Self-Purification: the Main Goal of Divine Messengers

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The greatest aim of Divine Messengers was to emphasize the importance of refinement, purification, and training of human selves. God-Almighty said in the Holy Quran: “God did confer a great favor on the believers when he sent among them an apostle from among themselves rehearsing unto them the signs of God, sanctifying them and instructing them in scripture and wisdom, while before that, they had been in manifest error.” -the Holy Quran (13: 164)

Therefore, it is obvious that the subject of human education and training was of such vital importance that God-Almighty sent Divine Messengers especially for this purpose thus, conferring a great favor ul1on the believers. The individual as well as collective personality, prosperity or cruelty (of this world and Hereafter) of a human being depends upon how much efforts he had already made or is still making for self-building. It is from this consideration that self-building is regarded something of such vital importance because it determines ones eventual destiny.

The Divine Messengers came to teach human beings regarding the path of self-building, nourishment, and perfection of self, as well as to accompany them as their guide and helper in this vital and determinant task.

They came for cleansing and sanctifying human selves from their indecent moral characteristics and animal instincts, and bestowing upon them superior spiritual virtues. The prophets lectured human beings about the self-building program, acted as helper and knowledgeable guides in identifying the ugliness in their moral conducts, and showed them the ways and means for self-control against their selfish whims and passions.

By timely issuance of warning and intimidating they succeeded in sanctifying the human selves from the moral obscenities and indecencies. They came for plantation of sapling of higher moral virtues within human souls, nurtured and protected it for its eventual blooming, and in doing so acted as guides, friends, and helpers of the people by encouraging and pursuing them towards the desired sublime' objectives. The Holy Prophet (S) has said:

"I emphasize the importance of good morals for you because God-Almighty has sent me especially for this purpose.” -Bihar al-Anwar vol. 69, p-375. He further said:

"I was appointed for the Prophethood so that I may accomplish the important task of moral perfection within human souls.” -al-Mustadarak, vol. 2, p-282.

Imam al-Sadiq[1] (A) said:

"God-Almighty appointed prophets with good morals; therefore, whoever discovers these virtues within himself should be thankful to God for this bounty, whoever lacks these virtues must pray, cry, and shed tears 1before God Almighty asking for such blessing." -al Mustadarak, vol. 2, p-283.

The commander of faithful Imam Ali[2] (A) said:

"Supposedly, if neither there was any desire for Paradise nor there was any fear of Hell, and also there would have not been any belief about the reward and punishment in the Next World; even then it would have been be fitting to strive for moral perfection, because, good morals are the path towards prosperity and victory." -al-Mustadarak, vol. 2, p-283.

Imam Baqir[3] said:

"The most perfect believers from the point of view of faith are the ones who excel in moral conduct." -al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-99.

The Holy Prophet (S) said: "There is nothing better than good moral conduct which could be written on the "Letter of Deeds" on the Day of Resurrection." -al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-99.

And said "My Ummah will enter into Paradise mostly on the basis of piety and excellence in moral conduct." -al-Kafi, vol. 2, p-l00. and the following narration:

"A man approached the Holy Prophet (S) and asked: 'What is religion?' The Holy Prophet (S) replied: 'Good moral conduct.' The man asked the same questions from the Holy Prophet (S) alternatively by appearing from right, left, and behind the Messenger. Finally the Holy Prophet (S) took a deep look at him and said: 'Why don't you understand?' Religion is defined as never to get angry." -Mohajateh al-Baiza, vol. 5, p-89.

Islam has attached special importance for moral ethics, and because of these consideration the Holy Quran contains relatively more verses regarding ethics as compared verses related to obligation. Inside the books of narrations, one may finds thousands of narrations regarding ethics as compared to narrations dealing with other topics;

if this number is not regarded greater in quantity, certainly it is not smaller either. The rewards and promises mentioned for good moral deeds are certainly not lesser than the rewards prescribed for other actions, and likewise the warnings and punishments described for indecent moral actions are certainly not less than the punishments for other actions.

Therefore, in Islam, ethics constitutes the basics and should not be treated simply as secondary religious obligations or something related to the beautification and decoration of religious persons. If religion has defined do's and don'ts for obligations, it has defined the same for ethics. If encouragement, persuasion, rewards, punishment, and warnings have been

utilized for obligations, the same approach has been applied for ethics as well as. Therefore, there exists no difference between ethics and obligations as for as religious recommendations are concerned, and in order to achieve perfection and prosperity one cannot remain ignorant of ethical matters. The moral obligations cannot be ignored by taking the excuse of treating them simply as moral obligations, likewise forbidden moral acts should not be performed either. If performance of daily-prayers is compulsory and their non-performance is prohibited and brings Divine-Punishment, equally important is the fulfillment of a promise and its breach is prohibited and brings Divine-Wrath. The real religious and prosperous is some one who is committed to his religious obligation as well as is honest in fulfillment of his moral commitments. On the contrary ethics play an important role for achieving prosperity and spiritual perfection that will be explained in the book later on.

Self-awareness and Self-building

Although a human being is not more than a single reality, but is the possessor of different dimensions within his single existence –the existence which starts from the insignificant dusty material lacking any sort of sense and feelings and ultimately terminates into a precious celestial jewel. God-Almighty said in the Holy Quran:

"Who made all things good which He created, and He began the creation of man from clay, then He made his seed from a draught of despised fluid; then he fashioned him and breathed into him of his spirit; and appointed for you hearing and sights and hearts; small thanks give ye"

-the Holy Quran (32: 7-9)

A human being is the possessor of various facts and parameters within his existence. From one aspect he is the possessor of physical body and a name, while from another aspect he is possessor of animal instincts as well as. Eventually overall, he is a human being possessing superior human virtues which are not found in other animals.

