words of Imam for him. He replied: 'These words are enough for me. , "He said these words and left my house. For several days I did not hear any news about him. One day, he send a message for me to visit him at his home. I accepted his invitation and went to his house, he opened the door and hiding behind the door said:

'Oh Abu Basir! Every thing which I acquired through forbidden means have returned to their owners,. Right now, I possess absolutely nothing even a pair of clothing to cover myself and that is why I am standing behind the door. I have quitted all sins and have truly implemented the Imam's message in my life.

"Abu Basir said:

'I was indeed happy to learn about his repentance and changed condition, and wondered about the impact of Imam s short message upon him. I returned back to my home and arranged some clothing and some quantity of food and brought it for him. After a while he again called me and when I went to see him, found him sick.

He remained in this condition for quite some time, and during this period I frequently visited him to take care of his needs, but unfortunately treatment did not produce any improvement and his condition continued to deteriorate day by day till one day I found him in precarious condition hovering between life and death, while I was sitting on his side, and he was taking his last breaths, he suddenly opened his eyes and said:

'Oh Abu Basir! Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) had fulfilled his promise. He said these words and left for his eternal abode.

"After sometimes I had the opportunity for going to Hijaz for Hajj Pilgrimage, and also to see Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). When I was about to enter in his presence and my one foot was inside the hall while another one still in the yard, the Imam said: 'Oh Abu Basir! I have .fulfilled the promise for your neighbor and the Paradise which I had guaranteed for him, was bestowed upon him. '[9](#)

There were and still are such individuals, who with single definite bold decision and act of bravery, subdued the imperious-self and took over the command of their affairs in their own hands, and with the occurrence of a spiritual internal revolution polished and refined their hearts from all sort of impurities and vices. Therefore, the above stories indicate that following the above path is possible for all of us.

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

قال عليه السلام: غالبو نفسم على ترك العادات وجاهدوا اهوائكم تملوكها.

*“For quitting habits subdue the self: by struggling against his whims and passions; may be you will succeed in making him your prisoner.”*¹⁰

And said:

قال علي عليه السلام: افضل العبادة ترك العادة.

*“Best of the worships are achieving domination over habits.”*¹¹

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

عن أبي جعفر عليه السلام قال: كل عين باكية يوم القيمة غير ثلاثة: عين سهرت في سبيل الله وعين فاضت من خشية الله وعين غضت من محارم الله.

“One the Day of Resurrection all eyes shall be crying except the following three kinds:

First: The eyes of some one who spent his nights awake in worshipping for the pleasure of God-Almighty.

Second: The eyes of some one who shed tears, because, of fear from God-Almighty.

*Third: The eyes of some one who prevented them from looking forbidden things for the pleasure of God-Almighty.”*¹²

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

عن أبي عبدالله (ع) قال: فيما ناجي الله عز وجل موسى (ع): يا موسى! ما تقرب الى المتقربون بمثل الورع عن محارمي. فاني ابى لهم جنات عدن لا اشرك معهم احدا.

*“God-Almighty said to Prophet Moses (a.s.) through revelation that nothing is more effective in attaining my nearness as avoidance of forbidden things. ‘The Paradise of Eden’ will be bestowed upon them, and no one else would be allowed to enter therein.”*¹³

Of course, it must be admitted that self-domination and total avoidance of sin is not an easy task, but still with foresight, self-awareness, decisiveness, and pondering it might not be so difficult, considering

the fact that one will be supported and strengthened with Divine Assistance as promised in the Holy Qur'an:

"As for those who strive in Our (cause) -We will certainly guide them to our paths. For verily God is with those who do right. (29:69)

3. Gradual Renunciation

If we discovered that our inner existence does not have the courage and boldness required for quitting all sins at once, we may decide for gradual renunciation in stages. This procedure consists of beginning with quitting few sins at a time as a test of our will power, and the struggle should be continued till we become victorious over the self cutting the roots of those sins forever.

Later on, the same procedure should be repeated regarding some other sins and should be continued till the final victory is achieved.

Care should be taken that the sins quitted earlier should not be repeated at all. Obviously, renunciation of each sin makes the imperious-self and Satan weaker in the same proportion; the place of each devil, forced out shall be immediately replaced by the entry of God's angel, and similarly the amount of darkness removed from the heart's surface shall be replaced with whiteness and illumination in the same proportion.

The abstinence from sins should be continued, in this manner, till self-perfection and final victory in controlling the self's desires is achieved. It is possible that while practicing abstinence of few sins at a time, we might reach to the limit, where we feel to have the necessary will power and determination to quit all sins at a time like sudden at once renunciation, in which case this golden opportunity should be utilized taking the decision to refrain from all sins.

By forcing out the Satan, the imperious-self should be subdued by allocating the heart's dwelling for God-Almighty and his favorite angels. If we struggle and endeavor to achieve the above cherished goal, we will certainly be victorious. Self-struggle is exactly like waging a war against an enemy.

A worrier must continuously watch over his enemy's movement, evaluate his own strength compared with enemy's resources, must strive for strengthening his forces, and by utilization of suitable opportunities must attack his enemy inflicting devastating blows, thus, annihilating his soldiers completely or forcing them out of self's kingdom.

1. Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 2, p-801.

2. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-511.

3. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-33.

4. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-26.

5. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-509.

6. al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-451.

- [7.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-455.
- [8.](#) Muntah al-Amal, vol. 2, p-126.
- [9.](#) Muntaha al-Amal, vol. 2, p-86.
- [10.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-508.
- [11.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-176.
- [12.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-80.
- [13.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-80.

Things which are Helpful for Self-refinement

1. Meditation

One of the most important obstacle for achieving the self-refinement is –negligence. If round the clock we are submerged in worldly affairs, running away from remembrance of death, are not prepared for thinking about dying even for a moment, and if incidentally this thought enters in our minds, we try to deviate from it immediately.

If, we are negligent about the dangerous consequences of moral vices, are not concerned about the indictment for sins and eternal punishment, and the belief in the Day of Resurrection has not penetrated the profundities of our soul beyond a superficial mental concept; then with such negligence, how could we,– take the decision for self-cleansing and refinement, and control and restrain him against his desires?

Negligence, in itself, is one of the most severe psychological disease and is the origin of many other diseases. The treatment of this disease is pondering, foresight, and strengthening the forces of belief.

It is necessary that a human being should continuously keep a strict vigil upon his self, should never forget death, should ponder about serious consequences of self's diseases, indictment for sins and horrible punishment of Hell, and should always keep in mind about the accounting of his deeds on the Day of Judgment. In that case he is ready for self-refinement and should take a definite decision for purifying his heart from sins and other moral obscene deeds.

Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: من عمر قلبه بدوام الفكر حسنت افعاله في السر والجهر.

*“Whoever makes his heart's kingdom habituated with continuous pondering –his affairs would become good in outward appearance as well as inwardly.”*¹

2. Reward and Punishment

In order to be victorious in attaining self-refinement and abstinence from sins, we may use the reward and punishment method. In the beginning we must address the self: I have decided to abstain from sins, if you do not cooperate in this matter and committed sins, I am going to punish you with such and such punishment.

That is, if you committed back-biting, I will take a fast for one day, or will speak only the minimum required for one week, will donate such amount for charity, will not drink water for one day, will deprive you from one diet, and will remain under the sun during summer, so that you should not forget about the temperature of Hell's Fire.

After that we must watch over the self strictly so that he does not commit back-biting, and in case he commits it, we must take a bold stand against it without being lenient, and must execute the promised punishment against him. Once, the imperious-self realized that we are serious in refraining from sins and will strictly execute the punishment without least compassion, he will surrender himself before our genuine demands.

If, we implemented this program without any negligence, we may close the paths of Satan's entries, and achieve absolute domination over the self, with the condition that we must take a definite decision and must punish the rebellious-self without showing least compassion.

It is strange that regarding minor violations of civil laws, the violators are indicted and punished, but unfortunately for self-cleansing and refinement this method is not practiced, in spite of the fact that our prosperity and eternal salvation depends upon it. Many of the God's deserving servants by utilization of the same method were able to attain self-refinement, self-cleaning, and self-domination.

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

قال عليه السلام: نعم العون على اسر النفس وكسر عادتها الجوع.

“Hunger is the most effective tool for achieving self-domination and breaking habits.”²

And said:

قال عليه السلام: من استدام رياضة نفسه انتفع.

“Whoever practices self-asceticism is bound to earn benefits.”³

One of the Prophet's companion said:

“Once on a hot summer day the Prophet Muhammad (S) was sitting under the shade of a tree,. suddenly a man appeared who after taking off his clothes laid down with bare back upon the hot sand and started rolling over it, alternatively making his back and stomach to bear the hot sand, occasionally covering his face with it, said: 'Oh my imperious-self! You better taste the heat of this hot sand particles, and know it that the heat of Hell 's fire is for severe and painful than this.

“The holy Prophet (S) witnessed the above scene with interest, and having wore his clothes when the man wanted to return, the Holy Prophet asked the man to come near him, and said: 'I saw you doing some thing strange which is not done by any other person. What was the motive behind this act. ?”

“The man replied: 'Oh Prophet of God: The fear of God forced me to perform this act. By performing this act I said to my self. Taste the temperature of this hot sand and know that the heat of Hell' s fire is much more severe and painful than the temperature of this hot sand.”

“The Holy Prophet (S) said: Yes! you feared God-Almighty the way one should. be really be fearful of Him, and he with this act has glorified you over the angels of His Throne. 'Then he said to his companions: 'Come and stand closer to this man and ask him to pray for you.' The companions assembled around the man and requested him to pray for them. The man raised his hand for prayer and said:

اللهم اجمع امرنا على الهدى واجعل التقوى زادنا والجنة ما بنا.

“*O God ! Guide our affairs. make piety provision of our journey, and bestow upon us Paradise in the Hereafter.* ”⁴

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

قال على (ع): تولوا من انفسكم تاديبها واعدلوا بها عن ضراوة عاداتها.

“*Arise against the self and chastisement prevent: him from becoming addicted to various habits.* ”⁵

3. Dignity of Human Essence and Strengthening Human Virtues

Earlier, it was pointed out that human self is a precious jewel which has come into existence from the world of life, knowledge, perfection, beauty, blessing, benevolence, and by nature is the origin of these things. Therefore, if he paid attention towards his exalted position and virtues within his existence, he will then realize that commitment of sins and other moral obscene deeds are below his dignity, and naturally will be disgusted with them.

When he understood that, he is a human being has descended from the Upper Heavens to be God's

Vicegerent upon earth, animalistic desires and passions will become worthless in his sight, and desire for achieving moral excellence shall be revived in his existence.

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

قال على عليه السلام: من كرمك عليه نفسه هانت عليه شهواته.

*“Whoever appreciated the greatness of his self, will regard passions as insignificant and worthless.”*⁶

Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) was asked:

قيل لعلي بن الحسين عليه السلام: من اعطهم الناس خطر؟ قال: من لم يرالدنيا خطرًا لنفسه.

“Who is the worthiest person ? 'The one who does not consider this world worthy of his own existence. ' Replied the Imam.”⁷

Therefore paying attention about the exaltedness of human soul, discovering the worth of his existence, and his lofty position, might be helpful in attaining self-refinement and abstinence from sins. If we address our self, we must say:

You belong to the heavenly kingdom of knowledge, life, perfection, virtues, benevolence and blessings; you are the God's Vicegerent upon the earth; you are human and have been created for eternal life of Next World and God's Nearness; you are superior than animals and following animalistic passions is not worthy of your existence.

In this manner attaining self-refinement and abstinence of sins will become easier for us. Also, for self-refinement, each vice must be uprooted gradually by strengthening opposite characteristics, thus, replacing vices with virtues, which turn into habits or second nature.

For example, if we are jealous with respect to a certain individual, becomes sad and annoyed seeing his blessings and happiness, and by means of slander, insult, annoyance, obstruction, and indifference try to satisfy our own internal psychic disorder –must try to show praise, respect, goodwill, and cooperation towards him.

When we behave in this manner exactly opposite to the feelings of jealousy, slowly, this vice becomes weaker day by day, and eventually is replaced by benevolence. If, we are sick with the disease of stinginess, must imposed upon the self to bear the necessary expenditure for our genuine requirements, so that the undesirable habit of miserliness gradually become uprooted, and eventually become accustomed to spending money and beneficence.

If, we show miserliness regarding payment of religious dues, we must take stand against the self and

without paying least attention to self's whims and passions, must remit our religious financial obligations. If, we show hesitation for spending money for ourselves and our family, then the genuine expenditure should be imposed upon the self so that it becomes accustomed to it gradually.

If, because of miserliness we cannot participate in charitable affairs, we must take action by all possible means at our disposal; a portion of our financial assets should be spent in God's Way for supporting the destitute people so that gradually we become accustomed to it.

Of course in the beginning this task might appear as difficult but with perseverance and resistance it would become easier. over all in order to achieve self-refinement and to refrain from immoral deeds the following two tasks should be performed:

Firstly: We should not offer positive response to the demands of immoral and obscene deeds, so that gradually their roots are dried off completely.

Secondly: The virtuous characteristic opposite to that particular vice should be strengthened; and in accordance with this virtuous characteristic, task must be imposed! upon the self so that gradually he becomes used to it, acquiring them as his habit and temperament, ! thus, cutting the roots of wicked deeds forever. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

قال عليه السلام: اكره نفسك على الفضائل فان الرذائل انت مطبوع عليها

*"Force your self to perform good moral deeds, because the wickedness has been incorporated in your inner essence."*⁸

And said:

قال عليه السلام: عود نفسك فال المكارم وتحمل اعبه المغامر تشرف نفسك وتعمر آخرتك ويكثر حامدوك

*"Make yourself used to performance of good deeds and for tolerance of payment of severe reparation, so that he becomes noble, your Hereafter becomes fruitful, and your admirers become more."*⁹

قال عليه السلام: الشهوات اعوال قاتلات والفضل دوائها اقتنا الصبر عنها

*"Selfish passions and desires are fatal diseases, and the best medicines are selection of patience and abstinence from them."*¹⁰

4. Renunciation of Bad Company

Human beings are susceptible to being influenced by many of the characteristics, etiquette, and behavior of other people with whom they have social association, and in reality become like them, especially their best friends and close social associates play an influential role in their lives. Friendship with corrupt and wicked individuals forces a person towards corruption and evil deeds, while association with righteous people with good morals invites a person towards salvation and goodness.

