

Summary of JĀMI' AL-SA'ĀDĀT, Part I: Fundamentals.

SAYYID JALAL AL-DIN MUJTABAVI

Translated by Mohammad Rassafi, International Institute for Islamic Studies, Qom, Iran

The study of ethical subjects necessitates mentioning some useful preliminaries which are as follows.

1. The Nature of Human Beings and their States

Theoretically, a human being has two aspects: one is hidden and unseen and the other is apparent and visible, these being spirit and body. Each of these has its own particular pleasing and displeasing elements, advantages and disadvantages, and, in other words, restorative or destructive factors.

The disadvantages of the body consist of bodily diseases; and its pleasing states lie in its health and corporeal enjoyments. It is a duty undertaken by the science of medicine to explain and expand on these bodily diseases and to cure them. Spiritual pains and maladies, on the other hand, consist of moral diseases which lead mankind to misery and perdition. These maladies are cured by returning to moral virtues, which eventually lead mankind to happiness and salvation and bring one into the companionship of divine people and those who are near to God. Ethics is a spiritual science concerned with explaining these vices and the methods of curing them.

2. The Incorporeality of the Soul and its Survival

The body is material and mortal but the soul has been proven to be incorporeal and immortal. Thus, if the soul possesses noble and elevated characteristics, it enjoys eternal felicity and salvation; but, in contrast, if vices are inculcated in the soul, it stays eternally in misery and suffering. Hence we should inform those seeking felicity about the immateriality of the soul and its survival after the destruction of the body so that they may take an interest in its purification and be diligent in preserving it from eternal misery and misfortune.

Several reasons have been put forward in philosophical and theological books that must be studied concerning the immateriality and survival of the soul after its departure from the body. According to Islamic ethics, the rewards and punishments for good and bad actions are not limited to this world; rather appropriate rewards and punishments will be fully realised in the other world. Accordingly, believing in the survival of the soul and life

in the other world is regarded as an important principle in Islamic ethics. It is noteworthy that since the permanent survival of the soul is dependent on its being immaterial, before discussing other subjects, moral thinkers used to offer some arguments to prove the immateriality of the soul. One of their proofs relies on the general rule that every compound object which contains parts is subject to destruction and ruin, but being simple and without parts, the soul is not liable to ruin and destruction.

3. Ethical Vices and Virtues

Moral virtues are mankind's spiritual reserves which help people to reach eternal happiness, and, by contrast, vices are the source of their permanent misery and hardship. Therefore, purifying the soul of vices and enhancing it with virtues is one of the most important necessities without which it is impossible to gain a pleasant life. Therefore, every sane person has to try diligently to acquire the moral virtues mentioned in divine law. In fact, virtues are normal moderate states of disposition and character. A person must also avoid vices that cause human beings to go to extremes. If they neglect this then eternal misery and misfortune befalls them. Confirming this point, the Glorious Qur'an says, "But whoever has been blind in this [world], will be blind in the hereafter, and [even] more astray from the [right] way." (17:72)

People can never adorn themselves with virtues and good characteristics and will not be suitable for receiving holy blessings and celestial gifts by means of their souls unless they are purified of bad characteristics and vices. Like a mirror that does not show the image of things except when rust and dust is removed from it, continual performance of worship and obedience does not benefit a person when the soul is not cleansed of unbecoming and abominable characteristics such as arrogance, envy, hypocrisy, love of reputation and honour, and malevolent behaviour towards relatives and workmates, because it is plain that to enhance outward appearances and neglect the internal will not be beneficial. In other words, blameworthy characteristics make the human heart (soul) like farmland and fields prepared for growing nothing but the weeds of sin. Accordingly, the outward worship of anyone who does not purge one's heart of such characteristics will neither bear fruit nor be a source of perfection.

Blameworthy Characteristics Keep Divine Teachings Hidden

Evil and unbecoming characteristics are like curtains that cover the truth and thus prevent a person from learning divine knowledge. Therefore, if

not removed, spiritual feelings and mystical states will not occur because knowledge of God, divine love and intimate friendship with God does not enter into hearts that are busy with other than God. As the Noble Prophet (s) has said, "If the people's hearts were not encircled by devils, they could see the kingdom of the heavens and the earth."¹

The more that minds and hearts are purified from pollution and abominations, the more they come closer to God and divine truths and teachings appear in them. The Noble Prophet (s) has pointed this out and said, "During your lifetime God will send you some divine breezes, lo and behold and expose yourselves to them."

