

An Essay on Ethics and the Spiritual Journey

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Translators' Foreword: Aqa Mir Husayn Qazwini was born in 1126 A.D. in Qazwin, Iran. He was a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (s). All of his family members were virtuous scholars. His father, Aqa Mir Muhammad, was a pious jurist and a great poet. His elder brother, Aqa Sayyid Muhammad, was also an insightful scholar who had proficiency in all Islamic sciences. Being raised by such great father and brother, Aqa Mir Husayn soon stood out in the world of knowledge, becoming famous as a pious and virtuous scholar and also being able to earn *ijtihād* (the ability of making a legal decision by independent interpretation of the legal sources). By the age of thirty-five along with mastering all the sciences, he had acquired the ethical virtues.

Enjoying the company of a knowledgeable father and studying the Islamic resources in depth, he was almost needless of any other teacher. It is said that he had four teachers overall: Sayid Nasrullah Hā'iri, Shaykh Husayn Māhuzi, Mawlā Muhammad Qāsim Sarāb Tonekāboni and Shaykh Muhammad Ali Juzayni.

His approach to spirituality came from Shaykh Mumin Kuchak also known as Pirasty. His father was trained by Mir Muhammad Taqi Shāhi who was a student of Shaykh Mu'min.

Thanks to the great teachers who trained him, he was able to experience high levels of spirituality. Staying awake at nights for praying, watching his own deeds and being constantly supplicant to God are only part of the efforts he made in his journey.

After a life of dedication to God, in the year 1208 A.H. Aqa Mir Husayn passed away and his body was buried in his birth town, Qazwin.

In addition to self-purification, training students and reinforcing people's faith by his Godly behaviour, he has left us with a precious resource of different subjects. In the book *A'yān al-Shi'a* the author names 26 of his books. What follows is a list of some of his important books.

I. *Ma'ārij al-Ahkām.* Shahid Thani has a book called *Masālik al-Afhām* which consists of notes and explanations on Muhaqiq Hilli's book named *Sharāyi' al-Islam*. Aqa Mir Husayn used to teach this book to his jurisprudence students. Following his friend's request he then gathered his notes and descriptions on the book and also added some chapters to the book. (i.e. comments on *Jāmi al-Ruwāt* and *Mushtarikāt*, a chapter on the resources he used with a review for each book and a chapter on the contemporary and early scholars including his father and teacher.) The result of this great work was the book *Ma'ārij al-Ahkām*.

II. *Mustaqṣā al-Ijtihād fi Sharh Dakhirat al-Ma'ād wa al-Irshād.*

III. *Barāhin al-Sadād fi Sharh al-Irshād.*

IV. *Al-Durr al-Thamin*

V. *Al-Majmā' al-Rā'iḳ dar 'Awā'id Shawāriḳ wa Fawā'id Bawāriḳ.*

VI. *Tadhkirat al-'Uqūl fi Usūl al-Din.*

VII. *Kitāb al-Akhlāq.*

The Following article is taken from his book *Al-Durr al-Thamin*. This had been also published separately by Dar Rah-e Haqq Publishers in Qum, entitled “*Risāle-yi dar Akhlāq wa Sayr wa Sulūk*” (An Essay on Ethics and the Spiritual Journey). In this edition, Ayatullah Ridā Ustadi has added some comments, the Qur’anic verses and hadiths for each instruction. What follows is a translation of this edition.



An Essay on Ethics and the Spiritual Journey

In the Name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful

After praising God and sending salutations to the Prophet (s) and his household (a), the following includes some words that this lowest servant of God, Husayn ibn Muhammad Ibrahim al-Husayni, has written in response to the requests of some brothers for moral advice.

Beware that it is incumbent upon all believers to remove qualities of hypocrisy and obtain moral virtues. Negligence and carelessness in self-discipline and acquiring virtues may lead to losing one’s potentials or even human dignity and becoming like animals, as we read in the Qur’an: “...They are like cattle; rather they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless (7:179).”

Those who seek truth must first try to have proper understanding of God and the resurrection and gain certainty by acting upon the Shari'ah (Islamic code of law) and adopt his noble traits of character, which are praised by God: "and indeed you possess a great character. (68:4)" They should always bear in mind the deeds and words of the Prophet (s) and his household (a) and take themselves gradually from the impurities and deficiencies to the height of perfection and purity.

As a reminder, in what follows, some of the major virtues will be mentioned.

