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Lesson 25: The Path towards Paradise and Manifestations of Divine Modesty

The Noble Prophet (S)¹ once more reminds us about the importance of modesty and decency and tells Abu Dharr:

“O Abu Dharr! Would you like to enter paradise?”

Abu Dharr responds, “Yes, may my father be sacrificed for you.”

The Noble Prophet (S) mentions three fundamental conditions with the intention of inviting Abu Dharr to heaven and eternal bliss:

“Cast long-drawn-out dreams out of your mind. Always perceive your death as close at hand. Have proper modesty towards Allah.”

Disapproval of Long-Drawn-Out Dreams and the Difference between Them and Positive Hope

One of the subjects upon which a lot of emphasis has been laid in the *hadiths* is that a believer ought to abstain from long and protracted wishes. Endless desires are a hindrance to man's fulfilling his divine duties and pursuing his spiritual goals and impel him to abandon his religious obligations and sacred aims in the hope of attaining his cravings.

Long-drawn-out dreams cause man to become heedless about the present, thus not perceive currently available opportunities. Because of the unbecoming role of endless wishes in keeping perfection and the sublime prosperity of the hereafter at a far distance, the devil uses them as effective tools to mislead the servants of Allah:

إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا إِنَاثًا وَإِنْ يَدْعُونَ إِلَّا شَيْطَانًا مَرِيدًا * لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَقَالَ لَأَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا *
...وَلَأُضِلَّنَّهُمْ وَلَأُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ

“They invoke none but female (deities) besides Him, and invoke none but a rebellious Satan, whom Allah has cursed, and who said, ‘I will surely take of your servants a settled share, and I will lead them astray and give them false hopes...’”²

It is in connection with this danger of interminable yearnings and because they infect man with erroneous doubts and thereafter impel him to perpetrate minor sins and later greater sins and crimes that Imam ‘Ali (‘a)³ perceives them as a threat:

“O people! What I fear most for you are two things—acting according to desires and extending of hopes. As regards acting according to desires, this hinders one from the truth; and as regards extending of hopes, it makes one forget the next world.”⁴

In order to differentiate between positive hope and interminable vain wishes, the notion of endless cravings ought to be explained, especially when we take into consideration the fact that the concept of ambition is somehow associated with the notion of hope and that which is the essence of life and making effort—whether in connection with material matters or spiritual issues—is positive hope.

If one were to have no hope in regard to improving his state of affairs and in worthy benefits which derive from good deeds, he would neither fulfill his worldly nor eschatological duties, and to quote the words of the Gracious Qur’an:

مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ أَنْ لَنْ يَنْصُرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ لِيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدَهُ مَا يَغِيظُ

“Whoever thinks that Allah will not help him in this world and the hereafter let him extend a rope to the ceiling and cut (himself) off, and let him see whether his plan would remove that which enrages (him).”⁵

On the basis of this translation, when a man has no hope in the help of Allah, he is always entrapped and caught up in a state of anger, wrath, wavering of the mind and hopelessness and he is perpetually restless and anxious. As a result of this excessive lack of hope, he is not able to take steps forward towards either his own well-being or that of others. He may not commit sin and crime, but he will not take positive action either. It is for this reason that positive hope and protracted futile aspirations are different—positive hope is the incentive for man’s development in life.

Hope in Allah gives fruit to rewards in the hereafter and hope in the graces of Allah is one of the ethical virtues. In this same aforementioned *hadith* the Noble Prophet (S) asks Abu Dharr if he would like to go

to paradise; that is to say, does Abu Dharr have the hope and aspiration to go to the garden of bliss? This question drives home the point that hope is acceptable and praiseworthy and that which is not proper and undesirable is interminable deceptive wishes and vain worldly cravings.

Therefore, a believer is not one who is devoid of hope nor is he one who lends his faculty of reasoning to inferior worldly yearnings because this faculty is more honorable than that it should be pre-occupied with thinking about low worldly ambitions; on the contrary, his hope is totally focused on Allah and on gaining proximity to Him.

