

The Importance of Work

Work not- Just Pray

An extremely anxious and perplexed man visited Hazrat Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (‘a), and begged him to pray that Allah would increase his sustenance and relieve him of all financial stress.

The Imam (‘a) answered, ‘I shall certainly not pray for you.’

The poor man sighed and asked, ‘But why not? What have I done?’

The Imam (‘a) replied, ‘You know perfectly well that Allah has devised means and ways of attaining prosperity. He has ordered you to leave your house and earn a living through hard work. You refuse to obey the law and foolishly hope praying for you will bring you prosperity.’

You work-I pray

A number of pilgrims were narrating their experiences of Hajj to Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (‘a), and recounting their views about their fellow pilgrims. One person was immensely impressed by a fellow pilgrim and said, ‘He was truly pious and an indefatigable worshipper of Allah. Whenever we broke journey to rest for the night, he retired to a secluded place, spread out his prayer mat and got engrossed in the worship of Allah.’

The Imam (‘a) enquired, ‘Who looked after the rest of his affairs? Who tended his camel?’

He replied, ‘Obviously, we performed all those duties for Allah’s pleasure. He remained absorbed in the holy acts, and had no time for such menial chores.’

The Imam (‘a) replied, ‘No wonder you achieved more than he did with all his piety and worship.’

A New Convert

Two neighbors became good friends. One was a Christian, the other, Muslim. They often discussed their religions to see what was more conducive to a civilized way of life, and then they adopted it. The Muslim presented Islam with all its material and spiritual benefits, so the Christian, one day, embraced Islam.

A few days later, earlier than dawn, somebody knocked at his door.

'Whose there?' asked the new convert, a little apprehensive.

'I am your neighbour. It will soon be time for the morning obligatory prayer (Fajr), so wear your clothes, perform ablution and come with me to the mosque. Today, we will offer our prayers with the congregation. The new Muslim consented, and they both reached the mosque.

'Fasting is a means of gaining nearness to God,' the neighbor said. The convert declared the intention of fasting for the day.

Since there was some time left for the call for prayer (*Azaan*), they both offered some units of prayer for spiritual satisfaction. Soon it was time, and they offered their Fajr prayer. After reciting all the supererogatory prayers advised by religious leaders, the convert got up to go home.

'Where are you going?'

'Home,' he replied.

'Hold on. Its now time to read the Holy Quran.'

He placed the Quran before him, and they both read till the bright rays of the sun fell on them. The convert rose to go home, but the Muslim stopped him again.

This time he stopped him for the Zuhr prayer, as only an hour remained. After the afternoon prayer and all the supererogatory prayers had been read, it was almost time for the evening, Asr, prayer. Having completed that, the man said he was going home to break his fast after sunset. His neighbor advised him to offer the Maghrib prayer. He agreed. After that, he stood up to leave.

'Only the I'sha prayer is left. After that you can go home.' The neighbor urged.

After offering the night prayer, the new convert went home.

There was a knock at his door again, at the time of Sehr.

'Whose there?' he asked.

'Wear your clothes and come, we will offer our prayer in the mosque.'

'Excuse me. I returned to my religion after staying with you yesterday. Go find somebody useless who has nothing to do but pray. I am a family man, and need to provide for them. I have other duties and responsibilities to fulfill. I cannot just pray to God all day and survive on nothing. Get lost!'

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a) related this incident to his followers and said:

'Thus, a pious and God fearing Muslim converted a non-believer to Islam. But, it took the new convert only one day to give it up because of the rigid and extreme measures adopted by the Muslim.

Remember, force and rigidity lead to unease, frustration, and discontentment. The Ummayyads used force to make people obey them, and received nothing but contempt. Promote religion affectionately, courteously, mildly, with mutual consent. Our methods should make people embrace Islam by choice,

and practice it according to the level of their faith and energy– both physical and mental.’

Just Distribution of Work

The Holy Prophet (s) and his companions alighted from their horses and started unloading their camels to break their journey. Everyone agreed on slaughtering a goat and cooking its meat for dinner. One of them offered to slaughter the animal. Another took removing the skin upon himself. A third volunteered to cook the meat.

The Holy Prophet (s) said, ‘I’ll collect the wood for the fire from the surrounding wilderness.’ All his (s) companions cried in unison, ‘Why must you work, with us around? We feel honored to serve you while you rest. We will complete the task in no time.’

The Holy Prophet (s) replied. ‘I know that you can accomplish this in no time, but God doesn’t befriend anyone who considers himself better than his friends and worthy of their respect.’

Saying this he walked towards the woods, and returned with a pile of dry twigs and leaves enough to light the fire while the others finished their work.

