

THE IDEAL YOUTH

by

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OPPORTUNITIES AND PITFALLS

Introduction:

Like the spring season of the year, Youth is a wonderful time in man's life. It is in this exciting period of fresh vitality and vigour that the body gets stronger and the mind develops.

Youth is also a time of challenge offering many golden opportunities for one to build a sound and happy future. But it also has a number of pitfalls which can harm one's future wellbeing.

Youth is also a time of transition, a period of change; the young man's body moves toward physical and mental maturity. But few of us realize that one is young only once. If this valuable phase is lost by not being on guard and making the best of youth, then to realize it later may be too late. Such golden opportunities for development during young age do not recur. Islam, as the perfect code of life sent by Allah Subhanahu has guided us in every aspect of human life. It has laid down the right path for young and old to tread upon.

This book is aimed at creating awareness of Islamic values in the light of the Holy Qur'an, Islamic traditions and history on the broad horizons offered to the youth. May this little effort prove useful and enlightening to our young ones. May they see the difference between opportunities and pitfalls, between darkness and true light. And May It help in creating awareness of what is an ideal youth in Islam.

That is our earnest wish and prayer. May Allah Subhanahu grant our wish. Ameen.

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FRIENDSHIP TO CHOOSE

Undoubtedly having a company of good friends adds to the joy of youth as it helps to get rid of loneliness. A good friend can be of real help in relieving sadness when one feels depressed. Also a good friend assists when in trouble.

Whilst choosing friends it's essential to know the right choice of friends. It is a basic principle of social relations that one tends to become like those around him if he associates with them long enough. Thus close friends are bound to have a lasting effect upon the mind of young man.

As the saying goes 'A man is known by the company he keeps', then the choice of friends tells much about the kind of person one is.

Parents or guardians who are truly mindful of the upbringing and future of their young ones need to guide them in the right choice. The leaders of Islam not only cared for their young ones but also offered valuable guidance with reason on this subject. The fourth Imam Zainul-Abideen (a.s.) addressing one of his young sons Said:

“Oh my beloved, Beware of five kinds of people with whom never to keep company, do not converse with them nor travel together with them.”

“Oh my respected father, Who are they?”, asked the son: Then the Imam (a.s.) described them for his son saying:-

1. “Beware of companionship of a liar as he is like mirage presenting matters in opposite way to the facts. He portrays far away things to be near and the near ones to be far away.”

2. “Beware of the company of the sinful and immoral for he may sell you out for a morsel or even less than that.”
3. “Beware of the company of a miser because he will not be of help to you when most needed.”
4. “Beware of the company of a fool because he may intend to benefit you but instead hurt you, out of his ignorance.”
5. “And beware of the company of the one who has broken relationship with his near ones because he has been cursed in three places in the Book of Allah.”

(Tuhaful ‘uqool, p. 279).

DOWNFALL OF SPAIN FOLLOWS CORRUPTION OF MUSLIM YOUTH

The history of Spain tells us that it was Tariq Bin Ziyad who, leading a Muslim army in AD. 711, conquered that country. It is mentioned that the battlefield where the Muslims fought decisively and conquered Spain was located at Trafalgar. This word is a distortion of the Arabic word 'Taraf-al-Ghar' meaning 'cape of the cave.' The surrounding country side, where the joint army of Arab and Berbers landed on their way to conquer Spain, still bears many Arab sounding place names.

Since then, Islam was introduced into that country where it held sway for nine centuries until 1610 when the last Muslims were expelled from Valencia on the East Coast of Spain.

What about their downfall? It was brought about when they turned their back from Islam values and traditions.

It is related that the Christian leaders, who were bent on putting an end to the Muslims' rule in Spain, had lured a young Muslim officer called Burg bin Ammara to their side. They sought his advice in their conspiracy against the Muslim state. This hypocritical and unfaithful Muslim officer told them that they could only catch a lion by tricks and deceit and that iron cannot be hammered, but with iron. What they should do, he advised them, was first to commence with undermining the spirit of devotion to Islam, the faith and bravery of Muslims before they could be uprooted from the country.

He also advised them to propagate Christian ways as widely as

possible and endeavour to control public schools, so as to brainwash the Muslim youths against their faith by providing free facilities of enjoyments.

He also advised them to open all trade links with the Muslims so that in the course of mutual contacts, certain ways could be employed to jolt the faith of people in Islam.

In addition, he suggested that alcohol consumption be freely encouraged among Muslim masses as this would demoralize their military strength.

Thus when such tricks were widely employed as advised by Burg, the Muslim youths in Spain became lavishly engrossed in anti-Islamic ideas and practices. Within no time wine and women caused their demoralization and decadence.

Consequently they lost the power of faith and Islamic solidarity to be able to defend that beautiful country which they had ruled for seven hundred years.

The fact is that when sense of reason and wisdom is allowed to be weakened and subdued by lust and immoral ways of life, disaster and calamity follow. How truly has Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) warned mankind:

“Domination of lust leads to great annihilation and destruction.”

QAIS: AN EXEMPLARY YOUTH OF FAITH AND COURAGE

Qais, a twenty year old youth, was well-known during his time for his staunch love and loyalty to the Ahl-ul-Bait, the Prophet's household members. He was also outspoken against the oppression of the Omayyads. Qais was arrested and made to stand before Hajjaj, the Omayyad governor of Kufa in Iraq. All eminent persons in the court of the governor were anxiously awaiting to hear what Qais would reply to the question put to him.

However, before the questioning started, Qais pointed his finger towards the pompous palace of Hajjaj and boldly recited the following ayat of the Holy Qur'an:

“Do you build on every height a monument? Vain is that which you do. And you make strong fortresses that perhaps you may abide.”

(Sura Al-Shu'ara v.128-129.)

In reciting the foregoing ayat of the Holy Qur'an, Qais was drawing the attention of Hajjaj that his staying with arrogance in his pompous palace was short-lived.

On hearing this, Hajjaj taunted Qais by saying:

“Oh young man! Do you mean to say you are the custodian and guardian of the Holy Qur'an?”

“Is Allah not the guardian of His Book? In that respect what effect would my memorizing and reciting it have?”, responded Qais.

Noting the intelligence and sagacity of the young Qais, Hajjaj put to him further questions:

“Have you collected the Holy Qur’an?”