Therefore, human being is a single reality, a reality that possesses various dimensions and facts within his single existence. When it is said: My weight and my face, it is indicative of his body and name; when it is said: My food and my health, it is also related to his body; when it is said:

movement, anger, and sexual passion, it indicates his animal self; and lastly when it is said; my wisdom, my thinking and my thoughts, it indicates to his superior human virtues. Therefore, a human being possesses different kinds of selves namely; self related to his physical body, self related to his animal instincts, and the human-self, but the most valuable and precious self is

his -human-self.

What had made human beings, "Vicegerent of God" upon earth and has distinguished them over other creatures is nothing but the single heavenly "Spirit" blown into his existence by the God-Almighty, called Human Soul. The wise God has explained the creation of human beings in the Holy Quran as follows:

"Verily we created man from a product of wet earth; then placed him as a drop (of seed) in a safe lodging; then fashioned we the drop a clot, then fashioned we the little lump bones, then clothed the bones with flesh,. and then produced it as another creation. So blessed the God, the Best of Creators." -the Holy Quran (23:12-14)

It is about the creation of human being that God-Almighty has said:

"So blessed the God -the Best of Creators." -the Holy Quran (23:14)

It was because of this Heavenly Spirit that human being reaches to an exalted position that God-Almighty orders the angels as follows: "So when I have made him and have breathed unto him of My Spirit, do ye fall down prostrating yourself unto him." -the Holy Quran (15: 29) If, human beings were bestowed distinction over other creatures and God-Almighty said about them as follows:

Verily, we have honored the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom we created with a marked preferment." -the Holy Quran (17: 70)

Therefore, if a human being should strive for self-building he must build his human-self and not his animal or physical-self. The aims of prophets had been to strengthen the human beings in their endeavors for perfecting their human selves. The Prophets said to the human-beings: Don't forget that your self is your human-self; in case you sacrificed your human-self for the sake of whims and passions of your animal-self; you will inflict upon yourself a terrible loss.

The God-Almighty has said in the Holy Quran:

Say: the losers will be those who loose themselves and their house folk on the Day of Resurrection. Ah, that will be the manifest loss." -the Holy Quran (39:15)

Those who never think about any thing except their animal existence have indeed lost their human personality and are not striving for their recovery either. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (A) has said:

"It is indeed strange to see someone so desperately looking for lost personal things, while making absolutely no efforts to find his lost (human) self." -Gharar al-Hukm p- 495.

There can not be more severe and painful loss than some one's loosing his human personality .and real self; for such a person nothing is left except animalism

Human-soul and Animal-self

The verses of the Holy Quran and narrations about human-self could be divided into two categories. Some of the verses define human-self as a precious valuable jewel possessing Heavenly excellence, descended from Heaven, which is the source of all superior characteristics and human virtues. These verses recommend that human beings must strive for achieving self-refinement and self-perfection through training, and must be careful for its protection, never to loose such a precious Heavenly gift. For example God-Almighty in Holy Quran defines this precious jewel as follows:

"They will ask the (of Muhammad) concerning the spirit. Say: The spirit is by command of my Lord, and knowledge ye have been vouchsafed but little." -the Holy Quran (17:85)

In the above verse the spirit has been defined as an existence belonging to the celestial world that is superior than the material world. The Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali (A) about the self said:

“Self is like a precious jewel, whoever strives for his protection, he will help him attaining exalted positions, and whoever acted negligently in his protection he shall pull him towards humiliation." -Gharar al-Hukm, p-226.

And said:

"Whoever knows the worth of his self will never allow himself to be indulging into passing worldly amusements and shameful deeds.” -Gharar al-Hukm, p-669.

And said:

"Whoever discovers the nobility of self shall guard him against lowness of passions and false desires." -Gharar al-Hukm, p-710.

And said:

"Whoever possesses the nobility of self will have more compassion."
-Gharar al-Hukm, p-638.

Also said:

"Whoever possesses the nobility of self will become free from Wants."
-Gharar al-Hukm, p-669.

From the above quoted verses and narrations whose examples are frequent, it can be derived that human self is a valuable and precious jewel which should be carefully guarded protected and nourished.

The second category of verses and narrations defines the self as something wicked and dangerous enemy responsible for all sort of evils, against whom we are supposed to wage a great struggle (Jihad-e-Akbar) till it becomes completely submissive, otherwise it will inflict

terrible misfortune and cruelty upon the defeated person.

Following are some examples:

"But as far him who feared to stand before his lord and restrained his soul from lust, Lo ! The garden will be his home." -the Holy Quran (79:40-41) The Holy Quran quotes from Prophet Joseph (A):

"I don't exculpate myself Lo! the (human) soul enjoineth unto evil, save that whereon my Lord hath mercy. Lo! My Lord is Forgiving, Merciful." -the Holy Quran (12: 53)

The Holy Prophet (S) said:

"Your's greatest enemy is your self, which is located between your two sides."

-Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-64.

Imam 'Ali (A) said:

"Self commands you continuously to indulge into evil deeds, therefore, whoever trusted his self -he will deceit him, whoever believed his self -he will destroy him; and whoever is satisfied with his self –he will lead him to face worst kind of disasters."

