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Piety, the Most Important Factor for Purification

In the Islamic School, piety has been assigned the most important position and the pious believers are regarded as the most distinguished and respectable persons in an Islamic Society. The phrase piety in the Qur'anic verses and narrations, and especially in the glorious book of Nahjul-Balagha (The Path of Eloquence) has been repeated quite frequently. The Holy Qur'an considers piety as the sole criteria for appraising the value and worth of individuals and said:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اتَّقَاكُمْ

“Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of God-Almighty is the best in conduct. (49: 13)

The piety has been introduced as the best provisions for the Hereafter, and greatest means for achieving salvation. the Holy Qur'an said:

لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَوْا أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

“For such of them as do right and word off (evil), there is great reward (3: 172)

And said:

فَمَنْ اتَّقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

“Then whosoever refrainth from evil and amendeth -there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve. (7: 35)

And said:

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

“And vie one with another for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Paradise as wide as are the Heavens and the earth, prepared for those who ward off (evil). (3: 133)

And said:

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَنَعِيمٍ فَاكِهِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُم رَّبُّهُم

“Lo! Those who kept their duty dwell in gardens and delight, happy because of what their Lord hath given them. (52: 17–18)

Also, in the Nahjul Balagha and other books of traditions, piety has been assigned the most distinguished position in all ethical matters, and is the greatest means for achieving prosperity and salvation. The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: التقى رئيس الاخلاق.

*“Piety acquires the most prominent position in all ethical affairs.”*Nahjul Balagha, saying 41.

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: خصلة من لزمها اتعته الدنيا والاخرة وربح الفوز بالجنة قيل وماهى يا رسول الله؟ قال: التقوى, من اراد ان يكون اعزاً الناس فليتق الله عز وجل ثم تلا: ومن يتق الله يجعل له مخرجا ويرزقه من حيث لا يحتسب.

“There is a characteristic that whoever acquires it will have the world and Hereafter in his control. He was asked: ‘Oh Prophet of God! What is that characteristic?’

“The Prophet (S) replied: ‘Piety! Whoever desires to become the most dearest person should become

pious, and then he recited the following verse:

And who so ever keepth his duty to God, He will appoint a way out for him. And will provide for him from (a quarter) whence he hath no expectation. (65:2-3)¹

The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: واعلموا عبادالله أن المتقين ذهبوا بعاجل الدنيا و آجل الآخرة، فشاركوا أهل الدنيا في دنياهم، و لم يشاركهم أهل الدنيا في آخرتهم. سكنوا الدنيا بأفضل ما سكنت و أكلوها بأفضل ما أكلت، فحظوا من الدنيا بما حظي به المترفون وأخذوا منها ما أخذه الجبابرة المتكبرون. ثم انقلبوا عنها بالزاد المبلغ و المتجر الربح أصابوا لذة زهد الدنيا في دنياهم، و تيقنوا أنهم جيران الله غدا في آخرتهم لا ترد لهم دعوة، و لا ينقص لهم نصيب من لذة.

“Know, O' creatures of God, that the God-fearing have Shared the joys of this transient world as well as the Next World, for they shared with the people of this world in their worldly matters while their people did not share with them in the matters of the Next World.

They lived in this world in the best manner of living and ate the choicest food and consequently they enjoyed herein all that the people with ease of life enjoyed, and secured from it what the haughty and the vain secured.

Then, they departed from it after taking provision enough to take them to the end of their journey and after doing a profitable transaction. They tasted the pleasure of renouncing the world in this world, and they firmly believed that on the coming day in their next life they would be neighbors of God, where their call would not be repulsed nor would their share of pleasure be small.”²

The commander of the faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: عليكم بتقوى الله فانها تجمع الخير ولا خير غيرها ويدرك بها من الخير ما لا يدركك بغيرها من خير الدنيا والآخرة.