One of the characteristics of a human being is that he makes himself like others. If, he mixes socially with corrupt and sinful people –he becomes familiar with sinning and other immoral deeds, not only he does not see the ugliness of his actions, on the contrary, regards these acts as manifestation of acts of goodness.

Opposite, to that if his social circle consists of righteous people with good morals, he becomes thoroughly familiar with good morals and good character and desires to become like them. Therefore, a good friend is one of the greatest blessings of God-Almighty and is considered as an important factor responsible for progress and prosperity of a human being. And opposite to that a bad friend is one of the greatest problems and an important factor responsible for his adversity and deviation.

Therefore, the choice of a friend should not be regarded something as insignificant and unimportant, rather should be treated with utmost importance, because it determines our ultimate destiny. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: لا ينبغي للمرء المسلم ان يواخى الفاجر فانه يزيّن له فعله ويحب ان يكون مثله ولا يعينه على عمر دنياه ولا امر معاده، ومدخله ومخرجه من عنده شين عليه.

"A Muslim should never take a sinful and corrupt person as his friend –because, a sinful friend presents vices as virtues, and desires that his friend should behave exactly like himself. A bad friend neither helps a person in worldly affairs nor in the affairs belonging to the Next World, and socialization with him makes a person disgraced."[11](#)

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

عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال: لا ينبغي للمرء المسلم ان يواخى الفاجر ولا الاحمق ولا الكذب.

"It is not appropriate for a Muslim to make friendship with a lewd, stupid, and mendacious person."[12](#)

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

قال رسول الله صلی اللہ علیہ وآلہ وسیدہ: المر علی دین خلیلہ وقرینہ.

*“A person is bound to follow the religion of his friend and social companion.”*¹³

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

قال علی (ع): ایاک و معاشرہ الاشرار فانہم کالنار مباشرتہا تحرق.

*“Association with evil person should be avoided strictly, because on evil person is like a burning fire and whoever nears him will be burnt.”*¹⁴

And said:

قال علی علیہ السلام: ایاک و مصاحبة الفساق فان الشر بالشر يلحق.

*“Association With Wicked person should be strictly avoided, because, evil will be associated with evil.”*¹⁵

Also said:

قال علی علیہ السلام: اخذر مجالسة قرین السو فانہ یهلاک مقارنه ویردی مصاحبه.

*“Strictly avoid companionship with an evil friend, because, he will lead his fellow companion towards destruction and will damage his reputation.”*¹⁶

Therefore, if some one is really striving to attain self-refinement, and if has bad friends and evil companions –should quite their company at once, because, with their company refraining from sins is almost impossible.

Bad friends slow down one's determination for self-refinement by encouraging him to get indulge into sins and other immoral deeds. To commit a sin is like a habit, and its quitting shall be possible only, if the socialization with other addicted persons should be avoided.

5. Avoiding Potential Blunders

Self-refinement and refraining from sins forever is something is not an easy rather is a difficult task. A human being is always susceptible to stumble by sinning, because the imperious-self naturally invites him towards vices. Heart –which is the command center for rest of the body is in a state of continuous change or metamorphism, is influenced by external events, issues orders in accordance with the situation it encounters, the things it sees, and the words it hears.

At centers of worships and religious spiritual assemblies the heart naturally shows inclination towards performance of virtuous deeds, and opposite to that at the centers of corruption and vices pulls towards evil deeds. Seeing scenes of spirituality motivates heart towards spiritual matters, while seeing erotic scene of carnal acts makes him seduced.

In a corrupted assembly the hearts becomes inclined to perform similar vices while in a spiritual gathering the heart gets motivated towards God-Almighty. If, he gets associated with worldly people infatuated with accumulation of wealth and properly, the hearts become inclined towards animalistic desires, and if associates with God's pious servants -becomes' motivated towards virtuous deeds.

Therefore, those who are sincerely interested in self-refinement and abstinence from sins must close their eyes and ears from seeing erotic scenes of carnal desires, should not participate in such parties; should not mix socially with such corrupted individuals, otherwise they themselves are most likely to stumble.

It is because of these considerations that Islam forbids a man from participating in religiously prohibited (*Haram*), parties such as gambling, drinking, and other sinful assemblies. Also, looking at the face (with lust), meeting in private, hand-shake, joking and laughing with women who are unlawful (*Na-mahram*) have been forbidden.

One of the great wisdom hidden behind the recommended Islamic Veil (*hijab*) is related to same matter. Since Islam requires an ideal social environment where self-refinement and abstinence from sins could be made possible. Otherwise, controlling imperious-self shall become impossible, because, the corrupt environment naturally pushes human beings towards corruption, even thinking about sin invites a man to commit that sin ultimately.

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

قال على عليه السلام: اذا ابصرت العين الشهوة عمي القلب عن العاقبة.

“When eye sees an erotic scene –the heart becomes blind from seeing its ultimate consequences.”¹⁷

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: فكرك فى المعصية يحدوك على الوقوع فيها.

“Simply thinking about sinful carnal deeds encourages you to commit them eventually.”¹⁸

1. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-690.

2. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-773.

3. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-647.

- [4.](#) Mohajateh al-Baiza, vol. 7, p-208.
- [5.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-350.
- [6.](#) Nahjul Balagha, saying 449.
- [7.](#) Tohf al-Aqool, p-285.
- [8.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-130.
- [9.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-492.
- [10.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-72.
- [11.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-640.
- [12.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-640.
- [13.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-642.
- [14.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-147.
- [15.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-147.
- [16.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-142.
- [17.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-315.
- [18.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-518.

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 breech 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 worlds, 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:

أَرَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهًا هُوَ أُولَئِكَ

"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:

أفلا تَعْقُلُونَ يَتَقَوَّنُونَ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُوٌ ﴿٤﴾ وَلِلَّدُّارُ 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:

أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُوٌ وَزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَافُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ ﴿٤﴾ كَمَثَلٍ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَاماً ﴿٥﴾ 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 فاني احذركم الدنيا فانها حلوة خضرة حفت بالشهوات وتحببت بالعاجلة وراقت بالقليل وحليت بالأمال وتزيينت بالغرور. لا تدوم حيرتها ولا تؤمن فجعتها، غرارة ضرارة حائلة زائلة نافذة بائدة اكالة غواة.

"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 ولاهلها منها الجلا وهي حلوة خضرا وقد عجبت للطالب والتيسرت 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 ³and 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 وَالْبُنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا

"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 لِلْوَالِدِينَ 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 جزاً 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 أبي جعفر (ع) قال: من طلب الرزق في الدنيا استغفافاً عن الناس وتوسيعاً على أهله تعطفاً على جارة لقي الله عز وجل يوم القيمة ووجهه مثل القمر ليلاً 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 أبي 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:

رُبِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقْنَطَرَةِ مِنَ الْذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ
وَالْحَرْثِ ۝ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۝ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَآبِ

"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 بلية.

"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 أبي 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 عليه السلام: الناس ابنا الدنيا ولابن 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 موعضة ولمن اتعظ بها.
مسجد احبا الله ومصلى ملائكة الله وحيط وحي 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 أبي 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 أبو عبدالله عليه السلام: لا خير في من لا يحب جمع المال من حلال، ويكتف به وجهه ويقضى به دينه ويحصل به رحمة.

“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:

إيها الناس إنما الدنيا دار مجاز والآخرة دار قرار فخدوا من ممركم لمقركم ولا تهتكوا أستاركم عند من يعلم أسراركم واخرجوا من الدنيا قلوبكم من قبل أن تخرج منها أجdanكم، وفيها اختبرتم ولغيرها خلقتم. إن المرء إذا هلك قال الناس: ما ترك؟ وقالت الملائكة: ما قدم؟ لله آبائكم! فقدموا بعضاً يكن لكم قرضاً، ولا تختلفوا 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 إنَّ هذه الدنيا التي أصبحتم تتمونها وترغبون فيها ، وأصبحت تعظكم وترميكم ليست بداركم ، ولا منزلكم الذي خلقتم له ، ولا الذي دعيتم إليه. الا أنها ليست بباقيه لكم ولا تبقون عليها وهلى وان غرتكم منها فقد حذرتم شرها. فدعوا اغرورها لتحذيرها واطماعها لتخويفها وسابقوها فيها الى الدار التي دعيتم عليها وانصرفوها 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 came 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 loosing 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:

أين أبى يعفو رقال قلت لابى عبدالله عليه السلام: أنا لنحب الدنيا فقال لي: تصنع بها مازا؟ قلت اتزوج منها واحد

وأنفق على عيالى وانيل اخوانى واتصدق. قال: ليس هذا من الدنيا، هذا من الآخرة.

"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 عباد الله أن المتقين ذهبوا بعاجل الدنيا وأجل 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 وتبقى لهم جراث الله غدا في آخرتهم لا ترد لهم دعوه 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 عنى، أبي تعرضت؟ أم إلى تشوقت؟ لا حان حينك؟ هيهاه! غري غيري، لا حاجة لي فيك، قد طلتك ثلاثة 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 عنى يا دنيا فحبلك على غاربك قد انسالتُ من مخالبك وأفلتُ من حبائك واجتنبت الذهاب في مداهضك

*“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 لي: ما قيمة هذا النعال؟ فقلت: لا قيمة لها! فقال عليه السلام: والله لهى أحب إلى من أمرتكم، الا ان اقيم خقا: او ادفع باطلا، ثم خرج خطب 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 مِنَ 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:

أَرَضِيْتُم 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 وَاطْمَأْنُوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غَافِلُونَ أُولَئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمُ 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, their home will be fire because of what they used to earn. (10: 7-8)

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

عن أبي عبد الله عليه سلام قال: أبعد ما يكون العبد من الله اذا كم 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: ولبئس 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 فيبني عمره في منفعة غيره. وعامل عمل في الدنيا لما بعدها فجاءه الذي له من الدنيا بغير عمل فأحرز الحظين معاً، وملك الدارين جميماً. فأصبح وجيهًا عند الله، 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 رجال: رجل باع فيها نفسه فوبقها ورجل ابتع نفسيه 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 Worler 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–l06.](#)
- [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.](#)

Piety, the Most Important Factor for Purification

In the Islamic School, piety has been assigned the most important position and the pious believers are regarded as the most distinguished and respectable persons in an Islamic Society. The phrase piety in

the Qur'anic verses and narrations, and especially in the glorious book of Nahjul-Balagha (The Path of Eloquence) has been repeated quite frequently. The Holy Qur'an considers piety as the sole criteria for appraising the value and worth of individuals and said:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَانُكُمْ

"Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of God-Almighty is the best in conduct. (49: 13)

The piety has been introduced as the best provisions for the Hereafter, and greatest means for achieving salvation. the Holy Qur'an said:

لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقُوا أَجْرًًا عَظِيمًا

"For such of them as do right and word off (evil), there is great reward (3: 172)

And said:

فَمَنِ اتَّقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزُنُونَ

"Then whosoever refrainth from evil and amendeth -there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve. (7: 35)

And said:

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٌ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

"And vie one with another for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Paradise as wide as are the Heavens and the earth, prepared for those who ward off (evil). (3: 133)

And said:

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَنَعِيمٍ فَاكِهِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ

"Lo! Those who kept their duty dwell in gardens and delight, happy because of what their Lord hath given them. (52: 17-18)

Also, in the Nahjul Balagha and other books of traditions, piety has been assigned the most distinguished position in all ethical matters, and is the greatest means for achieving prosperity and

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

قال عليه السلام: رئيس الاعمال

"Piety acquires the most prominent position in all ethical affairs." Nahjul Balagha, saying 41.

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: خصلة من لزمها أتعه الدنيا والآخرة وربح الفوز بالجنة قيل وما هي يا رسول الله؟ قال: التقوى، من أراد أن يكون أعز الناس فليتق الله عز وجل ثم تلا: ومن يتق الله يجعل له مخرجاً ويرزقه من حيث لا يحتسب.

"There is a characteristic that whoever acquires it will have the world and Hereafter in his control. He was asked: 'Oh Prophet of God! What is that characteristic?

“The Prophet (S) replied: ‘Piety! Whoever desires to become the most dearest person should become pious, and then he recited the following verse:

*And who so ever keepeth his duty to God, He will appoint a way out for him. And will provide for him from (a quarter) whence he hath no expectation. (65:2-3)*¹

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

قال عليه السلام: واعلموا عباد الله 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، فحفظوا من الدنيا بما حظي به المترفون وأخذوا منها ما أخذه الجباره المتكبرون. ثم انقلبوا عنها بالزاد المبلغ والمتجر الرابع أصابوا لذة زهد الدنيا في دنياهم، وتيقنو أنهم جيران الله غدا في آخرتهم لا ترد لهم دعوه، ولا ينقص لهم نصيب من لذة.

“Know, O’ creatures of God, that the God-fearing have Shared the joys of this transient world as well as the Next World, for they shared with the people of this world in their worldly matters while their 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. They tasted the pleasure of renouncing the world in this world, and

*they firmly believed that on the coming day in their next life they would be neighbors of God, where their call would not be repulsed nor would their share of pleasure be small.”*²

The commander of the faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: عليكم بتقوى الله فانها تجمع الخير ولا خير غيرها ويدرك بها من الخير ما لا يدرك بغيرها من خير الدنيا والآخرة.