He further said:

"Trusting the self provides the most dependable opportunities for devil's entrance"

Imam al-Sajjad[4] (A) said:

"Oh God! I do complain to you against the self –which continuously commands; to indulge into sinful acts and deviations,. Stands up against Your wrath and punishment; and pulls me towards the path of absolute destruction."

-Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 94, p-143.

From the above quoted verses and narrations whose examples are frequent, it can be derived that human self constitutes an evil existence which is the source of all sort of sins and therefore, should be made submissive through efforts and waging greater struggle (Jihad-e-Akbar). Here it is quite possible that some may consider that these two categories of verses and narrations are incompatible and contradict each other; or one might imagine that a human being possesses two selves, namely: human- self which is the source of all goodness and blessing, and the other one animal-self which is the source of all evil and sinfulness.

Both of the above mentioned interpretations are incorrect because firstly there exists no conflict between the above mentioned verses and narrations of two categories; secondly, the sciences had already proved that a human being is not more than a single reality possessing a single self and it is not such that his animalism and humanism are separate from each other. But human self comprises of two stages and two dimensions of his single existence. At lower the stage, self is an animal possessing all animalistic characteristic, while at higher stage, the

self is a human possessing Divine-spirit -descended from the Celestial Heavenly Kingdom. When it is said: Self is noble, precious, source of all virtues and blessings; one must endeavor for his nourishment and perfection -here the higher stage of self has been indicated. But when it is said: Self is your greatest enemy; don't trust him because he will lead you to eventual destruction, control and make him submissive through greater struggle -here his animal and lower stage have been pointed out. If it is said: Nourish and strengthen your self here the human dimension of the self is meant. When it is said: Wage greater struggle for his total submission, here the animal dimension of the self is meant.

There exists a continuous confrontation between these two selves or two stages of human existence. The animal self continuously strives to dominate by keeping human being amused with whims, passions and lower animal desires, thus, closing the path of advancement perfection, exaltation and movement towards God-Almighty and making a human being captive of his animal self.

While on the contrary his human self or the higher stage of his existence continuously strives for attaining the higher sublime spiritual stations of human perfection leading towards God's Countenance, and in order to accomplish his cherished goal, tries to control, and forces the animal-self for his absolute submission. This internal struggle, within the human existence continues until one of the combatant becomes victorious defeating his opponent.

If the human or celestial-self gets upper hand -the human values become alive, thus, leading human being towards the road of spiritual excellence and perfection ultimately achieving the highest position of God's Countenance. But, on the contrary if the animal-self becomes victorious -he turns off the light of wisdom, thus, throwing the human being into the deepest valley of darkness confusion and deviation. It was because of this internal confrontation within human existence that Divine Prophets came to help guide and support the human beings in their holy struggle which ultimately determines their destiny.

Human Virtues

A human being possesses two types of selves: the human self and the animal self, but the value of a human being is related to his human-self and has nothing to do with his animal self. The animal-self may be regarded some sort of parasitic existence, or like an uninvited guest, and in reality is the unconscious-self.

Although, a human being is an animal and is obligated to fulfill his animalistic requirements, but he has not been created to live in this world like an animal, instead he has been created with the aims and objectives of utilizing and commissioning his animal existence for perfecting

his human existence.

A human being have some genuine requirements incorporated within his inner existence for the sake of his animal as well as human existence. Since he is an animal, he requires food, water, clothing and shelter in order to motivate him for making serious endeavors for their search, feelings of thirst and hunger have been incorporated within his existence.

Similarly, for the sake of continuation of human race, sexual desires and love for female partner have been incorporated within his nature. Since men like to live and in order to sustain his life he has no other choice except to take care of means of living required for his animal existence.

When he sees food he feels hungry and desires to eat and therefore, he tells himself: I must arrange food for my own consumption and whatever obstacles are encountered in this path I must try to remove them. Of course, these feelings are not bad because for sustenance of life one must work, eat and drink.

In Islam not only this has not been forbidden, on the contrary it has been recommended and encouraged. But parallel to that it must be clearly understood that the animal life is a preliminary and not the desired goal. Or in other words, the animal life is not the main guest rather some one accompanying him.

Therefore, if some one assigns authenticity to animal existence, strives and endeavors seriously day and night to fulfill his animal lower desires and passions; considers the aims of life simply eating, drinking, sleeping, and reproducing -has indeed fallen into intense darkness of deviation and wanderness. Because, he has removed the human wisdom and Heavenly spirit from the position of power and have confined them into a forgotten place. Such an individual does not deserve to be called as a human being -rather he is an animal with a human face.

He possesses wisdom but by his perverted deeds has become so isolated that he can no longer recognize and follow the superior human virtues and characteristics. In spite of having eyes he is unable to see the realities; in spite of possessing ears he cannot hear the facts. the Holy Quran considers such an individual as an animal and even worse and more deviated than the animals because animal lacks wisdom and does not understand, while the above mentioned person in spite of having wisdom does not understand.

The Holy Quran describes such individuals, as follows:

“And if they answer thee not, then know that what they follow is their lusts. And who goes farther astray than he who followeth his lust without guidance from God? Lo! God guideth not wondering folk.” -the Holy Quran (28:50)

And further said:

“Already have we urged unto Hell many of the Jinn and humankind, having hearts wherewith they understand not, and having eyes wherewith they see not, and having ears wherewith they hear not. These are as the cattle -nay but they are worse! These are the neglectful." -the Holy Quran (7: 179) The Holy Quran further defines these creatures as follows:

"Hast thou seen him who maketh his desire his god, and God sendeth him astray purposely and sealeth up his hearing and his heart, and setteth on his sight a covering ? Than who will lead him after God (hath condemned him) ? Will you not then heed ?" -the Holy Quran (45: 23)

How unfortunate and losers are those who have sacrificed their heavenly-self, prosperity, and human perfection for the sake of passions and desires of their animal existence? They have exchanged their human self with their animalistic pleasures.[5]

The Commander of the Faithful Imam' Ali (A) said:

"Whoever becomes involved into world's allurements, thus giving up his gains from his immortal life in the Next World -has indeed been cheated." -Gharar al-Hukm, vol. 1, p-88.