“Why, was the Book scattered that I should have to collect it?” retorted Qais.

Hajjaj appeared to control his rage at this curt reply and told Qais: “Why don’t you recite before me some ayats (verses) from the Holy Qur’an?” Qais in response recited in an impressive and melodious tone the following ayats, of the Holy Qur’an:

“When there comes the help of Allah and the victory, and you see men (coming out) from the religion of Allah in companies.” (Sura Al-Nasr v.1-2).

Hajjaj thought he had a good opportunity of humiliating Qais by pointing to the error in his recitation and said to him: ‘Young boy! It is not ‘Yakhrujoon’ meaning ‘coming out’ but ‘Yadkhuloon’ i.e. ‘entering.’ Also ‘Min deeni Ilahi’ i.e. ‘from the religion of Allah’ is incorrect but you should read ‘Fee dieni Ilahi’ i.e. ‘in the religion of Allah.’

Laughingly Qais retorted by saying: “Those days are gone when men in companies after companies were converting to the religion of Allah. In these days people in numbers after numbers are discarding the religion.”

Hajjaj asked as to why and how was that. Qais replied:

“As a result of the oppression and tortures from you and the men around you, non-Muslims are not attracted towards Islam these days. And as for newly converted Muslims having not yet

understood that the defect does not lie in Islam but it lies with the despots and usurpers, they tend to break off their ties with the religion and are therefore coming out.”

Hearing these outspoken words from Qais, Hajjaj became exceedingly enraged and said:

“Young boy! Do you know with whom you are speaking?”

“Yes! To a sagacious Satan”, replied Qais.

“May I know where have you been brought up, Oh you man of the Jungle?” asked Hajjaj.

“I have been brought up in the deserts,” replied Qais.

“Who is your mother?” asked Hajjaj.

“The one who gave birth to me”, replied Qais.

“Where were you born?” asked Haiiaj

“In the deserts”, replied Qais.

“Are you mad?” asked Hajjaj.

“Were I a mad person, your people would not have brought me before you,” replied Qais .

Hajjaj then asked Qais the following:

“What do you have to say about Ameer ul Momineen i.e. the Commander of the faithful?”

To this question, Qais replied in a sorrowful voice, saying:
“May Allah Bless Abul Hasan” (i.e. the father of Hasan, Ali bin Abi Talib a.s.).

“By ‘Ameer ul Momineen’ I did not mean Ali bin Abi Talib, but Abdul Malik bin Marwan (the then Omayyad Caliph),” retorted Hajjaj.

“May curse of Allah he upon that debauchee-impious,” responded Qais. “Why do you deem fit to curse Ameer ul Momineen Abdul Malik?” inquired Hajjaj.

“He has committed many crimes but there is a very big crime which has qualified him for this curse”, said Qais.

“What is that crime?” inquired Hajjaj.

“What worse crime could be there than him appointing a cruel man like you as a governor over people who live in fear, and none in the whole city of Kufa is able to enjoy mental peace.”

Hajjaj on hearing such curt words was profoundly enraged. All present in the court expected the punishment of Qais by death. Addressing his courtiers Hajjaj asked their opinion as to what sort of punishment be meted out to the young boy who had dared to pass such insulting remarks against the Caliph. Naturally, as expected, everyone suggested death as the only punishment for him.

Hajjaj was taken into a deep thought for a while and then he said:
“Verily I have yet to see such a brave and outspoken young man.”

Addressing Qais, he then said:

“Take one hundred thousand dirhams from my treasury, go away and make no such insulting remarks again. I have forgiven and absolved you from the death sentence.”

Qais feeling fortunate to be freed from the claws of the blood-thirsty Hajjaj went away. When he was out of the court, Hajjaj remarked: “There is no parallel to the outstanding sagacity and bravery of this young boy. Shame would it be for him to die.”

What an outstanding example of the bravery of a youth, well-versed in the teachings of the Holy Qur’an and firm in faith, to speak the truth before a brutal ruler of his time. It would appear his uprightness and profound courage to speak the truth had such a deep effect that Hajjaj felt obliged to spare his life.

TO THE BATTLEFRONT AFTER A NIGHT'S WEDDING

Hanzala was a fully bloomed young Muslim of great faith and determination. He was keenly waiting for the wedding night as he was going to be married.

In those early days of Islam, the situation in Medina was not favourable. Muslim warriors were preparing to go towards the area around the mountain of 'Uhud' to defend themselves against the oncoming attack of the enemies of Islam. A declaration was already made from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) that whoever was able to fight should proceed to the front duly armed. It was the declaration of Jihad, an obligatory act which had to be respected.

Hanzala was rather bewildered as should he prepare to garb on his newly made wedding clothes or put on arms to fight. It was his staunch faith in Islam that made him not to evade, but go to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) for advice.

“Oh Messenger of Allah! Tonight is my wedding night. If you permit me, I shall stay in Medina so as to perform my wedding. But tomorrow morning, I shall proceed to the front.” The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) gave the permission and Hanzala stayed behind for a night in Medina.

The night was passed by Hanzala in conjugal bliss with his bride. At daybreak he bid farewell to her to proceed to Uhud to fight for the noble cause of Islam. Before departure, the bride with Hanzala's consent, farsightedly arranged for four witnesses so that in case of a birth of a child, it would be considered as having been fathered by Hanzala.

Arming himself Hanzala mounted his horse, and rushed to the front in Uhud. The battle had already gained momentum and he became engaged in a fierce fight with the enemy. But, Alas! in the course of it, Hanzala was martyred. May our salutation reach this great son of Islam.

What a splendid example of a young man whose profound spirit of sacrifice for Islam has remained on record in the annals of history. He had displayed great courage in leaving behind the conjugal bliss of the just married life to go to the front to die for Islam. How befitting to Hanzala is the tradition which reads; “Allah loves that young man who sacrifices his youth in His obedience.”

LEADERSHIP OF ‘UTTAB BIN USAID

No sooner had the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) accompanied with his companions, succeeded in overcoming Mecca and cleansing this great city from pollution of idols, the Muslims were required to come out for defending Islam in the battle of Hunayn. It was essential to prepare for the administration of Mecca which had then come out of the control of the polytheists.

A governor who could carry out the job with efficiency and bear full responsibility was required for selection.