“Don't give up piety because it is the source of all benevolence and goodness,. blessing except piety does not exist; and the blessing which is achieved by means of piety can never be obtained without it,. be it blessing of this world or the Hereafter.”³

Imam al-Sajjad:

قال السجاد عليه السلام: شرف كل عمل بالتقوى وفاز من فاز من المتقين, قال
الله تبارك وتعالى ان للمتقين مفازا.

*“The value and worth of each deed depend upon piety; only pious people may achieve righteousness and prosperity. God–Almighty said: Verily righteousness and prosperity belong to pious people.”*⁴

In some of the traditions, piety has been introduced as the most important factor for self-perfection and purification as well as the most effective medicine for curing the psychic diseases. The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: فان تقوى الله دوادا قلوبكم وصبر عمى افئدتكم وشفاء
مرض اجسادكم وصلاح فساد صدوركم وطهور دنس انفسكم وجلا غشا
ابصاركم. امن فزع جاشكم وضيا سواد ظلمتكم.

*“Piety is the only cure for wickedness of your heart. It is the Divine Light to expel darkness of your heart. It is a remedy for your ailing mind. It is the only way of improvement for your corrupt soul. It purifies your conscience. It brings back sight to the eyes blinded by ignorance of truth.”*⁵

1. Piety, Objective Behind the Divine Commands

In Islam the piety has been introduced as a genuine moral virtue and the real aim for explanation of (Divine) Commandments. Following are some of the examples God–Almighty said in Holy Qur’an:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“Oh mankind! Worship your Lord, who hath created you and those before you, so that you may ward off (evil). (2:21)

And said:

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off (evil). (2: 183)

And said:

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ

“Their flesh and their blood reach not God, but the devotion from you reacheth him. (22:37)

And said:

وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ

“So make provisions for yourself (Hereafter) ; for the best provision is to ward off evil. (2: 197)

Therefore, it could be seen that the aim behind explaining some of these commandments or worships is actually to encourage people to acquire piety by performing those particular acts of worships. Piety in Islam have been attached so much importance that it has been introduced as the sole criteria for the acceptance of other deeds, so much so that the deed without piety shall be worthless and will not be accepted:

The Holy Qur’an said:

إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“God accepteth only from those who ward off evil. (5:27)

The Holy Prophet (S) said to Abu Dharr:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وعليه: يا اباذر! كن بالعمل بالتقوا اشد اهتماما منك بالعمل, فانه لا يقل عمل بالتقوا وكيف بكل ما يتقبل بقول الله انما يتقبل الله من المتقين.

“Try your best to acquire piety, because, nothing accompanied by piety shall be regarded smaller, and

how come a thing accepted by God–Almighty, could be regarded smaller? Because, the Holy Qur'an said: God accepts only from pious ones.”⁶

Imam al Sadiq (a.s.) said:

قال أبو عبدالله عليه السلام: لا يغرنك بكائهم إنما التقوى في القلب.

“Do not let their crying deceive you, because, the piety exists only in heart.”⁷

God–Almighty said in Holy Qur'an:

وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

“But if ye persevere and ward off (evil), then that of the steadfast heart of things. (3: 186)

Therefore, as could be seen that piety in Holy Qur'an and other Islamic traditions has been mentioned as a genuine moral, virtue, best provisions for the Hereafter, important medicine for curing the heart's disease, and greatest means for attaining spiritual purification and self-refinement.

In emphasizing its importance, it is sufficient–to say that it has been mentioned as the real aim behind explanation of all Divine Commandments and Regulations. Now let us discuss its meanings in details.

2. Definition of Piety

Generally, piety is defined as a negative program i.e. refraining and avoidance from sins and other transgressions. It is interpreted that with being pious, participation in social affairs is very difficult rather impossible. Because, naturally, human–self is inclined towards sinning and in case of acceptance of social responsibilities, one will be forced to indulge into sins. Therefore, either one should acquire piety or must refrain from acceptance of social responsibility.