He also said:

"Restrain your self from indulgence into lower shameful deeds no matter how attractive or appealing they might appear because, in this exchange or trade you do not receive the genuine value of your self Do not allow yourself to be slave of other because, God has created you as free. The goodness which cannot be obtained except through the evil is not goodness. Also a thing acquired except with serious efforts would not be easy to retained.” -Nahjul-Balagha, Sabhi Saleh, vol. 31, p-401.

And said:

"What a bad trade it is that one exchanges his self for this world instead of trading it with whatever is available with God-Almighty (in the Next- World).” -Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 32.

But, a human being cannot be summarized only into animal self, because he also possesses a human self, and on account of this merit he is an abstract and Celestial Jewel, descended from the Heavenly Kingdom, cherishing values other then animalistic desires. If a human being ponders deeply into his Inner existence and really recognized himself; he will discover that he has arrived from the kingdom of power, wonder, knowledge, blessing, benevolence, illumination, goodness, justice, and in one sentence from the kingdom of absolute perfection, and is originated and belonged to it. It is here that a human being discovers another prospective and looks beyond the limit boundaries of created world -towards the supreme source of absolute perfection and feels attracted towards his higher values. Hence being committed for aspiration of those cherished values, accordingly he changes the movement of his self from the animalistic course towards the exalted path of perfection -which ultimately

leads him towards the highest spiritual station of God's Nearness.

When this internal revolution within him occurs the importance of higher and moral ethical values becomes explicit. Therefore, if a human being desires values such as knowledge, favor, welfare, sacrifice, justice, benevolence, defense of deprived and destitute, truth, goodness, and honesty- it is because,

he considers him belonging to the World of Absolute Perfection and regards such virtues worthy of his exalted human position. It is because, of these feelings that he admires them to the extent, that he is ready to sacrifice his animal self and its desires for the sake of those cherished higher virtues.

Good morals, etiquette, and ethics are defined as a series of spiritual and meaningful perfection, whose proportion for his own spiritual perfection need, is clearly understood by the human celestial soul. The soul admits to himself: "I must do these things."

The ethical musts are derived from the degree of perfection and nobleness within the self and are utilized for achieving exaltation of essence and spiritual perfection. When he says: "I must offer sacrifice on this righteous path." Because, he understands that sacrifice is useful for achieving the perfection and exaltation of essence, and therefore, desires to do that. As for as the path and means of spiritual perfection are concerned they are the same for all human beings. Similarly, all of them have been created identical as for as their sense for recognition of values and anti values is concerned.

If a human being ponders deep into his own perfection seeker pure nature, away from the whims and passions of self, he might discover the moral and ethical virtues as well as the moral vices. All human beings of all times were created such by the God-Almighty. And if some, of them become deprived of this sacred sense of identification, it was because their whims, passions, and intense animalistic desires, silenced the light of their wisdom, leaving them like a sole rider in the fields of self-struggle.

The Holy Quran about the recognition of virtues and vices by the pure human nature as follows: “And a soul and Him who perfected it and inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and what is right for it. He is indeed successful who causeth it to grow.” -the Holy Quran (91:7-9)

The Prophets came with the intention of awakening human nature and to charge their unconscious-self into conscious-self; they came to help, support, and guide human beings in recognizing and paying attention to higher moral values, and utilizing them for attaining God's-Nearness; they came to remind human beings about their exalted human position and need for safe guarding and motivating the superior human virtues; they came to emphasize the

important point that:

You are not animals instead are humans and possess the potential of being superior than the angels. World affairs and animalistic manifestations are far below before your exalted celestial dignity and therefore, you should not sell yourself for them. Imam al-Sajjad (A) was asked:

“Who is the most exalted and most noble person?”

“The one who does not regard the world worthy of greatness of his self.” Replied the Imam. -Tohf al-Aqul, p-285.

If man really identifies his true human personality and if his human self indeed gets upperhand, then good morals and ethics become alive and dominate over the moral vices and rascalities. And when it occurs, a man is no longer permitted to ignore human values and follow vices for example, Ignoring truth and speaking lies, disregarding honesty and practicing treachery, not care about the honor of self and indulging into sinful deeds; and ignoring favor and practicing human persecution etc.

The Commander of Faithful Imam Ali (A) said:

"Whoever consider his self honorable will regard selfish passions low and mean." -Nahjul al-Balagha, saying 449.

The prophets continuously strived for awakening the upright human nature so that. they could learn about their jewel of existence and could discover their dependence and link with God-Almighty; thus spending everything in their possession for attaining the position of nearness and pleasure of the Lord of the worlds to the extent that their eating, drinking. Sleeping, seeing, speaking, working, living, and dying become sacred and ethical. Truly, when men become God's servant and do not cherish for any other goal except his pleasure everything become ethics, worship and virtue. The Holy Quran said: "Say: Lo! My worship and my sacrifice, and my living, and my dying are for God, the Lord of the worlds." -the Holy Quran (6:162) Therefore, because of the above mentioned reasons, recognition of self in Islam has been assigned a special importance. The Commander of the Faithful Imam' Ali (A) has said: "Self-consciousness is one of the most profitable assets of a person." -Gharar al-Hukm, p-768. And said: "Whoever succeeds in self -his affairs will be improved." -Gharar al-Hukm, p-628.

