

# **AKHLAQ** **(Ethics)**



# Lesson 1

## Jihād al-Akbar

In Book 9, under Fiqh we learnt about Jihād as one of the Furu' ad-Din and we described it as fighting in battle to defend Islam. That form of physical and armed struggle is also called *Jihād al-Asghar* (The Minor Jihād) because of another form of struggle that is even greater and is called *Jihād al-Akbar* (The Greater Jihād).

These two terms come from a famous hadith of Rasulullāh (s). He had once sent a group of Muslim on a military expedition and when they came back, he said to them, 'Welcome to those who have returned from *jihād al-asghar* and now what awaits them is *jihād al-akbar*.' When he was asked what this greater jihād was, he said, '**Jihād against the self (*nafs*)**'.

Until a human being attains perfection, they constantly struggle with a 'self' that invites them to evil (also called *nafs al-ammāra*) and a 'self' that admonishes and tries to stop them when they want to do evil (also called *nafs al-lawwāma*).

Fighting against the self is a greater jihād because it is harder yet more important. It is harder because no one sees his own self as an enemy so we have to struggle against an 'enemy' that is invisible and within. It is only through constant introspection (*murāqabah*) and self-accounting (*muhāsabah*) that we can identify our weaknesses and negative traits and then struggle against them and overcome them.

In general any kind of addiction is harmful for the soul because it prevents us from experiencing Allāh's love (or being 'addicted' to Allāh) and it causes hard-heartedness. But more specifically, it is constant sinning that causes hard-heartedness and therefore we will discuss Jihād al-Akbar as a struggle against sinning and what is *harām*.

Hard-heartedness is a state when a person may have a lot of knowledge but they don't experience any love or feelings towards Allāh or Islam. When we no longer feel awe or love for Allāh and we can no longer cry when reciting du'as and we feel no sweetness or pleasure of faith (*imān*) when worshipping Allāh then we know our hearts have become 'hard'. We should therefore pray to Allāh to 'soften' our hearts.

Imām Ali ('a) has said, 'Dry eyes is because of hard-heartedness and hard-heartedness is the result of constant sinning.'

One could say the purpose of life is to do jihād against the self's desire to sin until the soul has completely surrendered to Allāh and does no *harām* whilst fulfilling all that is wājib.

Addiction to desires go hand in hand with sin because desires of any kind give us physical pleasure and when we are *addicted* to pleasure we easily forget that we are sinning or that it is making us forgetful of Allāh and the Day of Judgement and causing our hearts to become hard.

In one hadith we are told, ‘Hellfire is ringed with desires while Paradise is surrounded with unpleasanties.’ If we try and imagine ourselves as journeying towards our final destination (Paradise or Hellfire), to get to Paradise – more beautiful and peaceful than anyone can imagine – as our eternal abode, we must walk on ‘thorns’ with patience and undergo various sufferings because of not giving in to temptation. Until we don’t cross these difficult valleys and mountains, we won’t see the boundaries and walls of Paradise. But to slip into Hellfire – the most horrifying place beyond anyone’s imagination – we simply have to keep giving in to desires and sinning, thinking we are enjoying its pleasures and before we know it, we would be slipping down the brink of Hellfire.

Jihād al-Akbar is easier if we constantly remind ourselves of the temporary nature of this world and the permanence of the next world. It also helps to see ourselves as being on a journey and as we struggle, we are constantly moving towards Paradise or Hell.

Imām Ali (‘a) said, ‘Jihad against the self is the dowry of paradise’ and in another hadith he said, ‘Jihad against your desires is the price of paradise.’

And as a tip, Imām Ali (‘a) advised, ‘Repel your *self* when tempted with lusts and establish it according to the Book of Allāh when it doubts.’

As long as a person does not struggle against his or her *nafs*, they are shackled by desires and are slaves to their addictions even if they think they are slaves of Allāh. A person only becomes free by becoming a true slave of Allāh and surrendering to nothing but Allāh.

That is why Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘Fight your vain desires, you will own (free) your selves.’ And he also said, ‘It is with struggle (*mujāhadah*) that evil habits (addictions) are overcome.’

One of the ways to do *jihād al-akbar* is to fast. Fasting is always hard at the start because we have to wean ourselves from our habits and often we don’t even know how addicted we are until we are forced to give up some of our daily habits. Rasulullāh (s) advised us, ‘Fight your selves with little food and drink, the angels will shade you and shaytān will flee from you.’

## Persistence in Sin

Sometimes scholars divide sins into major sins and minor sins. They define major sins as those sins for which punishment is explicitly promised in the Qur’ān and minor

sins as those whose punishment is mentioned in hadith only. But what is most important to remember is that all scholars agree: 'Persistence in a minor sin is a major sin.'

We must not think of how 'small' our sin is but rather think of how great the Lord is against Whom we are sinning.

Allāh also mentions 'minor sins' in the Qur'ān but this is for mistakes and lapses not for habitually sinning:

﴿إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مُدْخَلًا كَرِيمًا﴾

*If you avoid the major sins that you are forbidden, We will absolve you of your misdeeds, and admit you to a noble abode.*

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:31

In a hadith from Rasullullāh (s), he said, 'One of the signs of wretchedness (i.e. being hard-hearted) is repeating a sin.'

Sins are forgiven on the condition that the person repenting makes a firm intention not to repeat the sin again.

﴿وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

*And those who, when they commit an indecent act or wrong themselves, remember Allāh, and plead [Allāh's] forgiveness for their sins - and who forgives sins except Allāh? - and (they) do not persist in what they have committed while they know.*

- Surah Āl-i 'Imrān 3:135

When a person persists in sin, it also makes him or her shameless. Thereafter they sin openly and publicly without a care of hiding their sinful habit. This then hardens the spiritual heart of the person so that he or she is incapable of purifying themselves and preparing themselves for Jannah.

If we are going to struggle against our lower self and against sin and desires, we must have a strategy. To build a strategy and plan, we must know the means that the *nafs* uses to keep us from purifying ourselves and thereafter have practices that we can use as a measure of how struggle.

We therefore list some of these here (based on hadith and du'as of Rasullullāh (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)). Your teacher may ask you for suggestions as well, especially on ways to practice *Jihād al-Akbar*.

## Causes of Hard-Heartedness

- Persistence in Sin.
- Publicizing one's sins to others or sinning openly and publicly.
- Being obsessed with physical pleasures and desires (food, sex, sports, computer games, etc.).
- Spending too much time in sleep, eating, chatting and talking, joking, etc.
- Not worshipping Allāh enough or worshipping without attentiveness.
- Forming addictive habits (even if not harām) e.g. coffee, games, internet, meaningless hobbies, etc.
- Associating with sinful or irreligious friends.
- Giving up on coming to the Masjid and/or reciting the Qur'ān.
- Being miserly with one's wealth and time and not volunteering unless there is some personal benefit to get out of it.

## Ways to Practice Jihad al-Akbar

- Pray *salāt al-layl* everyday (taught in Book 9 Fiqh). This teaches us to struggle against the desire for sleep.
- Fast every Mondays and Thursdays. It is mustahab to fast on these days and it teaches us to strive against the addiction to food.
- Keep a log that you update every night of how you spent your day. This daily self-accounting before going to bed is called *muhāsabah* and is one of the signs of a true Shi'ah. In particular check if any sin was committed that day, if time was wasted and if there were incidents of excessive eating, sleeping or talking.
- Increase your knowledge of Islam. Keep a copy of Nahj al-Balāgha by your bedside and read passages from it every time you need inspiration and encouragement for Jihād al-Akbar.
- Recite the Qur'ān everyday even if it is a few āyāt only.
- Watch your anger. When a person first starts resisting temptation and not giving in to desires, they get angry easily. When you see anger rising in you, breathe deeply, lie down, and recite salawāt until the anger subsides.
- Find ways to help the poor and needy. Feeding the poor, carrying out a humanitarian activity or giving charity with your own hands softens the heart.
- Constantly plead with Allāh for help in your struggle against the *nafs*. This keeps us sincere and humble so that we are never hypocritical in our *jihād an-nafs* and we never become proud and imagine it is the result of our own efforts that we are progressing spiritually.

## Lesson 2

# Honesty, Trust & Integrity (al-Amānah)

In the study of akhlāq we use the terms *amānah* and *khiyānah* as opposites to mean ‘trustworthiness’ vs. ‘betrayal of trust’.

For forty years before Rasulullāh (s) began preaching Islam, he demonstrated two qualities amongst his people: truthfulness (*as-sidq*) and trustworthiness (*al-amānah*). And long before he declared his messengership, the Quraysh (who would later become his enemy) called him ‘*as-Sādiq*’ (The Truthful) and ‘*al-Amin*’ (the Trustworthy).

A Muslim’s faith, worship, piety, good deeds, etc. all are of no value if he or she is not honest and/or has no integrity (i.e. cannot be trusted). Being truthful and trustworthy are absolute qualities that a Muslim must have in order to be regarded as a faithful Muslim.

Just as ‘*amin*’ is one who is trustworthy, a ‘*khāin*’ is one who is not trustworthy and is guilty of *khiyānah*.

### Amānah – Honesty

﴿وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ﴾

...and those who keep their trusts and covenants,

- Surah Mu’minun, 23:8

If someone entrusts something to us, we must be faithful to the trust and return it back to him or her when it is asked for. It does not matter what the value of the item is, or whether person is a Muslim or not, if he or she is a practising and pious Muslim or not, and in fact, it does not even matter if the person is our enemy.

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) said, ‘Be loyal to trusts even if it is to the murderer of Imām Husayn (‘a).’

And Imām Ali (‘a) said, ‘Be faithful to what you are entrusted with even if it is with the murderers of the children of prophets.’

Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘He that has no *amānah* has no *imān* (faith).’

Rasulullāh (s) also said, ‘One who betrays a trust in the world and does not return it to the rightful owner and then dies, he dies outside my religion and will meet Allāh while He is displeased with him.’

Imām Ali (‘a) said, ‘I swear that before Rasulullāh (s) passed away he repeated to me thrice, ‘O Aba al-Hasan, fulfill trusts to the good or the evil, small or big even if it is just a needle and thread.’

Two common misconceptions are that we don’t have to be loyal to trusts with non-Muslims and also that if someone has taken our right, we can take theirs just to get even or recover some of our rights.