Division of Labour

After Imam Ali (‘a) and Lady Fatimah Zahra (‘a) got married, they began their new life together. They organized their belongings as needed and went to the Holy Prophet (s) for his advice in the division of domestic chores. ‘Guide us, O Prophet of Allah (s), as to how we should divide our domestic chores between us,’ requested Imam Ali (‘a).

The Holy Prophet (s) declared, ‘Ali, you will do all the chores outside the house, while Fatimah will perform all those inside the house.’

Lady Fatimah (‘a) was overjoyed with his division. She said, ‘I am so relieved to have nothing to do with men.’ Ali (‘a) would purchase wood, grain, groceries and other essential items from the market, while she would grind the flour, cook the meals, do the laundry and keep the house clean. Besides, whenever Imam Ali (‘a) found extra time he would help with the chores inside the house.

One day the Holy Prophet (s) visited them and found them both working together. He (s) asked, ‘Who is the more exhausted of you two, for me to assist?’ ‘Fatimah,’ said Ali (‘a).

He (s) sent her to rest and helped Ali (‘a) to complete her chores.

Islam was in its early days and Imam Ali (‘a) had to accompany the Muslim army for Jihad more than often. He provided her with all the essential items, but, whenever the need arose, Lady Fatimah (‘a) went to the market herself and purchased whatever she needed in those days.

Life went on smoothly until the family grew and the house was echoing with the innocent joyful laughter of children. However, the burden of work inside the house had increased manifold. One day Imam Ali (‘a) noticed that grinding, cooking, carrying waterbags from the well, washing and cleaning, besides feeding, bathing, and babysitting the children had left Fatimah (‘a) with sore hands, a scarred back and worn-out clothes. Despite his help, she was busy all the time.

Sorrowful on her condition, he advised her to request her father for a serving woman. Lady Fatimah (‘a) agreed. She went to see her father, but found him busy conversing with some people. She returned home without voicing her request.

However, the Holy Prophet (s) noticed her coming and going, and understood that she had come for something important. Next morning, he went to visit her to find out the reason for her visit the day before. At the door, he greeted the inmates in a loud, clear voice, ‘Assalam o Alaikum.’

Both Ali (‘a) and Fatimah (‘a) were resting. They felt embarrassed that they were still resting, and did not respond aloud. It was the Holy Prophet’s (s) habit to repeat the greeting thrice and return if he failed to get a response. Imam Ali (‘a) knew his habit, so he quickly replied, ‘Walaikum Assalam, O Prophet of Allah (s). Do come in.’

The Holy Prophet (s) sat at the head side of his daughter’s bed and asked, ‘You came to see me yesterday, Fatimah, and then returned. I am sure it was important. What did you come for, my child?’

Imam Ali (‘a) replied, ‘If you permit me, I will tell you why Fatimah went to see you. I sent her to you. The reason was that her chores within the house have increased manifold. It grieves me to see her sore hands, scarred back and dusty clothes because of working all day long. I sent her to request you to provide a woman to assist her.’

The Holy Prophet (s) did not want any member of his family to enjoy facilities that were not available to the poor Muslims, especially the immigrants, who were in a state of extreme poverty in those days. He knew the spiritual level of his daughter’s faith, so he said, ‘Would you prefer it if I give you something better?’

‘We will be pleased to accept, Ya Rasool Allah (s).’

‘Everyday, before going to bed, recite **Allah o Akbar**, 34 times, **Alhamdulillah**, 33 times and **Subhanallah**, 33 times. It will give you more strength to perform your chores than any helping hand.’

Lady Fatimah (‘a) had not uncovered her face until this moment. She removed the cloth from her face and said, ‘My pleasure lies in what pleases my Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (s).’

Earn ones living

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (‘a) was busy working in his garden, wearing working clothes with spade in hand, when one of his friends, Abu Umro Shaibani arrived. Seeing him drenched in perspiration because of the

heat and labour, he thought there was need of a labourer, so the Imam (‘a) had opted to work himself.

He stepped forward and said, ‘Let me help you finish this work.’

The Imam (‘a) said, ‘No. I like working on the farm with my own hands. It is necessary for man to face the heat of the sun and feel the exhaustion of earning ones own living.’

Cause and Effect

Ali ibn e Abi Talib (‘a) left his home and, as usual, proceeded towards the jungle. He was familiar with the untrodden paths of the jungle. He was carrying something on his back. On the way, a passerby asked him, ‘Ali, what is that weight you are carrying on your back?’

‘Date-palms, Insha Allah!’ he replied.

‘Date-palms?’ He clearly did not understand what Ali (‘a) meant.

Some years later, he noticed an orchard of date-palms, stand tall and elegant where Ali (‘a) had planted the saplings he had nurtured with his own hands. His amazement, then at Ali’s (‘a) remark, vanished when he saw the full-grown trees with his own eyes.

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