Or, one must accept social responsibilities and should renounce the piety, because, they are not compatible with each other and their combination is not possible. The inevitable result of such thinking is that –the more one lives an isolated and monastic live the better he will be prepared to acquire piety.

But piety in some Qur'anic verses, traditions, and in the Nahjul Balagha has been defined as a positive quality and not a negative virtue. Piety, not only means renunciation of sins, rather it consists of possessing an internal energy and power of self-restraint, which are achieved because of undertaking continuous rigorous self-discipline, whereby self acquires a super strength, which makes him obedient to God's Commandments.

The self acquires such strength that he shows resistance and steadfastness against unlawful whims and passions. Also, the meanings of piety in the dictionary includes the similar aspect.

The phrase piety (*taqwa*) is derived from the Persian word (*waqaya*), which means protection and defense. Piety means self-restraint and self-control which is a positive quality bestowing an immunity upon the pious, and not a negative act or program. It means commitment of a human being to obey the religious commandments.

Every act of abstaining from sinning is not called as piety but the power of self-restraint and self-control responsible behind this abstaining is called piety; which has been described as the best provisions of journey for the Hereafter, and naturally making provisions for a journey is a positive act and not a negative one. Here, it would be appropriate to quote few narrations from the Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.), in this matter, as follows:

قال على (ع): اوصيكم عبادالله بتقوى الله فانها الزمام والقوام فتمسكوا
بوئائقها واعتصموا بحقائقها تؤول بكم الى اكنان الدعة واوطان السعة ومعامل
الحرز ومنازل العز.

*“O creatures of the Lord! I advise you to be afraid of Him. I advise you to adopt piety, because, piety is the safest way to salvation and the best support for religion. Keep yourself attached to it and never forsake it. It shall lead you to places of safety, to positions of honor and pursuits bringing you peace and contentment.”*⁸

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: فان التقوا فى اليوم الحرز والجنة وفى وغد الطريق الى
الجنة مسلكها واضح وسالكها رابح ومستودعها حافظ.

*“Piety will act as your shield and defense and in life and Hereafter as your guide to Heaven. Its ways are clear and simple. Those of you who espouse it will be benefited by it. And the one who has imposed it upon you will guard it and will guard you.”*⁹

And said:

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: اعلموا عبادالله ان التقوى دار حصن عزيز

والفجور دار حصن ذليل لا يمنع اهله ولا يحرز من لجا اليه الا وبالتقوى تقطع
حمة الخطايا.

“Know O Creatures of God! That piety is strongly forfeited and a respectable Heaven, and sinful and vicious life is such a undependable refuge that it can neither protect nor guard those who take shelter there. Remember that fear of God can protect one against the evils of sins.”¹⁰

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: فان تقوى الله حمت اوليا الله محارمه والذمت قلوبهم
مخافته حيث اسهرت ليااليهم واضمات هو اجرهم.

“Oh people! Piety prevents good people from indulging in sins and vices; it makes them God fearing, it persuades them to spend their nights in His Worship, and to pass their days in fasting.”¹¹

And said:

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: ان التقوى عصمة لك فى حياتك وزلفى بعد
مما تك.

“The same piety is shelter for you in this world, and will be a source of prosperity and salvation in the Hereafter.”¹²

As could be seen that the piety in the above mentioned narrations has been introduced as a positive virtue, a powerful force introducing restrain and immunity and an important preventing factor. It should be compared to a bridle used for training a mulish horse for riding or restraining and controlling the whims and passions of a rebellious-self.

It is like a formidable fortress and firm fortification which protect a human being from the devastating attacks of internal enemies i.e. the unlawful selfish whims and passions and Satanic whispers. It is like a shield ¹³ which protects a struggler in the battle-field from the piercing of poisonous arrows and other Satanic devastating blows.