The Prophet of Islam selected, out of so many young and old Muslims, a twenty-one year old young man by name of ‘Uttab bin Usaid. He was commanded to lead prayers. In fact he was the first person after the Muslim victory over Mecca to establish the congregational prayer there. Addressing, Uttab he said:

“Do you know in what position have I placed you and on what kind of people have I appointed you as Governor? You are now the ruler and leader of the people of Allah. Had I known anybody else superior than you I would have entrusted him with this position.”

Naturally the selection of this young man for such a high post displeased many of the elderly people in Mecca. When the news of this reached the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) he addressed a detailed letter to the people of Mecca. He explained the good qualities of the newly appointed young Governor and instructed them to obey him. In the end the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) warned that no one should raise objection to the young age of ‘Uttab because the basis of distinction of man is not his advanced age or greatness. But on the contrary It is based upon merit and one’s Spiritual hIgh status.

'Uttab is known to have remained the Governor of Mecca until the end of Prophet's life and to have rendered great service in the cause of Islam. Thus the youths of early Islam have left splendid examples of how those youths devoted to Islam and of superb character and knowledge can qualify for responsible positions in the Society.

YOUTH IN ERADICATION OF IDOL- WORSHIP

‘Amr bin Jamooh became popular in Islam as a man of staunch faith. He was one of the dignitaries of Medina, the City of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w;). He was from the tribe of Bani Salma and attained martyrdom in the battle of Uhud. It is narrated that before he converted to Islam, and accepted the belief in Allah, the only God, he used to worship an idol named Manat. He was deeply attached to it and paid much respect to this idol. It was his son, Ma’az, who had first converted to Islam. He was one of those early converts who had travelled from Medina to Mecca. Impressed by the sublime teachings of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) they accepted Islam. On returning to Medina, they proved staunch volunteers and supporters in the spread of the true message.

Once Ma’az met with his young Muslim friends from the tribe of Bani Salma to hatch a plan. They decided that after sunset when it was dark, they would snatch away Manat - the favourite idol of his father ‘Amr bin Jamooh. During the night they succeeded in doing this and deposited the idol on a garbage heap in a corner of a lane.

Poor ‘Amr! In the morning, finding his favourite idol disappeared, he would roam from place to place in Medina. Noticing it on the garbage, he would bring it back, and clean it. Whilst returning the idol to its place, he would angrily say:

‘By God, if I were to know who it is who dare disrespect you, I would harshly punish him.’ But then again the young Muslims would remove the idol and throw it out without ‘Amr noticing who did it. He became greatly disturbed not knowing how to protect his dear Manat.

One night he picked up his sword and tied it around the neck of the idol saying: “Now that I do not know who is causing all this disrespect and humiliation to you, I am tying this sword around your neck so that you can defend yourself when you are attacked, if truly you have power and goodness”

That night the youths of Bani Salma again went and removed the idol from its place. They untied the sword from its neck and replaced it on a skeleton of a dead dog. Again they dumped the idol at another garbage heap. As before, ‘Amr bin Jamooh again came out in search of his favourite idol. This time when he found it, he became rather perturbed and went into deep thought. Perhaps his deep faith and love for his favourite idol started shaking for noticing his god being unable to protect itself despite possessing the sword around its neck.

The youths of Bani Salma this time surrounded him blaming the idol for its weakness. Logically they argued with him persuading him to abstain from idol-worship and instead accept faith in Allah as propagated in Islam.

Finally one day, ‘Amr became convinced of the truth and declared his faith in Islam. Out of contempt for that idol and in gratitude for the great blessing of his new faith, he composed and recited the following couplets:

‘By Allah! If you were god, you and this dead dog would not have been tied together. Whilst I adored you as god only out of Ignorance. Now has the wickedness of your deceit been exposed.’

‘Praise be to Allah, the most high and gracious, the grantor, the sustainer, the Judge of religion. He is the one who has saved me

beforehand from being deposited into the darkness of grave by the guidance of Ahmed, the Prophet.”

It is narrated that Ghawee bin Abd Salmi was caretaker of an idol of Bani Salma. One day he saw two foxes approaching that idol. As they reached in front of the idol, they raised their legs and urinated over it.

On witnessing this happening, he came to his proper senses in realizing the folly of idol-worship. He went forward to the idol and breaking it down, he composed this couplet:

‘How can it be God when over its head the foxes urinate. Already downgraded and humiliated is the one over which a fox has urinated.’

Thus we see how the youths of early Islam, guided by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) helped people in using and raising their sense of reasoning. They practically aroused an understanding among the pagans of Arabia that it was degrading for man to bow down before a hand-made idol which could neither protect nor benefit him in any way.

Islam came to raise the dignity of man. It has forbidden him to bow down before anyone or anything save Allah Subhanahu - the Almighty Creator.

SEVEN YOUTHS OF THE CAVE (KAHF)

“We relate to you (Oh Prophet) their story with the truth; surely they were youths who believed in their Lord and we increased them in guidance.” (Sura Al Kahf - V. 13)

Ephesus was a famous city about fifty miles from Smyra, once flourishing on the west coast of Asia Minor (present Turkey). ‘Daqyanoos (i.e. Dacius) ruled the place from 249 to 251 AD. He was a heathen, an unbeliever of any religion and he cruelly persecuted the Christians. Seven youths of Ephesus escaped from the town and in their flight they met a shepherd with his dog called ‘Qitmir.’ The dog too followed them.

The cruel king who tortured those who did not worship him and his idols, pursued the seven fleeing youths. When they heard the sound of the horses galloping towards them, they became frightened. They took refuge in a cave on a mountain. Being true believers these young men entrusted their case to God and prayed to Him for their rescue from the merciless heathen king. This shows that the followers of Jesus were Muslims i.e. believers in one God with full trust in Him.

God heard their prayers and they were overtaken with sound sleep so that they were undisturbed in the least with what happened outside the cave. This state of sleep was made to continue for a long time, three hundred and nine years, according to the Qur’an. The dog sat there in front of the cave with the fore legs spread at ease. The king sent his vizier with some of his men to enter the cave and find them out. The vizier himself being a believer in Jesus and One God entered the cave and sounding a few calls for them, came out

and reported saying that the men out of fright of the king had died. The king and his party returned pleased and ordered to close the cave with a tablet with the names of the seven youths and the date of the happening inscribed on it. This is why the event is named 'The event of Kahf war Raqem - the event of cave and the inscribed Tablet.'