What is meant with self recognition is not the particulars of one's identify card rather it means –man’s realization of his true position within the created world; an understanding that he is not simply an earthly animal rather is a reflection of heavenly illumination from the Celestial Kingdom; is the Trustee and Vicegerent of God-Almighty upon earth. A celestial being who has been created conscious,

empowered and free, is capable of upward ascent towards the absolute perfection, and his

special creation has been assigned the responsibility of nourishment and perfection of the self. It is because of this realization that man feels a sense of greatness and perfection; discovers the sacredness and virtues within his inner existence and morals and ethics become valuable and meaningful for him. In that case he get relieved from the feelings of hopelessness, depressions, vainness, nonsense, aimless repetitions, and instead life becomes sacred, precious beautiful, and objective.

Esoteric Life

Man in this world has an outwardly life related to his body. He eats, drinks, sleeps, moves, and walks but at the same time also possesses a spiritual life in his inner essence. While he lives in this world, at the same time within his inner essence either journeys towards prosperity, perfection and enlightenment,
or moves towards adversity, cruelty and intense darkness; either journeys on the righteous path of humanity and ascends towards God, or deviates from the righteous path heading towards darkest valleys where he wanders in darkness becoming eventually lower than animals; either marches up on the steps of perfection towards enlightenment, joy, perfection, and God's Countenance or falls into intense darkness for eternal punishment.

Although, majority of people are ignorant of this reality but it does exist.

God-Almighty said in Holy Quran:

"They know only some appearance of the life of the World, and are needless of the Hereafter."
-the Holy Quran (30: 7)

But being knowledgeable or ignorant does not change the reality on the Day of Resurrection when the dark curtain of materialism are rolled up from the human eyes thus, enabling him to witness the reality and his own state of affairs.

The God-Almighty said in Holy Quran:

"(And unto the evil-doer it is said): Thou wast in needlessness of this. Now we have removed from thee thy covering and piercing is thy sight this day." -the Holy Quran (50:22)

Therefore, from the above quoted verses it may be inferred that affairs related to the Next World all along did exist within human inner essence right here in this world, but unfortunately man was ignorant to realize it. However, since in the Next World all the materialistic curtains of ignorance shall be removed from his sight, he will be forced to see these realities clearly over there. We may therefore, conclude from the above mentioned verses and traditions that the human-self earns things while living in this world, and these earning shall remain with him eventually determining his ultimate destiny in his eternal abode. Following are some examples:

God-Almighty said in the Holy Quran

"Every soul is a pledge for its own deeds." -the Holy Quran (74:38)

And said:

"Then every soul will be paid. in full what it hath earned; and they will not be wronged." -the Holy Quran (3:161)

And said:

"God will not take you to task for that which is unintentional in your oaths. But He will take you to task for that which your hearts have garnered. God is forgiving, clement." -the Holy Quran (2:225)

And said:

"God tasketh not a soul beyond its scope. For it (is only) that which it hath earned, and against it (only that which it hath deserved." –the Holy Quran (2:286)

And said:

"On the Day when every soul will find itself confronted With all that it hath done of good and all that it hath done of evil (every soul) will long there might be a mighty space of distance between it and that evil." -the Holy Quran (3:30)

And said:

"Whoso doth right, it is for his soul. and whoso doth wrong, it is against it. And afterward unto your Lord ye will be brought back. -the Holy Quran (45:15)

And said:

"And whoso doth good an atom's weight will see it then, and whoso doth evil an atom's weight will see it then." -the Holy Quran (99:7-8)

And said:

"And that man hath only that for which he maketh effort and that his effort will be seen." -the Holy Quran (53: 39-40)

And said:

"And whatever of Good ye send before (you) for your souls, ye will find it with God." -the Holy Quran (2:110)

And said:

"The day when wealth and sons avail not (any man). Save him who bringeth unto God a whole heart." -the Holy Quran (26: 88-89) The Holy Prophet (S) said .to one of his companions: "Oh Qais! You will have no other choice except to live with a companion in your grave. He is alive and you will be buried with him. If he is good and honorable, will make you honorable, and if he is low and mean, you will become low and mean as well. After that on that on the Day of

Resurrection you will be associated with him and will be reprimanded. Therefore, be careful and try to select a righteous companion for yourself; because if he is righteous -you will develop affection for him. If he is corrupt be assured that all the fear and punishment inflicted upon you will be through his existence. That companion is nothing but your actions and deeds in this life."

-Jameh al-Sadat, vol. 1, p-17.

A human being in this same world is continuously occupied in nourishing his self as well as accumulating the provisions of his life in the Next World. Through his belief and thoughts, habits and virtues, love and liking, interests and desires and by means of actions which affects his self -he gradually nourishes, trains, and builds himself.

His ultimate outcome is all related to the above mentioned factors, learning and righteous belief, ethics and good morals, love and association with God-Almighty, obedience and seeking God's Pleasure, and performance of righteous deeds in accordance with Divine Commands etc. are things which are responsible for the ascension of human Celestial Soul towards the stages of perfection, ultimately achieving the highest spiritual station of God's Nearness. A human by means of faith and performance of righteous deeds in this very world discovers a new life and purity which would be manifested in the Next World.

