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Biography of Ayatullah Ja`far Subhani

The golden pages of history are replete with individuals who have sacrificed their lives for the guidance and leadership of humanity and throughout the ages, we see many scholars who have dedicated their lives to the path of progress and spiritual upliftment of mankind. One such scholar who is also one of the greatest thinkers of the Islamic world is Ayatullah Hajj Shaykh Ja`far Subhani who has spent his entire life in research, writing and teaching and has struggled through these means to lift the culture and level of humanity.

Ayatullah Subhani was born on the 28th of Shawwal in the year 1347 AH (1926 CE) in the city of Tabriz (in Iran) into a scholarly and well-respected family. His father was the late Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad Husain Subhani Khayabani who spent more than fifty years teaching, writing and guiding the people and was also responsible for the training and educating of the future teachers and leaders of the society.

After completing his primary school and the introductory studies, Ayatullah Subhani then went on to study the books of Farsi literature and grammar. Following this, at the age of 14 (1361 AH/1940 CE) he proceeded to enter into the Theological Seminary of Tabriz named Talibiyah and was busy in the preliminary and second level of studies in the Theological Seminary.

He studied the `Arabic language under the guidance of the following deceased scholars: Hajj Shaykh Hasan Nahwi and Shaykh `Ali Akbar Mudarris Khayabani (author of the book Rayhanatul Adab). These studies took him five years – until the year 1365 AH (1944 CE) after with Ayatullah Subhani was able to complete the second level of theological studies and began the highest level of Islamic studies (Kharij) in Fiqh, Usulul Fiqh and Philosophy. During this period of his studies, he benefited from the knowledge of teachers such as:

1. The Late Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Husain Burujerdi (d. 1380 AH/1959 CE)

2. The Late Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Hujjat Kuhkamari (d. 1372 AH/1951 CE)

3. The Late Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ruhullah al-Musawi Khumayni (d. 1409 AH/1988 CE)

In the field of Philosophy, he studied the commentary of the book *Manzumah* and *al-Asfar* of Mullah Sadra (may Allah be pleased with him) and also benefited from private lessons in the subject of *realism* under the tutelage of the late `Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husain Taba'taba'i (may Allah be pleased with him).

In addition, he studied `Ilmul Kalam under the late Sayyid Muhammad Badkubae (d. 1390 AH/1969 CE).

Ayatullah Subhani is one of those scholars who took up the pen and writing from a very young age and since then, his entire life has been spent in the fields of teaching and writing. Because of this, we see that the first book he ever wrote which was named *The Criterion of Thinking* (in the field of Logic) was written when he was a mere 17 years old!

At the age of 18, he began teaching the secondary level of Islamic studies (Sutuh) and was imparting knowledge in the fields of Fiqh, Usul, Philosophy, Hadith and other subjects.

In addition, he has written notes on the lectures of Usulul Fiqh of the late Ayatullah Khumayni which have been recently printed.

Through all of this work, he has transformed himself into a teacher who goes deep into a subject and an effective thinker such that many important tasks have been imparted onto him, such as:

1) Establishing a centre for the teaching of `Ilmul Kalam and a research library and facility for those who are conducting research in the Islamic sciences.

2) Written one complete topic-wise commentary of the Qur'an in ten volumes.

3) Prepared and taught one complete course – consisting of 16 printed volumes of books – in the fields of the History of Fiqh and the Fuqaha.

4) Prepared and wrote manuals for the teaching of Usulul Fiqh, `Ilmul Kalam, Hadith, `Ilmul Rijal and the history and information on the various religions of the world and their sects and divisions.

We pray to Allah (Glory and Greatness be to Him) to grant the author of this work the blessings to be able to continue on this path.

