

Ethics

- ❖ Holding on to one's intention and resolve is the most difficult issue for the soul.
- ❖ No matter how much success and sincerity one may have acquired, even if one sustained his sincerity for seventy years, one cannot guarantee against one's intention and resolve being shaken, because one is shackled by instincts, desires, whims, worldly and various other weird things.
- ❖ The truthfulness of an intention is a difficult and an extremely significant matter. It is reported in great Qur'anic verses, divine hadith as well as prophetic ones that huge masses end up going to hell because of their ill intention, even though their deeds were as big as the mountains.
- ❖ It is imperative that we beseech the Almighty to protect our intention from various dangers, from Satan, whims, desires, and all other effects.
- ❖ It is not fitting for filthy souls to meet Imam Mahdi, may Allah hasten his reappearance, nor do sinful eyes deserve to see him, or ears that are filled with sins and disobediences are worthy to hear his voice, and those lips from which thousands of disobediences have emanated will not have the honor to kiss his hands.
- ❖ Why does Imam Mahdi, may Allah hasten his reappearance, not allow us to meet him while he is the owner of kindness and generosity? Did he not allow Sayyid so-and-so for an audience with him, or sheikh so-and-

Inspirational Quotes

- ❖ Let us plan for our souls and spirits before we plan for our stomachs, houses, and families, and let us move forward in this direction so that we may have the honor of meeting the Imam of our Time.
- ❖ It is imperative that we acquire *'elm al-akhlaq* or the science of morals. It isn't that all the Islamic morals and etiquettes are classified in the two groups of "recommended" and "discouraged" (*mostahab & makrooh*) deeds only. Rather, some of them are classified in the groups of "obligatory" and "prohibited" (*halal & haram*) too.
- ❖ If you come to recognize the position and station of knowledge, and that some of the *akhlaq* constitute obligatory and prohibited duties, you would then know that *akhlaq* is part of the required knowledge too.

Magnanimity is a praiseworthy trait, so too are generosity, hospitality, giving; all of that is good and encouraged, but as long as it does not lead to abandoning an obligatory duty or committing a prohibited deed.

- ❖ What is meant by giving up the "I" is not to humiliate oneself before others, nor is it meant to be arrogant; rather, it is meant that you intend your deed not for your own sake but purely for Allah's sake.
- ❖ If one is hurt or suffers a pain, it would not be possible for him not to say "ouch", but if one trains oneself, it would then be possible for one not to say it, but instead say, "*la hawla wa la quowata illa billah*".

- ❖ We are required to strengthen our relationship with the community, and that is through adhering to Islamic morals (*akhlaq*) such as humility, dignity, pleasantness, magnanimity, forgiveness, compassion, upholding kinship.
- ❖ Try to oppose your desires in all affairs; so if you believe something is right but you don't like it, submit to it with all leniency and forbearance.
- ❖ If you had a dispute with your friend and were angry with him, try to maintain your relation with him by visiting him, or greeting him every time you meet him.
- ❖ *akhlaq* requires commitment, seriousness, and perseverance in order to attain its higher levels.
- ❖ '*elm al-akhlaq* (the science of morals) is one of the challenging disciplines; it is even more demanding than *fiqh* (jurisprudence) which is considered to be one of the most difficult disciplines and has numerous case studies.
- ❖ '*elm al-akhlaq* is more demanding than *fiqh*, and we must not take it lightly, because *akhlaq* means producing a true human being.
- ❖ Advancement to higher levels of *akhlaq* (morals) and *fada'il* (virtues) is more demanding than gaining *ijtihad* in *fiqh*, because its fruit and result is more distant and more challenging to attain than *fiqh*. One will not touch the result of one's endeavor in this respect except when one will have a [sound heart],¹ and the morals and virtues (*akhlaq* & *fada'il*) become second nature (*malakah*) to the individual. It is only then that one would feel the delight of *akhlaq* and attaining its higher levels, and it is then one would recognize the value of self-discipline and opposing the whims and desires.

