

Importance of Good Advice

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Look before You Leap

A Muslim once insisted upon receiving a special piece of advice from the Holy Prophet (s). He (s) replied, 'Do you pledge to act upon it if I do?'

'Certainly! Ya Rasool Allah.'

'Are you sure you will act on it?'

'Absolutely! Messenger of God.'

'Do you promise to act on it?'

'I promise, Ya Rasool Allah.'

After repeating the question three times intentionally to make him realise the significance of the advice, the Holy Prophet (s) said: 'Seriously evaluate the results of your action before performing it. If its end is good, perform it; if it can lead to deviation and ruin, abstain from it

Self Esteem

Mufazzal bin Qais ran into financial problems, debts and consequent stress. He came to Imam Jafar al-Sadiq ('a) and shared his deplorable circumstances with him. 'I am in great debt and can not figure out how to raise money to cover the daily expenses of my family. I cannot help myself in any way and have asked almost everyone for a loan, but now, when people see me coming they close their doors in my face.' His condition was pathetic.

'Please pray that I find some means of earning a living,' he said. 'I came to request you to pray to Almighty Allah to put an end to my misfortunes and difficulties.'

The Imam ('a) called a maidservant and asked her to bring the pouch containing money sent by Mansoor. The maidservant complied with his wishes and brought the pouch.

The Imam ('a) gave it to Mufazzal and said, 'Take this. It contains 400 dinars. They will support you for some days.'

Mufazzal, embarrassed but grateful, said, 'I did not mean to ask you for money. I only came to ask you to pray for me.'

The Imam ('a) said, 'I will pray for you. However, I'd like to add a word of advice. Never advertise your difficulties and problems. This will inform people that you are a failure, an unsuccessful person. They will treat you with such contempt that it will destroy your self

.esteem and ruin your personality

Astrology

Imam Ali ('a) was leading his army towards the battle field of Nehrwan, when a companion stopped him. He pointed towards the stranger accompanying him, and said, 'Ya Ameer ul Momineen! This man is an astrologer and wishes to say something to you.'

The astrologer opined, 'Ya Ameer ul Momineen! Do not proceed at this hour towards the battlefield, because the stars foretell that whoever travels at this hour will meet with failure and great loss. However, if you travel at the auspicious moment you will meet with splendid victory.'

Imam Ali ('a) looked at him and asked, 'Can you foretell at what time good will befall you and at what time evil?'

'Yes I can.'

'You lie. Even the Holy Prophet (s) did not claim to know the hidden realities. How can you? A person who has faith in your knowledge does not need God.'

He then addressed his army thus: 'Beware of the trying to foretell the future or that which is concealed from you. This art is like witchcraft; witchcraft is like idolatry; idol worship will be punished with hell.' He then raised his head and looked at the heavens above, offered a prayer of total reliance on Allah and, looking at the astrologer, said, 'I will intentionally defy your prophecy and proceed at once.'

The battle of Nehrwan was won with great ease and success, as compared to the other battles fought in the way of Allah

An Astrologer's Plight

Abdul Maalik ibn e 'Ain, the brother of Zarara ibn e 'Ain, believed in the influence of stars on man's life. Despite the confirmed tradition against it, he collected many books on astrology and was firmly rooted in the subject. He consulted the books whenever he intended to do anything or faced taking a decision. He believed that the stars controlled his destiny and all success or failure depended on their position in the skies.

Gradually, he became addicted to following the prophecy adduced from his calculations, so much so, that he lost his power of decision altogether. He became so superstitious that he dared not do anything without taking guidance from the stars and their positions.

Soon, he realized that astrology had made him worthless and increased his superstitiousness manifold. He felt that if he continued to consider days and moments as good and bad, lucky

and unlucky, his whole life would become chaotic. On the other hand, he did not have the willpower to deny and defy their influence. He envied those people who courageously took decisions in their daily life and left the consequences to the Almighty, having full faith in His Justice and Mercy.

One day, he went to Imam Jafar e Sadiq ('a) and relating his predicament, said, 'I feel that astrology has chained my hands and feet. I just cannot give it up.'

The Imam ('a) looked at him shocked, 'You mean to say you believe in all this and act accordingly?'

'Yes, Ya ibn e Rasool Allah.'

'I hereby command you to go home and burn all those books at once.'

The Imam's ('a) disgust for his act had a strange effect on him. He immediately felt stronger, .went home and torched all the books. After doing that, he sat down, relieved and released

The Greater Duty

An Ansar of Medina came to the Holy Prophet (s) looking perturbed. He voiced his bewilderment thus: 'Ya Rasool Allah (s), if there is a funeral ready for burial and a lecture is being delivered on teaching a useful skill simultaneously, and I can attend only one, which of the two has a greater right on my attendance?'