Piety frees a person from the imprisonment of whims and passions and cuts off the chains of greed, prejudice, lust, and wrath wrapped around his neck. Piety is not a limitation, but on the contrary it bestows the mastership and being in control of one's own-self. It bestows upon a human being prestige,

honor, nobility, power, dignity, and steadfastness.

It protects the heart from Satanic assaults, thus, making it readied for the descent of God's angels, illuminating him with Divine-Light and bestowing upon him peace and tranquility. Piety for human being is like his home and clothing which protects him from natural calamities, cold and hot temperatures. God-Almighty, in Holy Qur'an said:

وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ

“But the best raiment is the raiment of righteousness. (7:26)

Therefore, piety is a virtue, excellence, provision for the Hereafter, and is not a negative quality .Of course, in the Holy Qur'an and in traditions piety has also been used in places of fear and avoidance of sins but these are the requirements of piety –and not piety itself.

3. Piety and Seclusion

Therefore, monasticism, and declining acceptance of social responsibilities not only cannot be considered as manifestations of piety, but on the contrary in some cases they are contradictory with righteousness. Islam does not believe in seclusion and monasticism, and in order to refrain from sins, it does not recommend its followers to decline acceptance of social responsibilities and living a secluded life, rather emphasizes them to accept social obligations, while at the same time by means of piety should practice self-restraint and self-control for avoiding sins and deviations.

Islam does not say: don't accept lawful positions of power rather says: do accept them but for the sake of God's Pleasure, serve the people, and don't be a slave of rank and position. Don't allow your position and authority as a mean of accomplishing your sole aim of satisfying selfish whims and passions and don't deviate from the straight path.

Islam does not say: in order to acquire piety close your business activities and don't make efforts for earning a living, instead it says: Don't be a slave and prisoner of world. Islam does not say: quite this world and live a monastic life to worship God-Almighty is seclusion, rather it says:

Do live in this world and do your best for its development and progress but don't become worldly or becoming infatuated with its charms –instead, utilize it for attaining higher exalted spiritual stations, and ascension towards God's Nearness. This is what piety is supposed to be in Islamic school, which has been described as one of the most exalted human virtue or characteristic.

4. Piety and Insight

It may be interpreted from the Qur'anic verses and traditions that piety bestows upon a human being a sense of profound insight and intelligence enabling him to diagnose, and to follow up his genuine interests of this world and Hereafter. Following is an example:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا

“Oh ye who believe! If you keep your duty to God, He will give you discrimination (between right and wrong). (8:29)

That is, God–Almighty open his esoteric eyes bestowing upon him a special insight to enable him to diagnose his prosperity, adversity, benefits and losses. In other verse God–Almighty said:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۖ وَيَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

“Observe your duty to God. God is teaching you and God is knower of all things. (2:282)

Although, the Holy Qur'an has been descended from the Heavenly–Kingdom for the common people but especially the pious people receive guidance and advice. It is in this background that the Holy Qur'an said:

هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

“This is a declaration for mankind, a guidance and an admonition unto those who ward off evil. (3: 138)

Imam al–Sadiq (a.s.) quoted a tradition from his father:

عن ابي عبدالله عليه السلام قال: كان ابي يقول: ما من شيء افسد للقلب من الخطيئة ان القلب ليوقع الخطيئة فما تزال به حتى تغلب عليه فيصير اسفله اعلاه واعلاه اسفله.

*“For heart’s corruption there is nothing more damaging than sinning, in which case the hearts struggles and offers resistance against sins until it becomes completely subdued by sins becoming an overturned heart.”*¹⁴

Therefore, it could be inferred from such verses and traditions that piety is responsible for enhancement of reason with insight and brightness as well as strengthening his power of comprehension. The faculty of reason, a precious Celestial Jewel, has been bestowed to enable him to correctly identify and diagnose his gains and losses, prosperity and adversely, welfare and wickedness, and last but not the least do's and don'ts. The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: العقل رسول الحق.

