

Part 3: Relation of the Man with Nature

This is a problem in *itself*, as this is a relationship of two strangers with one another, and, may include, the relation of a prisoner with jail, or, a bird with its cage, and Joseph with the well?

Someone may say that being born is being put in a prison, a cage, or, a well. If so, this relationship is one of two opposites, and the man's endeavour must be only to set himself free from this prison and cage.

But in Islam, the relation of man with nature resembles that of a farmer with the farm, of a merchant with the market, and of a devotee with the temple. For a farmer, land is not the goal but the means. His home is elsewhere but he uses the land to secure livelihood, and the means of comfort, and happiness. He ploughs it, scatters seeds, weeds it, harvests it, etc. The world is the farm of the hereafter, and this land should not be taken by a farmer for his permanent home. For a merchant, a market is a place of work in which he uses his capital, and efforts to gain profit. This is how man should view the world.

Someone came to Imam 'Ali and began blaming the world since he had heard that the Imam did the same. He did not know that 'Ali (as) reproached the worship of the world, which is contrary to the worship of God and truth, and in itself a negation of all human values. 'Ali was angry at this, and said: "O the reproaching man, O you who are deceived, the world has not deceived you, but you have deceived yourself."¹

As an example, I may say that an old woman deceives a young man with her make-up, and her false teeth, and hair. The youth realizes suddenly that he has been deceived. Or, maybe the old woman comes forward, and admitting her deficiencies makes an offer for marriage. In that case, the woman has not deceived him; rather the young man has deceived himself,

Imam 'Ali (as) said: "The world has not hidden anything from you to deceive you. Did the world deceive you on the day you buried your father? The world said: "I am what you see, and I have no stability, discern me the way as I am. Why do you suppose me to be what you wish, not what I really am?" So, the world deceives no one. Let us see whether the world has betrayed you, or, vice versa. It is you who follow your carnal desires." Then, 'Ali added: "The world is the trade market of saints, and the mosque of

God's friends."

The idea that the world is a prison, or, a cage, is based on a psychological view that has been prevalent in India, and in pre-Islamic Greece, but, it is unacceptable to Islam. It says that human spirit has been created in a perfect form in another world, and introduced, in a cage, to this world, in which case he has no alternative but to break the cage. But, the Holy Qur'an says:

"And certainly We created man of an extract of clay; then We made him a small life-germ in a firm resting place; then We made the life-germ a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation" (Sura al-Mu'minun, 23: 12-14).

The last sentence shows that man was made into something else, which is the spirit, and this spirit is produced from matter. Therefore, it has not been perfected elsewhere in order to be put in a cage here. Man lives in nature, like his mother's lap, and it is here that he undergoes evolution, and perfection. Islam says; if you do not rise higher from this natural position, you will remain here in the lowest of the low, and in the hell hereafter. The Holy Qur'an says:

"What is the terrible calamity! And what will make you comprehend what the terrible calamity is? The day on which men shall be as scattered moths, and the mountains shall be as loosened wool, then as for him whose measure of good deeds is heavy, he shall live a pleasant life. And as for him whose measure of good deeds is light, his abode shall be the abyss. And what will make you know what it is? A burning fire!" (Sura al-Qari'ah, 101: 1-11).

Therefore, in the anthropology on Islam, and in the knowledge of the world, man has not been a ready-made bird which has flown in a holy space, and put in a cage, to make it necessary for him to break the cage. If you admit that the world of spirit has priority over the world of matter, and it is a beam illuminating this world from another world, you cannot believe that spirit has been elsewhere in a perfect form, and brought here to be imprisoned. Such an idea is historically Indian, and Platonic.

Plato of Greece believed that the spirit was created in another world, and was brought here for some reason, and put into confinement, to be released later, and return. But, Islam does not have such a belief.

We do not mean that all the Gnostics have erred so much in this connection. They have not ignored the significance of society, or, nature, and as the Holy Qur'an have placed nature, and men side by side, they, too, believe that nature is a mirror of God, and His beauty.

Shabestari, in his poetic masterpiece, speaks of humanity in this regard:

"In the name of Him who taught life the skill of thought, and illuminated it with the light of the heart,

By His grace both worlds were brightened, and by His favor Adam's earth was a garden"

And he goes on to say:

"For him whose life appears with glory, the whole world is the book of God almighty."

If we place the Holy Qur'an on one side, and Gnosticism on the other, and pay attention to the Holy Qur'an's regard for nature, we realize that it pays more attention to nature without denying its attention to the self, and mind in any form.