As for the first one, the ahādith above clearly show that if we accept to hold a trust, we cannot betray it regardless of who it is. The Qur’ān in fact condemns the Jews during the time of Rasulullāh (s) of the same thing because they would not be faithful to trusts and pledges they made with the Arabs who were not Jews:

﴿وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنَهُ بِقِنطَارٍ يُؤَدُّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنَهُ بِدِينَارٍ لَا يُؤَدُّهُ إِلَيْكَ إِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَائِمًا ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ سَبِيلٌ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

*And among the People of the Book is he who if you entrust him with a quintal<sup>41</sup> will repay it to you, and among them is he who, if you entrust him with a dinar<sup>42</sup> will not repay it to you unless you stand persistently over him. That is because they say, ‘We have no obligation to the non-Jews.’ But they attribute lies to Allāh, and they know [it].*

- Surah Al-Imrān, 3:75

The reason why Allāh ends the āyah with ‘they attribute lies to Allāh, and they know it’ is because these Jews used to justify their dishonesty to non-Jews by saying God has allowed them and they don’t have to be loyal to those outside their faith. But ‘they attribute lies to Allāh’ means God never allowed it and they have no proof for this in the Torah (*Tawrāt*) but it was their rabbis who allowed them.

As for the second misconception, Imām Ali (‘a) has clarified, ‘Do not betray one who entrusts you even if he betrays you. And do not let out his secret even if he lets yours out.’

In other words, if someone mistreats you it does not give you the right or license to commit a breach of trust or to lie or compromise on your honesty and integrity. This is because when we lie or break promises or ignore trusts and pledges, we harm

<sup>41</sup> Quintal: a pile of gold.

<sup>42</sup> Dinar: Arab currency. Think of a dinar like a dollar.



ourselves more. We kill a part of our soul and this is far more serious than anything it does to the person we cheat.

### Khiyānah - Deceit

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوا أَمَانَاتِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

*O you who have faith! Do not betray Allāh and the Apostle, and do not betray your trusts knowingly.*

- Surah al-Anfāl, 8:27

Rasulullāh (s) said, 'If any of four (vices) enters a home, it destroys it and will never be blessed: treachery (*khiyānah*), theft, drinking alcohol, and fornication.'

And he also said, 'Plotting, deceiving and cheating are in Hellfire.'

Imām Ali ('a) described '*khiyānah*' (deceiving others) as 'the head of hypocrisy' and Rasulullāh (s) warned us, 'Do not deceive one who deceives you for you will be like him.'

Revealing a secret that is told to you in trust is also a form of breaching a trust. Rasulullāh (s) said, 'Letting out the secret of your (Muslim) brother is *khiyānah*, so keep away from it.'

Lastly, when a person regrets or repents betraying a trust, in addition to *tawbah*, they must make every effort to return what they took to the rightful owner. Giving back what was entrusted is a part of sincere repentance.

### Amānah and Khiyānah with Allāh and His Messenger

So far we have discussed honesty and deceit amongst people. You may want to think about the same concepts in relation to Allāh and His Messenger (s). Just to initiate your thinking along those lines, consider the following:

- The body and health we possess are given to us on loan and trust from Allāh. One day we have to return it. When we use the body to sin, are we being loyal to the trust?
- The wealth that comes to us is a trust from Allāh. When we don't pay our khums and zakāh, is it not *khiyānah*?
- When the Messenger of Allāh (s), was leaving the world, he entrusted us with the Qur'ān and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) [cf. *hadith ath-thaqalayn*]. When we don't follow the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) or we neglect the Qur'ān, how do the ahādith on *amānah* and *khiyānah* apply to us?

## A Note on Hubb ar-Riyāsah

Rasulullāh (s) is reported to have said, ‘Disobedience to Allāh starts with the love of one of six things: the love of the world, the love of fame and leadership, the love of food, the love of sex, the love of sleep, and the love of comfort.’

This hadith is profound in meaning because if we try and put it to test, we will hardly be able to find any sin that does not fall under one of these six categories.

Some of the sins are discussed in other lessons of akhlāq in detail. For example, the love of the world and wealth is discussed under the topics of materialism (Lesson 5), the love of sex under promiscuity, adultery, and so on (Lesson 7).

But in this lesson we wish to discuss briefly the love of leadership, fame and holding a social status. Leadership in Arabic is called ‘*riyāsah*’ and love for leadership is therefore called *hubb ar-riyāsah*.

Leadership usually involves a lot of work and pain. Yet people love it because it gives them attention and praise from others. Their egos enjoy basking in the limelight of people’s attention and in some cases it may also bring business opportunities and the means to make lots of money. Sometimes a leader may have the illusion that all the praise from those whom he leads is sincere. Usually they are only flattery and quickly turn to criticism if the leader fails to give them what they want.

It is often seen that *hubb ar-riyāsah* is found in older people. They are the ones who usually become presidents and prime ministers and politicians. There is a reason why it affects the older generation more. When we are young, shaytān knows our greatest concerns are our physical pleasures. So he tries to keep us distracted from Allāh and away from *jihād an-nafs* through physical pleasure and the other forms of love that is mentioned in the hadith above. But when we grow old, our need for physical pleasures dims and reduces. We are then faced with our mortality and we fear our impending death. In a last attempt to somehow keep ourselves from disappearing to oblivion, we seek fame and to ‘make our name’.

A true believer is of course quite happy remaining unknown because he or she seeks comfort and security from Allāh only. If he or she does take up positions of authority it is only out of a sense of duty and to guide and serve the community. There is no greed or competing against others to get votes and to prove being better than others. When they are called upon to serve, the faithful (*mumineen*) will volunteer themselves and when they are not, they are quite happy working for Allāh behind the scenes.

But for those whose *nafs* is impure and whom shaytān can still mislead, shaytān preys on this fear of death and oblivion and therefore whispers all kinds of ‘noble’ justifications to them on why they should ‘fight’ to dethrone others and take up positions of leadership and fame.

When one becomes a leader, they take on a great responsibility. In the eyes of Allāh they are now held accountable. If the community or society they lead becomes more corrupt or sinful, they are to be questioned on the Day of Judgement. If the leader sleeps with a full stomach while even one of those he leads sleeps hungry, he is also held accountable. That is why Imām Ali (‘a) said a leader is like one who rides on the back of a lion. Others may envy and admire him but only he knows the danger. In other words if he slumbers for a moment, the lion may throw him off his back and devour him. Holding the reins of leadership is very much like that. It seems attractive but is not as easy as it appears.

A person who takes up leadership but does not have the courage to speak or stand for the truth will very easily resort to backbiting, lying, cheating, bribing and other such sins in order to overcome challenges.

All this may give you an impression that leadership is bad and should never be considered. But in fact leadership can be commendable and even wājib, provided we find ways to do it with *taqwa* (Godconsciousness) and sincerity (*ikhlas*). If we have the courage to stand up for truth and the sincerity to serve Allāh alone then leadership is in fact even more commendable than other mustahab acts of worship. This is because a worshipper only benefits himself or herself whereas a leader moulds and changes a society and reforms the whole community. We could say that if a person has the right qualities to lead a community (such as the qualities of *taqwa* and religious knowledge) and the people are willing to follow him, then it may even be wājib for him to take up the leadership position especially if by not doing so, other corrupt individuals will take over and harm the community or nation.

## Lesson 3

# Tawakkul & Istiqāma

### Tawakkul

Tawakkul is simply defined as *Trust in Allāh*. It is a state in which we have more confidence and gain more security with Allāh than with anyone or anything else like a friend, relative, our wealth, citizenship, etc.

Allāh is always there to help His creatures. But what matters is their ability to draw from this Help, which in turn depends on how much trust they have in Allāh. The more trust (*tawakkul*) a person has, the greater their ability to get what they want from Allāh.

﴿وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ﴾

...And whoever is conscious of Allāh, He shall make a way out for him, and provide for him from where he does not imagine. And whoever puts his trust in Allāh, He will suffice him...

- Surah at-Talāq, 65:2-3

When a person does not trust in Allāh sufficiently, they start looking for alternative means of security. And this manifests itself through hoarding. They hoard wealth, food, clothes, knowledge, and anything they think will give them an advantage over others. This is a survival mechanism but it shows a weakness in faith and trust in Allāh and is therefore undesirable in a human being. Instead Allāh tells us:

﴿وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ الَّذِي يَرَاكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ وَتَقَلُّبِكَ فِي السَّاجِدِينَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ﴾

And put your trust in the All-mighty, the All-merciful, who sees you when you stand [for prayer], and your going about among those who prostrate. Indeed He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.

- Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26:217-220

As we grow older our worries increase. We are constantly stressed and anxious about the future. What happens if we fall sick? What will happen if our parents die? What if we lose our job? What about this and that....?

How comforting it is when a person trusts Allāh and lives a day at a time knowing that as long as Allāh is on his or her side, nothing can harm him or her and all will be well. Allāh points to this level of trust as well in the Qur'ān:

﴿إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمُ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ يَخْذَلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ  
وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

*If Allāh helps you, no one can overcome you, but if He forsakes you, who will help you after Him? So in Allāh let all the faithful put their trust.*

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:160

When Rasulullāh (s) asked the archangel Jibrāil ('a) to define *tawakkul*, he said, 'It is to know with conviction (*yaqin*) that the creation of Allāh can neither benefit nor harm you. They neither give you nor withhold from you. It is to place all your hopes on Allāh and not on the people. When a person becomes like this then he or she does not work to impress anyone but Allāh and does not fear anyone but Allāh and does not desire anything from anyone but from Allāh. This is the meaning of Tawakkul.'

Imām Ali ('a) said, 'Tawakkul is that you should see no one as being the provider of your sustenance (*rizq*) except Allāh.'

When Imām as-Sādiq ('a) was asked the limit of Tawakkul, he said, 'It means that you should not fear anyone or anything along with Allāh.'

This is also the meaning of the āyah concerning the faithful whom some tried to intimidate with their enemies:

﴿الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا  
حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ﴾

*Those to whom the people said, 'All the people have gathered against you; so fear them.' That only increased them in faith, and they said, 'Allāh is sufficient for us, and He is the best One to trust.'*

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:173

But tawakkul does not mean we just sit at home and 'trust' that Allāh will take care of all our needs. Rasulullāh (s) once met a group of people who were not farming for their food and simply waiting for others to give them handouts. He asked them, 'who are you?' They said, 'we are those who trust in Allāh'. Rasulullāh (s) said to them, 'No, actually you are devourers.' Meaning you are like parasites. You don't work and you expect others to work and pay for your expenses and to feed you.

Tawakkul therefore means you work hard as if it all depends on you but you pray as if it all depends on Allāh. Tawakkul means after you have done all you could, you don't worry or stress. You leave the matter in Allāh's hands and you are at peace and at ease with whatever happens thereafter because you trust that with Allāh in control of your life, all that happens will eventually be good for you.

