

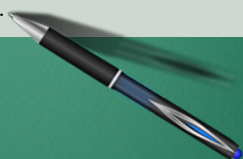


This book provides, for the first time in English, a vista to the original ideas and novel teachings of Allamah Ali Asghar Karbaschian, the founder of the Alawi educational institute in Iran which has gained international fame as the 'Eton College of Iran' because it has produced successive generations of political and cultural elites in the country.

Karbaschian was a renaissance man. He was a selfless senior cleric, a pedagogue, a self-taught educationalist, a maverick among his clerical peers and yet an orthodox religious man, an amazing orator, and finally a great friend to his students and the teachers whom he supervised.

He decided to leave the seminary environment to provide modern education for the pre-revolution youth. His new model of education aimed to inculcate religious values among teenagers who would later have to face the serious challenges of secular higher education.

This book is a must-read for all the pedagogists and educationalists regardless of their religious or secular persuasion as well as for anyone who wants to learn about providing modern education to Muslim youth while preparing them to face the challenges of secular culture.



Allamah Ali Asghar Karbaschian

The Master's Testament



Allamah
Ali Asghar
Karbaschiyan



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Translated by
Mehdi Baghi

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*‘Allāmah
Karbāschiyān*

First Published in 2024
Contemporary Thoughts Press

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England, B3 1HL, UK

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www.contemporarythoughtspress.com

THE MASTER'S TESTAMENT

Translated into English by
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ISBN: 978-1-914282-06-5
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FOREWORD

The eminent Master, the late ‘Allāmah ‘Alī Aṣghar Karbāschiyān (May his soul rest in peace) was born in 1914 in Tehran. He developed an interest in educating young adults in his days of youth, an interest encouraged by erudite scholars, particularly the late Sayyid Riḍā Darbandī and the Grand Ayatollah Burūjirdī.

Having completed his seminary education in Tehran and Qum and having attained the status of *ijtibād*,¹ he left Qum for Tehran in 1955, aspiring to establish a school to serve as a model for other staff members of educational institutions. Thus, he discussed the issue with his old friend, the late Ḥājj Muqaddas, a pious sermonist of Tehran, and benefited from his support. Then, he appointed the late Riḍā Rūzbih, a prominent scholar and a paragon of moral virtues, as the principal of the newly founded ‘Alawī School.

In the beginning, the master would do most of the chores at the school, like shopping and cleaning classrooms and washrooms. He and the late Mr. Rūzbih taught most of the classes. However, as the number of students grew, other teachers were employed in time and the master taught fewer

1. That is, independent judgment in legal and theological questions.

classes and he later taught ethics. It was so delightful to listen to ethical discussions from a paragon of virtues. The graduates of the school still cherish the reminiscences of those lessons and admit that the lectures had positive impacts on their lives and careers.

Having established the high school, he founded the 'Alawī Elementary School in 1962, maintaining that education must be received in childhood. He would recite these lines:

While a stick is green, thou canst bend it as
thou listest.

When it is dry, fire alone can make it straight.¹

The school focused on imparting knowledge and moral virtues, quality education, selecting students from religious and pious families, educational infrastructure, and abstention from putting up false fronts and window-dressing. He maintained that anything which is done in the name of religion must be a model of excellence. Therefore, despite leading a simple, austere life himself, he purchased the best facilities for the school and the vestiges of such precision and foresight are still noticeable after more than half a century at the 'Alawī School.

1. Sa'dī (1210-1291), *Gulistān* (Rose Garden), Chapter 7, On the Effects of Education, the third anecdote (Rehatsek). All the notes are by the translator, Mehdi Baghi. Translations of Qur'ānic verses are by Alī Qulī Qarā'ī. Citations from Persian and Arabic prose and poetry, unless stated otherwise, are by the translator.

Selection of devoted staff, even janitors, was of particular significance. The major steps taken by him included selecting religious teachers with precision and assisting them with spiritual growth through meticulously supervising their activities and providing them with instructions. Teachers' meetings were weekly held by him to help them remember the goals of education. Teacher-parent meetings were also held on a weekly basis to establish harmony between parents and the goals of the school.

The erudite master benefited immensely from the expertise of professional as well as modern methodologies, and sent a number of teachers on trips abroad to visit educational institutions. He would inquire his acquaintances, returning from abroad, about any experience they could share. Camping arrangements would be made by him for students during summer vacations to help them brush up what they had learned in the previous educational year.

His struggles in running the school came to fruition in time when its graduates stepped into society and noticed their principal's foresight and profound understanding of life. Further, thanks to his erudition and piety, religious authorities and sources of emulation granted him permission to spend half the *khums*, allotted to the Last Shī'ī Imam,¹ on the school.

1. *Sahm-i Imām* (lit. the Imam's share), consists of half of the *khums* (contribution of one fifth of income paid by

Philanthropists, witnessing the fruits of his endeavors, contributed in different ways to the betterment of the school. Thus, the path of the devoted man was divinely paved. Foundation of tens of schools, for boys and girls, in Tehran and other cities in Iran and abroad by the graduates of the 'Alawī School, who followed the example and guidelines of the late Master, have been the fruits of his perseverance, loftiness of purpose, and turning away from worldly posts and positions.

Tens of cultural institutes and organizations have been established by his disciples, in addition to those founded by him, aiming at finding solutions to the issues faced by people and serving the underprivileged.

Having lived a life imbued with divine blessings, the eminent Master passed away in August 2003, departing on a divine and delightful journey towards his Friend.

Shi'as) allotted to the Twelfth Imam (as). The other half is allotted to Sayyids (descendants of the Prophet (saw) through Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (sa) with the permission of a *mujtahid* or source of emulation in religious matters.

ABOUT THE BOOK

It is through the everlastingness and richness of their thoughts and ideas that great men are remembered as shining stars in the history of mankind. The lifespans of such great men are far shorter in capacity to display, in their entirety, the existential effulgence of their worldly lives. Therefore, the corporeal death of the elite is but the start of their pure thoughts and ideas.

The late erudite Master, Ḥājj Shaykh ‘Alī Aṣghar Karbāschiyān, was truly one of the rarities whose contributions have blessed our times. His lifetime, nearing a centenary, did not last long enough to display, in full bloom, all his erudition, pure thoughts, and original contributions to humanity. It was in his character to slide, in the course of his life, into obscurity and inconspicuousness. He led a life of selflessness; he neither aspired to achieve recognition, nor did he publish any of his own writings.

The corporeal death of this great man was but the effulgence of the flames, concealed in his loving and restless spirit, which serves as a beacon shedding light on the path to guidance. Although we are deprived of meeting him in person and benefiting from his temporal being, we are content

with availing ourselves of his pure thoughts and ideas in days to come.

The book in your hands is, in the wording of the Master, his cultural and educative testament, highlighting the late great Master's insightful suggestions about education and school management. He replied to an array of questions raised on the principles and methodology of education and his words, at his suggestion, were transcribed and the text was submitted to him. The text of this cultural and educative testament was edited by him in June 2003, and its veracity was confirmed in the following lines:

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

A number of friends and those interested in the domain of education had requested me to touch upon the fundamentals of education. To address their demand, a summary of educational discussions – based on the Holy Qur'ān and the traditions narrated from the Infallibles (as) as well as the experience gained in those long years of founding and managing the 'Alawī School – is hereby presented, aspiring to be divinely accepted and hoping that it may contribute to following the path of the prophets whereon man may acquire virtues and attain salvation.

The Master's experiences in the long years of his running the 'Alawī High School,

founded by him, as well as his lofty and dynamic ideas about education served as two main factors in establishing a school which well deserves the title of ‘modern school of religious education’. His main inspiration, when he was first consumed by this powerful love, was to provide the society with many an accomplished scholar, those whom he termed as ‘men of knowledge and religion’.

His educative testament may shed light on the path of those who intend to make use of it as ‘an ever-fixed mark’ in tempestuous times when education and ethics are fraught with peril, ‘a shining star’ whereby one may steer a straight course and draw a distinction between a pond and a mirage.

We are hopeful that educators and students alike may put into practice the inspiring ideas of that erudite thinker of noble character in the renaissance of ‘modern school of religious education’ and succeed in educating ‘men of knowledge and virtue’.

Center for Publication of
‘Allāmah Karbāschiyān’s Works

Tehran, June 2024

THE CULTURAL AND EDUCATIVE TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. Obligation of devoting oneself to education

It is incumbent on any Muslim to acquaint people with religious teachings and instructions. The Noble Prophet (saw) said, 'May the Lord of the World make happy those who listen to and learn my message and convey it to those who have not heard them. Those present are supposed to convey the message to others.[1]

The Noble Prophet (saw) is quoted as saying that a Muslim is supposed to convey the divine message and religion to the coming generations. Verily if people had acted upon that dictum, the entire world would have been Muslims.