- ❖ *akhlaq* does not become second nature for an individual until one combats one's self and opposes it, and opposes it, and opposes it vehemently and continually until that second nature of love of the good in all its dimensions grows within the individual.
- ❖ If one acquires the second nature of love of the good in all its dimensions, one would feel the delight, and would begin to sense the result of one's exertions in the field of morals and virtues (*akhlaq & fada'il*).
- ❖ Climbing the levels of *akhlaq* is difficult, indeed it is more difficult than *ijtihad*, and the best evidence for that is that the number of those who have attained the rank of the perfect human being is rare compared to the number of the *mojtahid* individuals.
- ❖ By saying that *akhlaq* is difficult we do not mean it is difficult to receive lectures in *akhlaq* such as studying the book of *jami' al-sa'adat* or deliver lectures on *akhlaq* or listening to them; all these represent '*elm al-akhlaq* or the science of morals. However, what is a required necessity of *akhlaq* is the practice of it, and what we mean by *fada'il* (virtues) is not having knowledge of but practicing them.

¹ See 26:89 and 37:84

- ❖ By asserting that *akhlaq* is difficult it is not intended to put people off it, rather it is in order to make them pay attention to it more.
- ❖ The fruit of *akhlaq* is not attained quickly, and the delight of feeling the spiritual elevation is not acquired except after much hardship and perseverance; and this is one of the differences that distinguishes *akhlaq* from other sciences and disciplines.
- ❖ One of the many differences between *akhlaq* and other disciplines, is that mankind likes to be encouraged, and by it progresses in various fields, however, those who endeavor to advance in the course of *akhlaq* must expect no encouragement in the process, rather they should even expect dissuasion, as this is the state of the community in general.
- ❖ Most people would dissuade those who take up *akhlaq* rather than encourage them.
- ❖ When an individual shows perseverance, is truthful, or honors his promise even to the detriment of his own interests, in such circumstances most people would try to make him renege. It is for these that such an individual should observe patience, perseverance, and concentration in order to adhere to *akhlaq* and *fada'il* and advance in them.
- ❖ Those who entice to renege, whims, satanic insinuations, and desires, make virtue resemble vice.
- ❖ Magnanimity is a praiseworthy trait, which is opposed by profligacy which is blameworthy; however, one may embark on an action that stems from magnanimity but others would depict it as an abhorred act of profligacy and extravagance.

- ❖ If you wanted to practice an act of altruism or self-sacrifice or any other praiseworthy action, you should not allow those around you to make you hesitate, and ultimately discourage you.
- ❖ We should concentrate on *akhlaq* so that we become experts and ultimately acquire a [sound heart] and the second nature of virtues and morals (*fada'il & akhlaq*).
- ❖ With a sound heart we can combat people's dissuasion and the camouflage of the [soul that continually enjoins unto evil].¹
- ❖ When we are certain that the path of *akhlaq* is difficult and barbed, and realize that in every instance we need to allocate this task enough time, patience and perseverance, we need Allah's support before all that, and must continually be wary of slipping. We would then know that we have begun observing the etiquettes of the journey, and that by relying on and trusting Allah we will arrive at the destination envisaged in Allah's Messenger's mission, peace be upon him and his holy family, when he declared: "I have been sent as a prophet to complete and perfect the noble traits."
- ❖ Our interaction with those of weakest faith should be such that it would not leave them with the impression of us being haughty in anyway.

¹ See 12:53

- ❖ Supposing that you are not haughty, but that alone would not be enough, it is essential that you do not leave an impression to that effect.
- ❖ Qualities such as being personable, genial and humble, as well as having a pleasant expression, good listening attitude, and forbearance have a great impact on people, which surpass the influence of our speech.
- ❖ Try to consort with anyone who asks you a question.
- ❖ The one who commits a forbidden act, or takes usury, or wrongs the people do so for one's own self; seeking wealth, position, fame, leadership, and realizing all its desires for one's self.
- ❖ The one who does not perceive Allah and denies His existence, you will find him stamp on Allah's laws and couldn't care less, turns his back to Allah and His messengers, and takes one's self and desires as his god instead of Almighty Allah.
- ❖ The cognition and understanding of [the attributes and oneness of] Almighty Allah, upholding His laws and religion, and self-discipline, is the basis of every virtue.
- ❖ The one who disciplines one's self rises above all vices.
- ❖ Imagine how the equation reverses if the self becomes the ruler; the thought of it alone would be enough for killing and oppressing people when self-discipline is non-existent, and the self declares "I am everything". Whereas, the one who practices self-discipline, states: Allah is greatest, and He is above everything.

