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Sermons Of Imam Ali As

States of man in this world

Imam Ali (‘a), describing unerringly the human life in this world, says,

Verily, man in this world is the target of the arrows of death and the spoils booted by misfortunes. With every drinking, there is choking; and with every eating, there is suffocation. A servant (of Allah) does not get any benefit in it except by foregoing another benefit and does not advance in age by a day except by the taking away of a day from his life. In this way, we are the helpers of death (against ourselves) and our souls are driving us in the direction of mortality.

How can we hope for survival while night and day do not raise anything in honor but that they hurry to demolish what we have built and scatter what we have gathered? So, seek welfare and its people and let it be known to you that the giver of welfare is better than welfare itself, and the doer of evil is more evil than the evil itself. 1

Acting upon personal desires

Imam Ali (‘a) has said,

O people, what I fear most about you are two things: acting according to desires and extending of hopes. As regards acting according to desires, this prevents from truth; and as regards extending of hopes, it makes one forget the next world. You should know this world is moving rapidly and nothing has remained out of it except last particles like the dregs of a vessel, which has been emptied by someone.

Beware, the next world is advancing, and either of them has sons i.e. followers. You should become sons of the next world and not become sons of this world because on the Judgment Day every son would cling to his mother. Today is the day of action and there is no reckoning while tomorrow is the day of reckoning but there would be no opportunity for action. 2

Desertion of worldly pleasures

Imam Ali (‘a) used to pray Almighty Allah, saying,

O Allah, I beseech You for oblivion of this world and abhorrence of it, because its welfare is worthless, its evil is ever-prepared, its clearness in no time becomes turbid, its new in no time becomes old, the bygone of it never returns, and whatever is obtained in it is in fact a test from You and none can pass it except those whom You endue with protection and You include with Your mercy.

So, please do not include me with those who are satisfied with this world and who put their trust in it, because it will unavoidably betray him who feels reassured of it and it will seduce him who puts his confidence in it.[3]

Laugh at death!

Imam Ali (‘a) was once accompanying a funeral when he heard someone laughing. He thus said,

Is it that death has been ordained only for others? Is it that right is obligatory only on others? Is it that those whom we see departing on their journey of death will come back to us? We lay them down in their graves and then enjoy their estate as if we will live for good after them. We have ignored every preacher, man or woman, and have exposed ourselves to every catastrophe.[4]

False abusing of the world

Imam Ali (‘a) once heard a man abusing the world. He thus said to him,

O you who abuses the world! O you who has been deceived by its deceit and cheated by its wrongs! Do you covet the world and then abuse it? Do you accuse it or it should accuse you? When did it bewilder you or deceive you-whether by the decay and fall of your forefathers, or by the sleeping places of your mothers under the ground?

How much you looked after them in their illness and nursed them during sickness, desiring them to be cured and consulting physicians for them in the morning when your medicine did not avail them and your wailing for them did not benefit them.

Your mourning over them did not prove useful to them and you could not achieve your aims. You could not ward off death from them with all your power. In fact, through the dying man, the world presented an illustration for you and showed you by the example of his falling down how you would also fall.

Certainly, this world is a house of truth for him who appreciates it; a place of safety for him who understands it; a house of riches for him who collects provision from it for the next world; and a house of instructions for him who draws instruction from it.

It is the place of worship for the lovers of Allah; the place of praying for the angels of Allah; the place where the revelation of Allah descends; and the marketing place for those devoted to Allah. Herein they earned mercy and herein they acquired

Paradise by way of profit

Therefore, who can abuse it when it has announced its departure and called out that it would leave! It had given news of its own destruction and the death of its people. By its hardship, it set an example of their hardships. By its pleasures, it created eagerness for the pleasures of the next world. It brings ease in the evening and grief in the morning by way of persuasion, dissuasion, alarm, and warning.

People abuse it on the morning of their repentance but others will praise it on the Judgment Day. The world recalled to them the next life and they bore it in mind. It related to them things of the next life and they acknowledged them. It preached to them and they took lesson from it.[5]

After death!