To obey God and to shun evil cause the heart to be purified. In fact, due to Allah's eternal grace, divine mercy is spread over all human beings without any restraint, stinginess or parsimony; but gaining access to it depends on polishing one's heart and purifying it from impurities and carnal pollution. It is not possible for the mirror of the heart to reflect divine realities while the rust and dust of carnal desires are accumulated on it. Thus, the heart's ignorance regarding the lights of knowledge and divine secrets is due to its pollutions and darkness and it being occupied with things that are not compatible with this knowledge. Real knowledge is a light that finds its fullest expression in the heart only after the heart's purification and "it is a light that God projects on the heart of whomsoever He wants to Guide."² The following saying of Imam 'Ali (a) describes those who receive this kind of divine light:

Knowledge has led them to real understanding and so they have associated themselves with the spirit of conviction. They take as easy what the easygoing regard as hard. They are enamoured of what the ignorant take as strange. They live in this world with their bodies but their spirits are residing in the heavens above."³

Briefly, this kind of knowledge will not be obtained unless the heart is purified and refined, because true knowledge is regarded as worship of the soul and the source of inner closeness to God. In the same way that ritual prayer is considered to be worship of the body and is not acceptable until after elimination of all apparent impurities from the body, so, too, inward worship is not acceptable until after purging the soul of inward filth including bad manners and unbecoming characteristics. Thus these words

¹ *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 56, p. 163.

² *Munyat al-Murid*, p. 167.

³ *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Subhi Salih, ed., Sayings, no. 147.

of the noble Prophet (s) saying, “Religion is founded on cleansing” indicates the removal of both inward and outward impurities. Furthermore, in the hadith that says, “Purification is half of faith,” the word “purification” refers to inward purification from bad manners and unbecoming characteristics. The other half of faith consists of enhancing the soul with honourable and proper characteristics and reviving it by also performing obligations and worship.

It follows from the aforementioned points that knowledge acquired through theological debates and theoretical arguments, without then proceeding to purify the soul from rust and pollution, is not pure knowledge; rather it is mixed with some kind of darkness and obscurity, and is not worthy of being called “true certainty”, which is something specific to pure human beings, because true certainty is always associated with light, joy, and inattention towards everything other than God. However, darkness of the heart, resulting from unbecoming characteristics, prevents it from clearly knowing the true nature of things. For the gates of guidance to be opened and the ways of knowledge to become visible, firm efforts towards purification of the soul are required. As Almighty God says, “As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways” (29:69).

4. The Embodiment of Deeds

On the day of their birth everyone is free from fixed dispositions and habits. These will gradually appear due to continuous repetition of actions and the results of these actions. To explain further, human words and actions do not endure for long at the sensory level because the material world is subject to change and decline. Yet each of our words or actions leaves an impression on the soul, then by prolonged repetition an established quality will take shape and finally there will be a firmly rooted characteristic in one’s soul. At the outset of their creation human souls are like blank sheets of paper (*tabula rasa*) which contain no images and have no fixed form, but nonetheless can easily acquire any form or habit. Regarding this it is worth mentioning that when a characteristic penetrates the soul by repeated practice it becomes very difficult for the soul to subsequently accept the opposite characteristic. Hence, unlike with adults, it is very easy to train and teach children and to familiarize them with any form or characteristic; but it is very difficult for adults to be trained and prevented from acting upon their bad characteristics. Scholars of morality are unanimous regarding the idea that if dispositions, habits and the deeds arising from them are virtuous and correct, they impart enjoyment and

pleasure to the soul and lead human beings to acquire the friendship of angels and pleasant and pure people. However, if they are wicked and unbecoming, they cause pain and punishment and accordingly devils and the wicked would be their friends.