*“Don’t give up piety because it is the source of all benevolence and goodness,. blessing except piety does not exist; and the blessing which is achieved by means of piety can never be obtained without it,. be it blessing of this world or the Hereafter.”*³

Imam al-Sajjad:

قال السجاد عليه السلام: شرف كل عمل بالتقوى وفاز من فاز من المتقين، قال الله تبارك وتعالى ان للمتقين مفازا

*“The value and worth of each deed depend upon piety; only pious people may achieve righteousness and prosperity. God-Almighty said: Verily righteousness and prosperity belong to pious people.”*⁴

In some of the traditions, piety has been introduced as the most important factor for self-perfection and purification as well as the most effective medicine for curing the psychic diseases. The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: فان تقوى الله دوا دلوككم وصبر عمي افئدكم وشفا مرض اجسادكم وصلاح فساد صدوركم وظهور دنس انفسكم وجلا غشا ابصاركم. امن فزع جاشكم وضيا سواد ظلمتكم

*“Piety is the only cure for wickedness of your heart. It is the Divine Light to expel darkness of your heart. It is a remedy for your ailing mind. It is the only way of improvement for your corrupt soul. It purifies your conscience. It brings back sight to the eyes blinded by ignorance of truth.”*⁵

1. Piety, Objective Behind the Divine Commands

In Islam the piety has been introduced as a genuine moral virtue and the real aim for explanation of (Divine) Commandments. Following are some of the examples God-Almighty said in Holy Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“Oh mankind! Worship your Lord, who hath created you and those before you, so that you may

ward off (evil). (2:21)

And said:

كُتبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقَوْنَ

"O you believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off (evil). (2: 183)

And said:

لَن يَنالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ

"Their flesh and their blood reach not God, but the devotion from you reacheth him. (22:37)

And said:

وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ

"So make provisions for yourself (Hereafter); for the best provision is to ward off evil. (2: 197)

Therefore, it could be seen that the aim behind explaining some of these commandments or worships is actually to encourage people to acquire piety by performing those particular acts of worships. Piety in Islam have been attached so much importance that it has been introduced as the sole criteria for the acceptance of other deeds, so much so that the deed without piety shall be worthless and will not be accepted:

The Holy Qur'an said:

إِنَّمَا يَنْتَقِبُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

"God accepteth only from those who ward off evil. (5:27)

The Holy Prophet (S) said to Abu Dharr:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وعليه: يا اباذر! كن بالعمل بالتقوا اشد اهتماما منك بالعمل، فانه لا يقل عمل بالتقوا وكيف بكل ما يتقبل بقول الله انما يتقبل الله من المتقين.

"Try your best to acquire piety, because, nothing accompanied by piety shall be regarded smaller, and how come a thing accepted by God-Almighty, could be regarded smaller? Because, the Holy Qur'an said: God accepts only from pious ones." [6](#)

Imam al Sadiq (a.s.) said:

قال ابو عبدالله عليه السلام: لا يغرنك بكافئهم انما التقوى في القلب.

"Do not let their crying deceive you, because, the piety exists only in heart." [7](#)

God-Almighty said in Holy Qur'an:

وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَقْوُا فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

"But if ye persevere and ward off (evil), then that of the steadfast heart of things. (3: 186)

Therefore, as could be seen that piety in Holy Qur'an and other Islamic traditions has been mentioned as a genuine moral, virtue, best provisions for the Hereafter, important medicine for curing the heart's disease, and greatest means for attaining spiritual purification and self-refinement.

In emphasizing its importance, it is sufficient-to say that it has been mentioned as the real aim behind explanation of all Divine Commandments and Regulations. Now let us discuss its meanings in details.

2. Definition of Piety

Generally, piety is defined as a negative program i.e. refraining and avoidance from sins and other transgressions. It is interpreted that with being pious, participation in social affairs is very difficult rather impossible. Because, naturally, human-self is inclined towards sinning and in case of acceptance of social responsibilities, one will be forced to indulge into sins. Therefore, either one should acquire piety or must refrain from acceptance of social responsibility.

Or, one must accept social responsibilities and should renounce the piety, because, they are not compatible with each other and their combination is not possible. The inevitable result of such thinking is that –the more one lives an isolated and monastic live the better he will be prepared to acquire piety.

But piety in some Qur'anic verses, traditions, and in the Nahjul Balagha has been defined as a positive quality and not a negative virtue. Piety, not only means renunciation of sins, rather it consists of possessing an internal energy and power of self-restraint, which are achieved because of undertaking continuous rigorous self-discipline, whereby self acquires a super strength, which makes him obedient to God's Commandments.

The self acquires such strength that he shows resistance and steadfastness against unlawful whims and passions. Also, the meanings of piety in the dictionary includes the similar aspect.

The phrase piety (*taqwa*) is derived from the Persian word (*waqaya*), which means protection and defense. Piety means self-restraint and self-control which is a positive quality bestowing an immunity upon the pious, and not a negative act or program. It means commitment of a human being to obey the religious commandments.

Every act of abstaining from sinning is not called as piety but the power of self-restraint and self-control responsible behind this abstaining is called piety; which has been described as the best provisions of journey for the Hereafter, and naturally making provisions for a journey is a positive act and not a negative one. Here, it would be appropriate to quote few narrations from the Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.), in this matter, as follows:

قال على (ع): اوصيكم عباد الله بتقوى الله فانها الزمام والقمام فتمسكوا بوثائقها واعتصموا بحقائقها تؤول بكم الى اكتنان الدعة واوطان السعة ومعاقل الحرز ومنازل العز.

“O creatures of the Lord! I advise you to be afraid of Him. I advise you to adopt piety, because, piety is the safest way to salvation and the best support for religion. Keep yourself attached to it and never forsake it. It shall lead you to places of safety, to positions of honor and pursuits bringing you peace and contentment.”⁸

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: فان التقوا في اليوم الحرث والجنة وفي وغد الطريق الى الجنة مسلكها واضح وسالكها رابح ومستودعها حافظ.

“Piety will act as your shield and defense and in life and Hereafter as your guide to Heaven. Its ways are clear and simple. Those of you who espouse it will be benefited by it. And the one who has imposed it upon you will guard it and will guard you.”⁹

And said:

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: اعلموا عباد الله ان التقوى دار حصن عزيز والفسر دار حصن ذليل لا يمنع اهله ولا يحرز من لجا اليه الا وبالتفوى تقطع حمة الخطايا.

“Know O Creatures of God! That piety is strongly forfeited and a respectable Heaven, and sinful and vicious life is such a undependable refuge that it can neither protect nor guard those who take shelter there. Remember that fear of God can protect one against the evils of sins.”¹⁰

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: فان تقوى الله حمت اوليا الله محارمه والزمعت قلوبهم مخافته حيث اسهرت لياليهم واضمات هو اجرهم.

*“Oh people! Piety prevents good people from indulging in sins and vices; it makes them God fearing, it persuades them to spend their nights in His Worship, and to pass their days in fasting.”*¹¹

And said:

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: ان التقوى عصمة لك في حياتك وزلفي بعد مماتك.

*“The same piety is shelter for you in this world, and will be a source of prosperity and salvation in the Hereafter.”*¹²

As could be seen that the piety in the above mentioned narrations has been introduced as a positive virtue, a powerful force introducing restrain and immunity and an important preventing factor. It should be compared to a bridle used for training a mulish horse for riding or restraining and controlling the whims and passions of a rebellious-self.

It is like a formidable fortress and firm fortification which protect a human being from the devastating attacks of internal enemies i.e. the unlawful selfish whims and passions and Satanic whispers. It is like a shield ¹³ which protects a struggler in the battle-field from the piercing of poisonous arrows and other Satanic devastating blows.

Piety frees a person from the imprisonment of whims and passions and cuts off the chains of greed, prejudice, lust, and wrath wrapped around his neck. Piety is not a limitation, but on the contrary it bestows the mastership and being in control of one's own-self. It bestows upon a human being prestige, honor, nobility, power, dignity, and steadfastness.

It protects the heart from Satanic assaults, thus, making it readied for the descent of God's angels, illuminating him with Divine-Light and bestowing upon him peace and tranquility. Piety for human being is like his home and clothing which protects him from natural calamities, cold and hot temperatures. God-Almighty, in Holy Qur'an said:

وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ

“But the best raiment is the raiment of righteousness. (7:26)

Therefore, piety is a virtue, excellence, provision for the Hereafter, and is not a negative quality .Of course, in the Holy Qur'an and in traditions piety has also been used in places of fear and avoidance of sins but these are the requirements of piety –and not piety itself.

3. Piety and Seclusion

Therefore, monasticism, and declining acceptance of social responsibilities not only cannot be considered as manifestations of piety, but on the contrary in some cases they are contradictory with righteousness. Islam does not believe in seclusion and monasticism, and in order to refrain from sins, it does not recommend its followers to decline acceptance of social responsibilities and living a secluded life, rather emphasizes them to accept social obligations, while at the same time by means of piety should practice self-restraint and self-control for avoiding sins and deviations.

Islam does not say: don't accept lawful positions of power rather says: do accept them but for the sake of God's Pleasure, serve the people, and don't be a slave of rank and position. Don't allow your position and authority as a mean of accomplishing your sole aim of satisfying selfish whims and passions and don't deviate from the straight path.

Islam does not say: in order to acquire piety close your business activities and don't make efforts for earning a living, instead it says: Don't be a slave and prisoner of world. Islam does not say: quite this world and live a monastic life to worship God-Almighty is seclusion, rather it says:

Do live in this world and do your best for its development and progress but don't become worldly or becoming infatuated with its charms –instead, utilize it for attaining higher exalted spiritual stations, and ascension towards God's Nearness. This is what piety is supposed to be in Islamic school, which has been described as one of the most exalted human virtue or characteristic.

4. Piety and Insight

It may be interpreted from the Qur'anic verses and traditions that piety bestows upon and human being a sense of profound insight and intelligence enabling him to diagnose, and to follow up his genuine interests of this world and Hereafter. Following is an example:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَقَوَّلَ اللَّهُ يَجْعَلَ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا

"Oh ye who believe! If you keep your duty to God, He will give you discrimination (between right and wrong). (8:29)

That is, God-Almighty open his esoteric eyes bestowing upon him a special insight to enable him to diagnose his prosperity, adversity, benefits and losses. In other verse God-Almighty said:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

“Observe your duty to God. God is teaching you and God is knower of all things. (2:282)

Although, the Holy Qur'an has been descended from the Heavenly-Kingdom for the common people but especially the pious people receive guidance and advice. It is in this background that the Holy Qur'an said:

هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

“This is a declaration for mankind, a guidance and an admonition unto those who ward off evil.
(3: 138)

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) quoted a tradition from his father:

عن أبي عبدالله عليه السلام قال: كان أبي يقول: ما من شيء أفسد للقلب من الخطيئة ان القلب ليوقع الخطيئة فما تزال به حتى تغلب عليه فيصير اسفله اعلاه واعلاه اسفله.

*“For heart's corruption there is nothing more damaging than sinning, in which case the hearts struggles and offers resistance against sins until it becomes completely subdued by sins becoming an overturned heart.”*¹⁴

Therefore, it could be inferred from such verses and traditions that piety is responsible for enhancement of reason with insight and brightness as well as strengthening his power of comprehension. The faculty of reason, a precious Celestial Jewel, has been bestowed to enable him to correctly identify and diagnose his gains and losses, prosperity and adversely, welfare and wickedness, and last but not the least do's and don'ts. The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: العقل رسول الحق.

*“The reason within human body is like the messenger of God.”*¹⁵

Such an important mission has been assigned to reason, and it is quite competent to discharge this responsibility, only if, self's whims and passions accept its rule, ,do not oppose, sabotage, and create problems in its administration. Unfortunately, passions are bitter enemy of reason and do not allow it to perform his function in an excellent manner. The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: الهوى عدو العقل.

*"Whims and passions of self are the enemies of reason"*¹⁶

And said:

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: من لم يملك شهوته لم يملك عقله.

*"Whoever does not have control over his passions will not be the master of his reason."*¹⁷

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: العجب يقدس العقل.

*"Self-conceit and egotism corrupts reason."*¹⁸

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: اللجوء لا راي له.

*"An obstinate person does not have correct opinion."*¹⁹

It is true that the ruling authority over human body has been assigned to reason (*Aql*) which is quite competent for this job, but self's whims and passions are the biggest obstacles in its path. If, one of the passions or all of them became out of control and revolted against it, than how could the reason will succeed in discharging its function well? Such a person does possess reason but lacks the sense of comprehension and correct diagnosis.

He does possess a lamp but the whims, passions, lusts, and wrath like a dark thick cloud have covered it completely, thus, not making him appreciate his welfare and control his rebellious passions.

When could an egotistic person find an opportunity to identify his faults and take the corrective action? Likewise, how could he refrain himself from moral indecencies such as wrath, jealousy, greed, revenge, stubbornness, ambitions for wealth, passion, and power?

If one of them or more succeed in taking over self's control, they will prevent the reason to truly apprehend the realities, and in case it wants to take action against their wishes, they will oppose it by creating troubles and mobilizing their partisans for rebellion, making environment unfavorable for the rule of reason, and ultimately making it helpless to discharge its obligations properly.

A person who is a prisoner of his whims and passions could not be benefited by lectures and preaching, rather it produces opposite reaction, thus, increasing his hard-heartedness. Therefore, piety may be

considered as one of the best and most effective factor of insight, enlightenment, and conscientiousness. In the end it must be clarified that when it said that piety is responsible in enhancing the sense of insight –it means the practical aspects of reason, ability to diagnose the duties, or in other words recognize the do's and don'ts.

It has nothing to do as far as the theoretical aspects of wisdom are concerned; it is not so that an impious person would not be able to understand mathematical and scientific problems, however piety to a certain extent might be effective in enhancing the power of intelligence and comprehension in these matters.

5. Piety and Victory over the Difficulties

One of the most important effects of piety is the ability to dominate over the difficulties of day to day life. God-Almighty said in Holy Qur'an:

وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَبَرْزُقًا مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

“And whosoever keepeth his duty to God, He will appoint a way out for him, and will provide for him from (a quarter) whence he hath no expectation. (65:2-3)

And said:

يُسْرًا وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ

“And whosoever keepeth his duty to God, He maketh his course easy for him. (65:4)

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

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: فمن اخذ بالتفوى عزبت عنه الشدائى بعد دنوها واحلوت له الامور بعد مرارتها
وانفرجت عنه الامواج بعد تراكمها واسهلت له الصعب بعد انصابها.

