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Lessons from Jami al-Sa'adat Part III

Vices of the Faculty of Passion

The darkness of sensual desire extinguishes
the light of reason and faith.

Imam Khumayni



Review of Parts I and II

- 1) Jami al-Sa'adat
- 2) Four faculties of the soul
- 3) Diseases of the Soul
- 4) Healing the diseases



Faculty of Passion

The faculty of passion motivates the human being to act towards that which it wants. This faculty takes on the responsibility of doing that which benefits the self. If the self is unrefined, it will go towards that which benefits the lowly self. When trained and disciplined, it will be attracted towards that which benefits the higher self.

Fulfilling desires of the body with the intention of strengthening the self for worship and servitude is praiseworthy.

It is evident that at the time of his birth, after passing through certain stages, man is no better than a weak animal and has no distinction over other animals, except for his potentiality of becoming a human being. That is, his humanness is potential, not present.

Therefore, man is an animal in actuality in the initial stages of his life in this world. No power but the law of animal nature, which governs through the faculties of Desire (shahwah) and Anger (ghadhab), rules over him. And since this marvel of nature is capable of acquiring all kinds of attributes, in order to cater to the needs of these two faculties he employs another fiendish power, the faculty of imagination (quwwah wahmiyyah) also in this direction through such means as: lying, deceit, hypocrisy, slander and all the other kind of tools.

Imam Khumayni, Forty Hadith, Hadith on Desire



Vices of the Faculty of Passion


- 1) Love of the world
- 2) Affluence and Poverty
- 3) Greed
- 4) Avarice
- 5) Obscene and haram matters



1) Love of the world

Proper use of Divine blessings is not an unworthy thing to do. However, what is undesirable is becoming attached to these things, and giving them a fundamental significance in one's life, an emphasis which may exceed even that given to God.

But if these things do not take the place of God and were to be used as means of attaining self-development and acquiring nearness to God, not only this is not objectionable but highly desirable.



One who wakes up with his whole attention directed towards the world is cut off from God, and God shall make four qualities to accompany him: endless sorrow, never ending occupation, a neediness which is never relieved, and a hope which is never achieved.

Holy Prophet (s)



Treatment

In order to cure this disease one must meditate on the fact that the good things of the world are transitory, and what remains for man are spiritual attainments, nearness to God, and the efforts made in preparation for the Hereafter.



Understanding Zuhd


The opposite of cherishing the world is zuhd, which is abstinence from worldly affairs, both inwardly and outwardly, except for such things as are necessary for the purpose of acquiring the bounties of the Hereafter, and for attaining nearness to God.

The zahid has been highly praised in Qur'anic verses and hadith. Zuhd is considered as one of the traits of Divine prophets and saints.



Degrees of Zuhd

- 1) Abstinenence from sins.
- 2) Abstinenence from things which are *mushtabah*, that is things which are not known with certainty to be forbidden, but which are suspect.
- 3) Abstinenence from what is more than needed.
- 4) Abstinenence from the pursuit of selfish desires.
- 5) Abstinenence from everything except God. That means confining one's attention to the Creator, being content with the minimum needed to meet one's physical needs and giving away the rest in the way of God.



2) Affluence and Poverty

Both affluence and poverty can uplift man's character or destroy him.

If affluence is acquired through legitimate means and the surplus wealth above his needs is spent for the sake of God and in the service of His creatures, it is considered as one of the virtues.

Poverty when accompanied by resentment against God and seeking wrong means to acquire wealth can lead to destruction.



Treatment

Attachment to wealth can be treated by giving away what is needed in the way of God. This decreases love of wealth. It also helps to reflect on the transience of this world and the eternity of the hereafter.

Lack of wealth must be accompanied by forbearance and contentment at the decree of Allah. It is a way of life that makes the burden of accounting light in the hereafter.



3) Greed – الْحِرْسُ

Greed is a condition which makes man dissatisfied with whatever he possesses and makes him yearn for yet more. Greed is one of the worst of destructive vices, and is not limited to worldly possession, but also includes indulgence in food, sex and other things

The greedy man in his love of the world is like the silkworm: the more it wraps itself in its cocoon the less chance it has of escaping from it, until finally it dies of grief. Imam al-Baqir (a)



Treatment

In order to free oneself from the vice of greed one must meditate on its evil and harmful consequences and realize that greed is a characteristic of animals, who recognize no restrictions for gratification of their sensual desires and use all means to attain it. It stems from the rebellious self which must be controlled by contentment and trust in Allah.



4) Avarice – الطَّمَع

Avarice is defined as having one's eye on the possessions of others. It is different from greed. Greed is to want more than one needs. Avarice is to intensely want what others have. Both have the quality of love of wealth and possessions.


The opposite of this vice is being independent of others and indifferent to what is in their hands



Treatment

Do not covet anything avariciously. If you ignore it, it will come to you anyway, if it is destined to be yours. Then you would find ease in your heart with Allah, praise for leaving it. But if you make haste in seeking it, not trusting Him, and not being content with the decree, you will be blameworthy.

Allah created this world the same as a shadow. When you chase it, it tires you out and you can never catch up with it. If you leave it alone, it follows you relentlessly, and gives you no cause for fatigue. Imam al-Sadiq (a), Lantern of the Path



Avarice can be treated by focusing on its opposite qualities like contentment, trust in Allah, and knowledge.

It also helps to not constantly look at and think about what others have. The Quran says; *Do not extend your glance toward what We have provided to certain groups of them, and do not grieve for them, and lower your wing to the faithful.* (15:88)



5) Obscene and haram matters

Extravagance in the faculty of passion leads to such vicious practices as adultery, fornication, sodomy, intoxication, all of which drag man down into a beastly mode of life.

It also includes discussing unlawful and haram actions, relishing such talk, and exchanging obscene jokes and stories not befitting human dignity and station.



Treatment

In order to be freed of this vice, one must control the self and not indulge in desires. It is also important to limit talk, and speak only of such matters as would please God.

The Holy Qur'an quotes the inmates of hell as saying:

And we used to engage in vain conversations with those who engaged in it. (74:45)

And in another verse, it warns against organizing parties for such purposes: *Do not sit with them [who disbelieve and mock] until they engage in another conversation....(4:140)*



Silence

The virtue of silence has been upheld in opposition to this vice. And what is meant by 'silence' here is not that one should always speak little, but rather that one should protect his tongue and ears from useless and nonsensical talk. In other words, one should be careful in speech, saying only those things that are beneficial to both our worldly existence and our Hereafter.



طُوبَى لِمَنْ أَمْسَكَ الْفَضْلَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَ أَنْفَقَ الْفَضْلَ مِنْ مَالِهِ

Blessed is he who restricts excess in his speech
and gives away excess in his wealth

Holy Prophet (s)