When after a very long period, they awoke from their sleep, they began to imagine things to be as they were when they were put to sleep. They were not conscious at all of the length of the time that had passed. Men ignorant of the phenomena of the consciousness of the count of time varying in this earthly life of ours might dispute, but the fact is that the count of time is restricted to our outerself in our external life and it has no effect on our innerself as we do not at all feel the passage of time during sleep. Students of Psychology know the fact that dreams of long events spread over a period of days, weeks, months and even years are experienced in only a few minutes and sometimes in a few seconds. This is one of the great signs from God to make men know that the working of the time-factor in the affairs of men is a matter fully controlled by God.

When these young men awoke, they did not know that the tyrant king was long dead and it was the reign of a good-hearted Christian king. Finding the mouth of the cave closed, each one of the young men began praying with conviction and faith in the Lord. One of them prayed saying: "Oh Lord I once paid a labourer a full day's wage while he had worked for half day only, He did not collect the amount and went away. With that amount due to the labourer, I purchased a calf and it multiplied into a big herd. When the labourer after sometimes returned to me, I took him to the flocks of the animals multiplied from that one calf purchased of his money.

The man did not believe and took it to be a joke, but I took an oath and handed the whole herd to him”;

“O Lord if what I had done was only for You, let this closure at the cave be opened.” The prayer was heard and one-third of the closure gave way. Another one of those young men prayed saying, ‘Oh Lord I during a famine, when a helpless beautiful woman came to me for some wheat, I wanted her to yield to my carnal desire of fornication, but the woman refused and went away. Again she came to me for help and again I laid the same condition, which she did not agree to. At last, when she came for the third time, she agreed, but when I wanted to hold her, she began to tremble, on asking her the reason for such a violent fear, she said that she was afraid of God. Hearning this, I left her free and sent her with the provision she had asked for, and I wept to be pardoned by you. Lord, if what I did was only for you, to please you, then let the closure of the entrance be opened.” God caused another third of the closure to be opened.

When two-thirds of the cave was open, another one from the young men prayed saying: ‘Oh Lord! I once took milk for my old parents and since they were asleep I did not like to disturb them. I waited for them the whole night until they awoke, and in the meantime, the whole herd of my sheep perished, but I did not mind. What I did, was for Your sake, O Lord let the closure be opened.” The whole entrance was cleared of the closure and thus the seven youths of the cave were able to emerge.

Thus, we learn what one can achieve through good deeds performed solely for the pleasure of Allah.

The secret of their sleep was revealed when one of them went to

Ephesus to buy food and offered a coin of the period of Emperor Dedius ('Daqyanoos). As it was a changed world, he naturally attracted attention for he was wearing a costume fashioned some hundreds of years before and spoke a different language. This was because during their prolonged sleep, language, culture and dress had changed. People suspected that he had dug up some ancient treasure. They gathered around him and took him to the ruler of the time. On questioning, it was discovered that he was a follower of Jesus Christ. They then accompanied him to the cave. The seven youths then lay down and again they were put to sleep by God.

YOUTH: QUICK TO RESPOND

Abu Ja'far Ahwal -a disciple of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) - was involved in propagating the true message of Islam. This he did according to the teachings of Ahl-ul-Bait, the family members of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.).

Once the Imam wanted to know how the people responded to his propagation. 'Only a few people have responded favourably.' He replied. "Why don't you concentrate on the youths who potentially are quick in responding?"; advised the Imam.

In the course of propagating the true message of Islam, the Prophets and Imams concentrated more upon the youth. This was because they appreciated vital strength and natural good of the youth. They knew that the youth with his untainted mind was quick to respond. And it is in this young age that clear and pure opportunities for spiritual upliftment need to be provided.

Thus it is acknowledged that the period of youth is the best time for easier and quicker response to message of truth and moral teachings.

LASTING IMPRESSION OF YOUTH EDUCATION

Youth, when full of its innate capabilities, needs right education, both religious and secular. The type of education provided in young age leaves behind lasting impressions for the rest of life. Imam Musa bin Ja'far (a.s.) has drawn our attention to this effect:

“Knowledge acquired during young age is like an engraving over stone.”

How important it is for knowledge to be acquired in young age can also be understood from the saying of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.):

“I do not like to see from you a young man except that his day starts in one of two conditions: Either he is an Alim i.e. a learned person or he is a student. If he is not, then he has neglected (his duty). And if he neglected, he wasted (his youth). And if he wasted, he committed a sin. And if he commits such a sin, then hell would be his abode.”

Stressing further on youth education, Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as.) is mentioned to have said:

“Be quick in teaching young ones with religious knowledge before they are approached by Murji'ah.” (That is before they are confronted with confusion and misguiding talks).

Luqman, the wise, has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an to have preached and warned his son. This portrays the need for parents to be concerned about their young ones and to guide them right.

The fifth Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) has said: ‘That of the

various warnings to his son, Luqman said:

“Oh my beloved son; whoever associates and moves in the company of the sinful, he learns from him his indecent ways of behaviour. Whoever prefers quarrelling, becomes liable to be abused and reviled. Whoever enters a place of sin and wickedness, becomes liable to be accused and subject to slander. Whoever moves around with a bad friend, would not remain safe from his corrupt behaviour. And whoever does not control his tongue, would have to repent ultimately.”

From the foregoing, what is noteworthy are not only the valuable warnings but also the outcome and effect of undesirable company. It indeed provides food for thoughts for an ideal youth, lest he falls prey to such pitfalls.

FROM A CRIMINAL TO A NOBLE MAN

Fuzail bin 'Ayaz was a well-known criminal of Kufa. Whenever a caravan of traders passed through a desert, he would make a sudden attack and loot them. His criminal actions had created great terror in the travellers who were always on their guard.

Once Fuzail had fallen in love with a girl. He planned to intrude into her house and kidnap her. At midnight he climbed over the wall of her home for that evil intention. Just as he was about to drop into her compound he heard a melodious voice of a person in the neighbourhood reciting the following ayat from the Holy Qur'an: "Has not the time yet come for those who believe that their hearts be humble for the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth?" (Sura Al-Hadid, v.13).

These words of the Holy Qur'an cast such a drastic effect on his heart that spontaneously the following words came out of his mouth: "Yes, the time has now come."