'If there are people to bury the dead, you must attend the lecture that increases your knowledge, because the reward of one such lecture is better than attending 1000 funerals, visiting 1000 patients, 1000 nights of prayer, 1000 days of fasting, 1000 dirhams given in charity, 1000 non-obligatory Hajj, and 1000 non-obligatory jihad.

There is a world of difference between all the above and one session spent in a scholar's company. Do you not know that only knowledge leads you to worship God, and only knowledge teaches you how to worship God? The good of this world and the next is aligned with '.knowledge, just as the evil in this world and the next is aligned with ignorance

Only Allah Knows

Usman ibn e Maz'oon was an immigrant, Muhajir, from Mecca. He was living in the house of a Medinite, Ansar. He was treated hospitably as a member of the family, as that was the basic principle of the fraternal relations created by the Holy Prophet (s) on immigration.

He fell ill. Umme 'Ala Ansari, the woman of the house, was a pious Muslim. She nursed Usman with care, but his condition worsened and he died.

When the funeral was ready, the Holy Prophet (s) arrived and Umme 'Ala pointed towards Usman's funeral and said, 'O Usman, may Allah's blessings descend upon you. I testify that Allah has granted you entrance into the realm of His blessings.'

When the Holy Prophet (s) heard the statement, he asked her, 'How did you know that he had entered the realm of Allah's blessings?'

'I just said it. Obviously, I don't know.'

'Usman ibn e Maz'oon has entered that realm where all veils are lifted from ones eyes. I also wish him well, but I'd like to add, that even though I am a Prophet, I never express such an opinion about myself or anyone of you.'

Umme 'Ala never again passed such remarks on anyone's funeral. She always said, 'Only Allah knows,' when asked for her opinion.

Some time after Usman's death she dreamt that a stream was flowing for him. She related the dream to the Holy Prophet (s) who said, 'His actions flow like a stream

The Nightmare

The man woke up with a start. He was terrified by the nightmare. Various horrible interpretations increased his terror. He got up in the morning and went to see Imam Jafar al-Sadiq ('a) for a clearer understanding of the dream.

'I have had a nightmare,' he said. I dreamt of a man made of wood riding a wooden horse, with a sword in his hand, which he waved with great might. The dream is driving me crazy. Kindly interpret it, so that I can get some peace of mind.'

'You are envious of the wealth of some person and keep thinking of ways and means to get your hands on it by hook or by crook. Fear God and give up your bad intentions.' The Imam ('a) warned him.

The man was shocked by the truth of the interpretation. 'You are surely one who knows. There is no doubt that you have been granted knowledge by the City of knowledge. I must admit that I have been nurturing such a desire in my heart for some time now. My neighbor owns a huge estate. He is in dire need of money and wishes to sell his lands. Presently, he doesn't have any offer besides mine. I was envisaging buying his valuable assets for much less than they are worth.'

Mistaken Boost of Ego

Ahmad ibn e Muhammad ibn e Abi Nasr Bizanti was one of the eminent religious scholars of

his time. He engaged in discussion through correspondence with Imam Reza ('a) and received such logically acceptable answers to all his questions that he was convinced of his leadership and Imamate.

One day, he requested the Imam ('a) in writing, 'No traveling restrictions have been placed on me by the government. I sincerely wish to come and visit you and further benefit from your knowledge.'

Some days later, the Imam ('a) sent his personal carriage and invited him over as his guest. Their academic discussion continued until late at night. Bizanti questioned and the Imam ('a) responded as expected. Bizanti felt elated by the thought that he had been invited as a personal guest by the Imam ('a) and was blessed with a one-to-one highly enlightening conversation with him.

Soon it was time to sleep. The Imam ('a) ordered his serving man to settle Bizanti on his personal bed.

Such affectionate treatment had a strange effect on Bizanti. He thought, 'There is no one more blessed than me today in the whole world. The Imam ('a) sent his personal carriage for me, has given me sole attention and answered my questions for hours, and now when its time to rest, has offered me his own bed. Who can be more blessed than me in this world?'

Lost in his thoughts, Bizanti was shocked into reality when he heard the Imam ('a) call him by his own name. 'Ahmed! Don't mistakenly consider yourself better or more blessed than other Muslims because of my courteous treatment. My grandfather, Imam Ali ('a) once went to visit his close friend Sasaa ibn e Suhaan when he was ill.

He sat by his bedside and calmed him by placing his hand on his head and patting it for some time. However, before departing, he addressed his friend and said, 'Don't imagine yourself to be better than others because of this, because it does not signify your nobility or status. I have only performed what was my duty. My courteous behavior should not make any individual 'mistakenly take pride in it

Saving A Soul

It was during the Abbasid ruler, Mansoor, that the Muslims were granted their rights from the Bait ul Maal or State Treasury. The doors were opened and the needy were taking their share and moving off. One Muslim, named Suqrani, stood for a long time but could not get his share. One of his ancestors had been freed from slavery by the Holy Prophet (s) himself, and came to be known as the 'One liberated by the Prophet(s)'. Suqrani took great pride in his ancestry and associated himself with the Household of the Holy Prophet (s).

