

Chapter 12: Explaining That Loving This World Causes Distraction Of The Mind

A Reference to that Loving this World is the Origin of the Distraction of the Imagination and Prevents the Presence of Heart, and Explaining its Remedy as Much as Possible

It must be noted that the heart, according to its nature and disposition, looks at what it loves and is inclined to that beloved to have it as its *qiblah*. If an affair distracted the heart from thinking of the beauty of its cherished beloved, no sooner the engagement slackens and the distraction stops than the heart flies towards its beloved and clings to his skirt.

Should the people of knowledge and the divinely attracted enjoy strength of heart and be firm in absorption and love, they would recognize the Beauty of the Beloved in every mirror, and would discern the wanted perfection in every being: “I discerned nothing unless I recognized Allah in it and with it,”¹ and if their leader [the Prophet (s)] says: “Sometimes my heart is enveloped by a cover of dust, and I ask Allah's forgiveness seventy times every day,”² it is because to see the Beauty of the Beloved especially in an impure mirror like the Abu Jahl mirror is in itself a sort of impurity with respect to the perfect ones.

If their hearts are not strong enough, and their engagement in multiplicity prevents the presence (of heart), no sooner the engagement lessens than their hearts' birds fly back to their sacred nests and cling to the Beauty of the Beautiful.

As to those who look for other than Allah who, in the eyes of the people of knowledge, all seek for this world they are also attracted to their want and cling to it. If they, too, are extremely in love with their quest, and the love of this world has completely possessed their hearts, they will never relax in their attraction towards it, and, whatever the situation, they remain beside the beauty of their beloved.

Should their love be less, their hearts would return, in their leisure time, to their beloved. Those who cherish in their hearts the love of wealth, rule and position, dream of them in their sleep, too, and, in their

wakefulness, they live thinking of their beloved. As long as they are engaged in worldly matters, they live hugging their beloved, and when the time of the *Salat* arrives, the heart feels a kind of vacancy and sticks to its beloved, as if the *takbīrat ul-īhrām* (the first *Allāhu akbar* uttered aloud at the start of the *Salat*) is the key to the shop, or the remover of the curtain between it and its beloved.

So, he comes to himself only when he has just uttered the *taslīm* (the finishing words of the *Salat*), whereas he had paid no attention to the *Salat* itself, and during it he had been engaged in thinking of this world. That is why our *Salats* for forty or fifty years have no result whatsoever in our hearts except darkness and impurity, and what should have been a cause for ascension to the proximity of Allah's presence and a means of becoming familiar with His sanctity, has, on the contrary, driven us out of His proximity and taken us miles away from ascending to be familiar with His presence.

Had our *Salat* a smell of servitude, its result would have been modesty and humility, not self-conceitedness, ostentation, arrogance and pride, each one of which can possibly be a separate cause of man's misfortune and perdition.

In short, when one's heart becomes mixed with the love of this world, with no objective or aim except building it up and developing it, this love will inevitably prevent the heart from being vacant and present in the presence of Allah. This deadly disease and ruinous corruption can be cured by useful knowledge and good deed.

The useful knowledge suitable for this ailment is to think of the fruits and outcomes of curing it, and compare them with the harmful and destructive consequences resulting from it. In my commentaries on the *Forty Hadiths* in this respect I have explained this topic in details as was possible. Here I will suffice myself with explaining some *Hadiths* of the infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a):

In *Al-Kāfī*, Abū 'Abdullāh (as-Sādiq) ('a) is quoted to have said: "The origin of every sin is the love of this world."³ Other *Hadiths* on this subject, though in different wordings, are plenty.⁴

Yet, this noble *hadīth* is quite enough for the wakeful man, and it is enough for this big and pernicious sin to be the source of all sins and the root and basement of all corruptions. By a little contemplation it can be realized that almost all moral and practical corruptions are the fruits of this vile tree. No false religion was established in the world, and no corruption has ever happened, unless it stemmed from this grave sin.

Murders, plunders, injustice and transgressions are of the offspring of this sin. Debauchery, atrocities, theft and other crimes are the outcomes of this germ of corruption. The man who is afflicted with this love is void of all moral virtues. Courage, chastity, generosity and equity, which are the origin of all the spiritual virtues, are not compatible with the love of this world. Divine knowledge [*ma'rif*], unity of Names, Attributes, Actions and Essence, truth-seeking and truth-discerning are contrary to the love of this world.