Thus, the perfect man of the Holy Qur'an, besides his inclination to intellect, and heart, has an inclination to nature. Another question is that of self-renunciation. Gnosticism respects the heart, but scorns "the self", and believes in its abandonment. This, in itself, is right, and Islam accepts it. But, there are two types of "self" in Islam, one of which is negated, and the other is revived by Islam. This is like a friend, and an enemy placed side by side while our target is the enemy in which case we must aim very carefully not to mistakenly hit the friend. That self which is to be crushed is meanness and vileness, and the other self, which must be preserved, is the source of all human values.

The miracle of Islam lies in the fact that these two selves are so exactly distinguished that there is no room for error. In Gnosticism, there is sometimes a distinction between the two, but, more often the friend is shot instead of the enemy, that is, instead of killing that vile self, the man and his heart are killed. Such an attitude, on account of the sweetness of the language of literature and its wider influence among people, has had a deep effect on the destiny of our society, and a perfect man, for most people, is the figure introduced by Gnostics. Therefore, a further explanation is necessary to illustrate this subject.

An important issue in the Gnostic school, in connection with a perfect man, is the relation of man with his "self", a problem that is Islamic in nature. Both the Gnostics, and the Sufis as well as Islamic teachers are in favor of combating selfishness, and carnal desires. But, the fact is that this jihad against "the self" is an Islamic view which they adopted. Sa'di says "You are a fellow-lodger of your own enemy, why do you bother about fighting strangers"

This idea is also found in the utterance of the holy Prophet, saying: "Your most dangerous enemy is your own "self", who is between your two sides. In his "Golestan", Sa'di speaks of a mystic who was asked the meaning of the above utterance of the Prophet, and he answered: "If you treat an enemy kindly, and offer him what he desires, he will become a friend; but, the more kindly you treat "the self", the greater will be its malevolence towards you." And, this self is selfishness.

One kind and degree of selfishness is to make oneself the axis of everything (narcissistic), and perform all acts for oneself, for one's livelihood, one's clothing, and the dwelling. To this extent, this selfishness is vice, or sickness, and not an appreciable value.

The Holy Qur'an believes in man's position to be higher than that of an animal, and in a way of the same level, and still in another below that of an animal. Therefore, there are three types of human acts:

- 1) Moral– above animal level,
- 2) Immoral– at the level of animals.
- 3) Amoral– below animal level.

If someone thinks only of himself, like an animal, or, a bird, this is neither moral, nor, immoral. But, sometimes in thinking of oneself, one catches a mental disease, and his humanity is placed at the service of his animal nature, probably leading to suicide. Greed is such a disease which knows no limit, even when there is the possibility of expressing benevolence and generosity, one is inclined to meanness and stinginess which is another disease in itself. The Holy Qur'an says:

".....Whoever is preserved from the niggardliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones." (Sura al-Hashr, 59:9).

In such a case only his mental sickness rules over him, not his intellect, thought and resolution. For, if his intellect ruled over him, he would know how to spend according to his true interest, pleasure and happiness, lie. But, his niggardliness hinders him, and lowers him below the animal level to make his conduct amoral, and these are not the only diseases that afflict a human being. There are many more complicated ones which are called complexes, such as envy, where one forgets to seek one's own happiness; but, only longs for the misery and misfortune of others.

His own joy and happiness are for him trifling when compared with his desire for the unhappiness of others. Such a state does not exist in any other animal except man. Pride is another disease which develops in a person in such a way that he himself is not aware of it. Sometimes the self deceives someone in a very strange way. As the Holy Qur'an says:

"He said: Nay, your souls have made a matter light for you, so patience is good; may be Allah will bring them all together to me; surely He is the Knowing, the wise:" (Sura Yusuf, 12: 83).

Delusion is a very subtle psychological point which is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, showing that one may be deceived by one's own self, by adorning that false desire in such a way that one believes it to be the genuine thing.

Today, psychology has derived very delicate, and minute conclusions in this respect to show that man sometimes goes mad without any bodily, or, nervous defect but only by some internal upheaval of the mind caused in turn by some great suffering, In such a case, one says farewell to one's intellect in order to relieve one's great sorrow. So, a poet says: "Every sober one in the world has a sorrow. Then, go mad, O heart, for, it is a wonderful state:"

This self-deception is an important psychological problem. And, it is surprising that a thousand years ago such problems were seldom analysed, the problems which are, in this century, subjects of careful study. Even though the Holy Qur'an is the source of all the knowledge. Sometimes, certain vices so

penetrate the human mind that the person himself is unaware of them, and only under certain conditions, these vices rise from the depth to reveal themselves to their owner, who is greatly amazed at having possessed them at all. Sometimes a person is sure of having a clear heart without envy, and rancour towards anyone; then, suddenly he finds himself in the clutches of these vices.