The World: Means Or Goal?

The world is not beneficial by nature. It is beneficial only to the extent that it is an instrument or means; that is to say, man should strive for the world, but not such that the world becomes his final goal. Worldly effort should be a means of attaining the bliss of the hereafter; otherwise, if the hereafter were not the aim, ordinary worldly efforts would not have an intelligible and correct justification—even worse is a situation where a person nurtures protracted wishes in his mind.

Man's efforts in the world have to be concentrated on fulfilling his duties and obligations, whether in the domain of individual issues or in the realm of social matters, and these obligations should be done for the pleasure of Allah and success in the hereafter; otherwise, from the Islamic point of view, his endeavors and actions will not be acceptable and they will be subjected to reproach. In the same manner, placing hope in the world ought to be with the intention of attaining the afterworld.

If man intends to make his worldly deeds a means of attaining the happiness of the hereafter, he ought to bear in mind that those worldly activities which play a role in achieving the bliss of the otherworld, and are not a hurdle to spiritual matters, are limited. For this reason, he ought not to preoccupy his thoughts and mind with worldly affairs, because the capacity of man's mind, thinking as well as creative powers, is limited: once man is preoccupied with pondering about one topic, he is hindered from reflection about other issues.

When his attention is captivated by one thing, he is held back from thinking about other matters. If round-the-clock man is absorbed in contemplating about earthly matters most of the time—he is immersed in thinking about his house, wife, food, clothing and he is obsessed with his social status and, in short, he is absorbed with that which is connected with the world—his mind becomes so preoccupied that he has no opportunity to think about the hereafter. He even dreams about worldly matters when he sleeps.

If one is a career person or a businessman, he dreams about checks and promissory notes. Or, we see the architect that is always absorbed with building affairs and the problems of architectural work who dreams about these issues in his sleep, too. A person who has not married is preoccupied with the thought of selecting a wife, or if he is married but has no child, he is absorbed in thinking about having a

child and with these mental preoccupations, he can no longer think about the hereafter, spiritual matters and the aim of creation and his future.

These daily duties preoccupy man's mind in such a way that he no longer has the time to accomplish his obligatory [*wajib*] duties, and when he is through with his daily affairs, he begins thinking about the next hundred years and what will happen to his grandchildren and great grandchildren and all his descendants!

How will his children marry and settle down? How will he make a living? Without the least doubt such a mind and heart cannot engage in thinking about spiritual matters, pains of the afterworld, diseases of the soul, cankers of the heart, nor social issues, all of which are associated with the pleasure of Allah.

It is very unfortunate and saddening that at times even spiritual matters are often used as tools for attaining the world. This is another loss and calamity for mankind. It is not surprising at all when a career person uses his income as a means for securing worldly cravings, but what is amazing is that a person might use religion as a means of securing worldly aspirations, meaning that he makes religion a trade for attaining earthly goals.

Such a person is a traitor to religion and, in the words of the *hadiths*, he acquires his daily bread by means of selling his religion. What a loss! How unfortunate and ill-fated is a person that uses his religion as a means of securing his worldly ambitions and carnal yearnings. As one of the Infallibles (‘a) has stated, the benefit of such a person from religion is equivalent to the income which he earns and he gains no other benefit from religion.

“One who makes his religion as a means of attaining worldly desires will derive no benefit from his religion but that which will lead to his perdition.”⁶

Attention to the Absolute Self-sufficient Results in Freedom from Want from Other than Allah

Once a believer is set on the course of knowledge and awareness of Allah as well as executing his divine duties, he no longer thinks about his worldly affairs for the reason that Allah is his guardian, providing his earthly needs. Of course, this does not mean that he ought not to work but that he should not preoccupy his mind with the world: the trader, farmer and craftsman who undertake effort to make money do so for the sake of securing the pleasure of Allah not for the sake of merely securing their worldly desires.