► First is to gain piety and righteousness in all one does and all he avoids, and to be constantly watching his own deeds. One has to feel God's presence and His supervision over him in all states of his life. He has to follow God's commands by the fear of Him and restraint from what has been banned to do. Alone or accompanied, he has to give priority to piety and do not cross the line of *shari'ah* (the eternal ethical code and moral code based on the Qur'an and Sunnah). If he commits a sin, he has to repent, regretful of what he has done, and ask for forgiveness trying to compensate for it immediately.

Comment:

وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ وَ تَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ
الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى وَ اتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

And whatever good you do, God knows it. And take provision, for indeed the best provision is Godwariness. So be wary of Me, O you who possess intellects. (Qur'an 2:197)

سُئِلَ الصَّادِقُ (ع) عَنْ تَفْسِيرِ التَّقْوَى فَقَالَ أَنْ لَا
يَفْقِدَكَ اللَّهُ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكَ وَ لَا يَرَاكَ حَيْثُ نَهَاكَ

Imam Sadiq (a) was asked about the meaning of *taqwā*. He said: “*Taqwā* means to be present where God wanted you to be present and to be absent where God wanted you not to be present.” (*Safinat al-Bihār*, vol. 2, p. 678)

► Second is to constantly remember God both verbally and in the heart so that one would not spend a single moment in negligence. He has to value every hour of his life not letting any of his chances to be missed. Every moment of one’s life is a precious gem that is more valuable than this world and all that exists in it.

Comment:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا

O you who have faith! Remember God with frequent remembrance (Qur’an 33:41)

عن الصادق (ع) قال: سَيِّدُ الْأَعْمَالِ ثَلَاثَةٌ: إِنْصَافُ النَّاسِ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ حَتَّى لَا تَرْضَى بِشَيْءٍ إِلَّا رَضِيَتْ لَهُمْ مِثْلَهُ وَمَوَاسَاتُكَ الْأَخَ فِي الْمَالِ وَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ عَلَيَّ كُلِّ حَالٍ لَيْسَ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ فَقَطُّ وَ لَكِنْ إِذَا وَرَدَ عَلَيْكَ شَيْءٌ أَمَرَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِهِ أَخَذْتَ بِهِ أَوْ إِذَا وَرَدَ عَلَيْكَ شَيْءٌ نَهَى اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَنْهُ تَرَكْتَهُ

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (a) that he said: “Three deeds are the best of the deeds.

1. To be fair with people to the extent that you wish for them whatever you wish for yourself.
2. To share with your needy brother the money that you are in need of.

3. To remember God in every situation. This does not only mean to say: “*subhan Allah wa'l-hamdu lillah wa la ilaha illallah wa'l-lahu akbar,*” rather it means to follow God’s commands and keep away from what He has forbidden.” (*Safinat al-Bihār*, vol. 2, p. 594)

► Third is to completely rely on God and leave everything to Him. One should never trust his own opinions and decisions and should ask God for His help and put his faith in his Eternal Creator. He should be happy with what God decides for him and should not consider Him guilty [for the bad things that occur to him] and should clean his heart from the likely dissatisfactions of the divine predestination.

Comment:

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

And whoever is wary of God, He shall make a way out for him, and provide for him from whence he does not reckon. And whoever puts his trust in God, He will suffice him. (Qur’an 65:2, 3)

عَنِ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ الْجَهْمِ قَالَ سَأَلْتُ الرَّضَا (ع) فَقُلْتُ لَهُ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ مَا حَدُّ التَّوَكُّلِ فَقَالَ لِي أَنْ لَا تَخَافَ مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا

Imam Ridā (a) was asked about *tawakkul* (total reliance on God). He replied: “*tawakkul* is not to fear anyone but God [since no one can harm you or do you good except God.]” (*Safinat al-Bihār*, vol. 2, p. 683)

► Fourth is to follow all the laws of the religion as they have been practiced by the best of the Prophets, Prophet Muhammad (s). One has to seek these laws from the pious scholars, since disobeying these laws is the cause of straying from the path, and will lead to corruption. One has to be consistent in observing the obligations and restraining himself from the forbidden acts. He has to put a great amount of effort during the days and nights and should not be satisfied with only listening to the guidance and advices of good friends. He has to perform the recommended acts as much as he can and has time. He should be aware of the regret one will feel on the Day of Judgment when he sees how his life has been wasted. He should avoid vain and useless talking specially if lying, swearing, backbiting or gossiping is involved. He also has to avoid hearing forbidden and useless things and to save all parts of his body from any action that is not accepted by God.