“Do you know how piety helps those who make It the basic : principles of their lives ? It wards off the calamities which have crowded round them and laid siege of them. It converts bitter disappointments of their affairs into pleasant achievements. It acts as a break water against the waves of disasters and destruction which want to dash against lives and ambitions.”²⁰

Therefore, it can be inferred from the above mentioned verses and traditions that piety helps a person in solving his problems and overpowering the obstacles in his day to day life. Now let us see what influence does piety exert in these matters? The life's hardships can be divided into two categories:

The problems of first category consist of physical- bodily defects, incurable fatal diseases, unpredictable natural disasters, and similar other calamities whose solution and prevention is out of our control. The problems of second category consist of psychological, physical, family, and social problems, where our intentions and decisions could be influential in their solution and even prevention.

Of course, piety could play an important role in offering solutions for each one of the above mentioned problems. Although, in the farmer case, even though prevention may be difficult, and total avoidance might be practically impossible but still the technique of how to encounter these problems is in our control.

A self-restraint and pious person who completely dominates over his passions regards this world and its problems as transient and short lived, while considers the Hereafter as real and permanent abode; rests his trusts upon the Supreme and Absolute Power of God-Almighty; treats the hardships and difficulties of this world as insignificant and temporary; does not become desperate and anxious, rather offers his absolute surrender to the Divine Will.

A pious person is familiar as well as confident about God-Almighty and Hereafter; calamities and hardships of day-to-day life do not disturb his state of ease and tranquility, because, hardships, calamities, and tragedies in essence are not painful, rather it is the anxiety and intolerance of self which makes a person uncomfortable, and piety could be helpful for him in such cases.

But most of the severe problems and catastrophes of the second category which make the human life bitter like burning Hell are the result of moral indecencies, self-whims and passions, and domination of Satanic desires.

In majority of the cases the family problems are created because of failure on the part of husband, wife, or both of them, in controlling passions, thus, burning and frightening in the fire, which was ignited by their own hands. Similar is the case with other problems.

The moral vices such as jealousy, revengefulness, stubbornness, prejudice, egotism, greed, lust, wrath, extravagance, arrogance, and other similar rascalities are responsible for causing problems and hardships for human beings, creating pains and anxiety, and turning the sweetness of life into bitterness. Such a person is a prisoner of his carnal desires and passions to the extent that he is even helpless to identify his disease and its treatment.

The best and most effective thing which could prevent such catastrophes is the same piety, self-restraint or self-control. In the life of a pious such painful horrible catastrophes do not exist at all; with tranquility of heart and enlightenment, he lives a peaceful life as well manages to collect sufficient provisions for Hereafter. The love of world is the roots of all evils but a pious person does not become infatuated with its allurements and charms. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: ايak وحب الدنيا فانها اصل كل خطيئة ومعدن كل بلية

"Be careful of world's love because, it is the roots of all sins. "[21](#)

6. Piety and Freedom

It is quite possible that someone may infer that piety deprives freedom and creates limitations making life difficult and unpleasant, but Islam rejects this belief and on the contrary consider piety as the source of freedom, comfort, dignity exaltedness, and regards an impious person simply as a prisoner or slave. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: فان تقوى الله مفتاح سداد وذخيرة معاد وعقب من كل ملكة وتجاة من لك هلكة.

"Verily piety is a key to the doors of righteousness and virtue. It is a provision for the Next World. It is a source of freedom from slavery of evil desires and a wall of protection from every ill-luck and misfortune. It is a refuge for those who try to run away from vice and wickedness and through it a person can achieve his aim."[22](#)

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: لا شرف اعلى من الاسلام ولا عزا عز من التقوى ولا معقل احسن من الورع.

"There is no distinction higher than Islam, no honor more honorable than fear of God'; no asylum better than self-restraint."[23](#)

In the above traditions piety has been introduced as the key for solution of problems, bestower of freedom and dignity, rescuer from the waves of disasters and destruction, and as the most formidable shelter for human beings.

Therefore, piety does not deprive and create limitations, rather it revives human personality and free a human being from the imprisonment of carnal desires, wraths, revengefulness, selfishness, self-conceit, prejudices, stubbornness, greed, mammonism, egotism, selfishness, ambitiousness, gluttony, and desire for fame and publicity.

It strengthens wisdom and human personality in order to dominate over the passions and rebellious self, adjust them in accordance to genuine requirements, provide leadership to guide them properly preventing extravagance and dissipation of forces.

The Holy Qur'an considers the persons who become prisoners and slaves of their desires, endeavored to satisfy their passions, did not recognize any limits in order to satisfy their carnal desires as idolaters

and self-worshipers. The Holy Qur'an said:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهًا هَوَاهُ وَأَضْلَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ
اللَّهِ ۖ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

"Hast thou seen him who maketh his desire his god, and God sendeth him astray purposely, and sealeth up his hearing and his heart, and setteth on his sight a covering ? Then who will lead him after God (hath condemned him)? Will you rest them heed ?" (45:23)

Yes! The person who has surrendered himself absolutely to his whims and passions, in order to accomplish his passionate desires strives frantically and does not hesitate to indulge into most degrading acts, does not pay attention to the voice of wisdom and guidance of prophets, such a person is indeed is a slave and prisoner of his self.

His passions have completely dominated and imprisoned his human personality and the precious jewel of wisdom, and in order to rescue them there is no other alternative except piety. Therefore, piety does not create limitations rather blesses human beings with freedom.

7. Piety and Treatment of Diseases

It was earlier prove that moral abjectnesses such as: jealousy, hatred, revenge, fault-finding, wrath, prejudice, greed, egotism, arrogance, fear , indecisiveness, temptation, and similar other things are psychological diseases. The hearts of such people are indeed sick. Also, it has been confirmed that between the man and his self not only there exists a firm connection rather they are united, and because of this connection and communication they exert an influence upon each and other.

Physical sicknesses make the self-disturbed and uncomfortable, and similarly opposite to that psychological diseases effect human body and nerves. In majority of cases the psychological diseases and nervous disorders are the result of moral abjectness. Even some of the bodily diseases like ulcer and swelling of intestine, indigestion, acidity, headache, and stomachache are more likely the result of moral abjectness such as; jealousy, hatred, greed, egotism, and ambitiousness.

It is has been proved beyond doubt that excessive indulgence into sexual activities results in dangerous fatal bodily diseases such as AIDS etc. Therefore, as was mentioned earlier the sole curing medicine for such psychological diseases is piety. It could be said that piety plays the most effective role as far as the treatment of psychological and physical diseases, hygiene, and fitness of human beings are concerned. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said:

فَإِنْ تَقُوا اللَّهُ دُوا قُلُوبُكُمْ، وَبَصَرُ عُمَى أَفْئَدُكُمْ، وَشَفَا مَرْضُ اجْسَادِكُمْ، وَصَلَاحُ فَسَادِ صُدُورِكُمْ، وَظَهُورُ دَنَسِ
انْفُسِكُمْ، وَجَلَا عَشا بِصَارِكُمْ، وَامْنَ فَزَعُ جَاشِكُمْ وَضِيَا سَوَادِ ظَلَمَتِكُمْ.

*“Certainly piety is the medicine for your hearts, sight for the blindness of your spirits, the cure for the ailments of your bodies, the rectifier of the evils of your breasts, the purifier of the pollution of your minds, the light of the darkness of your eyes, the consolidation for the fear of your heart, and the brightness for the gloom of your ignorance.”*²⁴

- [1.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-285.
- [2.](#) Nahjul Balagha, letter no.27.
- [3.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-285.
- [4.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p-386.
- [5.](#) Nahjul Balagha, letter no. 198.
- [6.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p-89.
- [7.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-286
- [8.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon 195.
- [9.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon 191.
- [10.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon 157.
- [11.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon 114.
- [12.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-222.
- [13.](#) An impatient (or impious) person could be compared to a soldier in the battle-field, who is fighting virtually naked without armor. Such an ill-equipped soldier is most likely to be killed and disappear from the scene during the very first encounter, with the same analogy a patient (pious) person could be compared to a soldier, who is clad in a coat of mail from head to toe and is fully equipped with all the required armaments. Obviously, to defeat such a well equipped soldier by the enemy is relatively a difficult task. Discourse of Patience, Ayatullah Khamenei, p-102 [Tr].
- [14.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-54.
- [15.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-13.
- [16.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-13.
- [17.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-702.
- [18.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm p-26.
- [19.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-31.
- [20.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon 198.
- [21.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-150.
- [22.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon 230.
- [23.](#) Nahjul Balagha, saying 371.
- [24.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon 198.

The Characteristics of Pious (Sermon of Hammam)

In order to appreciate the attributes of piety and to understand its profundities in detail, let us quote here the famous sermon of Hammam from the Nahjul-Balagha explaining the qualities of pious and God-fearing persons. In this sermon the Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) has explained what piety really means and what sort of human beings pious people are, describing the graphic details of their

ways of living, thinking, praying, and dealing with other men.

Hammam was one of the companions of Imam ‘Ali (a.s.), a very pious and God fearing man. He once asked Imam to explain at length the qualities of pious person. He wanted the explanation to be so graphic and so vivid that he could get the picture of a pious man in his mind's eyes. Imam knew that Hammam had a very tender heart and was disinclined to explain piety in the way that Hammam had requested and evading the subject he replied.

“Hammam! Fear God and do good deeds. Remember that God is always a companion of pious and good people! ” But Hammam was not satisfied with this reply and wanted to say something more. He pressed so much and others joined him and seconded his request that Imam reluctantly delivered the following sermon. After praising the Lord and praying Him to bless the Holy Prophet (a.s.) Imam thus, continued the sermon as follows:

“When God created mankind He was not in need of their obedience and prayers, neither was He nervous of their disobedience. Because, disobedience or insubordination of men cannot harm Him, similar obedience of obedient people cannot do Him any good. He is beyond the reach of harm and benefit.

After creating man He decided for him the variety of food which his body could absorb and assimilate, and the places which were congenial for him to live and to propagate. Among these human beings excellent are those who are pious and who fear God.”

“They possess pre-eminence and excellence because they always speak truthfully, rightly and to the point, their way of living is based upon moderation, and their mode of dealing with other men is founded on their good will, fellow feeling and courtesy towards them. They deny themselves the things prohibited by God. They concentrate their minds upon knowledge of things which will bring them eternal bliss.

They bear hardships and sufferings as happily as they enjoy comforts and pleasures. If God had not fixed the span of life for each one of them, their souls in desire of attaining His Heaven and out of fear of falling into His displeasure, would not have stayed in their bodies for long.”

“They have visualized mentally the glory of God in such a way that beyond him nothing in this world alarms, frightens or awes them. Everything other than His might appears to them as insignificant and humble. They believe in the Heaven and its blessings like a person who has been there and has actually seen everything of the Heaven with his own eyes.

Similarly, their faith in the Hell and its torments is as strong as that of a person who had passed through its sufferings. They feel that the tortures of the Hell are around them and very near to them.”

“The ways of worldly people make them sorry. They harm nobody. They do not indulge in excessive eating and pleasure seeking. Their wants are limited. Their wishes are few. They have accepted

patiently sufferings and adversities in this mortal and transitory life for the sake of eternal bliss which by the grace of God proved for them a very profitable transaction.

The vicious world desired their fellowship but they turned their faces away from it. It wanted to snare them, but they willingly accepted every trouble and discomfort to free themselves from its clutches.”

“Their nights they spend in carefully studying the Qur'an, because, of their weaknesses and shortcomings, and try to find ways from this Holy book for improvements of their minds. In the study of the Qur'an when they came across a passage describing the Heaven they feel highly attracted towards it and develop such a keen desire to reach it; that the Heaven with all its blessings is visualized by their minds, while a passage about the Hell frightens them and makes them feel as if they are seeing and hearing the raging fire and the groans and lamentations of those who are suffering the tortures of the Hell.”

“Nights they spend in praying before the Lord and requesting and beseeching Him to deliver them from the Hell. Days find them occupied with such works that clearly indicate their wisdom, depth of knowledge, virtuousness, and piety. Constant fasting, simple diet: avoidance of every aspect of luxury and regular hard work make them look lean and haggard, but they possess very sound and robust health.

When people hear them discussing various problems of life they often take them to be whimsical fanatic or even half-witted. But it is not so, they are not satisfied with the quality and quantity of the work done by them in the cause of religion and humanity .The more they work the less they feel satisfied. Having set up a very high standard of efficiency for their work they fell nervous that indolence may not make it impossible for them to attain those heights.”

“If anyone of them is praised for piety, virtuousness and the good deeds done by him, he does not like to be so complimented; he is afraid that such praise may not allure him towards vanity, self flattery, and self glorification. He says, I know my mind and my work more than others, and God knows much more than me.

O Lord! Please do not hold me responsible for what they have said about me. You know very well that I did not instigate them for such praises. Please Lord! Grant me excellence far greater than what they complimented me for. And Lord! Please forgive those of my sins short-comings which they do not know.”

“You will find every pious person possessing the following attributes. He is resolute though tender-hearted and kind. He is unwavering in his convictions and beliefs. He is thirsty for knowledge. He forgives those who harmed him, fully knowing that they have wronged him. Even when owning wealth his ways of life are based upon moderation. His prayers are models of humility and submissiveness to God. Even when starving he will maintain his self-respect. He will bear sufferings patiently.”

“He will resort only to honest means of living. Leading others towards truth and justice, will give him pleasure. He despises avarice and greed. Though he does good deeds all the time, yet he feels nervous of his short-comings. Every night, he thanks God for having passed one more day under His Grace and Mercy.

Every morning finds him starting the day with the prayers of the Lord. Of nights he is cautious that he may not carelessly waste those hours in comfort and ease. He starts his days happy with the thought the Lord has given him another day to do his duty.”

“If his mind wishes for something unholy and impious he refuses to obey its dictates. He desires to achieve eternal bliss. Worldly pleasures do not interest him. His wisdom is mixed with patience. His deeds reciprocate his words (he does what he says). Inordinate desires do not trouble him. He has few defects in him. He is courteous to others.

He possesses a contended mind. He eats little, he does not harm anybody. He is easy to be pleased. He is strong in his faith. His passions are dead. His temper is controlled.”