The Holy Qur'ān says, 'Indeed those who conceal what We have sent down of manifest proofs and guidance, after We have clarified it in the Book for mankind, they shall be cursed by Allah and cursed by the cursers.'[2] The late Ayatollah Burūjirdī (May God be satisfied with him) maintained that based on this blessed verse any Muslim is obliged to impart religious teachings and instructions to

others. It is a historical fact that educators have succeeded, directly or indirectly, in saving the lives of multitudes of people.

If we fail to impart the religious message and guidance to others and, as a consequence, some people steer off the straight course, we will have in the Hereafter a share of their sins in the records of our deeds. Similarly, if a small child is on the verge of falling off the roof and we fail to hold them, we will be accountable for our neglect, and we will be thus censured, 'You could have saved the child. How come that you have not?'

If you see a blind man near a well
It is a crime for you to remain silent.¹

When one (who is able to open a school wherein thousands of Muslim children may receive their education and become men of knowledge and virtue) fails to act upon his obligation and deprive those prospective students of such opportunity, he will have a share of their corruption and sins. Imam 'Alī (as) said, 'One who does not protest against the vices of some people will be regarded as one of the vicious.'[3]

A parent with a child afflicted with cancer may sell their home and spend the money on medical treatment. In like manner, one who is not satisfied with irreligiousness or corruption of Muslim children needs to take some measure to educate

1. Sa'dī, *Gulistān*, Chapter 1, The Manners of Kings, Anecdote 38 (Rehatsek).

them, or else, he will be accountable for their corruption and sins.

The Noble Messenger of God said, 'One who is indifferent to the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim.' [4] Is educating children and young adults not considered as the affairs of Muslims? Is the dignity of Muslims in future not in the hands of today's children and young adults? Do educators not safeguard Muslims' happiness and dignity in the future? Therefore, one who considers himself a Muslim needs to contribute to this divine mission or he will stand accountable on the Day of Retribution.

Becoming physicians and engineers, even butchers and bakers, is a collective duty of the individuals in a Muslim community. If others do not assume such responsibility, such obligation will turn into an imperative duty for any mature Muslim. Now, is educating Muslim children not one of the obligatory tasks? The Noble Prophet (saw) said, 'The best of men is one who provides people with maximum benefit.' [5] Nevertheless, maximum benefit does not lie in rendering material services, since providing people with food, clothing, and medical treatment is but attending to their physical needs. How may clothing, food, and physical health be compared to man's spiritual growth and guidance?

The Noble Prophet (saw) said to the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Alī (as), 'If God Almighty guides one person by you, it will be better for

you than anything else under the blue sky.'[6]
It is unfortunate that our reason is overcome by our senses; as a consequence, we assume that assisting people lies but in providing them with clothing, food, accommodation, employment, and medical care. Guiding and educating them is of utmost significance, but education requires certain preliminaries.

The late Ayatollah Burūjirdī (May God be satisfied with him) said, 'His Excellency is a physician! He says, 'I've saved a thousand people from death.' But, it must be appreciated that his former patients will die in a few years! The true salvation lies in saving a soul that will be evermore alive.'

The late Ḥājj Āqā Ḥusayn Qummī (May God be satisfied with him) said, 'It is important to educate people to establish prayers and go to mosques, rather than build mosques. One who is accustomed to establish prayers will do so without there being a mosque, but it will be of no avail to build tens of mosques when there is no one to establish prayers.'

The Commander of the Faithful (as) said, 'Compared to enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong, any good deed, even waging *jihad* in the cause of God, may be likened to a drop of water against a deep sea.'[7]

Accordingly, one who establishes prayers, fasts, goes on pilgrimage to Mecca, pays his *khums* and *zakāh*, but neglects the secondary principle of uttermost importance, i.e. enjoining what is good

and forbidding what is wrong, has failed to act upon his religious obligation of utmost significance. Similarly, people ignorantly follow sinful lives; when a knowledgeable and religious person is able to save them from the swamp of ignorance through providing them with guidance, but fails to do so, he will have a share of their sins.

The Commander of the Faithful (as) said, ‘God Almighty will ask the wise, ‘Why did you not teach them?’ before He will ask the ignorant, ‘Why did you not learn?’[8]

It is incumbent upon Muslims to educate and guide others, and the more one is blessed with divine guidance, the more one will be responsible for providing people with guidance. One who acts upon his individual duties to God but neglects to guide others and make better Muslims of them has steered off the course of innate disposition (*fiṭrah*); since one endowed with such awakened innate disposition may not be indifferent to those deprived of educators, morals, and spiritual growth. Such deprived people are those who are afflicted with drug abuse, sexual perversion, mental disorders, and moral corruption and tread the road to ruin. A healthy innate disposition bids us to mobilize our material and spiritual reserves in their entirety to struggle most effectively in the cause of human guidance and salvation.

If thou hast no sympathy for the troubles of others

Thou art unworthy to be called by the name of a man.¹

God Almighty says in the Qur'ān, 'You are the best nation [ever] brought forth for mankind: you bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, and have faith in Allah.'[9]

God, the Most High, is not saying that you are the best nation since you establish *ṣalāh*, fast, and go on pilgrimage to Mecca. He is saying that you are the best nation, as you enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong.

The enemies of Islam noticed that Muslims' dignity and glory will fade away by suspending these two principles. As a consequence, they disseminated false beliefs, like 'Jesus follows his own religion and Moses does likewise!', and 'I will not be interred in his grave!' Thus, they rendered these two principles ineffective.

Those intent on evading this duty argue that enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong are but restricted to reminding people of their obligations, saying, 'An Apostle's duty is only to communicate'[10]. They must be inquired whether the Noble Prophet (saw) was simply content with conveying religious teachings, but did not put his mission into practice, or he propagated the religion of Islam despite many a hardship and harassment?

1. Sa'dī, *Gulistān (Rose Garden)*, Chapter 1, The Manners of Kings, Anecdote 10 (Rehatsek).

It must be borne in mind that verbally enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong may be effective but to a meagre extent. What is intended by these two principles is to act upon what is good and forbid doing what is wrong. The aim of these principles is that small children be brought up in such a way that they become accustomed to doing what is good, without being censured and punished, and abstain from doing what is wrong, since small children are more impressionable and prone to change.

Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) said, ‘Attend to children’s upbringing.’[11]

Sa’dī says:

While a stick is green, thou canst bend it as thou listest.

When it is dry, fire alone can make it straight.¹

Accordingly, Muslim children are supposed to be brought up in a healthy and peaceful environment so that they may receive schooling and moral education, in which case, each of them will be able to save multitudes.

2. Acquaintance with foreign methodologies and the appropriate form of encounter

The Holy Qur’ān bids Muslims ‘So should anyone aggress against you, assail him in the manner he

1. See above, footnote 1.

assailed you'[12], that is, familiarize yourselves with the strategies deployed by your adversaries.

The late Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn (May God be satisfied with him) once was taking the preliminary measures required in founding a school. He said, 'Guidance may not be disseminated but through the manner whereby some people steered off the straight course.'

Dr. Samuel Martin Jordan (1871 – 1952) founded the American College of Tehran about seventy years ago and served as its principal for forty years, wherein he educated hundreds of students and propagated Christianity in Iran. A number of Salesian priests founded the Andishih School in Tehran. Despite being highly educated and knowing several languages, they were content with a life of austere simplicity and a meagre income, but they disseminated their ideas in this country. Similarly, Jews established the Ittihad School and the ORT technical schools on a few acres of land, wherein professional teachers taught in classes with 12 pupils.

Our enemies found out where they had to commence their activities and that was the time when we were asleep. Some people sent their children to those schools and later assisted them with furthering their studies abroad. As a consequence, they lost their faith. Upon their return, they held academic credentials, held sensitive public positions, and had a free hand as to their undertakings. When our enemies strive to divest our children of their faith

and inculcate materialistic ideas in them, we need to establish schools, aiming at safeguarding our children against faithlessness and educating them to become men of knowledge and faith.

3. Shortcomings of schools in the past

It is unfortunate that modern schools did not pay heed to moral virtues and religious beliefs. As a consequence, religious families resorted to not sending their children to school, claiming that children turn away from religious beliefs upon studying at high school! Therefore, we had no alternative but to seek assistance from foreign experts or Westernized graduates. Well, what can you expect from a hog but a grunt? They disseminated their vicious beliefs in our society.

Traditional schools, deprived of modern methodologies and sciences, taught but the Qur'an, religious teachings, and literature. Our young generations were impeded by mysterious hands from learning modern sciences along with religious teachings and as a consequence lagged behind in terms of the acquisition of modern sciences and technologies. Nonetheless, the Noble Prophet (saw) is quoted as saying, 'Seek knowledge even in China.'^[13] China was considered as the farthest of lands from Medina in those days wherein religious beliefs were not reportedly taught. It would be wrong to follow the West blindly in as much as it would be inappropriate to turn away from Western sciences and technologies.

4. The novel methodology employed in founding the 'Alawī School

Accordingly, a number of religious people, aiming at assisting students to build their character, founded the 'Alawī School in 1955. They strove to provide their students with quality modern education along with teaching them religious beliefs and moral virtues. Therefore, they invited the best teachers to teach at the school.