Retreating from his ill-intention, he descended from the wall. The fact is that the Holy Qur'an had cast its spiritual effect over his heart and he was now on the way of reforming his previous evil habits. A change was taking place from bad to good in his thoughts and actions. A revolution had set in his way of life.

The same night a caravan of traders had halted at a station and having off-loaded their cargo, they waited for dawn to continue with their journey.

Fuzail who happened to be in a corner at that station, overheard

those people advising each other not to come out that night as Fuzail the looter was around and there was a danger of attack. Hearing these words, he was deeply moved and coming forward to them, he said:-

“Oh people! Let it be known that I am Fuzail bin ‘Ayaz, whom you fear. Now you may relax as I am no more a looter nor a thief. I have now repented and pray to Allah for His forgiveness.”

Thus we learn how the Holy Qur’an, cast its spiritual effect over the heart of a hard-core criminal. This occurred only when he paid attention to and meditated over the sublime words of the Holy Book.

That the Holy Qur’an has deep effect over human heart and can cleanse it from evil thoughts and intentions is endorsed by the following Prophetic sayings:

“Verily, hearts do rust the same way as iron rusts.”

When asked how can a heart be cleansed and polished, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) declared the following two remedies:

- (a) Recitation of the Holy Qur’an
- (b) Remembrances of death.

And Ali in Abi Talib (a.s.) in sermon 113 of Nahjul Balagha says: “Read the Holy Qur’an carefully because it is the most sublime of all the Holy Books; try to understand and to study it diligently because it is the best food for thought. Enlighten your mind with its teachings because its divine light is the best cure for a diseased mentality.”

But how many of us do truly revere the Holy Book by reciting it regularly? How many do try to understand the meaning of what we recite and apply the teachings in our daily life?

MENTAL DEPRESSION ON THE INCREASE

‘What is the most thriving profession in the U.S.A. today?’ I once asked an American doctor. ‘Psychiatry’, he said. It is the treatment of those suffering from lack of mental peace and from depression. Despite all the amenities and pleasures of life, today an increasing number of young adults are walking into psychiatrists’ office complaining of depression, isolation and lack of sense of direction in their lives.

In an interview, Dr. Bert Pepper of Spring Valley, New York, explained that adults are in an era that believes in instant gratification and they are discovering that it doesn’t always exist. A patient feels inadequate because his life isn’t as unique and wonderful as it’s supposed to be. A young man suffering from depression finds himself disabled by problems to the point he is unable to cope.

Dr. Pepper adds that normally the patients, who are whites aged between 20-30 years who have been to colleges, are drawn from nice families. They seem to have everything going for them, yet they become suicidal and frustrated to the point of violence. Their hall-mark is confusion, moodiness, indecisiveness and desire for everything at once. Their mental condition is usually compounded by the use of drugs and alcohol which deepen their depression and feeling of frustration.

The fact is that mental tension and lack of inner peace is dreadful scourge of our time. Millions of sleeping tablets and tranquilizers are daily consumed in ever-increasing quantities particularly in the West. This may be providing temporary relief in soothing the mind

but the true and lasting remedy is elsewhere.

Allah Subhanahu has placed health and peace of mind under the shadow of religious faith and in His remembrance. The following ayats from the Holy Qur'an explicitly support this view:

“And he who turneth away from remembrance of Me, his will be a narrow life, and I shall bring him blind to the assembly on the day of judgement.” (Sura Taha, v.124)

“Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.”
(Sura AI-Raa'd, v.28).

When man cherishes faith in Allah as Almighty and the One in full control of everything in this universe, he resorts to prayer relying only upon Him as capable of removing his distress and solving his problems.

Consequently hope and tranquility is generated in his heart. In acknowledging this fact, the great philosopher C. A. Liebane says 'Religion in life provides man with mental peace and spiritual sanctuary.'

HOW TO SPEND SPARE TIME

One of the problems facing the present day youth is how and where to spend spare time in the evenings, weekends or holidays. Due to the absence of appreciation of the value of time in man's short span of life and ignorance in determining the right ways of relaxation by a youth, many periods of his spare times are wasted.

Drawing our attention to this subject, Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) has said:

“Spare and opportune time passes away like cloud; therefore make the best use of opportunities of doing good deeds.”

“Spare and opportune time is quick to go out of hand and late to return.”

Warning against the consequence of whiling away and spending one's spare time after trivial and nonsensical matters, the Imam has said:

“Whosoever engages himself in nonsensical matter, he is bound to fall behind and lose in his vital life ambition.”

Hence wise and sensible is the one who spends his spare times for relaxation in such hobbies which would benefit him physically and mentally. Islam has encouraged certain sports and exercises for physical development. The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has advised the Muslims to bring up their young sons physically strong, saying: “Teach your sons swimming, archery and horsemanship.”

In fact this is an invitation to sports and chivalry. It has opened doors to all sorts of physical training and athletic exercises which

can help the body to preserve its abilities. Traditions speak of the Prophet's participation in tournaments, watching them and encouraging them. Imam Ali bin Al-Husayn (a.s.) said:
"The Messenger of Allah raced horses and ordered for the winners' quantities of silver."

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) is quoted to have said: "The Messenger of Allah (s.a) raced lean horses from Al-Hayfa to the mosque of Bani Zorayq, for three date-palms as prizes, giving the first three winners a cluster of dates each."

ADDICTION TO ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND GAMBLING

The major pitfall besides alcoholism, an up-coming youth today is addicted to drugs like cocaine, cannabis, heroin. Millions of shillings are spent after this addiction which causes damage to health, social fabric and economic condition of the society.

But why do youths succumb to such dangerous and harmful habits? The primary reason is the lack of a Godfearing life style, devoid of religious and moral guidance. Young ones are misled by friends to believe that the aim of life is to attain all the pleasures of life we see others enjoying. When he finds he cannot afford to secure them, he is drawn to at least having the wishful thinking and feeling of highness and imaginary heavenly bliss from the intoxicating effects of alcohol and drugs.

Warning against such sins and pointing to their results, Imam Ali bin Husain (a.s.) has said:

“Of the sins which cause to discard the veils of modesty and virtue are alcoholic drinks and games of chance (gambling).”

“Alcoholic drink is the mother of evils.”

