

# ALI 266: Spiritual Growth

## Session Four – Role of Appreciation in social progress

Emotional motivation and encouragement is a useful means for the propagation of human virtues in society. Should the people reward good doers and punish those guilty of misconduct by means of their appropriate reactions, society would move steadily towards health and growth.

From Ethics and Spiritual Growth, Sayyid Mujtaba Musawi Lari

- 1) Why would human beings need motivation and encouragement to do good?
- 2) Why do some people find it hard to appreciate?



# Agenda

- Appreciation
- Criticism
- Flattery
- Staying sincere

# Interconnectedness of Society

Human beings are all connected to each other. What one person does is not separate from the others. It affects others in a myriad of ways.


To make society more positive and loving, each member has to spread positive energy. This will come back to impact the doer also.

*You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean, in a drop."* Rumi

# Appreciation

[O Malik] the good and the wicked  
must not be equal in your eyes  
for otherwise it would discourage the good  
from good doing  
and encourage the wicked in their misconduct.  
Treat them in accordance with the kind of  
conduct he has chosen for himself.


**Nahjul Balagha, letter no.53**



[O Malik] attention to major matters should not make you neglect minor and less important ones, for the people benefit from your trivial services and acts of kindness in their own right, while they cannot do without major services . . . hence pay thorough attention to the demands and needs of the people.

Pay compliments to those who take pains and do worthy work. For the tribute paid to them for their work gives enthusiasm to the brave and serves as a constant source of their motivation.

**Nahjul Balagha, letter 53**



Be like the honey bee  
which always drinks the purest of things  
and yields the purest of things  
and does not break any bough  
that it alights upon.

**Imam Ali (a)**

# Criticism

Why people criticize?

- a reflection of inner dissatisfaction.
- awareness of one's own inadequacies.
- self-centeredness
- Jealousy
- Lack of sensitivity

# Effects of Criticism

- 1) Throws out negative energy which affects everyone.
- 2) Decreases self esteem in the other person.
- 3) Represses growth and progress
- 4) Puts people on the defensive
- 5) Creates disharmony in relationships




# Principled Criticism

Sometimes it is necessary to criticize and help others to improve by pointing out certain faults. However it should be done constructively. Keep in mind the following:

- Express a positive first
- Use gentle language
- Follow up with positivity
- Do it with sincerity and love.

# Flattery

- Flattery is exaggerated and undeserved praise which stems from insincerity.
- Flattery is a form of manipulation, usually done for selfish interests.
- Praising someone and appreciating them is different from flattery



Make the people get accustomed to  
refraining from flattering you  
and from praising you unduly  
for something you haven't done  
for excessive flattery brings about self conceit  
and leads to pride and haughtiness.

**Nahjul Balagha, letter 53**

# Staying Sincere

A man does not become a sincere slave unless his praise or his criticism by the people becomes alike in his eyes and knows that such verification or falsification makes no difference in the reality of a thing.

So do not be pleased by the praise of anyone because such praise does not make man nearer to his God, and does not make him needless from whatever has already been destined for him.

**Imam as-Sadiq (a)**

## Dua when praised/appreciated

أَنَا أَعْلَمُ بِنَفْسِي مِنْ غَيْرِي، وَرَبِّي أَعْلَمُ مِنِّي بِنَفْسِي! اللَّهُمَّ  
لَا تُؤَاخِذْنِي بِمَا يَقُولُونَ، وَاجْعَلْنِي أَفْضَلَ مِمَّا يَظُنُّونَ، وَاعْفِرْ  
لِي مَا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.

When anyone of them is spoken of highly, he says:  
I know myself better than others, and my Lord  
knows me better than I know.

O Allah, do not deal with me according to what  
they say, and make me better than they think of me  
and forgive me (those shortcomings) which they do  
not know.