

Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil

(Amr bil-Ma`roof and Nahi anil-Munkar)

Amr bil-Ma`roof and Nahi anil-Munkar means ordering and enjoining people to do good and prohibiting them from doing evils or bad deeds. It is an important religious duty, and abandoning it is a root cause of many social evils.

In the Quran, Allah (S.W.T.) says, "From among you there should be a party who invite to goodness and enjoining what is right and forbid what is wrong; they are the ones who shall be successful." (chapter Aal-e-Imran, verse 104)

Once the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said, "Such a time will come when your women become corrupt, your youth become sinful, and you neither enjoin good nor forbid evil".

"Oh Messenger of Allah, will that occur?" asked the people.

The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) answered, "Yes, and such a time will also befall you when you will begin

forbidding good and enjoining evil.”

“Oh Messenger of Allah, will that occur?” asked the people again.

The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said, “Yes, and worse: such a time will come when you will consider evil as good and good as evil.”

Amr bil-Ma`roof and Nahi anil-Munkar is a collective obligation, which means that if a person fulfils the obligation others are relieved from it. But if no one fulfils the obligation all are equally sinful. However, this duty is not obligated on a particular class; if the conditions of obligation are present, it is equally obligated upon all the members of society.

If an act itself is recommended, ordering and enjoining others to do it is also recommended, which means that if someone orders or enjoins a recommended act, he will be rewarded, and if he does not, he will not be punished.

Conditions for the obligation of Amr bil-Ma`roof and Nahi anil-Munkar

There are several conditions for the obligation of Amr bil-Ma`roof and Nahi anil-Munkar, and they are as follows:

(1) A person should be familiar with good deeds and bad deeds, even if it may be in a general sort of way. One who is not familiar or acquainted with good deeds and evil deeds is not obliged to enjoin the good and forbid the evil.

(2) There should be an expectation of the person accepting the enjoinder of good and

forbidding of evil. Thus, if it is known that the person has no conscience of the distinction between good or evil, enjoining or forbidding him is not obligatory.

(3) The person who is enjoined to do good and told to leave evil should be determined to do evil and shun good deeds. If there are signs, and even some hope, that he would give up evil and perform good deeds, ordering or forbidding him is not obligatory. For example, if a person does not perform an obligatory act, or commits a prohibited act, and it is not known whether he will remain on this path or whether he will regret his misdeed, then forbidding him or ordering him will not be obligatory; however, if he has the intention of committing even one bad deed or leaving one obligatory act, then to forbid him from the bad deed or to enjoin him to perform the obligatory act will be obligatory.

(4) Performing the good deeds and leaving the bad deeds should be the practical obligation of a person (i.e. he believes himself to be obligated), it is obligatory to order him to do good and give up evil. If a person believes that the act he is committing is not prohibited or the act he is not performing is not obligatory, ordering him is not obligatory, whether his belief is due to his misunderstanding or due to his imitation (Taqleed) or his own Ijtihad (his own derivation from his research).

(5) The enjoining of good and forbidding of bad deeds should not damage the person himself nor his wealth, his status, etc., nor should it harm the interests of the Muslims; otherwise, (should there be such harm or damage) it will not be obligatory. The apparent case is that it does not matter whether one is certain or suspects or finds it very probable that it brings him harm, as long as the positive effect of enjoining and forbidding is not certain. And if the positive effect of doing so is known, then one should consider its importance. As such, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil in some situations may be obligatory even though there is some of the said damage.

Degrees of Amr bil-Ma`roof and Nahi anil-Munkar

There are three degrees of Amr bil-Ma`roof and Nahi anil-Munkar.

(1) The person should like the good deeds and hate bad deeds in the heart, and will not be pleased on the occurring of bad deeds. As such, he should make apparent to the committer of evil acts that he is not pleased with him, and he should refrain from meeting and speaking with him, or act in any other such way whereby the person who has committed the bad deed comes to know that your behaviour is a manifestation of you being displeased with his acts. This first degree is well-known as such, but it is not actually accurate to call this love (of good deeds) and hatred (of bad deeds) as *Amr bil-Ma`roof* or *Nahi anil-Munkar*, as merely love or hatred cannot be called *Amr* (ordering or enjoinment) and *Nahi* (forbidding); the two (i.e. the love of good and hatred of evil) are inevitable properties of faith, and are inherent attributes and characteristics of the believers.