They were endowed with divine blessings in all the stages of founding the school, from finding a suitable building and receiving the permission from the Ministry of Education to inviting a qualified principal. Mr. Rūzbih (May God be satisfied with him), in particular, facilitated the management of the school. He held a master's degree in physics and one in education; in addition to academic mastery and unequalled devotion and spiritual growth, he taught math, chemistry, literature, Arabic, and religious teachings.

The Noble Prophet (saw) said, 'I was divinely appointed to teach people moral nobilities [and thereby complete the mission of the prophets aiming at helping people to attain spiritual growth].'[14] It is the mission of all the prophets to do likewise. Therefore, the teaching staff at the 'Alawī School were not simply content with providing students with education and help them become physicians and engineers, but they strove to acquaint them with moral virtues and spiritual growth so that having learned modern sciences

they would be able to serve the society through their knowledge and expertise.

That beacon shone but through the late Mr. Rūzbih's academic knowledge, sincerity of intention, God-wariness, and sense of orientation. There were schools wherein later academic authorities received their education, but they did not succeed in making God-wary men of knowledge – the fundamental mission of the prophets – out of them. In contrast, the 'Alawī School, in addition to being endowed with scientific accomplishments, succeeded – through adherence to moral standards and the late Mr. Rūzbih's management skills – in educating outstanding students who, God willing, followed his footsteps and, bearing in mind the exalted goals and mission of their school, founded similar schools. It is to be noted, once more, that the late Mr. Rūzbih led a life of austere simplicity and was a paragon of God-wariness and devotion to Him.

Those who are able to strive in the cause of educating people and assisting them with attaining to spiritual growth, as the prophetic mission of the Messenger of God (saw), but neglect their duties, will stand accountable on the Day of Resurrection. Accordingly, it is incumbent on us to strive, with utmost steadfastness, for the education of the younger generation.

The teaching and administrative staff members of these schools are supposed to bear in mind this divine mission, persevere in safeguarding

moral integrity and God-wariness, adhere to the educational principles of this testament, as the key to the achievements of the 'Alawī School, and thereby enjoy dignity before God Almighty on the Day of Resurrection and live evermore under the aegis of the Seal of the Prophets (saw) and the pure Infallible Imams (as). We hope that they enjoy such blessing!

Section ONE

Educational
Principles and Approaches

*Allāmah
Karbāschiyān*

1. PURPOSEFULNESS

The purposeful and the resolute may not be preoccupied with alien factors. Resolved to educate the youth and help them with attaining to spiritual growth, such individuals are not bothered by people's satisfaction or dissatisfaction. It happens, at times, that people start something, but they consign to oblivion their goals; as a consequence, their course of action is altered by Satan. In other words, a school founded in the divine cause of assisting the pupils to build their character and achieve spiritual growth alters its course towards economic and financial matters. Accordingly, steadfastness and perseverance are the keys to achieving one's goals and being proud of one's worldly activities in the next life.

The main goal behind founding schools is to assist the pupils with attaining to spiritual growth, rather than educating them to receive high school and university degrees. The mission of all the Infallible Imams (as) is but to help humanity with attaining to spiritual growth. Those who establish schools for financial gains and strive to have more students to gain further financial gain pay no heed to their pupils' beliefs or moral virtues.

The principle of a school is supposed to be insightful and possess exalted moral virtues; as a result of his noble qualities and in line with the Prophetic tradition, 'People adhere to the religion of their rulers',[15] he may serve as a model for other staff members.

Therefore, the main goal of founding a school is supposed to be in accordance with the Prophetic mission of the Messenger of God (saw), i.e. moral virtues and spiritual growth; but to achieve this goal the school needs to provide students with high quality education. The 'Alawī School was founded with such plan and, God willing, many of its graduates have been blessed with academic achievements.

2. PLANNING

The stage of goal setting is followed by that of planning, in that required preparations must be made with utmost care and precision and no efforts must be spared in this respect. Divine predestination goes hand in hand with human prudence and resourcefulness. Man is divinely endowed with knowledge, awareness, and choice so that he may make use of his intellectual power and reason as well as the laws of nature to tread the path towards perfection.

One of the natural laws is the chain of causality, in that any phenomenon has a cause which engenders its appropriate effect. This law is applicable to physical as well as non-physical phenomena. The world is based on causality, rather than human desires and imagination. People are supposed to be acquainted with the chain of causality so that they appreciate that divinely predestined laws are not subject to alteration. One of the causes of

weakness and decadence is neglecting the principle of causality. The consequence of such neglect and sheer reliance on imaginary factors has impeded man from achieving his goals and has contributed to his fancifulness and subjectivism.

Education rests with certain factors, neglecting which leads to corruption. Those who hold that as they establish prayers and fast, their children and students follow their example reject, in practice, the chain of causality. Put the case that someone sows barley and establishes prayers on his farm and another man sows wheat and drinks alcoholic beverages on his own farm. How may the former reap wheat and the latter harvest barley? As the old saying goes, 'As you sow, so must you reap.'

If a teacher or father fails to keep his promise and when it is said to him that failure to keep his promise may make the child or pupil negligent and disorganized, he would say, 'God is the Greatest. He will provide people with guidance.' In like manner, he believes in two gods: 1. A god who is weak in worldly matters; as a consequence of belief in such god, man needs to exercise extra care in all matters; for instance he needs to see the best physicians and follow their instructions. 2. A god who is mighty in the non-physical realm who rectifies all the matters in lieu of man. Such individual with such attitude assumes no responsibility in upbringing his children.

Accordingly, if the enemies of Islam consider natural laws in their endeavors, they will achieve

their goals. Nevertheless, if Muslims turn away from such laws, they will not attain their end. It is unfortunate that our enemies, striving to disseminate their false beliefs, make use of planning to attract our youth, but we, neglectful of proper planning, are preoccupied with superficial activities. Let us strive from now on to be engaged with educational activities, bearing in mind the divine, natural laws, and rejecting the false perception according to which God must rectify all the issues and that God sees to the proper adherence to religious laws.

3. COOPERATION AND CONSULTATION

The aim of gathering and assembly is the
mobilization of the forces,
As when drops of water unite the sea is
formed.

Ideas make contributions to other ideas,
Consultation engenders perception and
awareness.

The innate, natural disposition bids man that ‘in unity there is strength.’ Since Islam is innately in human nature, God says in the Holy Qur’ān, ‘Cooperate in piety and God-wariness’[16]; ‘And their affairs are by counsel among themselves.’[17].

Addressing the Prophet (saw), God Almighty says, 'And Consult them in the affairs.'[18]

The Noble Prophet (saw) is quoted as saying, 'No one will regret consultation.'[19]

Although the Noble Prophet (saw) considered it inadvisable for warriors, taking part in the battle of Uḥud, to leave Medina, he put on his armor and participated in the battle. Following the defeat suffered by Muslims, he never said that he had not deemed it advisable to leave Medina and cause seventy warriors to fall in that battle. If we believe in the infallibility of the Noble Prophet (saw), we need to follow his model, as the paragon of divine guidance, in our conducts.

The late Mr. Rūzbih said, 'Individuality may work out in many affairs, but one needs to rely on consultation in managing a school, since the teachers' spirit is at work, which is different from a factory worker who, despite his discontent, works as per the specified standards.'

In short, there are three approaches of school administration:

1. Despotism, in that the principal's decisions should be exclusively followed.
2. Rehearsal council, in that the principal has already made council members follow his instructions and they vote for his already made decisions. Such approach will lead to the ruin of the principal and the school. Hence, it will result in loss in this world and the Hereafter.

3. Real and functional council, wherein the principal asks for and makes use of teachers' opinions. If you inquire about the principal's opinion prior to convening the meeting, he will say that his opinion will be in accord with that of the council. Simply imagine how the teachers' morale will be boosted and what a rose garden the school will thereby turn into!

The principal of such school considers himself as one of the members of the council. He does not start a speech and he is the last member to vote. The result of such approach is sincerity, devotion, and friendly cooperation whereby the staff and the students may tread the path to spiritual growth as the main goal of the establishment of that educational institution. Such principal solely works for divine satisfaction and turns away from lustful desires. Thus, he will attain happiness in the next life and attains happiness in this world among his sincere, devoted, and cooperative colleagues.

Failure to make use of such divine approach – the fruit of which is peace in this world – arises from insanity and folly and is displayed through despotism and ostentation. Failure to consult the staff in running a school and acting against the opinions of the council members discourage the teaching staff and educational activities will be derailed by such attitude. An inexperienced teacher with high morale feels at home to make valuable suggestions which may not even occur to

experienced teachers. Thus, such suggestions must be welcome.

Further, the regulations approved by the council must be followed in their entirety.[20] A principal who argues that he is certain that the opinions voiced at the council meeting are baseless and he is not able to act upon them should be aware, in the first place, that what he considers to be baseless might be quite right. Secondly, acting against the regulations approved at the council meeting disrupts order and students will be adversely affected by such irreparable damage.