Introduction

Introduction to the Fourth Printing in Farsi

Stability of Nations and the Importance of Etiquette

This book, *The Islamic Moral System* which was written close to thirty years ago, contains a discussion

on the Islamic principles and values as mentioned in the blessed Surah of the Qur'an, al-Hujurat. These topics were explained in a way that could be easily understood by all readers and it was our intention and prayer to Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) that the youth would take notice of this book, and through the manifestation of the Islamic etiquette (mentioned in this book), they would be able to reach to great (spiritual) levels during the course of their lives.

Since we desired that this close relationship with the dear readers of this book (especially the youth) should be re-established (through this work), we have edited and re-published this work once again.

We remind the readers of one point in relation to the importance of developing the noble ethical traits, just as an `Arab poet has stated:

فَإِنَّمَا الأُمَمُ، الأَخْلاَقُ مَا بَقِيَتْ فَإِنْ هُمْ ذَهَبَتْ أَخْلاَقُهُمْ ذَهَبُوا

So then surely they are (*the true*) *nations,*
Whose etiquette has remained behind (*for us*)*;*
Then if they lost their etiquette (*when they existed*)*,*
Then they too have ceased to exist (*now*)*.*

Who are those nations that had made a pledge to uphold these valuable ethical traits such that these priceless qualities would rule supreme over them and through this, have remained in existence? If one day we see that a nation is destroyed and becomes extinct, then the only reason for this can be that they did not pay attention to the noble ethical traits, and thus they were pulled into confusion and destruction.

During the `Abbasid Empire, all of the branches of knowledge (with the exception of Akhlaq – Morals and Ethics) of the Greeks were translated into the `Arabic language and were widely and openly accepted (by others) and even the Muslims struggled (to understand these texts).

However in the opinion of the Muslim thinkers, the ethical and moral teachings of the Greeks did not even carry the slightest importance since the moral commandments that Islam possessed were much more superb, such that no other ethical teachings could compare to them. Therefore after the book Taharatul A`raq of Ibn Maskuyah, most of the books of Akhlaq written were concerning the Islamic etiquette.

It is our hope that this book will be the guiding light to the (straight) path for the Muslim youth.

Qum, Imam as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) Institute
6/11/1376
27th of the Blessed Month of Ramadhan, 1418 AH
Ja`far Subhani

Introduction to the English Translation

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful
Allahumma salli ‘ala Muhammadin wa Ali Muhammad

Surah al-Hujurat, the forty-ninth chapter of the Qur’an, lays out many of the social-ethical concepts in Islam. It covers various themes from submission and obedience to Almighty Allah and His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), to the status and honour of the Prophet in eyes of Allah; its talks about the brotherhood of the Muslims and the ethical duties that they have towards one another; it emphasizes on the concern that Muslims should have for solving internal disputes, and for supporting justice against injustice; it presents the equality among the believers irrespective of their ethnic and racial differences; it highlights the importance of spiritual conviction (Iman) over the physical submission (Islam).

Al-Hujurat was my favourite Surah since my student days in Qum in the seventies. When I was invited by the Imamia Students Organisation (of Pakistan) in Ramadhan of 1979, I started a tafsir program in their four local chapters in Karachi and used Surah al-Hujurat as the theme. All praise is due to Allah that the program became a success even, and that tradition of tafsir in Ramadhan nights has continued ever since in Karachi.

When I came to Vancouver (Canada) in summer of 1983, I initiated the tafsir program in Ramadhan where I again started with Surah al-Hujurat. That Surah was also used by me as the pilot project for the plan of *An Explanatory Translation of the Qur’an* which has been published in three volumes covering half of the holy Qur’an (and the remaining three volumes will be published soon, Insha-Allah).

The Persian commentary of Surah al-Hujurat by Ayatullah Shaykh Ja`far Subhani was one of the sources that I referred to when doing the tafsir of that Surah. Ayatullah Subhani is one of the leading scholars of Qum, and his multi-volume commentary of the Qur’an (under the title of *“Mafahimu ’l-Qur’an”*) may be considered as a pioneering attempt in the thematic approach of Qur’anic commentary.