Comment:

مَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

Take whatever the Apostle gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you, and be wary of God. Indeed God is severe in retribution. (Qur'an 59:7)

► Fifth is to renounce worldly pleasures and resist carnal desires. One has to stand on his own and do not ask people for small and big favours, since asking for people's help leads to degradation and forgetting the Hereafter, and will result in despair and poverty.

Comment:

قَالَ عَلِيٌّ (ع): الزُّهْدُ بَيْنَ كَلِمَتَيْنِ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا

بِمَا آتَاكُمْ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَأْسِ عَلَى الْمَاضِي وَ لَمْ يَفْرَحْ
بِالْآتِي فَقَدْ اسْتَكْمَلَ الزُّهْدَ بِطَرَفَيْهِ

Imam Ali (a) said: "Asceticism is indicated in two sentences of Qur'an: "So that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor exult for what comes your way." Whoever does not grieve for what he has missed and does not exult for what he gains has accomplished asceticism from both sides." (*Nahj al-Balaghah* 3/258)

قَالَ عَلِيٌّ (ع) أَفْضَلُ الزُّهْدِ إِخْفَاءُ الزُّهْدِ

Imam Ali (a) said: "The best asceticism is to hide asceticism." (*Nahj al-Balaghah* 3/156)

► Sixth is constantly remembering and preparing for death. One should not neglect death for a moment since this negligence will ruin his life in both this world and the Hereafter. He should prepare the provision needed for his eternal journey and should write his will, prepare his winding sheet and whatever else that is necessary. Because if one does not do this, no matter how long he lives, his death will be sudden to him.

Comment:

قَالَ: أَفْضَلُ الزُّهْدِ فِي الدُّنْيَا ذِكْرُ الْمَوْتِ وَ أَفْضَلُ
الْعِبَادَةِ ذِكْرُ الْمَوْتِ وَ أَفْضَلُ التَّفَكُّرِ ذِكْرُ الْمَوْتِ

The Prophet (s) said: "The best asceticism in this world is remembrance of death, the best act of worship is remembrance of death, and the best contemplation is remembrance of death." (*Jāmi' al-Akhhār*, p. 193)

كان رسول الله (ص) كثيرا ما يوصي أصحابه بذكر الموت

The Prophet (s) used to advise his companions to remember death, a lot. (*Amāli* by Shaykh Tusi, p. 17)

قيل لأمير المؤمنين (ع) ما الاستعداد للموت؟ قال: أداء الفرائض و اجتناب المحارم و الاشتغال على المكارم ...

Imam Ali (a) was asked: What is preparation for death? He said: "Doing the obligations, and keeping away from the forbidden acts and sins, and behaving well and morally." (*Safinat al-Bihār*, vol. 2, p. 554)

► Seventh is to always bring oneself to account, every morning and night. Thus, whenever he finds a good action in his deeds he should thank God and should consider that great blessing to be from Him, and ask God to give him the ability to do that action again. And whenever he finds an evil action in his deeds, he should not hesitate to repent and clean his heart from evil while being regretful of what he has done.

Comment:

عن أبي الحسن الماضي صلوات الله عليه قال:
لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يُحَاسِبْ نَفْسَهُ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ؛ فَإِنْ
عَمِلَ حَسَنًا، اسْتَزَادَ اللَّهُ وَإِنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئًا، اسْتَغْفَرَ
اللَّهُ مِنْهُ وَتَابَ إِلَيْهِ

Imam Kazim (a) said: "A person who does not bring himself to account every day is not one of us, so if he does a good action he asks God to make it more, and if he commits a sin he has God

to forgive it and return to Him.” (*Muhāsabat al-Nafs* by Ibn Tāwus, p. 13)

عن النبي (ص): حاسبوا انفسكم قبل ان
تحاسبوا و زنوها قبل ان توزنوا و تجهزوا للعرض
الاکبر

The noble Prophet (s) said: “Bring yourselves to account before you are brought to account, and weigh your acts before they are weighed, and prepare yourself for the Judgment Day.” (*Ibid.*, p. 13)

- Eighth is to constantly seek forgiveness from God in all hours of the day especially during the evening and dawn, since in Luqman’s words to his son it has been written that: say “God forgive me” a lot. Indeed there are times during the day when God does not reject people’s requests. Therefore, we have to pray constantly so that it might be accepted at one of these times.