Describing man's state after death, Imam Ali ('a) says,

If you could see that which has been seen by those of you who have died, you would be puzzled and troubled. Then you would have listened and obeyed; but what they have seen is yet curtained off from you. Shortly, the curtain would be thrown off. You have been shown, provided you see, and you have been made to listen, provided you listen, and you have been guided, if you accept guidance.

I spoke unto you with truth. You have been called aloud by instructive examples and warned through items full of warnings. Only man can convey messages from Allah, after the heavenly messengers (i.e. the angels).[6]

The transient nature of this world

Talking about the transient nature of this world, Imam Ali ('a) says,

So now, surely this world has turned its back and announced its departure while the next world has appeared forward and proclaimed its approach. Today is the day of preparation while tomorrow is the day of race. The place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hellfire. Is there no one to offer repentance over his faults before his death? Or is there no one to perform virtuous acts before the day of trial?

Beware, surely you are in the days of hopes behind which stands death. Whoever acts during the days of his hope before the approach of his death, his action will benefit him and his death will not harm him. But he who fails to act during the period of hope before the approach of death, his action is a loss and

his death is a harm to him.

Beware and act during a period of attraction just as you act during a period of dread. Beware, surely I have not seen a coveter for Paradise asleep nor a fearful from Hellfire to be asleep. Beware, he whom right does not benefit must suffer the harm of the wrong; and he whom guidance does not keep firm will be led away by misguidance towards destruction.

Beware, you have been ordered insistently to march and been guided how to provide for the journey. Surely, the most frightening thing, which I am afraid of about you, is to follow desires and to widen the hopes. Provide for yourself from this world what would save you tomorrow (on the Judgment Day).[7]

Elapse of the world

Warning against the evils and seductions of this world, Imam Ali (‘a) says,

Beware, the world is wrapping itself up and has announced its departure. Its known things have become strangers and it is speedily moving backward. It is advancing its inhabitants towards destruction and driving its neighbors towards death.

Its sweet things (i.e. enjoyments) have become sour, and its clear things have become polluted. Consequently, what has remained of it is just like the remaining water in a vessel or a mouthful of water in the measure. If a thirsty person drinks it, his thirst is not quenched.

O servants of Allah, get ready to go out of this world for whose inhabitants decay is ordained, and beware heart’s wishes should overpower you, nor should you take your stay in life to be long.

By Allah, if you cry like the she-camel that has lost its young one, call out like the cooing of pigeons, make noise like devoted recluses, and turn to Allah leaving your wealth and children as a means to secure His nearness and high position with Him or the forgiveness of sins which have been covered by His books and recorded by His angels, it would be less than His reward that I expect for you or His retribution that I fear about you.

By Allah, if your hearts melt down thoroughly and your eyes shed tears of blood either in hope for Him or for fear from Him and you are also allowed to live in this world all the time that it lasts, even then your actions cannot pay for His great bounties over you and His having guided you towards faith.[8]

Haste towards righteous acts

Calling to devoutness and piety, Imam Ali (‘a) says,

O creatures of Allah, fear Allah and anticipate your death by good actions. Purchase everlasting joy by paying transitory things: pleasures of this world. Get ready for the journey, for you are being driven, and

prepare yourselves for death, since it is hovering over you. Be a people who wake up when called and who know that this world is not their abode, and so have it changed with the next.

Certainly, Allah has not created you aimlessly nor left you as useless. There is nothing between anyone of you and Paradise or Hellfire except death that must befall him. The life that is being shortened every moment and being dismantled every hour must be regarded very short.

The hidden thing; namely, death, which is being driven to you by two over new phenomena: the day and the night, is certainly quick of approach. The traveler that is approaching with success or failure; namely, death, deserves the best of provision. So, acquire such provision from this world while you are here with which you may shield yourself tomorrow (on the Day of Judgment).

So, everyone should fear Allah, should admonish himself, should send forward his repentance, and should overpower his desire, because his death is hidden from him, his desires deceive him, and Satan is posted on him; and he beautifies for him sin so that he may commit it and prompts him to delay repentance until his desires make him the most negligent. Piety is for the negligent person whose life itself would be a proof against him and his own days passed in sin would lead him to punishment.