The teaching and administrative staff members must be unanimous and strive to find solutions to problems through friendship and empathy.

O Ḥāfiz! We find no fault with the foe,
If he is right, we do not dispute over sound
arguments.

Those who pursue their divine goal will face no
fundamental disagreements with like-minded
people.

Dogs and wolves may not be reconciled
But, lions of God are united at heart.¹

Friends of God, who are in pursuit of achieving
their spiritual goals, are not in disagreement, since
there exists neither restriction nor exclusiveness in
the world of intelligibles, in that when millions

1. Rumi, *Mathnawī*, Book 4.

of people know something or possess some virtue, which is unrestricted and related to the world of spirits, they are not in discord; nonetheless, the material world is limited and we notice, for instance, that people disagree and quarrel over material possessions. Therefore, we must be aware that quality education, as the main goal of running a school, may not be achieved without the spirit of empathy and mutual understanding between the teaching staff.

4. STRUGGLING AND PERSEVERANCE

Besides having faith in the goals, planning, consultation, and cooperation, struggling and perseverance are also required in providing quality education. Those who choose teaching as their profession for the love of God but turn away from it as a consequence of other people's ingratitude, insolence, and indifference must know that one who is in pursuit of acquiring moral nobilities and perfection is supposed to exercise fortitude in the face of people's opposition and derision. In like manner, the Seal of the Prophets (saw) was accused of lying, sorcery, and being possessed by evil spirits, but the Noble Prophet (saw) was steadfast in preserving his faith and imparting the divine message and thereby attained to the goal of his mission and delivered billions of people from misguidance and straying from the straight path.

Lion cubs take after their parents
Say if there is any resemblance between you
and the Prophet.¹

The key to such worldwide service was his perseverance, steadfastness, and indefatigable struggle. We consider ourselves to be his followers and failure to follow his model will be of severe consequences for us on the Day of Resurrection. Let us reflect on our past and find some solution to the damages which we have caused to our souls and compensate our misdeeds by following the Noble Prophet (saw) and Imam 'Alī (as) as our role models, attain spiritual growth, and assist others with achieving the same goal.

One who intends to buy a house may need to work harder, sleep fewer hours, and spend less on vacation. When some people struggle so indefatigably to achieve some worldly goal, why should we remain inactive instead of pursuing exalted goals in this world and achieving everlasting life in the Hereafter? Why should we not exercise fortitude in the face of agonies so we will not regret our past when we meet our death.

Exercise fortitude in the face of great
encounters,
Since the dust of the cattle herd is the tutty
powder of the wolf.²

1. Rumi, *Mathnawī*, Book 2.

2. Bahā' al-Dīn al-Āmilī (1547 - 1621), better known as Shaykh Bahā'ī, *Mathnawī-yi Nān u Ḥalwā*.

Believers solely consider divine satisfaction in fulfilling their duties and are not affected by idle gossip.

5. PAYING ATTENTION TO QUALITY

The value of all things rests with their quality. A diamond, despite its small weight, costs millions owing to its certain qualities which are not to be found in other stones.

One who spends millions of toman on medical treatment abroad, for the sake of the specialists practicing there, is aware of the fact that such specialists may not to be found elsewhere. Muslims, despite their small number in early Islamic history, triumphed over their enemies for the sake of the quality of their spirit and morale.

If someone establishes *ṣalāh* with due observance of all the rulings but simply makes an ostentatious display of his devotion, his prayers will be rendered void. The reason is that the quality of that *ṣalāh* is lost. Divine rewards for good deeds are commensurate with an individual's perception, understanding, and spiritual qualities. Similarly, one may fast, but he may not gain anything and may simply taste thirst and hunger. One may keep a vigil at night or in the morning to worship God, but he may solely taste sleeplessness and discomfort. Imam 'Alī (as) says, 'There are many people who fast, but they gain nothing but thirst and hunger.

There are many people who keep vigils, but gain nothing but sleeplessness and discomfort.'[21]

What matters in education is its quality, neglecting which will deprive us of its fruits. When the quality of education is high in a school, it will serve as a model for other schools, and staff members of the model school will have a share of the rewards divinely bestowed on the staff members who follow their footsteps.

The quality of one of our classes, wherein thirty students studied, was so high that one of the graduates of that class decided to teach such class. How could he establish a high quality school if he had not attended such class? Accordingly, quality should not be sacrificed for the sake of quantity.

The number of students studying in the first grade has decreased from 30 to 24 and such decrease has resulted in the students' progress in terms of their studies as well as moral qualities.

Accordingly, qualified students with insufficient means could enroll at the 'Alawī School and be provided with food, clothing, and transportation. In contrast, an unqualified applicant, despite the fact that his parents were willing to pay ten million rials for the tuition fee, could not enroll at the school. This policy aimed at preserving the high quality of education and moral discipline.

Therefore, exchanging the goal of the school, i.e. assisting students with achieving spiritual growth with financial gain, stems from folly since if one invests one's energy and time in some other

enterprise, one may be able to gain a thousand times more. Stepping into such profession requires reflection and when individuals are not intent on pursuing divine goals and lack loftiness of spirit, they should not waste their time.

I do not bid you to be like a salamander or a butterfly,
As you are intent on being consumed by fire,
be manly!¹

Accordingly, one who establishes a school, aiming at assisting others with spiritual growth, needs to provide high quality education through employing teachers endowed with empathy, faith, academic credentials, sound bodies, and high morale, and provide them financially to assist them with focusing on their educational activities because if they are in dire straits, they may not concentrate on their calling.

The facilities and equipment of the school should be of high quality as well. In short, anything in a school needs to be of the best quality. Even a bad janitor will be a bad influence on the students.

A school established with the aim of assisting others with spiritual growth may be likened to a white garment, whereon one single spot is conspicuous. A school with 80 students in each classroom is not an appropriate place for spiritual growth. How may a principal who neglects the

1. Furūghī Bastāmī (1798 - 1854), a famous Persian poet.

moral and spiritual aspect of education, but simply pursues financial gain, achieve such noble goal?

In response to the baseless claim that imperfect existence is better than sheer non-existence, one may state that it is not applicable to the school setting. A school with educational goals, but lacking organization and prestige, will adversely affect the students and its non-existence will be preferable.

6. DOUBLE-CHECKING AND PUNCTUALITY

Having buried Mu'adh, one of his Companions, the Noble Prophet (saw) sealed the gaps between the stones on his grave with mud. His Companions looked in astonishment and thought about the reason of his so doing. He said, 'I know that you are thinking that this grave can be easily filled with soil and no traces will remain. What is he making doubly sure of? Behold! 'God likes that people do things as best as they can.'[22]

If we are going to manage a school according to the goals of the Seal of the Prophet (saw), we need to double check everything and make sure that utmost precision is put into practice. For instance, if a letter is going to be sent to parents, it is expected from an educational institution to have some people read the text of the letter and make sure that it contains no grammatical and stylistic errors and mistakes. Teachers should be paragons

of punctuality. The administrative staff members follow the model of the principal and his assistant. For instance, the driver who would pick up the late Mr. Rūzbih at ten minutes to eight for several months said that the late principal was a paragon of punctuality.

The Noble Prophet (saw) said to somebody, ‘I wait for you here.’ It was a scorching hot day and his Companions said to him, ‘O Messenger of God! It would be a good idea to wait for him in the shade.’ He replied, ‘I said to him, ‘I wait for you here’ [but as I did not mention how long I would be here, I have to wait for him right here.][23]

If we believe in the Islamic faith, we need to follow his model and keep our word. We are true Muslims, rather than nominal Muslims who have simply uttered the formula: ‘I bear witness that there is no god but God. I testify that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God.’ Some eminent Muslim figures are reported as saying that breaking one’s promise is a cardinal sin; which is an allusion to the Qur’anic verses ‘O you who have faith! Why do you say what you do not do? It is greatly outrageous to Allah that you should say what you do not do.’[25]

The late Mr. Rūzbih would say, ‘A teacher is supposed to enter the classroom before the students. It is also of significance as the students arriving at the classroom observe the manners in taking their seats. A teacher who arrives later than the students will find a disorderly class, with the

students pushing each other, jesting, shouting, etc. The students take another lesson when they see that their teacher arrives in time and leaves the classroom after them, in that they learn to be punctual and detail-oriented in all their tasks.

Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) said, 'Call people to beneficence by your proper conduct.'[26] A teacher who lived far from the school and was always punctual said, 'I learned punctuality from a teacher in my student years.' It must be known that double checking is of significance in all affairs. It is not simply restricted to building a house to make doubly sure that the iron bars and cement are of good quality. We receive tuition fee from parents to teach 50 minute classes and as Muslims we are not supposed to teach less or cancel the classes. It must be known that the Qur'anic verse, 'Woe to the defrauders who use short measures'¹ is applicable to us as well.