Comment:

فَافْرَأُوا مَا تَيْسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ عَلِمَ أَنْ سَيَكُونُ مِنْكُمْ
مَرْضَىٰ وَ آخَرُونَ يَضْرِبُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَبْتَغُونَ مِنْ
فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَ آخَرُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَافْرَأُوا
مَا تَيْسَّرَ مِنْهُ وَ أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَ آتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَ أَقْرَضُوا
اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا وَ مَا تَقْدِمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ
تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا وَ أَعْظَمَ أَجْرًا وَ اسْتَغْفِرُوا
اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

So recite as much of the Qur’an as it is feasible. He knows that some of you will be sick, while others will travel in the land seeking God’s grace, and yet others will fight in the way of God. So recite as much of it as is feasible, and maintain

the prayer and pay the zakat and lend God a good loan. Whatever good you send ahead for your souls you will find it with God [in a form] that is better and greater with respect to reward. And plead to God for forgiveness; indeed God is all-forgiving, all-merciful. (Qur'an 73:20)

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص) طُوبَى لِمَنْ وَجَدَ فِي
صِحْفَةِ عَمَلِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَحْتَ كُلِّ ذَنْبٍ أَسْتَغْفِرُ
اللَّهُ

The noble Prophet (s) said: "Blessed are those who find an istiqlār (ask for forgiveness) with every sin they have done, in the Day of Judgment." (*Muhāsabah al-Nafs* by Ibn Tāwus, p. 15)

► Ninth is to enjoin the good and prohibit the evil as much as possible, with its conditions and etiquettes that it is explained in the books of our scholars, and whenever it was not possible to stop the evil, one has to leave the place and dislike that deed in his heart and should not be lenient with its doers.

Comment:

و إِذْ قَالَ لِقَمَانَ لِابْنِهِ وَ هُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بَنِيَّ لَا تَشْرِكْ
بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لظَلَمٌ عَظِيمٌ ... يَا بَنِيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ
وَ أْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَ أَنْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ اصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا
أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

O my son! Maintain the prayer and bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, and be patient through whatever may visit you. That is indeed the steadiest of courses. (31:17)

عن علي (ع): إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالنَّهْيَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ لَا يُقَرِّبَانِ مِنْ أَجَلٍ وَلَا يَنْقُصَانِ مِنْ رِزْقٍ

Imam Ali (a) said: “Indeed, enjoining the good and prohibiting the evil does not bring death forward nor does it reduce one’s provisions. [This means that fear of life or provisions should not stop one from commanding to the good and forbidding from the evil, since no one will see harm if God does not want to.]” (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, 3/244)

عن علي (ع): لَعَنَ اللَّهُ الْأَمْرِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ التَّارِكِينَ لَهُ، وَ النَّاهِينَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ الْعَامِلِينَ بِهِ

Imam Ali (a) said: “May those who command to the good but do not do it themselves be away from God’s mercy and also those who forbid from the evil but commit it.” (*Nahj al-Balāghah* 2/17)

- Tenth is to help and support his brothers in faith in good deeds and to be caring for their needs especially for the descendants of the prophet.

Comment:

وَ تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَ التَّقْوَىٰ وَ لَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَ الْعُدْوَانِ وَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

Cooperate in piety and Godwariness, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression, and be wary of God. Indeed God is severe in retribution.” (Qur’an 5:2)

عن الصادق (ع) قَالَ: مَنْ كَانَ فِي حَاجَةٍ أَخِيهِ
الْمُسْلِمِ كَانَ اللَّهُ فِي حَاجَتِهِ مَا كَانَ فِي حَاجَةٍ
أَخِيهِ

Imam Sadiq (a) said: “Whoever tries to solve a problem of his brother in faith, God will be taking care of his affairs and needs during the time he is doing so.” (*Safinat al-Bihar*, vol. 1, p. 351)

روى عن رسول الله (ص): أَرْبَعَةٌ أَنَا لَهُمْ شَفِيعٌ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ: الْمُحِبُّ لِأَهْلِ بَيْتِي، وَ الْمُوَالِي لَهُمْ وَ
الْمُعَادِي فِيهِمْ، وَ الْقَاضِي لَهُمْ حَوَائِجَهُمْ، وَ
السَّاعِي لَهُمْ فِيمَا يَنْوِبُهُمْ مِنْ أُمُورِهِمْ

Prophet Muhammad is reported to say: “There are four groups of people that I will be their intercessors on the Day of Judgment:

1. Those who love my household.
2. Those who support my household and defend them against their enemies.
3. Those who help them with their needs.
4. Those who try their best for them while they are distressed. (*Fadā'il al-Sādāt*, p. 120)

► Eleventh is to respect the commands of God and honour the pious ones and also the scholars who work on religious studies. It is through this that one can get to the source of prosperity in this life and salvation in the Hereafter.