- ❖ Sincerity being a good and praiseworthy issue is one of the real issues. So anyone would be upset if told he is insincere in his deeds. Even the insincere would be delighted if told he is sincere, even though he is not so in reality. This is an evidence for sincerity being a good issue, like the reality of truthfulness, bravery, magnanimity and everything that is good.
- ❖ Every individual has one's own weak points that one knows. If one of them surfaced and sought to overcome and deteriorate the individual, one should at that instance remember that there is Almighty Allah [who would hold one to account]. One should therefore concentrate on this attitude, and keep reminding oneself on this and similar issues, so that one can reform one's self bit by bit.
- ❖ Disobediences do not emanate except from a vile soul or a soul with no control over it; its owner is a slave to one's desires instead of their master. It is natural therefore that such an individual may not have the qualities which would take him or her to paradise.
- ❖ Donation is hard, and donation during hard times is even harder. The donor must therefore have a sublime soul, a control on one's self and desires, which will truly save the individual.
- ❖ Donation during hard times is the highest degree of self-sacrifice.
- ❖ Self-control and self-discipline require great determination and training.

- ❖ Self-control and self-discipline is a challenging undertaking which should not be taken lightly.
- ❖ It is not possible to tame the self easily and quickly, and without the need to much preliminary training and discipline. Rather, it needs continuous discipline.
- ❖ If self-discipline is one of the individual obligations (*wajib 'ayni*) for [each one of] us, this means one would be required to prepare for the ways and means to enable one not to disobey the Almighty. This is a matter which should not be underestimated. This requires preparations, time, and discipline.
- ❖ Discipline of the self is much harder than the discipline of the body, since in the latter case, with an able body, there won't be any of the hindrances that will normally be faced in the course of the discipline of the self, which are extremely powerful, such as those depicted in the poem:

Myself, my devil, my materialistic world, and my whims and desires

How can I free myself from them while they are all my enemies

We all face these hindrances, and they require powerful resolve and determination to overcome them.

- ❖ The rein is in our hands and it is not in the hands of others... every one of us has one's own rein in his or her hands.

- ❖ At whatever stage of piety, abstention-from-haram, and self-discipline we may be, there is still more room for improvement and progression.
- ❖ One who finds Almighty Allah, would not then care about what one person or another achieves. Learn from those who are pious and those who point you to faith and source of good. However, after you find the source of good, which is the Almighty, strengthen your connection with Him, continuously seek His help, and seek refuge with Him from the evils, Satan, and the evil-commanding soul so that you, your intention, and your sincerity are not affected by the changes in the states of others.
- ❖ If an individual who, in our opinion, is the greatest saint or devotee, errs the greatest error, then our faith must not change, otherwise, this will prove our faith is superficial.
- ❖ We should know that Allah scrutinizes our hearts, and He gives us success, capability and happiness according to our merit; since it is not wise, and Allah is the wisest, to give to someone over and above one's worth and merit.
- ❖ If we humans, with our limited intellectual capability, endeavor not to act other than in wisdom, how do we expect other than that from the Almighty?!
- ❖ If the congregational prayer leader is not just (i.e. *'adil*)¹ we would not pray behind him, and this is based on wisdom, before it being a jurisprudential ruling.

¹ *'adil* is the individual who adheres to and acts upon the obligatory duties and refrains from the prohibited acts, such that if his neighbours or colleagues were asked about him, they would report of his good nature, commitment, and piety.

- ❖ We do not give a wealth of millions to a feeble-minded, because it is not wise to do so, and thus the Almighty would not give us precious gems if we do not qualify for them.
- ❖ Asceticism is not to abstain from food, drink, marriage or ownership; rather, true asceticism is not to grieve over wealth lost or opportunities missed whatever they may be, and not to rejoice for achieving them. One may not acquire this quality easily, except through continuous discipline and exercise.
- ❖ People differ through the rate and magnitude of change; some can change quickly and some slowly. However, the more one realizes the benefits gained or the harm repelled through the change, the higher the rate of change.
- ❖ The love of prestige is one of the fundamental powerful traits in mankind.
- ❖ If one is saddened for the loss of something, say one's health, this would be normal; and self-discipline would lessen the impact of this loss on the individual. However, if the psychological pain, regret and suchlike dominate one's life, then the solution would require training and practice to eliminate them. One relevant clue is to remind oneself that everything that one owns, including one's health, body and soul, all are put in trust with him, and that one is not their real owner.¹

