We Must Always Go To the Source of the Problem

<"xml encoding="UTF-8?>

Imam 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Hadi (as) was a great Imam who lived under some of the hardest conditions and opposition (to his leadership). It was through the use of the military (of the ruling class of that time), that the Imam was forcefully separated from his Shia (followers); and it is because of this, that there are not many traditions narrated from this Imam.

One of the crimes which the Bani Umayyah and the Bani 'Abbas perpetrated on the nation was the cutting off of all relations and ties between the people and the A`immah of the Ahlul Bait (as). If this cutting off of contact had not been done, then today we would have had countless books at our disposal containing the words of these great personalities.

In the time period between the leadership of Imam Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Baqir (as) and Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as), we see what kind of valuable treasures were left behind for their followers. However it is after this time, meaning during the time of Imam Musa b. Ja'far al-Kazim (as) in which the limits and restrictions were imposed (on the A`immah (as)).

In any case, there are some short sayings available from Imam 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Hadi (as) even though the words which have reached us from this personality are quite few in number. Nevertheless, we will explain one of the short sayings of this Imam.

خَيْرٌ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ فَاعِلُهُ وَ أَجْمَلَ مِنَ الْجَمِيلِ قَائِلُهُ وَ أَرْجَحَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ حَامِلُهُ وَ شَرٌّ مِنَ الشَّرِّ جَالِبُهُ وَ أَحْوَلَ مِنَ الْحَوْلِ رَاكِبُهُ

Even better than a good act, is the person who performs the good act; and more attractive" than beautiful (words) is the person who speaks beautiful words; and what is more nobler that knowledge is that person who possess knowledge; and what is even worse than wickedness is the person who commits evil; and what is more of an obstruction than the obstruction (itself) is the person that obstructs (others)."[1]

In these five statements, the Imam has referred to some very important points. What is the meaning of these sentences of which, three of them refer to something good, while the other two are in reference to something bad? In reality, the Imam is pointing to one fundamental principle, which is that we must always go in search of the roots and causes (of anything).

If we wish to spread goodness and we want the proliferation of good deeds, then we must go to its source. If we want to prevent bad deeds from taking form, then we must go the root and

source of that which is bad. What is more important than good and bad is the person who performs that action.

An important issue that has always been within the society and still exists is that when a group of people decide to fight against corruption, a majority of people look at the effects (of the actual corruption), however they do not go after the causes (that brought that effect into being) and therefore they are not successful. They remove one bad thing however something else takes it place. They proceed to remove the second thing, however, a third thing takes it place – why is this??

This happens because one does not go after the root of a problem and the causes for it coming into existence. Instead, one goes straight to the effect or outcome.

This can be understood in the light of a simple example. Some people may have eruptions (pimples, warts, etc…) on their face, or they may have wounds and abrasions on their body and thus they rush to purchase various types of ointments to remove these various things. However there are other people who take the time to investigate and check if the skin which is nourished (with vitamins and minerals) is facing some difficulty in the way it works and because of these difficulties, the effects which can be seen on the skin and the body of the person are made apparent.

As is commonly held, the skin of the body is like a plain sheet or surface that reflects what a person does (what he eats, drinks, applies to his body, etc…). Even though putting ointment on the injury or abrasion may suffice temporarily, however it will not remove the actual cause (of the problem) and thus, once again these things may return on another part of the body.

It is a good thing to use these ointments or creams to have temporary relief from what is troubling the person; however in the mean time, one must go in search of a permanent solution and establish the root of the problem.

Right now, there are two major problems which are evident in our society and they are getting worse day by day.

The first problem is in relation to the use of drugs, and the second problem is the open and unrestricted sexual activities taking place.

The age of people who are turning to cigarettes has dropped and even children of a young age are now becoming polluted with this disease (of smoking). According to one of the sources of news, one of the cities near to us (near to Qum), there are over 150 women who are addicted to drugs – even though the experts say that women are typically less likely to become addicted to drugs. However as can be seen, this spiritual sickness of drugs is now common amongst women, children, youth and the young adults.

One way to cure this danger of drug abuse is to arrest all of those who are addicted to drugs, and all those who are dealing in this are executed. This is one way which we can follow. However, this direction will not solve the fundamental problem. Thus, we must see what the root of the addiction to drugs is amongst within each society.

Is it because people have nothing else to do? Is it because they are not religious? Is it because they have not been taught the proper culture, or is it the work and actions of the hidden hand of foreigners who state that if the youth are hooked on drugs, then an important source for us to influence this country will be taken care of??

We will never forget the event in history when the British wanted to take over China so much so that they tried to introduce opium into their culture, however the Chinese understood this and stood up in opposition to the British. The British too, by resorting to their military prowess, brought opium into China and in the books of history this event was recorded as the Opium War.[2]

By bringing opium into China, they were able to pollute the people, and once the younger generation was polluted with this addiction, the Chinese people then had no source of opposition to their enemies (the British). From the time the British launched the War of Opium, they were able to take benefit from another problem that the Chinese then had to face – that of controlling the people – more specifically, the youth.

When the Americans were dominating over Afghanistan, it was thought that in the face of the slogans that were being raised, that the roots and causes of tobacco and drugs would be destroyed completely. However it has been stated in the media that the planting and cultivating of opium actually increased and was even greater than before – even more so than the American led war on Afghanistan!

The Americans declare the slogan of human rights and claim that they are fighting against corruption and drug addiction, however they are actually lying! They are in reality, only going after what benefits themselves and what is in their own interests, even if this means that they must destroy everyone else in the world.