The concept of *tawakkul* is derived from the concept of *tawhid* (Oneness of God). According to Islam, the universe in its entirety belongs exclusively to Allāh, Who is indebted to no one for His existence; He is the only preserver of the universe. On Him rests the entire order of the cosmos. He alone wields all sovereign authority. He is the only Bestower of bounties, because to Allāh alone belongs the heaven and earth and everything therein. There is no one who shares anything with Allāh in the governing of the universe.

Not even a raindrop or a leaf can drop on the earth without His permission:

﴿وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبُرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ﴾

*With Him are the keys of the Unseen; no one knows them except Him. He knows whatever there is in land and sea. No leaf falls without His knowing it, nor is there a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything fresh or withered but it is in a manifest Book.*

- Surah al-An'ām, 6:59

And there is not a creature in the universe, small or mighty, except that it depends on Allāh for existence, survival and sustenance:

﴿وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ﴾

*There is no creature on the earth, but that its sustenance lies with Allāh, and He knows its [enduring] abode and its temporary place of lodging. Everything is in a manifest Book.*

- Surah Hud, 11:6

And nothing lives or dies without Allāh's permission:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كِتَابًا مُؤَجَّلًا...﴾

*No soul may die except by Allāh's leave, at an appointed time...*

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:145

Let tawakkul then be a part of our lives. We should do our best and make the best decisions we can in life. And:

﴿فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ﴾

*Once you are resolved, put your trust in Allāh. Indeed Allāh loves those who trust in Him.*

- Surah Al-i Imrān, 3:159

And in Allāh let the faithful put all their trust:

﴿قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

*Say, 'Nothing will befall us except what Allāh has ordained for us. He is our master, and in Allāh let all the faithful put their trust.'*

- Surah at-Tawbah, 9:51

## Hoarding

Hoarding we said was the result of lacking tawakkul. The Qur'ān condemns hoarding severely:

﴿...وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ . يَوْمَ يُحْمَى عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كَنْزْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ﴾

*..and (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allāh's way, announce to them a painful chastisement. On the Day when it shall be heated in the fire of Hell, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it; 'this is what you hoarded up for yourselves, therefore taste what you hoarded!'*

- Surah at-Tawbah, 9:34-35

During a famine in Madina, Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) once asked one of his servants, 'What is the position of our stocked grains?' and the servant replied happily, 'We have sufficient to last us months.' Imām as-Sādiq ('a) then instructed him: 'Take it out to the market and sell it.'

'But there is a shortage of wheat and barley in Madina,' the servant protested. The Imām ('a) however insisted and once the servant had sold the surplus grain, the Imām then told him to go out and buy supplies from the market as they needed it just like all the other Muslims in the city and if need be, to even add some barley to the wheat bread rather than hoarding what Muslims need.

Hoarding therefore creates greed. Sellers will stock up what is in demand and then sell it at higher prices during shortages. This is taking advantage of people's need and it is a great sin in Allāh's eyes.

**Homework:**

The following nine āyāt of the Qur'ān all end with '*and in Allāh let all the faithful put their trust*' or very similar words:

3:122	3:160	5:11	9:51	12:67
14:11	14:12	58:10	64:13	

Write a brief essay (about half a page) on what you understand tawakkul to be. In your essay, quote at least 2 verses from the above that are relevant to your discussion and give at least one example in life or in your experience where tawakkul can play a role (or has played a role in your life).



### Imām Ali ('a)'s Trust (Tawakkul) in Allāh's Strength & Protection



## Istiqāma vs. Haste

*Istiqāma* means ‘steadfastness’. It means to remain firm and rooted in our faith in Allāh and not to waver or doubt. It also means to remain persistent in good deeds and acts of worship like our daily salāh.

*Istiqāma* requires patience and that is why hastiness is condemned in Islam. A person who is hasty jumps to conclusions and makes decisions without enough thought. The outcome of hasty actions and decisions is always harmful and accompanied with remorse and repentance. Sometimes the decisions made or actions taken are irreversible.

Before reacting to any matter, always think it through. For example, when someone offers you an opportunity, don’t say yes or no immediately. Give it some time to think of the advantages and disadvantages. Similarly, if you receive an email, don’t hit the reply button right away. Wait sometime. In particular if you are angry or emotional about what you have read or heard, never be hasty. It will always end in regret! Even when you compose a reply in anger, wait for 3 days before sending it. Usually you will no longer want to send your reply that was composed in haste.



Hastiness therefore comes from shaytān whereas patience and steadfastness comes from Allāh.

When humans are not developed spiritually, they are usually hasty, which is why Allāh says:

﴿خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ سَأْرِيكُمْ آيَاتِي فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونِي﴾

*Man is a creature of haste. Soon I will show you My signs. So do not ask Me to hasten.*

- Surah al-Anbiyā, 21:37

Of course not being hasty does not mean not doing things on time. For example, you should always say your prayers on time. There is a difference between being disciplined and doing things without forethought.

As for *Istiqāma* and not wavering, whether it is in faith or in battle, the Qur’ān commands us:

﴿فَاسْتَقِمُّ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ...﴾

*So be steadfast, just as you have been commanded...*

- Surah Hud, 11:112

And Allāh praises those who are steadfast saying:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا  
وَأَبَشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ. نَحْنُ أَوْلِيَائُكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ  
وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِي أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدَّعُونَ﴾

*Indeed those who say, 'Our Lord is Allāh!' and then remain steadfast, the angels descend upon them, [saying,] 'Do not fear, nor be grieved! Receive the good news of the paradise that you have been promised. We are your friends in the life of this world and in the Hereafter, and you will have in it whatever your souls desire, and you will have in it whatever you ask for.*

- Surah Fussilat, 41:30-31

That is perhaps why Rasulullāh (s) advised us to adopt this as our principle in life, when it comes to matters of faith: he said, 'Say: 'Allāh is my Lord!' then be steadfast!'

And Imām Ali ('a) said, 'One who is steadfast shall be in paradise. One who wavers shall be in hell.'

## Lesson 4

# Knowledge vs. Bīd'ah

### The Seeking of Knowledge

Knowledge (*al-'ilm*) is to the soul what food is to the body. Without knowledge a human soul withers and dies just as a body would without food.

But just as some foods can harm the body, so can some knowledge. The knowledge that helps us know Allāh better and helps us get to Jannah and helps us to serve Allāh and His creation is called 'useful knowledge'. Then there is trivia and useless information that people may spend endless amounts of time memorizing only because they are obsessed with a science, sport or hobby or because they wish to win lots of money, and so on. These are not forms of useful knowledge and in fact harmful to the soul.

That is why in du'as we ask Allāh:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ

*O Allāh! I seek refuge with You from 'knowledge' that is of no benefit!*

Regarding useful and true knowledge, Rasulullāh (s) said, 'Seek knowledge even if it be in China' and he (s) said, 'Gazing at the face of a scholar is an act of worship.'

It is not befitting for a faithful (*mu'min*) man or woman to be ignorant and uneducated and ignorance is a form of humiliation and shame. That is perhaps why Imām Ali ('a) said, 'Knowledge is the lost property of the faithful.' In other words, knowledge always belongs with a *mu'min* even if he or she may lose it for a while before finding it again.

After the Battle of Badr, the Muslims took some of the polytheist Quraysh as prisoners of war. Usually these prisoners were freed on ransom. Rasulullāh (s) identified the prisoners who were literate and offered to free them provided they taught some of the illiterate Muslims how to read and write.

'Seeking knowledge is a duty on every Muslim', said Rasulullāh (s) and he also said, 'The ink of the scholars will weigh more than the blood of the martyrs on the Day of Judgement.'

This is perhaps because a martyr only offers one (his) life to Islam but a scholar can save an entire community and even a nation with his or her knowledge. Which is also why Rasulullāh (s) said, 'One rak'ah of a person learned in Allāh is better than one thousand rak'ahs of a person ignorant of Allāh.'

The reward of gaining knowledge is so great - especially religious knowledge – that Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘One who seeks knowledge, everything prays to Allāh for his or her forgiveness, even the fish in the sea.’ Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) also quoted this hadith and added, ‘and even the birds in the sky.’ And other ahādith have mentioned even the beasts in the jungles. Some hadith mention that when a person sets out of his or her home to gain knowledge, they walk on the wings of angels.

So wonderful is knowledge that Imām Ali (‘a) said, ‘Everything decreases when you give it to others except knowledge (which increases).’ And whereas wealth requires protection, knowledge protects us.

And some ahādith tell us that when Allāh wishes to humiliate a person who is evil, He punishes him or her by denying them knowledge. So poverty of material possessions is not a humiliation but remaining ignorant when knowledge is accessible is a form of humiliation.

Some of the fruits of knowledge are humility, tolerance, compassion for others and a strong faith in Allāh. When you see a person who doubts in Allāh or denies Him, know that they are ignorant even if they are a university professor! Similarly when you see a person who is narrow-minded and very unforgiving and intolerant of others, always judging people and criticizing them, that also points to ignorance. And most of all, ignorance reveals itself as pride and boastfulness. A knowledgeable person is wise and humble and never thinks of himself or herself as being ‘learned’ but rather sees himself or herself as a ‘student’. Rasulullāh (s) once said, ‘Whoever says “I am learned” is ignorant.’

The greatest responsibility with having knowledge is to teach it to others and to act on it. ‘The best form of charity,’ said Rasulullāh (s), ‘is that a person should gain knowledge and then teach it to his brother (fellow Muslim).’ And he (s) also said, ‘The zakāh of knowledge is to teach one who does not know.’

For the learned, the greatest danger is when they don’t act on their knowledge. If a person gains knowledge and even preaches to others but does not act on it, their heart will become hard and in due course, the knowledge will in fact harm him or her. But the solution is not to remain ignorant. Rather it is to act on one’s knowledge and to practice what one preaches. And as a person does that, more wisdom and knowledge will come to them through self-realization and from Allāh.

The reason why knowledge is so important is because without it, purification of character is difficult, if not impossible. Knowledge gives us the map towards success in the hereafter and provides signposts towards Jannah. Knowledge in itself is not an end. It is a means. The end is to practice what we know so that a change occurs in our character and ultimately our souls. But we still need signposts and a map to navigate through life and know *how* to act and purify ourselves.

The greatest science and form of knowledge is of course knowledge of Tawhid. The more a person increases in his or her understand of Allāh’s Oneness and Absolute

Unity, the more they rise towards perfection and enlightenment. And at some point knowledge comes from Allāh and is only accessible through spiritual practices and devotion based on previous knowledge.

In summary, a Muslim is required to seek knowledge from cradle to grave. There is never a time when a Muslim is 'done' with studying or gaining knowledge.

## Rights of Teachers

A teacher nourishes our minds and souls with knowledge just as a parent nourishes our bodies with food and water. Islam therefore asks us to respect teachers just like we do our parents.