Rumi, compares this to a snake frozen in the winter, with no movement, and no apparent sign of being dangerous, so that a child may play with it, and when it thaws under the sun, its true nature suddenly reveals itself. He gives another example of these hidden, and dormant inclinations in the following poem: "Desires are like sleeping dogs, possessing both inherent good, and evil. When there is no power they are dormant, looking like pieces of lifeless wood. But the moment a carrion is seen there, the call of greed awakens, just like when a donkey is found dead in that street, hundreds of sleeping dogs will become awaken. The greed which had so far hidden itself, rushes out galloping at full speed, as if every hair of the dog turns into a tooth, and the tail wagging in cunning adeptly. In this body of ours are sleeping a hundred such dogs, and they are dormant for lack of prey."

So far, these matters are true, and are supported by the Holy Qur'an saying that they must be fought against. The following verses refer to these points:

"Then as for him who is inordinate, and prefers the life of this world, then surely the hell, that is the abode. And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord and forbids the soul from low desires, then surely the garden - that is the abode. (Sura an-Nazi'at, 79: 37- 41);

"Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his God" (Sura al-Jathiya, 45:23);

"And I do not declare myself free, most surely (man's) self is wont to command (him to do) evil." (Sura Yusuf", 12: 53).

This is what Yusuf says meaning that he cannot trust "the self", and its desires. It is the quality of a believer not to rely on this "self" lest it would be inclined to evil and wickedness.

Islam emphasizes combat (jihad) against self. A number of the Prophet's companions, upon returning from battle, went in a group to him, and he said to them: "Praised be those who have returned from the lesser Jihad, but their greater Jihad is still to come," They asked what the greater jihad was, and he answered: "Jihad against the self."[2](#)

In the Gnostic school of thought, this greater jihad with the self reaches a point which is not acceptable to Islam, one of whose stages is rigorous self-mortification. Islam attributes a right to one's body, and the Prophet strongly opposes those who give themselves such severe physical discipline. The combat with the self (Jihad al-nafs) is of two kinds:

- 1) Mortifying the body rigorously by giving it little food and sleep.
- 2) Combating the mind and spirit by acting contrary to its wishes.

This may be right to some extent, but there are matters which do not correspond with Islam, and with the idea of a perfect man. One example of this is the way adopted by some Sufis, called "the reproaching way", which is the opposite of the hypocritical way. A hypocrite has an evil mind, but, pretends to be good, whereas a reproachful one is a good person, but conceals in order to not flaunt so that the people would not consider him good.

He said: "I act thus to kill "the self" which desires to win honour and popularity", Islam rejects this view, and action, and says: "A believer has no right to dishonour, and disgrace himself". It [*He says? Or it??*] says: "If you are not good, do not pretend to be good, nor resort to a false pretence of wickedness, for, both conduct are false". The reason for employing the language of debauchery, and dissoluteness in Gnostic literature is this same pretence to wickedness. We see many examples of this in the poems of Hafiz, the poet, even though he says:

"O heart, let me guide you towards salvation, Show no pride in debauchery, nor pretend to be devout." Anyhow, the way of reproaching oneself is a type of *Sufi* combat with the self, which is unacceptable in Islam. There are, of course, other *Sufis*, like Khaja Abd'ul-lah Ansari, who are not followers of this way.

Sometimes in the Sufi school of thought, this self-jihad leads to meanness, in order to tame, and to make abject that self, which is left undefended where its honour should be protected. Sometimes, the follower, in serving the leader, is forced to perform very humble tasks, which are below human dignity, such as gathering animal excrement, or, etc.

Ibn Abul-Hadid quotes Ibrahim Adham, who was one of the Gnostic elders, as saying that he had never felt such joy as on the following three occasions:

1) I was ill in a mosque, and I could not rise. The pontiff came, and forced everyone to get up, but as I was unable to do so, he got hold of my leg, and dragged me like a corpse, and threw me out. I felt very happy on seeing the self so miserably humbled.

2) We were on a ship where a clown was amusing people with his tricks, and entertaining people. He began telling a story about pulling the beard of a pagan, and looking around him he noticed me. He came forward, and pulling my beard, said: "Like this!" Everyone laughed and I felt joyful that he had humbled this self of mine.

3) It was winter, and I came out of a lodge, and looking at my pelisse I found it so full of lice that I could hardly see the fur in it, I felt happy to be able to bear this, and humiliate the self.

Another *Sufi* says: "I was invited to a house one evening to break the fast in the month of *Ramadhan*. When I knocked, the host did not let me in. I was invited once more, and again the host refused me admission. This was repeated, and at last, the would-be host said: "What an amazing fellow you are. I have refused you admission so many times, and yet you keep on coming." The *Sufi* said: "Yes, a dog behaves in the same way!"

Islam does not permit such insults to one's personality. Thus, there are two things to be considered in self-discipline according to Islam: self-mortification to a degree, and self-respect to another degree. The self may thus have a sublime side, and a low side, and the latter must be checked when it goes to excess.