When there was an inspector at the school and the late Mr. Rūzbih had to be a few minutes late in his class, he asked the students to stay for a few more minutes at the end of the session. It must be known that if we fail to value the students' time we will not have done our duties of obedience which we owe to community (*ḥaqq al-nās*). For instance, it is recommended to join a funeral procession, but it is obligatory to honor our obligations to the students. By cancelling a class to attend a funeral procession we have not honored our obligation,

1. 83:1.

unless we compensate the loss by having a make-up session.

A university professor, who taught composition to grade four students at the Nikān School, lost his mother on a Friday morning, but he attended a meeting with parents at 4 pm right on time. He was inquired about his attendance despite his loss. He replied, 'My mother passed away but why should Muslims be affected by it? I had a meeting and had to be on time.' Some teachers said that he taught them a lesson by his punctuality and honoring his obligations.

The Holy Qur'ān says, 'You shall have the upper hand, should you be faithful.'[27] In what should we believe? We should believe in Qur'ānic teachings. Had we believed in the Qur'ān and acted upon its injunctions, we would have the upper hand over all other nations. If a patient simply names different kinds of medication he will not be cured unless he follows his physician's instructions.

Even if one calls out evermore, 'Wine! Wine!'
He will not be inebriated unless he drinks
wine.

Flowers in a garden will not bloom by uttering
the name of spring,
The name of light may not brighten the
night.¹

1. Rumi, *Mathnawī*.

7. CONCENTRATION

Concentration is a principle of significance in education. The Commander of the Faithful (as) said, 'One who fails to focus on his task will not benefit from his means of accomplishment.' [28]

Such person would be a jack of all trades and master of none, in that he may not accomplish his end. Nonetheless, when someone focuses on one subject and devotes his time and energies to it with peace of mind will succeed in his profession. The late Mr. Burūjirdī said, 'Any person is supposed to set his goal and only focus on it without steering off the course.'

You certainly know people who are enormously talented, but as they get involved in different activities and spread themselves too thin, they simply fail to reap the benefits of their talents at the prime of their life, and live with an ailing health. Thus, they incur heavy losses in this world and the Hereafter. You may know physicians who are involved in real estate and foreign exchange transactions; instead of focusing on their medical calling, they cause the death of their patients!

Some teachers asked me to give a series of one-hour talks on a weekly basis, but I declined. They asked for such talks on a monthly basis. Again, I declined. Once I was asked to give speeches in three evenings, but I declined. They insisted that I did not need to read more, but I could simply suffice to reiterate what I teach in my classes. Again, I had to decline, saying, 'I need to think in peace about

what I am going to teach tomorrow and I cannot focus on something else. Some clerics establish prayers in their own mosques and deliver sermons, run schools, and take pilgrims to Mecca as well! Had they focused on only one engagement, they would have enormously succeeded.

I focused for months on an aphorism by Imam ‘Alī (as), ‘Do not be afraid of the meagre number of those who tread the path of guidance.’[29] As a result, one of our graduates returning from Germany after eleven years came to me and took out a crumbled piece of paper from his pocket, saying, ‘This aphorism which I took down in your class saved me in these eleven years.’

It is said in *Your Hidden Powers*,¹ ‘If you drain the water of a pond it will evaporate in an hour, but concentration keeps the water in the pond.’ A teacher is supposed to focus on his teaching profession, but if he gets involved in executive duties and financial transactions, ‘he will not benefit from his means of accomplishment’, as said by Imam ‘Alī.

8. MAKING USE OF EXPERTISE

The Noble Prophet said, ‘If one does something without knowledge, he will ruin rather than improve the affairs.’[30]

Carrying out tasks requires expertise. For instance, we take our sick child to a specialist. A

1. By Alan Macey, 1933.

hospital president will only allow a surgeon to perform surgery. Medical students are not allowed to write prescriptions, since we are aware of the consequences. However, since the consequences of poor education are not conspicuous, unqualified people are involved in the teaching profession, despite the fact that such poor education will entail more adverse consequences. Are we not accountable before God for such negligence?

Qualified teachers in some countries are supposed to be experts in their department and teachers with high academic credentials teach primary school classes with simply eight students. The Noble Prophet said, 'If someone introduces some unsuitable approach to be used by some people to the Day of Resurrection, the progenitor of that approach will be responsible for the evil consequences.'[31]

This calls for some reflection! If we let Muslim children be taught by unqualified teachers and thereby directly cause damages, we will be accountable for the losses on the Day of Resurrection, when we will be asked, 'Why did you open a school when you did not have qualified teachers?' Do we intend to open a school for financial gain and earning a living? Someone who establishes a school wherein an unqualified teacher causes some Muslim children to turn away from knowledge and religion will not be able to compensate for that loss.

Knowledge falls into two categories: axiomatic and acquired. For instance, 'two and two makes four' is axiomatic and common knowledge. Acquired knowledge falls, in turn, into two types: one is divinely inspired to the Noble Prophet (saw) and the infallible Imams (as), and the other requires schooling.

It is known that education is neither axiomatic nor divinely inspired, but it is acquired. How may someone, who has neither studied education nor has he any experience in this domain, get involved in such field wherein eminent masters, after thirty years of study, fail to understand some of its topics?

The late Mr. Rūzbih said that after teaching for years and conducting serious studies on education he is unable to find solutions to some educational issues, despite the fact that the marks which he had received in his BA education courses were higher than those which he had received in his BA physics courses. Somebody who has not studied physics is not allowed to discuss physics problems but he voices his opinions on educational issues!

Accordingly, besides being endowed with moral qualities, teachers need to be experts in their own fields and be well-versed in educational topics, or they will ruin the school.

9. SIGNIFICANCE AND QUALIFICATIONS OF TEACHERS

Qualified teachers constitute the most significant factor in education, as they may assist their students to attain the zenith of dignity and erudition. In contrast, unqualified teachers may lead their students to ruin and perdition. It is said, 'The student is the inward aspect of his teacher', in that the moral and psychological qualities of a teacher are reflected in his students.

A newlywed woman lived with austere simplicity. She did not wear jewelry. She did not ask her husband to buy her clothes. She gave her gold bracelet to charity. She was inquired about what made her lead a simple life. She replied, 'We used to have a math teacher who was very simple in her appearance and talked about simplicity in life only once. She was my role model. In contrast, a teacher who wears a new suit every day and is preoccupied with his home, car, and luxuries, but gives speeches about simplicity and contentment in class may not find listeners.

An eminent figure said, 'Our students follow our model, rather than what we say or desire.' Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) said, 'Call people to believe in God through your [good] deeds.' [32]

This is a very delicate issue.

O Sa'dī! You are an elocutionist uttering good words,

But actions, rather than words, speak louder.¹

We expect children to abstain from lying, but if we do not lie, they will follow our example. A teacher is his student's role model. A teacher said to his student that his shoes were dirty. The student replied that he would welcome the suggestion, but the teacher's own shoes were dirty as well. The teacher made a confession, saying that the answer provided by that eleven-year-old student gave him a lesson and changed the course of his life: he learned that words of truth must be welcomed from anybody and in any circumstances.

The appearance as well as the moral qualities of a teacher, willingly or unwillingly, have impacts on the students. Some people might say, 'Let the teacher teach his lesson! We have nothing to do with his beliefs.' One may say in response, 'No. It doesn't work that way. Students develop a liking for a teacher who is qualified in terms of quality teaching but unqualified in terms of having a noble character. Such teacher may squander away, in a single session, what the school has gained in years. Therefore, one needs to consider the teacher's expertise in teaching as well as his moral qualities with uttermost precision and delicacy.

It must be known that teachers fall into three categories. Some of them are sincere and goal-oriented, and have chosen the teaching profession on the model of the prophets. Some of them

1. Sa'dī, *Mawā'iz*.

may not ask for remuneration. For instance, the late Mr. Jazā'ri, Mr. Ḥājj Sayyid Jawādī, and Brigadier General Hayawī taught simply for divine rewards to be granted in the Hereafter. The second category includes those who are morally corrupt and disseminate corrupt beliefs; one minute of their teaching will entail irreparable damages. Such people are not supposed to talk to students even for one single minute as they may have a bad influence in such a short time. The third category consists of unbiased teachers who simply teach their lessons and when students inquire about some moral or religious point, they ask their students to make such inquiries at the principal's office. Such teachers may teach their lessons, but their conduct must be under supervision.

Our enemies paid attention to, and made use of, teachers' impacts on students. For instance, it is reported that a minister of the court under the Qājār monarch Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh¹ dismissed a Russian tutor of the Crown Prince, Muḥammad 'Alī Mīrzā.² The Russian ambassador asked the king to have the dismissed tutor reinstated, but the minister declined. The ambassador requested that the tutor be allowed to teach the Crown Prince only one hour a week. Again, the request was not granted. The ambassador made an offer, saying that half of the Russian troops in Qazvin will be deployed elsewhere if they agree to reinstate

1. 1853 – 1907, (reign: 1896 – 1907).

2. 1872 – 1924, (reign: 1907 – 1909).

the tutor. The minister replied, 'So it is apparent that Russia intends to deploy the other half at the court!'