And so it was indeed a delight to know that Shaykh Saleem Bhimji has translated the commentary of Surah al-Hujurat of Ayatullah Subhani and has thus helped the English speaking students of the Qur’an to study the moral/ethical concepts of Islam from its original source.

May Almighty Allah bless Shaykh Saleem Bhimji for his endeavours in translating this book and increase his *tawfiqat*.
Amen

18 August 2003 / 20 Jumadi ath-Thani 1424
Toronto
Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

Foreword

In introducing man as a creature with the ability of thought and contemplation, the Philosophers and great thinkers of the world have relied upon the phrase that man is a *rational animal* (الحيوان الناطق) – one that possesses intelligence and the ability to perceive things.

Such a definition is precisely correct and undeniable from the point of view of a Philosopher since his occupation is related to the thoughts and intelligence of people.

Thus, he wishes to enlighten people by inviting them to the laws and secrets behind creation and the mysteries of the universe of creation through the faculty of thought and reasoning. Consequently according to the Philosopher, a person will never reach to his true objective (in life) except through strengthening his ability to think and reason.

However, from the point of view of the Scholars of Akhlaq (Islamic Etiquette and Morals) and others who are active in the field of training and education and those responsible for the nurturing and development of man, this definition is completely incorrect and is not a complete nor expressive definition of man.

They state this since even though half of a person's character is made up of his thought and intelligence, however the other half is derived from instinct, human nature and the (innate) inclinations whose boundaries and limits are unknown. For those who are engaged in the field of nurturing and training others, the issues of instinct and human nature of the person is much more important than his intellect and intelligence since these are the things that lead and govern a person's human nature and his desires.

There is no doubt that every individual has certain innate characteristics that he has been created with such as: love of self; desire to reach perfection; help and service to others; love for wealth, status and beauty; the feeling of fear and revenge; and other things.

These innate characteristics which guarantee the preservation of mankind and which are the source of every type of movement and development in life are so deeply rooted in a person that sometimes they take control of his destiny and make him traverse a particular path in his life.

Through the control that they possess, they penetrate deep into him and limit his power of thought and reason. It is at this point that the role of ethical teachings in the life of a person and the necessity of having a correct guide for one's instincts is made clear. Thus, this makes the weighty responsibility that lies on the shoulders of the teachers of Akhlaq even more apparent.

The Most Important Issue in the Lives of the Youth

The principle issue in the lives of the youth is that of the control of their sentiments and feelings. The control of ones' natural instincts and keeping ones' sentiments from going to the two extremes of

extravagance and miserliness is one of the greatest difficulties in the life of a person, especially during the period of ones' adolescence. This is the stage of life in which the young man or woman sees a crisis in relation to his or her feelings and where the power of the youths' internal wishes and desires take over.

For example, anger is one of the natural instincts of a person which plays an active and functional role in the life of a person and which can – in certain instances – protect the life and guarantee his existence. When a person's life is thrown into danger, this natural instinct takes control and by alerting all of the energy that the person has, it strives to protect the person whose life has been thrown into danger by the enemy.

If this natural instinct is not channelled in the proper manner, then the one who possesses this trait will be just as that person who he is being threatened by and thus, he too would be labelled as one who has anger and rage. In addition, he would never be able to be a person of proper composure and would be such a source of anger that he would have deviated from the peaks of humanity. Since he was not able to channel his anger in the proper way, we would be ruined such that there would be no way for him to make amends for his actions.

We are able to come to this conclusion concerning each of the natural instincts that we have been given such as: sexual inclinations, inclinations towards beauty, inclinations towards wealth and status – which just like the inclination towards anger and wrath have all been tested and examined. Accordingly we reach to the conclusion that the way to happiness is to control these emotions and natural instincts and make sure that they are correctly governed. The people who are responsible for this important task are none other than the teachers and instructors of Akhlaq.