Comment:

عن رسول الله (ص): إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ اسْتِخْفَافًا
بِالدِّينِ

The Prophet (s) said: “I fear for you to undervalue the religion.” (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 72, p. 227)

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) قَالَ إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغَفْلَةَ فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ
غَفَلَ فَإِنَّمَا يَغْفُلُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالتَّهَاقُوتَ بِأَمْرِ
اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ تَهَاقُوتَ بِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ أَهَانَهُ اللَّهُ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

Imam Sadiq (a) has said: “Avoid negligence, for whom who is negligent, neglects himself (negligence of God and spiritualities is equal to neglecting one’s self and forgetting the humanity of human), and avoid undervaluing the commands of God, for, in the judgment day, God will disgrace whom who disregarded and undervalued His commands.” (*Ibid.*)

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) قَالَ لَا تُحَقِّرُوا مُؤْمِنًا فَقِيرًا
فَإِنَّهُ مِنْ أَحْقَرِ مُؤْمِنًا فَقِيرًا وَاسْتَخَفَّ بِهِ حَقَرَهُ اللَّهُ
وَلَمْ يَزَلِ اللَّهُ مَاقِنًا لَهُ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ عَنْ مَحَقَرَتِهِ أَوْ
يَتُوبَ

Imam Sadiq (a) has said: “Never humiliate a faithful who is poor and never dishonour him, for God will humiliate those who dishonour a poor faithful and humiliate him for his poverty, and God will always be wrathful with this person until he repents.” (*Safinat al-Bihār*, vol. 1, p. 40)

In another narration, the respect and regard for the faithful has said to be an implication of respect and regard for the Prophet (s). (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 74, p. 232)

► Twelfth is to be patient in every situation. Patience is a chief principle of faith. Being satisfied with *qadar* (divine

predestination), establishes comfort in both this life and the Hereafter. One should never wish and ask for what he does not know the consequences of, and should always thank God, which further increases the Godly gifts, and continually pray for *ta'jil-i al-faraj* (hastening the relief through the reappearance of the twelfth Imam).

Comment:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

O you who have faith! Take recourse in patience and prayer; indeed God is with the patient. (Qur'an 2:153)

عَنِ الْأَصْبَغِ قَالَ قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ
عَلَيْهِ الصَّبْرُ صَبْرَانِ صَبْرٌ عِنْدَ الْمُصِيبَةِ حَسِينٌ
جَمِيلٌ وَأَحْسَنُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ الصَّبْرُ عِنْدَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ
عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَيْكَ وَالذِّكْرُ ذِكْرَانِ ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ
عِنْدَ الْمُصِيبَةِ وَأَفْضَلُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ عِنْدَ مَا
حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكَ فَيَكُونُ حَاجِزاً

Imam Ali (a) has said: "There are two kinds of patience; one is patience at the time of misery, which is beautiful, and the other one, which is more beautiful than the first one, is patience and restraint when there is opportunity for committing a sin. And also remembrance of God has two kinds; one is remembering Him at times of misery, and the other one which is better than the first, is remembering Him when there is opportunity for committing a sin so that by His remembrance, one abandons that sin." (*Safinat al-Bihār*, vol. 2, p. 5)

In some narrations, it is said that patience has three kinds; patience at the time of misery, patience in restraining oneself from committing sins and patience in fulfilling the religious obligations. (*Irshād al-Qulūb*, p. 114)

► Thirteenth is to try to learn the religious studies which will benefit him in the Hereafter and to ask for it from its experts. One should not fear the rebukes of others while seeking knowledge, so that he will not remain in ignorance.