Some principals pay a lot of attention to the educational space, classes, laboratories, sports and recreational facilities, but neglect the significance of qualified teachers, unaware of the fact that with qualified teachers and without such facilities and equipment they may achieve their goals. Our great masters, as a result of their high qualifications, taught prominent students in modest rooms.

The most erudite and the most pious people formerly taught at schools in different cities. Some of them were so attentive to the quality of teaching that they used public baths very early in the morning that their students may not see them naked there and thereby they intended to preserve their dignity. It is so unfortunate that these days those who fail to pursue any other calling step into the teaching profession.

Despite the fact that human psychology is far more complicated than his physiology, and there is an enormous literature on human body and its functions, only experts are allowed to get involved in diagnosis; in contrast, everybody passes judgments on educational issues.

Qualified teachers are versed in educational topics; besides their interest and talent in teaching, they are supposed to be outstanding scholars in their own fields. They thus succeed in making men

of knowledge out of their students. They must be like waterfalls rather than brooks.

Further, teachers are supposed to be morally qualified and possess moral virtues, since a teacher lacking such noble qualities may not educate his students. The Commander of the Faithful (as) said, 'One who intends to be the leader must have received education before embarking on teaching and must have learned to control his own conduct prior to teaching others to behave properly. One who is training and teaching himself more deserves to be respected than one who teaches and trains others.'

How one that has not been endowed with
substance by the One bestowing existence
May bestow existence [on others]?
A rainless cloud is devoid of water.
It lacks the quality of raining down.¹

One who is not in possession of something may not bestow it on others. If we establish a school or take up a teaching profession, aiming to follow the prophets and assist students with spiritual growth, we need to begin at home and build our own character and attain spiritual growth before making attempts to assist others in this respect.

It is worthwhile to make mention of some of the noble qualities found in qualified teachers:

1. Jāmī (1414 - 1492), the Persian poet and mystic.

A. ORGANIZATION AND PRECISION

In his last moments, the Commander of the Faithful (as) recommended others to be organized. One who is attentive to organization in all the affairs of life shall be successful. It is unfortunate that we paid no heed to such recommendation but our enemies acted upon it and succeeded in their pursuits. Anything in life, e.g. food, clothing, sleep, hygiene, recreation, even writing, reading, talking, teaching, and thinking, must be organized and follow a certain arrangement. Organization leads to making optimal use of time, but disorganization results in wasting time, anxiety, and discomfort.

The Noble Prophet (saw) said, ‘God Almighty loves a servant who is serious in his endeavors.’[34] Had we Muslims acted upon this instruction, we would have made enormous progress and it could have prevented many an instance of duplication, i.e. doing things which have already been done! Social problems will immensely decrease by due observance of social obligations; that is why Muslims are supposed to be organized and detail-oriented in all the spheres of life. These instructions are to be followed with uttermost precision, in particular, by educators who serve as role models for others. The Noble Prophet (saw) said, ‘One who has assumed a responsibility should regard it as his own affair or he will not smell the fragrance of Paradise.’[35]

It must be known that organization is reflected in keeping one’s word. Breaking one’s promise

is severely criticized in the Holy Qur'ān, 'O you who have faith! Why do you say what you do not do?'[36]

When a man keeps his promise,
He will excel in any imaginable virtue.¹

It is unfortunate that breaking one's promise is so common among us nominal Muslims.

B. FORGIVENESS

If someone repents his sins, he will be divinely forgiven. The Noble Prophet (saw) and the infallible Imams (as), as the truly divine guides and manifestations of divine forgiveness forgave other people's impertinence and misconducts. Following their models an educator needs to acquire these moral qualities and pay attention to these points:

1. Other people suffer from shortcomings, but he is also entangled in sins and it may be that a sinner with a broken heart repents of his sins before God Almighty and is granted forgiveness but that educator may not be absolved of his sins.
2. Beneficence is by the grace of God without which man will be led astray.
3. One needs to empathize with sinners and try to provide them with assistance.

1. Rumi, *Dīwān-i Shams, Rubā'īyyāt* (Arberry).

4. God Almighty is all aware of the sins committed by people, but He still grants grace, mercy, and daily sustenance.

To God that magnanimity and bounty is
surrendered
Which beholds the crime but nevertheless
bestows the bread.¹

When an educator is appreciative of these points, he forgives students' misconducts, is kind to them, supports them, and strives to guide them toward salvation. When such teacher asks a student a question he will reply kindly, and never says that he has already taught that lesson against some remuneration. A student once said that he was studying abroad and as he was descending the stairs he saw that the books carried by a professor fell from his hands. He offered to help him with picking them up, but he said, 'You were certainly in a rush. Please go on. I'll pick them up.' Do you see how the student was impressed by the professor's pleasant attitude?

One who is always in ambush to take vengeance on people for their mistreatment is similar to a dog who, in human form, says, 'If you say something harsh to me, you will hear ten harsh things from me.' Nonetheless, a noble man says, 'If you say ten harsh things, I will not answer by even one single

1. Sa'dī, *Gulistān* (*Rose Garden*), Chapter 1, The Manners of Kings, Anecdote 17 (Rehatsek).

harsh thing.' The perfect man is the Noble Prophet (saw) who said, 'Be beneficent to those who wronged you.'[37]

Evil for evil is an easy recompense,
If you would be a [noble] man, 'Be kind to
him who evil does!'¹

C. CONCEALMENT OF OTHER'S FAULTS

This is one of the most significant of moral nobilities. An educator is not supposed to expose the faults of students and disgrace them, but he should gently and empathetically find a solution to his problem. God Almighty says in the Holy Qur'ān, 'And when they [the worthy servants of God] come upon misconducts, [they] pass by nobly.'[38].

An educator is supposed to empathize with a wrong-doing student, find the cause of misconduct, and try to help him rectify his mistake. When an educator is pessimistic and finds faults with a student, he may never be able to empathize with him, help him with rectifying his mistake, and thereby save him from error. The servants of God and their privacy must be respected. We are not supposed to expose the sins and mistakes of others, disgrace them, and impede them forever from treading the path of happiness and perfection, but we need to conceal other people's faults and respect

1. Sa'dī, *Bustan*, Chapter 2, On Beneficence (Wickens).

them so that they may appreciate their own value and repent of their sins and misconducts.

It is unfortunate that some teachers disgrace their students and feel exalted in destroying their credibility. Disgracing others will entail divine wrath and this is the worst of vices. If our students have made mistakes we are also entangled in shortcomings and sins. If we intend to ask God Almighty for forgiveness of our sins and grant us His grace, we need to conceal the faults of other people and forgive their mistakes. The Holy Qur'ān says, 'And let them excuse and forbear. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you?'[39]

A young man slandered the late Mr. Qawām, a preacher of renown in Tehran. After that it was said to the young man that Mr. Qawām was a virtuous man of God and the impertinent young man will die in his youth for his insolence. He went to the late Mr. Qawām and asked for forgiveness. The pious man feigned ignorance about the slander and the young man was glad that he had not heard of his impertinence. Great men are like that.

You inquired why I do not entertain in my heart hatred for the foe?

It is so imbued with the love for the Friend that there is no room for hatred.¹

The love for the Friend is brimming over the heart

1. Muḥammad Farrukhī Yazdī (1889 – 1939), the famous Iranian Poet.

That there is no room for hatred for the foe.¹

A student verbally abused the late Mr. Rūzbih. He was asked by other students to go to him and ask for forgiveness. When he did, that great man feigned ignorance. The student returned happily and said that thanks to God he had not heard his abusive words.

The important point is that we must not only conceal the shortcomings of other people, but also we need to remember their noble qualities.

There exist good and bad qualities in all people
and things,
Do not find faults [in them] so that you
acquire virtues.²

Friends of God see other people's beneficence and virtues rather than their shortcomings and faults.

Behold the perfection of sincerity and love, not
sin's defect,
For whoever lacks virtues glances at defects.³

D. HUMBLENESS

Arrogance and egotism are grave sins. The Commander of the Faithful (as) said, 'A sin that

1. Aẓharī of Kermān, a Persian poet.

2. Niẓāmī (1141 - 1209), *Makhzan al-Asrār*.

3. Ḥāfiẓ (1325/6 – 1389/90; Wilberforce Clark).

makes you ashamed is better, before God, than a good deed that entangles you in vanity.’

Khwājah ‘Abd Allah Anṣārī¹ said, ‘I favor an act of disobedience that makes me repent and I dislike an act of obedience that makes me arrogant.’ It is a grave sin to look down on others.

Do not look down on people,
As the servants of God may happen to be among
the lowly.²

The Commander of the Faithful (as) said, ‘Those who are not adulterated by sin must look at sinners with empathy, since they may be entangled with the same sin or a graver one. By God! If they have not sinned at all, their attempt at finding faults with others is the gravest of sins.’[41]

A teacher who looks down on a wrongdoing student is entangled in egotism and arrogance and must be aware that even if he devotes all his life to beneficence and worshipping God, he will not have done anything worthwhile before Divine Majesty and His innumerable bounties.