Blessed is the tradesman who uses the world as means for attaining the hereafter and woe upon him who trades the hereafter to achieve only his worldly aspirations.

Definitely such a person will not attain his ambitions in life and his soul will be traumatized and full of

stress all the time because, despite perceiving himself as attached to religion and familiar with it, he lacks real faith in religious and divine values, has not conformed his knowledge with his deeds and does not have faith in what he says.

Such a person becomes an object of Allah's wrath and Allah does not provide him with the tools and means of attaining his worldly aims. It is for this reason that we see that such people experience failures and become unsuccessful in life and neither derive benefit from the world nor from the hereafter.

However, when a believer trudges the course of faith and sets foot on the path of propagating divine beliefs and sciences, Allah opens the way for him in connection with the life of the world and manages his life in such a way that man does not even need to think about the world and there will not be the least worry in his mind with regard to material life. As Allah stated to the Noble Prophet (S) on the Night of the Ascension [*laylat al-mi'raj*]:

“He (Allah's servant) keeps trying to get closer to Me by means of optional prayers [*nafileh*] until I love him. [After] loving him, I will become his ears with which he hears, his eyes with which he sees, his tongue with which he speaks and his hand with which he strikes. When he asks from Me I answer, and if he demands from Me I will give him...”⁷

The chain of transmission of this authentic *hadith* has been recorded in books like “*Al-Kafi*” and its purport has also been inscribed in other *hadiths*. Various interpretations have been put forward for the expressions which have been recorded in this *hadith*, one expression being that Allah stated, “I become his ears... eyes... hands...” Eminent scholars like Shaykh Baha'i and Imam Khomeini (may Allah be pleased with them) have put forward several interpretations in this regard.

Imam Khomeini's (may Allah be pleased with him) interpretation in his book entitled “*Forty hadiths*” is as follows: “The more the heart is pre-occupied with all else besides *Haqq* (i.e. Allah) and is engaged with the edifices of the world, the more will be its need and longing for the world.”

However, the need of the heart and the longing of the soul are very apparent, because its attachment and affection to the world has filled all the corners of the heart. It is natural that its external need too should increase because there is no person who can manage all his affairs alone. Perhaps the rich are apparently considered to be without want, but a precise glance at their affairs makes it clear that their needs increase with the increment of their riches. For this reason rich people are poor people in the semblance of the self-sufficient and they are needy people dressed in the clothing of the affluent.

The more the heart is engrossed in managing worldly affairs and the more it is absorbed with the fanfare of the world, the more man is overcome by the pain of abasement and humiliation and the more he is overwhelmed by the abysmal darkness of disgrace and need.

In contrast, once a person tramples the inferior world underfoot and concentrates his heart and soul's attention on the Absolute Self-Sufficient and believes in the essential need [or natural poverty] of all

existents and comprehends that no being is self-sufficient in and of itself and that there is no power, glory and majesty save for Allah, he becomes free from want of both worlds—so free from want that the kingdom of Solomon is worthless in his point of view.

If the keys to the treasures of the world were given to him, he would not pay any attention to them; as has been recorded in the *hadith* that the Archangel Gabriel brought the keys of the treasures of the world from Allah, the Exalted, to the Seal of the Prophets (S) and that holy man showed humility and did not consent to the offer and instead chose poverty as his pride.⁸ Also, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) told Ibn ‘Abbas, “This world of yours is more inferior to me than this worn out shoe.”⁹

They know that being absorbed in the treasures of the world and its wealth and riches and companionship with the lovers of the world gives rise to darkness and opacity of the heart, weakens man’s will and determination, makes the heart needy and destitute, and hinders it from concentrating on the Absolutely Perfect.

