

The Psychological Effects of Loving the Transient World

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Article

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The Psychological Effects of Loving the Transient World

This is the translation of a lecture given by Ayatullah Makarem Shirazi

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This is from a small booklet that I have titled The Touch Of Grace, a compilation of lectures followed by various questions and answers by one of my favourite scholars, Ayatullah Makarem Shirazi. The short booklet was compiled and edited by Syed Ajaz Mehdi Naqvi. Below is one of the sections where Ayatullah Makarem presents points on the psychological effects of loving temporary world – some Arabic portions were removed by me due to some formatting issues I was encountering.

عن ابن عباس قال: سمعت رسول الله (صلي الله عليه وآله وسلم) يقول: انه ما سكن حب الدنيا قلب عبد الا التاط فيها بثلاث: شغل لاينفد عناؤه و فقر لايدرك غناه و امل لا ينال منتهاه، الا ان الدنيا و الآخرة طالبتان و مطلوبتان، فطالب الآخرة تطلبه الدنيا حتي يستكمل رزقه و طالب الدنيا تطلبه الآخرة حتي يأخذه الموت يغته

It has been narrated from Ibn `Abbas that he said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) say: The person who becomes plagued with the love of the transient world within the heart will be overcome by three trials: the continuous thoughts about the material world will tire him out to the point that they will never stop; (he will develop a) poverty which will never be able to be satiated; his long desires and wishes (which he possesses) will never be fulfilled. Be aware that the transient world and the next life are both searchers and also the things which are being sought after (by others). So then the searcher of the next life is the one being sought after by the transient world so that it (the material world) can complete its granting of sustenance (to that person) and the searcher of the material world is being sought after by the next life so that it can take him through a sudden death and gratify itself¹.

Commentary of Hadith:

In the ahadith concerning love for the transient world, although this is in the meaning of worshipping the material world and not mere affection for it which is governed by a balance, there are various expressions used such as that love of the material world is the prelude to all sins. In addition, there are various branches to this Hadith as the effects which love of this material world exert on the psychology of a person states that: The person who is plagued with the love of the transient world will be overcome with three tribulations and in reality, there are three spiritual inconveniences which will come about².

1. The person's mind will always be preoccupied. A person will develop a continuously preoccupied mind and due to this, he will always feel tired, and this exhaustion will never go away and almost the same phrase can be seen in Nahjul Balagha where it is mentioned:

The one whose heart is taken over by the love of the transient world will have his heart overcome by three things....³

2. Perpetual poverty involves spiritual poverty for which there is no way to become prosperous and the more a person attains things from the transient world, the more he will feel that he does not have enough since in reality, the issue of being needless is not something which is based on the exterior of the presence of a person rather, it has its roots in the inner recesses of the soul of a person. The person who worships this transient world will always be thirsty and hungry (for more) and will never be satiated and filled.

3. Long desires with no end. The long wishes and desires also do not give up attracting the person and anytime any of these desires is acquired, another desire comes forth and takes its place and in this way, these desires and wishes have no end to them. Such a person (who has these continuous desires) would never be able to find tranquility, meaning that he has lost control of this issue and the tranquility and ease is taken away from such a person such that even during the state of Salat, the person's mind is on the transient world; while eating his food, his thoughts are on the material world such that he does not even pay attention or know what he has read or what he has eaten!

At this point, it is necessary to mention the following points:

1. People give importance to those things which in reality have no value to them at all and why is this? It is because it is important for people, that during their life in this transient world, they have peace of mind.

However we see that today even though the life of people is much better and organized, however still the psychological and mental pressures have increased. In other words, the (physical) difficulties which existed in the past do not exist today for humanity for example, long journeys are now made in a short time period whereas in the past it used to be said:

Traveling is a fragment of the hell.

With all of these eases, we see that the spiritual problems (of the society) are on the increase since the mental tranquility of the people has decreased. At this point we must ask the question that why has this mental tranquility decreased so much in the people?

There are two very important reasons which have been mentioned in regards to this question:

- Not possessing true faith.
- Worship of this transient world.

We see that the issue of the worship of the transient world takes place in some of the best centres of worship such as the Hajj which is one place where this issue grabs hold of a person. Truthfully it is something to witness what the creations of Allah perform at the Hajj time! While in that place (Mecca), the people are transformed into another world, however when worship of this transient world takes over a person, then even in the city of Mecca, the person runs after this temporal world he runs from here to there (trying to acquire this ethereal world) whereas maybe some of these people, while they were in their own home in Iran would not have run after these things!

