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Responsibility 22: Keeping a Distance from People of Ill-Reputation

Another responsibility of a true believer is to keep away from people who are not worthy of associating with those who are not on the path of the Imam or do not follow his way of life. People who have distanced themselves from the righteous and noble individuals and do not remember the Imam. This is definitely one of the important responsibilities for one who loves and is seeking closeness to the Imam.

It is possible for a person to be considered as a Muslim and even a Shi'a and it is possible that he performs the Salat, Sawm, pays his Zakat and other charities and Islamically legislated "taxes" and fulfills all other obligations, but is still considered as one who is not worthy of associating with.

In essence, these people spend most of their time preoccupied with the material world and follow their lower desires and passions. They pay very little attention to spiritual issues, the spiritual journey towards the final abode or treading on the path towards Allah. They have fled the difficult paths (of this life), have run away from the slope that leads towards the next life and have given preference to a life of ease, comfort, relaxation and negligence (of the faith).

If they approach the Salat and fasting and other Islamic acts, then they do so because they are seeking a good outcome in the next life and because of their fear of the hell fire. Thus, the only reason for them to perform these acts is in order to get a lofty place in Paradise!

When a person looks at their acts of worship, one sees that they are performed in a particular manner such that it does not intrude with the goals of the transient world!

How many times has it been seen that their acts of worship are simply performed because they wish to look good amongst the people (that others see them perform these acts) and to gain something for this world from another person. Therefore, such people actually seek to acquire even more of the transient world by misleading the people (through the acts of worship!)

Even in the face of many solid proofs, they refuse to submit to true guidance and refuse to turn away from the path they are on (of seeking the material world). Such individuals are drowning themselves in unattainable desires and wishes.

These types of people, whose number is not small, and whom we can safely say make up a large percentage of the followers of the path of truth(The Shi'a) If they are not classified as enemies of the Imam, it can safely be said are not true friends of the Imam either! Thus, the true followers of the Imam must keep their distance from such people.

In addition, one should also keep away from them when it comes to business dealings and working with them in other issues of life – except in the case of necessity.

Of course, there is no problem in guiding them and taking them by the hand to enlighten them with the hope that this will have an effect on them and that some change may take place. Rather, this is actually obligatory (wajib) upon the true believer! However, in other than this situation, one must keep their distance from them.

One who associates with them, speaks with them and remembers them, will definitely forget the Imam even though they apparently may be righteous people.

If being with a certain individual or speaking with him makes one forget the love of the Imam, then it is not worth associating with that person – even if he or she is not an enemy of the Imam and is a part of the nation of the Imam! In essence, any person who makes a true believer negligent of his responsibilities to the Imam is not worth associating with!

In addition, if a person does not help his brother or sister in their spiritual growth and achieving closeness to the Imam, then it is not advisable to associate with that person – even if they does not prevent one from these things.

The only people who are worthy of keeping company with are those who help one another on the path towards the Imam; those who have the same spiritual course in life; and those who have the same desires and goals and are actively awaiting the Imam.

Of course, that which has been expressed in this responsibility does not go against the reciprocal rights that one must fulfill in relation to brothers in the faith. For example, if one does not associate with a person who is not worthy of associating with, this does not mean that he has broken off family ties (which is a sin in Islam).

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