Comment:

قال موسى بن جعفر (ع) : أَوْلَى الْعِلْمِ بِكَ مَا لَا يَصْلُحُ لَكَ الْعَمَلُ إِلَّا بِهِ- وَ أَوْجِبُ الْعِلْمَ عَلَيْكَ مَا أَنْتَ مَسْئُوكٌ عَنِ الْعَمَلِ بِهِ وَ الزَّمُّ الْعِلْمَ لَكَ مَا دَلَّكَ عَلَى صَلَاحِ قَلْبِكَ وَ أَظْهَرَ لَكَ فَسَادَهُ وَ أَحْمَدُ الْعِلْمِ عَاقِبَةٌ مَا زَادَكَ فِي عَمَلِكَ الْعَاجِلِ فَلَا تَشْغَلَنَّ بِعِلْمٍ مَا لَا يَضُرُّكَ جَهْلُهُ وَ لَا تَغْفَلَنَّ عَنِ عِلْمٍ مَا يَزِيدُ فِي جَهْلِكَ تَرْكُهُ

Imam Kazim (a) has said: “The worthiest knowledge you must learn is the knowledge that your deeds will not be right and proper without it (i.e. the knowledge of practical rulings); the most compulsory knowledge for you is the one about whose practice you will be accountable; the most needed knowledge for you is the knowledge that informs you of the things that purify your heart and reveals to you its impurities; the knowledge with the most praised end is the one that will prompt you to act. Therefore, do not get involved in those types of knowledge that if you do not know you will not lose anything and do not be heedless with respect to those things that if you do know they will increase your ignorance.” (*Safina al-Bihār*, vol 2, p. 219)

عَنْ النَّبِيِّ (ص) قَالَ: إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ ثَلَاثَةٌ: آيَةٌ
مُحْكَمَةٌ، أَوْ فَرِيضَةٌ عَادِلَةٌ، أَوْ سُنَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ، وَمَا
خَلَاهُنَّ فَهُوَ فَضْلٌ

In this narration (*Safinat al-Bihār*, vol. 2, p. 219) the Prophet (s) states that there are three types of knowledge and whatever that is not among them is only a virtue. These three types have been interpreted to be *the principles of theology, ethics and jurisprudence*.

► Fourteenth is to have *ikhlas* (sincere intention) in everything one does, so that his intention would be free of anything other than pleasing God. This is due to the fact that having *riyā'* (impure intention) is committing *shirk* (polytheism) and it is necessary to avoid it.

Comment:

فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ

So worship God, putting exclusive faith in Him. Look! [Only] exclusive faith is worthy of God, (Qur'an 39:2, 3)

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

You [alone] do we worship, and to You [alone] do we turn for help. (Qur'an 1:5)

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) قَالَ الْإِيقَاءُ عَلَى الْعَمَلِ حَتَّى
يَخْلُصَ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْعَمَلِ وَالْعَمَلُ الْخَالِصُ الَّذِي لَا
تُرِيدُ أَنْ يَحْمَدَكَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

Imam Sadiq (a) has said: "Keeping an action from being tainted with polytheism is harder than doing the action itself, and an action with a pure

intention is one that you do not seek in doing in pleasure of anyone other than God.” (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 70, p. 230)

عن سفيان بن عيينه عن ابي عبدالله (ع) قال: سألته عن قول الله عز و جل (إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ) قال: القلب السليم الذي يلقي ربه و ليس فيه أحد سواه قال: و كل قلب فيه شرك أو شك فهو ساقط، و إنما أرادوا الزهد في الدنيا لتفرغ قلوبهم للآخرة

Imam Sadiq (a) was asked about the meaning of the “pure heart” in verse 26:89, he answered: “A pure heart is a heart that meets its Lord in a state that there is no one other than God within it.” And he also said: “Any heart in which there is polytheism, impure intention, doubt or faithlessness, has no value or credit before God. The servants of God exercise asceticism only to keep their hearts with God and the Hereafter.” (*Ibid.*, p. 239)

► Fifteenth is *silat al-rahim* (observation of kinship) and doing good to relatives which adds blessings to one’s belongings and life span and grants the satisfaction of God even if it is only by greeting one’s kinship when more than that is not possible. This is more emphasized when it is towards parents which have numerous rights and their curse causes misery both in this life and the hereafter.

Comment:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص صَلِّهِ الرَّحِمِ تَزِيدُ فِي الْعُمْرِ وَ تَنْفِي الْفَقْرَ

The noble Prophet (s) said: "Observing kinship prolongs one's life and eliminates one's poverty."
(*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 74, p. 103)

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) إِنَّ صَلَةَ الرَّحِمِ تُهَوِّنُ
الْحِسَابَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

Imam Sadiq (a) has said: "Observing kinship eases the reckoning of the Judgment Day." (*Ibid.*, p. 102)

وَ وَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ
لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا

We have enjoined man to be good to his parents. But if they urge you to ascribe to Me as partner that of which you have no knowledge then do not obey them. (Qur'an 29:8)

