

Fault-Finding, Ignorance of One's Own Faults

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One of the greatest behavioral weaknesses of man is the ignorance of his own faults. In many instances the soul ignores an unwanted quality which results in the subconscious adopting of such a trait as a basis of misery. When a person becomes the slave of his ignorance, he kills the spirit of morality in himself. Thus becoming the victim of his inclinations and various lusts, which isolate him from happiness and comfort. Under such conditions, neither guidance nor .constructive advice can be productive

The first requirement for the salvation of oneself is to realize your shortcomings. The only way man can eradicate ill manners and rescue himself from the dangers of his personality that may lead him to misery, is if he recognizes these manners.

A careful study of the characteristics of the human psyche, so as to educate mankind, is a vital step toward leading to both spiritual and behavioral integrity. Reflecting on oneself allows the individual to realize his shortcomings and positive points, eradicate the unwanted traits, and purify the mirror of his soul from the filth of sins by conducting a basic purification of his manners.

We commit an unforgivable mistake when we carelessly ignore the real reflection of ourselves in the mirror of our actions. It is our responsibility to discover our own characteristics in order to pinpoint the unwanted traits which unwillingly have grown in us. Undoubtedly we will be able to eradicate the roots of such traits, even prevent them from appearing in our lives by constantly struggling against them. At any rate, achieving noble traits requires forbearance with long lasting hardships. It is not an easy matter to execute.

In order for us to eradicate the roots of dangerous and harmful habits, we not only have to recognize them but also must possess a strong will to do so. The more organization we can apply to our actions, the straighter and more productive our thoughts become. The advantages of every step in this process become manifest to us as we move on to the next stage.

Dr. Carl has written: 'The most effective method to transform our daily program into an acceptable one is to examine it with scrutiny every morning and review the results every evening Thus, in the same manner that we anticipate to finish a certain job at a specific time, we should include in our schedule certain steps so others may benefit from our activities. We should be fair and just in Our conduct.

“Behavioral lowliness is just as repulsive as bodily dirt. Thus, it is just as important to cleanse our bodies from dirt as it is to purify our manners of filth. Some people exercise before and/or after sleeping; reflecting on our manners and thoughts is just as important as these exercises. By studying the way we should act and struggling to observe the borders of our designated limits, we can see our realities without any barrier.

Our success in decision making is directly related to our inner-selves. It is incumbent upon every one whether young or old, rich or poor, learned or ignorant. to realize what he has done in daily expenditures and earnings, as scientists write down the results of their experiments. By applying such methods with scrutiny and patience, our souls and bodies change for the better.”

The Sarcastic and the Insulters

It is the nature of some people to search for the faults, mistakes, and secrets of others and to criticize and blame them for these shortcomings. Yet in most circumstances, these people’s faults and shortcomings greatly exceed their noble traits. They ignore this and occupy themselves with the misfortunes of hers.

Insulting others is an evil trait which pollutes man’s life and degrades his behavioral characteristics.

The elements which motivate man to put others down become more dangerous when accompanied with conceit, arrogance and self-righteousness. These behavioral complexes instigate man to make false judgments while thinking that they are positively the right ones. Those who constantly criticize others waste their efforts in manners unacceptable to reason or law. They give too much importance to observing their friends’ faults in order to insult and downgrade them, ignoring the fact that by doing so they deprive themselves of any opportunity to notice their own mistakes, thus leading themselves from the path of guidance and righteousness.

Those who lack courage do not observe any rule or respect the honor of others; they cannot live in harmony with the closest people to them. When these people cannot find acquaintances to insult, they turn to relatives and friends; for this reason these people are unable to make real friends whose love and respect they can enjoy.

Men earn their honor throughout their lives; therefore, those who offend the honor of others, subject their own honor to insults and destruction.

Although those who constantly insult others may not realize the amount of damage they do to themselves, they cannot stop themselves from the social reaction to their wrongdoings. Wrongdoings which bring them nothing except hate, enmity and disgust. They feel sorry, but as

it is said, "It is impossible to bring a bird back to its nest when it has flown away." He who wishes to socialize with others has to define his own duties and responsibilities, one of which is to always look for the virtuous traits and good deeds of others in order to be able to glorify them. He must also rid himself of the traits which insult the dignity of others and contradict the fundamentals of love, for love only survives if it lives within the exchanges of respect and observance of both parties. He, whose habit it is to conceal the shortcomings of his loved ones and friends will enjoy more stable relationships. It is also complimentary if one is able to bring the attention of those he loves to their weak points so the individual has a chance to change.

Of course, it is necessary for an individual wishing to bring his friend's attention to an unpleasant trait to apply special skills so as not to insult or "hurt his feelings."

According to one educator: "It is possible to bring the attention of your listener to his mistakes by a glance or a gesture, it is usually unnecessary to speak directly. If you were to say to someone, 'You made a mistake, he would never agree with you for you have insulted his reason, ability to think and self-confidence. Confronting him openly makes him resist your action without adjusting his views, even if you prove to him beyond doubt that you are right. When you bring a conversation do not open it with, 'I will prove it to you.' or 'I will substantiate that,' for this means that you are smarter or more clever than the person to whom you are speaking. The act of correcting someone's thinking is a difficult task so why add more trouble by the wrong procedure and creating an irreversible barrier.

"When you propose to prove a point it is important that others are not aware of your attention. You should proceed towards your goal with precise steps without allowing anyone the opportunity to discover your aim. Remember the following saying when working in this field:

'Teach people without being teachers.'"

