

42. Religion

Allah, the Wise, has said:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا

*“Then set your face upright for religion in the right state.”*¹

The Noble Prophet (s.a.w) said:

الْمُسْتَأْكَلُ بِدِينِهِ حَظُّهُ مِنْ دِينِهِ مَا يَأْكُلُهُ.

*“One, who seeks to fill his stomach by means of religion, his share of religion is what he fills in his stomach.”*²

Short Explanation

Allah grants the worldly provisions to His friends as well His enemies. However, He only bestows His religion to His friends – just as he has placed monotheism within the *fitrah* and nature of every person, but grants His special religion to those whom He pleases.

One ought to sacrifice one's life and wealth for the religion of Allah and adorn oneself with the insignias of religion, such as truthfulness, steadfastness, faithfulness towards trusts, fulfilment of pledges and covenants, and goodness of behaviour.

1) Religion is Dead

Imam ‘Ali (a.s) was passing by a place where a group of children were engaged in play. However, there

was one boy who was not playing with them but stood aloof and sad. Imam (a.s) approached him and asked: “What is your name?” He replied: “Mat al-Din (Religion died).”

The Imam (a.s) desired to know the reason for such a name and so inquired about the child's father. He was informed that his father had died, but his mother was alive. He (a.s) called for his mother and inquired about the reason for such a strange name, whereupon the mother said: “When this child was in my womb, his father had embarked upon a journey. After a period his companions approached me and said: “Your husband fell ill on the way and died, but before his death he requested us that if his child was born, he should be named Mat al-Din.”

Having heard this, the Imam (a.s) comprehended the reason for such a name and ordered all the people to gather in the mosque. When the people had gathered, he (a.s) said to them: “Whenever I recite Allahu Akbar, all of you should recite it in unison too.”

He then called for the dead person's companions – who were four in number – and subjected them to individual and separate interrogation.

Turning to the first person, he (a.s) sought to know how he had killed the boy's father. The man, who was stunned to hear the question, blurted out: “All I did was to present the cord.” The Imam (a.s) recited Allahu Akbar, and the people in the mosque chorused.

The second one, in answer to the Imam's (a.s) question, said: “My only crime was to tie the cord around his neck.” The third person said: “I had brought the knife”, while the fourth person, recounting the incident explicitly, said: “We collectively murdered him for the purpose of seizing and appropriating his wealth.” The Imam (a.s) recited Allahu Akbar and the people too recited in unison.

Imam ‘Ali (a.s) took possession of the wealth which they had stolen from the deceased and handed it to the boy's mother, and then subjected the killers to a severe punishment. Then turning to the boy's mother, he (a.s) said: “Change his name to Asha al-Din (religion is alive).”³

2) The Religiousness of the Learned One from Dizful

At the time of his death, Sheikh Murtadha Ansari – having become the highest-ranking religious authority, with notable popularity and profundity in the Methodology and Science of Islamic Jurisprudence – was not any different in the material point of life from the time when he had first set foot in Najaf as a poor student from Dizful.

When people looked at his house, they found that he led his life just as the most impoverished ones led theirs. A person once said to him: “This is an immense work on your part that despite the large sum of money that comes to you, you refuse to use it for yourself.” He said: “What great work have I done?” The man said: “What work could be greater than what you are doing presently?” The Sheikh said: “At the very best, my work is similar to the donkey-riders of Kashan, who go to Isfahan and then return from

there.

The donkey-riders are given money to travel to Isfahan, purchase goods from there and bring them back to Kashan. Have you ever seen them exhibiting unfaithfulness and disloyalty with respect to the people's money? They are trustworthy individuals and do not possess any right (over the people's money). This work of mine is not as important as it appears to you.”⁴

3) Religion Beside the Royal Throne

During the caliphate of the second Caliph, Sad Ibn Waqqas in the company of a few others, started out for Iran. Yazdgard, the king of Persia who was in the city of Madain at that time, sent a herald to Sad inviting some of the people in his caravan to come to his court so that he could become aware of their destination.

They reached his court at a time when he had been busy consuming wine and so he ordered the drinks to be removed. When the group had entered the court, Mughairah Ibn Amir sat down alongside the king near the royal bed. Witnessing this, Yazdgard, in a state of protest, said: “You Arabs initially came to our lands for trading and begging, and after you had consumed the tasty food and the delicious water (of our land) you went and informed your friends. Now you return and claim to have brought a 'new religion.'”

Your example is similar to that of the fox that had entered a garden with the intention of eating the grapes. The owner of the garden allowed him to eat and did not hurt him. The next day the fox brought other foxes along with him and, entering the garden, began eating the grapes. When the owner of the garden arrived and witnessed the scene, he bolted all the exits and killed them all.

If I wished, I too could behave just like that but I know that you have drawn up your army because of your poverty and straitened livelihood. I shall give you abundant bounties and place over you a commander such that you would lead a life of ease and comfort.”