However, when the heart has been put under the care of its Owner and the house has been submitted to the Landlord and has not been surrendered to a usurper, Allah manifests Himself in it. Of course, the manifestation of the Absolute Self-Sufficient brings about absolute self-sufficiency and submerges the heart into the sea of honor and riches and fills it with freedom from want:

“Yet all might belongs to Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful.”¹⁰

It is natural that once the affairs of the house are managed by the Owner of the house, He does not leave man to himself and He Himself takes possession of all the affairs of His servant and even becomes his ears, eyes, hands and legs... in this state, the poverty and need of His slave becomes completely obviated and he becomes free from want of both worlds and, of course, in this manifestation of the *Haqq* his fear of all existents is precluded and dread of Allah, the Exalted, takes its place and the greatness and eminence of the *Haqq* fills his heart to the brim. Besides the *Haqq*, he does not perceive anyone as great, eminent and possessor.¹¹

The simplest interpretation that can be put forward for the *hadith* which says “... I become his ears and his eyes and...” is that Allah performs the duties that the ears, eyes, hands and legs of His slave do. Allah’s servants ought to do deeds which settle their material affairs and remedy their needs; but Allah arranges the daily affairs of His servants in such a way that they become automatically available and everything is put in order such that there is no need to exert pressure on one’s mind about what will have to be done the following day.

As soon as one steps out of the house, tasks are fulfilled by the will of Allah, by means of agents which He makes available and perhaps also through other servants of Allah. Individuals need help and Allah makes that aid reach them from the unseen world [*‘alam al-ghayb*]. It is not such that affairs are settled directly from the unseen supernatural world, but that the management of all undertakings and the capacity for all affairs lie in His Hands. Allah arranges agents and means in such a way that all affairs go

well without man being in need of anything and without his needing to think and plan.

In order to advance his affairs and duties, a believer does not have need of satanic plans. Once he believes that his short term needs are provided by Allah, he no longer nurtures long-drawn-out aspirations. His task is only to fulfill the responsibilities that lie on his shoulders.

In contrast, if a person is only preoccupied with amassing riches and wealth and the acquisition of more income in order to increase worldly allurements and attractions—changing household decorations as often as possible, buying new cars, etc.—his aspirations will not come to an end because this domain is endless and to quote Imam Khomeini (may Allah be pleased with him), “If he were given the whole of the planet earth, he would not be contented with it and would begin planning how to conquer and subjugate other planets as well.”

Remembrance of Death and Manifestations of Divine Modesty

With regard to what has previously been alluded to, the Noble Prophet (S) has mentioned three conditions for man to enter paradise: the first condition is that man ought to curtail his aspirations, not attach his heart to the world, not worry about the future and only preoccupy his mind with the hereafter. The second condition is that he ought to remember death all the time. Referring to this condition after the first condition is indicative of the close connection between these two because one ought to think about death constantly if he intends to keep interminable hopes outside the realm of his thoughts.

The reason for this is that when one takes death into consideration, the end and consequences of worldly ambitions and their futility become apparent; therefore, there is a close relationship between wiping out endless hopes and contemplation of death.

Having hopes and aspirations are not entirely voluntary. When man is brought up in circumstances which are governed by a materialistic culture, what he sees and hears have an effect on him and the eyes and ears make him pay heed to the world. Whether he likes it or not worldly ambitions find their way to his heart.

Under the circumstances, what must one do to avoid being attracted by the allurements of the world and to refrain from long-drawn-out hopes? It is in regard to this important issue that the Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr to persistently contemplate death: if man is continually attentive to the fact that the end of this life is death, he comprehends that this world is not a worthy place for him to attach his heart. That which is worthy of love is eternal, never ending and never decreases—and that is the pure life of the hereafter.

If man is consistently preoccupied with the thought of death, he is not afflicted by false expectations, greed and a great deal of other mean qualities. For this reason, the remembrance of death is an effective remedy for curing spiritual diseases. Paying attention to death is very easy: man can create

manifestations of death in his surroundings; for example, he can hang a writing or poster about death in his room or at his place of work, or he can put it in the inner folds of a book so that he is reminded about death by seeing it.

