

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

We seek forgiveness from Allah

We stand witness to Allah that there is no God but Him

That Muhammad (saww) is his slave and messenger

Introduction

- Man has a soul and a physical body, each of which is subject to its own pleasure. What harms the body is sickness and that which gives it pleasures lies in its well being. However, the disease of the soul can make man worse than a wild animal, whilst the pleasure of the soul brings the man closer to its spiritual being. This science of the soul is known as the *science of ethics* or *ilm ul akhlaq*.
- In today's world human beings are very concerned about their health. Everyone tries their level best to live a healthy lifestyle. Unfortunately, even though a lot of attention is paid to the diseases of the body, not much concern is given to the vices of the soul. Similarly, a lot of attention is given to the pleasure of the body, for instance gathering wealth, but not much consideration is given to the pleasures of the soul. If we want to avoid hellfire, then we need to ensure that we look after the health of our soul. Indeed in Surah At Tin 95:4, Allah SWT states that He has created man in his best form.

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَن تَقْوِيمٍ

It is thus our duty to make sure that our best form is retained as far as is possible in this life so that we can reap the rewards in the world hereafter.

- Moral virtues give men eternal happiness while moral corruption leads him to everlasting wretchedness. Our human soul can be compared to a mirror. If we want to see something beautiful reflected in the mirror we must first clean the mirror to ensure that the dirt is not reflected. Analogously man needs to purify himself of his evil habits as otherwise he would be akin to putting jewels on a dirty and unwashed body.

(Continuation of) Diseases of the soul: Pretending virtuousness (Riya`)

- Today the main killer of the human body is diabetes or heart attacks. However, the soul can also suffer from diseases like *riya`* or *showing off*, *ujb* or *self admiration* and *kibr*, a sense of superiority. Pertaining to *riya`* is *ikhlas* which is *doing everything for the sake of Allah*.
- In Surah Al Ma'un 107:4-7 Allah SWT says:

So woe to those that pray قَوْلِيلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّينَ
And are heedless of their prayers الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ
To those who make display الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاؤُونَ

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And refuse charity وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ

It is clear from the above verses that Allah has cursed those who pray or perform good deeds for anyone other than Allah SWT. According to Imam Ja'far Shadiq, anyone who indulges in *riya`* would have engaged in *shirk* or *polytheism*.

- Once Syaddad ibn 'Aus saw the Holy Prophet was crying. He asked the Prophet what had caused him to cry. The Prophet replied that he was worried that his *ummah* will revert to polytheism: “*They will not be worshipping idols, sun or moon but they would like to be seen in their amaal*”. [*Mizaan al Hikmah*, hadith no 6798]
- One reason why we begin our shalat with the words ‘*Allahu Akbar*’ is to rid ourselves of any sense of superiority.
- It should be noted that the *sajdah* during shalat is always performed twice in each raka’at. This is because our *first sajdah* implies that our origin is from earth and we were dead and it was Allah who gave us life. The *second sajdah* implies that we are all mortal and ultimately we will return to the earth and finally we will be raised again on the day of resurrection. Thus it is Allah SWT who gives life and takes it away. He is the Most Superior and it will be his Judgement that will decide our fate on the day of resurrection.
- In earlier classes we have already discussed the example of Iblees. The downfall of Iblees was due to his ego since he refused to bow down to Adam as he thought that he was superior to mankind. Iblees thus suffered from *kibr* or a sense of superiority and ultimately this was what led to his eviction.
- In a hadith it is stated that whenever Iblees sees someone praying, he whispers in their ears that they should prolong their prayers as they might be seen by their peers and thus they may want to look pious in front of them. [*Mizaan al Hikmah*, hadith no 6815]. Such an action is *riya`* and is strongly disproved in Islam.
- The Prophet of Allah has said that if you pray in congregation with ten people then Allah will record the reward of each raka’at as being equal to 72,800 raka’at of shalat (Mustadrak al-Wasa’i, Volume 1, Page 487) the implication is that if you were to pray just one 2 raka’at shalat in congregation with ten people just ONE TIME, this would be equivalent to performing the shalat of 23.5 years! Thus the congregation or *jamat* prayers are highly recommended.
- Imam al-Shadiq (as) said: “*Riya`* in any of its forms amounts to *shirk*, (polytheism); verily, one who works for the people, his reward lies with them, and one who works for Allah, his reward lies with Allah.” [Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 402]

It is for us to ponder whether the reward of Allah is comparable to the reward of anyone else.