“People expect good out of him and consider themselves immune from his harm. Even if he is found among godless people his name will be written in the list of Godly persons. If he is in company of those who always remember God, naturally his name will not be included amongst those who forget Him. He forgives those who harm him. He helps those who have forsaken him and have refused to help him.

He is kind to those who have been cruel to him. He does good to those who do evil to him. He never indulges in loose talks. He has no vice in him, and his good qualities are outstanding, noticeable, and prominent, when facing dangers and disasters he is calm and undisturbed. In sufferings and calamities he is patient and hopeful. In prosperity he is thankful to God. He would not harm his worst enemy. He will never commit a sin even for the sake of his best friend.”

“Before anybody has to bear testimony to his fault he accepts and owns it. He never misappropriates anything entrusted to him. He never forgets what he has been told. He does not slander anybody. He does not harm his neighbors.

When misfortunes befall any person he does not blame him, neither is he happy at the losses of others. He neither goes astray from the right path nor follows a wrong one. His silence does not indicate,, his moroseness nor his laughter is loud and boisterous.

He bears persecution patiently and God punishes his oppressor. He is hard to himself and very lenient to others. He bears hardships in this life to attain eternal comfort and peace. He never wrongs a fellow being. If he avoids anybody it is to retain his piety and uprightness. If he forms contract with anybody it is on account of his kindness and clemency.

He does not avoid anybody because of his pride and vanity, and he does not mix with others with ulterior

motives of hypocrisy, pretense, and vile.”¹

“The narrator says that Hammam was hearing the sermon very attentively when Imam reached the above passage, Hammam fainted and died it during the faint. Seeing this Imam said: “By God, I was hesitating to all this to Hammam because of this very reason. Effective advises on minds ready to receive them often bring almost similar result”.

¹. Nahjul Balagha, sermon 193.

Supervision – the Most Important Factor for Self-restraint

One of the most important factors for self building and self-refinement is guarding, supervising, and paying attention towards the self. A wise person who is concerned about his well-being and prosperity would not remain ignorant about his own moral abjectness and psychological disease rather he would be continuously guarding and supervising his self and would be strictly controlling his habits, etiquettes, actions, deeds, and even thoughts. We would discuss this matter in details as follows:

1. Recordings of Deeds

The Qur’anic verses and traditions from the Holy Prophet (S) and his Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) indicate that all actions, deeds, sayings, even breathings, intentions, and thoughts of human beings are recorded in his letter of deeds, will remain filed for the Day of Resurrection, and each person will be judged on that Day strictly in accordance to his performance. For example: God-Almighty said in Holy Qur’an:

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصُدُّرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِّبِرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

“That day mankind will issue forth in scattered groups to be shown their deeds. And whoso dath good an atom's weight will see it then. And whoso doth ill on atoms weight will see it then. (99: 6-8)

And said:

وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيَلَّتَنَا مَا لَهُذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْسَاهَا ﴿٤﴾ وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا ﴿٥﴾ وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا

"And the book is placed, and thou seest the guilty fearful of that which is therein and they say: What kind of a book is this that leaveth not a small thing nor a great thing but hath counted it! And they find all that they did confronting them, and Lord wrongeth no one. (18: 49)

And said:

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمْدًا بَعِيدًا

"On the Day when every soul will find itself confronted with all that hath done of good and all that it hath done of evil (every soul) will long that there might be a mighty space of distance between it and that evil. (3:30)

And said:

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"He uttereth no word but there is with him on observer ready. (50: 18)

Therefore, if we believe that all our movements, actions, deeds, sayings, and even thoughts are being registered, recorded, and saved then how could we remain naive about the consequences arising therein?

2. Accounting on the Judgment Day

A lot of Qur'anic verses and traditions confirm that human beings will be accounted for their deeds accurately on the Day of Resurrection. All their deeds whether small a big shall be checked and even the most insignificant action shall not be neglected. e.g. God-Almighty said in the Holy Qur'an:

وَتَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا ﴿٤﴾ وَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَالَ حَبَّةً مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا ﴿٥﴾ وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ

"And we set a just balance for the Day of Resurrection so that no soul is wronged in aught. Though it be of the weight of a grain of mustard seed, We will bring it. And We suffice for reckoners. (21: 47)

And said:

أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ يُحَاسِبُكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ ﴿٦﴾ وَإِنْ تُبْدُوا مَا فِي

“And whether ye make known what is in your minds or hide it, God will bring you to account for it. (2:284)

And said:

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ ۝ فَمَنْ تَفَلَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا بِإِيمَانِنَا يَظْلِمُونَ

“The weighing on that day is the true (weighing). As for as those whose scale is heavy, they are the successful. And as for as those whose scale is light: Those are they who lose their souls because they disbelieved Our revelations. (7: 8-9)

The Holy Qur'an describes the Day of Resurrection as the Day of Auditing and God-Almighty as the one who audits promptly. According to lots of Qur'anic verses and traditions one of the most difficult stage, through which we all have to pass over on the Day of Resurrection –is the stage of auditing of deeds.

During our entire span of life we perform various deeds which are forgotten by us after a while, but they are registered and recorded in our letter of deeds by God-Almighty, in a manner that not even the smallest or insignificant action is removed from the letter of deeds.

All of them are registered and recorded right here in this world and will remain with the human being forever, although he might be ignorant of them completely in this world, but after death when his esoteric eyes will be opened, he will see them all intact written in a single file. Then he will realize that all the actions, deeds, beliefs, and thoughts written over there are indeed belong to him and henceforth shall never be separated from him. God-Almighty said in Holy Qur'an:

وَجَاءَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَعَهَا سَائِقٌ وَشَهِيدٌ لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِنْ هُنَّا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ

“And every soul cometh, along with it a driver and a witness, (and unto the evil-doer it is said): Thou wast in heedlessness of this. Now We have removed from thee thy covering, and piercing is thy sight this day. (50: 21:22)

The Holy Prophet (S) had said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: لا تزول قدمًا عبد يوم القيمة حتى يسأل عن أربع: عن عمره فيما افناه، وشبابه فيما ابلاه، وعن ماله من اين اكتسبه وفيما انفقه، وعن حبنا اهل البيت.

“On the Day of Judgment, each servant of God will not be able to move forward even a single step without being questioned about the following :

How he spent his life ? How he spent his youth ? Through what means he earned the money and how was it spent ? And about the friendship of us (Ahlul Bayt). ”[1](#)

In another narration the Prophet (S) said:

في الخبر النبوى: أنه يفتح للعبد يوم القيمة على كل يوم من أيام عمره أربعة وعشرون خزانة عدد ساعات الليل والنهر - فخزانة يجدها مملوءة نورا وسرورا فيناله عند مشاهدتها من الفرح والسرور ما لو وزع على أهل النار لادهشهم عن الاحساس بألم النار وهي الساعة التي أطاع فيها ربه.

ثم يفتح له خزانة أخرى فيراها مظلمة مفزعه فيناله عند مشاهدتها من الفزع والجزع ما لو قسم على أهل الجنة لنفس عليهم نعيمها ، وهي الساعة التي عصى فيها ربه. ثم يفتح له خزانة أخرى فيراها فارغة ليس فيها ما يسره ولا ما يسويه وهي الساعة التي نام فيها أو اشتغل فيها بشئ من مباحثات الدنيا فيناله من الغبن والأسف على فواتها حيث كان متمكنا من أن يملأها حسنات ما لا يوصف ومن هذا قوله تعالى، ذلك يوم التغابن.

“One of the Day of Judgment when a servant of God is being readied for accounting, for each day of his living in the world, twenty four treasure boxes (each one representing an hour) are brought in front of him. Then they open a treasure box which is full of light and joy, whereby seeing it the servant of God becomes so happy that if his happiness is distributed among all the dwellers of Hell, they will forget the pain and torture of Hell's fire –this treasure box represent the hour when he was busy in God's Worship.”

“After that another treasure box is opened which is frightening, dark and full of odor, whereby upon seeing it he becomes so frightened and sad that if his grief is distributed among the dwellers of Paradise, all of the blessings of Paradise will become unpleasant for them –this treasure box represents the hour when he was busy in sinning.”

“Then another treasure box is opened before him which is completely empty and neither contains deeds producing joy nor deeds producing sadness –this treasure box represents the period when he was either sleeping or was busy performing allowable religious acts (Mubah) (which may or may not have been performed).

But having seen this empty treasurer a servant of God feels sorry because he could have utilized this hour for doing righteous and good deeds. It is because of this reason that the Day of Judgment has been named by God-Almighty as the Day of Regret.”[2](#)

On the Day of Judgment the accounts of our deeds will be audited swiftly and most accurately determining the final destinies accordingly; all the past deeds shall be scrutinized; human limbs and bodily members, prophets, angels, and even earth will offer their testimonies; it will be real tough scrutiny indeed, and will determine one's eternal destination.

Because, of the anxiety of result the hearts palpitate and bodies tremble in fear –a fear so horrible and

frightening that mothers will ignore the breast feeding of their babies and pregnant women will loose their conception by miscarriages.

All are anxious and worried to learn about their ultimate consequences. Is the result of their scrutiny would be God's pleasure, securing a draft for freedom, being honorable among God's prophets and saints, eternal living in Paradise in the company of God's most favorite and descent servants? Or, would it be wrath of God, humiliation and disgrace before other creatures and eternal living in the Hell?

Therefore, from the above narrations it could be concluded that scrutiny of people's deed is not same and differs; for some of them it would be extremely complicated and lengthy while for others it would be swift and easy. It would be done at various stops several times and at each station some of the questions would be asked. The most horrible and difficult station is the stop for oppressors, where the question are asked regarding trampling of human rights, oppressions and tyrannies.

Here the accounts must be settled completely and everybody should pay his debt to the creditors. Unfortunately, over there, no one possesses ready cash to pay for his debt and therefore, he has no choice except to pay from the account of his righteous deeds. If, he had some in his account, he may exchange them for clearing his debt. If, he does not possess righteous deeds in his account then in that case, the creditor's sins are transferred into the balance sheet of his deeds.

Any way, it is a horrible and tough day indeed, and may God helps all of us. Of course, the length and toughness of scrutiny is not same for all and differ in accordance to the magnitude of good and evil deeds, but for the pious and God's descent servants it would be extremely swift and easier. In replying to a question regarding the length of Day of Judgment the Holy Prophet (S) said:

قال رسول الله صلى عليه وآله: لما سُئل عن طول ذلك اليوم فقال: والذى نفسي بيده انه ليخفى على المؤمن حتى يكون اهون عليه من الصلة المكتوبة يصلبها في الدنيا

*"By God! For believers it would be so swift and easy –even easier than recital of an obligatory prayer."*³

3. Self-scrutiny Before the Judgment Day

Someone who believes in Day of Judgment, scrutiny of deeds, rewards and punishment, knows that all the deeds are registered and recorded, and verdict would be issued either good and bad; than how could such a person would remain naive about his deeds, actions, moral etiquettes, and thoughts? Wouldn't he really care about what has been done by him during the days, months, years, and entire span of his life? And what provisions have been forwarded by him for the Hereafter?

One of the precondition of belief is that it demands from believers to scrutinize their accounts of deeds in this same world, must ponder profoundly about what they have done in the past, and what is being done

right now? Acting in a manner like a wise businessman, who checks his accounts each day and each month, in order to determine his profits and losses. The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) had said:

قال على عليه السلام: حاسبوا انفسكم قبل ان تحاسبوا ووازنها قبل ان توازنوا.

*“Before being audited on the Judgment Day better self-scrutinize your deeds in this same world.”*⁴

Also said:

قال على عليه السلام: من حاسب نفسه ربح.

*“Whoever scrutinizes the account of his self in this world would earn profit.”*⁵

Imam al-Naqi (a.s.) ⁶said:

عن أبي الحسن الماضي عليه السلام قال: ليس منا من لم يحاسب نفسه في كل يوم فان عمل حسنا استزاد الله وان عمل سيئا استغفر الله منه وتاب اليه.

*“Whoever does not scrutinize his actions daily does not belong to us; then if, he found that he has performed some righteous deeds, he should request God-Almighty to increase His Grace, and in case if he has done an evil act, he should seek pardon from God-Almighty by offering repentance.”*⁷

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

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: من حاسب نفسه ربح ومن غفل عنه خسر ومن خاف امن ومن اعتبر ابصر ومن ابصر فهم ومن فهم علم.

*“Whoever scrutinize the account of his self will earn a profit and whoever will be negligent will suffer a loss, whoever is fearful in this world will be safe in the Hereafter, whoever will pay heed to counseling will see the realities; whoever is able to see the realities would understand; and whoever understands would become wise and intelligent.”*⁸

The Holy Prophet (S) said to Abu Dharr:

في وصية النبي انه قال: يا ابا ذر! حاسب نفسك قبل ان تحاسب، فانه اهو لحسابك غذا وزن نفسك قبل ان توزن وتجهز للعرض الاكبر يوم لا تخفي على الله خافية (الى ان قال): يا ابا ذر! لا يكون الرجل من المتقين حتى يحاسب نفسه اشد من محاسبة الشريك شريكه فيعلم من اين مطعمه ومن اين مشربه ومن اين ملبيسه؟ امن حلال او حرام؟

يَا أَبَا ذِرَّة! مَنْ لَمْ يَبَالْ مِنْ أَيْنِ اكْتَسَبَ الْمَالَ لَمْ يَبَالْ اللَّهُ مِنْ أَيْنِ ادْخَلَهُ النَّارَ.

“Oh Abu Dharr! Before they scrutinize your account of deeds on the Judgment Day, do your own self-auditing in this world because today's review would be lot more easier than tomorrow's auditing on the Judgment Day, try to attain self-purification in this world instead of his being cleaned on Judgment Day –The Day when the deeds will be presented to God-Almighty and even the smallest deeds will not be hidden from him. Then the Holy Prophet (S) continued:

“O Abu Dharr! One never acquires piety unless until he self-scrutinize his own deeds –a scrutiny much more severe than the auditing of accounts between two business associates. A man must ponder seriously as through what means has he acquired his means of living ? Were it earned through lawful means or through forbidden means ?