(2) A person should preach to the person who has committed a bad act or left a good (*wajib*) act, and give him advice and guidance, that God has promised the good-doers reward and the evil-doers punishment.

(3) A person should correct the evil-doer by physical means, so that he leaves the evil acts. One should deal with the situation according to the circumstances and use the appropriate method. For example, if he can achieve his goal by expressing his fondness or hatred of his actions, this will suffice, otherwise one should use his tongue or, in the end, physical means to make him understand his error and to correct him.

Apparently, the first two methods (i.e. by expressing anger or fondness, and by dialogue and speech) are at the same level, and whichever of the two may be more effective, that method should be used, or even both methods can be used concurrently.

The third and final degree is required only when the first two methods are ineffective, and as per precaution, one should not act excessively and with severity; however, if one does not expect such lack of force will be effective, one can use appropriate force from the beginning.

If the above-mentioned methods are ineffective, then the question arises: should the evil-doer or abstainer from good deeds be subjected to a greater physical treatment that he is, for example, wounded or even killed? There are two opinions in this regard, and the stronger opinion is that this level of extremity should not be adopted. Similarly, it is not permissible to fracture or damage a part of his body. Hence, if one acts out such violence against somebody results in

such injury or death, then he will be liable for the loss and he must pay the appropriate Diah (blood-money, or indemnity for bodily injury) as prescribed by Islamic Law. However, if the harm and damage caused by the evil-doer due to his bad deeds is greater than the loss resulted by wounding or killing him, then the Imam (A.S.) or the qualified jurist can do this and there will be no Diah due.

More emphasis has been laid on Amr bil-Ma`roof or Nahi anil-Munkar with family members and relatives. Therefore, if a person observes that his family members are, for example, not offering prayers or not fulfilling the necessary conditions of prayer, not performing ablution correctly or are not careful about ritual purity or are engaged in some prohibited act, such as backbiting or causing friction, it is obligatory on him to fulfil his obligation according to the rules related to ordering and enjoining good and prohibiting evil and bad deeds.

Good Acts

1. One should have a bond with God.

· God has said in the Holy Quran: "And Whoever keeps a tight bond with God, he is surely guided to the Straight Path." (Aal-e-Imran: 101)

· Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: "God revealed upon the prophet Dawud (A.S.): Oh Dawud! There is nobody from amongst my servants who has left his world to seek my bond, which I do not know about, and if the skies and the earth plot and plan against him, I will Myself provide him the way to salvation and safety."

1. One should have trust in God, as He is Kind and Merciful with His creation. He knows what is beneficial for His servants and has the power to provide their necessities.

· God has said in the Holy Quran: "And Whoever places his trust on God, He is enough for him."

· Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: “Non-dependence (except on God) and respect is in constant motion around us, and when they find a place in us where there is trust in God, they choose such places as their home.”

1. One should have good expectations and good faith in God.

· It is narrated from Imam Ali (A.S.) who reported from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.): “I swear on Him besides whom there is no god, Whoever amongst the believing servants keeps good faith in God, God will meet his expectations; because He is Kind and in His hands is all goodness. He feels diffidence in that His believing servant has kept good faith in Him and then He breaks his expectations and hopes. So keep good faith in God and desire his closeness.”

1. One should be patient in times of hardship and should stay steadfast when drawn towards forbidden acts.

· God has said in the Holy Quran: “Surely the patient ones will be granted in full their reward without account.”

· It is reported from the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) that he said: “Be patient in restraining yourself from disliked things, as there is much goodness in being patient. And remember: victory and success is with patience; and ease is with hardship and struggle. Surely every hardship is followed by ease and rest.

· Imam Ali (A.S.) said: "Patience is not without success and triumph, even if it takes a long time."

· "Patience is of two types: to be patient in times of hardship, and this is a virtue and dignity. And the superior patience is that which is used to keep away from prohibited acts."

1. One should be always chaste and virtuous

· Imam Baqir (A.S.) said: "According to God, there is no worship and servitude better than the chastity of the belly and genitals."

· Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: "Our Shia are those whose belly and genital are chaste and guarded, and he should have a strong desire to do work for God, should have hope for His reward, and should fear His punishment."

1. One should be with knowledge and clemency

· The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: "God never gives progress to the ignorant, and as for those who are clement, God never allows them to be abased."

· Imam Ali (A.S.) said: "Whosoever has clemency, the first benefit of this attribute is that people will support him against the ignorant."

· Imam Redha (A.S.) said: "As long as one is without forbearance, he will not be able to be a

true worshipper of God.”

1. One should be affable. One should take the moderate path in his livelihood and should often remind himself of his eventual death.

· The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: “Whoever acts affably and with humility, God will elevate him, and those who act with arrogance and vanity, God will bring him down. And whoever takes a moderate path in his livelihood, God will give him sustenance, and whoever over-spends, God will withdraw his sustenance. And whoever remembers death often, God befriends him.”

1. One should act justly and be compassionate with his brothers in faith.

· The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: “To act justly and fairly with others, and to be compassionate with one’s brothers in faith in all circumstances for the sake of God, is better than all other acts.”

1. One should not talk about other’s faults and should strive to improve oneself.

· The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: “Glad tidings for those who rather than fearing others, fears only God, and rather than talking of other believer’s faults, is busy in remedying his own faults. The one good act that brings the quickest reward his good behaviour, and the one evil act that brings the quickest punishment is fornication. Suffices this one fault that one finds fault in others and ignores his own faults, and that he does not refrain from such prohibited acts which he criticises others for committing, and he hurts and offends those who sit with him in ordinary matters.”

· Imam (A.S.) said: "Whoever reforms his inner-self, God reforms his external being. Whoever works for his religion, God will give him success in his worldly affairs. Whoever keeps a good bond with God, God will tighten his bonds with others.

1. One should withdraw from this world, and his rejection of this world should be his distinguishing characteristic.

· Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: "Whoever makes his withdrawal from this world his distinguishing characteristic, God makes his heart strong with wisdom, and makes his tongue fluent with words of wisdom, and makes his eyes able to see the defects of this world and its blemishes and remedies, and takes him to the Place of Peace with safety and security."

· A man asked Imam Sadiq (A.S.): "I have arrived before you with much difficulty and struggle and after a long time. Will you grant me words of advice?" Imam (A.S.) replied: "Be God-fearing, be pious and hardworking, and do not hope for those that you are not able to attain. God had said to His Prophet (P.B.U.H.): do not be concerned about other's wealth, possessions and women, and do not be prone to other's wealth and children. The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) lived on barley bread and his dessert was dates. He made his fire with the branches of date trees. In times of hardship, remember the sufferings of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) as nobody faced harder sufferings than he."

Bad Acts

1. Rage and Anger

· The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: "Rage and anger corrupts one's faith just as vinegar spoils

the honey.”

- Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: “Rage and anger is the key to every evil.”

- Imam Baqir (A.S.) said: “Whoever is often angry, he will never find tranquillity, until he enters Hell. Whoever is angry upon his relatives, he should sit down if he is standing, as doing so will remove the filth of Satan. And those who are cross with his close relatives, he should seek to become closer to them and touch them, as doing so will help him find respite.”

1. Envy

- The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said to his companions: “Amongst you is an illness of the previous nations, and this illness is envy. This illness does not affect your wealth, but it destroys your faith. To escape from this virus, you should control your hand and seal your tounge, and you should not taunt your brother in faith.”

- Imam Baqir (A.S.) said: “Envy devours one’s faith just as fire devours its fuel.”

1. Oppression

- Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: “Whatever one gains from acting oppressively, it will be returned from himself, or his wealth, or his children.”

- Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: “Whoever gains success through oppression, he will not receive

benefit from it. However much wealth is usurped from the oppressed, he will receive back much more in faith from the oppressor.”

1. Mischief-making

- The Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: “On the Day of Judgement and most wretched of people will be those whom others respected only in fear of his mischief-making.”
- Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: “Whosoever’s tongue people fear, his abode will be Hell.”
- Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: “The most hated of people amongst God’s creation are those whose tongues create fear in the people.”