The Factors that Can Control One's Instincts

1. Knowledge and Wisdom

Socrates and Aristotle are two of the most well-known scholars of the ancient Greeks. They truly believed that the proper guide for one's natural instincts which could lead to a fruitful life of excellence and moral ethics in the heart of a human being was possible only under the shadow of knowledge and wisdom.

Under the shade of knowledge of what is good and bad, mankind would naturally gravitate towards the noble ethical traits and would seek to distance themselves from the negative ethical traits. Thus, the conclusion of this school of thought is that the only thing that forms the foundations of ethics and etiquette is knowledge and wisdom and thus, their slogan was, *'Ethics under the shadow of knowledge.'*

It is not a place of argument that knowledge and wisdom leave a beneficial mark on the well-being of the moral traits and can also prevent some crimes from occurring (within a society). However, we can

never accept that for all times and for all people, knowledge and wisdom can completely and without any doubt be the final solution in controlling the natural instincts of the people.

Thus, some feel that the bad people within a society are the same people who did not take advantage of the knowledge available to them; and in contrast to this, (they say that) the outstanding people of the society are those that have been disciplined in the middle schools and universities.

This point is not accurate and if anyone who has knowledge of the world societies in general were to conduct a study on this issue, one would see that this statement is a lie since the increase and spread of corruption in its various forms and shapes amongst those people who have an education is not something that anyone can deny. Rather, the statistics that are published in the newspapers of the world bear witness and make our claims solid and trustworthy.

Certainly, we are not saying that a well-read engineer or a well-educated doctor can be equivalent to a person who dwells in the desert and has corrupted himself with sins. Rather, if through this person (the one with education) demonstrating a special vigilance which is a direct product of his knowledge and intelligence, his good actions were to be changed to bad ones and he was to commit a heinous crime due to various reasons, then it can be said that his actions have stemmed from his weak religious convictions.

We personally know people who are able to write voluminous books about the dangers that can be caused by drinking alcohol, however these same people sometimes get so drunk that they cannot even tie their own shoelaces!

There are people who can write articles on the individual and societal damage that is caused by gambling and bribery and illicit relations and can organize and hold seminars in these regards, however, if you look carefully at their lives, you will definitely see that from the top of their head to the tips of their toes, they are submerged in sins and wickedness. Thus, simply having the knowledge which is a resultant of studying and attending classes has not saved them from these desires and inclinations.

There is not a single person who can claim that on its own, knowledge can prevent greed and gluttony, or that it can stop one who is in the quest of attaining a higher position. Today, we see that the world has been pulled towards wars and fighting by those people who seek a higher position and status and who are educated people and this has occurred twice already – during World War I and World War II – in which more than one hundred million people were killed and eradicated.

There are some people who changed the name of the mentioned teachings which have been inherited from Socrates and Aristotle and in place of the word ‘knowledge’ substituted the word ‘intellect’. By doing this, they wished to claim that through the greatness and training of the intellect and mind of a human being, one is able to strip ones’ self of all sins and wrongdoings, and in their place, cultivate the noble traits of humanity.

However this agent (that of the intellect) also does not possess the ability to do this and is not much different than the first agent mentioned (knowledge). This is so because the intellect is able to control and restrain the force and power of the passions (of a person), but in the face of the demonic lusts and passions, it can be compared to a straw house being destroyed by a violent river. It can also be compared to a small lamp which offers very little light to a person while he is wandering through a dark, gloomy valley.

The natural human instincts can sometimes be compared to a flowing river. When the flow of water on the river is normal, many truckloads of gravel can stop the river from overflowing. However once the river has started to overflow and heavy rains fall upon it and the torrential currents surge forth, then this water would take with it hundreds of tons of gravel and sand.

In normal circumstances, in the greatness of the light of his natural instincts, the intelligence of a person illuminates the path of his life and prevents him from falling into the valley of extinction, however when his natural instincts explode, then the intelligence becomes so weak and muted that even the strongest of people become lost and thus in the end, they end up falling deep into the dreadful valley of their (low) human instincts.