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- There is a narration which states that *al muraaee*, or those who pretend virtuousness, apparently or externally look pious and their acts depict beauty but internally or inwards their soul is ailing. [*Mizaan al Hikmah*, hadith no 6771]
- The Prophet has said that when we perform good deeds, the angel will ascend joyfully after writing down our deeds. However, if our deeds were performed in *riya`* for the sake of showing off, then Allah will ask the angel to throw our amaal or our deeds in *Sijjin*, which is the seventh and the lowest ebb of hellfire [*Mizaan al Hikmah*, hadith no 6780]
- In a well known hadith the Prophet has said that the Ark of Noah is the Ark of salvation and that his progeny is similar to the Noah's Ark; whoever abandons them will be perished while whoever follows them will be salvaged.
- The Prophet was once asked what he meant by 'salvation'. The Prophet replied that salvation will not be for those who are hypocrites and try to deceive Allah and that if anyone tries to deceive Allah, he will end up deceiving himself and ultimately stripping off his faith if only he is aware. Then someone asked the Prophet how it was possible to deceive Allah. To this the Prophet replied that it referred to those who performed what Allah commanded but did so to seek the pleasures of others rather than to appease the Almighty. [*Mizaan al Hikmah*, hadith no 6791]
- Someone once asked Imam Ali, "Who are those that are blind creatures?" Imam Ali replied, "They are those who perform virtuous deeds not for the sake of Allah." [*Mizaan al Hikmah*, hadith no 6928]

Devastating effects of riya`

- A person suffering from *riya`* fails to realise that even if he earns worldly fame among people, scholars or the elite, he will be disgraced in the eyes of the King of kings, and his actions will lead him to *Sijjin* (the lowest level of hell).
- *Riya`* is often accompanied with other serious moral vices. One of these vices is *sum`ah*, which means to orally transmit one's good qualities to the ears of people for the purpose of attracting them and publicising oneself. A person with *riya`* usually likes to humiliate others, and injures the feelings of brothers and sisters-in-faith. He is often rude to a pious person and behaves proudly with him in order to project himself to be more virtuous.
- If the tree of *riya`* grows for a long time in a person's heart, it leads him to become a hypocrite. Each one of the vices mentioned above is enough to land a person in hell.

Advice to combat riya`

- A person suffering from this grave disease is usually not aware that it has penetrated his personality and thus made his deeds worthless. The lures of the devil and the self are so subtle and the path of humanity is so delicate that unless he is very self-vigilant, he cannot

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understand this inherent evil. He imagines that his actions are for pleasing God, but in reality they are serving his own interests.

- Be your own physician and regularly scrutinize yourself for the real aims behind your good actions, words, and acts of worships. Do you feel the same fervour in doing good acts, offering prayers or fasts when you are alone or when these deeds are not known to anyone? Are you really performing good only for the sake of earning the pleasure of God? Do you feel a desire for your friends to praise you for your good deeds, intellectual endeavours, long prayers and piety? How do you feel when you are not praised for a certain good action? Compare your feelings when performing an action in public and then doing the same act when the chance of it being seen by others is least. If, God forbid, your eagerness to do an act of goodness or worship is more when you are in the company of your friends or in public or when there is a greater chance of it getting seen or praised, then consider yourself to be a victim of *riya'*. In short, as Imam Ali said in one his sermons (cited in Najh al Balagah) we should evaluate ourselves before we are evaluated.
- If you are acquiring knowledge, falling prey to *riya'* will make you desire to gain an important position in the eyes of scholars or men of honour by solving an important problem or presenting a topic in a unique way and to make you the focus of their attention in order to receive applause from them and the praise of the public at a gathering. Ask yourself: If a friend of mine or some one else had done the same feat in front of others or done it in a better way, would I have felt the same way? Was this action of mine only for God?
- Take a firm step to get rid of *riya'* for it is leading you to hell. Eradicate the desire of getting praised by creatures for the actions that are done for the sake of God. Do all your acts as a duty to God. Fight your inclination of performing virtuousness and worship in public or where there is a chance of getting praised, until this inclination is totally eliminated from your heart. Pray frequently to God Almighty to purify your heart of the stains of polytheism and hypocrisy and to clean it of the rust of the love of the world, which is the source of all vices.

Conclusion

- The Prophet (s) said: "**One who performs an act that is liked by God in order to show off to people, and in secret manifests qualities that are not liked by God, he shall encounter the anger and wrath of God.**" [Al-Hurr al-'Amili, *al-Wasa'il*, v.1, p.69]

Mind Blowing Story

Haroon Rashid's hunting expedition

Once Haroon Rashid went for a hunting expedition and the witty scholar, Bahlool, decided to accompany him.

During his expedition, Haroon saw a deer and he tried to attack it. However, the arrow that Haroon aimed at the deer just managed to miss the creature and thus Haroon missed his target. He was greatly disappointed.

While he was ruing his luck, Bahlool started shouting, "Well done! Well done!"

Haroon Rashid got very angry on hearing this and he said to Bahlool, "Are you trying to ridicule me?"

The witty scholar replied, "No, I was not ridiculing you. I am just congratulating the deer."

Disclaimer:

In this tafseer class, there might be shortcomings in imparting the knowledge of the tafseer. If there is any information that requires correction, please do not hesitate to let us know via e-mail: jaafari_tafseer_committee@yahoo.com.sg.
Allah knows best.