

Discourse 20: Attaching Worth To One's Self

قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ: مَنْ هَانَ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ فَلَا تَأْمَنَ شَرَّهُ.

It has been narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) that, "Do not consider yourself safe from the evil of one who does not consider himself as having any worth."¹

One of the important issues in life is that of the worth or value of people within the society as has been mentioned in the Divinely revealed teachings.

In the material and spiritual world, everything has a value to it. There are things that are cheap and things that are valuable, and naturally, if something has little value then one would give it up easily. However, something that is valuable would not be given up with ease!

For example, a small child who has a very expensive jewel in his hand would use it as a toy as in his opinion, it has no value, and he would easily give this thing up when the time comes. The valuable jewels that we have this world all have particular names and worths to them and it is possible that if a group of children were playing with one of them saw a person passing by, they would give it to him as in their estimation, it has no material value! The character of a person is the same – if he considers himself as having worth, then he would not sell himself so easily.

In relation to this fact, the Qur'an tells us that in the world of existence, after the pure essence of Allah (SwT), there is nothing worth more than the human being and the proof of this is that all things which exist in the universe have been created for mankind. Allah (SwT) has said:

خَلَقْتُ الْأَشْيَاءَ لِأَجْلِكَ وَ خَلَقْتُكَ لِأَجْلِي.

"I created all the things in the universe for you and I created you for Me."

In addition, we see that the highest creations of Allah (SwT) – the Angels – were ordered to prostrate towards Adam:

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ...

“So then the Angels bowed down in prostration to him (Adam) – all of them...”

From this, the value of the human being is clear.

In addition, everything in the universe has been placed at the disposal of the human being. Therefore, everything in creation works for and is subservient to the human being, and this too shows the status of humanity!

Thus, if we were to understand the worth of our soul then we would definitely not sell it for the lower desires that shall quickly pass, nor for the worthless positions of the transient world.

However, if we do not recognize our self-worth, then we will definitely sell ourselves cheap.

In addition, we must be cautious of the person who does not know his own worth since he could even resort to killing another human beings for a meagre price since he does not consider himself to be worth anything!

However what about the one who considers himself to be worth something? The answer to this question has been provided by our master, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib (as) in three sentences where he has said:

مَنْ كَرَمَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ لَمْ يُهِنْهَا بِالشَّهَوَاتِ...

“The one who considers himself to be worth something will not weaken himself through his lower desires...”

مَنْ كَرَمَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسُهُ هَانَتْ عَلَيْهِ شَهْوَتُهُ...

“The one who considers himself to be worth something will consider his lower desires as something of no value...”

مَنْ كَرَّمَتْ عَلَيْهِ نَفْسَهُ صَغُرَتِ الدُّنْيَا فِي عَيْنِهِ.

“The one who considers himself to be worth something will consider the transient world as something insignificant.”²

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 75, pg. 365

2. Mizan al-hikmah, Under the letters of “نفس”

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