Nevertheless these scholars hold different views regarding the nature of reward and punishment. Some of them distinguish between the action and its reward or punishment and say that each disposition or action is the source of a reward or punishment independent of the action itself. However, some of them believe that the action itself is one's reward or punishment. To explain this they say that inner states become intensified by continuous repetition until they are gradually instilled in the soul; and finally they take the shape of habits and dispositions. Besides their forms in this world, which are in the form of mental qualities, these habits and dispositions have appropriate forms in the transcendental invisible world. According to this view, everything exists in each of the different worlds (this world, the world of the *barzakh*, and the hereafter) and takes on a suitable form in harmony with each of them. Thus, carnal pleasures that bring enjoyment in this world may reappear in the hereafter in undesirable, unpleasant and painful forms. However, avoiding unlawful bodily pleasures, bearing the hardships of worship and being patient in calamities and difficulties, although unpleasant and painful in this world, will appear in the hereafter in the form of pleasure and joy. Adherents to this view, sometimes call these otherworldly forms angels if they are the manifestations of worldly moral virtues and actions, and call them devils if they are the manifestations of vices and bad actions.

This view is called "the embodiment of deeds" in pleasurable or horrible and painful form and is highly respected. In addition to some philosophical reasons, numerous traditions support the validity of this view and some Qur'anic verses also allude to it. For example: "and indeed hell besieges the faithless" (9:49); "nor are you requited aught save what you used to do" (36:54); and "You shall be requited only what you used to do" (52:16).

In these verses God has said 'what you used to do' rather than 'for what you used to do'. This wording shows that the reward or punishment is in fact the deed itself, which appears under the guise of pleasure or pain in the hereafter, not the result of deeds and actions.

A fact supporting the idea of the "embodiment of deeds" is as follows. If habits and intentions are not eternal, then eternal life in paradise or a

permanent abode in hell is not reasonable. This is because each one of our worldly deeds, good or bad, is an ephemeral event. Accordingly, it is not possible to justify eternal requital on the basis of these deeds, for these deeds are the causes of rewards or punishments, and to relate eternal requitals to ephemeral deeds means that the effects would remain while the causes themselves have disappeared; and this is rationally impossible. Therefore, we should say that deeds result in the formation of habits and dispositions. They will then take on eternal spiritual forms and cause either eternal joyfulness or eternal fear and pain. Thus, the cause of eternal enjoyment of divine blessings or tasting eternal punishment is the survival and stability of intentions and dispositions which exist for ever.

5. The Impact of Temperament on Ethics

The nature and temperament of a human being affects one's character and ethical disposition. From the moment of their creation, the nature of some people is inclined towards certain characteristics and temperaments, while others are inclined to the opposite characteristics. For instance, regardless of external factors we see that in terms of their nature some people are irascible and irritable, others are weak hearted and timorous, some are touchy and easily offended, others are somewhat miserable and some start laughing at the slightest thing and then there are others who are different from all of these.

In fact, sometimes human faculties are naturally so balanced that they lead a human being to achieve perfect reason and excellent characteristics because their intellectual faculty prevails over their faculties of anger and desire. However, what happens in many people is that their faculties are not naturally so balanced and consequently they diverge from the middle state to the extent that their intellectual faculty begins to wane and falls under the control of other faculties, the result being that their human characteristics become degraded.

Nonetheless, it is clear that even in this condition, base qualities and unhealthy characteristics are removable by means of the cures assigned by the science of ethics. In other words, characteristics, good or bad, are not inborn, therefore a human being can remove vices and defects and then achieve moral virtues by way of their efforts and undertakings. This will be discussed in detail later on.

6. The Impact of Training on Morality

Temperament is an “inner disposition and habit which causes human actions to emerge easily without any contemplation.” Disposition is a quality of the soul that is hard to remove. Contrary to this, a state is a quality of the soul which may be abolished easily.

Dispositions may appear in human beings either naturally, due to the physical makeup of their temperament (which was mentioned before) or by falling into the habit of a certain disposition or by continuously practicing a particular characteristic, even if little or only imitatively at first, until it becomes a disposition, after which its related effects will appear easily, even if they are contrary to the demands of the temperament. Therefore, if continued long enough, practice and effort will eventually lead to the formation of disposition.

Previous scholars of ethics have a difference of opinion regarding the possibility of abolishing moral characteristics. Some of them believe that characteristics and dispositions are not inborn and natural, so all of them are changeable or removable. However, others say that all dispositions are innate, and accordingly none of them is changeable or removable. According to a third group, some of them are innate and natural, and are therefore impossible to remove, and some of them are not natural, originating from external causes, and may therefore be removed.

