

Four Islamic Commandments and the Transient Life of this World

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It has been narrated from Abi Ayyub al-Ansari who said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say: "Cover yourselves with the clothing of obedience (to Allah) and cover (your heart) by going against the desires of your soul. Make your next life by yourselves (through your actions) and make your strivings (in this world) be for your perpetual and everlasting home (meaning the next world).

Know that surely very soon you shall leave this world and you will go back towards Allah; so realize that on that day, nothing will profit you except for the righteous actions that you send forth for yourselves and the good deeds which you save for your own souls. Certainly you are in need of that which you send forth for yourselves and for all the deeds you perform, you will be rewarded and punished accordingly."

In this tradition, we will start with four Islamic commandments and then will work into a discussion concerning the transient aspect of the life of this world. These four Islamic commandments are:

- 1) The things which make a person more attractive is his obedience to Allah (SwT).
- 2) We must clothe ourselves with the clothing of obedience.
- 3) We must build and decorate the next life by



- ourselves.
- 4) Our struggles and endeavors (in this life) must be directed to our original (and permanent) abode.

In this tradition, there is a sentence which we must pay careful attention to. We are told that obedience (to Allah (SwT)) is a beautiful garment for the person who wishes to make his countenance beautiful. Thus, the covering which Allah (SwT) has commanded us to adorn ourselves with is the clothing of obedience.

The society in which the laws and regulations of Allah (SwT) are put into practice is a good society and that society which lacks Allah (SwT) is one in which whatever angle and aspect we

look at them from, we see (spiritual) sicknesses and immorality. If there was no concept of a next life involved (for those who do not believe in Allah (SwT)) - which definitely exists for some people - then even for the life of this world, mankind should still be compelled to follow the orders of Allah (SwT), since it is by following the commandments set by Him that give a person character and elevate his status. Just imagine a person whose tongue, eyes and all of his body parts are free and not under any sort of control, such that they permit him to perform any wrong act. Compare such a corrupt person with one whose tongue, eyes, heart and entire presence are spiritually aware (of Allah (SwT)) and the Last Day. Naturally, you would develop a stronger attraction to the person who is spiritually cleansed and an aversion to the first sort of person. The first person has removed the covering of obedience of Allah (SwT) from his own heart and has turned into a Fasiq or an open sinner.

:or Fisq comes in the meaning of "فسق" The word

خُرُوجُ النَّبَاتِ عَنِ التَّمَرَةِ

This means that the seed (of a date) has been taken out from the date and the seed or pit is no longer clothed or covered with the actual edible part of the date. Similar is a person who is a Fasiq as the kernel of his existence has been removed from him and all that remains is his physical shell.

However it is a spiritually cleansed person who obeys the commandments of Allah (SwT) and thus covers himself with the obedience of Allah (SwT).

As for the words of the Prophet (S) in regards to the transient life of this material world, in many traditions we see that the human being has been compared to a traveller in which this world is one of the momentary or temporary sojourns of a person, whereas his final objective is the next life.

This traveller is a person who is not in control of his trip and thus, we see that he was brought to this location, and in the end he will be taken away from this place (against his will). At a resting place, the traveller would naturally prepare and gather the things that he would require in order to continue his journey.

The trips and journeys that people took in previous times and those which are undertaken today differ drastically from one another. In the past when people wanted to travel from one city to another, they would take into consideration the distance between the two points and divide this stretch of land over the amount of distance which they had the ability to cover per day and along the way, would setup a camp to rest.

For example, a hundred kilometer trip would be referred to as a 'three-stage' trip meaning that

a person would start his trip by leaving in the morning and whatever place he reached to in the evening would be taken as a resting place and they would rest and sleep (and this would be the first stage of their trip). Obviously, even stopping to rest and sleep at night was also for some purpose such as:

1. Rest.[2]

2. Protection from the dangers of thieves and wild animals.

3. On these long journeys, there were also people who used to wander around the paths with water (for the travellers to make use of). Those who were travelling and needed water or help with preparing their animals for the next leg of the journey would be provided this assistance by these people. The travelers who reached such a resting spot during the period of their trip never considered that a place as their permanent home.