The pretender sees no one but himself
Because he has the veil of conceit in front.
If he were endowed with a God-discerning eye

1. A famous Sufi who lived in Herat (1006 – 1088).

2. Sa’dī, *Mawā‘iz*.

He would see that no one is weaker than himself.¹

Vainglory in knowledge is far worse than taking false pride in wealth and position. The knowledge resulting in egotism is a veil; in fact, it is not knowledge, since humbleness and God-wariness are the fruits of true knowledge. The Holy Qur'ān says, 'Only those of Allah's servants having knowledge fear Him.'[42]

One who perceives his weakness and humility before divine majesty becomes humble. It is only a humble educator who is able to attract students and favorably impact on them.

E. CONTENTMENT AND FREEDOM FROM WORLDLY ATTACHMENTS

An educator is supposed to be content with what he possesses and also be free from vain competitions and worldly attachments; otherwise, he may not succeed in his sacred profession. Those who are obedient to God are free from mundane attachments.

One free from mundane attachments is granted ecstasy and the privilege of nearness to God;

How may amber attract the straw in the mud?

1. Sa'dī, *Gulistān*, Chapter 2, On the Morals of Sufis (Rehatsek).

Worldly possessions, according to Qur'ānic teachings, resemble worthless merchandise which is loved only by the lowly and the faithless. In contrast, those who are free from mundane attachments devote their lives to beneficence and thereby attain everlasting happiness. Belief in God as the only source of sustenance reinforces contentment. A teacher who believes in the Qur'ānic verse, 'There is no animal on the earth, but that its sustenance lies with Allah'[43] and knows dispensation of his affairs is in the hands of God, acts, with peace of mind, upon his obligation as to educating the youth.

The Commander of the Faithful (as) said, 'O son of Adam! Do not grieve for the day which has not come; since, if you live tomorrow, your sustenance will be divinely granted.'[44] Imam 'Alī (as) is not saying that we do not have to work and earn a living, but he is saying that we are not supposed to consign to oblivion our religious obligations for the sake of amassing wealth and earning a living. We must know that God Almighty is the provider of the entire world. One who believes in God treads the path of obedience to Him and serving humanity. Such individual invokes God to bestow blessings on his family and does not grieve for their sustenance.

Your child is a servant of God; do not grieve for him.

Who are you to excel God in caring for his servants?

If he is fortunate, the treasure of happiness will be his.

If he is unfortunate, over what are you grieving?¹

The Commander of the Faithful (as) said, 'Do not be preoccupied with your family, since if they happen to be among the friends of God, they will never be forsaken by Him; but if they happen to be among His enemies, why are you grieving over the enemies of God?'[45]

Our ancestors were acquainted with such truths; as a result, they were unaware of consumerism and led a life of contentment and peacefulness. It is unfortunate that our unfamiliarity with those truths has engendered consumerism and avarice in us; as a consequence, we put all our energies in amassing wealth and miss the opportunity to serve and guide others.

One may not wrong one's reason,
One may not entangle oneself in grief.
Knowledge, freedom from mundane
attachments, religion, and manliness,
All these may not be made submissive to gold.
Be contented and happy with what you have;
One may not be a servant and a lord at the
same time.²

1. Sa'dī, *Qaṣā'id*.

2. 'Unṣurī.

A teacher who firmly believes that God is more loving than any father and more loyal than any friend, never bows down before anybody and never exchanges his knowledge with money, but stays content with what he has. As a result, he succeeds in his educational career and is assiduous in learning and acquiring noble qualities and imparting them to his students.

A teacher who truly knows that the world and worldly possessions are of no value to him is able to tread the path of guiding others. Paying attention to the worthlessness of mundane possessions, transience of human life, and loneliness after death makes man serve others as best as he could, i.e. guiding others to the straight path. If the world serves but a means of achieving exalted stations in the Hereafter, a reasonable man never sacrifices his goal for his means, but exchanges worldly gain for Paradise. In contrast, one who considers the world as the end and only aims for worldly gain distances himself, day by day, from the rewards of the Hereafter.

The Commander of the Faithful said, 'The world is like carrion and those who partake of it are like dogs.'[46] The world is never approached by those who consider the world like putrid carrion. Imam al-Ḥasan (as) said, 'Consider the world as carrion. Approach it solely to meet your necessary demands!'[47] When someone is on the verge of death because of hunger, he may make use of a

dead fowl to survive, though it is unlawful to do likewise in everyday life.

One whose heart is granted life by his love for God and attaches his heart on attaining exalted stations in the Hereafter truly considers the world as carrion. Such a person is not allured by worldly pleasures, and lives with uttermost simplicity and contentment. Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (as), attending a funeral service, said, 'The world whose last station is this is not worthy enough to be sought, and the Hereafter whose first station is this must cast fear in our hearts.'[48]

Except for heart which is to be cherished and saved,

The earth and whatever on it are to be abandoned.

Why have you attached your heart to this earth and time?

Time is transient and the earth is to be abandoned.¹

Those endowed with happiness take some provision from this transient world for their Hereafter. The late Shaykh 'Alī Kūhistānī had devoted his life to educating people in a region in the north of Iran; as a result, many people in that region still act upon their religious obligations. That great man was well acquainted with the most lucrative transaction.

1. Ṣā'ib (1601 – 1677).

There are many people who are able to save hundreds by simply abstaining from leading a luxurious life; nevertheless, their love for the world impedes them from attaining to such exalted goal. As a consequence, they will be accountable for the sins of those whom they failed to save. If they had not been allured by worldly gains and positions and had they trodden the path of guiding others, those people would not have been entangled with those sins. In this respect, the Messenger of God (saw) is quoted as saying, ‘Love for the world is the worst of all the sins.’[49]

Life is not what we imagine – one could live with far more simplicity. It is through leading such life that one may save others. Man can live on simple food. The late Mr. Shalchiyān, the founder of the Nīkān School who had saved thousands from perdition, lived with uttermost simplicity.

The late Ḥājī Ibrāhīm Ḥakamī’s shoes had been frequently mended. When he received shoes as gift he said that he had no need for them. It was said to him that the Prophet accepted gifts. He said, ‘I accept, but give it to somebody who does not have even shoes like these.’ It must be known that it is by developing a spirit of contentment that one may serve others and deliver them from everlasting perdition.

F. SINCERITY

What is not sincerely devoted to God is transient. Men of God do good deeds for divine satisfaction

and are thereby beneficent and their good works are long-lasting. In contrast, the deeds of people who do not seek divine satisfaction are ineffective and transient.[50] It is a hard but possible task to attain the exalted station of devotion in the sense that one annihilates his will in divine will. If man had not been able to attain such station, God Almighty would not have called him to achieve it.

It is unfortunate that we exchange our moral nobilities and dignity for worthless and lowly gains and positions; as a consequence, our educational endeavors are ineffective and they may never give a new life to students. It is sincere devotion to God that accords value to human endeavors. Devotion to God lies in humbleness before God and insincere acts of devotion resemble a walnut without a kernel. Such self-conceit and implicit polytheism may not be divinely accepted.

If you do not establish prayers in intoxication[51]

You are involved in idolatry inside a mosque.¹

A sincere teacher who seeks divine satisfaction in his beneficence is divinely endowed with noble qualities and is able to do good deeds. Sincere devotion lies in forgetting oneself and total devotion to God. One who is obedient to God is endowed with all blessings, but one who attaches his heart to anyone or anything besides God is

1. Raḍī al-Dīn Ārtīmānī (1570 – 1627).

worthless, even though he may have the entire world in his possession.

Whatever is worshipped besides God is nothing.

He is unfortunate who chooses nothing from all the choices.¹

An educator who is not self-conceited reacts positively and constructively to a student's fault or impertinence and acts upon discretion but he never reacts for the gratification of his thirst for retaliation. When a student mistreats such teacher, the latter feigns ignorance, since the teacher is well aware of the fact that he is but an atom in this infinite universe and that he may not be affected by other people's impertinence. He knows that people may not be satisfied with his conducts; as a result, he is not affected by their admiration or slander. He knows that

With strenuous effort the Tigris can be bounded,

But the malevolent man's tongue can never be bound.²

As the old saying goes, 'A jar's mouth may be stopped, a man's cannot.' The teacher who knows that people need him to satisfy their needs and they

1. Sa'dī, *Mawā'iz, Qaṣā'id*.

2. Sa'dī, *Bustān*, Chapter 7, Concerning the World of Edification (Wickens).

will abandon him after his death only educates others for divine satisfaction and everlasting happiness. Such teacher is endowed with peace of mind and never invests his enormous human intellectual powers in idle thoughts.

If a teacher makes use of his intellectual powers to entangle himself in internal conflict over why a student's father verbally abused him, why he was mistreated by the principal, or if he does such and such thing he will fall from grace with such and such teacher, he will miss opportunities and fails to make use of his talents. He will be wise after the event, in that having wasted his dear life over such worthless issues, he has to leave this world with a broken heart. In contrast, one who is not self-conceited is able to keep his peace of mind and is not offended by idle talk.