Some of the rights of a teacher include:

- That we listen to them when they are teaching us and not disrupt their teaching.
- That we don't argue with them or raise our voices above theirs.
- That we respect them like we do our parents, even outside the classroom.
- That we pray for them and continue to remember them even after we stop studying with them and after they have passed away.

A teacher is able to teach you because his or her knowledge and experience is far greater than yours. And Allāh too has given them a rank above those who know less, for He says:

﴿...يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ...﴾

*...Allāh will raise those of you who have faith and those who have been given knowledge in ranks...*

- Surah al-Mujādilah, 58:11

Rasulullāh (s) also said the superiority of a learned person over an ignorant worshipper is like that of the full moon over the stars. And in other traditions we are told of how it is so much harder for shaytān to mislead a learned person than it is for him to mislead an ignorant worshipper. When a scholar of Islam passes away it leaves a hole in the wall of Islam that can never be filled again.

If we study the history of any community we will find that as long as it had learned people in its midst, the community thrived. Once the learned died or left, the community became stagnant and began dying as well, even if there were lots of rich and influential people amongst them. Knowledge is therefore essential for the survival of a community or nation as well.

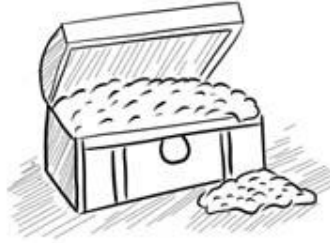
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# KEY TO KNOWLEDGE

Sufi Comics  
Arif & Ali

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SAW) ADVISED HIS PEOPLE:

KNOWLEDGE IS A TREASURE!



THE KEY TO WHICH IS THE ...



QUESTION

SO ASK AND ALLAH WILL HAVE MERCY ON YOU FOR VERILY FOUR PEOPLE ARE REWARDED...

THE SPEAKER

THE LISTENER

THE QUESTIONER



AND THE ONE THAT ADMIRES THEM!

قُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

MY LORD! INCREASE ME IN MY KNOWLEDGE ~ QURAN (20 : 114)

## Bid'ah

*Bid'ah* is generally defined as 'innovation'. It refers to when a person adds or changes or removes something in Islam and therefore creates an innovation in religion that is of course *harām*. This is usually done by people who think they love Islam but they are ignorant so they introduce practices from their own culture into Islam (that may be out of emotional love but not based on the Qur'ān, hadith or any acceptable proof).

However unlike some Muslim groups that assume everything is *harām* and *bid'ah* unless proven otherwise, the Shi'ah faith is more particular about what can be categorized as *bid'ah*. According to Allama Majlisi *bid'ah* does not apply to general matters. For example, if people wear clothes that were not worn during the time of Rasullāh (s) or if they build madrasahs and schools or teach other useful sciences, or eat foods that Rasullāh (s) did not eat, that is not *bid'ah*. Bid'ah is to create or innovate in worship and Islam things that have no proof in Qur'ān or reliable ahādith (of a ma'sum) and then to implement them as if they are *wājib* and a part of religion.

Examples of Bid'ah (some of which occurred after Rasullāh (s) and for which there is no support from the hadith of the ma'sumeen ('a)) include: pledging allegiance to a *fāsiq*, making the property or life of a Muslim lawful, punishing someone in an Islamic court only on the basis of suspicion, doing *mas-h* of wudu on the socks or shoes instead of feet, saying '*as-salātu khayrun min an-nawm*' in adhān, removing '*hayya 'ala khayril 'amal*' from the adhān, praying *tarāwih* in the month of Ramadan in congregation (*jamā'ah*) as if it is prescribed by Allāh and His Messenger (s), praying *nāfila* (mustahab) salāh in Jamā'ah, doing a second adhān on Fridays (for salāt al-jumu'ah), making the two mut'ahs haram (*hajj at-tamattu* and *zawāj al-mut'ah*), opposing the rightful Imām, giving inheritance to far relatives and denying it to the immediate heirs, not giving khums to those deserving, paying zakāh on income and wealth when it is only *wājib* on specific things, ending a fast and having *iftār* before the time, doing wudu after ghusl janābah when it is not necessary, folding hands in *qiyām* of salāh, saying '*āmeen*' after Surah al-Fātiha in salāh, demanding witness for a marriage '*aqd* (when it is not required) and not having a witness for a divorce when it is *wājib* to do so, and so on.

According to Shahid al-Awwal, even though *bid'ah* is to add or remove from matters that are *wājib* and *harām*, it is also not desirable to add or reduce from what is mustahab or makruh because we are adding or removing from what was taught by a ma'sum. For example, to add a little more to the *Tasbih az-Zahra* ('a) is not desirable even if it is not *bid'ah per se* (as a complete new innovation in religion).

Similarly there may be rituals introduced into our own communities that are not in the Shari'ah and may not be *bid'ah* or *harām* but we need to ensure that people know this. The Shi'ah faith is not intolerant and does not rush to brand everything as *bid'ah* provided the scholars ensure that people don't forget with time and assume them to be a part of religion.



Allamah Majlisi says, 'Bid'ah is to make halāl what Allāh has made harām, or to consider makruh what is not made makruh by Allāh, or to make wājib what Allāh did not make wājib or to make mustahab what Allāh did not make mustahab.'

For example, a mustahab, nāfila salāh is always 1 or 2 rak'ahs, if a person starts a 3 rak'ah nāfila salāh of his own, this is bid'ah. Or if a person starts praying maghrib before its real time and considers it to be the time of *fadila* (recommended), that is harām and a bid'ah, or if a person starts doing two rukus' per rak'ah in a normal daily salāh, or a person starts believing that saying '*Ash-hadu anna Ali waliyullah*' is a wājib part of adhān (when it is not a part of adhān but only mustahab), and so on.

Similarly, Allama Majlisi says, 'For example, reciting the dhikr of Allāh with the tasbih "*lā ilāha ilallāh*" is highly recommended. But if a person decides on his own that every morning after Fajr salāh he will recite this 1500 times as if it is a part of religion and prescribed by a ma'sum and he considers it to be a form of worship for himself (and that others can emulate), then this is a *bid'ah* in religion and a serious sin....'

Bid'ah is a common problem amongst many Sufi groups who have their own formulae of dhikr and tasbihs and duas.

Bid'ah is therefore to alter and change religion and the shari'ah of Allāh. Either by adding something or reducing something, whether it is in usul ad-din or in furu' ad-din.

Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said, 'The halāl of Muhammad is halāl forever until the Day of Judgement and his harām is harām forever until the Day of Judgement. There will never be another one besides him and no one will come after him (as a prophet or messenger).'

And Imām Ali ('a) said, 'No innovation (bid'ah) comes into existence without having to give up a sunnah. Therefore beware of bid'ahs...' and he also said, 'Nothing demolishes religion like innovations.'

Rasulullāh (s) said, 'The worst of matters are innovations. Every innovation is a form of misguidance and every misguidance shall be in Hellfire.' And he said, 'Follow and do not innovate. For you have been given whatever suffices you.' He also said, 'The people who innovate (*ahl al-bid'ah*) are the doors of Hellfire.'

Sometimes we may assume that only the minority innovate in religion. But with time these innovations (bid'ahs) can become mainstream. Hence Imām Ali ('a) said, 'The people who innovate (*ahl al-bid'ah*) are those who are opposed to the commands of Allāh, and His Book and His Messenger. They act according to their own opinion and desires, (and they are the *ahl al-bid'ah*) even if they are the majority...'

Rasulullāh (s) advised as follows: 'A little action based on *sunnah* is better than a lot of action based on *bid'ah*.'

## Fighting Bid'ah and the Responsibility of the Learned

To ensure a community is not misguided and does not introduce its own emotional practises into religion, Islam first asks the most learned to lead. Anyone who takes on religious leadership when they are not deserving of it is condemned.

In the words of Imām as-Sādiq ('a), 'Anyone who calls people to himself whilst amongst them there is one who is more knowledgeable than him, is a misguided innovator.'

Secondly every Muslim is responsible to try and stop bid'ah in the community, just as *al-amr bil ma'ruf* and *an-nahi 'anil munkar* are wājib on all who know better. Rasullāh (s) for example, said, 'When you see one who innovates (in religion) than belie him on his face.' And he said, 'One who smiles at the face of an innovator has helped in the destruction of his religion'


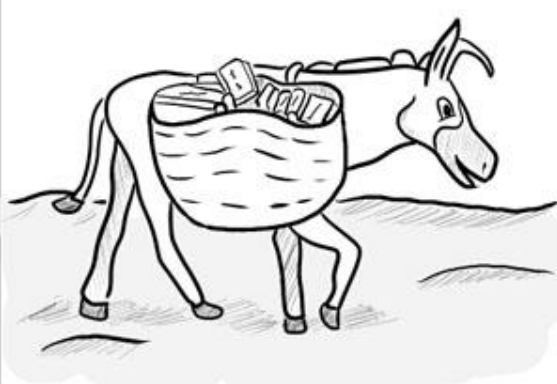
And last but not least, one of the functions of knowledge is to help us identify what is real Islam from what is an innovation and therefore a person of knowledge is obliged to speak out against bid'ah even when everyone else keeps quiet.

Rasullāh (s) said, 'When innovations become manifest in my ummah, then let the learned (*'ālim*) reveal his knowledge. Whoever (is learned and) does not do so, then on him is the curse of Allāh.'

## True Knowledge is What You Practice

**PERHAPS YOU KNOW THIS DONKEY**

A DONKEY... .. CARRYING A LOAD OF HOLY BOOKS...



... IS STILL A DONKEY.