In advocating preventive measures as better than cure and in order to discourage such evil habits, Islam prohibits Muslims to be associated with people involved in such sins. Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) said: “Do not sit with liquor drinkers nor salute them.”

Traditions have also been narrated condemning those who give their daughters in marriage to liquor drinkers. Thus, we see how Islam has instituted a system of boycott against those involved in major and basic crimes and evils so as to discourage and uproot them.

ILLICIT AND DISHONEST DEALING - A DANGEROUS PITFALL

Misam Tammar, a shopkeeper selling dates, was one of the staunchest companions of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) in Kufa. The Imam used to sit at his shop and guide people on honest ways of conducting business.

One day Misam went out for some work leaving the care of his shop to the Imam. After a while, someone came to buy dates. The Imam weighed and supplied him the type he wanted. In payment thereof, the buyer paid some wrong debased coins. Naturally he went away happy for having profitted from the cheating.

When Misam returned and saw the debased coins, he was naturally astonished and inquired how they came in.

“Never mind, I knew about it but did not like to make him feel ashamed. Allah is sure to reward for it,” explained the Imam.

After a while, that buyer returned with the dates complaining that they were weevilled and insect-bored. The Imam returned the very coins paid by him in return for the dates. But on examining the dates, Misam was surprised to find no weevils nor any insect at all. On inquiring from the Imam of what happened, he was told:

“Allah Ta’ala takes care of the good and truthful people. That man wanted to cheat us but Allah did not allow him to do so.”

What a splendid example of the backlash and consequences of fraud and cheating. One with weak faith and overtaken with greed

overlooks the fact that the ill-gotten and dishonestly earned wealth does not last, but invites problems and calamities for him sooner or later.

One of the major pitfalls before modern youth is the greed to get rich quickly and maximise material wealth.

To him money is everything that matters whether he earns it by cheating, bribery or fraud. For that he disregards not only the laws of the country, but also Islamic norms.

The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has disowned such people and rejected them from his followers by saying: “He is not from us who indulges in cheating practices.”

One un-Islamic way of making money is to deal in stolen goods. The one who deals in such goods does not pause to think that one day it can turn out that his own goods are stolen and sold in the bazaar. Would he like this to happen? The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had warned: “Whoever purchases stolen goods knowing them to be so, shares in its indignation and crime.”

Besides, bribing officers to secure favours is considered unavoidable today no matter the harm it causes to others and the poor masses in particular. Islam has condemned this practice as can be seen from the following Prophetic saying: “May Allah curse both the giver and receiver of bribery in the course of a legal dispute.”

A state officer was once reported to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) for having accepted a gift from someone in the course of his

public duty. When this was verified the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) became exceedingly upset. He summoned the officer to his presence and asked him why he had accepted something which was not his due?

“It was only a gift, Oh the Messenger of Allah”, explained the Officer.

“If you were not in the official position, would anyone give you such a gift”? retorted the Holy Prophet.

What the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) meant to tell him was a bribe which he had accepted as a gift.

Instruction was promptly given to return the gift to the giver; the officer was dismissed from his post.

Thus Islam abhors and totally rejects the practice of bribery.

WHAT IS IDEAL YOUTH?

An ideal Muslim youth is that who is righteous, modest and harmonious with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and Ahl-ul-Bait. It is this youth whose life-style is exemplary and worth emulating.

Opportunities, are those convenient times and good chances which seized and acted upon by a young man, he stands to gain and prosper in the future. Pitfalls are the dangers and risky things around a young man tempting him away from the path of Islam. If he allows himself to fall victim of them, they would lead him to disaster and failure in life.

YOUTH: AS RECOGNIZED BY ISLAM

Islam has recognized youth as a potent force, a sensitive and important phase of man's life, requiring careful attention and right training. A young man's heart and mind are like a clean slate, yet unspoiled and unpolluted by external influences. What is seen, heard or read by him are absorbed staunchly, and deep impression is created on his heart and mind. The benefits of the right training given to the youth under healthy and sound conditions reflects in later periods of life.

And that is why the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had forewarned in the following words not to neglect this phase but to make the best of this important period in man's life:

“Two things one does not appreciate their value except when he is deprived of them: 1. Youth 2: Good health.

“Let five things be appreciated and taken opportunity of before the coming of five:

1. Your youth before your old age.
2. Your health before sickness.
3. Your spare time before becoming occupied.
4. Your well-off state before poverty.
5. Your life before your death.

Thus, we see that youth needs to be taken good care of in the same way as one cares for his health and wealth. Not only this, but the way one has spent his youth is to be questioned on the Day of Judgement. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had warned:

“No servant of Allah would be able to raise his steps (move forward) on the Day of Judgement until he is questioned on that he had passed his life and in what way did he allow his youth to wear out.”

Thus, youth once passed away is never to return. The physical strength and mental alertness of youth once vanished cannot be restored. Many an old man does repent for having neglected and wasted the potential opportunities he had during his young age.

A Muslim whose submission to Islam is completed with the belief in the Day of Judgement, needs to concern himself as to how he is going to account on that day for the ways he had passed his youth.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL GROWTH OF YOUTH

In Islam a period of seven years is stipulated for a child to play about. This assists in the growth of his body and senses. In this period all that the child sees and hears creates a lasting impression on its mind like an engraving over a stone. As such a healthy care taken by mother followed by good nursery education during this period is of paramount importance.

Then comes the age of education, both religious and secular, from the age of 7 to 14 years. It is during this period that the basic primary education is provided when a child acquires the taste of life by learning to read and write and conducts himself in ways that help him to get along with others. It is also during this age that essential knowledge of Islamic fundamentals i.e. '*Usool*', the Roots of Islam, and "*Furu*" the branches of the religion, need to be imparted to the child thoroughly with practical training for '*salat*' the daily prayers and '*saum*' the fasting during the holy month of Ramadhan.

As the child spends more time at home, the responsibility of its proper upbringing rests upon its parents. Education at school and religious madressas, both being equally important, is not enough. Parents have an important part to play in explaining and inculcating good habits in their offsprings.

