

## **Preserving Factors which ward off Negligence**

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The qualities of the soul and the inner conscience like fear, dread, yearning, hope, love and affection all come into appearance once man is heedful and his heart is awake and aware; but if he were heedless, and his attention were weak, the states either never at all come into appearance and/or appear in a weak and faint form.

Once man becomes afflicted by negligence and hardheartedness and he himself gets aware of this ethical vice, there are causes and factors which help man to emerge from that low condition. Some of the causes and factors are from the inner conscience of man and some of those factors are external.

Sometimes, in the external world an event occurs, words are heard and/or conditions are provided which result in man's admonition, wakefulness and emerging from heedlessness. Of course, this effect is in the category of divine graces and man ought to make the most of these opportunities and to be thankful, so that the graces and favors of Allah, the Exalted, may multiply. If these opportunities are not appreciated and not made use of, the negligence and hardheartedness of man increases. In this regard, the Noble Prophet (S) states: "O Abu Dharr! Soften your voice [when you are] near corpses or at war with the enemies of religion and at the time of reciting the Qur'an."

In this section, the Noble Prophet (S) hints at three ethical, instructional and security advices:

### **1) Speaking softly at the time of escorting a funeral**

It is very proper for man to speak softly and not loudly; this is a praiseworthy habit which Luqman, the Wise, recommended to his son:

... **وَإِغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ**

**... And pursue the right course in your going about and lower your voice; surely the most hateful of voices is braying of the donkeys (31:19)**

Even if in ordinary instances speaking softly is desirable, but still in some cases we ought to speak softer than the common and ordinary instances and/or adopt quietness. It is natural that one of the instances which ought to drive man into thought and reflection and from which he ought to take lesson is at the time of escorting and burying a corpse. Man has to attend to this fact that this death will one day come to him.

For this reason, he ought to abstain from talking about worldly affairs and his attention should be concentrated on his final destination; he ought to ponder deeper into this fact that his corpse will be carried on the shoulders of people someday and take lesson from it. That is why the Noble Prophet states: "O Abu Dharr! When you are escorting a dead body, busy your intellect with meditation and humility, know that you too will go back to Him."

One of the issues which are likely to drive negligence out of man is witnessing the corpse of a believer which has left the world after a lifetime of endeavour and deriving benefit from the favours of the world and pleasure-seeking and his dead body is being taken to the grave. Without the least doubt, witnessing that sad scene drives man out of heedlessness because paying heed to the world and its treasures and encumbrances gives rise to negligence and the thing which concentrates man's attention to the hereafter causes wakefulness and abstinence from negligence.

Therefore, in contrast to long and protracted hopes which cause hardheartedness and heedlessness, paying attention to death results in abstaining from negligence and in man's awakening and all too often meditation and thought transform man's way of life and his destiny too.

It is natural that once man reflects about his destiny and perceives himself subdued in the face of the majesty of Allah, a state of brokenness, lowliness and humility appears in his heart whose effects also get manifested outwardly in the same way that once a believer stands to recite his prayers perceives himself in the presence of the greatness of Allah giving rise to humility and lowliness in him and of course this is something which has been emphasized and has been mentioned as the most delicate quality which causes a believer to attain his prosperity:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ \* الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

*“Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers...” (23:1-2)*

Humility takes place in the heart and its effects become manifested in the organs and members of the body such as eyes, but at times humility is attributed to certain parts of the body, as the Gracious Qur'an states:

... وَخَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا

*“...and the voices shall be low before the Beneficent God so that you shall hear ought but a soft sound.” (20:108)*

The Prophet advises Abu Dharr that one of the instances which causes fear, humility, lowliness and submissiveness in man is presence at funerals and burying rites; on the condition that one is attentive and heedful and abstains from being noisome and paying attention to this and that person. He only ought to think about himself and speak softly so as to follow up on his meditation and reflection; for the reason that speaking loudly and even merely speaking occupy the heart of man and prevent him from presence of heart: One day a man in Tehran asked the late 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may he reside in Allah's eternal Garden of bliss, "What ought I to do in order to have presence of heart during prayer?" In response, 'Allamah Tabataba'i said, "Speak less [during the course of your day]." We may perhaps be surprised about the role speaking has in preventing man from having presence of heart during prayer (coincidentally, that man was very talkative). Without the least doubt, speaking and talking expend the energy [which is supposed to be preserved] for the mind, the soul and spirit of man, especially if talking is a custom, like admonishing, delivering speeches and teaching. When a group of people are listening to the words of a

speaker, he takes care not to make a single mistake; it is for this reason that he concentrates all his attention on his talking and refrains from attending to himself. For this reason, speaking less and also speaking softly results in man becoming more attentive to his inner self and keeping mental distraction at bay.