We ask Allah the Glorified that He may make us and you like one whom bounty does not mislead, whom nothing can stop from obedience to Allah and whom shame and grief do not befall after death.[9]

Description of the transitory world

Describing this world, Imam Ali ('a) says,

In what way shall I describe this world whose beginning is grief and whose end is destruction?[10] *The lawful actions performed here have to be accounted for, while for the forbidden ones there is punishment. Whoever is rich here faces mischief and whoever is poor gets grief. One who hankers after it does not get it. If one keeps away from it then it advances towards him. If one sees through it, it would bestow him sight, but if one has his eye on it then it would blind him.*[11]

Death and after death

The following sermon is known as Al-Gharra' (i.e. the brilliant sermon) and it is one of the most wonderful sermons of Imam Ali ('a):

Praise be to Allah Who is High above all else, and is Near (the creation) through His bounty. He is the Giver of all reward and distinction, and Dispeller of all calamities and hardships. I praise Him for His continuous mercy and His copious bounties.

I believe in Him as He is the First of all and He is Manifest. I seek guidance from Him as He is Near and He is the Guide. I seek His succor as He is Mighty and Subduer. I depend upon Him as He is Sufficer

and Supporter. And I stand witness that Muhammad (blessing of Allah be on him and his progeny) is His slave and His Prophet. He sent him for enforcement of His commands, for exhausting His pleas, and for presenting warnings against eternal punishment.

O servants of Allah, I advise you to have fear of Allah Who has furnished illustrations and Who has timed for you your lives. He has given you covering of dress[12] *and He has scattered for you livelihood, surrounded you with His knowledge.*

He has ordained rewards. He has bestowed upon you vast bounties and extensive gifts. He has warned you through far-reaching arguments, and He has counted you by numbers. He has fixed for you ages to live in this place of test and house of instruction.

You are on test in this world and you have to render account about it. Certainly, this world is a dirty watering-place and a muddy source of drinking. Its appearance is attractive and its inside is destructive. It is a deception, a vanishing reflection, and a bent pillar.

When its despiser begins to like it and he who is not acquainted with it feels satisfied with it, then it raises and puts down its feet in joy, entraps him in its trap, makes him the target of its arrows, and puts round his neck the rope of death taking him to the narrow grave and fearful abode in order to show him his place of stay and the recompense of his acts.

This goes on from generation to generation. Neither death stops from cutting them asunder nor do the survivors keep aloof from committing of sins.

They are emulating each other and proceeding in groups towards the final objective and the rendezvous of death, until when matters come to a close, the world dies and resurrection draws near. Allah[13] *would take them out from the corners of the graves, the nests of birds, the dens of beasts, and the centers of death.*

They hasten towards His command and run towards the place fixed for their final return group by group, quiet, standing, and arrayed in rows. They will be within Allah's sight and will hear every one who would call them peculiar to man, it has been particularly mentioned

They would be having the dress of helplessness and covering of submission and indignity. At this time, contrivances would disappear, desires would be cut, hearts would sink quietly, voices would be curbed down, sweat would choke the throat, fear would increase, and ears would resound with the thundering voice of the announcer calling towards the final judgment, award of recompense, striking of punishment, and paying of reward.

People have been created as a proof of His power, have been brought up with authority, they are made to die through pangs, and placed in graves where they turn into crumbs. Then, they would be resurrected one by one, awarded their recompense, and would have to account for their actions, each

one separately.

They had been allowed time to seek deliverance, had been shown the right path, and had been allowed to live and seek favors, the darkness of doubts had been removed, and they had been let free in this period of life as a training place in order to make preparation for the race on the Day of Judgment, to search for the objective with thoughtfulness, to get time necessary to secure benefits, and provide for the next place of stay.

How appropriate these illustrations and effective admonitions are provided they are received by pure hearts, open ears, firm views, and sharp wits! Fear Allah like him who listened to good advice and bowed before it; when he committed sins, he admitted it, when he felt fear, he acted virtuously, when he apprehended, he hastened towards good acts, when he believed, he performed virtuous acts, when he was asked to take lesson from the happenings of this world, he did take the lesson, when he was asked to desist, he abstained from evil, when he responded to the call of Allah, he leaned towards Him, when he turned back to evil, he repented, when he followed, he almost imitated, and when he was shown the right path, he saw it.

