



ALI 679/680

Jami al-Sa'adat: Part II

Diseases of the Soul

Self-development is necessarily prior to all else and this is impossible except through the science of ethics.

Jami al-Sa'adat

Review of Part I

- Jami al Sadaat
- The concept of Malakah
- Four faculties of the soul
- Pleasure and Pain of the soul



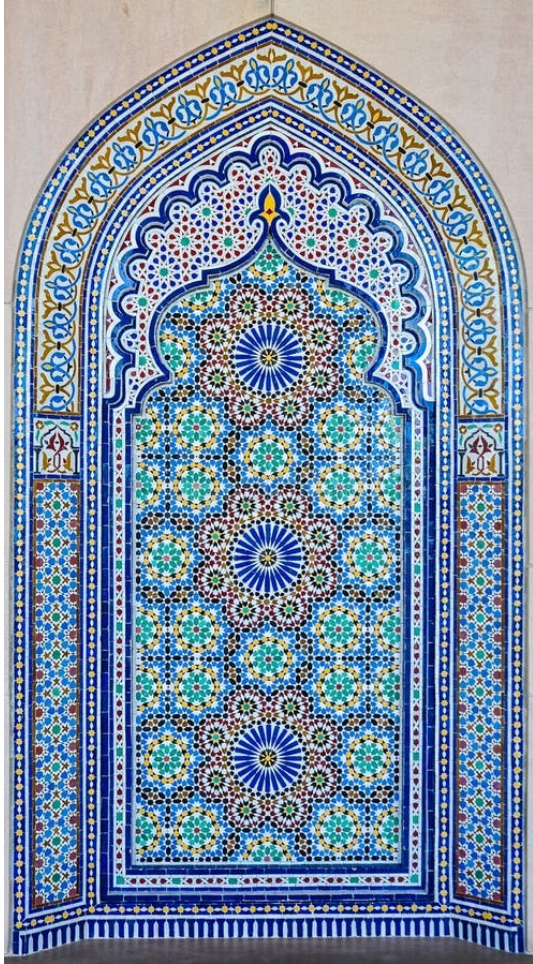
Diseases of the Soul (Vices)

Every one of the four ethical virtues is to be practised to a certain degree and within definite limits, transgression of which would transform a virtue into a vice.

If every virtue is thought of as the center of a circle, any movement away from the center would be considered as a vice, and the farther away it were to move from this point, the greater the vice.

For every virtue, therefore, there are innumerable vices; since there is only one center in a circle, whereas points all around the center are infinite in number. In regard to deviation, it does not make difference in which direction the deviation occurs. Deviation from the center, in whatever direction, is a vice.





To find the real center, which entails absolute moderation, is difficult to attain. To remain at this center and to preserve this balance is even more difficult.

As opposed to the real center, there is the approximate center, which is more accessible. Individuals who purify and develop their souls usually reach this relative center and acquire relative moderation. It is for this reason that moral virtues differ with different individuals, circumstances, and times. Relative moderation, like deviation, covers a wide area at the center of which lies the point of absolute balance and moderation.

Diseases of the soul are caused when its powers trespass the bounds of moderation, moving towards the extremes of either deficiency or excess. The way in which these diseases must be treated is the same as that used in treatment of physical illness;

Firstly - the disease must be identified.

Secondly - the way of treatment must be determined.

Thirdly - treatment must begin with the use of appropriate medications and avoidance of harmful things and continue until complete recovery.



Vices of the power of intellect

- 1) Ignorance
- 2) Doubt
- 3) Over thinking
- 4) Slyness
- 5) Shirk



i) Ignorance

a) Simple Ignorance

when the individual lacks knowledge and learning but is aware of his ignorance.

b) Compound ignorance

a state in which one not only does not realize his ignorance but considers himself to be knowledgeable.



Treatment

Simple ignorance

In order to cure 'simple ignorance' all that is necessary is to examine the evil consequences of ignorance and realize the fact that man's distinction over the rest of animals lies in knowledge and learning.

In addition to this, he should note the importance of learning and knowledge as attested by reason and also Revelation



Compound Ignorance

This is a fatal disease the cure of which is extremely difficult. This is because the `compound ignorant' person does not see any shortcoming in himself, and so lacks any motivation to do anything about it.

In order to cure this kind of ignorance, we must explore its roots. Roots could include distorted thinking, assumptions, false logic...

Learning a new science can help change compound ignorance into simple ignorance.

Another treatment would be to interact and learn from those with a different type of reasoning.



2) Doubt

This makes man incapable of distinguishing right from wrong. This disease is usually caused by appearance of numerous contradictory pieces of evidence, which confuse him, and make him incapable of reaching a definite conclusion.



Treatment

In order to cure this disease, the individual must first consider the principles of logic, such as the law of contradiction, the principle that the whole is always bigger than any one of its parts, the law of identity, etc., and base all his subsequent reasoning on them, realizing that truth is one and except the true one all other conclusions are false. In this manner he can cut through the web of contradictory thoughts that bewilder him.



3) Over thinking

It is one of the vices of the Power of Intellect in its condition of excess or extremity. When afflicted with this disease, the human intellect is so immersed in meticulous examination and analysis that it loses balance.

In other words, the individual's mental activity, instead of bringing him closer to an understanding of reality, takes him farther and farther away from it, and may even lead him to deny reality.



Treatment

The way that this fatal disease is to be treated is that the individual must first become aware of its danger, meditate upon it, and then make an effort to force his mind to keep within the limits of moderation. With common sense as his guideline and the thinking and judgement of normal people as criterion, he should judge his own thinking and judgements, being constantly on his guard until he reaches the condition of moderation.



4) Slyness

Slyness and trickery is defined as conscious plotting against others and drawing of elaborate and detailed plans to harm them.

This vice is a fatal one, because the individual afflicted by it is counted one amongst the party of the Shaytan.



Treatment

The way to cure this fatal disease is that the afflicted should wake up to the dangerous consequences of this vice and realize that one who digs a pit for others will himself fall into it, getting his punishment in this world itself.

He should also ask himself, why, instead of being kind and good to others, he should plot against them.



By Allah, Mu'awiyah is not more cunning than I am, but he deceives and commits evil deeds. Had it not been for the reprehensibility of deceit, I would have been the most cunning of all men. But every deceit is a sin, and every sin is disobedience, and every deceitful person will have a banner by which he will be recognised on the Day of Judgement.

Imam Ali (a),
Nahjul Balagha, sermon no.200



5) Shirk

This disease lies in believing that other forces besides God have a role in directing the affairs of the world.

If one worships these forces, it is called *shirk 'ibadi* (polytheism in worship).

If he obeys them, it would be *shirk ita 'i* (polytheism in obedience).



Treatment

The root cause of *shirk* is immersion in the material world and forgetfulness in regard to God. In order to cure it, one must meditate upon the creation of the heavens and the earth and myriads of God's creatures. That may awaken within one the appreciation of the glory of God. The deeper his meditation and contemplation on the beauty of the universe and the mystery of its creation, the greater his faith in the existence and unity of God shall become.