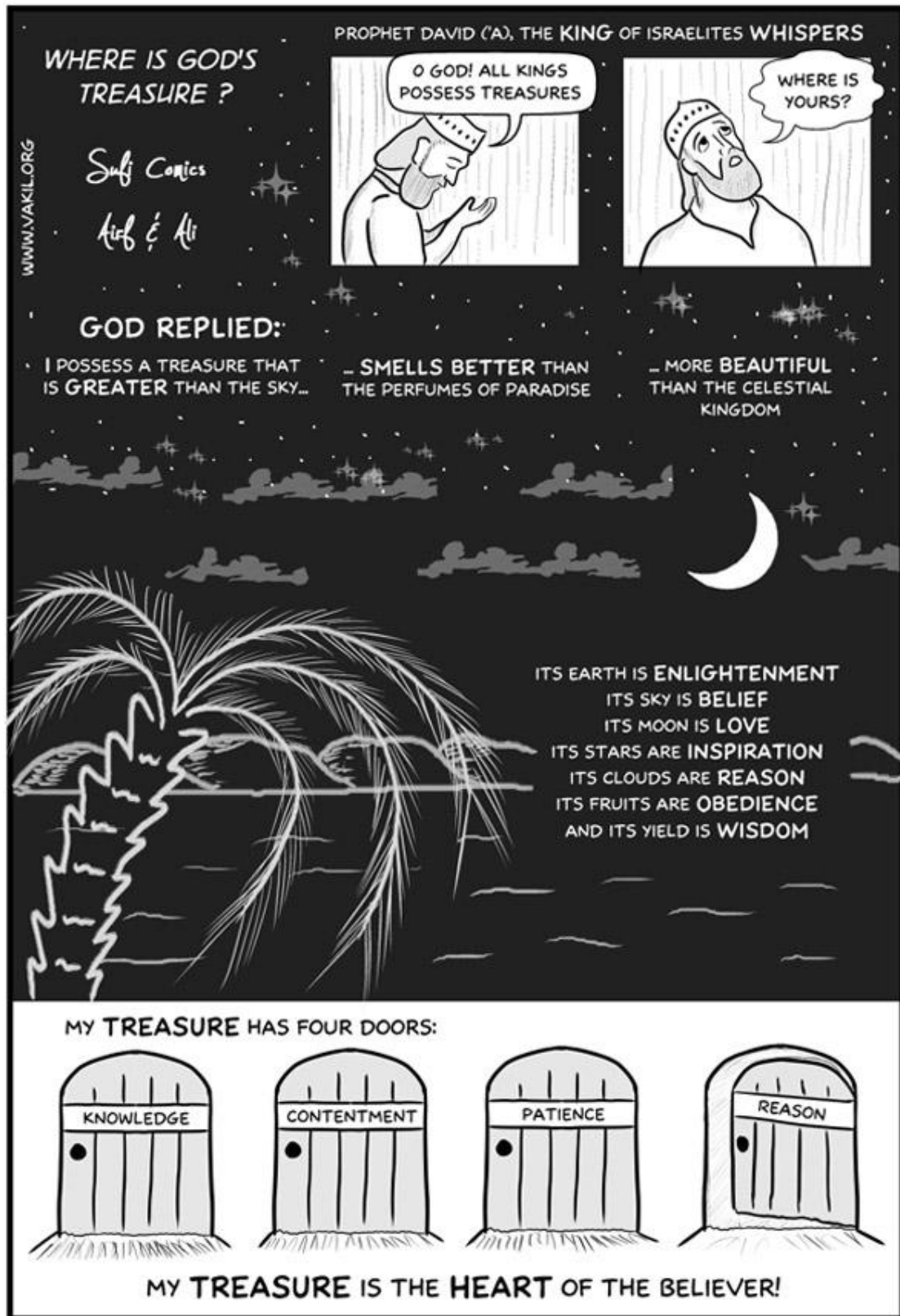
**Sufi Comics**  
Arif & Ali

DOES THIS DONKEY LOOK FAMILIAR? IT'S THE ARMCHAIR INTELLECTUAL, THE RABBLE-ROUSING PREACHER, THE COMMON-FOLK WHO READ YET DO NOTHING. "REAL KNOWLEDGE DOES NOT COME FROM READING THE MESSAGE. IT IS ENDOWED FROM LIVING THE MESSAGE."

THE LIKENESS OF THOSE WHO WERE CHARGED WITH THE TAURAT, THEN THEY DID NOT OBSERVE IT, IS AS THE LIKENESS OF THE DONKEY BEARING BOOKS (QURAN 62:5)

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## A Mu'min is Never Ignorant by Choice and Effects of Knowledge Shows



# Lesson 5

## Zuhd vs. Materialism

### Zuhd

*Zuhd* is loosely defined as ‘asceticism’. But this definition can be misleading. Zuhd is abstention from **worldliness** and **materialism**. It is not abstention from the world or being part of a society or earning a living and having a family. In fact a famous hadith of Rasullāh (s) says:

لا رَهْبَانِيَّةَ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ

*There is no monasticism in Islam*

But besides that, Islam highly encourages Muslims not to attach themselves to worldly pleasures or to live in the world as if they are here to stay forever. One who practices zuhd is called a *zāhid* (fem. *zāhida*) and a distinguishing quality of a *zāhid* or *zāhida* is that all aspects of their lives show that they truly believe this world is a temporary abode.

Most of the time of a *zāhid(a)* is occupied in preparing for the permanent abode and not in hoarding and amassing for this world. Of course preparing for the next permanent abode is not by worship only but may and should include working to earn a lawful living to support one’s family, socializing with family and friends, and so forth. As long as the intention is to please Allāh and one’s mortality is not forgotten, the blessings of Allāh can be enjoyed in this world.

So we could re-define zuhd as ‘non-materialism’.

Rasullāh (s) said, ‘Zuhd is not to give up what is *halāl* or to make what is *halāl* *harām* for yourself or not to own anything in the world. But zuhd is that you don’t trust and find more security and safety with what is in your hands than what is with Allāh.’

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) said, ‘If you put all that is good in a house, it’s key would be zuhd from the world.’

Nahj al-Balāgha is an excellent resource after the Qur’ān to find an understanding of zuhd in Islam because Imām Ali (‘a) has mentioned non-materialism in numerous sermons, letters and sayings.

Of course as a person grows spirituality, they may lose some more interest in the world and even abstain from some *halāl* matters. But this is not because they regard it wrong or evil or wish to become monks. Rather it is because they now love the worship of Allāh far more; and they derive more pleasure conversing with Allāh than

indulging in any halāl pleasure. It is in this sense that the following ahādith are given. Your teacher may discuss some of them to explain the point further:

Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘O Abu Dhar! When a person abstains from the world (i.e. worldliness), Allāh plants wisdom in his heart that manifests in his tongue and He makes him see the flaws of the world, its illnesses and its cure and He takes him out of the world safely into the Safe Abode (*Dār as-Salām*)’ i.e. to Jannah.

Imām Ali (‘a) said, ‘A person’s proportion of zuhd over what is temporary (i.e. the world) is based on how much conviction (*yaqīn*) he has over what is permanent (i.e. the hereafter).’

And Imām Ali (‘a) also said, ‘How can he abstain from this world who does not know the value of the hereafter?’ and in another hadith he said, ‘Do not be like one of those who want the hereafter with actions for the world.... He speaks against the world like the *zahideen* but he works for the world like those who long for it.’

Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a) advised, ‘Remember death frequently because when a person remembers death frequently, he abstains from this world (i.e. from materialism).’

Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) said, ‘A *zāhid* is one who keeps away from halāl out of fear of *hisāb* (accounting on the Day of Judgement) and keeps away from harām out of fear of *‘adhāb* (chastisement on the Day of Judgement).’

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) also said, ‘A *zāhid* prefers the hereafter to the world, prefers being unknown over fame, prefers struggling over comfort, prefers hunger instead of overeating, and prefers remembrance of Allāh over being heedless. His body is in this world but his heart is in the hereafter.’

Typically what stops a person from practising zuhd is being shackled by lusts and desires. First and foremost of course is the need to abstain from harām desires. Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘The best zuhd is to abstain from sins.’ But thereafter a faithful (*mu’min*) needs to combat addiction to desires and pleasure even if it is halāl.

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) said, ‘It is forbidden on your hearts to taste the sweetness of faith (*imān*) until they abstain from the world.’

And of course most people go through life driven only by desires, greed and fear. Which is why our eleventh Imām, Imām Hasan al-‘Askari (‘a) said, ‘If the people of the world all became intelligent, it (the world) would fall into ruins.’ In other words a lot of what we see as ‘progress’ and ‘advances’ by human beings is only because of their hankering for the world and their desire to invent new devices that will give them more pleasure or more material comforts.

In seeking the company of those who are truly non-materialistic and not after the world, Imām Ali (‘a) taught us to identify a true *zāhid* as one who hides his zuhd. For

he ('a) said, 'When you see a *zāhid* who runs away from people, then follow him. And when you see him running after people then run away from him.'

## Forgetting Death

One of the main, if not the primary reason, why humans become materialistic and worldly and make this world the end of their goal in life is because they forget their mortality and that death is not 'if' but simply 'when'. Islam therefore encourages the faithful to constantly think of death. Not in the sense of being morbid but in order to remain realistic.

A person who exerts himself only to build his world will have intense remorse when death overtakes him and he finds himself dying having lost both this world and the next. That is perhaps why when Rasullāh (s) was asked, 'Will anyone else be raised on the Day of Judgement with the martyrs (*shuhada*)?' He replied, 'Yes. One who remembers death twenty times every day.'

Imām Ali ('a) used to say, 'With every breathe there is death' and Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) said, 'The remembrance of death kills lusts.'

Our tenth Imām, Imām Ali al-Hādi ('a) said we should remember the time when we will be separated from our loved ones and leave them forever, when no doctor can help and no friend is of any use.

In many ahādith, death is called the 'Destroyer of False Desires' (*hādīm al-ladhāt*) because when people remember it, it kills in them the desire for worldly pleasures. Instead it gives life to the heart and stops people from being heedless. Rasullāh (s) once passed by a group of people who were sitting around and laughing very loudly. He said to them, 'Remember the destroyer of desires' And when they asked what it was, he said, 'Death'.

It is reported from Imām as-Sādiq ('a) that a man came to Abu Dhar and said, 'O Abu Dhar, how come we dislike death?' He said, 'Because you have made the world your home and ruined your hereafter. So you hate being moved from where you have settled to where you have ruined.'

Suggested Class Activity: Organize a session to watch the movie "O Lord! Send Me Back!" (given in the Teacher's DVD).

## Materialism

When we discuss *materialism* in akhlāq, we mean preoccupation with the material world. A materialist in this sense is a person whose main focus in life is material possession and the belief that material success and progress are the highest values in life. This belief is what is prevalent in many societies today.

Islam opposes this materialism because constant focus on material ‘things’ (like wealth, property, children, games, pleasure, jobs, fashion, worldly social status, ‘the latest craze’) distracts a human being from focusing on spiritual matters that are far more important. Islam teaches us that humans have a soul and that the soul survives after physical death and even after the end of the physical body. And therefore preparing the soul (through spiritual focus) for eternal life is the real purpose of coming to this world and therefore needs to be our primary aim in life.

Running after material possessions is frequently where problems occur in our ability to succeed in the hereafter. We become obsessed by a desire to obtain material things or simply frustrated by the need to maintain them. And often times we don’t even know why we are running after them or why we need more. It simply becomes an addiction and an obsession.