God-Almighty said in the Holy Quran:

"Whosoever doth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicker good life." -the Holy Quran (16: 97) Man in this world in addition of utilizing material blessings for his bodily pleasures could also utilize spiritual blessings for the growth, training and perfection of his soul and innerself, thus, building his Next World's life in such a manner that the desired result would be manifested in the Hereafter.

Imam al- Sadiq (A) said:

God-Almighty says to his servants:

"Oh my righteous servants! Utilize My worship's blessing in this world so that you could be benefited with them in the Next World as well." -Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-253.

The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (A) said:

"Continuation of invocation (dhikr) is the nourishment of human souls." -Gharar al-Hukm, p-764.

He also said:

"Don't forget invocation (dhikr) of God-Almighty because, it is the illumination of Hearts." -Gharar al-Hukm, p-479.

"Paradise and its blessings or hell and its punishments for a human being are decided in this

same world through his beliefs, morals and deeds, even though he might be ignorant of them; but in the next world when the materialistic curtains are rolled up, this reality will be manifested. Imam al-Sajjad (A) in a narration speaks as follows:

"Be aware! That whoever bears enmity with the prophets and saints; accepts religion other than God's religion; disregards Divine Obligations by following his own whims and passions; is indeed engulfed with eternal flames which consumes human bodies -the bodies who have given up their spirituality through domination of cruelty over their inner existence. Alas! They are like dead bodies who do not feel the heat of the fire. Had they been alive they would have felt the pain and torture of burning their bodies. Therefore, oh people of insight! Learn a lesson and be thankful to the Lord of the worlds who has bestowed upon you the blessing of His Guidance." -Qurrateh al-Ayoon, Faiz, p-466.

The God-Almighty said in the Holy Quran:

"Lo Those who devour the wealth of orphans wrongfully, they do but swallow fire into their bellies and they will be exposed to burning flame." -the Holy Quran (4:10)

A human being in this world either accumulates enlightenment and insight or cruelty and darkness for the Next World. If he remained blind and without enlightenment in this world tomorrow he will be raised up in the Next World with the same condition.

The Holy Quran said:

"Whoso is blind here will be blind in the Hereafter, and yet further from the road." -the Holy Quran (17:72)

The most eminent scholar Allameh Tabatabai (R.A.) had stated the following interesting story:

"Once upon a time there used to live a pious ascetic and saintly personality known as Sheikh Abud in Najaf Ashraf. He was a committed way farer upon the road of gnosticism, continuously worshipping and reciting invocation (dhikr). Sometimes he would visit the grave yard located in the Wadi-us-Salam, spending long hours walking, sitting, pondering, and looking carefully at the old and new graves. One day, while returning from such routine visits he was encountered by a group of curious people, who after offering salutations asked him:

'Sheikh Abud! What is new of Wadi-us-Salam?' 'There is nothing new'. Replied Sheikh Abud. "But the group insisted to hear some news from the Wadi-us-salam. Then the Sheikh Abud said:

"I encountered the most strange thing over there; in spite of careful looking through the new and old graves, I could not discover any traces of snakes, scorpions, and the food stuff consumed by them. I therefore, asked one of the grave: in narrations it has been described that the human beings inside the graves are tortured by the snakes, scorpions, and other noxious

creatures, but I do not see these creatures within these graves." "The grave replied to me: 'Yes! It is true that snakes and scorpions do not exist among us, instead, you are the one who bring them with you from the world for your own fortune."

The internal and spiritual life of a human being is an actual and real life; a human being in his essence travels a real path which either leads him towards prosperity and perfection or terminates into cruelty and total annihilation. For continuation of this action he receives help and strength from his beliefs, morals and deeds.

God-Almighty in the Holy Quran said:

"Whoso desireth power (should knows that) all power belongth to God. Unto Him good words ascend, and the pious deeds doth He exalt." -the Holy Quran (35:10)

The ultimate status of human self is the outcome of his efforts and endeavors which depends upon his beliefs, morals, characteristics, liking, and deeds; the final result of which, whether good or bad, will be declared in the Next World.

What to Be?

The scientific higher learning had confirmed that the human sprit consists of a physical occurrence and a spiritual eternal dimension. That is, the Celestial Spirit is the same earlier physical form, which after passing gradually through various stages of perfection has now reached to the level of human soul meaning potential human being.

This movement towards perfection never stops rather continues till the end of human life. At the beginning he is a celestial abstract superior than the matter, but at the same time he is not a full or complete abstract because, for his existence, he is related to a physical body.

The soul consists of two dimensional existence: The material dimension which is related to body and performs material acts, and because of this consideration the stages of movements towards perfection have been attached to it; the other dimension is an abstract superior than the matter capable of performing non-material acts. One side of his existence is physical and animal while the other side is human and celestial. While he is not more than a single existence, possesses animal passions and desires and accordingly performs animalistic acts, but at the same times also possesses human desires and virtues and performs human obligations.

It was because of this wonderful creation that God-Almighty in Holy Quran said:

"So blessed be God -the best of creators" -the Holy Quran (23:14)

This wonderful creation at the very beginning is not complete, rather nourishes himself gradually towards his ultimate perfection. Beliefs, thoughts, virtues, and desires derived, from his actions and deeds build his real identity, thus gradually completing his perfection. Virtues

and characteristics are not the sort of things which could be added to his existence from outside accidentally rather they are the real builders of his existence's identity from within. Here it is interesting to note that beliefs, thoughts, and characteristics not only exert influence upon human existence but, also are effective in his deciding what to be come? That is, righteous beliefs and thinking together with good morals and virtues as a result of righteous actions gradually ascend a human being towards the path of perfection ultimately his becoming a perfect human being and thus, attaining God's Nearness.