Philosophers think that the ego of a person is his spirit, and psychoanalysts believe that the ego has a conscious aspect, and an subconscious aspect, which form the main part of the ego. Psychoanalysts have explicitly contradicted the philosophers' idea that the ego is the spirit. They say that the real ego is much deeper than that, and the real ego discovers itself only when it discovers God. The Holy Qur'an says:

"And be not like those who forsook Allah, So the lie made them forsake their own souls these it is that are the transgressors." (Sura al-Hashr, 59: 19).

Mohyedin Arabi, who is the father of Islamic Gnosticism, and many Gnostics, both Iranians and Arabs, are his pupils, severely scorns philosophers like Avicenna. The Holy Qur'an says:

"Say: The losers surely are those who shall have lost themselves..." (Sura az-Zumar, 39: 15).

The spirit of devotion, and the reality of devotion, which is to pay attention to God, is to discover one's true self. At the same time, we find little of this belief in Gnosticism that it is through self-respect and on its basis that a man attains high ranks. In this way they have received little inspiration from Islamic teachings. The Holy Qur'an says:

"...And to Allah belongs the might and to His Apostle and to the believers..." (Sura al-Munafiqun, 63: 8).

The Prophet has said: "If you are in need, do not beg for help in abjectness to anyone, expect with self-respect".

Imam 'Ali says: "It is death to be vanquished in life, and it is life to die victoriously."[3](#)

Imam Husayn says[4](#): "It is better to die in honour than to live in abjection." He said: "Ibn-Ziad, this ignoble son of an ignoble man has asked me to choose between abjectness, and the sword. How can we submit to abjectness? Neither God, nor, the Prophet, nor believers permit us to do so. Virtuous parents have brought us up. I shall never offer my hand of abjectness to you, and not act like slaves, nor, submit."

Another school of thought is the school of power in which perfection is the equivalent of ability, and defect is equal to weakness. Even the good, and the bad are measured by the same criterion, namely power meaning good, and inability meaning bad.

The German philosopher, Nietzsche, went mad at the end of his life, but in my opinion he showed signs

of madness even from the beginning. He introduced the principle of power in ethics. There were two philosophers before him, namely the French: René Descartes, and the English: Francis Bacon, both of whom offered views about science which overhauled previous theories, and led to a great progress in the sciences, and the theory on human domination over nature, however, at the same time, caused human corruption.

Before these two philosophers, religion and philosophy, used science in the service of truth, not in the service of power, and for this reason, science possessed some sanctity above human interests, and material things. Knowledge was generally compared with wealth, and given superiority over wealth. This is what Imam 'Ali says in *Nahjul Balagha*. A teacher had a sacred rank, and Imam 'Ali said: "He who teaches me a word makes me his servant."[5](#)

The Holy Qur'an says:

"We said to the angels: Make obeisance to Adam....." (Sura al-Baqara, 2:34).

And, the reason given was that Adam knew what the angels did not, thus showing the sanctity of knowledge. Bacon's view was that knowledge is not an amusement, but should serve mankind and enable him to dominate nature. Thus, the heavenly nature of knowledge was turned into an earthly one, and the course of research was changed into that of discovery of the secrets of nature, in order to provide man with privileges.

In one respect, this attitude rendered a great service to mankind, but at the same time knowledge lost its sanctity. The students of theological colleges, who pursue their studies on the old system of education, observe certain rites in connection with attending religious classes which show that the sanctity, and exalted position of knowledge is still important, and a pupil feels deep respect for his teacher.

For them, studying is not for securing wealth, and a teacher considers it below his dignity to turn himself into a wage earner.

But, in modern education which is the continuation of Bacon's views, and those who preach the same ideas, studying is a preliminary step for living under its specific system, that is, to equip oneself as an engineer, or, merchant, or, even a teacher etc. to gain as much money as possible for a comfortable life. Such students are even inclined to abuse their professors behind their backs.

Following Bacon's idea that knowledge means power, everything became a pursuit for power, and in the service of the powerful. Learned men, and the scientists are the slaves of others, whether it is the imperialist, or, the socialist camp, it makes no difference. The world is managed by power, not by science, and scientists. Every invention, and discovery is placed at the service of force, first for wicked purposes, and if there are of no use militarily, such types of knowledge are employed for other services.

The way followed by Bacon was bound to end into what Nietzsche declared, and what Machiavelli believed, to which was added Darwin's theory. Darwin himself was said to be a devout Christian, and it

is alleged that on his deathbed he held the Bible tightly to his chest, and his confessions show his faith in God, and Jesus. But, others misused his views in a way contrary to his own wishes.

Materialists used the evolutionary theory of Darwin to deny the existence of God. Darwin's philosophy was also misused in ethics. He had offered four principles: firstly love of self which prompted every living being to make an effort for preserving itself. Secondly, survival which made every being combat with others as a result of which the strongest alone survived.