عَنْ مَنْصُورِ بْنِ حَازِمٍ قَالَ قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع أَيُّ
الْأَعْمَالِ أَفْضَلُ قَالَ الصَّلَاةُ لَوْفَتِهَا وَ بِرُّ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَ
الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

Imam Sadiq (a) was asked about the best action. Imam replied: "to perform Salat (the daily prayers) in its proper time, to do good to parents and to struggle for the sake of God. (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 45, p. 74)

قَالَ الرَّضَا (ع): بِرُّ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَاجِبٌ وَإِنْ كَانَا
مُشْرِكَيْنِ، وَ لَا طَاعَةَ لَهُمَا فِي مَعْصِيَةِ الْخَالِقِ عَزَّ
وَ جَلَّ وَ لَا لِعَيْرِهِمَا فَإِنَّهُ لَا طَاعَةَ لِمَخْلُوقٍ فِي
مَعْصِيَةِ الْخَالِقِ

Imam Ridā (a) said: “Doing good to parents is necessary even if they are polytheists. However if they want their child to disobey God, hu must not follow them, since no creature should be obeyed by disobeying the Creator.” (*Ibid.*, vol. 72, p. 74)

► Sixteenth is to visit brothers in faith and to talk to them about religious issues and the hereafter. Since talking with them provides the provision needed for the momentous journey to the other world.

Comment:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ مَنْ زَارَ أَخَاهُ فِي اللَّهِ قَالَ
اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِنِّي زُرْتَهُ وَثَوَابُكَ عَلَيَّ وَ لَسْتُ
أَرْضَى لَكَ ثَوَابًا دُونَ الْجَنَّةِ

Imam Sadiq said: “Whoever visits his brother for the sake of God, God says to him: you visited me and your reward stands on me, and I will not be pleased with any reward other than paradise for you.” (*Ibid.*, vol. 34, p. 74)

روى عن الصادق عليه السلام انه يقول لأصحابه:
اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ، وَ كُونُوا إِخْوَةً بَرَّةً مُتَحَابِّينَ فِي اللَّهِ،
مُتَوَاصِلِينَ مُتَرَاحِمِينَ، تَزَاوَرُوا وَ تَلَاقُوا وَ تَذَاكُرُوا وَ
أَحْيُوا أَمْرَنَا

It is narrated that Imam Sadiq (a) said to his companions: “Be pious! Be good brothers who love each other for the sake of God, visit each other and show mercy to each other! Visit each other and meet. Remind each other of the good things and revive our affair (by not letting our teachings be forgotten)” (*Ibid.*, vol. 74, p. 352)

► Seventeenth is not to be lenient and not too hard with himself, rather to be moderate in his spiritual journey.

Comment:

The highest level of perfection and prosperity for anyone is earning the quality of moderation and fairness in everything he does, even in his mind, regardless of that action being related only to him or to other people as well. Salvation in this life and the hereafter is not earned but with striving to keep moderation in everything. So if you want to be prosperous, try to earn all the good qualities and to be moderate in various things you do. Try to be moderate in gaining knowledge and acting upon it, and do as much as you are capable of. Do not be satisfied only with one of them, since it has been really discouraged in narrations. (*Mi'raj al-Sa'adah*, p. 49)

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) قَالَ: لَا تُكْرِهُوا إِلَى
أَنْفُسِكُمُ الْعِبَادَةَ

Imam Sadiq (a) has said: "Do not ruin your desire for worship, by excessive performance of acts of worship." (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 71, p. 213)

عن علي (ع) قال : قليل من عمل مدوم عليه
خير من عمل كثير مملول منه

Imam Ali (a) said: "Doing less actions continuously is better than tiring yourself by doing too many actions [and then stopping it altogether]." (*Ibid.*, p. 219)

عن علي (ع) في وصيته عند وفاته : واقتصد يا
بنى في معيشتك و اقتصد في عبادتك و عليك
فيها بالامر الدائم الذي تطيقه

Shortly before his death, Imam Ali (a) stated in his final words: “My son! Be moderate in life and work, and also in worship! It is necessary to plan your worship in a way that you are able to continue it.” (*Ibid.*, p. 214)

► Eighteenth is to socialize with people and deal with them according to their level of understanding. One should not talk to people about issues that are beyond their understanding and they might not approve of. He has to endeavour to have a moral character, control his anger, be humble, and be free of arrogance, false pride and snobbery. He also has to pray for rectification of his situation and also of others. The solution to every problem is to be righteous and in the persistent guardianship of God, and to recourse to the Prophet Muhammad (s) and his household (a).