Therefore, we must go after the source of the problem. These youth must be taught properly and one important factor is religion. Without doubt, a religious young man or woman will never become addicted to these things. However, once he or she has left the religion, then they will definitely fall into addiction.

Another issue is that of being idle and having nothing else to do. Once a person becomes idle and lazy, then he sees that there is good money to be made from this job (of buying and selling drugs) and thus, he will go after this kind of work. Thus, those people who are idle and lazy will

end up being corrupted and (spiritually) polluted.

If we do not sit and think about the plans of our enemy, then how are we going to be able to fight against them?

Therefore, one must go after the real causes of the problems and it is not sufficient to simply rely on the effects of the problems and go after these.

In order to truly understand the causes, we must organize meetings and seminars and arrange programs so that the thinkers of the society can sit down and chart out a course of action for the future of the community.

For simple issues and concerns that come up, we see how many conferences and seminars are held – however for such an important task like this one – there are none?!

The second problem which is spreading right now is in relation to the open and unrestricted sexual activities taking place which are corrupting the youth.

Is it simply enough to place a group of volunteers and army personnel on the street corner and use them to stop the prohibited meeting of young men and women and expect the issue to be resolved, or must we tackle this problem from another angle?

We must see what the roots of this problem are, and one of them is that fewer marriages are taking place in the society. It has gotten harder and harder for people to get married such as the following reasons:

1. Expectations (on both sides) have become too high;
2. The wedding formalities have become too numerous;
3. The Mahr (dowry) has become too high;
4. The material cost of getting married is too great.

In addition to these, there is also the spread and proliferation of corruption which are causing the youth to become sexually excited (at younger ages). There are some youth who say that with the present situation and conditions, it is very difficult to control their sexual desires.

We would say to them that, “If you wish to watch those bad movies with open eyes, or if you wish to watch those particular CDs and read those magazines and then come and say that it is difficult to control yourself, then first off, you yourself must put an end to these things which are sexually arousing you.”

When these things which cause a person to become sexually excited are easily available – for example, one CD can contain a whole world full of corruption or the InterNet which is full of these things that have made the entire world unsafe from the point of view of moral ethics and other issues – then how is it possible for the youth to control themselves?

Sometimes, wedding parties are arranged which contain things which cause sexual excitement

and are full of filth, which go directly against the teachings of the religion. Hundreds of youth become spiritually polluted in one such wedding program in which men and women come together and mix with one another and show themselves off - not to mention the dancing and music. At the same gathering, there are groups of young boys and girls who are single and present in such a corrupt gathering and thus, they too become misguided.

However the youth themselves wish to take part in such a gathering and then at the same time cry out that they are not able to control their sexual desires!

Thus, the factors which lead one to become sexually excited must be removed, and the factors which can lead to early marriages must be put into place.

Thus, we must go back to the root of the problem, whereas in most these issues, we are simply going to the effects and outcomes of them.

However, who is there that will even bother to listen to and hear these words? Even more than !?this, who is there that is willing and ready to speak these words to the people

Notes:

[1] Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 75, pg. 370

[2] Despite strict government regulations, foreign trade in China expanded during the late 18th and early 19th century. As trade grew, the West found themselves having a large and rising trade deficit with China. They were increasingly anxious to balance their trade. Yet the Chinese, having a self-sufficient economy, showed little interest in Western products. Finally, in 1820, the West found a product which China did not have, and this was opium. Between 1829 and 1855, opium smuggling developed rapidly along China's South Coast. In 1820, 9,708 chests of opium were smuggled in per year. 15 years later, the smuggled opium rose to 35,445 chests, a growth of 400%.

In the 1830's, opium had became a vice in China and virtually all men under 40 smoked it. The entire army was addicted. It affected all classes of people, from the rich merchants to the Taoists. The total number of addicts in China in the 1830's was as high as 12 million. Due to the smuggle of opium, the trade deficit Western countries had quickly turned into a trade surplus. China could not export enough tea and silk to balance the trade. Instead the difference in trade was made up by the export of Chinese silver, which was highly valued for its fine qualities. In the 1835-1836 fiscal year alone, China exported 4.5 million Spanish dollars worth of silver. In 1839, the Chinese opium smokers spent 100 million taels, while the government's entire annual revenue was only 40 million taels. The drain of silver greatly weakened the Chinese government. One government official wrote, “If we continue to allow this trade to

flourish, in a few dozen years, we will find ourselves without any soldiers to resist the enemy, and no money to equip an army."

Faced with this problem, the Chinese government opened a debate among the Manchus and senior officials. The debate lasted for two years and in the end a minority group which favoured an uncompromising stand prevailed. In 1839, the emperor issued 39 articles which imposed extremely severe punishments, including death, for smoking and trading opium. Special Commissioner Lin Ze-xu was sent to Canton to ensure the rules were carried out. Lin, while in Canton, made 1,600 arrests and confiscated 11,000 pounds of opium in two months. In June, Lin forced foreign merchants to hand over 20,000 chests of opium. He burned the opium in a public demonstration and scattered the ashes across the sea. When Lin gave the order that Canton should be completely closed to foreign trade, the British opened hostilities and started the Opium War.

China, with its backward army, was overwhelmed and backed down. Commissioner Lin was recalled in disgrace and sent to exile in the Northwest. The first of the unequal treaties, the Treaty of Nanjing was signed. The Opium War, which lasted from 1840 to 1842, ended with China losing in shame.