*“The reason within human body is like the messenger of God.”*¹⁵

Such an important mission has been assigned to reason, and it is quite competent to discharge this responsibility, only if, self’s whims and passions accept its rule, ,do not oppose, sabotage, and create problems in its administration. Unfortunately, passions are bitter enemy of reason and do not allow it to perform his function in an excellent manner. The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال على عليه السلام: الهوى عدو العقل.

*“Whims and passions of self are the enemies of reason”*¹⁶

And said:

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: من لم يملك شهوته لم يملك عقله.

*“Whoever does not have control over his passions will not be the master of his reason.”*¹⁷

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: العجب يقسد العقل.

*“Self-conceit and egotism corrupts reason.”*¹⁸

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: اللجوج لا رأى له.

*“An obstinate person does not have correct opinion.”*¹⁹

It is true that the ruling authority over human body has been assigned to reason (*Aql*) which is quite competent for this job, but self's whims and passions are the biggest obstacles in its path. If, one of the passions or all of them became out of control and revolted against it, than how could the reason will succeed in discharging its function well? Such a person does possess reason but lacks the sense of comprehension and correct diagnosis.

He does possess a lamp but the whims, passions, lusts, and wrath like a dark thick cloud have covered it completely, thus, not making him appreciate his welfare and control his rebellious passions.

When could an egotistic person find an opportunity to identify his faults and take the corrective action? Likewise, how could he refrain himself from moral indecencies such as wrath, jealousy, greed, revenge, stubbornness, ambitions for wealth, passion, and power?

If one of them or more succeed in taking over self's control, they will prevent the reason to truly apprehend the realities, and in case it wants to take action against their wishes, they will oppose it by creating troubles and mobilizing their partisans for rebellion, making environment unfavorable for the rule of reason, and ultimately making it helpless to discharge its obligations properly.

A person who is a prisoner of his whims and passions could not be benefited by lectures and preaching, rather it produces opposite reaction, thus, increasing his hard-heartedness. Therefore, piety may be considered as one of the best and most effective factor of insight, enlightenment, and conscientiousness. In the end it must be clarified that when it said that piety is responsible in enhancing the sense of insight –it means the practical aspects of reason, ability to diagnose the duties, or in other words recognize the do's and don'ts.

It has nothing to do as for as the theoretical aspects of wisdom are concerned; it is not so that an impious person would not be able to understand mathematical and scientific problems, however piety to a certain extent might be effective in enhancing the power of intelligence and comprehension in these matters.

5. Piety and Victory over the Difficulties

One of the most important effects of piety is the ability to dominate over the difficulties of day to day life. God–Almighty said in Holy Qur'an:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

“And whosoever keepeth his duty to God, He will appoint a way out for him, and will provide for him from (a quarter) whence he hath no expectation. (65:2-3)

And said:

يُسْرًا وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ

“And whosoever keepeth his duty to God, He maketh his course easy for him. (65:4)

The Commander of the Faithful and Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: فمن اخذ بالتقوى عزبت عنه الشدائد بعد دنوها
واحلوت له الامور بعد مرارتها وانفرجت عنه الامواج بعد تراكمها واسهلت له
الصعاب بعد انصابها.

“Do you know how piety. helps those who make it the basic : principles of their lives ? It wards off the calamities which have crowded round them and laid siege of them. It converts bitter disappointments of their affairs into pleasant achievements. It acts as a break water against the waves of disasters and destruction which want to dash against lives and ambitions.”²⁰

Therefore, it can be inferred from the above mentioned verses and traditions that piety helps a person in solving his problems and overpowering the obstacles in his day to day life. Now let us see what influence does piety exert in these matters? The life's hardships can be divided into two categories:

The problems of first category consist of physical- bodily defects, incurable fatal diseases, unpredictable natural disasters, and similar other calamities whose solution and prevention is out of our control. The problems of second category consist of psychological, physical, family, and social problems, where our intentions and decisions could be influential in their solution and even prevention.