Islam wants us to ask ourselves, ‘Are material things really more important than anything else? Is material success the highest goal? Is acquiring and enjoying material things all there is to life? Why am I here at all? If life is really just about materialism, why should I even try to live a moral life? Why does it matter how I treat others or how I live, as long as I have what I want? Why does what I believe about the origin of life matter?’

And as we grow older and begin losing our youth, energy, health, productivity, and so on, we soon come face to face with our mortality i.e. that we are heading towards the end of our lives. And this is very frightening for those who have used up all their youth and lives only running after the world and its pleasures as if it was a permanent abode that they would never leave.

In Book 9 (Akhlāq Lesson 5) we studied ‘The Love of the World’ (*Hubb ad-Dunya*) and at the end of the lesson, a number of āyāt of the Qur’ān as well as numerous ahādith from the ma’sumeen (‘a) were listed. In this lesson, we repeat them and also add some more to the list. Your teacher will not discuss all these āyāt and ahādith. They are given for your reference and for you to think about.

Your teacher, however, may assign you a project to review and write essays on some of these āyāt and/or ahādith just to gauge if your understanding of the fine balance between neither being a recluse nor being a materialist is sound. In other words, you must demonstrate that you understand how we are meant to enjoy the blessings of Allāh in this world without becoming attached to them or losing focus on Allāh and the Last Day.



## Qur'ān and Hadith on Love of the World & Materialism

### Qur'ān

﴿وَلَيْكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ فَلَا يَخَفُّ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ﴾

*They are the ones who bought the life of this world for the Hereafter; so their punishment shall not be lightened, nor will they be helped.*

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:86

﴿زَيْنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْحَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ﴾

*Worldly life has been glamorized for the faithless, and they ridicule the faithful. But those who are Godconscious shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection, and Allāh provides for whomever He wishes without any reckoning.*

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:212

﴿...مِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ...﴾

*...Some of you desire this world, and some of you desire the Hereafter...*

- Surah Aal-i Imrān, 3:152

﴿لَا يَغُرَّتْكَ تَقَلُّبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي الْبِلَادِ مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ ثُمَّ مَاؤَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَيَسَّرَ الْمِهَادُ لَكِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا نُزُلًا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِلْأَبْرَارِ﴾

*Never be misled by the bustle of the faithless in the towns. It is a trivial enjoyment; then their refuge is hell, and it is an evil resting place. But those who are conscious of their Lord - for them shall be gardens with streams running in them, [to remain in them [forever], a hospitality from Allāh; and what is with Allāh is better for the pious.*

- Surah Aal-i Imrān, 3:196-198

In other words the āyah means to tell us, don't be fooled by all the coming and going of the people of the world. When you see the shopping malls full and the large number of people dressed up, enjoying in luxuries, eating rich sumptuous food, building large mansions, hoarding large sums of wealth, and living as if they will never die. The other side of the world is always kept hidden from us. We have to go to the hospitals, the cemeteries, the nursing homes, the homeless shelters, the

prisons, the asylums, etc. to see it. And in the end, all this will end as if it never existed. The sense of permanence in this world is an illusion and a mirage.

﴿وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهْوًا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا...﴾

*Leave alone those who take their religion for play and diversion and whom the life of this world has deceived...*

- Surah al-An'ām, 6:70

﴿الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَلَعِبًا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا فَالْيَوْمَ نَنْسَاهُمْ كَمَا نَسُوا لِقَاءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هَذَا وَمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ﴾

*Those who took their religion for diversion and play and whom the life of the world had deceived. So today We will forget them as they forgot the encounter of this day of theirs, and as they used to oppose Our signs.*

- Surah al-'Arāf, 7:51

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنَّنُوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غَافِلُونَ أُولَئِكَ مَا وَاهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ﴾

*Indeed those who do not expect to meet Us and who are pleased with the life of this world and satisfied with it, and those who are oblivious of Our signs - it is they whose refuge shall be the Fire because of what they used to earn.*

- Surah Yunus, 10:7-8

﴿وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

*The life of this world is nothing but diversion and play, but the abode of the Hereafter is indeed Life, had they known!*

- Surah al-Ankabut, 29:64

﴿يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ﴾

*O my people! This life of the world is only a [passing] enjoyment, and indeed the Hereafter is the abiding home.*

- Surah al-Ghāfir, 40:39

﴿مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ﴾

*Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We will increase for him his harvest, and whoever desires the harvest of the world, We will give it to him, but he will have no share in the Hereafter.*

- Surah ash-Shura, 42:20

﴿وَلَوْلَا أَنْ يَكُونَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً لَجَعَلْنَا لِمَنْ يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَانِ لِبُيُوتِهِمْ سُقْفًا مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ وَلِبُيُوتِهِمْ أَبْوَابًا وَسُرُورًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَكَبَّرُونَ وَزُخْرُفًا وَإِنْ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ لَمَّا مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

*Were it not [for the danger] that mankind would be one community,<sup>43</sup> We would have surely made for those who defy the All-beneficent, silver roofs for their houses and [silver] stairways by which they ascend; and [silver] doors for their houses and [silver] couches on which they recline; and ornaments of gold;<sup>44</sup> yet all that would be nothing but the wares of the life of this world, and the Hereafter near your Lord is for the Godconscious.*

- Surah az-Zukhruf, 43:33-35

Imām as-Sādiq ('a) said about the āyah above, 'If He (Allāh) would do that, then all of mankind would disbelieve.'

﴿وَقِيلَ الْيَوْمَ نَنْسَاكُمْ كَمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ذَلِكَُمْ بِأَنَّكُمْ اتَّخَذْتُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوءًا وَغَرَّتْكُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُخْرَجُونَ مِنْهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ﴾

*And it will be said, 'Today We will forget you, just as you forgot the encounter of this day of yours. The Fire will be your abode, and you will not have any helpers. That is because you took the signs of Allāh in derision, and the life of the world had deceived you.' So today they will not be brought out of it, nor will they be granted goodwill.*

- Surah al-Jāthiya, 45:34-35

<sup>43</sup> That is, a monolithic community of people without faith.

<sup>44</sup> Or 'houses embellished with gold.'

﴿فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَىٰ وَآثَرَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ﴾

*as for him who was rebellious and preferred the life of this world, his refuge will indeed be hell.*

- Surah an-Nāzi'āt, 79:37-39

﴿بَلْ تُوْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ﴾

*Yet you prefer the life of this world, while the Hereafter is better and more lasting.*

- Surah al-A'la, 87:16-17

### Hadith

1. Rasulullāh (s) said, 'Be the children of the hereafter and do not be the children of this world.'
2. Rasulullāh (s) said, 'The world is the faithful (*mu'min*)'s prison and the unfaithful (*kāfir*)'s paradise.'
3. When Rasulullāh (s) went for *mi'rāj*, Allāh described to him the people of the world as follows: 'The People of the World (*ahl ad-dunya*) are excessive in their food, sleep, laughter and anger. They are never satisfied. They never forgive or accept the excuse of one who apologizes to them. They are lazy when it comes to obeying Allāh But very bold when it comes to disobeying Him. Their hopes are far-fetched. They never account for their souls. They help very little are not very useful but they talk a lot. Their fear of Allāh is very little and they get very happy and excited when they see food. They never thank Me when in ease and are neither patient when in trouble. They love to praise themselves even for what they never did and will claim what is not theirs. They are always talking about their desires and what they like. They like to mention the faults of others but will hide the good deeds of others.' Rasulullāh (s) then asked, 'O Allāh, do these people have any faults by which they are identified?' And Allāh said, 'Yes. They are ignorant and foolish. They show no humility from the one who teaches them. They see themselves as being very intelligent but the wise know them to be foolish.'
4. Rasulullāh (s), ' Work for your world as if you will live forever and work for your hereafter as if you will die tomorrow.'

Note: Some misinterpret the hadith above to say we should work hard for the world as if we will live here forever. What Rasulullāh (s) meant was that if you have to choose between doing something for this world vs. the hereafter, you should rush to do what is for the hereafter 'as if you will die tomorrow' and delay doing what is for the world 'as if you will live forever'. This is because if we die before doing what we wanted to do in this world, it won't matter. But if we miss doing what we wanted to do for the hereafter, it may have eternal consequences.

5. Rasulullāh (s), 'The most amazing thing is how a person who is convinced of the everlasting life is busy striving for the this vain life!'
6. Imām Ali ('a) said, 'The bitterness of the world is the sweetness of the hereafter and the sweetness of the world is the bitterness of the hereafter.'
7. Imām Ali ('a) said, 'The world is like poison. Only the one who doesn't know it will eat it.' And also, 'The world is a trap. Only one who doesn't know it will fall into it.'
8. Imām Ali ('a) said, 'Why is it that you rejoice over the little of the world that you get and it does not grieve you of the much of the hereafter that you lose?!'
9. Imām Ali ('a), 'One whose concern for the world is great, so will his sorrow and grief.'
10. Imām Ali ('a), 'Beware that you are not cheated out of the permanent abode (of the hereafter).'
11. Imām Ali ('a), 'The goal of the hereafter is permanence. Everything in the hereafter is permanent and everlasting.'
12. Imām Ali ('a), 'One whose remembrance of the hereafter is plenty, his sins will be few.'
13. Concerning Amr b. al-Aas, the vizier of Mu'āwiya, Imām Ali ('a), said, 'By Allāh, what prevents me from playing and fooling around is the remembrance of death and what prevents him from speaking the truth is forgetting the hereafter.'
14. Imām Ali ('a), 'Strive against yourself and work for the hereafter as hard as you can.'
15. Imām Ali ('a), 'You are a creature of the hereafter so work for it. You were not created for the world so abstain from it.'
16. Imām Ali ('a), 'How can a person work for the hereafter when he is busy with (running after) the world?'
17. Imām Zayn al-Abidin ('a), 'The life of the world is like a slumber while the hereafter is like waking up from sleep.'
18. Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq ('a) asked, 'If you are certain the world is temporary, then why all this greed and eagerness for it?!'

## Lesson 6

# Dhīkr vs. Ghafalah

The word ‘*dhikr*’ means ‘remembrance’. In Islamic sciences it refers to ‘the remembrance of Allāh’ (also called *dhikrullāh*). The opposite of *dhikr* is *ghafalah* that is usually translated as ‘heedlessness’. It means to be oblivious to the remembrance of Allāh and to forget Allāh except on rare occasions such as when one is in trouble.

The remembrance of Allāh can take many forms. It can mean literal recitation of Allāh’s Names in a *tasbih* or the recitation of Qur’ān or supplications (*du’as*). The daily *salāh* is also a form of *dhikr*. *Dhikr* can also be in the heart where one is constantly thinking of his or her Creator and feeling a sense of love and gratitude to Allāh. By far one of the greatest forms of *dhikr* is to remember Allāh when one is tempted with sin and then to abstain from the sin. This may be the desire to indulge in a pleasure or it may be the temptation to speak evil of someone, to express anger, to backbite, etc.