ADORNMENT FOR YOUTH

During the times of his caliphate, Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) once went to the cloth bazaar in Kufa to do some shopping. Accompanied by his slave, Qamber, he stopped at a shop to inquire about a kind of cloth which they wished to purchase. In response, the shopkeeper said:

“Oh Amir-ul-Mumineen; I certainly have for sale the material you want.” But Ali (a.s.) went away without making any purchase from that shop. The reason was that the shopkeeper had recognized him as Amir-ul-Mumineen, he was going to receive special attention and consideration in price. This the Imam wanted to avoid. He would rather not enter into negotiation for a purchase lest the shopkeeper felt inclined to give him a preferential treatment.

Walking further down the bazaar, they entered into another shop where Ali (a.s.) purchased two clothes, one for three dirhams and the other for two. He gave the costly dress which was better in quality to Qamber and retained the other of a cheaper quality for himself. To this Qamber expressed disapproval saying that the better cloth would be more suitable for his master Ali (a.s.) who sat on the pulpit to deliver sermons while preach to the people. Ali (a.s.) explained that since Qamber was young and the young ones normally are more fond of adornment, it was he who should wear the better cloth. Moreover, added Ali (a.s.), the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had recommended that slaves be provided with clothes and food similar to what their masters enjoyed.

Youths have a natural desire for adorning themselves and Islam recognizes this factor. By passing the better cloth to Qamber, Ali (a.s.) in fact encouraged him to satisfy this natural instinct. To

satisfy this instinct is a beloved act to Allah as stated by Ali (a.s.) in one of his sayings:

“Verily Allah is all beautiful and He loves beauty and He loves to see the effect of blessings bestowed upon his servant.”

Stating that Allah is all-beautiful, it does not mean as we understand beauty by the physical and material appearance. It is the combination of the positive attributes of Allah that Allah is all-beautiful. On the other hand Imam Ali (a.s.) points to where the real beauty and adornment of man lies:

“Distinction of a man lies in his level of intelligence and reasoning power and his (real) beauty and adornment lies in his manliness and valour.”

“Ilm (knowledge) is such a beauty to adorn with that cannot be concealed and such a related thing which does not go in vain.”

Thus, ideal beauty and adornment for every man lies not only in his manliness but also in the knowledge he acquires and his power of reasoning.

WHERE YOUTH CAN LEAD

In Islam, the criterion for leading is neither based upon the amount of wealth one has nor his age. Also it is not based upon tribal or family honour or status. According to Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), the following qualities have been enumerated for a leader.

1. Knowledge
2. Chastity i.e. pure, virtuous, simple in life-style.
3. Good character and decent manners
4. Generosity
5. Intelligence

From Islamic history, we find that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) when selecting people to lead an army or a delegation, took into account merits rather than age, tribal affinity or personal relationship. Even youths possessing decent qualities were chosen to lead.

Zayd bin Haritha, a former slave, is the only person among the companions of the Prophet to be mentioned by name in the Qur'an. He was the third person after Khadija and Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) to accept Islam. He was the commander of the Muslim army sent to fight against the Christian forces at Muta.

Zayd had a son, Usamah, from his first wife, Umm Ayman. Usamah was almost nineteen years old when he was appointed the commander of the army which consisted of all well-known companions of the Prophet, such as Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman. When some of the companions frowned upon this appointment, the Prophet delivered a lecture in which he said:

“Zayd was better than you, and his son Usamah also is better than

you all.”

Mus’ab bin ‘Umair:

In the early days of Islam, two prominent personalities from the tribe of Khazraj in Medina came to Mecca. After listening to the captivating words of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) they accepted Islam. Thereafter, they requested the Holy Prophet to send a representative to Medina so as to teach the Holy Qur’an and propagate the message of Islam to the people in Medina.

It was not an easy decision and selection for the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) to make, bearing in mind that, Medina which was prominent city of Arabia in those days was involved in great rift between the two major tribes of Aws and Khazraj. For years they were embroiled in fighting each other.

Thus, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had to select a person of such a high calibre who would successfully carry out this important mission. He was to be a person of such refined and decent character so as to be able to win the hearts of the warring people.

From a number of his aged and young companions, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) selected Mus’ab bin ‘Umair who was well learned in the knowledge of the Holy Qur’an and a dedicated active young man. Accompanied by Asa’d, he proceeded to Medina and on arrival immediately embarked upon his mission with much fervor and sincerity. By his great devotion to Islam, his good knowledge of the Holy Qur’an and decent character, his teachings were so effective that he succeeded in converting large numbers of people to Islam. It did not take long for a great number of the Aws and Khazraj to be attracted towards him and accept his guidance and

leadership.

It is related that Mus'ab was the first person in Medina to establish and lead the congregational prayer daily.

Thus, this young man not only carried out a great mission of propagating Islam but also paved the way for the Holy Prophet subsequently to migrate and establish the first Islamic state in Medina.

EXEPLARY YOUTHS OF KERBALA

Ali bin Husayn

Ali Al-Akber

Islamic history has provided some supreme models of such youth who under the most dangerous situation did not waver, and remained steadfast on the path of truth. The tragedy of Kerbala has provided the best of examples.

In 60 A.D. the caravan of Imam Husain (a.s.) and his companions was moving towards Kufa. When it left the way-station of Qasr Bani Muqatil, suddenly the Imam was overtaken by a short nap. As his eyes opened, he recited three times the Qura'nic ayat of 'Inna Lillahi wa Inna llayhi Raje'un.' Meaning: 'We are from Allah and unto Him is our return.'

Ali Akbar, the young son of Imam Husain (a.s.) trailing his father was taken aback for this recitation. The Imam in reply said he had just seen a vision in which a rider on seeing us made these remarks: "Death follows along with this caravan."

Hearing it, the son inquired:

"Father! Are we not on the path of truth?"

"By Allah, to Whom is our return, certainly we are on the right path," replied the Imam.

"That being so, we do not care at all if we die," reacted the ideal young son of the Imam.

Hearing this sublime view of the son, the Imam looked at him and lovingly said: .

“May Allah reward you with the best of rewards from a father to a son.”

Qasim bin Hasan

It was the night of Ashura, the eve of the Supreme Martyrdom of Kerbala. The Imam in one of his discourses was presenting to his companions a list of those who were destined to lay down their lives on the following morning for the cause of truth and defence of Islam. In the courses of it, Qasim, a thirteen year old son of Imam Hasan (a.s.), enthusiastically stood up to enquire from his uncle whether he too was destined to have the privilege of martyrdom for the noble cause. The Imam in response thought of testing the faith and determination of his young nephew.