Of course, piety could play an important role in offering solutions for each one of the above mentioned problems. Although, in the former case, even though prevention may be difficult, and total avoidance might be practically impossible but still the technique of how to encounter these problems is in our control.

A self-restraint and pious person who completely dominates over his passions regards this world and its problems as transient and short lived, while considers the Hereafter as real and permanent abode; rests his trusts upon the Supreme and Absolute Power of God-Almighty; treats the hardships and difficulties of this world as insignificant and temporary; does not become desperate and anxious, rather offers his absolute surrender to the Divine Will.

A pious person is familiar as well as confident about God-Almighty and Hereafter; calamities and hardships of day-to-day life do not disturb his state of ease and tranquility, because, hardships, calamities, and tragedies in essence are not painful, rather it is the anxiety and intolerance of self which makes a person uncomfortable, and piety could be helpful for him in such cases.

But most of the severe problems and catastrophes of the second category which make the human life bitter like burning Hell are the result of moral indecencies, self-whims and passions, and domination of Satanic desires.

In majority of the cases the family problems are created because of failure on the part of husband, wife, or both of them, in controlling passions, thus, burning and frightening in the fire, which was ignited by their own hands. Similar is the case with other problems.

The moral vices such as jealousy, revengefulness, stubbornness, prejudice, egotism, greed, lust, wrath, extravagance, arrogance, and other similar rascalities are responsible for causing problems and hardships for human beings, creating pains and anxiety, and turning the sweetness of life into bitterness. Such a person is a prisoner of his carnal desires and passions to the extent that he is even helpless to identify his disease and its treatment.

The best and most effective thing which could prevent such catastrophies is the same piety, self-restraint or self-control. In the life of a pious such painful horrible catastrophies do not exist at all; with tranquility of heart and enlightenment, he lives a peaceful life as well manages to collect sufficient provisions for Hereafter. The love of world is the roots of all evils but a pious person does not become infatuated with its allurements and charms. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: اياك وحب الدنيا فانها اصل كل خطيئة ومعدن كل بلية.

“Be careful of world’s love because, it is the roots of all sins.”²¹

6. Piety and Freedom

It is quite possible that someone may infer that piety deprives freedom and creates limitations making life difficult and unpleasant, but Islam rejects this belief and on the contrary consider piety as the source of

freedom, comfort, dignity exaltedness, and regards an impious person simply as a prisoner or slave. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: فان تقوى الله مفتاح سداد وذخيرة معاد وعتق من كل ملكة وتجاهة من لك هلكة.

“Verily piety is a key to the doors of righteousness and virtue. It is a provision for the Next World. It is a source of freedom from slavery of evil desires and a wall of protection from every ill-luck and misfortune. It is a refuge for those who try to run away from vice and wickedness and through it a person can achieve his aim.”²²

And said:

قال على عليه السلام: لا شرف اعلى من الاسلام ولا عزا عز من التقوى ولا معقل احسن من الورع.

“There is no distinction higher than Islam, no honor more honorable than fear of God; no asylum better than self-restraint.”²³

In the above traditions piety has been introduced as the key for solution of problems, bestower of freedom and dignity, rescuer from the waves of disasters and destruction, and as the most formidable shelter for human beings.

Therefore, piety does not deprive and create limitations, rather it revives human personality and free a human being from the imprisonment of carnal desires, wraths, revengefulness, selfishness, self-conceit, prejudices, stubbornness, greed, mammonism, egotism, selfishness, ambitiousness, gluttony, and desire for fame and publicity.

It strengthens wisdom and human personality in order to dominate over the passions and rebellious self, adjust them in accordance to genuine requirements, provide leadership to guide them properly preventing extravagance and dissipation of forces.