In all its meaning and in general, the Qur’ān declares:

﴿وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ﴾

...and the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest...

Surah al-Ankabut, 29:45

Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘Do not prefer anything over the remembrance of Allāh because He (Allāh) says, “and the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest”.’

Rasulullāh (s) also said, ‘There is no action more loved by Allāh and better to save a person from every evil in this world or the hereafter than the *dhikr* of Allāh.’ He was asked, ‘Not even fighting in the way of Allāh?’ He said, ‘If it was not to save the remembrance of Allāh, He would not command us to fight (in His way).’

In the following āyah Allāh explicitly asks us to remember Him constantly and profusely:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا. هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا﴾

*O you who have faith! Remember Allāh with frequent remembrance, and glorify Him morning and evening. It is He who blesses you, and so do His angels, that He may bring you out from darkness into light, and He is most merciful to the faithful.*

- Surah al-Ahzāb, 33:41-43

That is perhaps why Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘Recite the Qur’ān and remember Allāh frequently. For it is a cause of remembrance for you in the heavens (by the angels) and a light for you on the earth.’

Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) said, ‘Remember Allāh frequently, as much as you can, every hour of the night and day because Allāh has ordered the frequent remembrance of Him.’

Generally speaking Islam sets a limit of moderation in all acts of worship. For example, it is recommended to worship Allāh from fajr until sunrise but then it is makruh to pray salāh after sunrise until closer to dhuhr time because people are expected to work and earn a living. Similarly, it is recommended to fast but at maghrib we are expected to break our fast. Charity is good but in moderation without being miserly or extravagant. However the dhikr of Allāh is the only exception. There is nothing like ‘too much’ or ‘excessive’ dhikr. We are encouraged to remember Allāh as frequently and as profusely as possible. And it doesn’t matter where we are – in bed, on the bus, at work, or in the marketplace. We are asked to stay connected to our Creator constantly even if it is in the heart and not verbal.

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) has said, ‘The Tasbih of Fatima az-Zahra (‘a) is from the ‘abundant dhikr’ (*adh-dhikr al-kathir*) about which Allāh says, ‘remember Allāh with frequent remembrance’ (33:41).

When Nabi Musa (‘a) asked Allāh to appoint his brother Nabi Hārūn (‘a) as a support, he (Musa) said to Allāh:

﴿كِيْ نُسَبِّحُكَ كَثِيْرًا وَنَذْكُرُكَ كَثِيْرًا﴾

*so that we may glorify You frequently, and remember You frequently.*

- Surah Tā Hā, 20:33-34

Which means even the prophets of Allāh were accustomed to profuse remembrance of Allāh.

The remembrance of Allāh has physical benefits too. Rasulullāh (s) said, ‘The remembrance of Allāh is a cure (for illnesses)...’ And Imām Ja’far as-Sādiq (‘a) guaranteed, ‘Lightning will never strike one who is remembering Allāh.’

In Dua Kumayl, Imām Ali (‘a) taught us to recite:

يَا مَنْ اسْمُهُ دَوَاءٌ وَذِكْرُهُ شِفَاءٌ

*O’ You Whose Name is a cure and Whose remembrance is a healing.*

Imām Ali (‘a) advised that even in danger, ‘when you meet your enemies in the battlefield, then talk less (to others) and increase your remembrance of Allāh, the Mighty & Glorious.’

Imām as-Sādiq ('a) said, 'Our Shi'ahs are those who when they are alone, they remember Allāh excessively.'

And our fifth Imām, Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) said about the signs of the Children of the Hereafter, '...nothing can turn them away from the constant remembrance of Allāh....'

This is what the Qur'ān says as well concerning the most sincere of Allāh's servants:

﴿رَجَالٌ لَا تُلِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ  
يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ﴾

*Men whom neither trading nor bargaining distracts from the remembrance of Allāh, and the maintenance of salāh and the giving of zakāh. They are fearful of a Day wherein the heart and the sight will be transformed.*

-Surah an-Nur, 24:37

But as mentioned earlier, the greatest form of dhikr is not to recite many duas and tasbihs and then fall for sin when tempted. It is to remember Allāh and out of fear for Him to lose the desire and temptation to sin and even to be ashamed of sinning while Allāh is watching.

Rasulullāh (s) said, 'One who obeys Allāh has remembered Him even if his (*mustahab*) prayers and fasts and Qur'ān recitation is not excessive.'

And this habit of remembering Allāh when faced with sin comes from being sincere and from the habit of remembering Allāh in the heart even when one is working or socializing with others. This 'hidden dhikr' in the heart is also mentioned in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ وَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ﴾

*And remember your Lord within your heart humbly and reverentially (i.e. with awe), without being loud, morning and evening, and do not be among the heedless.*

- Surah al-'Arāf, 7:205



## Turning Away from Dhikr of Allāh

﴿وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَتَتْكَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيْتَهَا وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ

تُنْسَى﴾

*But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him blind.’ He will say, ‘My Lord! Why have You raised me blind, though I used to see?’ He will say: ‘So it is. Our signs came to you, but you forgot them, and thus you will be forgotten today.’*

- Surah Tā Hā, 20:124-6

﴿وَمَنْ يَعِشْ عَن ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَانِ نُقِضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَصُدُّونَهُمْ عَنِ

السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ﴾

*Whoever shuns the remembrance of the All-beneficent, We assign him a devil who remains his companion. Indeed they (the devils) bar them from the way while they suppose that they are [rightly] guided.*

- Surah az-Zukhruf, 43:36

﴿وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنسَاهُمْ أَنفُسَهُمْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

*And do not be like those who forget Allāh, so He makes them forget their own souls. It is they who are the transgressors.*

- Surah al-Hashr, 59:19

All the above āyāt point to the fact that humans need to be remembering Allāh in order not fall prey to shaytān. When Allāh does not occupy a human heart then it is always prey to shaytān.

In fact a person who remembers Allāh also remains aware of his own true self and why he is on the earth. Whereas a person who forgets Allāh is constantly driven by worldly desires and therefore he not only forgets Allāh but also forgets his or her ownself and is physically alive but spiritually in deep slumber until he or she is given a rude awakening at death. At that point – when it is too late – he or she realizes how they have wasted all their lives running after the wrong things and not preparing for their eternal abode.

Imām Ali (‘a) also said, ‘One who forgets Allāh, Allāh makes him forget his ownself and blinds his heart.’

## Ghافلah

Ghافلah we said was the opposite of dhikr and means to be heedless or forgetful of Allāh. Many Qur'ān verses (āyāt) and ahādith caution us against this. The following āyah tells us what a person who dies whilst being *ghāfil* is told upon his death:

﴿لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ﴾

*'You were certainly oblivious of this. We have removed your veil from you, and so your sight is sharp today.'*

- Surah Qāf, 50:22

Rasulullāh (s) said, 'Strange is the one who forgets but is not forgotten (by Allāh), strange is the one who seeks the world while death seeks him, and strange is the one who is filled with laughter while he does not know whether Allāh is pleased with him or angry at him!'

And Rasulullāh (s) also said, 'O Aba Dhar! Be concerned with doing good even if you don't actually (get a chance to) do it, so that you may not be counted amongst the heedless.'

Imām Ali ('a) described 'Wakefulness' (*yaqda*) as 'a light' (*nur*) meaning a person who is *ghāfil* is like one who lives in a dark world but is unaware of it.

Imām Ali ('a) also warned, 'Woe be on one who is overcome with heedlessness so he forgets the departure (from the world) and never prepares for it; and Imām Ali ('a) lamented, 'The intoxication of heedlessness and arrogance is harder to recover from than the intoxication of wine.'

The solution of course is to keep at dhikr until ghافلah is removed. Imām Ali ('a) said, 'It is by constant remembrance of Allāh that heedlessness is avoided.'

If we knew that somewhere in the room we're in right now there is a small poisonous snake, we would not sit with heedlessness. We would be constantly aware and present. Similarly, Imām as-Sādiq ('a) asks, 'If shaytān is (known to be) the enemy then why the heedlessness?!' In other words, if we know that without being alert and present with the dhikr of Allāh, our hearts can be preyed upon by shaytān who is always lurking around to catch us heedless, then why do we not remain present with Allāh's remembrance?



﴿قُلْ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَانَ أَيَّمَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ...﴾

Say, 'Invoke "Allāh" or invoke "the All-beneficent." Whichever [of His Names] you may call upon, to Him belong the most beautiful Names.'...

- Surah al-Isra, 17:110

## Dhikr as Sign of True Love for Allāh



Many people are like the man in the comic above. They claim to love Allāh and that they would do anything for Allāh. But the moment they hear of something interesting, like a new hobby or new game or meet a new friend or a new career or opportunity comes up, they turn and run away to it. Allāh describes this behaviour in the Qur'ān as well:

﴿وَإِذَا رَأَوْا تِجَارَةً أَوْ لَهْوًا انفَضُّوا إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَائِمًا قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهْوِ  
وَمِنَ التِّجَارَةِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ﴾

When they sight a deal or a diversion, they scatter off towards it and leave you standing! Say, 'What is with Allāh is better than diversion and dealing, and Allāh is the best of providers.'