More recent scholars have chosen the first view and have said that moral characteristics are neither natural (innate) nor opposite to nature, and so the human soul is able and apt to adopt any one of the different characteristics, good or bad, either easily when it is in harmony with its temperament, or with difficulty when it is not in agreement with it. Thus, the variations in moral characteristics seen among people are related to external causes. An accurate study of people’s ethics shows that they differ in self-discipline (removing bad characteristics and replacing them with good) and so some may succeed in this very easily and quickly; but others only do so with difficulty and at a very late stage. If we carefully observe all the people of the world, we can hardly find two persons with the same characteristics. A tradition of the Noble Prophet (s) may refer to this point: “Practice! Everyone is suited to what has been created.”

It should be understood that the process of self-discipline to change bad characteristics does not imply that one must remove, for example, anger and lust completely because this is impossible. Anger and desire are placed in human nature by God for a necessary purpose. If anger were to be uprooted from a human being’s nature, one would not be able to defend

oneself from dangers and destructive events. Likewise, if human beings lacked the desire for food, they would die; and if they lacked sexual desire, the continuation of the human race would be impossible. Therefore, the true meaning of self-discipline consists of turning the soul away from going to extremes and directing it towards the middle way and the state of moderation.

The faculty of anger is expected to be free from timidity and fear, on the one hand, and from harshness and recklessness, on the other. Instead, it is expected to be endowed with bravery and zeal. In order to be brave and enthusiastic, human beings need to control their anger so that they only allow it to surface on occasions when becoming angry is permissible according to reason or divine law; but when it is not permissible, they must repress their anger. This is similar in the case of the faculty of appetite.

Furthermore, the factors involved in changing and modifying moral characteristics and habits differ according to the person and the level of their training. The easiest time for adopting characteristics and becoming accustomed to habits is the period of childhood, because their souls are empty of the bad characteristics which can hinder them from accepting good characteristics. Therefore, it is incumbent upon parents to train their children in good manners and to prevent them from committing bad deeds, until their souls become habituated to following virtues and forsaking vices.

7. The Superiority of Ethics Lies in its Subject Matter and Purpose

Ethics is considered to be the most exalted and valuable of sciences because authentic human life is based on the purification of the soul and the refinement of characteristics by means of the remedies mentioned in ethics. Indeed, the value of any science is directly related to the value of its subject and its purpose. Therefore, since the subject of ethics is human beings and their nature; and since the human being is the noblest of creatures, as proved by the rational sciences; and since, furthermore, the goal of ethics is to bring human kind to perfection and to raise people from the lowest level of life to an exalted position and the highest level of perfection, ethics is therefore the most valuable of all sciences. The lowest level of human life is close to the state of animals; and its highest level is connected to the angelic life. So, there are numerous different levels of human life beginning from the animal state and reaching the angelic position. This variation in the

levels of human life is not seen among other kinds of animals as human beings are unique in this regard.

By practicing ethics, human beings can attain the highest level of human life and perfect their humanity. What kind of knowledge other than ethics can elevate the lowest of beings to become the noblest? In light of this fact, ancient philosophers have called ethics “the greatest elixir,” placed it in a position of prime importance in their teachings, and exerted themselves in preaching it. They also believed that other sciences do not benefit a student when they are not yet purified by ethics. In the same way that an unhealthy body becomes unhealthier the more food it receives, likewise an impure soul will become increasingly wicked the more it learns sciences. The Noble Prophet (s) has said, “Two groups of people broke my back: corrupt scholars and ignorant worshipers.”

8. The Soul: its Names and its Four Faculties

The soul is immaterial in terms of its essence but not in its actions, because to do any action, the soul needs a body and organs, even though it is intrinsically needless of the body. Thus, it can be defined as a heavenly substance which uses the body and its organs to fulfil its needs.

The soul has various names according to its different aspects. Sometimes it is called “spirit” because the spirit is the origin of life and the life of the body depends on it. Sometimes it is called “intellect” because it perceives intellectual ideas. Sometimes it is called “heart” because it is changed by different thoughts and memories.