“O Abu Dharr! Whoever does not respect the Divine limitations for earning a living, God-Almighty too would not have slight hesitation in dispatching him inside the Hell's fire through either passage.”⁹

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

كان على بن الحسين عليه السلام يقول: ابن آدم! إنك لا تزال بخير ما كان لك واعظ من نفسك وما كانت المحاسبة من همك وما كان الخوف لك شعاراً والحزن لك دثاراً ابن آدم إنك ميت ومبعوث وموقوف بين يدي الله عزوجل فأعد جواباً.

“O son of Adam! You will be continuously accompanied by goodness and blessing so far as you possess a preacher in your heart, practice self-scrutiny for your deeds and fear God-Almighty.”

“O son of Adam! verily you will die, will be raised on the Resurrection-Day, and your deeds will be judged in accordance with Divine-Justice. Therefore, get yourself readied for getting scrutinized for your deeds on the Judgment Day.”¹⁰

A man is like an investor in this world, his limited capital –life span –consists of these very hours, days, weeks, months, and years. This most precious capital i.e. one's life span, either willingly or unwillingly gets consumed and eventually one approaches death. The youth turns into old age, strength gives up to weakness and sound health changes into sick- ness.

If, against this spending of capital one has performed righteous deeds and forwarded some provisions for Hereafter, then in that case he has not suffered a loss, because he had secured for himself a happy and prosperous future.

But if he wasted his precious capital consisting his life, youth, strength and physical fitness, and against all this spending no righteous deed was deposited for his Hereafter; instead, with moral abjectness, and indulgence into sins and transgressions, made his heart dark and contaminated, then he has inflicted

upon himself –the most severe damage and loss, which could never be compensated. God-Almighty said in the Holy Qur'an:

وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبَرِ

"By the declining day; lo! Man is a state of loss, save those who believe and do good works, and exhort one another to truth, exhort one another to endurance (103: 1-3)

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

قال على عليه السلام: ان العاقل من نظر في يومه لغده وسعى في فكاك نفسه وعمل لما لا بد له ولا محيس عنه.

"A wise man is the one who is all anxious today about his tomorrow –the Resurrection Day, must strive for achieving freedom of self; Because, of the realities of death and Resurrection Day, he has no choice except to perform righteous deeds." [11](#)

Also said:

قال على عليه السلام: من حاسب نفسه وقف على عيوبه واحاط بذنبه فاستقال الذنوب واصلاح العيوب

"Whoever scrutinizes his deeds will discover his faults and sins. Then, he will offer repentance for his sins and will strive for correcting his faults" [12](#)

4. How to Scrutinize?

Supervision and management of self is not an easy task and requires determination, maturity, sincerity, efforts, endeavors, and specific program. Will the imperious–self offer surrender so easily? Will he present himself for cross-examination and verdict? Will he agree to pay his dues so easily? The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: من لم يس نفسه اضعها

"Whoever has not programmed his self for performance of righteous deeds has indeed wasted him." [13](#)

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: من اغتر بنفسه سلمته إلى المعاطب

*“Whoever is not careful of self’s frauds and cheating will be destroyed (by self)”*¹⁴

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: من كان له من نفسه يقظة كان عليه من الله حفظة.

*“Whoever possesses self–awakening and self–enlightenment, God–Almighty will assign Divine angels for his guidance and protection.”*¹⁵

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: املکوا انفسکم بذوام جهادها.

*“Subdue your self through continuous struggle and resistance, and firmly take over his control.”*¹⁶

The self–accounting must be accomplished in three steps in order to acquire this habit gradually:

4.1. Making Commitments (Mosharateh)

The self–accounting should be started as follows:

As the early hour of the day before starting daily routine activities some time must be allocated for this purpose. For example, after offering morning prayer one may sit alone in an isolated place and should address to his self in the following manner:

Right now, I am alive but don't know how long it may last, may be for next one hour or may be little bit more. The time of life already spent has all been wasted, and the remaining time left might be counted as capital still at my disposal. For each hour spent out of this remaining life, I could arrange some provisions for the Hereafter. If right now the Israel –the angel of death would have arrived for receiving my soul I would have desired for living one more day or even one extra hour.

Oh helpless poor self! Just imagine that you are in such a condition and your desire for this living a little longer has been granted and you have been allowed to return to this world. Oh self! Be kind to me as well as to yourself and don't waste these precious hours for indulgence into nonsense amusements. Don't be negligent now, otherwise you will be ashamed tomorrow on the Judgment Day –the Day when being regretful will not be of any help.

Oh self! For each hour spent during this life God–Almighty has created a treasure box in which good and evil deeds will be deposited, to be opened on the Judgment Day. Oh self! Try to fill this treasure with righteous deeds. Be careful not to fill this treasure with sins and transgressions.

Likewise, all the parts of the body should be addressed individually to comment themselves not to commit sins. For example, the tongue should be asked that lying, backbiting, tell-bearing, fault finding, abusing, babbling, insulting, self-praising, disputing, and false testimony are moral abjectness and divinely forbidden, which destroy eternal life of human beings.

Therefore, I will not allow it to indulge in these acts. Oh tongue! Be kind to me and yourself and don't commit immoral acts because everything said will be taped and deposited into the treasure box containing the deeds and I will be accountable on the Day of Judgment.

In this manner the tongue should be required to commit itself not to indulge into sinning. After that the righteous deeds which could be performed by it should be reminded and their performance should be made obligatory during each day. For example, it could be said to the tongue: you may recite such and such invocation (*dhikr*), such and such supplication, may fill up the treasure box of deeds with joy and illumination and may receive a good result in the Hereafter.

Therefore, don't be negligent otherwise you will feel terribly sorry later on. Similarly, all other parts of the body should be required to commit themselves to perform only righteous deeds and to strictly guard them against sins and transgressions.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) narrated a tradition from his father as follows:

عن الصادق عليه السلام قال: الليل إذا أقبل نادى مناد بصوت يسمعه الخلائق إلا الثقلين يا ابن آدم اني خلق جديـد ، إـنـي عـلـى مـا فـي شـهـيد فـخـذ مـنـي لـو طـلـعـت الشـمـس لـم أـرـجـع إـلـى الدـنـيـا وـلـم تـزـدـد فـيـ مـن حـسـنـة وـلـم تـسـتـعـتـبـ فـيـ مـن سـيـئـة وـكـذـلـك يـقـول النـهـار إـذـا أـدـبـرـ اللـيـلـ

"When night approaches it makes an announcement which is heard by all the creation except human being and jins as follows:

Oh sons of Adams! I am a new creation and will testify about all the, deeds performed during my tenure. Utilize my existence to the best of your advantage, because, after the sun-rise you will never see me again. After that you would not be able to increase your righteous deeds and offer repentance for your sins and transgressions. After the night departs each coming day repeats the same announcement." [17](#)

It is quite possible that Satan and imperious-self may tell us: You cannot live a life with such program. Is it possible to live a life with such limitations and restrictions? How could you allocate a certain hour for auditing program every day? With these whispers the Satan and imperious-self want to deceive, thus, preventing us from taking the important decision. We must offer resistance against these Satanic plots and must neutralize them by telling them:

This program is absolutely feasible and does not have any contradiction with life's daily routine activities, and since it is necessary for attaining self-refinement and self-purification as well as for accomplishing

the eternal salvation, I must undertake this program. It is not so difficult either, and once you have decided firmly it would become easier. Even if it is a little bit difficult in the beginning, would become easier gradually.

4.2. Supervision and Control (Moraqebat)

After passing through the stage of making commitments we enter into the stage of contact execution. At this stage all the self's actions should strictly be monitored all along the day to be sure that they are being performed in accordance to commitments made earlier. A human being should remain awake in all situations and should strictly guard his actions.

He should remind himself continuously: that God-Almighty watches all our actions, and must remember the commitments made earlier. Even, a slight negligence might provide opportunity for Satan and imperious-self to make their entry and, thus, disrupting the entire program.

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

قال عليه السلام: إن الحازم من شغل نفسه بجهاد نفسه فأصلحها و حبسها عن أهويتها و لذاتها فملكها و إن للعاقل بنفسه عن الدنيا و ما فيها و أهلها شغلا

“A wise man offers continuous resistance against the self, endeavors for self’s correction, preventing him following passions and in this manner makes him subdued. A wise man with absolute domination over the self will dejected from the world and its allurements.”[18](#)

And said:

قال عليه السلام: من كان له من نفسه زاجر كان عليه من الله حافظ.

“Whoever possesses a guard to reprimand, with in his self; God-Almighty, will appoint for him Divine Protectors.”[19](#)

And said:

قال عليه السلام: الثقة بالنفس من أوثق فرص الشيطان.

“Being optimistic and confident about self provides the best opportunities for Satan to deceive us.”[20](#)

A cautious and aware human being is continuously occupied in God is Remembrance and sees him in His presence. He does not perform any task hastily without profound thinking and appraising all the consequences. If he commits a sin or transgression, immediately reminds himself about God-Almighty

and Judgment Day and refrains from its continuation.

Does not forget his earlier commitments and in this manner keeps the self continuously subdued, preventing him from indulgence into evil and obscene deeds. This program is one of the best means for attaining self-refinement and purification.

In addition to that a cautious believer thinks continuously about obligatory and recommended deeds, fulfillment of duties, righteous deeds, and charity through out the day; try his best to offer daily prayer on preferred time with humility, devotion, and presence of mind, offering in a manner as though this would be the last prayer of his life; keeps himself occupied with remembrance of God-Almighty in all situations and involvement.

Does not spent his free time in nonsense amusements, instead utilize it to the maximum advantages of affairs related to Hereafter; knows the importance and preciousness of time and endeavors seriously for utilization of every available opportunity for achieving self-perfection; strives to perform recommended deeds (*Mustahabbat*) as much as his capacity permits.

How good it is that a believer should try to become habitual of performing at least some of the recommended deeds. Remembrance of God-Almighty and recital of invocation (*dhikr*) is one such recommended deed which could be done easily in all circumstances.

Also, it is important that a believer with sincerity and pure intention of God's Nearness (*Qurbat*), should direct all his daily activities for worship, spiritual migration and ascend towards God is Countenance. Even, working, eating, drinking, sleeping, marrying, and all other lawful desired acts through sincerity and pure intention could be made as part of worshipping.

Work and business if done with the intention of earning a lawful genuine living and serving the people would became an act of worship. Similarly, eating, drinking and resting if are preliminaries for living and being a devoted servant of God are considered as worship. That is the way God's pure servant used to live and they still live in this manner.

4.3. Accounting of Deeds

The third stage is the accounting of deeds performed every day. It is necessary that a person should fixed a certain hour to scrutinize his deeds and the most suitable time would be the hour when he has finished all his daily activities. At this time he should sit alone in a corner and should think what he has done during this stay. He should begin from the very first hour till the last hour of the day checking every minor activity accurately.

If he finds that he has performed a righteous deeds and worship at that time he should thank God-Almighty for bestowing his Divine grace and should decide for its continuation. But if finds that he has committed a sin or transgression he must show his wrath against the self addressing him:

Oh you wretched self! Look what have you done? You destroyed my letter of deed and made it totally dark. What will be your reply to God-Almighty on the Day of Judgment? What are you going to do with the painful punishment of Hell? God-Almighty bestowed upon you life, health, and resources in order to enable you to collect provisions for Hereafter, instead you blackened your letter of deeds with sins. Why don't you consider the probability of death approaching you at this very moment? In that case, what are you going to do? Oh shameless self!

How come you are not ashamed from God-Almighty? Oh you liar and wretched hypocrite! You claim to be a believer in the existence of God-Almighty and Hereafter then how come your actions reflect contradictions with your belief?

Then, he should repent sincerely and should decide firmly never to indulge into sins and transgressions as well as to compensate for his past omissions. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على (ع) : من وبح نفسه على العيوب ارتدعت من كثرة الذنوب.

*"Whoever would reprimand self for his faults and sins- would be able to restrain himself from indulgence into sins."*²¹

If he realizes that the self is showing rebellious tendencies and is not ready for repentance and abstinence from sinning, then he must take a firm stand against the imperious-self through offering resistance. He may threaten the self that serious consequences will arise in case he continued to show disobedience.

For example, if the self has consumed the forbidden (*haram*) an unlawful food, or has committed other sins then to punish him will donate some money for charity for God's pleasure, will do fasting few days, temporarily will refrain himself from eating delicious foods or cold water, or other food which is self's favorite, or will stay out side under the burning sun for a certain period.

Any way, one should not show weakness and negligence against the self or otherwise he will take the upper hand eventually throwing a human being into the darkest and deepest valleys of deviations and misfortune. But if you acted strongly offering stiff resistance against him, he will become subdued.

If he finds that at a particular hour he has neither performed any righteous deed nor has committed any sin even in that case he should show his anger and reprimand the self that how come this particular hour which was the precious capital of the life has been wasted for nothing? You could have performed righteous deeds in this period and could have deposited it in the accounts of your deeds for the Hereafter. Oh you wretched looser!

Why have you wasted this valuable precious opportunity? You will certainly feel sorry for your this negligence on the Day of Judgment –a Day when regret will not be of any use. In this manner, acting like

a strict business associate all the daily transactions of the self should be scrutinized strictly. Of course, it would be better if the result of this scrutiny could be recorded in a notebook.

Anyway, the matter of supervision and scrutiny for attaining self-purification and refinement is an important, useful thing that is absolutely necessary; whoever is serious, and who is serious and aspires for his salvation and prosperity, should pay special attention to it.