This principle has been refuted for several reasons, one of which is that many of the living creatures, which have survived, do not possess the strength, and competence for survival. Nietzsche did not only follow this theory of the survival of the fittest, but he also added that it is right that they should survive, and said that nature's course is directed towards producing superman, and for him this is the perfect man, meaning a being without any weakness.

For him, affection, benevolence, and service are not morality, but these that have caused disasters, and hindered man's evolution towards becoming superman. He is wholly opposed to Socrates, and Christ, for, Socrates has supported virtue, kindness and justice, and Christ has gone even further, and preached love, and charity. These are, according to him, weaknesses, which hinder man's perfection.

Furuqi in his book "The Course of Philosophy in Europe" says: "All learned men in the world have considered selfishness as malicious, whereas compassion as laudable, but, Nietzsche thinks selfishness is strength, and compassion, a weakness and defect. He has agreed with Schopenhauer that the universal principle is the desire for existence, but he has opposed the view that this is wrong. He says this desire for existence is good, and right, and this desire means desire for power. Nietzsche has purported Darwin's theory of survival as a struggle, and whatever has been refuted in Darwin's theory by critics, he has approved and said this struggle is necessary for gaining power. All the philanthropists in the world have considered as an obligation the regard for the state of affairs of the majority, and have based world's affairs on public well-being. Nietzsche, on the other hand, scorns the majority, and gives priority to a selected few, or, the minority. He thinks the more power a person has, the happier he will be, and the greater his benefits to his desires.

Some say it would have been better not to have been born at all, but man thinks: Now that he is born, he must get as much out of the world as he can, even if it is by means of cruelty, deceit, and conflict. Everything which opposes this goal such as truth, kindness, and virtue, is bad. Nietzsche's writings are intended partly to destroy the moral principles of the past, and partly to substitute what he considers as desirable, and laudable for them. He thinks it unfeasible to suppose all people, and nations become equal in their rights, for such a view is contrary to human progress. There should always exist two groups: superiors, and inferiors, and honour and privilege belong to superiors who are the ultimate goal of existence, while inferiors are used as tools, and means by the superiors for attaining their selfish aims. Human progress depends on superiors who are few in number, and the majority is at their service. Society and civilization are formed for that noble group, contrary to what is supposed that the superiors

are at the service of inferiors. Superiors must be nourished in order to become supermen, and rise to the epitome of progress. The Inferiors are like quadrupeds that must carry load for the superiors.[6](#)

This attitude is quite the reverse of what Sa'di, the poet, says:

"The sheep are not for the shepherd, rather, the shepherd is meant to serve them,"

Western men of learning have a theory of racial improvement which is developed by Alexis Karl in his book: "Man, an Unknown Creature", where he says that the weak should not be given the right of reproduction.

According to Nietzsche, the moral principles observed hitherto have been framed in the interests of the majority, namely inferiors, and these principles must give way to those which favour the superiors. Goodness, honesty, and beauty are not genuine and real values. What is real is that everyone desires power. He believes that religions have betrayed humanity since they have preached justice and protection of the weak. When there was no religion, and the law of the jungle reigned supreme, it was much better, as the strong destroyed the weak.

The world was, at first, in favour of the strong, and the weak were considered their slaves. But, the former were in the minority, the latter resorted to the trick of propagating the idea of benevolence, kindness, modesty, justice etc. as something good, and beautiful in order to make the weak appreciate the power of the strong, and be liberated from them; thus, religion was used as a means of attaining their goal. But, this is quite opposed to what Karl Marx believes. He says religion was invented by the strong against the weak, whereas Nietzsche says that it was invented by the weak.

According to the former, Christian ethics are the fundamentals of servitude, which has ruined the ethics of lordship. The talk of brotherhood and equality, love and peace, and observance of the rights of women and workers which have become prevalent today, originated from that source, and are all elusive as implied, and the cause of poverty, weakness, and decadence. These must be replaced by the principles of lordly life. The thought of God and the hereafter must be abandoned, and kindness and sympathy must be put aside.

Kindness means weakness, and humility, and obedience mean baseness, and patience, and forgiveness show lack of resolution. Manliness is the thing to adopt, since the goal is to become a superman, who is above the good, and the bad, and a man of willpower.

In Europe, there have appeared many such schools, but fortunately we have been free from them. The Charter of Human Rights, which is issued by them, is meant only to deceive others. The true European ethics are the Machiavellian and Nietzschean ones. The act of colonization in the world is based on these ideas.

When we are influenced by such thoughts, we are led astray, Are the misdeeds of America in Vietnam anything but the practice of Nietzsche's philosophy? Almost all of their writers follow the same theory, and

only very exceptional ones think otherwise.