There are four distinct faculties of the soul: the faculty of intellect, the faculty of anger, the faculty of appetite or desire and the faculty of imagination.

The function of intellect is to perceive the true nature of things, to make a distinction between good and evil and to dictate that good deeds must be performed and bad deeds must be shunned. The power of anger acts as the origin of brutal actions like animosity, enmity and harming people. The function of the faculty of desire is the same as for animals, which is greed and sensuality. Lastly the function of the faculty of imagination is to discover various kinds of tricks and ruses in order to reach its goals.

Each of these faculties plays an important role in our life. The role and benefit of the faculty of appetite and desire is to maintain the life of the body, which is the vehicle of the soul by which it moves along the path to perfection.

The benefit of the faculty of anger lies in curtailing the ruthlessness and excesses of the faculties of appetite and imagination and in bringing them under its control, because these two faculties do not willingly obey the intellectual faculty, but instead are under the command of anger and readily follow it. Therefore, a person whose faculties of appetite and imagination prevent one from choosing the middle way can gain mastery over them with the help of the faculty of anger which arouses zeal and enthusiasm.

Lastly, the benefit of the faculty of imagination lies in comprehending particular meanings and in searching for some remedies in order to achieve correct aims.

The association of these faculties within the human soul is like the association of an angel or a wise man with a dog, a pig and a devil who live together in one place and are constantly fighting with each other. The angel or wise man is the symbol of the intellect, the dog is the symbol of the power of anger, the pig is the symbol of desire and the devil is the symbol of the faculty of imagination. The one that prevails over the others will govern them. Therefore, the human soul is a permanent battlefield for these faculties until one of them overcomes the others.

Thus, if the faculty of the intellect prevails over them and governs them so that they do not do anything without its permission and it directs all of them to the middle way and a state of moderation, then justice and balance will be established in the land of the body. Otherwise, they will prevail over the intellect and take it into their service. When this happens, the dog (faculty of anger) is always busy with biting and harming, the pig (faculty of desire) with lewdness and the devil (faculty of imagination) with inventing tricks to satisfy the dog's and pig's needs. Accordingly, the intellect will become the slave of the bitter dog, the covetous pig, and the misleading devil. Thus, unaided by the favour and the mercy of God, the intellect descends into eternal ruin and misery.

If all these powers come under the control of the intellect, they will work as a harmonious whole in peace and reconciliation; because then their ruler is but one power which manages the other powers so that they perform their proper functions at a suitable time. It is thus that the soul and its faculties function correctly.

Regarding this, Almighty God says, "The one who purifies it (the soul) is felicitous." (91:9)

However, if the intellect is overcome by the other faculties, the flames of struggle between them would rise and increase which would result in the corruption of the soul and its faculties. Regarding this Almighty God says, “And the one who betrays it fails.” (91:10)

The outcome of what has been said is that human beings possess a spiritual aspect, by which they can associate with purified spirits and celestial angels, and a corporeal aspect, by which they may bear a resemblance to savages and animals. A human being dwells in one’s corporeal aspect for a short time in this sensory world and by using one’s spiritual aspect one can be raised to the superior celestial world and reside there eternally in the company of angels. Of course, this is provided that one tries to direct one’s faculties along the path of one’s specific perfections until the spiritual rules over the corporeal aspect; profane pollutions are removed, and spiritual signs appear in one’s soul, such as knowing the true nature of things, having an intimate relationship with God, feeling the love of God, and adorning oneself with virtues and good characteristics. In this condition one becomes illuminated and enlightened by divine light, freed from all worries and regrets and is joyful and content forever.

Furthermore, such persons take no heed of what they have missed out on or lost the world and its possessions, because worldly attachments are of no importance in their eyes. Such people regard their body, wealth and financial power as nothing but annoying and troublemaking things, except when they are spent in the way of gaining perfection. Such a person is hungry to associate with luminous saints and avoids whatever hinders one from happiness. They do not become depressed about missing a beloved person or a desirable object.