Although, in the beginning it might appear as a difficult task but with firm determination and perseverance it would become easy and imperious-self would become subdued surrendering completely to your supervision and domination. The Holy Prophet (S) once asked his companions:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: الا ابنتهكم باكيس الكيسين واحمق الحمق؟ قالوا: بلى يا رسول الله! قال: اكيس الكيسين من حاسب نفسه ، و عمل لما بعد الموت . و احمق الحمقاء من اتبع نفسه هواه ، و تمنى على الله الامانى. فقال رجل: يا رسول الله وكيف يحاسب الرجل نفسه؟ قال: إذا أصبح ثم أمسى رجع إلى نفسه فقال: يا نفس! إن هذا يوم مضى عليك لا يعود إليك أبدا والله يسألك عنه فيما أفيته، فما الذي عملت فيه؟ أذكرت الله أم حمدته؟ أقضيت حق اخ مؤمن؟ أنفست عنه كربة؟

أحفظتني بظاهر الغيب في أهله وولده؛ أحفظتني بعد الموت في مخالفيه؛ أكفت عن غيبة أخ مؤمن بفضل جاهك؟ أأعنت مسلماً؟ ما الذي صنعت فيهفان ذكر أنه جرى منه خير، حمد الله عز وجل وكبره على توفيقه. وإن ذكر معصية أو تقصيرها يستغفر الله وعزم على ترك معاودته، ومحا ذلك عن نفسه بتجديد الصلاة على محمد وآله الطيبين وعرض بيعة أمير المؤمنين على نفسه وقبولها وإعاد الله لعن شائئه وأعدائه ودافعيه عن حقوقه. فإذا فعل ذلك قال الله: لست أناقشك في شيء من الذنوب مع موالاتك أوليائي، ومعاداتك أعدائي.

"Shouldn't I inform you about the most intelligent person among the intelligent and the most stupid one among the stupid?"

"They replied: 'Oh Prophet of God please tell us.'

'The most intelligent person is the one who is audits his self's account and performs righteous deeds for his life after death, and the most stupid person is the one who is a prisoner of self's whims and passions and keeps himself amused with long term desires! Replied the Holy Prophet (S).

"He was asked: 'Oh Prophet of God! How the account of self should be audited ? ' The Prophet (S) replied:

'When the day has finished entering into night the! communicate with your self as follows:

"Oh self! This day too is passed and will never return, God-Almighty is going to ask you about it as how did you spend it and what deeds were performed? Did you remember and praise him? Did you discharge your due obligations as regards to the rights of a brother believer?

Did you remove the sorrow from his heart ? Did you take care about his children and family in his absence ? Did you pay his due share to his offspring after his death ? Did you help a fellow Muslim ? What have you done during this day ?

“Therefore, remind it to your self one by one whatever you have done, and if you find that you have done some righteous deed then thanks God-Almighty for bestowing His grace, but if you find that you have committed a sin then immediately offer repentance and decide firmly never to commit any sin again. Through recital of salutation. (Salawat) upon the Holy Prophet (S) and his Holy Progeny (a.s.) purify your self from impurities and contamination.

“Take the oath of allegiance for the friendship of the Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) and should imprecate his enemies: If one acted in this manner God-Almighty would tell him: ‘I am not going to have any controversy with you at the time of auditing your account of your deeds on the Day of Judgment, because, you were friend with my favorite saints and showed enmity towards their enemies.”²²

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

عن الكاظم عليه السلام قال: ليس منا من لم يحاسب نفسه في كل يوم فان عمل خسنا استزد الله وان عمل سيرا استغفر الله وتاب اليه.

“Whosoever does not scrutinize the account of the self does not belong to us; thus, if he has done some good deeds should request God-Almighty for increasing His Favor and if he has sinned should offer repentance.”²³

The Holy Prophet (S) said to Abu Dharr:

في وصية أبي ذر قال النبي صلى الله عليه وآله: على العاقل أن يكون له ساعات: ساعة ينادي فيها ربه وساعة يحاسب فيها نفسه وساعة يتذكر فيما صنع الله عز وجل اليه.

“A wise person should distribute his hours as follows: One hour should be assigned for being occupied in Prayers, supplications, and hymns with God-Almighty. One hour should be allocated for auditing the account of self’s deeds. And one hour should be reserved for pondering the Divine Blessings bestowed upon him.”²⁴

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

قال علي عليه السلام: جاسبو انفسكم باعلامها وطالبوها بادا المفروض عليها والأخذ من فنائها لبقائها وتزودوا وتأهبو قبل ان تبعثوا.

"Let the self be accountable for his deeds, should be demanded to discharge his due obligations by utilizing this transient world properly. You should collect provisions for the Hereafter and make yourself readied for that journey before being forced to be transferred."[25](#)

Also, said:

قال على عليه السلام: ما احق الانسان ان يكون له ساعة لا يشغل عنها شاغل يحاسب فيها نفسه فينظر فيما اكتسب بها وعليها في ليلها ونهارها.

"How much is it necessary for a person to allocate a free time for himself to scrutinize the account of his deeds, and see what kind of good and useful, or bad and harmful deeds, have been performed by him during the past twenty four hours."[26](#)

Also said:

قال على عليه السلام: جاهد نفسك وحاسبها محاسبة الشريك شريكه وطالبها بحقوق الله مطالبة الخصم خصم
فان اسعد الناس من انتدب خامسة نفسه

عن أبي عبدالله (ص) قال: فحاسبوا انفسكم قبل ان تحاسبوا فان فى القيامة خمسين موقفا كل موقف مقاً ألف ستة
ثم تلا هذه الاية فى يوم كان مقداره خمسين الف سنة

"Wage a continuous struggle against the self; like a strict business associate check precisely the account of his deeds, and like a creditor force him for payment of God's dues, because, the most prosperous person is the one who does his own self-scrutiny."[27](#)

"Do your own self-auditing for the account of deeds in this world before being forced to be audited on the Judgment Day, because over there, this would be done over fifty stops –each stops being one thousand years long." Then he recited the following verse:

"The day whose length is equivalent to fifty thousands years. (70: 4)[28](#)

In the end this point should be emphasized that at the time of self-scrutiny a person should not be optimistic and trust his self because the deceitful imperious-self with hundreds of deceipts and tricks manifests evils as good and visa versa; does not allow a person to identify his duties and their fulfillments; justifies refrainment from worshipping and encourages indulgence into sins and transgressions. He makes you forget your sins or regard them as minor omissions and presenting minor acts of worships as great, thus, making you proud about it.

He cleans the thoughts of death and Resurrection Day from the memory of your mind, encourages the

hopes and long-term desires; and presents self-scrutiny something as difficult, impracticable, and even unnecessary. Therefore, because of these considerations a person should be pessimistic while auditing the account of his deeds, and should scrutinize strictly with precision without paying least attention to Satanic justifications and interpretations.

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

قال على عليه السلام: وان للذكر لاهلا اخذوه من الدنيا بدلًا فلم تشغلهم تجارة ولابيع عنه يقطعون به ايام الحياة
ويهتفون بالزواجر عن محارم الله في اسماع الغافلين، ويامرون به، وينهون عن المنكر ويتناهون عنه. فكانما
قطعوا الدنيا الى الاخرة وهم فيها، فشاهدوا ما وراء ذلك فكأنما اطلعوا عيوب اهل البرزغ في طول الاقامة فيه
وحققت القيامة عليهم عداتها فكشفوا غطاء ذلك لاهل الدنيا حتى كأنهم يرون مالا يرى الناس ويسمعون فلو مثاثهم
لعلك في مقاومتهم المحمودة ومجالسهم المشهودة وقد نشروا دواوين اعمالهم وفرغوا لمحاسبة انفسهم على كل
صغريرة وكبيرة امرؤا بها فقصروا عنها ففطروا فيها وحملوا ثقل اوزارهم ظهورهم فظعنوا عن الاستقلال بها
فنشجوا نشيجا ونحبوا نحيبا يعجون الى ربهم من مقام ندم واعتراف، لرأيت اعلام هدى ومصابيح دجى، قد حفت
بهم الملائكة وتنزلت عليهم السكينة وفتحت لهم ابواب السماء واعدت لهم مقاعد الكرامات.

"There are some people devoted to the remembrance (of God), who have adopted it, in place of worldly matters so that commerce or trade does not turn them away from it. They pass their life in it. They speak into the ears of neglectful persons warning against matters held unlawful by God, they order them to practice justice and themselves keep practicing it, and they refrain them from the unlawful and themselves refrain from it."

"It is as though they have finished the journey of this world towards the Next World and have beheld what lies beyond it. Consequently, they have become acquainted with all that befell them in the interstice during their long stay therein, and the Day of Judgment fulfills its promises for them. Therefore, they removed the curtain from these things for the people of the world, till it was as though they were seeing what people did not see and were hearing what people did not hear."

"If you picture them in your mind in their admirable positions and well-known sittings, when they have opened the records of their actions and are prepared to render an account of themselves in respect of the small as well as the big things they were ordered to do but they failed to do, or were ordered to refrain from but they indulged therein."

"They realized the weight of their burden (of bad acts) on their backs, and they felt too weak to bear them, then they wept bitterly and spoke to each other while still crying and bewailing to God in repentance and acknowledgment (of their shortcomings).

You would find them to be emblems of guidance and lamps in darkness, angels would be surrounding them, peace would be descending upon them, the doors of the sky would be opened for them and positions of honor would be assigned to them in the place of which God had informed them. Therefore,

He has appreciated their actions and praised their position. ["29](#)

- [1.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 7, p-258.
- [2.](#) Bihar al-Anwar vol. 7 p-262.
- [3.](#) Majma al-Dawaид, vol. 1, p-337.
- [4.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-385.
- [5.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-618.
- [6.](#) Imam al-Naqi (a.s.): The Tenth Imam 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Naqi (a.s.) son of Imam Muhammad al-Ta'i was born on Friday 2nd Rajab 212 A.H. in Suryah in the vicinity of Medina. He was only six years old when his father Imam al-Ta'i was poisoned by Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'tasim.

The Holy Imam devoted himself to the sacred mission of preaching in Medina and did, thus, earn the faith of people as well as their allegiance and recognition of his great knowledge and attributes. This reputation of the Imam evoked the jealousy and malice of Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil against him.

Al-Mutawakkil imprisoned Imam under his strict vigilance for a number of years during which he was subjected to severe tortures. But even in this miserable imprisonment, the Imam kept devoting himself at all times to worship God-Almighty. The watchman of the prison used to comment that Imam al-Naqi seemed to be an angel in human grab.

He was poisoned by Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'azz billah on 26 Jumada'th-thaniyah 254 AH. The Imam was only forty two years old at the time of his martyrdom. The period of his Imamah was thirty five years. He was buried in Samarra in Iraq.

- [7.](#) Wasail al-Shi'a, vol. 11, p-377.
- [8.](#) Wasail al-Shi'a, vol. 11 p-379.
- [9.](#) Wasail al-Shi'a, vol. 11, p-379.
- [10.](#) Wasail al-Shi'a, vol. 1, p-378.
- [11.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-238.
- [12.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-696.
- [13.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-640.
- [14.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-685.
- [15.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-679.
- [16.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-131.
- [17.](#) Wasail al-Shi'a, vol. 11, p-380.
- [18.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-237
- [19.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-698.
- [20.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-54
- [21.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-696.
- [22.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-69.
- [23.](#) al Kafi, vol. 1, p-453.
- [24.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-64.
- [25.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-385.
- [26.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-753.
- [27.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-371.
- [28.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-64.
- [29.](#) Nahjul Balagha, sermon 222.

Repentance and Self-cleansing

Prevention and refraining from sins is the best way for attaining self-refinement. A person who has never been contaminated by Sins and possesses his original purity and righteousness certainly is far superior than a sinner who has repented after committing a sin.

The person who has not yet tasted the pleasure of sin and is not used to it may refrain himself from sinning much more easier as compared to the one who has been contaminated by sins and now wants to refrain from them. The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: ترك الذنب اهون من طلب التوبه.

*“Refraining from sin is far easier than repenting after sinning.”*¹

But if a person becomes contaminated after sinning, he should not be disappointed from God's blessings because, the path of spiritual migration, self refinement, and ascent towards God-Almighty remains forever open and is never closed.

The Most Merciful and the Most Benevolent God-Almighty has kept the path of repentance always open for the sinners and have especially asked them to return towards Him after cleaning and purifying the self's tablet from the impurities and contamination of sins through the water of repentance. God-Almighty said in the Holy Qur'an:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Say: O My slaves who have been prodigal to their own hurt. Despair not of the Mercy of God, who forgiveth all sins. Lo! He is the forgiving the Merciful. (39:53)

And said:

وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ إِنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوءًا بِجَهَاهَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“And when those who believe in our revelations come unto thee say: Peace be unto you! Your Lord hath prescribed for Himself Mercy, that, those whoso of you doth evil and repenteth afterward thereof and doeth right, (for him) Lo ! God is forgiving, Merciful. (6:54)

1. The Need for Repentance

I don't imagine that there exists a thing which is more essential for a sinner than the repentance. The one who believes in God, Prophet, Resurrection, Rewards and Punishment, Accounting of Deeds, Paradise, and Hell does not contradict the urgency and necessity of repentance. Then, how come are, we negligent from repentance, inspite of being knowledgeable about the self and the sins committed by him?

Don't we believe in the existence of Resurrection, Accounting of Deeds and Hell's punishments? Or, Do we contradict the God's promise that He will fill the Hell with sinners? Through sinning the human self becomes dark, black, and contaminated, even there is possibility of loosing the human face and turning into a brute animal.

Then how could we still expect finding the path leading towards Gods-Almighty and sitting in the company of His favorite saints in Paradise with such contaminated, darkened, and polluted self? Because, of indulgence into sins the straight path of human exaltedness and ascension towards God-Almighty has been lost, and now we are wandering into the darkest valleys of ignorance and deviations.

We have parted from God-Almighty and have become close to Satan. Inspite of all that we are still expecting to receive eternal salvation in the Next World and would be blessed with Divine bounties in the Paradise! What a wishful and immature thinking indeed?

Therefore, for a sinner who is concerned about his prosperity and salvation there is no choice left except to repent and return towards God-Almighty. This is one of the great blessing of God-Almighty that the path of repentance has been left opened for his servants. A person who has been poisoned does not allow the least delay in his being taken to the hospital for treatment, because, he knows that any negligence would result in his quick demise.

Similarly, sins for human-self are far more fatal than the most deadly poison for human body. If, a poison could threaten the worldly life of a person quickly, sinning would inflict an eternal doom upon the self and would result in the destruction of his eternal life.