- Surah al-Jumu'ah, 62:11

**SECRETS OF PRAYER TAUGHT BY IMAM JAFFER SADIQ (AS)**  
Sufi Conjes - Arif & Ali

<p><b>OPENING THE PRAYER</b></p>	<p><b>BOWING IN PRAYER</b></p>
<p>WHEN YOU FACE THE QIBLAH, YOU SHOULD DESPAIR OF THIS WORLD, WHAT IT CONTAINS OF CREATION AND WHAT OTHERS ARE OCCUPIED WITH. EMPTY YOUR HEART OF EVERY PREOCCUPATION WHICH MIGHT DISTRACT YOU FROM ALLAH. SEE THE IMMENSITY OF ALLAH WITH YOUR INNERMOST BEINGS, AND REMEMBER THAT YOU WILL STAND BEFORE HIM. KNOW THAT ALLAH DOES NOT NEED YOUR SERVICE. HE IS INDEPENDENT OF YOU, YOUR WORSHIP AND YOUR SUPPLICATION.</p>	<p>THE BONDSMAN OF ALLAH DOES NOT TRULY BOW (IN RUKU') BUT THAT ALLAH ADORNS HIM WITH THE LIGHT OF HIS RADIANCE, SHADES HIM IN THE SHADE OF HIS GREATNESS AND CLOTHES HIM IN THE GARMENT OF HIS PURITY. BOWING IS FIRST AND PROSTRATION (SUJUD) IS SECOND: THERE IS COURTESY IN BOWING, AND IN PROSTRATION NEARNESS TO ALLAH. WHOEVER IS NOT GOOD IN THE COURTESY IS NOT FIT FOR NEARNESS.</p>
<p><b>PROSTRATION IN PRAYER</b></p>	<p><b>SALAM (PEACE)</b></p>
<p>ALLAH MADE PROSTRATION THE OCCASION TO DRAW NEAR TO HIM IN ONE'S HEART, INNERMOST BEING AND SPIRIT. WHOEVER DRAWS NEAR TO HIM IS FAR FROM ALL THAT IS OTHER THAN HIM. DO YOU NOT SEE THAT IN ITS OUTWARD APPEARANCE THE STATE OF PROSTRATIONS IS NOT COMPLETE EXCEPT BY DISAPPEARING FROM ALL THINGS AND BEING VEILED FROM ALL THAT THE EYES SEE? THUS DOES ALLAH WANT THE INWARD BEING TO BE. IF SOMEONE'S HEART IS ATTACHED TO SOMETHING OTHER THAN ALLAH IN PRAYER, HE IS NEAR TO THAT THING, AND FAR FROM THE REALITY OF WHAT ALLAH DESIRES IN HIS PRAYER.</p>	<p>THE MEANING OF THE TASLIM (GREETING OF PEACE) AT THE END OF THE PRAYER MEANS SECURITY, THAT IS, ANYONE WHO CARRIES OUT THE COMMAND OF ALLAH AND THE SUNNAH OF HIS PROPHET OUT OF HUMILITY TO HIM AND SHOWING FEAR, HAS SECURITY FROM THE TRIBULATIONS OF THIS WORLD AND FREEDOM FROM THE PUNISHMENT OF THE NEXT WORLD. AL-SALAM (PEACE) IS ONE OF THE NAMES OF ALLAH, WHICH HE ENTRUSTED TO HIS CREATION SO THAT THEY WOULD MAKE USE OF IT IN THEIR BEHAVIOUR, TRUSTS AND CONTRACTS; IN CONFIRMING THEIR COMPANIES AND ASSEMBLIES; AND FOR THE SOUNDNESS OF THEIR SOCIAL RELATIONS.</p>

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﴿فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكَرَكُم...﴾

So remember Me; I will remember you...

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:152

# Lesson 7

## Hayá

### Modesty, Chastity & Bashfulness

In Book 10 (Akhlāq Lesson 7) we studied modesty and chastity (*hayā*) extensively. This lesson is a review of the subject but it also discusses the opposite of *hayā*, which is *fuhsh* (shamelessness) from the perspective of hadith.

#### Hayā (Chastity and Modesty)

Wherever the word *hayā* occurs in the following ahādith, it means modesty, chastity and shamefulness (in the positive sense and as opposed to shamelessness).

1. Rasulullāh (s), 'One who is not ashamed of Allāh in public will not be ashamed of Allāh in private.'
2. Rasulullāh (s), 'A person should feel shame from the two angels with him as if he has two righteous neighbours who are with him night and day.'
3. Rasulullāh (s), '*Hayā* has ten parts. Nine parts are in women and one in men.'
4. Rasulullāh (s), 'Whenever there is indecency in something it makes it ugly. And whenever there is *hayā* in a thing – without exception – it makes it beautiful.'
5. Rasulullāh (s), 'If *hayā* was a person, he would have been a virtuous one.'
6. Rasulullāh (s), '*Hayā* is religion itself, all of it.'
7. Imām Ali ('a), 'The best clothing in this world is *hayā*.'
8. Imām Ali ('a), 'A lot of *hayā* in a person is proof of his or her faith (*imān*).'
9. Imām Ali ('a), 'Three things are not to be ashamed of: For a man to serve his guests (his ownself), to stand up in the midst of a gathering for one's father or teacher, and to seek a right (that belongs to a person) even if it is little.'
10. Imām Hasan ('a), 'One who has no religion has no shame (*hayā*).'
11. Imām al-Kādhim ('a), '*Hayā* is from faith (*imān*) and faith (*imān*) is in Jannah.'
12. Imām al-Kādhim ('a), 'Be ashamed of (disobeying) Allāh in your privacy as you are ashamed of people in public.'

## Fuhsh (Shamelessness and Indecency)

Any form of shamelessness and indecency is called *fuhsh* or *fahshā* in Arabic. For example, Allāh tells us in the Qur'ān:

﴿الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ وَفَضْلًا وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

*Satan frightens you of poverty and prompts you to [commit] indecent acts (fahshā). But Allāh promises you His forgiveness and grace, and Allāh is all-bounteous, all-knowing.*

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:268

*Fuhsh* or *fahshā* can be of many kinds. When a person swears at others, is rude and indecent, dirty and vulgar in speech, that is *fuhsh* of speech. Similarly, adultery, pornography, masturbation, homosexuality, and all forms of permissiveness are all *fahshā* of the body. Some of these were discussed in detail in Book 10 (Akhlāq Lesson 7).

*Fuhsh* (shamelessness and indecency) is the result of giving in to lusts and vain desires (*hawā*) that in turn comes from love for the material world. When a person is in love with the world, their constant concern is how to enjoy more pleasure and they forget that Allāh is watching and recording their every thought and action.

Rasulullāh (s) said, 'If *fuhsh* was a person it would have been the worst of God's creatures.'

Rasulullāh (s) also said, 'Every *fāhish* (shameless person) is forbidden from entering Jannah.'

And Rasulullāh (s) said, 'The worst of people is one whom people avoid because out of fear for his *fuhsh*.'

## Hawā (Vain Desires)

Every human being has desires. Desires in themselves are not bad provided they are channeled in healthy ways and controlled by one's intellect and faith (*imān*). This could be the desire to marry, the desire for food, the desire to succeed, and so on. But when desires control a person then he or she stops having a purposeful life. A person addicted to and driven by worldly desires and physical pleasures is like a runaway train. It only gets faster and worse until it falls apart, breaks up and destroys itself.

It is this uncontrolled desire that is called *hawā*. When a person is dominated by their *hawā*, then it takes the place of God i.e. a person becomes subservient and obedient to his or her desires and ‘worships’ them. This, Allāh confirms in the Qur’ān:

﴿أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ  
عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾

*Have you seen him who has taken his desire (hawā) to be his god and whom Allāh has led astray knowing (him to be such), and set a seal upon his hearing and his heart, and put a blindfold on his sight? So who will guide him after Allāh? Will you not then take admonition?*

- Surah Jāthiya, 45:23

In the time of Nabi Musa (‘a) there lived a man called Bal’am b. Bā’ura. He was a man of tremendous religious knowledge. He commanded utmost respect and was regarded as being very spiritual. But because he couldn’t fight his desire for the world and its pleasures, in the end, he gave up his faith and turned to his desire. And once he did that, there was no limit at which he stopped. He sold his hereafter completely for this world. Allāh tells us the exact reason why he fell from such a high level of piety to the fire of Hell:

﴿وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ  
تَحْمِلُ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثُ أَوْ تَتْرُكُهُ يَلْهَثُ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَاقْصُصْ  
الْقِصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ سَاءَ مَثَلًا الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَأَنْفُسَهُمْ كَانُوا  
يَظْلِمُونَ﴾

*Had We wished, We would have surely raised him by their means, but he clung to the earth and followed his [base] desires (hawā). So his parable is that of a dog: if you make for it, it lolls out its tongue, and if you let it alone, it lolls out its tongue. Such is the parable of the people who deny Our signs. So recount these narratives, so that they may reflect. Evil is the parable of the people who deny Our signs and wrong themselves.*

- Surah al-A’rāf, 7:176-177

This teaches us that knowledge is only a *means* to show us how to struggle against our souls. In itself, having religious knowledge does not make us pure or perfect. In contrast to this, those who strive against their desires until they overcome and tame them (because of practising the knowledge they have) are promised paradise:

﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ﴾



*But as for him who is awed to stand before his Lord and forbids the soul from [following] desire (hawā), his refuge will indeed be paradise.*

- Surah an-Nāzi'āt, 79:40-41

It may at times frighten us to think that we may fail or give in to our desires at the last moments of our lives. How do we prevent this? The Qur'ān hints at the answer:

﴿كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَيْطَغَىٰ أَنْ رَأَاهُ اسْتَعْنَىٰ﴾

*Indeed man becomes rebellious when he sees himself without need.*

- Surah al-'Alaq, 96:6-7

In other words, when we forget that whatever good we see in ourselves is from Allāh and that we are constantly in need of His help and support, then we stop holding on to Allāh's rope, and pride takes over. Now we begin to imagine that it is by our own effort that we are good and we rely on our strength thinking, "it's up to me" to become perfect.

Only those succeed to Jannah who remain humble and sincere and constantly beg Allāh not to let go of them or to leave them alone, throughout their lives. They constantly thank Allāh for any good that He does *through* them but attribute it all back to Allāh and are therefore always in awe, fear and love of Allāh. This state of surrendered love to Allāh and constant Godconsciousness (*taqwa*) is the only shield and protection from the ego and shaytān, and therefore from *hawā*.

### **Ahādith on Hawā**

Rasulullāh (s), 'Blessed is a person who gives up his present lusts for a promise in the future that he has not seen.'

Rasulullāh (s), 'The bravest of people is one who overcomes his or her vain desires.'

Imām Ali ('a), 'Jannah is surrounded with unpleasantries while Hellfire is ringed with lusts and desires.'

Imām Ali ('a), 'Stop yourself from giving in to lusts, you will save yourself from ruin.'

Imām Ali ('a), 'Know that anything that involves obedience to Allāh you will find a dislike for it (because of the self or ego) and anything that involves disobeying Allāh you will find it desireful.'

Imām Ali ('a), 'An ignorant person (*jāhil*) is a slave of his or her desires.'

Imām Ali ('a), 'The foundation of religion is to oppose your vain desires.'

Imām Ali (‘a), ‘It is forbidden on every intellect that is shackled with lusts to benefit from wisdom.’ And also, ‘Overcome your lusts and your wisdom will be perfected.’

Imām Ali (‘a), ‘Blessed is one who overcomes his self and it does not overcome him and he controls his desires and is not controlled by them.’

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) was asked, ‘what is the path to comfort?’ and he replied, ‘Opposing vain desires.’ So he was asked, ‘When then does a servant of Allāh get to rest?’ and he said, ‘The very first day he enters Jannah.’

Giving up lusts is therefore the best form of worship (and the best strategy to break away from addictions) and one who wants the permanent abode must turn away from vain desires and lusts.