The Holy Qur'an considers the persons who become prisoners and slaves of their desires, endeavored to satisfy their passions, did not recognize any limits in order to satisfy their carnal desires as idolaters and self-worshippers. The Holy Qur'an said:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ
عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

“Hast thou seen him who maketh his desire his god, and God sendeth him astray purposely, and sealetth up his hearing and his heart, and setteth on his sight a covering ? Then who will lead him after God (hath condemned him)? Will you rest them heed ?” (45:23)

Yes! The person who has surrendered himself absolutely to his whims and passions, in order to accomplish his passionate desires strives frantically and does not hesitate to indulge into most degrading acts, does not pay attention to the voice of wisdom and guidance of prophets, such a person is indeed is a slave and prisoner of his self.

His passions have completely dominated and imprisoned his human personality and the precious jewel of wisdom, and in order to rescue them there is no other alternative except piety. Therefore, piety does not create limitations rather blesses human beings with freedom.

7. Piety and Treatment of Diseases

It was earlier prove that moral abjectnesses such as: jealousy, hatred, revenge, fault-finding, wrath, prejudice, greed, egotism, arrogance, fear , indecisiveness, temptation, and similar other things are psychological diseases. The hearts of such people are indeed sick. Also, it has been confirmed that between the man and his self not only there exists a firm connection rather they are united, and because of this connection and communication they exert an influence upon each and other.

Physical sicknesses make the self-disturbed and uncomfortable, and similarly opposite to that psychological diseases effect human body and nerves. In majority of cases the psychological diseases and nervous disorders are the result of moral abjectness. Even some of the bodily diseases like ulcer and swelling of intestine, indigestion, acidity, headache, and stomachache are more likely the result of moral abjectness such as; jealousy, hatred, greed, egotism, and ambitiousness.

It is has been proved beyond doubt that excessive indulgence into sexual activities results in dangerous fatal bodily diseases such as AIDS etc. Therefore, as was mentioned earlier the sole curing medicine for such psychological diseases is piety. It could be said that piety plays the most effective role as far as the treatment of psychological and physical diseases, hygiene, and fitness of human beings are concerned. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said:

فان تقوى الله دوا قلوبكم, وبصر عمى أفئدتكم, وشفا مرض اجسادكم,
وصلاح فساد صدوركم, وطهور دنس انفسكم, وجلا عشا بصاركم, وامن فزع

جاشکم و ضیا سواد ظلمتکم.

“Certainly piety is the medicine for your hearts, sight for the blindness of your spirits, the cure for the ailments of your bodies, the rectifier of the evils of your breasts, the purifier of the pollution of your minds, the light of the darkness of your eyes, the consolidation for the fear of your heart, and the brightness for the gloom of your ignorance.”²⁴

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1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-285.
 2. Nahjul Balagha, letter no.27.
 3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-285.
 4. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p-386.
 5. Nahjul Balagha, letter no. 198.
 6. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p-89.
 7. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-286
 8. Nahjul Balagha, sermon 195.
 9. Nahjul Balagha, sermon 191.
 10. Nahjul Balagha, sermon 157.
 11. Nahjul Balagha, sermon 114.
 12. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-222.
 13. An impatient (or impious) person could be compared to a soldier in the battle-field, who is fighting virtually naked without armor. Such an ill-equipped soldier is most likely to be killed and disappear from the scene during the very first encounter, with the same analogy a patient (pious) person could be compared to a soldier, who is clad in a coat of mail from head to toe and is fully equipped with all the required armaments. Obviously, to defeat such a well equipped soldier by the enemy is relatively a difficult task. Discourse of Patience, Ayatullah Khamenei, p-102 [Tr].
 14. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-54.
 15. Ghirar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-13.
 16. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-13.
 17. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-702.
 18. Ghirar al-Hukm p-26.
 19. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-31.
 20. Nahjul Balagha, sermon 198.
 21. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-150.
 22. Nahjul Balagha, sermon 230.
 23. Nahjul Balagha, saying 371.
 24. Nahjul Balagha, sermon 198.

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