In a *hadith*, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

“The most intelligent person is he who meditates upon death more.”^{[12](#)}

Without the least doubt, an intelligent person is not deceived and he chooses the best between the world and the hereafter. Once a clever person conceives that the world is destined to destruction, he does not believe that it is worthwhile. In any case, remembrance of death is an effective remedy for breaking free from love of the world and interminable false hopes.

The third condition for entering the garden of eternal bliss (paradise)—which was referred to in a different way in the previous lesson—is divine modesty. Because the Noble Prophet (S) repeatedly alludes to the need to be decent and modest in the presence of Allah, Abu Dharr understands that the issue of modesty enjoys special status and importance, and that is the reason why the Noble Prophet (S) continues to lay a great deal of emphasis upon it. For this reason a question arises for him about why the Noble Prophet (S) lays so much emphasis on this issue and grants it so much importance. He considers it probable that the Noble Prophet (S) has a special intention in mind, and thus asks:

“O Prophet of Allah, we are all modest before Allah. (What do you mean?)”

Because he does not consider the normal amount of modesty to be sufficient, the Noble Prophet (S) cites three manifestations of divine modesty:

“Modesty is not that which it appears to be; rather, modesty before Allah is that you must not forget the graves and ruins of former generations.”

The first manifestation of divine modesty mentioned by the Noble Prophet (S) is that man should not forget graveyards and ancient constructions. Of course, the intention here is not places like decorated cemeteries which do not remind man of the hereafter, but desolate and ruined graves to which little or no attention at all is paid. Previously it was mentioned that the mind of man is limited and when he is preoccupied with one set of issues he is hindered from paying attention to others.

If man wants to produce desirable spiritual states like modesty, fear [*khawf*] and eagerness for Allah, which are considered pre-eminent in the Islamic order and emphasized in ethics, it is necessary to prepare the proper foundation: in order to bring about that level of modesty which has been alluded to in the words of the Noble Prophet (S), a person ought to forgo the allurements of the world and become affectionate towards desolate graveyards and old ruined buildings.

When man’s attention is focused on grand, beautiful and attractive buildings which are being built and if every day his eyes are set upon new decorations and colorful curtains, the attractions of the world

manifest themselves more and more in his eyes. If he wants to reduce a bit of this attention to the deceptive manifestations of this world, he must turn his attention to graveyards, the destination of humanity, and the dead lying under the earth. He ought to look at ruined desolate buildings and observe what the end of stones, metal and cement which are laid one on top of the other will be.

It should not be mistakenly understood that what is meant is that we should build our houses with clay so that they fall whenever it rains. On the contrary, the order of Islam is that man ought to do every act correctly; if he is building a house, he ought to build a strong one. The intention is that man must not give his heart to the allurements and attractions of the world and must not be deceived by the world. The purport is not that he ought not to perform his work correctly.

Man has a duty to be earnest in his deeds, but not to fall in love with the world. When man sees the attractive beauties of the world, it is natural for his heart to be captivated by them. This state is not volitional: when he sees his neighbor has a car and exchanges it for a more luxurious car, he becomes tempted and asks himself why others should be able to exchange their cars so often while he doesn't even own a dilapidated car!

When he himself does buy a car, the following day he is tempted to buy the newest and latest model. Therefore, the Noble Prophet's (S) advice is that man ought to sometimes visit graves and desolate or ruined places. Ethical scholars, too, counsel their students to go to graves on a daily basis; at the minimum, they ought to visit graves once a week, which is recommended in Islamic law, so that their hearts become cleansed of love for the world and material affections and so that at least a balance is struck between love of the world and the hereafter.

It is not possible that man be infatuated with the world and love of the world cast a shadow over his heart and at the same time feel fear [*khawf*] of Allah, be an early riser for prayer and shed tears when he hears the name of Imam al-Husayn ('a). It is natural that the world and love of it would occupy the place of these affairs. A heart that is filled with love of the world no longer has any room for love of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and Her Holiness Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a). Of course, these Infallibles ('a) are so luminous that when our dead hearts remember them, they leave an effect, but because our hearts are contaminated, their remembrance does not have the necessary effect.