Such a man was busy in search of truth and got rid of the worldly evils by running away. He collected provision of good acts for himself, purified his inner self, built for the next world, and took with himself provision for the day of his departure, keeping in view his journey, his requirement, and the position of his need. He sent ahead of him for the abode of his stay in the next world.

O servants of Allah, fear Allah keeping in view the reason why He created you and be afraid of Him to the extent that He has advised you to do. Make yourself deserve what He has promised you, by having confidence in the truth of His promise and entertaining fear for the Day of Judgment.

He has made for you ears to preserve what is important, eyes to have sight in place of blindness, and limbs that consist of many smaller parts, whose curves are in proportion with the molding of their shapes and lengths of their ages, and also bodies that are sustaining themselves, and hearts that are busy in search of their food, besides other big bounties, obliging bestowals, and fortresses of safety.

He has fixed for you ages whose terms are not known to you. He has retained for you remains of the past people for your instruction. Those people enjoyed themselves fully and they were completely unhampered. Death overtook them before satisfaction of their desires, from which the hands of death separated them. They did not provide for themselves during health of their bodies and did not take lesson during their youth.

Are these people who are in youth waiting for the back-bending old age, and those enjoying fresh health waiting for ailments, and these living persons looking for the hour of death? When the hour of departure would be close and the journey at hand, with pangs of grief and trouble, suffering of sorrows and suffocation of saliva, and the time would arrive for calling relations and friends for help and changing sides on the bed.

Could then the near ones stop death, or the mourning women do any good? He would rather be left alone in the graveyard confined to the narrow corner of his grave.

His skin has been pierced all over by reptiles, and his freshness has been destroyed by these tribulations. Storms have removed his traces and calamities have obliterated even his signs. Fresh bodies have turned thin and withered and bones have become rotten. The spirits are burdened with the weight of sins and they have become conscious of the unknown things.

But now, neither the good acts can be added to, nor evil acts can be atoned for by repentance. Are you not sons, fathers, brothers, and relations of these dead and are not to follow their footsteps and pass by their paths? But hearts are still unmoved, heedless of guidance and moving on wrong lines, as though the addressee is someone else, and as though the correct way is to amass worldly gains.

And know that you have to pass over the pathway (i.e. Sirat; the discriminating bridge between Paradise and Hellfire) where steps waver, feet slip away, and there are fearful dangers at every step.

O servants of Allah, fear Allah like the fearing of a wise man whom the thought of the next world has turned away from other matters, fear of Allah has afflicted his body with trouble and pain, his engagement in the night prayer has turned even his short sleep into awakening, hope of eternal recompense keeps him thirsty in the day, abstention has curbed his desires, and remembrance of Allah is ever moving his tongue.

He entertains fear before dangers. He avoids uneven ways in favor of clear ones. He follows the shortest route to secure his purpose, wish-fulfillment does not twist his thinking, and ambiguities do not blind his eyes. He enjoys deep sleep and passes his day happily because of the happiness of good tidings and pleasure of eternal bounties.

He passes the pathway of this world in praiseworthy manner. He reaches the next world with virtues. He hastens towards virtue out of fear for vice. He moves briskly during the short time of life in this world. He devotes himself in seeking eternal good.

He runs away from evil. During today, he is mindful of tomorrow and he keeps the future in his view. Certainly, Paradise is the best reward and achievement, which hellfire is appropriate punishment and suffering. Allah is the best Avenger and Helper and the Quran is the best argument and confronter.

I enjoin upon you fear of Allah Who has left no excuse against what He has warned, has exhausted argument of guidance about the right path He has shown. He has warned you of the enemy that steals into hearts and stealthily speaks into ears, and thereby misguides and brings about destruction, makes false promises and keeps under wrong impression; he represents evil sins in attractive shape and shows as light even serious crimes.

When he has deceived his comrades and exhausted the pledge, he begins to find fault with what he

presented as good, and considers serious what he had shown as light, and threatens from what he had shown as safe.