Mughairah Ibn Amir said: “Your statement regarding a difficult livelihood is correct and we too agree that there was a time when we used to eat mice and lizards, could not differentiate the lawful from the unlawful, kill our cousins for the sake of one turnip and even go on to brag about it. But then Allah, by means of His Prophet, sent for us a religion, stopped us from idolatry, guided us towards monotheism, and very soon we shall be targeting your country too.

O' Yazdgard! I give you the option to choose one out of three things: Become a Muslim so that you can continue to rule, pay the poll-tax or prepare for war.”

Hearing this, Yazdgard was overcome with rage and said: “Nothing, save a sword, can exist between you and me.” Having said this, he then drove them out of his court. Later, a war ensued between the two forces in which the Muslims emerged victorious.⁵

4) The Religiousness of Abu Ja'far Husaini

Abu Ja'far Muhammad Husaini⁶ – whose lineage reached Imam Husain (a.s) through four generations – was a jurist and a pious and ascetic person, who had revolted against Mutasam – the Abbasid Caliph – due to his oppression and injustices. Mutasam sought to crush his revolt and so he fled to Iran and into the cities of Khorasan, Sarakhs, Taliqan, Nisa and Merv, and a great number of Iranians pledged allegiance to him.

In Merv, forty thousand Iranians pledged allegiance to him. One night, when his army had gathered, he heard the sound of weeping. Investigating, he came to know that one of his soldiers had forcefully taken a felt from a weaver and it was this weaver who had been weeping.

Abu Ja'far called for the soldier and sought to know the reason for the evil act whereupon the soldier replied: We have pledged allegiance to you so that we can loot the people and do as we like.

Abu Ja'far returned the felt to its owner and then disbanded his army, saying: “Assistance for the religion of Allah cannot be sought from such people.” Then, accompanied by his close companions, he left for Taliqan.⁷

5) Religion-Selling by Samurah

Samurah Ibn Jundab was of the inhabitants of Basrah. After his father's death, he accompanied his mother to Madinah, where she married Mary Ibn Shaiban – a companion of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) – and Samurah grew up under his care. Despite his young age, he was an expert archer and the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) permitted him to participate in the battle of Uhud; later, he participated in the other battles as well.

During the reign of Muawiyah, Samurah, like some of the corrupt and lying companions of the Noble Prophet(s.a.w), began fabricating traditions in praise of Muawiyah and in criticism of Amirul Mo`minin (a.s).

Muawiyah said to him: “I shall give you one hundred thousand dirhams if you ascribe the following verse (which was revealed in criticism of the hypocrites) to ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَهُوَ
أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَ
اللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ

“And among men is he, whose speech about the life of this world causes you to wonder, and he calls on

Allah to witness as to what is in his heart, yet he is the most violent of adversaries. And when he turns back, he runs along in the land that he may cause mischief in it and destroy the tilth and the stock, and Allah does not love mischief-making."⁸

...and ascribe this verse (which was revealed in praise of Imam 'Ali (a.s) after he had slept on the bed of the Noble Prophet during the migration of the Noble Prophet to Medina) to Ibn Muljim:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَؤُفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

*"And among men is he who sells himself to seek the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is Affectionate to the servants."*⁹

Initially Samurah refused the offer, however Muawiyah raised the stakes saying: "I shall give you two hundred thousand dirhams", but once again Samurah refused. But when Muawiyah offered him four hundred thousand dirhams he agreed and then forged traditions ascribing the first verse, which was about the hypocrites, to Amirul Mominin (a.s) and attributing the second verse, which was for Amirul Mominin (a.s), to Ibn Muljim, and in this manner proved that he had indeed sold his religion.¹⁰

1. Suratul Rum (30), Verse 30

2. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 78, pg. 63

3. Dastan-ha Wa Pand-ha, vol. 10, pg. 168; In the book Tarikh al-Anbiya - vol. 2, pg. 215, this judgment has been attributed to Prophet Dawud and a similar one this has been ascribed to the Commander of the Faithful(as).

4. Dastan-ha-e-Ustad, vol. 2, pg. 68; Sirah-e-Nabawi, pg. 29

5. Namunah-e-Ma'arif, vol. 5, pg. 234; Bazm-e-Iran, pg. 142

6. He was the son of Qasim Ibn 'Umar Ibn 'Ali Ibn al-Husain (as) while his mother, Safiyyah, was the daughter of Musa Ibn 'Umar Ibn 'Ali Ibn al-Husain (as).

7. Tatimmah al-Muntaha, pg. 221

8. Suratul Baqarah (2), Verse 204-205

9. Ibid., Verse 207

10. Paighambar Wa Yaran, vol. 3, pg. 258; Commentary of Nahjul Balagha (of Ibn Abil Hadid), vol. 1, pg. 471

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