“And that do not forget the stomach and that which is in it.”

The second manifestation of divine modesty is that people should be careful about what they eat. If people make use of everything that falls into their hands and are not afraid of eating prohibited [*haram*] foods, little by little they become afflicted by hardheartedness and their hearts become devoid of divine light. People must be careful not to eat doubtful or forbidden foods which can cause hardness of the heart and from then on they do not find the inclination to worship, fear Allah, desire paradise and encounter the beatific vision [*liqa'*] of Allah. For this reason, in order to have divine modesty, it is incumbent to pay heed to the stomach and be cautious about the food that is placed into it. The Noble

Qur'an advises man to be careful what food he eats:

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ

“So let man observe his food.”¹³

Man has to follow all the aspects of nutrition and examine his food from all points of view and take care that it is sound, hygienic, lawful [*halal*] and pure. The Companions of the Cave [*ashab al-kahf*] who, as the best of Allah's servants, had forsaken the polytheistic order and idol worship and liberated themselves from the trap of atheistic beliefs during the reign of Diqyanus, according to the saying of the Qur'an, used to select the purest and most lawful [*halal*] of foods. After narrating the events that came to pass for the Companions of the Cave in the grotto and their waking up from sleep after a hundred years and the course of their conversation, the Glorious Qur'an states:

... فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِنْهُ

“Send one of you to the city with this money. Let him observe which of them has the purest food, and bring you provisions from there.”¹⁴

It is in view of the effects of unlawful possessions in misleading man and keeping him aloof from what is right and in propelling him towards sinning against Allah and against the saints [*awliya*] of Allah that Imam al-Husayn (‘a) said to the atheistic army when they did not listen to his words:

“All of you are sinning and disobeying me and opposing my orders and are not listening to my words. Yes, your stomachs are filled with haram food and a seal has been put over your hearts.”¹⁵

Yes, *haram* food impels a person to be so hard-hearted and cold-hearted that he even becomes ready to pull out a sword against the son of the Noble Prophet (S). It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) believes that modesty is guaranteed by man being careful about what he eats and eating *halal* foods.

“And that he ought to control the head and its parts.” (That is to say, the eyes, the ears and the tongue.)

The third manifestation of divine modesty is that man ought to observe the thoughts and ideas he nurtures in his mind and the hopes and dreams that exist therein. If he purifies his imagination, casts null and void thoughts out of his brain and also embarks upon purifying his inner self, he can attain desirable modesty.

Neatness, A Practice of the Saints [Awliya] of Islam

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

“Any human being who desires nobility and dignity in the hereafter has to give up the ornaments of the world. Whenever you have done this, you have attained the station of the friend of Allah.”

When man has detached his self from the world and has become heedless with regard to it, he falls in love with the hereafter and its unending blessings and yearns to encounter the beatific vision [*liqa'*] of Allah and he becomes beloved and honorable in the hereafter. In contrast, if the world appears great in the sight of man, the hereafter appears small from his point of view.

Of course, reflecting about the hereafter, death and going to the graves is effective; however, man has to think well also in regard to his conduct. In order not to fall into the trap of the world, he ought to rid himself of its ornaments and attractions, in which case he will become honorable and dignified in the hereafter.

It must be stated, however, that some adornments are recommended, so much so that if man pursues them, because of their religious desirability, not only is he not considered to be a seeker of the world but a pursuer of the hereafter. It is religiously desirable and recommended in divine law that a wife should beautify herself for her husband and that the husband ought to do the same for his wife, and it is commendable for believers in gatherings to wear clean clothes, perfume themselves, brush their teeth, comb their hair and apply oil to their bodies. Believers must be so clean that people delight in socializing with them.

Beyond the shadow of doubt if these affairs are done with the intention of gaining nearness and proximity to Allah, they are considered to be worship and not counted as ornamentation for the world. Ornamentation for the world takes place when a human being beautifies himself for the sake of carnal desires and in order to derive pleasure from it and not for the sake of Allah and the hereafter.