Nietzsche says: Why should one kill the self? The self should be nourished. Why should one love others? One should love oneself. Let the weak alone be destroyed, and diminish the pains of this world. A superman is strong, so does everything in power to fulfil his selfish desires, similar to a lord, or, master who removes every obstacle in his way, and fears no danger and war. He then turns to women, and says: It is futile to talk of the equality of man, and woman, or, the observance of women's rights. The main thing is a man, who is a fighter, and a woman is for his amusement, and for bearing children. This is for them the criterion of a perfect man.

At the opposite pole is a school which favours weakness, and considers goodness in being weak. Christianity belongs to such a school which preaches about turning the other cheek after one side of it is slapped.

What does Islam preach, power, or, weakness, or, neither? In one sense it favours power, not of the type of Nietzsche, but a power that is the source of exalted human qualities, from which comes kindness, pity, compassion, and charity. In this sense, the Holy Qur'an speaks so much of power that no other religion emphasizes it to its adherents.

Will Durant, in the first volume of his History of Civilization, speaking of Islamic civilization, says: "No religion has invited people to strength and power like Islam has".

The Holy Qur'an says:

"O Yahya! Take hold of the Book with strength...." (Sura Maryam, 19: 12).

Elsewhere, speaking of the strength of believers, it says:

"And how many a prophet has fought with whom were many worshippers of the Lord; so they did not become weak-hearted." (Sura 'Ali-Imran, 3: 146).

In another place, the Holy Qur'an says:

"Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall," (Sura as-Saff, 61: 4).

And also it says:

"...and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves..." (Sura al-Fath, 48: 29).

Islam approves of having power to the extent of allowing no one to oppress another. The Holy Qur'an says in connection with fighting an enemy:

"And prepare against them what force you can and horses tied at the frontier, to frighten thereby

the enemy of Allah and your enemy." (Sura al-Anfal", 8: 60).

And again:

"And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limits. Surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits"(Sura al-Baqara, 2: 190).

Thus, it is recommended that if the enemy puts down his weapon and surrenders, fighting should cease against the foe. There should be no aggression against women and old men, and children, or, those who have left the battlefield. There are also traditions beside the Verses of the Holy Qur'an. For example, the Prophet says: "Two things are unworthy in a believer: to be avaricious, and to be cowardly." In his prayer, the Prophet said: "O God, I take refuge unto you against two things: avarice and cowardice," Imam 'Ali says: "A believer's spirit is firmer and stronger than grind-stone."[7](#)

Imam as-Sadiq says in *Safinat-ul-Bihar*: "God has given a believer the choice in everything except one aspect, and that is, to make himself abject. A believer is always dear, and higher than a mountain, for, a mountain can be hewed with a pickaxe, but a believer's spirit cannot in any way be cut into pieces', "

Imam Baqir says[8](#): "God has given a believer three gifts:

- 1) Respect in this world and the hereafter.
- 2) Salvation in both worlds:
- 3) Fear in the heart of oppressors.

There are also traditions about sense of honour, The Prophet has said: 'Abraham had a sense of honour, but God's is the greatest.'

Mussolini, the Italian dictator, once said; "He who has iron, has bread." (By iron meaning weapon and strength.) Iqbal Lahori changed the above remark into the following: "He who is iron, has bread,"

Imam 'Ali says: "One can never win his right except by endeavour, and an abject person can never check oppression except by effort."[9](#)

Westerners say: "A right must be secured", But the question is whether it must be secured, or, must be granted." Christianity is based on giving a right, and there is no need to rise in order to secure it, Islam says that it is both securable, and grantable. He who has usurped a right must prepare to give it back, and he, whose right has been usurped, too, must rise to recover it.

Imam 'Ali (as) in *"Nahjul-Balagha"* in his letter to Malik Al-Ashtar quotes the Prophet as saying: "No people rise to the level of sanctity unless the weak stand up against the strong without a stammer"[10](#) . No society is Islamic unless it rises to secure its right.

The Prophet possessed both physical and spiritual strength. In the book *"Muhammad, a Prophet to know Afresh"*, two points are clearly explained:

1) The prophet was placed in a situation politically, and socially, which he had no hope from any quarter, but, he never despaired, and always stood steadfast. His spiritual strength during those twenty-three years was astounding. Hassan ibn Sabet, an Arab poet, says of him in a poem: "He has many aspirations the greatest of which has no limit, and the smallest is greater than the world."

2) Physically, the Prophet was strong, and very brave, so much so that Imam 'Ali says: "In difficult conditions, we all sought his protection". He always lauded strength, and courage, and thus these qualities stand side by side with other human values in Islam. Nietzsche has taken only one value, namely power, and strength, as the criterion of perfection, and other values are disregarded, while in Islam many values are collectively the sign of human perfection. In the Nietzsche school of thought, the power is the equivalent of right, and justice, and weakness is wrong and means defeat.