When they are totally cleansed from impurities, carnal desires and demonic dreams are removed from such people’s souls, and at that time they will fully gain divine teachings and heavenly joy and delight and will be prepared to reach the highest level of perfection. This is a position that “no eye sees and no ear hears and in no mind it occurs”. Regarding this, the Glorious Qur’an says, “No one knows what has been kept hidden for them of comfort as a reward for what they used to do.” (32:17)

9. The Essence of Good and Happiness

The goal of purification, removing vices from the soul and adorning it with virtues, is to reach good and felicity. Philosophers have said that there are two kinds of good: absolute and relative. Absolute good is what the entire world is created for because the entire world desires it strongly and it

is the goal of all goals. Relative good serves as a means to reach absolute good.

Happiness consists of everyone attaining their specific perfection by their own free will. So, the difference between good and happiness is that good does not differ depending on the person but happiness does.

Confining felicity and happiness to moral virtues, some philosophers believe that felicity is exclusively allocated to souls and thus the body does not experience it. They argue that the reality of a human being is the soul, and the body is merely its tool and vehicle. The state of well-being of the body and whatever else is regarded as corporeal perfection has nothing to do with a human being's happiness.

Other philosophers, such as Aristotle and his followers, believe that happiness pertains to the "person", and as the person is composed of the soul and the body, so both of them may enjoy happiness. According to this view, happiness is divided into what belongs to the body, such as health, and what belongs to the soul, namely knowledge and good characteristics.

In this manner, the earlier philosophers, such as Plato and his followers, specified that while the soul is engaged in administering its body and is polluted with worldly impurities and profane occupations, happiness cannot occur. However, Aristotle and his successors believed that the achievement of happiness is possible for the soul only due to its attachment to the body. They held that it is clear that when a person is adorned with all the ethical virtues happiness is achieved. They argued that it is completely unfair to promote the idea that such persons are not perfect men and not fortunate while they are alive and that they will only achieve perfection after death. Therefore, there are levels of happiness through which, by enormous efforts, human beings can reach the pinnacle of perfection and complete happiness, even before the departure of the soul from the body.⁴

Muslim philosophers make a distinction between the happiness of the living and of the dead; and believe that the happiness of living is not complete unless they gain all the accomplishments of their body and soul. The lowest level of happiness is a situation in which the body enjoys its pleasures and accomplishments more than the soul does but at the same

⁴ Editor's note: For Aristotle, happiness means the happy life, and as such, it is a kind of activity. Since activity ceases at death, according to Aristotle, it is absurd to speak of the dead as happy, although we can only say of one who is dead that he has lived a happy life, because something can happen at the end of one's life to change our evaluation of it. See *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1100a.

time the desire for happiness and the longing for human perfection becomes greater and predominates. A higher level of happiness consists in the accomplishments of the soul accompanied by desires to increase these accomplishments, although there is a secondary attention to worldly affairs and the body.

However, as far as the dead, who obviously do not need a body are concerned, their happiness is only related to their soul. This means that their happiness lies solely in virtues, certain true knowledge and arriving at witnessing the eternal beauty and glory of God. In this condition a human being is perpetually enlightened by divine lights and acquires brightness through celestial intellect. They are eager for the remembrance of God and to be His intimate friends and are drowned in the ocean of His splendour and sacredness.

The opinion of Muslim scholars regarding this contains, on the one hand, the Aristotelian view which confirms a portion of happiness for the body and, on the other hand, prefers the view of those philosophers who believed that the greatest happiness is not attainable for a soul still attached to the body. It seems that this view is correct and true because undoubtedly things like bodily health and wealth and friends are means for reaching absolute happiness, so to possess them is to gain a relative happiness, which helps us to reach absolute happiness. Thus, to have, for example, bodily health and wealth is regarded as happiness but it is plain that this is a relative happiness rather than an absolute one.

According to the words of all moral thinkers, the reality of the good and happiness is nothing but true knowledge and good characteristics, because the good and happiness are desirable in themselves and always remain with the soul and lead human beings to love God, feel close to Him and taste intellectual and spiritual pleasures.

10. The Conditions for Gaining Happiness

Happiness cannot be obtained except by constant modification of all characteristics and faculties; and, thus, partial modification and occasional purification is not sufficient. A completely happy person is one who constantly and permanently modifies all one's characteristics and actions so that one becomes good and acquires stable characteristics, so that, accordingly, the changes of circumstance and time have no effect. This means that one will not lose patience and tolerance when faced with calamities and difficulties. Pains and difficulties will not cause the happy to forget about giving thanks to God. Numerous doubts will not remove their

assurance, losses and calamities will not cause them to lose their satisfaction and contentment. Enmity will not remove their kindness and friendship. The appearance of these qualities in their soul is due to the fact that their ethics and characteristics are stable and firm, so they are made joyful and happy by their spiritual enlightenment and noble characteristics. They do not pay any attention to worldly matters.

