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Self-refinement

At this stage the following three acts should be performed:

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

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

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

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

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

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

us how to relinquish them. We all recognize moral indecencies and understand their ugliness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Negligence from the Disease

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

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

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

about our own improvement.

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

2. Diagnosis of Self-sickness

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

2.1. Strengthening of Reason

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

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

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

عن ابي جعفر عليه السلام قال: لما خلق الله العقل استنطقه. ثم قال له: اقبل, فاقبل. ثم قال له: ادبر. فادبر ثم قال: قعزتي وجمالي! ما خلقت خلقا احب الى منك ولا اكملتك الا فيمن احب. اما انى اياك امر واياك انهى واياك اثيب

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

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

Also the Holy Qur'an said:

لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ

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

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا

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

And said:

يَعْقِلُونَ إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا

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

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

وَيَجْعَلُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

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

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

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

“It is because of the existence of reason that God–Almighty gets worshipped, and one makes his entry into Paradise.”[3](#)

He also said:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

قال ابوعبدالله عليه السلام: اكمل الناس عقلا احسنهم خلقا

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

قال ابوعبدالله عليه السلام: العقل دليل المؤمن

“The reason is the guide of a believer.”⁷

Imam al-Ridha’⁸ (a.s.) said:

قال الرضا عليه السلام: صديق كل امر عقله وعدوه جهله

“The reason is the friend of everyone and the ignorance is his enemy.”⁹

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

قال امير المؤمنين (ع): اعجاب المر بنفسه دليل على ضعف عقله

“Egotism of a person is the indication of his wisdom’s weakness.”¹⁰

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

قال موسى بن جعفر عليه السلام: يا هشام! من اراد الغنى بالامل وراحة القلب من الحسد السلامة في الدين فليترضع الى الله في مسالته بان يكمل عقله. فمن عقل قنع بما يكفيه ومن قنع بما يكفيه استغنى ومن لم يقنع بما يكفيه لم يدرك الغنى ابدا.م.

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

Imam al Kadhim (a.s.) ¹²said:

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

“A wise person avoids even extra worldly–affairs what to say about sins, while quitting extra worldly–affairs is optional and avoiding of sins is mandatory.”¹³

And said:

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

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

And said:

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

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

From the above tradition the preciousness of the reason, its important role in acquiring higher learning and sciences, accepting faith , worshipping God, recognizing and utilizing good morals, and quitting sins

and other vices, could be understood well. Here, it should be emphasized that simply the existence of reason is not sufficient as far as the accomplishment of the above objectives are concerned, rather it is the commissioning and efficient utilization of the faculty of reason within human body which produce the cherished results.

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

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

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

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

2.2. Thinking before Action

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

كان امير المؤمنين عليه السلام يقول: نبه بالتفكر قلبك.

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

Also said:

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

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

And said:

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

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

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

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

“Oh Messenger of God! Please advise me.

The Holy Prophet (S) replied:

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

Also, he said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: انما اهلك الناس العجلة ولو ان الناس تشبثوا لم يهلك احد

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

And said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: الاتاة من الله العجلة من الشيطان

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

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

واروى: التكفر مرآتك ترايك سيأتك وحسناتك

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

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

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

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

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

2.3. Being Pessimistic towards the Self

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

بَلِ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ وَلَوْ أَلْفَىٰ مَعَاذِيرَهُ

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

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

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

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

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

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

قال علي عليه السلام: ان المؤمن لا يصبح ولا يمسي الا ونفسه ظنون عنده فلا يزال زاريا عليها ومستزيذا لها

“A believer is continuously pessimistic about his self, always criticizes, and demands better deeds from him.”²³

In praising the characteristics of the pious, he said:

قال علي (ع): فهم لانفسهم متهمون ومن اعمالهم مشفقون واذانكي احد منهم خال مما يقال له فيقول: انا اعلم بنفسي من غيري وربى اعلم منى بنفسي.

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

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

2.4. Consulting Spiritual Physicians

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

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

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

2.5. Consulting a Wise Friend

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

قال الصادق عليه السلام: أحب اخوانى الى عيوبى

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

2.6. Learning from Other's Faults

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

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

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

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

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

2.7. Learning from Criticism

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

advantage.

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

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

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

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

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

2.8. Symptoms of Heart's Sickness

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Decision for Treatment

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

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

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

خواهي نشوی رسوا هم رنگ جماعت باش.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

evilness it could never be a place for goodness.

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

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

4. Control and Domination of Self

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

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

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

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

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

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

of them demands its own absolute domination.

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

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

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

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي

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

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

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

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

And, he said:

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

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

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

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

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

قال على عليه السلام: اياكم وغلبة الشهوات على قلوبكم فان بدايتها ملكة ونهايتها هلكة.

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

And said:

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

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

And said:

قال على (ع): غلبة الشهوة اعظم هلك وملكها اشرف ملك.

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

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

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

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

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

قال على عليه السلام: غالبوا انفسكم على ترك المعاصي يسهل عليكم مقادتها الى الطاعات.

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

worships.”[33](#)

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

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

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

قال على عليه السلام: اذا صعب عليك نفسك فاصعب لها تذل لك وخادع نفسك عن نفسك تنقد لك

“If self showed stubbornness and did not surrender against you, then deal harshly till he becomes tame. Act deceitfully against him until becomes obedient.”[34](#)

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: الشهوات اعلال قاتلات افضل دوائها اقتنا الصبر عنها

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

[1.](#) “For God’s-worship there is nothings superior than the reason. A believer is not wise until and unless he possesses the following ten characteristics:

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

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

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

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

[2.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p–10.

[3.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p–11.

[4.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p–11.

[5.](#) al Kafi, vol. 1, p–16.

[6.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p–23.

[7.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p–25.

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

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

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

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

[9.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p–11

[10.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p–27.

[11.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p–18.

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

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

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

[13.](#) al-Kafi, vol. I, p–17.

[14.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p–19.

[15.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 1, p–19.

[16.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p–54.

[17.](#) al-Kafi, vol. 2, p–55.

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

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

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