Various Branches of Worship of the Transient World:

Worship of this temporal world is not limited to the worship of money alone. Rather, it is possible that love of attaining a specific status, position or any sort of other worldly ranking (may make up worship of the temporal world). For example, when a person enters into a gathering and is forced to sit at the back of the hall (since there is no other room left), he would not be able to sleep that evening. He would be upset within his self that why was this insult leveled upon him? Slowly, this issue would grow within him and this apparent insult leveled upon himself would then be extended to him leveling insults against Islam and even against those things held sacred in Islam and would even reach to the insulting of the Theological Seminaries!

In summary, this person would concoct all sorts of false rumors (against Islam and its sacred symbols). Thus it has been stated in a Hadith that:

The final thing to leave the heart of the truthful people (as-Siddiqin) is the love of status and position.

In this part of the Hadith, the Prophet (pbuh) has come with a new phrase in which he has shown the fraudulence of the material world, and what an interesting phrase he has used!

The Prophet (pbuh) has stated that, The material World and the Next Life both of these are both in search of something and also are things which others are searching for.

Whatever direction we place ourselves in, we see that these two things (the material world and the Next

Life) are at the opposite side! For example, when we aim to seek the next life, we see that the Material World comes after us and we become that which the Material World is searching for. Seeing as how Allah has promised that whatever sustenance He has decreed to reach us will definitely come to us, thus even though we seek the next life, the material world still comes after us and is in search of us. The opposite of this theorem is also accurate that if we go in search of the material world, the next life will come looking for us. The next life will come looking for us to pull us closer to death we would be so caught up in the material world that all of a sudden death would come upon us (and we would not even realize it).

Do not think that if a person goes in search of the next life that he must deprive himself of the transient world not at all! If we struggle to achieve the next life, then this does not mean we have deprived ourselves of this material world.

I have thought about this issue numerous times that if we desire the material world then we must be people of the material world and people of the next life since if we wish to live in this world then we must faith in both of these issues since if we do not have reliance on both (the material world and the next life) then it is not possible to live a societal life.

If millions of bricks were to be placed in random order on top of one another, they would never be able to make a building, however if we were to follow an orderly and methodical manner, then we would be able to assemble a new building.

If we are people of the material World, then we must also be people of the Next Life and we must have faith in a series of issues (of the theological beliefs) so that we would be able to, by putting them all together in an orderly manner, reach to tranquility and peace in the life of this world. If the entire society were to become true believers, then the people would definitely be optimistic and cheerful with one another and would have trust in each other and an atmosphere of sincerity, intimacy and honesty would be brought about.

We are told in the ahadith that the Prophet (pbuh): A (spiritual) doctor treating patients with his medication.

He knew where our pains lied and thus he was able to pinpoint our illnesses and was also able to show us the medication and prescription to take. If today, you were to take a look at the cases which are in the court systems, you would notice that none of the arguments are of a spiritual type all of the files and cases are in relation to the material, transient world. For a small amount of possessions of the material world, people are fighting with one another; people are being treacherous to one another; people are acting criminally with one another.

Sometimes, two brothers are standing opposite of one another in the court and without doubt the source of all these sins is the love of the material world. In these regards, the Noble Quran has told us that:

زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ

The love of desires, of women and sons and hoarded treasures of gold and silver and well bred horses and cattle and tilth, is made to seem fair to men. (Surah Aale Imran, 3: 14)

Women, children, money, gold, all of these things are simply a beauty for the life of this world. In this verse, the verb used is in the passive tense such that through employing the verb in this way, it should sink into the heads of the people that who is it that has made these things an attraction is it the Shaitan who has made these things fair seeming; is it one's friends; is it one's own lower desires and passions or is it Allah (Glory and Greatness be to Him) who has done this to test us?

All of these forms of beauty and attraction prevent us from moving in any (spiritual) direction and thus, Islam has continuously recommended and advised us to abandon these things so that we are able to build up a wall of defense around us to protect us from our lower desires since the things in this material world which aim to allure and distract us are many.

[1.](#) Bihar ul Anwar, Volume 74, Page 188

[2.](#) The meaning of heart in this Hadith is one's soul.

[3.](#) Nahjul Balagha, Short Saying 228. <https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/selec...> [3]

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