Or look at man whom Allah has created in the dark wombs and layers of curtains from what was overflowing semen, then shapeless clot, then embryo, then suckling infant, then child, and then fully grown up young man. Then He gave him heart with memory, tongue to talk, and eye to see with, in order that he may take lesson from whatever is around him, understand it, follow the admonition, and abstain from evil.

When he attained the normal growth and his structure gained its average development, he fell in self-conceit and he was perplexed. He drew bucketfuls of his desires and he was immersed in fulfilling his wishes for pleasures of the world and his sordid aims. He did not fear any evil nor was he frightened of any apprehension. He died infatuated with his vices. He spent his short life in rubbish pursuits.

He earned no reward nor did he fulfill any obligation. Fatal illness overtook him while he was still in his enjoyments and perplexed him. He passed the night in wakefulness in the hardships of grief and pricking of pains and ailments in the presence of real brother, loving father, wailing mother, and crying sister, while he himself was under maddening uneasiness, serious senselessness, fearful cries, suffocating pains, anguish of suffocating sufferings, and the pangs of death.

Thereafter, he was clad in the shroud while he remained quiet and thoroughly submissive to others. Then, he was placed on planks in such a state that he had been down-trodden by hardships and thinned by ailments. The crowd of young men and helping brothers carried him to his house of loneliness where all connections of visitors are severed.

Thereafter, those who accompanied him went away; and those who were wailing for him returned and then he was made to sit in his grave for terrifying questioning and slippery examination. The great calamity of that place is the hot water and entry into Hellfire, flames of the eternal Fire, and intensity of blazes.

There is no resting period, no gap for ease, no power to intervene, no death to bring about solace, and no sleep to make him forget pain. He rather lies under several kinds of deaths and moment- to-moment punishment. We seek refuge with Allah.

O creatures of Allah, where are those who were allowed long ages to live and they enjoyed bounty? They were taught and they learnt; they were given time and they passed it in vain; they were kept healthy and they forgot their duty. They were allowed long period of life, were handsomely provided, were warned of grievous punishment, and were promised big rewards. You should avoid sins that lead to destruction and vices that attract the wrath of Allah.

O people who possess eyes, ears, health, and wealth; is there any place of protection, any shelter of safety, or asylum, or haven, or occasion to run away or to come back to this world? If not, 'how are you

then turned away?'

And wither are you averting? By what things have you been deceived? Certainly, the share of every one of you from this earth is just a piece of land equal to his own stature and size where he would lie on his cheeks covered with dust. The present is an opportune moment for acting.

O servants of Allah, since the neck is free from the loop, and spirit is also unfettered, now you have time for seeking guidance: you are in ease of body; you can assemble in crowds, the rest of life is before you; you have opportunity of acting by will; there is opportunity for repentance and peaceful circumstances. But you should act before you are overtaken by narrow circumstances and distress, or fear and weakness, before the approach of the awaited death and before seizure by the Almighty and Powerful Lord. [14]

Learning lessons

Sermonizing his companions, Imam Ali ('a) is reported to have said,

O servants of Allah, take lesson from useful items of instruction and shining indications. Be cautioned by effective items of warning. Get benefit from preaching and admonition. It is as though the claws of death are pressed in you, the connection of hope and desires has been cut asunder, hard affairs have befallen you, and your march is towards the place where everyone has to go; namely, death. Hence, 'With every person there is a driver and a witness.' The driver drives him towards resurrection while the witness furnishes evidence about his deeds. [15]

Abstinence from worldly pleasures

In one of his precious sermons, Imam Ali ('a) says,

O servants of Allah, I advise you to keep away from this world, which is shortly to leave you even though you do not like its departure and which would make your bodies old even though you would like to keep them fresh. Your example and its example are like the travelers who travel some distance and then as though they traverse it quickly or they aimed at a sign and reached it at once.

How short the distance to the aim is if one heads towards it and reaches it! Too short is the stage of one who has only a day which he cannot exceed while a swift driver is driving him in this world until he departs from it.