In regard to the Noble Prophet's (S) state at the time of escorting or burying a corpse, a *hadith* has been recorded stating: "At the time of escorting and burying a corpse, intense sorrow used to overcome him and he used to attend more to himself and speak less.

## 2) Speaking Softly At The Time Of War

Considering the circumstances of the forces and the privacy of military secrets during military operations and war, the Noble Prophet (S) recommends speaking softly during war. During war special conditions arise—especially during planning for military operations and gathering information about the war zone—which call for utmost precaution and care at keeping war secrets and not divulging the conditions of your forces to the enemies.

All too often, speaking and improper movements result in the enemy becoming aware of the strategy of your operations and in the end the lives of people and soldiers fall in danger and the design and strategy to become thwarted and frustrated. Another point which can be derived from this advice of the Noble Prophet (S) is that the sensitivity and importance of war and military operations demand that the forces use all their capacity and energy in the direction of advancing military goals. In view of this, with silence and tranquility and concentration of the senses, they ought to concentrate all their capacity and energy concealed in their inner selves and with perfect firmness, decisiveness and steadfastness combat their enemies and abstain from that which dissuades them from war and military operations. Bearing this important matter in mind, in his military recommendations to his son Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah during the war of Jamal, Imam 'Ali ('a) states: "Mountains may move from their position but you should not move from yours. Grit your teeth. Lend to Allah your head (in fighting for Allah, give yourself to Allah). Establish your feet firmly on the ground. Have your eye on the remotest foe and close your eyes (to their numerical majority). And keep sure that succour is but from Allah, the Glorified. (Nahjul Balagha, Khutba #11)"

## 3) Speaking softly at the time of reciting the Qur'an

If man finds the grace to be present in sessions of recitation of the Gracious Qur'an, whether his aim and motivation is to derive benefit from the Noble Qur'an or reasons other than that, like participating in sessions of wishing Allah's mercy for the dead and to expresses condolences to the remaining people, it is necessary to make the most of this invaluable chance, embark upon meditation about the *ayats* (signs) of Allah and paying heed to their meanings and purports. Even when the celestial sound of the Gracious Qur'an is being aired on radio, we ought to delve into deep thought and meditation so as to derive benefit from the meanings of this eternal, inspiring and guiding miracle in the direction of edifying and purifying the inner soul and getting rid of inward ethical vices and establishing invaluable attributes like humility and lowliness, as the Qur'an states:

اللَّهُ نَزَلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِي تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ...

**“Allah has revealed the best announcement, a book conformable in its various parts, repeating whereat do shudder the skins of those who fear their Lord, then their skins and their hearts become pliant to the remembrance of Allah... (39:23)**

With regard to the wonderful effects of the Qur’an, if man does not pay attention to the purports of the verses at the time of recitation of the Gracious Qur’an and for him there is no difference between the sound of the Qur’an and the words of others, he gets afflicted by negligence and his hardheartedness increases.

Considering the importance and gravity of the need to protect the honour of the Gracious Qur’an and to grant it value, Allah states:

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

**“And when the Qur’an is recited, then listen to it and remain silent, that mercy may be shown to you. (7:204)**

It is proper to hold general and expansive sessions for recitation of the Qur’an where the sound and recital is beautiful and also makes available the opportunity and occasion to explain the meanings and purports of the Qur’an and to take lesson from it. Verses of the Gracious Qur’an ought to be recited with a beautiful and sorrowful sound which gives rise to humility and submissiveness in the listeners and also causes admonition and wakefulness and self-awareness in them:

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَى أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ...

**“And when they hear what has been revealed to the Apostle, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears... (5:83)**

#### The Consequences of Inattention to the Causes of Spiritual Wakefulness

“O Abu Dharr! Know that salt is the preserver [or medicine] of everything corruptible, but once salt itself becomes corrupt, there is no treatment [or preserver] for it.”

Perhaps, the connection between this sentence and the previous issues is that all our problems arise from negligence, hedonism and obsession with material things and they give rise to the corruption of the heart and soul. There are means and ways of treating these pains and encumbrances which give rise to vigilance and man’s paying heed to his destiny.