Similarly ignorance, false ideologies, immoral deeds, and hard heartedness as a result of evil deeds pull human soul towards weakness and isolation, and after gradually leading him towards various animalistic stages eventually throws him inside the deep valleys of intense darkness. Because of his firmness, influence of animalistic characteristics and accumulation of ignorances and cruelties he turns into an animal form in his esoteric essence.

Yes, his essence indeed turns into an animal thus, acquiring an animalistic personality. He no longer remains a human being but is an animal or even worst than an animal because, he is an animal who has acquired his animalism after passing through the superior stage of humanism. Although, outwardly he lives a human life but, in essence has turned into an animal without being aware of this internal change. The animalism of animals is not due to their special faces or features, rather it is because of their animalistic selves and absolute obedience to their animalistic instincts and desires without any limitations and considerations.

A wolf is regarded as a wolf not because of his apparent wolfy face but, it is because of his brutal nature and his absolute obedience to this instinct without any limitations that he is regarded as a wolf. Therefore, if some one is completely subdued by animal brutality in a manner that his senses of seeing and thinking become out of order, then such a person in essence turns into a real wolf- a wolf far brutal as compared to common wild wolfs. Because, now his faculties of wisdom and thinking are being employed and are at the service of his brutal animalistic characteristics.

It is because of this reason that there are situations, where human being are charged with brutal crimes for which the wild wolf could not be charged. Are such human being not wolves? Yes! They are indeed true wolves, even though they do not understand and the others regard them as humans.

But, on the Day of Resurrection, when the curtains shall be rolled up, their inner essence will be exposed. Obviously Paradise is not a place for wolves, because they can not become companions for saints and righteous servants of God. Such a wolf who has been demoted to lower animal status from the superior human status, deserves to be confined, punished, and

tortured inside the dark and horrible environment of Hell.

Therefore, a human being in this world is an undetermined existence who builds himself his future personality. Either he becomes human thus, surpassing in excellence even with the most intimate God's angels, or descends whereby his inner essence turns into an animal. This is something whose authencity have been proved by higher scientific learning as well as confirmed and certified by Divine Prophets. Also, the Holy Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams (A) of his Holy Progeny (Ahlul Bayt) have informed about that.

Holy Prophet (S) had said:

On the Day of Resurrection the people will reappear in faces that the faces of monkeys and pigs are far better than theirs." -Qurrath al-Ayoon, p-479.

The Commander of the Faithful Imam' Ali (A) about the corrupt scholar, has said "Although, his outward appearance is like a human being but his heart is like an animal heart. He does not recognize the path of guidance so that he could follow it, and does not know the path of deviation so that he could avoid it. Such a person is indeed a dead one living among the alive." -Nahjul Balagha, sermon 87.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) had said:

"The arrogant people on the day of Resurrection will be transformed into tiny ants to be trampled by the people till accounts of all the people are settled." -Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 7, p-201.

The God-Almighty in the Holy Quran said:

"And when the wild beasts are herded together." -the Holy Quran (81:5)

Some of the commentators of the Holy Quran have interpreted the phrase "wild animals" in the above verse for human beings who will reappear with animal faces on the Day of Resurrection, because, unlike human beings the animals are not required to be judged for their deeds, hence their appearance does not make any sense.

God-Almighty in Holy Quran said:

A day when the trumplet is blown and ye come in multitudes." -the Holy Quran (78:18)

According to some of the commentators the above verse has been interpreted that on the Day of Judgment, human beings will be separated from each other and will appear in different groups in accordance with their esoteric faces. There is an interesting narration from the Holy prophet (S) regarding the interpretation of the above verse:

Ma'z bin Jabal said: "I asked the Holy Prophet (S) about the interpretation of the above verse. He replied: 'Oh! Ma'z you had asked about a very important subject while shedding tears from his eyes the Holy Prophet (S) said: My ummah will reappear in ten different groups on the Day

of Judgment as follows:

"Some of them will reappear as monkeys while some of them will look like pigs; some of them will reappear while walking up side down,. some will reappear as blind and wandering,. some of them will reappear as deaf and dumb understanding absolutely nothing; some will reappear with chewing their tongues while blood and pus will be coming out of their mouths making the people around them uncomfortable; some of them will reappear with their hands and feet cut off; some will reappear as being hanged upon branches of fire; and while some of them will reappear with dress of molten lead pressed to their bodies.'

"Then he explained these ten categories as follows:

"Those who will reappear as monkeys are the tale bearers or spies;, those who will reappear as pigs are the ones who accepted bribes and had illegal income those who will be walking up side down are the ones who practiced usury, those who are blind are the judges and officers who oppressed the people, those who are dumb and deaf are the ones who were egotistic and ambitious;

those who will reappear with their hands and feet cut off are the ones who pained and troubled their neighbors; those who are hanged upon the branches of fire were the people who indulged in slandering and backbiting against the masses for the pleasure of kings and rulers; those whose odors is worst than dead bodies are the ones who indulged themselves in worldly desires and passions without paying Divine Share from their wealth, and those who are dressed with molten lead dress are the arrogant ones who took pride in themselves." -Tafsir Majma al-Bayan, vol. 10, p-423, Ruh al-Bayan, vol. 10, p-299 and Nur al-Thaqalain, vol. 5, p-493