So, do not hanker after worldly honor and its pride, and do not feel happy over its beauties and bounties nor wail over its damages and misfortunate, because its honor and pride would end while its beauty and bounty would perish, and its damages and misfortunes would pass away. Every period in it has an end, and every living being in it is to die. Is there not for you a warning in the relics of the predecessors and an eye-opener and lesson in your forefathers, provided you understand?

Do you not see that your predecessors do not come back and the surviving followers do not remain? Do you not observe that the people of the world pass mornings and evenings in different conditions? Thus, somewhere the dead is wept for, someone is being condoled, someone is prostrate in distress, someone is enquiring about the sick, someone is passing his last breath, someone is hankering after the world while death is looking for him, someone is forgetful but he is not forgotten by death, and on the footsteps of the predecessors walk the survivors.

Beware! At the time of committing evil deeds, remember the destroyer of joys, the spoiler of pleasures, and the killer of desires (*namely death*)*. Seek assistance of Allah for fulfillment of His obligatory rights and for thanking Him for His countless bounties and obligations.* 16

1. Abu-'Ali Al-Qali, Dhayl Al-Amali 2:54.
2. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 42.
3. Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah; Section: Du'a', pp. 274.
4. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Aphorism No. 122.
5. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Aphorism No. 131.
6. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 20.
7. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 28. Commenting on this paragraph, Sharif Al-Radhi says,

If there can be an utterance which would drag by neck towards renunciation in this world and force to action for the next world, it is this sermon. It is enough to cut off from the entanglements of hopes and to ignite the flames of preaching for virtue and warning against vice. His most wonderful words in this sermon are

'Today is the day of preparation while tomorrow is the day of race. The place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell.'

Besides sublimity of words, greatness of meaning, true similes, and factual illustrations, there are wonderful secrets and delicate implications therein.

It is his saying that he place to proceed to is Paradise while the place of doom is Hell. Here he has used two different words to convey two different meanings. For Paradise, he has used the word 'the place to proceed to,' but for Hellfire, this word has not been used. One proceeds to a place, which he likes and desires, and this can be true for Paradise only. Hellfire does not have the attractiveness that it may be liked or proceeded to. We seek Allah's protection from it.

Since for Hellfire it was not proper to say 'to be proceeded to' Imam Ali ('a) employed the word 'doom' implying the last place of stay where one reaches even though it may mean grief and worry or happiness and pleasure. This word is capable of conveying both senses. However, it should be taken in the sense of 'Al-masir' or 'Al-ma'al,' that is, last resort. A Quranic verse reads,

'Say thou: 'Enjoy ye (your pleasures yet a while), for your last resort is unto the hellfire. (14:30)'

Here to say 'sabqatakum' that is 'the place for you to proceed to' in place of the word 'masirakum' that is, your doom or last resort would not be proper in any way. Think and ponder over it and see how wondrous its inner implication is and how far its depth goes with beauty. Imam Ali's utterance is generally on these lines.

8. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 52.
9. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 64.
10. 'The beginning of the world is grief and its end is destruction.' This sentence contains the same truth which the Holy Quran has presented in the verse:

‘Indeed, We have created man to dwell amidst hardship. (90:4)’

It is true that right from the narrow womb of the mother up to the vastness of the firmament, the changes of human life do not come to an end. When man first tastes life, he finds himself closed in such a dark prison where he can neither move the limbs nor change the sides. When he gets rid of this confinement and steps in this world, he has to pass through innumerable troubles.

In the beginning, he can neither speak with the tongue so as to describe his difficulty or pain nor does he possess energy in the limbs so as to accomplish his needs himself. Only his suppressed sobs and flowing tears express his needs and translate his grief and sorrow. When after the lapse of this period he enters the stage of learning and instruction, then on every step voices of admonition and abuse welcome him. All the time, he seems frightened and terrified.

When he is relieved of this period of subjugation, he finds himself surrounded by the worries of family life and livelihood, where sometimes, there is clash with comrades in profession, sometimes collision with enemies, sometimes confrontation with vicissitudes of time, sometimes attack of ailments, and sometimes shock of children, until old age approaches him with the tidings of helplessness and weakness, and eventually he bids farewell to this world with mortification and grief in the heart.