Without doubt, if our outlook for this world was like these travellers such that it is not our permanent abode and that eventually we must return back to our original home, then our state of affairs would definitely be different than they are right now and we would definitely go through a complete spiritual change.

:Our true life is reserved for 'that' place and in the Noble Qur'an we read that

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

And the life of this world[3] is nothing more than sport and play and surely the abode of the“ next life - that is the (true meaning) of life - if only they had any intelligence.”[4]

If we truly had this vision in ourselves we would not bother fighting for things like a piece of land or status, or other trivial things.

The resting places that existed in the olden days on the roads differ from the life of this world since the travellers knew that when they reached such a house or locality at night time, they would stay there until the morning and then once the sun was up, they would proceed on their journey. However no one can guarantee us that we will be alive in this world until the morning time until the afternoon?

That which has been explained in the tradition is that there is nothing in this material world that will be of any use or benefit for a person except for two things: the righteous actions which one sends forth for oneself; and the reward for the good deeds which a person does for his own good while in this world.

It is possible that the difference between these two items lies in the fact that righteous actions are the property of the person himself while the rewards given are actually a blessing from

Allah (SwT). By this we mean that deeds should be performed which will result in the blessings and grace of Allah (SwT) being showered upon us even if we did not possess any righteous deeds (in our book of actions). However it should be such that due to the good intentions that we have, we will receive the reward of Allah (SwT) or such that others will perform action and send the reward for us.

In any event, the greatest calamity for humanity is that in this world, we are not able to comprehend the realities!

How beautiful are the words of the Commander of the Faithful,'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) where he :said

رَجِمَ اللَّهُ امْرَأً عَلِمَ مِنْ أَيْنَ وَ فِي أَيْنَ وَ إِلَى أَيْنَ

May the mercy of Allah be upon that person who truly knows where he has come from, where“ he is (at present) and where he is going.”

Without doubt, our entire existence in this world can be summed up in these three short statements: where we have come from, where we are and where we are going. This means that any person who truly knows and understands these three points will be enraptured within the mercy of Allah (SwT).

In relation to this, there is a well known tradition from the Commander of the Faithful,'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) in which he stood was standing behind the door to the city of Kufah ('Iraq) and :started to speak to the dead people and he said to them

أَمَّا لَوْ أُذِنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْكَلَامِ لَأَخْبَرُوكُمْ أَنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى

If these people (who are deceased) were given the permission to speak, then surely they“ would tell each and every one of you that without doubt, the best provision (to send forth) is Allah consciousness (Taqwa).”[5]

A person must continuously repeat this statement to oneself such that one truly understands it and is made aware of its deeper meaning!

Notes:

[1] Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, pg. 182

: [2] It has been mentioned in a Farsi Poem that

من به خود نامدم اینجا که به خود باز روم آن که آورد مرا باز بَرَد در وطنم

I did not bring myself here such that I can leave on my own, He who brought me here will also“
take me back to my (original) home.”

which has been repeated many “حياة الدنيا” [3] Another term that is used in the Noble Qur’an is
times in different Surahs of the Qur’an. This term points to the contemptibility of this world's
which is the perpetual and everlasting next life which “حياة الآخرة” life as compared to the term
will never come to an end.

whose original meaning is “دنو” comes from the root letters of “دنيا” As we know, the word
are “أدنى” and “دنيا” being close in relation to place, time, status or rank. Thus, the words
sometimes used for very small creatures who are close at reach and not for large creatures.
Sometimes, this word is used in praiseworthy areas and other times, this word is used in
reference to a vile issue, thus in opposite of something which is good. It has also been used for
something which is far away, contrary to something that is close at hand. Since the life of this
world is referred to as something small, no value and close at hand, thus, we see that this term
is completely appropriate for the life of this world. (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 16, pg. 134)

[4] Surat al-`Ankabut (29), Verse 64

[5] Short saying number 130 from Nahj al-Balagha