Religious Teachings Verses Sarcasm

The Holy Qur'an warns the sarcastic of their gloomy fate, and cautions them about the results of their evil actions. It is written: "Woe to every slanderer, defamer." (The Holy Qur'an, 104:1) Islam deems it obligatory for all Muslims to observe the rules of manners and good conduct so as to preserve unity. Islam also forbids slander and sarcasm in order to avoid dissension and the weakening of brotherly relationships. Therefore, it is the duty of every Muslim to observe the rights of others and to refrain from insulting or humiliating them.

Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) said: "A believer becomes more reassured near another believer than a thirsty man does when he finds cold water." [1]

Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) said: "It is enough of a fault of an individual to note the faults of people and ignore that which he suffers from, criticize others for something that he himself does or to hurt an intimate friend with that which does not concern him."^[2]

Their grandfather, Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said: "Avoid the companionship of those who search for people's shortcomings, for their companions are not safe from their plots."^[3]

Although it is part of man's nature to refuse criticism, one should be attentive to constructive criticism. It is under the shadow of constructive advice that we are able to prepare the elements for advancing ourselves, if Allah wills.

The Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) reminded us of the above-mentioned fact when he said: "Let the closest to you be from among people who guide you to (discover) your shortcomings, and aid you against your own wrong inspirations."^[4]

The following is from Dr. Dale Carnegie's book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*: "We must listen to criticism and accept it for we should not expect two-thirds of our actions and thoughts to be accurate. Albert Einstein admitted that ninety-nine percent of his ideas and conclusions were false. When someone wants to criticize, I find myself being defensive without even knowing what he wants to say; yet, when this happens I later resent myself.

"We all prefer praise and glorification and refuse reprehension and criticism without observing the degree of appropriateness and accuracy of any of these comments. We surely are not the children of proof and logic but the children of feelings. Our minds become like sailing ships which are tossed around by the waves of feelings on a dark sea. At the present time most of us are self-confident, but in forty years we shall look back at ourselves and laugh at our actions and thoughts."

Imam 'Ali (a.s.) said: "He who searches for people's shortcomings should start with himself."^[5]

Dr. H. Shakhter has said: "Instead of objecting to the utterances or actions of others it is better to reflect on your own problems and pains if possible correct them. it is incumbent upon each one of us to reflect on our problems, discover our faults and shortcomings and solve them if we can."^[6]

The ignorant attempt to conceal their shortcomings instead of endeavoring to eradicate them. According to Imam 'Ali (a.s.): "It is stupidity in a person which causes him to observe the faults of others and not notice that which is concealed of his own faults."^[7]

Dr. Auibuty has stated: "Because of our ignorance, we frequently ignore our shortcomings and conceal them under a veil of ignorance and unawareness so as to lure ourselves in this manner. It is amazing how people will try to conceal their shortcomings from the eyes of

others without ever attempting to eradicate them. Yet, when one of their faults is revealed and they cannot conceal it, they create thousands of excuses to satisfy themselves and others. These people attempt to downplay the importance of their faults in the eyes of people, forgetting that as days go by the importance of such faults will become more manifest. Exactly as a seed grows to become a mighty tree".[8]

Studying the personality is the only accepted method by psychologists to diagnose and treat various illnesses. Imam 'Ali (a.s.) advised people of this very same method. He said: "It is incumbent on men of reason to pinpoint their shortcomings in religion, opinion, behavior, and manners and to gather them in their heart or in a book and work on eliminating them."[9]

Also according to a psychologist: "Sit comfortable in a quite room with a clear mind and ask your family not to let anyone bother you. The more comforting the place is and the more at rest you are the better it is: because what we intend to do requires a basic rule which is not to allow your thinking to be disturbed by concentrating only on the main objective. Also, your body should not be diverted by your bodily needs.

"Take with you some dark cheap paper and a pen which you can write with easily. I mentioned dark cheap paper so as to allow you to use a large quantity without worrying about expense. I also mentioned an easy pen because you will be surrounded by thousands of spiritual and psychological factors when you study yourself, you will need a pen that will not distract you. "Make a list of the types of feelings and reactions which you encountered in yourself on this day and the day before. Now review each one of them, think deeply about them, next write down everything that comes to your mind regarding these feelings without any reservations or limitations. Do not worry if it takes a long time.

"When you have written all your actions, thoughts. feelings. and reactions, bring to mind the instincts of self-love, seclusion. conceit,.. etc, Now match every action or thought with the instinct which motivated it by asking yourself the simple questions: Which instinct motivated this action or utterance?

"The purpose of this psychological self-analysis is to allow the patient to change as much of his spiritual personality. as his lively and constructive spiritual powers can by eradicating his psychological reactions and nervous states. This way he will consciously feel that he is a new person. Hence, he will realize new goals and meanings in life and be able to draw a new path in life For himself other than the previous one."[10]

Notes:

[63] al-Kafi v. 2, p. 247

- [64] Al-Kafi v.2. p. 459
- [65] Ghurar al-Hikam p. 148
- [66] Ghurar al-Hikam p. 558
- [67] Ghurar al-Hikam p. 659
- [68] Rushde Shakhsiyyat
- [69] Ghurar al-Hikam p. 559
- [70] Dar Jostojuye Khushbakhti
- [71] Ghurar al- Hikam p. 448
- [72] Ravankavi