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Lecture 8: Lust Results In The Continuation Of Human Life

Lust and anger are two traits, two powers that Allah put inside man. The continuation of mankind is dependent on these two traits. Lust is used to attract benefits and anger is used to keep away loss. If one did not have any lust or desire he would not go after the things that his body needs. One would not eat if he did not have a desire for food, and when he does not eat he would die. So, it is a blessing that one has this desire for food that forces him to struggle to obtain something to eat.

Sexual desires are also necessary for the prolongation of human life. Nobody would get married if sexual desires did not exist, because married life has its difficulties and bad times. For this reason there must be a desire, a lust in man for him to marry and have children. So, sexual desires are necessary for the continuation of human life.

Spiritual Growth Is Also Found In Anger and Lust

The social order of man would become destroyed if man did not get angry, if man was indifferent to his property being stolen, to his life being taken or to the life of his loved one's being taken. That person would not do anything; he would not protect his money or his honor. So, anger is necessary to protect him from all sorts of losses that he would be faced with.

These traits, lust and anger are necessary in this world and are also necessary for the next world. One's religion is also dependent on these two traits. One must choose the middle course in these traits; one must not become, for example, too angry or not angry enough. Both becoming too angry or not angry enough are mistakes.

Determining the middle course is dependant on the intellect and religious decrees. One's intellect, when it has grown enough to be able to determine right from wrong, and divine laws guide man to finding the middle course.

Becoming Too Angry Or Lustful Or Not Angry Or Lustful Enough Is Dangerous

A man who becomes too angry or too lustful or not angry enough or not lustful enough will be lower than any animal.

The middle course of these two traits is the straight path (*sirāṭ al-mustaqīm*).¹ One's state in the hereafter depends on his state in this world. The person who falls off the middle course in this world will fall in the next world as well. Most of the bad things and difficulties that happen in this world are because of man's actions.²

The Middle Course In Eating; Not Being Excessive

One will be healthy if he follows the middle course regarding the desire for food. The middle course in eating is eating the necessary amount and variety of food. The Qurʾān orders us: ***“Eat and drink, but do not be excessive.”***³

The commander of the faithful, Imām ‘Alī (a) also has given an order in this regard. He said that one should not eat until one is hungry and should stop eating before one is full. If one eats when he is full he will get a digestive disease. This is being excessive. On the other side not eating enough is not eating anything for 24 hours. For this reason, it has been commanded for a person who is fasting to eat something at night. For this reason eating something before dawn has become part of the Islamic culture.

The poet Sʿadī has wrote a poem in this regards: “Do not eat so much so that food falls out of your mouth and do not eat so little so that you die of weakness.”

One should not become weak due to lack of eating and one should not eat so much that he would become sick and get digestive diseases. Some have said: “The stomach is the home of all pain.” This was about the amount of food, but about the kinds of food:

A Colorful Dinner Table And Different Diseases

Never become accustomed to eating all kinds of different food at once. The more kinds of food that man eats the more health problems he will have. He thinks that he will become stronger from eating these different kinds of foods, but it is the opposite. The different kinds of sweets and fatty foods that one eats bring him closer to getting diabetes and other diseases.

One who is used to eating different kind of foods must also spend a lot of money. For this reason it is possible for him to commit any crime in order to provide his stomach with what it wants. But when one is satisfied with whatever is brought to him, when one does not care to eat different kinds of food he will

not commit these crimes; instead he will fight against his *nafs*.

You have heard how Abu Dharr fought against his personal desires and did not accept Mu'awiyah's elaborate dinner invitations or pouches of gold. Instead, he was satisfied with barley bread.

One who is satisfied is honored. He pays attention to what is allowed and what is forbidden.

So, being excessive in eating or not eating enough is when one steps out of the ordinary and necessary amount or varieties of food that the body needs. The middle course is eating the necessary amount and varieties of food that the body needs.

One Must Follow The Middle Course In Sexual Desires As Well

The middle course must be followed in sexual desires; the desire to touch the opposite sex. One should not refrain from marriage because this has been ordered against. The Prophet of Islam (S) said:

“Marriage is a good custom (*sunnah*) and something that I have done. One who does not act according to my customs is not from me.”^{[4](#)}

Refraining from marriage all together is a form of negligence. Allah gave man sexual desires so that man will procreate. There has been a tradition from the Messenger of Allah (S) regarding this as well. He said: “Get married and have children. Increase in population so I can take pride at your being larger than other communities on the Day of Judgment.”^{[5](#)}

Being excessive in sexual desires is also a mistake. Suppose one is not able to take care of one woman, he will only cause himself and others pain in getting another wife. Also, different diseases occur when one performs the act excessively. One's life span also becomes shorter when he does this in excess.

The Middle Course In Marriage Is Relative

The middle course regarding sexual desires must be adhered to. One should marry according to what the divine law says and according to what man's nature says. After marriage, one should perform the act according to his body's ability. The ability of men's bodies differ; likewise the middle course differs from man to man. For some once a week is the middle course, for some twice a week and for some once every two weeks.