An obvious conclusion that can be drawn from the above is that a person who shows restlessness when faced with the difficulties and calamities of this world, becomes confused in adversities and hardships, and is the object of the rejoicing of enemies and the pity of friends is not counted as a happy person.

Furthermore, when a person pretends to be patient and content and likens himself to happy people, while inwardly he is impatient and distressed, then of course he cannot be regarded as truly happy, because genuine happiness is only gained when good characteristics are transformed into stable dispositions and inculcated in the soul in such a manner that difficult events and the vicissitudes of life do not change him.

11. The Zenith of Happiness

Philosophers specify that the highest level of happiness is achieved by those people who assimilate themselves with God in their attributes, that is to say, that in doing any good deeds, reaping benefits or repelling harms, they only consider the goodness inherent in those things and no other reasons. This level of felicity takes place when the reality of a human being, which is called divine intellect or the rational soul, becomes pure good, meaning that it is purified from all material pollutions and wicked characteristics, there remains no worldly concerns, and carnal delusions and illusions do not distract it. Then one's being is full of divine lights and true knowledge.

12. Pleasures and Pains of the Four Faculties

Each of the four faculties (the intellect, imagination, anger, and appetite) possesses its own specific pleasures and pains. Pleasure is the perception of agreeable matters and pain is the perception of disagreeable matters. We will mention the pleasure and pain of each faculty separately.

The pleasure of the intellect, which has been created to recognize the true nature of things, is in knowledge and wisdom and its pain is in ignorance. The pleasure of anger is to prevail over others and its pain is in its lack of victory. The faculty of desire obtains its pleasure by receiving food and satisfying other bodily needs and its pain lies in not satisfying them. Thus,

pleasures and pains are of four kinds: intellectual, imaginary, irascible, and animalistic. Intellectual pleasure results from knowing universals and immaterial substances and intellectual pain is ignorance of these things. The pleasure of the faculty of imagination lies in the joy which results from perception of particular agreeable forms and meanings and its pain lies in the perception of disagreeable ones. The pleasure of the faculty of anger is the pleasure which results from gaining victory and attaining position, glory or superiority, and its pain is the despondency and uneasiness which results from being defeated, deposed or from failing to attain position. Lastly, physical pleasure lies in eating, intercourse and the like and its pain lies in the feeling of hunger and thirst and in suffering from hot or cold weather and the like. All these pleasures and pains are actually connected to the soul.

Another point regarding this is that intellectual pleasures are actual and essential activities of the soul which originate from within and are imperishable in the face of different states and the vicissitudes of life whereas sensory pleasures are passive and accidental and therefore changeable and perishable. These sensory pleasures at first taste good to a human being's nature and increase along with the intensification of animalistic power and decrease due to its weakness until they are totally exhausted. However, intellectual pleasures are not normally achievable during the first stages of life because intellectual perception does not occur except in purified people and those who are adorned with good characteristics. After reaching intellectual perception, beauty and dignity will emerge and increase along with the development of intellectual power and this will continue until the highest levels are attained.

It is somewhat surprising that some people think that pleasure is confined to sensory pleasures and regard them as the highest level of happiness. Many religious people also believe that the pleasures of the afterlife only consist of the heavenly gardens, nymphs and handsome youths dwelling in paradise and the like, and that the pains of that world consist merely of the fire of hell, snakes, scorpions and the like. The goal of their worship is simply to reach these kinds of pleasures and deliverance from those pains as if they do not realise that such worship is the worship of hired workers and slaves who forsake lesser pleasures on this earth due to their desire to achieve more such pleasures in the hereafter. I wish I knew how this idea and such actions could lead a human being to true perfection and closeness to God the Glorious! And I do not know how a person crying due to their fear of the fire of hell and desiring sensory pleasures, which is the demand

of the animalistic soul, could be regarded as those who are the elect, close to God and described as high-ranking persons! It is as if though they do not comprehend spiritual rejoicing and delight and the pleasure of knowing God and loving Him! It is as if they have not heard this saying of Imam 'Ali (a): "O, my Lord, I have not worshipped You because of fear of the fire of hell or because of glimpsing Your paradise, but I find You deserving of worship, so I have worshipped You."