- ❖ We should know that our health is a trust [placed with us which] we must take care of, and that we must not be saddened or depressed if it is taken back from us. The *qudsi* hadith states: “O Muhammad! Love whoever you like but you will separate from them, and do what you like, for sure you will meet it.” This of course does not mean that one should not be saddened for the loss of dear ones, but there is a difference between that and that one gets sad and angry merely for the event to take place.
- ❖ Since we face personal problems, we need to train ourselves to acquire the degree of agreeing with and accepting Allah’s share and destiny for us. As a result of our response to what has happened to us we should not say or do something that angers Allah. We should continually remind ourselves that whatever good we achieve is from Almighty Allah, i.e. it is a trust with us, and it is inevitable that we will separate from it one day. We should not regret what we lose and nor exult for what we achieve.²
- ❖ If one proceeds on Allah’s path, one would certainly be supported by Him. Indeed the Almighty made that promise to the believers, when He promised them victory if they strive in His cause; whether combating an external enemy, or combating the internal enemy which is the self. Thus if the believer seeks help from Allah, and proceeds in the course of combating his self, support and victory from the Almighty Allah will come to him.

¹ Whatever every individual owns has been given to by Almighty Allah and when something is taken from him or her is ultimately taken by Him. Thus, it would be in one’s benefit, both physically and psychologically, to be thankful and optimistic under all circumstances for Allah knows the best for everyone.

² This is in reference to the Qur’anic verse 57:23.

- ❖ The best evidence for the possibility of gaining victory against the self are Allah's devotees (*awliya 'Allah*) who reached those elevated stages, not to mention the *ma 'soomeen*, peace be upon them. For what is the difference between us and Sayyid Bahr al-'Oloum for example, or Sheikh al-Sadouq, or Sayyid al-Radi,¹ Allah's blessings be upon them all? They used to be normal people, i.e. non-*ma 'soom*, and through self-discipline they became extraordinary devotees, about whom wonders have been reported. It is through them that the current Islamic heritage reached us. How did they become like that while they weren't *ma 'soom*? The answer: they took up the path of those who relied on Allah and sought His help, and the Almighty helped them and gave them victory against their selves until they attained whatever they attained in terms of knowledge and faith.
- ❖ Through the continuous observance of holding oneself to account, it is possible for an individual to reach elevated levels and stations. Indeed, many reached such high levels that enticement would not boost their motivation any further, and discouragement would not weaken their resolve in any way, despite the fact that they are humans, have desires, and realize the meaning of enticement and discouragement, but realization is one thing and being influenced by it is another.
- ❖ Satan, desires and bad influence have their own negative impacts. However, if one becomes convinced that it is possible to reach [those elevated stations] and relies on the Almighty Allah, then this conviction in itself would help the individual reach them. One of the key factors for this [journey], which is easy to realize, is to hold oneself to account.

¹ They are some of the most illustrious Shia scholars in history.

-To observe this, one should adhere to identifying a particular time of the day to hold oneself to account. The time should be appropriate, it shouldn't be at a time when one is hungry, or full, or one's mind is preoccupied with another matter, which might affect the process. It should be a time when one can isolate oneself, and assess one's conducts that day.

- ❖ The process of holding oneself to account should not cease as long as one is awake. This is possible through some self-discipline in that one would assign some time of the day to do that, increasing the time a bit every day. One should review one's conduct and assess one's deeds and intentions. For every good deed one should thank Allah and ask Him for more of the same, and make the necessary effort for it. For every evil deed one should seek Allah's forgiveness and ask Him for help and success to eradicate such conduct.
- ❖ It is essential for believing men and women to assign a particular time, every day, even if for a few minutes, for the business of holding oneself to account, and to carry out a quick review of the conducts over the previous twenty-four hours, and to resolve to continue the good deeds, and seek forgiveness for the sins.
- ❖ It is imperative that one should pay attention to and direct others to observe and practice the Islamic morals such as truthfulness, patience, forbearance, loyalty, perseverance, and geniality, for this is the best means to gather all the goodness and happiness in this world and in the hereafter.