If poisoning results in cutting off a person's connection with the transient world instantaneously, likewise sinning makes a person far removed from God-Almighty depriving him from the God's Countenance and Nearness. Therefore, repentance and return to God-Almighty for us is something more urgent and essential than any thing else, because, our eternal prosperity and salvation depends upon it. God-Almighty said in the Holy Qur'an:

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

"And turn unto God-Almighty together, O believers in order that you may succeed. (24: 31)

And said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَى رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

"Oh ye who believe! Turn unto God-Almighty in sincere repentance! It may be that your Lord will remit from your evil deeds and bring you into Gardens underneath which rivers flow. (66:8)

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

قال رسول الله (ص): لكل دا دوا ودوا الذنوب الاستغفار.

*"There is a medicine for each pain and the medicine for sins is repentance."*²

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

قال الصادق عليه السلام: تأخير التوبة اغترار، وطول التسويف حيرة الاعتلال على الله هلكة والاصرار على الذنوب أمن لمكر الله ولا يامن مكر الله على القوم الخاسرون.

*"Delaying repentance is a sort of arrogance and deceit; continuation of delay results in confusion and astonishment; excuses in front of God-Almighty is total destruction and persistence in sinning is due to feeling secure against Divine punishment and except the people who are losers no one else feels secure against it."*³

In the light of above it would better that we should take an in-depth look within our lives; should remember all our past sins and transgressions; should ponder about the ultimate consequences; should think about the accounting of our deeds and being ashamed before God-Almighty and being insulted in front of angels and mankind; we must momentary manifest before our sight the horrible torture of Hell and deprivation from the God's Countenance.

This should create a transformation and internal revolution in our lives encouraging us to repent immediately and should return towards God-Almighty. All the past sins and transgressions should be washed with the pure life-giving refreshing water of repentance.

All the self's impurities and contamination must be set aside and forgotten; a firm decision should be made, to refrain from sins to strive for collection of provisions for Hereafter, and start marching upon the path of spiritual ascent towards God-Almighty.

But would Satan leave us alone so easily? Would he ever permit us to repent and return towards God-Almighty? The same Satan who reduced us to indulge into sinning would also prevent us from repentance; would manifest sinning something as minor offense and insignificant; would wipe them out thoroughly from” our mental memory in a manner as though they never happened at all; would completely set aside thoughts related to death, account of deeds and punishments from our mind, keeping us amused in worldly allurements.

So that we never think about the repentance until death approaches suddenly and, thus, being forced to leave this world with a self, contaminated with sins. Woe upon us, our negligence, and misfortune! !

2. Acceptance of Repentance

If repentance is indeed offered correctly it would receive Divine acceptance certainly which is one of the most unique favor of the Most-Compassionate and Most-Merciful Lord. Because, He has not created his servants for Hell and its tortures, rather has created us for Paradise and its eternal prosperity.

Divine Messengers were assigned to guide the mankind towards the path of salvation and to invite the sinners towards repentance and return to God-Almighty. The door of repentance and return always remains opened for everyone inviting them to enter into it.

Divine messengers and saints throughout the human history continuously motivated the mankind towards repentance. The Most Compassionate and the Most-Merciful Lord in plenty of Qur’anic verses invites the sinners to return to Him and had promised them to accept their repentance and His promises are not lies.

The Holy Prophet (S) and Infallible Imams (a.s.) through hundreds of traditions have invited the mankind for repentance and return towards God-Almighty, thus, making them hopeful of Divine blessings. Following are few examples:

God-Almighty said in Holy Qur'an:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبِلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنِ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

“And He it is who accepteth repentance from His bondsmen, and pardoneth the evil deeds and knoweth what ye do. (42:25)

And said:

وَإِنِّي لِغَفَارٌ لِمَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى

"And lo! Verily I am forgiving towards him who repenteth and believeth and doth good, and afterward walketh aright. (20:82)

And said:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ نَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَن يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

"And those who, when they do an evil thing or wrong themselves, remember God-Almighty and implies forgiveness for their sins –who forgiventh sins save God-Almighty only? And will not knowingly repeat (the wrong) they did. (3: 135)

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said:

قال ابو جعفر عليه السلام: التائب من الذنب كمن لا ذنب له والمقيم على الذنب وهو مستغفر منه كالمستهز

"After repenting a person becomes like some one who has never sinned, and the one who is continuing sinning while reciting the phrase of repentance upon his tongue is like someone who ridicules himself." [4](#)

There are plenty of verses and traditions dealing with this matter and therefore, one should not have any reservation regarding the acceptance of repentance. Not only God-Almighty accepts repentance from a sinner but also loves him for undertaking this bold initiative. God-Almighty said in the Holy Qur'an:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

"Truly God-Almighty loveth, those who turn unto him, and loveth those who have a care of cleanliness. (2:222)

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

قال ابو جعفر عليه السلام: ان الله اشد فرحا بتنورة عبده من رجل اضل رحلته وزاده في ليلة ظلماء فوجدها فالله اشد فرحا بتنورة عبده من ذلك الرجل براحته حين وجدها.

"The happiness of God-Almighty from seeing a sinner repenting is much more than the joy of a lone traveler who finds his missing animal together with the provisions of journey in a dark night." [5](#)

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

قال ابو عبدالله (ع): اذا تاب العبد توبة نصوحا احبه الله فستر عليه فقلت و كيف يستر عليه؟ قال ينسى ملكيه ما كاتنا يكتبان عليه و يوحى الله الى جوارحه و الى بقاع الارض ان اكتمن عليه ذنبه فيلقى الله عزوجل حين يلاقاه و ليس شيء يشهد عليه بشيء من الذنوب.

"When a servant of God offers pure and firm repentance, God-Almighty loves him and deletes all of his past sins. The narrator asked; 'Oh son of Prophet! How are the sins deleted ?'

'The two angels responsible for writing of deeds forget about his sins, simultaneously, God-Almighty orders his bodily parts, limbs, and different places upon earth to cancel his sins from their register of deeds. Thus, he meets God-Almighty in a manner whereby nobody and nothing is a witness to his sins. ' Replied the Imam. ⁶

3. What is Repentance?

Repentance could be defined as a feeling of being ashamed, sorry, and regretful for past sins. Some one who is indeed ashamed by heart for his past sins may truly be called as a repentant. The Holy Prophet (S) said:

"Feeling ashamed and being sorry (for past deeds) is repentance." ⁷

It is true that God-Almighty accepts repentance and forgives the past sins, but simply recital of the sentence: "I ask God to forgive me" (*Astaghferullah*), being ashamed and regretful or even. crying for past sins may not be considered as sufficient for a pure and sincere repentance, but with the existence of the following three symptoms the repentance could be considered as true and realistic:

- **First:** He must be disgusted by heart for his. past sins and his self should have a feeling of shame, regret, and sorrow.
- **Second:** He must take a firm decision not to indulge into sinning in the future.
- **Third:** If, because of indulgence into a particular sin, he has done something, which could be compensated then he must take a firm decision for its compensation. For example: If he owes dues of people, has usurped property or stolen money, must decide to return it to its owner in the first available opportunity. In case he is not in a position to pay at present, he should try to get the owners consent or satisfaction through whatever means at his disposal.

If he has committed backbiting against some one, should seek his pardon, if he has oppressed some one, should try to redress the aggrieved. If religious dues have not been paid he must arrange for their payment, and if the daily prayers and the fasting have been missed, he must perform them as make-up (*qadha*) obligations.

If some one has undertaken all the above steps, then he may truly be called as a sincere repentant, who

is indeed ashamed for his past deeds and such atonement certainly receives God's acceptance.

But if some one recites the sentence: "I seek God's forgiveness" upon his tongue, but by heart is not ashamed for his past sins, does not decide for avoidance of future sins and is not ready to compensate for those sins which could have been compensated –then such a person has not atoned and should not expect acceptance of his repentance, even though he might appear in a prayer assembly and, thus, being affected sentimentally might shed some tears or may cry loudly.

A person recited the sentence: "I seek God's forgiveness" in the presence of the Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.). The Imam said:

عن أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام: ان قائلا قال بحضرته: استغفرالله، فقال: ثكلتك امك اتدرى ما الاسفار درجة العليين و هو اسم واقع على ستة معان اولها الندم على ما مضى و الثاني العزم على ترك العود اليه ابدا و الثالث ان نؤدى الى المخلوقين حقوقهم حتى تلقى الله املس ليس عليك تبعه و الرابع ان تعمد الى كل فريضة عليك ضيعتها فتؤدى حقها و الخامس ان تعمد الى اللحم الذى نبت على السحت فبنببه بالاحزان حتى يلصق الجلد بالعظم وينشا بينهما لحم جديد و السادس ان تذيق الجسم الام الطاعة كما اذقته حلاوة المعصية، فعند ذلك تقول: استغفرالله

"*May your mother lament for you, do you know what is repentance ? The repentance can be defined with the following six parameters:*

1. *Feeling ashamed and regretful for the past sins.*
2. *Taking firm decision for avoidance of sins forever.*
3. *Paying all the dues of the people so that when he meets God-Almighty on the Resurrection Day, he does not have any pending claim against him.*
4. *All the religious obligations (Wajibat) which have not been performed in the past should be discharged as makeup (Qadha) obligations.*
5. *Should feel so sad about his past sins that all the bodily flesh formed as a result of eating forbidden (Haram) should be melted in a manner that skin should touch the bare bones until the new flesh is reformed again.*
6. *The inconvenience and hardship of worshipping should be imposed upon the body as a compensation for the pleasures it fasted because of past sins. Only after performing all the above, you may recite the sentence I seek forgiveness from God.*"⁸

Satan is so deceitful that sometimes he even deceives a person regarding repentance. It is possible that a sinner might attend a prayer gathering and after being effected sentimentally may shed some tears or may cry. Then Satan would say:

Great, wonderful! What a great thing have you done? You have already atoned and all your sins have been cleaned. While in reality, such a person neither is ashamed from sinning by heart nor has he decided not to commit sins any more, and to remit dues of the creditors. Such act does not constitute a real repentance and would not result one's attaining self-purification and eternal salvation. Such a person has not refrained from sins and has not returned to God-Almighty.

4. Things which Require Repentance

What is sin and what sins should be repented? The answer is that every thing which stops a man from journeying towards God-Almighty, making him attached to worldly-allurements, thus, preventing from repentance should be considered as sin, must be avoided, and self should be thoroughly cleaned from its contamination. The sins might be classified into following two categories:

4.1. Moral Sins

Moral abjectness and obscene characteristics results in self's contamination, thus, preventing him to follow the straight path of human exaltedness leading towards God's Nearness and Countenance. Moral abjectness if gets deep rooted within self gradually becomes his characteristic resulting in metamorphism of his inner essence.

It even influences the ideal; of "what to be" for a human being. Moral sins, because of the excuse of their being only moral, should not be treated as smaller and insignificant, and, thus, being negligent for their repentance, instead self-purification for them is something necessary and of vital importance.

The moral-abjectness consists of: Hypocrisy, wrath, arrogance, egotism, harshness, oppression, deceit and treachery, back-biting, accusation, criticizing, fault-finding, slander, breach of promise, lying, love of world, greed stinginess, parents rights, cutting family ties, ungratefulness, extravagance, jealously, vilification, cursing, and other obscene characteristics.

Hundreds of Qur'anic Verses and traditions condemn these characteristics and describe their prevention, treatment, symptoms and worldly and eternal punishments. Since this matter has been discussed in details in several books of ethics, it would not be appropriate for us to discuss here, rather the readers are advised to refer to the literature dealing with ethics.

4.2. Practical Sins

Consist of the following: stealing, murder, adultery, homosexuality, paying and receiving interest, usurpation of public property, cheating, running away from the battlefield in a mandatory struggle, breach of trust, drinking alcoholic beverages, eating pork and other forbidden meats, gambling, false testimony or oath, accusing some innocent person for adultery, refraining from offering mandatory prayers and fasting, refraining from Haj Pilgrimage, refraining from the duty to encourage good and forbid evil (*Amr*

bil-Maroof wa Nahi al-Munkar), eating unclean food, and other forbidden things.

These sins have been described in detail in the books of traditions and jurisprudence and therefore, it would not be appropriate to discuss them here in detail, rather the readers are advised to refer to the relevant literature.

These are some famous sins which should be avoided by a human being and in case of indulgence he should offer repentance and should return to God-Almighty. Apart from these there are some other types of sins which are not famous and have not been introduced as sins but for God's most favorite saints and exalted pious personalities they are counted as sins e.g.: refraining from recommended acts (*Mostahabbat*), performing acts which are supposed to be avoided although not absolutely unlawful (*Makroohat*), sinful thoughts, attention towards other than God, and selfish whims and Satanic whispers which prevents them from God's Remembrance.

All of them are considered as sins for God's favorite saints and they offer repentance for them. Even higher than the above is their negligence and omission in true recognition of God-Almighty, His essence, Attributes and Actions, which are the pre-requisite for the existence of every created being is regarded as a sin for them and realizing this omission they tremble in fear, shed tears, and offer repentance to return towards God. The repentance offered by the prophets and Infallible Imams (a.s.) might belong to this category. The Holy Prophet (S) had said:

قال النبي (ص): انه ليغافن على قلبي حتى استغفر الله في اليوم و الليلة سبعين مرة.

*“Sometimes it happens that the darkness approaches my heart, and because of this reason I offer repentance seventy times every day.”*⁹

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

قال الصادق عليه السلام: ان رسول الله صلي الله عليه وآله كان يتوب الى الله في كل يوم سبعين مرة من غير ذنب.

*“The Holy Prophet (S) used to offer repentance seventy times a day, while he had not committed any sin at all.”*¹⁰

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, p-364.

2. Wasail al-Shi'a, vol. 11,p-354.

3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, p-365.

4. al Kafi, vol. 2, p-435.

5. al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-436.

6. al-Kafi, vol. 2, p.-436.

7. Haqayaq, p-286.

[8.](#) Wasail al-Shi'a, vol. 11, p.361.

[9.](#) Muhjatteh, vol. 7, p-71.

[10.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-450.

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