2. Training and Upbringing without Religion

This is the same design and plan that Freud and those who followed him had brought forth into the sphere of operation. They stated that the issues related to moral ethics and the principles of humanity must be taught to the child while he is in the bosom of his father and mother and while in the environment of the kindergarten and primary school – and this is an obligatory requirement. Not only must they be taught these things, rather, the people (around them) must strive and struggle such that these things become a regular part of the child's soul and spirit.

For example, one of the societal crimes is the breaking of laws that takes place amongst the older people of the society. In order to prevent this moral disease from coming about, the young children must be taught and trained in the centres of learning in such a way that they do not act in any other method, except that they respect the laws and regulations of the society. Thus, such thinkers see no other way than this to move forward upon.

In order to make this moral belief firm rooted and penetrate deep into the spirit during the period of ones' youth – right from the beginning of one's education – the laws and regulations that the kindergarten and primary school have in place must be obeyed.

The children must be made to follow these rules and the threat and punishment of going against these rules must also be practically shown to them. If the leaders (of the society) and the teachers of the children would be careful in following up their teaching with injecting the noble moral, ethical traits to the children and were to make the principles of upbringing and nurturing of the children under the shadow of

continuous drills and by paying attention to them as common practice, then this would have a very good effect on the children.

The people who brought forth the idea mentioned above were negligent of one point which is: whereas it is true that nurturing and upbringing has a positive effect on the eventual success (of the child) and in the growth and development of the principles of ethics in the mind of the young children, however opposition and resistance to this in the face of the obstinate natural instincts of a person is very rarely seen.

In most times, this opposition is met with defeat and in most instances in the face of natural desires and instincts such as: self-pride, quest for status, sexual desires and worship of the beauty (of self) - the ethics (which have been taught or imposed upon the children) are overcome and defeated. Thus, we see that the power and strength of these natural instincts is so great and the force of their blow is so powerful, that any form of upbringing which is devoid of the divine religious teachings is completely powerless and will eventually accomplish nothing.

Most often, there is a discrepancy and difference between a person's internal desires, his natural instincts and the ethical principles and the only way to satisfy one's internal desires is by throwing the ethical principles under one's feet and to not obey them. This is the case since: doing the right thing, speaking the truth, self-sacrifice, maintaining the trust that others have given, chastity and forgiveness of others – which are all clear examples of the principles of ethics and morality – necessitate that one must be deprived and give up certain things (of the material life). The woman who wishes to protect her chastity and modesty must obviously keep away from a series of things which may bring her pleasure.

Doing the right thing and speaking the truth – even if later on, would cause troubles, acting with justice and dealing with others with equality may lead to others falling into difficulties and may also lead to the loss in the material sphere for others; and in this event, which person would actually keep away from those things which cause one loss? In addition, the power of upbringing is not that powerful and firmly rooted that a person would be able to be transformed into a machine-like being that all sense of perception and negative emotions would be completely removed from him.

However, we cannot deny the fact that in this battle field, sometimes the victory is achieved through nurturing and upbringing. However at the same time, we cannot deny the fact that when one's sexual desires are overflowing, and when the desire to have great amounts of wealth and to attain a status (within the society) are there, the principles of upbringing that one has learnt are all thrown under one's feet and those things that one is not permitted to perform are now made acceptable.

The people who brought about this view defended their incorrect theory for some time and claimed that ethics and morality could take the place of religion and the actions of the well-mannered nations of the West was made as their document (of ethics). These people were adamant that now that the Western World had found these humanistic teachings of upbringing that there was no need for the Divine and

Heavenly teachings.