In summary, human beings are similar to animals in sensory and carnal pleasures and to angels in inner insight and good characteristics. Therefore, how can a sane person agree to put the noble and honourable soul at the service of the animalistic aspect?

How surprising it is that there are those who restrict all pleasures to the sensory ones but at the same time consider as great those who keep themselves aloof from animalistic appetites and inferior sensory pleasures and show humility towards them, believing that they are the highest of people and the closest ones to God, the Glorious, because they purify themselves from all carnal desires.

The secret behind this conduct and way of thinking is that although their idea about restricting pleasure to the sensory is wrong, the weak rays of the intellect still exist in them and cause them to believe in the excellence of true perfection and its essential brightness. By the grace of these weak rays of the intellect they can still recognize true virtue as virtue and true vice as vice and praise those who keep aloof from desires and blame those who immerse themselves in them.

A reason indicating the inferiority of animalistic pleasures is that those who seek these pleasures hide their actions by doing them in secret and feel ashamed about disclosing such actions.

Advice

Now that you understand that a human being is similar to angels regarding intellectual pleasures and to wild and domestic animals and devils in other pleasures which are sensory pleasures belonging to the brutal, beastly and demonic faculties, then my dear friend, be aware in which direction you are leading your soul! If the faculty of desire prevails over your soul in such a manner that most of your care is directed towards animalistic appetites such as eating, drinking and intercourse, you are in fact simply one animal among many others, with no difference between you. If the faculty of anger prevails over your soul in such a manner that you wish to take the chair,

annoy people and do beastly actions, then you are one of the wild animals. And if your faculty of devilish imagination prevails in such a manner that all your efforts are spent on finding tricks and ruses to achieve the demands of your faculties of desire and anger by using various means of magic and deceit, then you have actually joined the party of Satan. Finally, if your intellectual faculty prevails over your other faculties in such a manner that all your efforts are spent on understanding divine teachings and practicing virtues, then you are in the rank of angels. All sane persons who are not their own enemies must spend most of their efforts and ambitions on acquiring theoretical and practical happiness and on removing the deficiencies in their soul. They must also be content with limiting themselves to those sensory desires and pleasures that are necessary.

My friends! Fear God's punishment and take care of your souls and spirits and rescue them before they sink in the oceans of corruption! Wake up from the slumber of ignorance before the paths of guidance are closed to you! Start to acquire happiness before fatal dispositions and corrupting habits are rooted in your soul, because removing vices after they have become hardened is very difficult. Nonetheless, to despair of the mercy and the grace of God is not right so we must try as much as possible, so that God in His mercy rescues us.

Ibn Miskawayh, the first Muslim to compile a work on ethics, said, "In the years of old age and after the hardening of habits in my soul, I woke up from the slumber of ignorance and decided to remove vices from my soul. I started a great struggle and finally God made me successful in rescuing my soul from what was the source of corruption and destruction."

Nobody should despair of the mercy of God which is the source of salvation for everyone who wants it because the doors of divine grace are always open. So, O brothers and sisters! Proceed to purify your soul before your intellect is defeated and subordinated to your other faculties, your precious humanity is corrupted, your true nature is metamorphosed and your ethics are overturned, which is a condition which would cause you to be expelled from humanity and to join animals and devils. God save us from this great loss!

Nevertheless you should not think that if your heart's purity has been lost by committing sin, it would be recoverable. At most, after that sin you may do a good deed to remove its bad results and thus cause the soul to come back to the first state. However, in this case, by doing that good deed, your light and happiness is not increased, just the result of the previous sin is

removed. In other words, if you had done that deed without committing a sin, the light and joy of your heart would be increased and you would gain a degree in paradise, but due to that sin this benefit is lost and there is no compensation for this loss. A saying of the Noble Prophet (s) refers to this point. He is quoted as saying, "Whoever commits a sin loses a reason which never comes back to them."