There are two errors in the philosophy of that school; firstly, it ignores all human values, but one. In the case of God, might and strength are not His only attributes; there are many others to show His perfection. The second error is in the definition of power itself, and that is, only one type of power which is animal strength, either a physical one, or, his carnal desires, to satisfy which one should suppose that one can oppress others by making use of his strength.

There is a story narrated about the Prophet in this connection. He was passing through a street in Medina where a number of youths were competing in lifting a heavy stone. The Prophet offered to act as referee, and they agreed. Then, the Prophet said there is no need to lift the stone to see who is stronger; he who is attracted by a desire to commit a sin, but resists it, is the strongest.

Here, the Prophet is speaking about the power of resolution, and that is different from physical power, which is common between man and animals. In Islamic ethics, and Gnostic literature, this resolution is considered as a power above physical strength, which conquers carnal desires. Sadi says in a poem: "Bring sweetness to another mouth when you can, It is not manliness to deal a blow on another's mouth."

Rumi says:

"Who is a man at the time of wrath and passion? I am looking for such a man in every street"

To be able to control oneself, in anger and lust, is a power. Of course, sometimes what is really weakness is mistaken for power, and that is why moralists say that sentiments must be combined with wisdom and faith, in order to possess value.

Sa'di, speaking about this, says in a poem:

"To show pity to a sharp-toothed tiger, is to show cruelty to the sheep."

Such pity is really doing an injustice to the weak and the oppressed.

There is a verse in the Holy Qur'an saying that if a married man commits adultery, his punishment is death, and a married woman committing adultery must be put to death, in the presence of believers. If the feeling of compassion is roused in such a case among bystanders, the Holy Qur'an says:

"...and let not pity for them detain you in the matter of obedience to Allah..." (Sura an-Noor, 24:2).

For, in this case high divine and human interests are at stake, and compassion here means injustice to society.

Today, it is often said that execution is useless, and inhuman. Their argument is that a criminal should be reformed. Reform is all right, but it should come prior to crime. Many societies lack the power of education, whereas means of corruption are plentiful. If the punishment by death is abolished, the potential criminal who is not reformed, will become most active. He is encouraged to commit more crime, either to avenge his being ignored, or, hoping to receive the education, in prison, of which society had deprived him before.

Others are against cutting off a thief's hand. But, you can see how numerous are the cases of theft even leading to crimes simply because the punishment for it is too light, or, even negligible.

The pilgrims, who visited Mecca fifty, or, sixty years ago, know how frequent theft was in Saudi Arabia. The caravans did not dare to set off with a number smaller than two thousand, or, without taking armed guards with them; yet, no year passed without some disaster for the pilgrims in being plundered, and killed. The Saudi government took the step of cutting off a few robbers' hands, and all the robbery, and stealing came to an end suddenly. Now you find the belongings of pilgrims left uncared for here and there, and no one dares touch them.

So, we realize that the school of might has neither known other human values, nor, recognized power, or, might itself. Power means assisting others, as Imam 'Ali (as) said to his two sons, Hassan (as) and Husayn (as): "Let your strength be used in aiding the oppressed, and in fighting the oppressor."[11](#)

Rancor, envy, malice, and all these vices have their root in weakness. He who is vengeful, and suffers from sadism is not strong, but very weak. A strong person is rarely envious, or, vengeful.

A remark is narrated from Imam Husayn saying: "Power removes rancor".

This is opposed to the idea that weakness causes rancor. Another sentence is quoted from Imam 'Ali about slanderer, which is noteworthy. He was asked what kind of people loved slandering, so he answered: "The weak, it is the utmost effort of the weak." A strong person has no need of it. He also attributes adultery to weakness, for, a person, with a sense of honour, does not resort to it.

Islam does not approve of weakness, but, at the same time does not consider strength as the only criterion of perfection. Moreover, strength is of a greater variety, and degree in Islam that is ignored in some other schools of thought. The conclusion is in favor of society. Sympathy is not weakness, but is benevolence, and charity.

Another school of thought, mostly prevalent in India, and to some extent, propagated by Christianity, is the school of love. In this school, man's perfection is in serving people, and loving them. This is at the opposite pole of the school of Nietzsche. Humanitarianism in the West means doing service to human beings, and the word "human", as used by our press, means being charitable. Sa'di, our poet, speaks of

this in an exaggerated way by saying:

"Devotion is nothing but serving people, and not by rosary, prayer carpet, and cassock."

His remark is obviously levelled at the *Sufis* who know nothing of benevolence.

Others refer to the same idea by saying:

"You may drink, or, burn a pulpit, but abstain from hurting people."

In this school, there is only one value, and that is benevolence, and only one vice, and that is to hurt people. The Holy Qur'an recommends benevolence; but, does not confine perfection to it. It says:

"Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion; He admonishes you that you may be mindful" (Sura an-Nahl, 16: 90).