Man likes to wear stylish and fashionable clothes, to eat delicious and diverse foods, and to have a beautiful and grand house. Such adornment is desirable if it is done for the sake of the hereafter and for conforming to the orders of Allah. The Noble Prophet (S) used to consistently clean and perfume himself:

“The Noble Prophet’s (S) habit was such that he used to look at himself in the mirror, clean his head and face, and comb his hair and often he did this with water. Besides doing this in front of his family, he used to groom himself in front of his companions too and say, ‘Allah loves the servant who cleans and adorns himself when going out of his house to visit his brothers’.” [16](#)

A believer ought to be clean and have an orderly outward appearance all the time; he ought not to be disheveled and dirty because this results in other people being disgusted with him. In the past there used to be dirty, soiled carpets in mosques and some people used to enter them with grimy clothes and smelly bodies and, in contrast, places of moral corruption used to be clean and perfumed.

The assemblies of the believers ought to be the best, cleanest and most fragrant places of gathering.

We must imitate the way of the Noble Prophet (S) and adopt the conduct of the Infallible Imams (‘a) as our role models.

A considerable amount of the Noble Prophet’s (S) income used to be spent on buying perfume. We ought to take lessons and know that these ornamentations and adornments are not undesirable, for the reason that they are orders of the divine law and, if they are performed with the intention of gaining nearness to Allah, they are considered to be worship. The wisdom underlying these injunctions is that the believers become affectionate towards each other, derive pleasure from one another and get benefit from the light of each other.

- [1.](#) The abbreviation, “S”, stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *sallallahu ‘alayhi wa alihi wa sallam* [may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny], which is mentioned after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S). [Trans.]
- [2.](#) Surat al-Nisa’ 4:117–119.
- [3.](#) The abbreviation, “a” stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *‘alayhi’s-salam*, *‘alayhim’us-salam*, or *‘alayha’s-salam* [may peace be upon him/them/her], which is mentioned after the names of the prophets, angels, Imams from the Prophet’s progeny, and saints (‘a). [Trans.]
- [4.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon [khutbah] 42, trans. Fayd al-Islam. [For English translation see <http://www.al-islam.org/nahj> [1], ed.]
- [5.](#) Surat al-Hajj 22: 15.
- [6.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 78, p. 63.
- [7.](#) Usul al-Kafi, vol. 4, p. 54, hadiths 7–8.
- [8.](#) One of the angels of Allah who had never come down to the earth descended with the Archangel Gabriel carrying the keys to the treasures of the world and addressed the Noble Prophet (S), “O Muhammad! Your Lord sends his peace and states, ‘These are the keys to the treasures of the world. If you want, you can be a prophet who is poor and if you desire, you can be a prophet possessing power and a kingdom’.” Then after that Gabriel made a sign to him and said, “O Muhammad! Show humility!” The Prophet (S) stated, “I will be a poor prophet.” Thereafter the angel accompanying Gabriel returned to the sky... (Amali Saduq, majlis 69, p.365, hadith 2)
- [9.](#) ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas says that when Amir al-Mu’minin set out for war with the people of Basrah, he went to his audience at Dhi Qar and saw that he was stitching his shoe. Amir al-Mu’minin said to me, “What is the price of this shoe?” I said, “It has no value now.” He then said, “By Allah! It is dearer to me than ruling over you, except that I may establish right and ward off wrong.” Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon [khutbah] 33.
- [10.](#) Surat al-Munafiqun 63:8.
- [11.](#) Imam Khomeini, Fourty hadiths: An Exposition of Ethical and Mystical Traditions, The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works (International Affairs Department), 4th printing 1373 AHS, pp. 444–445.
- [12.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 130.
- [13.](#) Surat ‘Abasa 80:24.
- [14.](#) Surat al-Kahf 18:19.
- [15.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 45, p. 8.
- [16.](#) Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. 6, p. 330.

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