

Asceticism in Nahjul Balagha

Session One

Undeniably, abstinence and caution exercised with discretion is an essential principle of wholesome living.

Ayatullah Mutahhari, Glimpses of the Nahjul Balagha

Agenda

- The Quran on Taqwa
- Understanding Taqwa
- Different Meanings of Taqwa
- Taqwa as immunity
- Reciprocal Relationship with Taqwa

The Quran on Taqwa

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ
شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
اتَّقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind, surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you into tribes and families that you may know each other; The most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful of his duty; surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.

Sura Hujurat, no.49, verse 13

وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ

And he who obeys Allah and His Messenger, and fears Allah, and is careful of (his duty to) Him, these it is that are the achievers.

Sura Nur, no.24, verse 52

Other verses

- Sura Aale Imran, no. 3, verse 102
- Sura Taghabun, no. 64, verse 16
- Sura Talaq, no. 65, verses 2-3 (beginning from wa man yattaqillah . . .)

Understanding Taqwa

- Is Taqwa abstinence and negation?
- If so it would mean;
 - 1) withdrawal from active life
 - 2) a negative attitude towards life
 - 3) increased self denial would equal increased taqwa
- There is negation in Islam but negation of one thing should entail movement towards another.

Different Meanings of Taqwa

- A spiritual faculty which appears as a result of continued exercise and practice.
- A vaccination that gives immunity and resistance.
- Control and command over one's self
- A personality endowed with will-power

Two Aspects of Taqwa

- Hadith of Imam Sadiq (a) explaining Taqwa - Submit to the command of Allah and do not go near the prohibited.
- He also says; Strive more to perform good deeds. However if you cannot perform a good act then at least do not disobey. Because if one lays the foundation of a building and does not spoil it, then, even if the progress is slow, the building will definitely rise. While the person who lays the foundation and at the same time spoils it, then it is sure that the walls of this building will never be raised.

Taqwa as Immunity

- *Taqwa* is a shield and a shelter, not a chain or a prison. It is not against freedom.
- A barrier is present in both a sanctuary and a prison. The barrier of a sanctuary avert dangers while the barriers of a prison stops the inmates from progress and enjoyment of life.
- *Taqwa* is the source of freedom from all forms of slavery to desires and whims.

Reciprocal Relationship with Taqwa

- Taqwa protects from sins and degradation but must also be protected itself.
- It can be compared to a person and his clothes. A man takes care of his clothes and protects them while the clothes guard him against heat or cold. The Qur'an speaks of *taqwa* as a garment: *And the garment of taqwa, that is better. (7:26)*

Discussion

- Choose one of the quotes of Imam Ali (a) on Taqwa
- Discuss how it can apply to Taqwa in your life;
 - What are the barriers to Taqwa in your life?
 - How can you reach higher levels of Taqwa?