However, not much time passed when they realized their mistake and the savage World War I broke out, which resulted in the killing of tens of millions of people. In addition, the entire European continent was turned upside down by these same Western people who claimed to have ethics and morality – and this war definitely woke them up from their deep sleep and made them declare that, *"The perception and intelligence of humanity has still not yet reached to the level that morals and ethics can take the place of divine religion nor where proper upbringing can take the place of religion (a complete code of life)."*

The further ahead we advance in the history of the world, the more it is made clear that the desire to place morals and etiquette in the place of religion will not lead to any positive results.

Beneficial Ethical Traits

The moral traits that are in vogue in the West are those which provide material benefit which have been founded from the writings of Dale Carnegie. The roots of these teachings are the same moral teachings of the Ancient Greek whose distinctions and particulars we will explain later on. The principle and essence of the teachings of such a school of ethics and morality are a disguised form of well-mannered exploitation that believe: *What can we do to increase our wealth and to make our position and status in the minds of the people firm?*

After a person has finished studying these books, he would have certainty that if Western Nations have implemented many of these ethical principles in their lives, for example keeping away from lying and not deceiving and tricking people, then it is because of the fact that these traits are ways that they are able to gain (material) benefit and which lead to increases in the business market and to a change in the economic wheels (of the country).

If one day the people see that their (material) benefit is in something opposite to this, then immediately they will change face – and this will show their true side and character. This in itself is a form of deviation from the perfect state of a human being since such people desire ethical traits only to serve their materialistic goals and pleasures, which would add greatness to their lives and economic status, not because these traits are worthy in and of themselves and are natural and instinctive traits.

3. Ethical Traits that Rely upon Religious Teachings

The ethical teachings that are based upon religion, such that the theological beliefs of the faith and the belief that (all people) are granted rewards and punishments based on their daily actions, are what support and sustain the principle of ethics. It is through this channel that the Divine and Heavenly teachings, especially the sacred teachings of Islam have chosen (to propagate the ethical teachings) and during the course of 14 centuries, we see a brilliant outcome from traversing this path.

The belief in a God who is completely aware of the inner thoughts and apparent actions of humanity; the

belief in a God who is not kept unaware of anything that is upon the Earth or in the Heavens; the belief in a God who is completely aware of the number of unimaginable atoms in the universe and the number of molecules in a particular body; the belief in a God who is the final Judge and on that Day that He judges everyone, the book of deeds of each human being which has been protected by the Angels from all sorts of errors and mistakes and is free from all sorts of materialistic aims and goals, will be brought forth and spread open for all to see – and He will not even stop at this.

Rather, the actual image of the actions that we had performed will also be brought forth through His never-ending power and all the parts of our bodies, through the unbreakable intention, will speak and bear witness to the acts that he had performed. Then, each and every person will be given the reward and punishment that they deserve, and…[1]

The firm and immutable belief in such a day is the greatest support for the noble ethical traits and is the most natural guarantee for people to act according to the principles of humanity and in reality, is the most valuable asset and most priceless treasure that the great divinely appointed Heavenly leaders have left behind for us and we must support and keep this priceless legacy alive.

The power of true belief in Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) and the belief in the punishment on the Day of Judgement can sometimes reach to such a level within a person that these things actually act as a deterrent to the person who wants to commit a sin and would thus bring a person who wishes to commit an evil deed to the level of a heavenly creature and infallible person.

The strength of true faith in controlling a person is such that if one day, a believer was to act against what true faith entails him to act upon and went against the teachings of his natural instincts, then he would immediately think about how to repair the damage he has caused and would fall into grief and misery through this act of polluting one's own self. In order to remove the effects of the sin he had committed, without those who are responsible for judging and sentencing a person who had committed such acts, he would seriously request them to punish him or would request the punishment that Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) has ordained be meted out on him. In the end, he would come out of this event as a spiritually cleansed person with no burden (of sin) on his shoulders and would thus enter on the Resurrection Day as such.[2]

The Mission of Ethical Guidance of Islam

Through various types of societal, economic and ethical programs and guidelines, the religion of Islam stepped into the social arena of life and through laying this groundwork in all areas (of life), was able to bring about a valuable and original set of teachings – a set of teachings that are completely new-found, with positive qualities which are able to (spiritually) build a society.

