

Discourse 19: Characteristics of The True Believer – Part VI

In our previous ethical discussions, we narrated a tradition from the Noble Prophet (S) to 'Ali (as) in which he listed one hundred and three characteristics of a true believer. We have covered twenty-six of these characteristics and in this lecture, we will cover another five of them.

... لَطِيفُ الْحَرَكَاتِ، حُلُوُ الْمُشَاهِدَةِ، كَثِيرُ الْعِبَادَةِ، حُسْنُ الْوَقَارِ، لَيِّنُ الْجَانِبِ...

”(The true believer is one whose) movements are with grace and elegance; seeing him is something that is sweet (pleasing); he performs a great amount of worship; he moves with eloquence and dignity; and he is gentle and loving.”

The twenty-seventh characteristic of a true believer is that his movement is with grace and elegance and when he deals or interacts with the creations of Allah (SwT), he does so with love, and gentleness.

The twenty-eighth characteristic is that seeing and meeting him is something sweet and pleasing and he is never harsh or bitter with others.

The twenty-ninth characteristic is that he performs a lot of worship (of Allah).

Is the meaning of this worship simply related to his Salat and Sawm or is it something else?

As we know, 'Ibadah (worship) is of two types:

1. 'Ibadah in the specific meaning: These are forms of worship which if not performed with the intention of seeking closeness to Allah (SwT) are rendered null and void.
2. 'Ibadah in the general meaning: Any action, which if done with the intention of seeking nearness to Allah (SwT) earns the person a reward, however the intention is not one of the conditions for the

correctness of the act.

Thus we can include all actions that we perform in this section and thus when the traditions speak of 'Ibadah, they refer to this meaning.

The thirtieth characteristic of a true believer is that he moves with eloquence and dignity (the word وَقَارِ and وَقَار both come from the root word of وَقَرَ which is in the meaning of a weighty object).

The thirty-first characteristic is that he is gentle and has love and affection (for others).

Amongst these five characteristics which we just mentioned, there are four characteristics which are related to a person and his interaction with other people. We see that a pleasant interaction and good dealings with others is so important and has a great effect on people whom we are speaking to – whether they be people of the faith or people who are engrossed in this materialistic world.

The enemies of Islam are unyielding on placing the label of violence and aggression on the Muslims and we must show them that although we are:

أَشَدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ

“Harsh against the disbelievers.”

However at the same time, we are also:

رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ

“Merciful with one another.”

Looking at the lives of the A`immah, we see that they showed love and affection even with those who were not Muslims and who were not at war with the Muslims. For example, in the books of history it is mentioned that Imam 'Ali (as) was once traveling with a Jew and when they reached a place where they were going to separate on their own routes (to their own city), we see that the Imam went a partial way on the road with the Jew.

Upon seeing this, the Jew told him that he had taken the wrong road to which the Imam replied, “In order to follow the commandments of my religion and observe the rights of the person I am traveling with, I came a short distance on the path with you.” The Jewish man was very surprised at the conduct of the Imam and after a short period of time, he accepted Islam.

Acting according to such a simple injunction in the religion of Islam resulted in a great number of people

becoming Muslims:

وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا

“And you will see people entering into the religion of Allah in groups.”

With great regret though, some people who think themselves to be holy, pious people – are in reality just shallow minded individuals, who act in such ways that give an excuse to the enemies (to insult Islam) whereas the principles of our din are not based on aggression or hatred.

In the Qur`an, we have 114 chapters of which 113 of them all start with the words:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

“In the Name of Allah the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.”

Thus, a fraction of 1/114 of Islam deals with anger and harshness, whereas 113 parts of Islam deal with mercy and compassion.

In addition, we have two different types of interaction with people:

1. Acts of showing off which are done to gain some material benefit in this world.
2. Acts which are done with sincerity and come straight from the heart.

The first type of act is quite common in the West – for example in order to gain the pleasure and satisfaction and attract more customers, the people show more care and love to their clientele. It is through this act that they can gain wealth because they know that if they have good interaction with their customers, then they will be able to attract more people to product.

The second type is one of the characteristics of a true believer and when we say that a true believer is one who is pleasant to interact with, it is not done to gain profit from this material world, rather, they do this to unite hearts and get spiritually closer to one another.

The story of Luqman, the Wise, and the advice that he gave to his son, it has been narrated in the Qur`an:

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا

“And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at people, nor walk with insolence through the Earth.”¹

The word in this verse [تصعر] comes from the root word of [صعر] and its original meaning is a sickness that a camel becomes plagued with and due to this disease, his neck is contorted to the right or left side.

This verse speaks to people and tells them that they must not develop the same sickness that a camel develops which makes his neck contorted for this sort of spiritual sickness in a person can lead him to turn away from the people. Through the use of this phrase, it is clear that people who have bad etiquette actually possess a sickness. In the continuation and end of this verse we are told that we must not walk the road of pride and this is another characteristic which we must all keep in mind!

1. Surat Luqman (31), Verse 18

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/ethical-discourses-vol1-makarim-shirazi/discourse-19-characteristics-true-believer-part-6>