Thereafter, Imam Ali (‘a) says about this world that in its lawful actions, there is the question of reckoning and in its forbidden acts, there are hardships of punishment, as a result of which even pleasant joys produce bitterness in his palate. If there is plenty of wealth and money in this world, then man finds himself in such a whirlpool of worries that he loses his joy and peace of mind. But if there is want and poverty, he is ever crying for wealth.

He who hankers after this world, there is no limit for his desires. If one’s wishes are fulfilled, the desire for fulfillment of another wish crops up. This world is like the reflection. If you run after it, then it will itself run forward; but if you leave it and run away from it, then it follows you. In the same way, if a person does not run after the world, the world runs after him. The implication is that if a person breaks the clutches of greed and avarice and keeps aloof from undesirable hankering after the world, he too gets pleasures of the world and he does not remain deprived of it.

Therefore, he who surveys this world from above its surface and takes lesson from its chances and happenings and through its variation and alterations, gains knowledge about Allah’s Might, Wisdom, Sagacity, Mercy, Clemency, and Sustaining power, his eyes will gain real brightness and sight. On the other hand, the person who is lost only in the colorfulness of the world and its decorations loses himself in the darkness of the world that is why Allah has forbidden to view the world thus: ‘And strain not your eyes unto that which We have provided different parties of them, of the splendor of the life of this world, so that We may try them in it; for the provision of;

Your Lord is better and more abiding. (20:131)

Quoted from Nahj Al-Balaghah, the English version.

11. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 81. Commenting on this sermon, Sharif Al-Radhi says,

If a thinker thinks over this phrase of Imam Ali: ‘waman ab●ara biha ba●●arat-hu (If one sees through it, it would bestow him sight),’ he will find thereunder very amazing meaning and far-reaching sense whose purpose cannot be appreciated and whose aim cannot be understood particularly when he joins it with the Imam’s phrase: ‘waman ab●ara ilayha a’mat-hu (If one has his eye on it, then it would blind him),’ he would find the difference between ‘ab●ara biha’ and ‘absara ilayha,’ clear, bright, wonderful and shining.

12. Allah has furnished every creature with natural dress, which is the means of protecting it from cold and heat. Thus, some animals are covered in feathers and some carry apparels of wool on their bodies. But the high degree of intelligence of man and the quality of shame
and modesty in him demands distinction from other creatures. Consequently, to maintain this distinction, he has been

taught the ways of covering his body. It was this natural impulse that when Adam was made to give up his dress, he began to cover his body with leaves. The Holy Quran says,

'So, when they tested of the tree, their shameful things were displayed unto them and they began covering themselves with leaves of the garden. (7:22)'

This was the punishment awarded for his committing what was better for him to omit. When removal of dress is punishment, its putting on would be a favor, and since this is peculiar to the man, it has been particularly mentioned.

13. The intention is that Allah would resurrect all the dead, even though they had been eaten by beasts and been merged in their bodies. Its aim is to refute the view of the philosophers who hold that the resurrection of the nonexistent is impossible and who do not therefore believe in the physical resurrection. Their argument briefly is that a thing, which has lost existence by death, cannot return to life.

Consequently, after the destruction of this world, the return of any of its beings to life is out of question. But this belief is not correct, because dispersal of the parts does not mean its nonexistence so as to say that putting these parts together again would involve resurrection of the nonexistent. On the other hand, separated and dispersed parts continue to exist in some form or the other.

Of course, in this connection, this objection has some force that when every person is to be resurrected in his own form, then in case one person has eaten the other, then in such a case it would be impossible to resurrect either of them with his own constituent parts, since this would involve creating deficiency of parts in that who had eaten the other.

To this, metaphysicians have replied that in everybody there are some constituents which are essential and others which are non-essential. The essential constituents remain constant from the beginning until the end of life and suffer no change or alteration, and resurrection with regard to such constituents would not create any deficiency in the man who ate the other.

14. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 82. Sharif Al-Radhi comments, It is related that when Imam Ali ('a) delivered this sermon, people began to tremble, tears flowed from their eyes, and their hearts were frightened.
15. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 85.
16. Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 99.

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