He looked around to see if he recognized somebody who could help him get his share. Suddenly, he saw Imam Jafar al-Sadiq ('a). He hurried towards him and explained his reason for being there. The Imam ('a) solved his problem. Before leaving, he ('a) addressed him, saying, 'A good deed is a good deed, no matter who performs it. Since you associate yourself with the Household of the Holy Prophet (s), a good deed will further cement that association. A bad deed is a bad deed, no matter who performs it. Since you associate yourself with the Household of The Holy Prophet (s), your bad deed will be magnified and look worse.'

Suqrani stopped, dumbfounded. He was certain that the Imam ('a) had referred to his bad habit of drinking alcohol. Despite knowing about it, he ('a) had not refused helping him, but done him a favour, and then affectionately jolted his conscience and saved him from a bad prohibited .act

For You and Me

On the 20th of Ramadan 40 AH, Imam Ali ('a) dictated this document to his son, Imam Hasan ('a).

In the Name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful Ali ibn e Talib, on his deathbed, declares the following as his will: Ali testifies to the Oneness of Allah Almighty (SWT) and declares that Muhammad (S) is His Prophet. Allah (SWT) sent him on earth to make His faith supersede all other faiths and beliefs prevalent on earth. Certainly, my worship and devotion, my life and death, are from Allah, and for Allah alone. There is no god but Allah, and He has no partner. This is my faith and belief and I am among those who submit to His Will.

Hasan, I bequeath unto you, all my sons, and members of my family, the following deeds:

- 1) Never give up piety and fear of God, and try hard to remain steadfast in the faith of Allah, until your very last breath.
- 2) Firmly grasp the cord of Allah. Remain united with amity, and avoid discord. The Holy Prophet (s) said, "Unity among people on the basis of peace, accord, and harmony is better than constantly praying and fasting. Discord and unrest destroy faith."
- 3) Do not neglect your women and relatives. Be sympathetic towards them, because sympathy will help man account for his deeds on the Day of Judgment.
- 4) Beware! Beware! Do not ever be neglectful of orphans. I warn you again, never leave an orphan hungry and unprotected.
- 5) For the sake of Allah, be mindful of your neighbors and fulfill your duties towards them. The

- Holy Prophet (s) emphasized the rights of neighbors so emphatically that we felt he wished to include them in our inheritance.
- 6) Remember! Remember! Attend to your obligatory prayers with concentration, because Prayer is a pillar of faith.
 - 7) Remember! Remember! Carefully obey the commands revealed in the Holy Quran. Do not let others supersede you in obeying them.
 - 8) Remember! Remember! Maintain the K'aaba as your focus of attention. Ensure the performance of Hajj. Let it not lose its importance, for if you do, other people will wipe you out without giving you a moment's respite.
 - 9) Do not ever consider your life and property more valuable than fighting in the way of Allah (SWT).
 - 10) Remember! Remember! Do not neglect paying the poor tax (zak'aat), for it saves the giver from the wrath of God.
 - 11) Never neglect the household of the Holy Prophet (s). Protect them from becoming victims of injustice and oppression.
 - 12) Be attentive towards the companions and friends of the Holy Prophet (s). He himself (s) has requested courteous and affectionate behavior towards them.
 - 13) Beware of indifference towards the poor and needy. Make them a constant part of your lives.
 - 14) Never be careless regarding slaves. The Holy Prophet's (s) last request was for them.
 - 15) Strive to perform an act that pleases Allah (SWT), without bothering about public opinion.
 - 16) Urging the lawful and obligatory, and preventing forbidden acts must be your habitual routine. If you give this up, bad intentioned and unjust rulers will instate themselves over you and oppress you severely. Then all the prayers of the pious will prove to be useless.
 - 17) Always be courteous towards others, for the Holy Quran has made it obligatory upon you.
 - 18) It is your responsibility to encourage and maintain friendly relations between yourselves. Be good to each other. Avoid creating differences, or isolating, separating, alienating, and distancing yourself from each other.
 - 19) Unite in the performance of good deeds. Do not involve yourself in deeds that are sinful, and cause unpleasantness and hatred leading to enmity.
 - 20) Remember, God's punishment is severe, so fear it.
- May God keep you safe in His protection, and grant the Holy Prophet's (s) followers the capacity and will to protect your honour and that of their Holy Prophet (s). I give you all in the .protection of Almighty Allah (SWT). Peace be upon you all