The religion of Islam looked favourably at ethical principles and the role of upbringing and nurturing others and has classified these as being the most important responsibilities of the Prophet of Islam

(blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny).

As for the importance of this role, it is worthy to mention that the topic of training and nurturing others has been placed ahead of teaching others in the Noble Qur'an[3]. This has been done since the religion of Islam wishes to announce to the leaders of society that the issue of upbringing and nurturing others is more important than teaching and educating them and thus, the slogan of the leaders of a society, in relation to the leadership and building the happiness of the entire society must be first through nurturing and then teaching. This is said because until that time that a community does not have the proper nurturing and development, teaching and educating them will never reach to a level of ever being noticed.

The Distinctions of the Islamic Ethical Teachings

Before the official appointment of the Prophet of Islam (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), the Ethics of the Greeks ruled over the advanced civilizations of the world for a period of time.

After relating and translating the scientific and ethical works of the Greeks, the principles of their ethical teachings were introduced into the scholarly gatherings of the Muslims without any thought and a group of Muslim scholars proceeded to expand upon and perfect these teachings and thus, wrote treatises and books in relation to these works.

One of the best books that shows the true value of the ethical teachings of the Greeks is the book, "Tahdhibul Akhlaq Wa Tathirul A`raq" **(تهذيب الأخلاق و تطهير الأعراق)** written by Abu `Ali Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Maskuyah (d. 431 AH). As for the importance and worth of this book, it is sufficient to state that the late Muhaqqiq at-Tusi has written a poem in relation to this book, of which the first line states:

بِنَفْسِي كِتَاباً حَازَ كُلَّ فَضِيلَةٍ وَ صَارَ لِتَكْمِيلِ لْبَرِيَّةِ ضَامِناً

"I sacrifice my soul for a Book
That contains all virtuous traits,
And guarantees to paint the portrait
Of the perfection of creation."[4]

After this book of morals which elucidates upon the principles of the ethical teachings of the Greeks, the next book which is also very valuable is Akhlaq-e-Nasiri **[أخلاق ناصري]** written by the late Khajah Nasir ad-Din at-Tusi which had been penned according to the methodology of the Greek books of ethics.

The clear deficiency of the ethical teachings of the Greeks is that their ethical principles have been based upon the foundations of the quickly diminishing materialistic gains and have been explained and elucidated as such. For example it has been said in these books that, "If you put these ethical teachings

into practice, then you will definitely find that you will be remembered in a good way and people would speak good things about you in the society."

However these people only looked at things from a materialistic point of view and were completely uninformed of the next life and its affairs and thus, they tried to imitate the ethical teachings of the materialists – whose goal and aim was not geared towards purification of the soul and the mind. Rather, their aim and purpose was only to ensure the (ease in the) life of this world and how they could wield influence within a society.

The spiritual-ethical teachings (Akhlaq-e-Irfani) are directly opposed to the Greek ethical teachings (Akhlaq-e-Yunani), however both seek to give the same benefit, but they would never have the ability to build a persons' self or instill a moving nature within him. In addition, some of the teachings (the ethical teachings of the Greeks) cannot even be taught or presented to the common people and for the youth who are thirsty over a set of teachings that would not only beautify their spiritual presence with greatness and nobility, but that would also teach them a path and customs to follow in their lives, these teachings of the Greeks would have absolutely no appeal or attraction.

The original and firm set of teachings, which at the same time are also the most comprehensive and which contain all of the positive qualities of the religion, are the ethical teachings and guidelines found in the Noble Qur'an and the faith of Islam. All of the advantages of the material and spiritual world are completely taken into account – with the condition that it is put into practice and presented in its purity – distanced from any sort of artificial decorations.

