

Moral Counsel in Nahjul Balagha

Session Two

Questions

- 1) What do you understand from the word Zuhd?
- 2) What is the difference between Zuhd and renunciation of the world?

Understanding Zuhd

Translations of the word Zuhd;

Asceticism, detachment, simplicity, indifference, avoidance, abstinence.

Zuhd is the opposite of Raghbah, to have an attraction towards, or a desire for, something. It also means not to have long hopes.

Zuhd is when desires and interests transcend the material sphere, rising to greater heights such as moral ideals and spirituality.

Zuhd means to belittle the significance of gains and losses of the world.

Two Aspects of Zuhd

All Zuhd is summarized in two sentences of the Qur'an :

*So that you may not grieve for what escapes you
nor rejoice in what has come to you. (57:23)*

Whoever does not grieve over what he has lost and does not rejoice over what has come to him has acquired Zuhd in both of its aspects.

Saying no. 439

Zuhd and Monasticism

Monasticism is incompatible with Islam

Monasticism is retreating from society to worship God. It is a withdrawal from people and commitment to society.

Islam is a religion of life and society, with reverence and an optimistic outlook for life of the world – not renunciation.

Zuhd means to live in and with society, to fulfill responsibilities, but abstain from luxuries and love of comfort and pleasures.

The Zahid and the Monk

Both the zahid and the monk are other-worldly but choose different paths to attain it.

Both renounce what they think will prevent them from spirituality. The zahid rejects indulgence in material pleasures, while the monk rejects life in society.

For the monk the world and the Hereafter are different, opposites, incompatible, contradictory. For a zahid the world and the Hereafter are interconnected. The world is a setting ground, a farm. The world is beautified and valued because of its connection with the Hereafter.

This world and the Hereafter

Inner and outer sides of a single reality

Like the soul and the body

Works of the world and the hereafter are inter related

Three Principles of Zuhd

- 1) Physical and material pleasures are not enough for man's happiness. If spiritual needs are not satisfied, human beings will not be completely happy.
- 2) Individual happiness is not independent of the happiness of society.
- 3) The soul needs nurturing and nourishment, and has pleasures and pains. It is an independent reality, but is also affected by the state of the body. Complete immersion in physical enjoyment is incompatible with spiritual satisfaction.

A Practical understanding of Zuhd

Simplicity

Contentment

Abstaining from indulgence in pleasures

Abstaining from luxuries

Being free from attachment to material aspects of life

From Nahjul Balagha

Know O creatures of Allah, that the God fearing have gained the joys of this transient world as well as the next coming world . . . They tasted the pleasure of renouncing the pleasures of the world in this world, and knew with certainty that tomorrow they would be the neighbors of Allah in the coming world.

Letter 27

Do not be like him who hopes for the next world with action, and delays repentance by lengthening desires, who talks like a Zahideen in this world but acts like those who are eager for it.

If he is allowed something from it he does not feel satisfied, if he is denied he is not content . . . He refrains others but not himself . . .

He loves the virtuous but does not behave like them, he hates the vicious but himself is one of them. He dislikes death because of the excesses of his sins but adheres to that for which he is afraid of death.

Saying 150

Readings:

<http://www.islamicinsights.com/religion/religion/zuhd-asceticism-and-worldliness.htm>

<http://productivemuslim.com/zuhd-an-anti-dote-to-consumerism-culture/>