In the light of above, the ethical and moral matters cannot be treated as minor and insignificant rather are the most important crucial and determinant matters which build the esoteric and spiritual life of a human being and even influence his "what to become"? Thus, moral education .not only teaches how to live, but also deals with "what to become" for human beings

Notes:

[1] Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A): The sixth Imam, Ja'far, known as al-Sadiq (A) was born in Medina on Monday, 17th Rabi-ul-awwal 83 A.H. The son of the fifth Imam, he lived in an increasingly favorable climate and was able to teach openly in Median. Large numbers of scholars gathered around him to learn, including such famous Sunni figures as Abu Hanifa, the founder of the one of the four Sunni schools of Law. Towards the end of Imam Ja'far's life severe restrictions were placed upon his activities, as a result of growing Shi'ite unrest. More

traditions are recorded from him than from all the other Imams together. He is so important for Twelve-Imam Shi'ite law that it is named the Jafri School after him. He is buried in the Baqi cemetery in Medina.

Ja'far's fame for religious learning was great, greater than that of his father or of any other Twelver Imam except for 'Ali bin Abu Talib (A) himself. perhaps the earliest historical reference presenting Ja'far as one of the most respected and highly esteemed personalities of his epoch, and as having profound knowledge and learning, is Ya'qubi's statement that it was customary for scholars who related anything from him to say: "The Learned One informed us".

Even the famous jurist of Medina, the Imam Malik b. Anas, is reported to have said, when quoting Ja'far's traditions: "The Thiqa (truthful) Ja'far b. Muhammad himself told me that. ..." Similar compliments for Ja'far are attributed to the Imam Abu Hanifa, who is also reported to have been his pupil. Al-Sadiq's (A) knowledge was great in religion and culture, he was fully informed in philosophy, he attained great piety in the world, and he abstained entirely from lusts. He lived in Medina long enough to greatly profit the sect that followed him, and to give his friends the advantage of the hidden sciences. He died at the age of 65, in Medina on Monday, 25th Shawwal 148 H.; poisoned by al-Mansur ad-Dawaniqi, the Abbasid Caliph.

[2] "The Commander of the Faithful' Ali ibn Abu Talib (A): Was the first perfect exemplar of the teachings of the Most Noble Messenger (S) 'Ali was raised by him from early childhood and followed him like a shadow until the very end of the latter's life. He was like a moth before the prophetic flame; the final moment when he was separated from the Most Noble Messenger (S) was when he embraced his corpse and laid it to rest. 'Ali (A) was the first person after the Most Noble Messenger (S) to approach spiritual realities in the manner of philosophical reflection, that is, by free exercise of reason.

He used many technical terms and laid out and organized the rules of Arabic grammar in order to protect the Holy Quran from copyist's errors. The exact scholarship, spiritual culture, and consideration of ethical, social, political, and even mathematical problems shown in' Ali's (A) discourses, letters, and other documents that have reached us are astonishing.

The wealth of these documents makes ' Ali (A) the best known individual among Muslims to have a full realization of the sublime goals of the Holy Quran and the critical and practical concepts of Islam as they should be realized. They testify to the soundness of the Prophetic saying, ‘I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate'. Furthermore, he combined this knowledge with action. In short, ' Ali's outstanding character is beyond description, and his virtues are innumerable. Never in history has someone's character drawn the attention of the world's scholars and thinkers to such an extent.

-R. Compbell, Allameh Sayyed Mohammad Hosayn Tabatabai, Islamic teachings pp. 123-127.

[3] The Fifth Imam, Muhammad, known as al-Baqir (57/675-114/732) The son of the fourth Imam, he was present at Karbala at a young age. Because of changing political and religious conditions, among them the general revulsion following the events at Karbala, many people came to Medina to learn the religious and spiritual sciences from him. He trained numerous well-known men of religion, and mainly for this reason is the first Imam after' Ali from whom large numbers of traditions are recorded. He buried in the Baqi' cemetery in Medina.

[4] Imam al-Sajjad (A): The son of Imam al-Husayn by the daughter of Yazdigird the last Sassanid king of Iran was born in Medina on Saturday, 15th Jamadi al-Ola 36 A.H. He participated in Imam al Husayn's uprising and accompanied his father to Karbala being a tragic witness to the tragic event. After his father's martyrdom he was made captive and taken from Karbala to Kufa and from Kufa to Damascus. His speeches and protests on necessary occasions made manifest the worthiness and glory of Ahlal Bayt (A), the cruel injustice suffered by his father, and the enormities perpetuated by the Yazid's Ummayad regime. Imam al-Shafi considered Imam' Ali ibn al-Husayn (A) as the most supreme jurist of all the people of Medina. His book. Al-Shaifah Al-Sajjadiyyah" represents and stands out as a profound social work of the time and a reflection of a supreme endeavor to meet the exigencies of spiritual ordeals facing the society at the time of Imam. He died at the age of 58 in Medina; poisoned by al-Walid ibn Abdul Malik ibn Marwan on 25th Muharram 95 A.H., and is buried in Jannatu'l Baqi Cemetery in Medina [Tr].

[5] The Commander of the faithful Imam' Ali (A) has said:

"This world is not a place of permanent settlement, it is passage, a road on which you are passing. There are two kinds of people here; those who have sold their souls for eternal damnation, the other type are those who have purchased their souls and freed them from damnation." -Nahjul-Balagha, S.M. A Jafri p-543 [Tr].