“How is death with you? O my son!” asked the Imam.

“Sweeter than Honey, O uncle!” replied Qasim.

Deeply moved with such a gesture of valour and devotion, the Imam was much moved, and informing him of what was to happen the following day, the Imam said:

“Yes dear son, you are also destined to be martyred and so is my little baby Ali Asghar.”

Hearing this prediction, Qasim became rather perturbed and enquired:

“Oh uncle! Will the enemy enter the camp of our household members?”

“No Qasim! It will not happen so. But I shall have to take the child

to the battlefield to ask water from the enemy for quenching his thirst. The response from them will be a three-pronged arrow aimed at the child's tender throat." Such were the sublime ideals of the youths in the tragedy of Kerbala. They had accepted death rather than bowing down before the oppressive and wicked men of the Umayyads, because they were fully convinced that they are on the right path.

And when their turn came on the day of Ashura, they boldly went forward to the front and fought the enemy with profound courage and valour, despite three days under the scorching sun till they laid down their lives.

When we remember them and salute to their profound spirit of sacrifices for the cause of truth, there is a lesson to draw from their noble lives. And that is to uphold the truth and remain steadfast on the ideals and teachings of Islam, under all circumstances, even if the sacrifice of one's life has to be given.

‘AIDS’ -A DIVINE PUNISHMENT

Youth is the time when dreams enfold the young and the urge is strong in the veins to extract fully the joys of life in this world of pleasure. Here is the true story of one such man and its tragic aftermath.

The young man from a Middle Eastern country, his pocket full of petro-dollars and his head dizzy with stories regaled to him by other men of his age, was on his way to Europe to savour the joys this world had to offer him. He was on his way on a flight to London.

He carried a note book choked with contact telephone numbers and addresses supplied to him by his friends who had been on earlier sprees to the glamour world centres in Europe including London. Armed with these he looked forward to a hectic spell of forbidden adventure.

In London the young man put into a hotel from where he thought he would set upon his quest for the ultimate joys his friends had described to him and which he dreamed of in anxious anticipation.

The attractive girl came in much later on to keep her assignment and the young man called up drinks to entertain himself and the girl and ‘tune’ himself up for the unimagined pleasure of the meeting. All seemed to go well, except for the fact that the youth was so overcome that he let himself go to the full getting quite drunk and was not quite besides himself through everything that happened later on.

By and by the youth went into a heavy sleep and found himself

fast asleep only to get up again late next morning. He found his companion gone and recovering his senses he looked around to find a note besides the table in the room. He rushed to grab it and found this message:

“Welcome to the ‘AIDS’ world in London.”

Reading on, his heart beating frantically and his hands shaking nervously he saw the rest of the message of doom that struck at the heart of his quest for his first-time flirtation with wild pleasure. The note further said:

“Look, I have AIDS which was given to me by one like you and I am to die soon. I do not want to leave this world without revenge. I want the others in the world, those like you, to share the agony and the suffering that I am meeting on my way to a fast approaching death.”

The young man, with the awful truth dawning over him, promptly got in touch with his Muslim friends in London and confided his sorry tale to them. All of them were unable to tell him anything more than that he should get back to his home country as fast as possible. However, the young man preferred to stay on in London and have himself treated there. His parents were informed and they rushed to look after their dying son in London hospital.

To one of his friends who met him later he sadly said, “Well I have to die some day ... but now I have to meet death soon ... sooner than I ever imagined it to be. I blame myself. But I have one thing to say to all those friends of mine who drove me on to this senseless search for such shortlived pleasures and a life of sin, tantalizing me with all the stories of a glittering nightlife, with no warnings of the dangers that lurked. Now I have to die and this is perhaps God’s punishment for my forgetfulness. I can only hope He will forgive me.”

(Tehran Times)

What is ‘AIDS’?

It is an epidemic of alarming seriousness never experienced before in the world. It is such a disease that destroys the natural defensive system of human body for which no remedy has so far been found. One who suffers is considered to be on the sure way of death.

But what are the causes of this dreadful disease? Medical experts are unanimous in their opinion that the primary source of it is the homosexuals, the gays/lesbians, the hetero-sexuals and the drug addicts well-known to abound in the West. The dens of vices and the gay clubs of New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and other centres of Europe are well-known places for such vices which are now recognized to promote this fearful disease.

Muslims believe that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w) had not concerned himself with the material and spiritual welfare of only the people of his times, but also with that of the people to come after him till the day of Judgement. His divinely endowed vision enabled him to foresee the times to come. His following warning is worth considering herewith:

“No indecency and obscenity becomes widely prevalent among the people, unless they are consequently afflicted with such plagues and epidemics which had never previously overtaken their predecessors.”

(Sawahul Aamal, page 226)

By the words plague and epidemic is meant such annoying and troublesome malignant diseases which spread around unchecked. Today what disease would the foregoing Prophetic warning apply to other than the ‘Aids’ which is confirmed to have originated from the indecent homosexuals and drug addicts etc.

YOUTH: AN EMOTIONAL AND ZEALOUS PERIOD OF LIFE

Youth is acknowledged as an emotional period when body urges inner desires and the heat of young blood are all at their peak.

There are certain things in life which if left uncontrolled then one's emotions can become toxic. They harmfully lead one to feel high and at his top such as foregoing the good sense of humility, one may tend to belittle others. In warning against the pitfall of such things, Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) says:

“For the intelligent, it behoves him to guard himself against the intoxication of wealth, power, knowledge, glorification and youth.”

The greatest danger before youth is the lustful and immoral way of life.

When he allows himself to fall its victim, he stoops low and loses not only his respect but that of his family. Once one becomes enslaved by his desires and pursues to satisfy them, he is unable to regain freedom from immoral habits.

In Islam involvement in lustful and immoral ways of life has been described as a kind of slavery from which freedom becomes unattainable. The following words of Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) are worth pondering upon:

“One enslaved by lust is like a captive who is not liable to secure freedom.”

“One overwhelmed by lust and carnal desires is degraded and lower than a purchased slave.”

That the preservation of one's honour and self-esteem lies in guarding oneself against lust and unlawful desires is explained by the Imam in these words:

“Whoever recognized and understood the meaning of true honour and self-esteem would remain guarded from the lowliness of his lust and the falsehood of his desires.”

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