Tranquility of the soul, calmness of the mind and repose of the heart, which are the spirit of happiness in

both worlds, cannot come along with loving this world. Richness of the heart, greatness, self-respect, freedom, and manliness are of the requisites of ignoring this world, whereas poverty, humility, covetousness, greed, servitude and flattery are of the requisites of loving this world. Kindness, mercy, observing kinship relations, affection and amity are not in harmony with the love of this world. Hatred, rancor, despotism, severing kinship relations, hypocrisy and other evil characters are of the progeny of this “mother of diseases”.

As-Sʿadiq (ʿa), as stated in *Misbʿah ash-Sharʿah*, said: “This world is like a portrait: its head is arrogance, its eye is greed, its ear is covetousness, its tongue is pretence, its hand is desire, its leg is conceit, its heart is negligence, its being is perishing and its destiny is decline. Whoever loves it, it gives him arrogance, whoever approves of it, it grants him greed, whoever demands it, it drives him to covetousness, whoever praises it, it clothes him with pretence, whoever wants it, it offers him conceit, whoever trusts it, it neglects him, whoever admires its properties, it ruins him, and whoever accumulates it and does not spend it, it turns him down to its dwelling place, the Fire.”⁵

Daylam, in *Irshād al-Qulūb*, quoting Amr al-Muʿminin (ʿAlī) (ʿa), says that the Messenger of Allah (s) said: “On the night of the *mirʿaj*, Allah, the Exalted, said: “O Ahmad, if a servant performs the *Salat* as much as that of the people of the earth and the heaven, and fasts as much as that of the people of the earth and the heaven, and refrains, like the angels, from food, and wears the apparel of a devotee, then I see in his heart a bit of love for this world or for worldly reputation, leadership, celebrity and ornaments, he will not be in an abode in My neighborhood and I will drive My love out of his heart and make it dark until he forgets Me. I will not let him taste the sweetness of my love.”⁶

It is quite clear that loving this world and loving Allah cannot meet together. In this respect there are too many *Hadiths* to be contained in these pages.

Now as it has become clear that the love of this world is the origin of all evils, it becomes incumbent on a man of reason, who cherishes his happiness, to uproot this tree from his heart. The practical way to treat it is to do the contrary, i.e., if he has a longing for wealth and position, he can get rid of it by way of being open-handed and spending obligatory and recommended alms and charities.

By the way, one of the characteristics of alms-giving is lessening the love of this world. That is why it is recommended to give charity out of what you love most, as stated in the Glorious Qur'an:

“You shall not attain goodness until you spend out of what you love” (*Surah aal-Imraan, 3:92*).

If he desires pride, priority, authority and power, he is to act against that, to turn the nose of the evil-commanding soul into the dust to reform it.

Man should know that the world is such that the more one is attached to it and in pursuit of it, the more his affection to it and the more his regret for parting company with it. It seems as if one is in quest of something, which is not in his possession. Man thinks he is in need of a certain portion of the world, which he pursues, no matter what difficulties and risks he will have to endure to attain his goal, and, as

soon as he obtains it, it loses its attraction and becomes an ordinary matter, and his love and attachment turn into something else more sublime than the previous one, and he starts his toil and endeavors anew.

In this way his anxiety will never be subdued. Actually, his love gets ever stronger, and his hardships ever increase. This natural disposition never stops. The people of knowledge use this inborn nature to prove a lot of disciplines, which are out of the scope of these papers to explain. This subject is referred to by some noble *Hadiths*, such as that which is stated in the noble *al-Kāfi*, quoting. Imām al-Baqir (‘a) who said: “The parable of a man greedy of this world is the parable of the silk worm: the more it winds the thread round itself the farther it becomes from salvation, until it dies of grief.”⁷

Imām as-Sādiq (‘a) is quoted to have said: “This world is like sea-water; the more a thirsty man drinks from it the thirstier he gets, until it kills him.”⁸

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1. A quotation from Amr al-Mu‘minin [‘Alī] (‘a) in ‘Ilm al-Yaqin, vol. 1, p. 49.
 2. Mustadrak al-Wasail, “Book of as-Salat,” sec. on “Invocations,” ch. 22, hadith 1.
 3. Usul al-Kāfi, “Book of Faith and Infidelity,” ch. on “Loving this World and Being Attached to it,” hadith 1.
 4. Ibid., hadiths 1–17.
 5. Misbah ash-Shar‘ah, ch. 32 “On This World’s Attribute(s).”
 6. Irshad al-Qulub, vol. 1, p. 206
 7. Usul al-Kāfi, vol. 3, “Book of Faith and Infidelity,” ch. on “Dispraising this World and Neglecting it,” hadith 20, and ch. on “Loving this World and being Greedy of it,” hadith 7, p. 202.
 8. Ibid, hadith 24.

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