The Spiritual Benefits Of Making A Family

It is necessary for one's soul to make a family. One finds perfection after dealing with the difficulties of marriage and childbearing. As I alluded to before, religious decrees are related to man's nature and instincts. One who acts in excess or refrains from satisfying his desires not only has acting against divine orders but will also suffer spiritual and physical diseases. He will lose the blessings of having a

household which will perfect him on a spiritual level.

Do Not Oppress Nor Be Oppressed

Anger also has a middle course. The middle course of anger is necessary and man becomes perfected in it.

One must not remain indifferent when his property, loved ones, honor or life is put in danger. It is correct to be angry at these times. As long as one is able, he must not let someone take away the *halq* money that he has obtained. The same goes for his honor, life and loved ones.

The Qurʾān says: ***“Do not oppress nor be oppressed.”***⁶ Do not hit someone without reason and do not allow someone to hit you.

A sentence from the Bible has been narrated that I do not believe is from divine revelation. There is no doubt that the Bible and the Torah have been tampered with. They say that Jesus (a) said: “Whenever someone hits you, turn your cheek so that they could hit the other side as well.”

This is in opposition to justice and man's nature. Do not kill and do not let someone kill you. Do not hit and do not let someone hit you. Do not fight without a cause, but fight if there is a cause.

Being Indifferent

Suppose someone is indifferent and says: “They came, what's it to me? They left, what's it to me? They were killed, what's it to me?” This person is like what the Commander of faithful (a) said: “A person who does not move to fight against wrong, or at least, does not feel angry in his heart, is like a dead man walking.”

I have previously described what being too angry is and what not being angry enough is. Not being angry enough is being indifferent to someone taking one's property, life, loved ones or honor. Being too angry is becoming angry when one should not become angry or exceeding the limits of anger even when one should be angry. One must refrain from both of these cases. I gave examples of both of these cases in the last lecture. I explained that some of the cases where one should not become angry are due to having false expectations. For example, one expects everyone to stand up and treat him with respect when he enters a room, but when one or two people do not stand up he gets angry. What kind of expectation was that?

The Prophet (S) Did Not Want Respect

It is a mistake to expect man to respect you. The Messenger of Allah (S), with all of his majesty, said that he did not agree with the way that everyone showed him respect when he entered a meeting.

The Prophet (S) did not expect others to respect him; he did not consider himself better than others. It is the community's duty to respect him, but he wanted to show that one should not expect others to respect him nor should he consider himself better than others. The Messenger of Allah (S) did not consider himself better than his nation; instead he considered himself their servant. He did not expect anything from them, he was a servant sent by Allah. For this reason, his reward is also with Allah.⁷ Respecting and loving his family, which has been ordered, is for the Muslims; it is a benefit for the Muslims themselves.⁸

Be Happy If Someone Did Not Treat You Ill

Especially, the religious scholars and seminary students should follow this strategy of the Prophet (S). One of the great scholars said that a scholar should expect people to throw stones at him when he leaves his house and when that does not happen he should be thankful. A scholar should not expect people to greet him, treat him with respect and kiss his hands. You are a follower of the Prophet (S); you have and heard about how much he has been tortured, how bad he has been treated, how much he has been hit by stones and bones. Now, I should say: "I am a scholar. I am a *sayyid*. Respect me." But, if they do not respect me should I become angry?

The Prophet (S) And Imāms (A) Did Not Have Expectations

You should not expect others to serve you; instead you should serve mankind. Do not desire to become higher or better than others; instead follow the path of the Prophet (S) and the pure Imāms (a).

It has been related that, in one of the Islamic wars, the Prophet's companions slaughtered a sheep. Every one of them had a certain job to do. The Messenger of Allah (S) went to collect firewood and they told him: "We are your servants, O Messenger of Allah. Sit down and relax, we will collect the firewood ourselves." The Prophet responded by saying that he would feel shy from his Lord if he would consider himself in a higher position than his companions.⁹

We Should Not Expect Greetings And Respect

I am trying to say that the scholars must lower their expectations. They should not expect people to serve them. (Of course, the people have their own duty, they should respect scholars.) For example, a scholar should not expect the people to greet him; instead they should follow the Prophet's (S) example and greet the people. Just like the Prophet said: "There are three things that I will not leave as long as I am alive; one of them is greeting the people before they greet me." (The second and third things are sitting on the ground and not walking in front of others.)

^{1.} Refer to 6:153.

^{2.} Refer to 42:30.

^{3.} 7:31.

- [4.](#) 'Allāmah Majlisī, Bihār al-Anwār, volume 103, page 220.
- [5.](#) Same as above.
- [6.](#) 2:279.
- [7.](#) Refer to 42:23.
- [8.](#) Refer to 34:47.
- [9.](#) 'Allāmah Majlisī, Bihār al-Anwār, volume 6.

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