Generosity is a Holy Qur'anic principle, meaning to give priority to others to benefit from what is yours and you need it yourself. The Holy Qur'an speaks about the Ansar (Prophet's helpers) who preferred the Emigrants to themselves:

"...and prefer (them) before themselves, though poverty may afflict them..." (Sura al-Hashr, 59:9).

and:

"And they give food out of love for Him to the poor, and the orphan, and the captive. We only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks"(Sura al-Insan, 76: 8- 9).

This Verse refers to the time when 'Ali's children had observed fast, and in the evening when the time came to break the fast, an orphan came to their door, and they offered him the barley bread they had baked, leaving nothing for themselves. This is an example of the self-sacrifice and generosity, which has always been emphasized in Islam.

A nobleman of the pagan tribes came to the Prophet, and he saw him with one of his children on his knees, and kissing and caressing the child.. He said to the Prophet: "I have ten sons, and I have never kissed any of them even once." The Prophet became uneasy, and angrily, and said; "He who has no compassion towards others, will not receive any compassion from God. What can I do for you if God has removed kindness from your heart?" Imam 'Ali himself is a model of kindness and commiseration.

We stated before that cruelty is in the depth of the Western spirit. This fact is admitted by the Westerners themselves, and they consider indulgence, charity, and affection to be Oriental qualities, even such affections as fatherly, motherly, sisterly, and brotherly ones. That is why Easterners declare the Westerner to be dry, and without sentiments even though they have apparent system of social justice.

A friend narrates that he was ill, and had gone to Austria for treatment. After an operation he was

recovering, and sitting with his son in a restaurant, as his son looked after him. A man and a woman were keeping watch on them. As his son passed by them to fetch something, they asked him some questions. When he came back to his father's table, his father asked him what those two were asking. He said; "I told them you were my father. And, they asked whether it was my duty to serve you. I told them that you supported me in order to complete my studies."

They came to my friend's table, and talked about their son studying in another country. But, my friend's son found out that they had lied, and they had no son. Those two had agreed thirty years before to live together, on the condition that if they found each other compatible, they would marry. And, they had not bothered to get legally married after all that time. This is a typical Western attitude.

The late Mohagheghi has narrated a story about his visit to Germany. A learned professor used to visit him. He had cancer, and Mohagheghi, and other Muslims often went to see him in the hospital. One day he began complaining of his son, and wife, who after being told that he was suffering from cancer, thought he had no chance of survival, so they said good-bye to their husband and father respectively, and never returned to visit him. One day, the Muslim friends heard that he had died, and they went to attend the funeral ceremony. His son was there that day, but the Muslims found out that he had sold his father's body to the hospital before his death, and now he had come to receive the money.

But, it must be remembered that not all affections are true in nature; they are rather a kind of selfishness, for affection means forsaking one's own legitimate right in favor of someone else's. Such a person must abstain from transgressing on the rights of others, and respect those rights, and secure his own right, and use it in favor of another. Gathering wealth by illegal ways and spending some of it for someone else's sake is neither generosity, nor, social benevolence. This is for the sake of winning a good reputation (social standing).

Another example is to claim hospitality, and to receive people at various times; thereby, force the wife to work like a slave. Imam 'Ali always co-operated with Fatimah in household affairs, and was ever fair, and helpful.

It is related of the great religious authority, Haj Mirza Muhammad Taqi Shirazi that he never gave orders to anyone. Once he was ill, and his meal was brought, and left near the door. He could not get up to carry it, and at the same time he abstained from calling someone to bring it to him. Some hours after they found the food cold, and in the same place.

A story is told about some companions of the Prophet in the Battle of Muth, which is truly amazing. A number of the wounded were lying on the ground, and were groaning with thirst. A man carried a pot of water to them. When he offered it to one of them the latter pointed to another, and said that he was in greater need of water, and the second man pointed to a third one for water to be taken to him. When the water-carrier approached the third man, he found him dead. So, he returned to the second man, but he, too, was dead, and when he came to the first man he, too, had died. This is self-sacrifice, and giving

priority to others before oneself, is one of the greatest of human values.

- [1.](#) Nahjul-Balagha, 493.
- [2.](#) Wasail al-Shiah Vol.11, p. 122 .
- [3.](#) Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 51.
- [4.](#) Life of Imam Husayn", Vol I, p.1831.
- [5.](#) Sobhi Saleh Version, Sermon 147, p. 495.
- [6.](#) Course of Philosophy in Europe, Part 3, pg 198.
- [7.](#) 'Nahjul Balagha", wisdom 333.
- [8.](#) Al-Mawaez, p. 103.
- [9.](#) Nahjul-Balagha, Sermons 27 and 29.
- [10.](#) Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 29.
- [11.](#) Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 47.

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