

# ALI 453: Asceticism in Nahjul Balagha

## Session Four

### Quote for Reflection

Often man mistakes 'non-self' as his self, regards that non-self as his real self. Then imagining the non-self to be his self, he treats the non-self and takes care of it as he would have treated and cared for his true self.

Ayatollah Mutahhari, Glimpses of Nahjul Balagha

# Agenda

- ◆ Quran and hadith on the self
- ◆ Freedom and Movement
- ◆ Losing the self
- ◆ Worship and Freedom

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنسَاهُمْ أَنفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ  
هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

And do not be like those who forgot Allah; and  
He made them forget their own souls! Such are  
the rebellious transgressors!.

Sura Hashr, no.59, verse 19

فَاعْبُدُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ <sup>قل</sup> قُلْ إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ  
خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ <sup>قل</sup> أَلَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ  
الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ

Worship what you like besides Him. Say: Surely  
the losers are those who have lost themselves  
and their families on the day of resurrection;  
now surely that is the clear loss

Sura Zumar, no.39, verse 15

I wonder at a man  
who searches for his lost things  
But does not care to recover his lost self

Imam Ali (a)

al Amudi, al Shurar wa al durar, vol. 4 p. 340

The Price of my soul is [the pleasure of]  
its Lord. The whole of creation does not  
equal its worth.

Imam Sadiq (a)  
Biharul Anwar

# Some Questions

- 1) Is submission to God negation of human freedom?
- 2) Is movement and progress contradictory to self identity?

# Submission to God and Human Freedom

- ◆ Servitude to God is freedom itself.
- ◆ It prevents stagnation and inertia.
- ◆ It leads man to knowing his true self.
- ◆ All other forms of servitude deviate man from his true self.



# Movement and self-identity

- ◆ True and correct movement is towards the most perfect state of the self
- ◆ The relation of an imperfect self with its perfect self is not a relation of otherness, rather it is a relation of the thing to itself.

A seed that breaks the ground and sprouts leaves, and sends out branches and flowers, does not move from the self to non-self. If it were aware of itself and aware of its ultimate evolution, it would not feel self alienated.