Comment:

قال رسول الله (ص): اعقل الناس اشدهم مداراة
للناس و اذل الناس من اهان الناس

The Prophet (s): “The wisest of people is the one who has the greatest tolerance with people, and the lowliest of people is the one who humiliates people.” (*Ibid.*, vol. 75, p. 52)

قال رسول الله (ص): انا امرنا معاشر الانبيا
بمداراة الناس كما امرنا باداء الفرائض

The Prophet (s) said: “We prophets are ordered by God to be tolerant with people the same way we are ordered to perform our obligations.” (*Ibid.*, p. 53)

It has been reported that Imam Ridā (a) sent the following message to a person who was teaching people the theological issues:

يكلّم الناس بما يعرفون و يكف عمّا ينكرون

Tell him to speak to people of the things they understand, and avoid telling them what they do not understand and thus deny. (*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 69)

► Nineteenth is to acquire the quality of fear and hope: fear of God’s punishment, and hope for His endless mercy. One should have both these qualities, because they both have great advantages. Of course, prior to death, one should have more hope for God’s mercy.

Comment:

قال ابو عبد الله كان ابى عليه السلام يقول : انه ليس من عبد مومن الا فى قلبه نوران نور خيفه و نور رجا لو وزن هذا لم يزد على هذا

Imam Sadiq (a) said: “There is no faithful that does not have two lights in his heart: the light of fear and the light of hope. If both are compared, one would not be greater than the other.” (*Bihār* vol. 70, p. 352)

عن الصادق (ع) قال : كان فيما اوصى به لقمان ابنه يا بنى خف الله خوفا لو وافيته ببر الثقلين خفت ان يعذبك و ارج الله رجا لو وافيته بذنوب الثقلين رجوت ان يغفر لك

Imam Sadiq (a) has said: “In Luqman’s words to his son he said: My son! fear God. A kind of fear that if you had done the good deeds of all the

humans and jinns, you would still fear that God might punish you. And be hopeful for God's mercy, a kind of hope that if you had committed the sins of all the humans and jinns you would still have hope that He might forgive you." (*Ibid.*, p. 384)

► Twentieth is to acquire *'iffah* (chastity) by being persistent in showing generosity and helping other brothers and having toleration and moderation in dealing with them.

Comment:

'Iffah means that one's sexual desire is under the control of his rationality, so that the person controls it depending on what good and bad his logic defines and acts in a way that is beneficial to both his life in here and in the Hereafter. Hence, the person avoids what causes corruption and never neglects the right thing his logic tells him to do. What causes someone to obey logic in these situations is his perfection of self or his greatness of essence or wanting to earn prosperity in this life and the Hereafter. His intention should not be to deceive people or to save his reputation, and also he should not do this for the fear of some people watching over him. There are people that abandon some pleasures in their lives for some other pleasures and not for the sake of the Hereafter, these people are not considered to have the quality of 'iffah. And some people abandon sexual pleasures because they do not have the opportunity, or they do not have the sexual organs, or they do not understand what it is about, or they fear that people might know about it or fear from other people's rebuke. These people are not considered to have 'iffah (*Mi'rāj al-Sa'ādah*, p. 31)

► Conclusion: Contemplation on what has been written here and steadiness in disciplining oneself will be effective in achieving happiness and avoiding misery.

May God saves us and our faithful brothers from the obsession of the cursed Satan and home us in the safe place on the Day of Judgment! Amen!

Comment:

Begging: One of the teachers of ethics has stated that if you are doing what you have to do in struggling with the *nafs* (metaphorically it means evil desires in this case), that is good. But if, God forbid, you are lazy in your deeds, and cannot do what you have to do, at least do not miss begging. Weep and moan when you are alone. Since a beggar wants things for free, if he tries hard, he will get what he wants. If they [God] tell you “we do not need a poor servant like you”, say in a humble way that “the beggars waiting on the road for the king, are not considered to be his servants”. And if the king tells you “you are disobeying us”, say in a nice way “everyone has a position suitable to him”. And if he tells you “so how will our dominance be shown?” say in a pleasing way “when someone opposes you”. If he says “Throw him out”, say in a humble way “I will not go anywhere from here. If you throw me out, I will come in from another door.” If he tells you “you are not capable of receiving benefits from us”, say “make me capable of it with the help of your friends”.

In any case, you should not quit begging. Many things are possible through it. The reason for struggling (with the *nafs*) is to realize your poorness and so to beg God.