In some of the books which have been written under the topic of Islamic Ethics, we see a series of commandments presented which are in no way in line with the principles of the teachings of Islam. Thus, after careful research and review, it is made clear that all of the conclusions that are presented are the specific opinions of the writer of the work and they have absolutely no connection to the principle ethical teachings of Islam.

One example which we can present to highlight this point is the book entitled, *"Ihya' al-`Ulum"* (al-Ghazali, d. 505 AH) which is one of the most comprehensive books of ethics, and possibly in the entire history of Islam, there has never been a more all-inclusive book written than this one. Unfortunately however, in expounding on some of the ethical issues, we see that often times there are things that in no way can be considered as being harmonious with the teachings of Islam.

The Late Muhammad Muhsin Faidh (Al-Kashani) (d. 1091 AH) has embellished his monumental work with countless ahadith from the leaders of Islam (the Prophet and A'immah, prayers be upon all of them) which he named, *"Al-Mahajjatul Baydha Fi Tahdhibul Ahya"*. this book, which has been published in eight volumes has been printed countless times to date!

Necessity of Having a Movement that Encourages Ethics

There is not a single intelligent person – religious or non-religious – who, in the face of growing corruption amongst the future builders of a society (the younger generation) who would be indifferent (to what is happening) and not feel some personal responsibility since this matter is a warning to the leaders and those who are responsible for upbringing others, that they must act as fast as possible to make decisions and rescue this generation from falling into the valley of destruction.

Due to this, there is no other option available to us except that we must strengthen our source of faith and make the principle theological beliefs stronger (in our heart) which will be a prelude to laying the groundwork for the advancement of ethical traits.

Through a correct leadership and by utilizing all the means at our disposal, we will be able to struggle and refine the ethics of the society and alongside this, through organizing religious functions and establishing seminars and in addition, the study of the reasons for the spread of corruption, we will be able to get together to publish a series of books on Islamic Ethics which are in line with the spirit, time and thoughts of the youth of today.

We say this since a majority of the books of ethics have been written in such a way that they do not confirm to the soul and level of understanding of our youth. How many times have we seen that after reading a few pages of these sorts of books, the person becomes tired or loses his interest to continue the book and puts it aside?

In order to assist in this lofty, humanistic goal, this humble writer has proceeded to study Surah al-Hujurat which contains a great number of principle ethical and societal teachings of the faith of Islam. The principles that have been mentioned in this Surah have been examined and analysed in such a way that people of all levels of a society would be able to make use of them. It is our hope that this insignificant book would serve in this purpose.

We pray for that day when the great scholars of Islam are able to extract all of the verses of the Qur'an that deal with ethics and through organizing and putting them in order, are able to comment and elucidate upon them.[5] This point too should also not go without saying that some parts of this book were previously printed in the scientific-religious magazine, *Maktab-e-Islam*, in the section on Tafsir of the Qur'an and now, we present it in its complete form to the dear readers.

Qum, Hawzah `Ilmiyyah
10th Dhul Qa`dah al-Haram, 1390 AH
Ja`far Subhani

1. This sentence is the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an contained in various chapters of the Noble Qur'an such as: Surah Luqman (31), Verse 16; Surah al-Saba' (34), Verse 4; and Surah al-Zilzal, (99), Verses 7 and 8.
2. In the book, The History of Punishment in Islam, we see many examples on this issue which, to keep this discussion

brief, we do not mention in detail here.

3. In the Qur’an, we read the phrase:

وَ يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَ يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰابَ وَ الْحِكْمَةَ...

“And he (the Prophet Muhammad) purifies them (nurturing and upbringing) and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom...” Surah al-Jumu`ah (62), Verse 2.

4. Ta’sis al-Shi`atul Kiram lil-`Ulumil Islam, Page 411.

5. It should be noted that as far as we are aware, this task has been completed to a certain level by two noble writers. This book has been printed under the name of: “Ethics from the point of view of the Qur’an” and “The Ethics of the Qur’an”.

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