A large river will not become turbid from floods,
A mystic who feels aggrieved is shallow water yet.¹

We are the followers of the Prophet who once visited a sick man who used to cast ashes on his head and it was our noble Prophet who prayed for those who would stone, deride, and verbally abuse him. He said, 'O God! Guide my people as they do not know [what they are doing].'[52]

1. Sa'dī, *Gulistān*, Chapter 2, On the Morals of Sufis (Rehatsek).

In short, sincere devotion is one of the necessary qualifications of educators. When an educator is entangled with self-conceit, he fails to understand his students; as a consequence, he may not assist them, as he should, with their spiritual growth. He will leave this world empty-handed and will have wasted away his life.

G. HEALTH.

Educators are supposed to be endowed with a strong, good constitution. The Noble Prophet (saw) said, 'Good for those with strong constitution.' [53] It is unfortunate that our enemies paid attention to their health and got the better of us, but we failed to do likewise and lagged behind.

The Noble Prophet (saw) is quoted as saying, 'Religion is based on cleanliness.' [54] Some people think that cleanliness rests with cutting nails, taking bath, and having a clean body and clean clothes. Nevertheless, cleanliness falls into three categories: cleanliness of appearance, that of body, and purity of soul. Having faith is incomplete without these three types of cleanliness and purity.

Bodily cleanliness requires that the digestive system and kidneys be free from poisonous material. One who suffers from constipation and thousands of germs secrete poison in his large intestine or one suffers from a fatty and malfunctioning liver because of consuming fried food is unable to be happy, wear a smile, and endure hardships. A glutton with a pot belly, who is short of breath or

is afflicted with diseases, and has a foul smelling breath, black and blue and dried up lips, may not be a good teacher. A teacher's food must be simple. Having different kinds of food at the same time is harmful to human body.

Religious leaders have provided us with valuable health and hygiene instructions, some of which have been collected in books like the Noble Prophet's (saw) Medical Instructions (*Ṭibb al-Nabī*), those of Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) and Imām al-Riḍā (as) (i.e. *Ṭibb al-Ṣādiq* and *Ṭibb al-Riḍā*, respectively). Having failed to follow those instructions, we surprisingly and vainly expect to enjoy our lives.

A teacher who intends to educate others and assist thousands with spiritual growth needs to follow health instructions. For instance, he may fast one day a week for medical purposes and consume fruits and liquids on that day. Moreover, the poisonous material in the body may exude through perspiration and working out and evacuation of fecal material from intestines by drinking water before breakfast. Those who follow such instructions have generally a better immune system. Those who fail to follow health instructions and suffer from a weak constitution easily fall sick. Sickly teachers are not successful in their career.

The final stage is the purity of soul. Teachers are supposed to adorn themselves with noble qualities and moral virtues. The Noble Prophet (saw) is quoted as saying, 'My mission is to perfect moral

nobilities.’[55] In other words, it was the mission of all the prophets, and that mission was completed by the Seal of the Prophets (saw).

Envy, anger, hatred, greed, miserliness, vanity, and self-conceit adulterate the soul and such impurity may be fortified by facing hardships. The Commander of the Faithful (as) said to Imam al-Hasan (as), ‘Accustom yourself to enduring hardships!’[56] Worldly life may not be pleasant to everybody and those who are not accustomed to discomfort will suffer blows in life.

A man does not attain everything that he desires;
For the winds do not blow as the ships wish.¹

H. EXUBERANCE

Teachers are supposed to be exuberant. The Noble Prophet (saw) wore a smile at all times. Such exuberance is not the fruit of affluence. Material gain is below the league of teachers who help others grow spiritually. A teacher who jumps for joy when he buys a hand-woven carpet fails to assist others with spiritual growth and steadfastness in the face of vicissitudes. We saw great men who, despite living in poverty, wore smiles at all times.

In short, affluence does not engender liveliness and peace of mind. There are many unhappy but affluent people and many people who are poor

1. al-Mutanabbī (915 – 965).

but lively. One way leading to exuberance is to be contented with what is in our possession. Nevertheless, it is not that easy, but it requires a lot of practice. Such person is not dissatisfied with unfavorable winds.

Having taken a step out of myself,
I found the world entirely as I wished for.

I. PEACE OF MIND

Acquire of rest a measure, you who lack
stability,
For herbage will not grow upon a rolling
stone.¹

Peace of mind is one of the keys to a teacher's success. Constitution withers away by anxiety and stress. Many ailments are psychosomatic. It may help with having peace of mind that there is always a limit to our abilities. Favorable winds do not blow at all times. Anxiety and stress fade away when we admit that what people think and do and the way the world turns may not be to our liking.

One who expects everything to his desire, in practice, expects himself to have divine power. With regard to divine omnipotence the Holy

1. Sa'dī, Bustān, Chapter 6, On Contentment (Wickens). The second line is reminiscent of the old saying, 'A rolling stone gathers no moss.'

Qur'an says, 'All His command, when He wills something, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is.'[57]

One may not expect to find like-minded people everywhere. Is his thought the standard for assaying other people's thoughts? Does he think that he deserves special treatment for being special and that others have to curry favor with him? It may be that he is wrong and others are right. The prophets and the Infallibles are the only ones who are not subject to error and their words and deeds are entirely right. Other humans suffer from shortcomings and are prone to making mistakes. He thinks that others make mistakes but, in practice, others think that he makes mistakes. To err is human, to forgive is divine.

When an educator appreciates the fact that people think differently, he will neither be upset with them nor will he mistreat them. It is by this spirit that he may develop a liking for students and provide them with support and guidance.

Another key to having peace of mind is freedom from worldly attachments. One whose heart is attached to worldly possessions and feels happy to possess them will be anxious about losing them; since there is no limit to human expectations. Besides, any being, except for God Almighty, is subject to transience and annihilation. As people grieve for losing the objects of their love, the only solution will be to not be attached to worldly things.

Cherish not an inconstant friend.
Such a traitor is not fit for amity.¹

One may set one's heart on the sacred,
intransient, divine essence and say wholeheartedly:

You are the One not prone to transformation,
You are the One who has not died and shall
never die.²

The other key to enjoying peace of mind is contentment and simplicity in life. Those who bother themselves for achieving affluence and luxury will be anxious and stressed out once they will have achieved such life. The Noble Prophet (saw) said, 'I and the pious from among my followers dislike ceremoniousness and affectation [and we do not bother about illusory things].'[58] A great man said that the most difficult thing to learn is how to live, i.e. the manner of life wherein our energies are not squandered away.

J. CONCENTRATION OF MENTAL FACULTIES

Concentration of mental faculties is a prerequisite for having an educational career. One whose mental faculties are dispersed may not prove to be a qualified educator. Sun's rays do not normally burn a piece of paper, but they will burn it

1. Sa'dī, *Gulistān*, Introduction (Rehatsek).

2. Nizāmī, *Makhzan al-Asrār*.

when they are concentrated by passing through a magnifier. Concentration of mental faculties is the key to a successful life.

The assembly of affection is the place of
society of the excluded!

From the thought of separation, come out,
So that collected thou mayst be,
Since when Ahrīman went, Surūsh will come.¹

Concentration of mental faculties is the result of contentment, indifference to worldly gains, turning to spiritual blessings, and remembrance of God. A teacher whose mind is preoccupied at all times with further luxuries and welfare lacks such concentration and will not succeed in his educational career. One who is not endowed with moral nobilities and virtues must not engage himself in teaching, a calling pursued by the prophets.

Such individual must know that choosing such career does not befit him. The principal who employs such teacher will be responsible on the Day of Resurrection for the student's corruption and error. This fact is neglected by school founders who are not in pursuit of noble goals. Had we been in pursuit of assisting students with spiritual growth and acquiring moral nobilities we would

1. Ḥāfiẓ (Wilberforce Clark). In Zoroastrianism, Ahrīman is the Devil and Surūsh is the god and manifestation of obedience to Ahūrā Mazdā.

have been more attentive in employing teachers, and even school janitors and drivers.

Having selected virtuous and qualified teachers, we need to provide them with sufficient support so that they may pursue their educational career with peace of mind. Teachers in financial straits who have a second job in the evening cannot devote themselves to their educational pursuit.

School principals need to be aware of the domestic problems of their teaching and administrative staff and attempt to assist them with finding solutions to their problems. Benevolent and empathetic principals are supposed to help their teachers with finding the best solutions to their problems and choosing marriage partners. It was said in olden times, 'Do not send an old man to buy horses nor send a young man to pay a visit to a girl's house aspiring to ask for her hand.'

Parents must make sure that their children do not fall into the trap of a materialistic family since there have been many virtuous and noble young men who trod the path of perdition for the sake of marrying an unworthy wife. Couples must be like-minded. A teacher deals with his students' mind and must be at peace with his family. Therefore, one must conduct an investigation of his prospective marriage partner's family, relatives, school, and friends before asking for her hand.

A teacher must not marry into money since a young woman brought up in an affluent family expects her husband to afford to spend as much.

She may censure him for his modest means and urge him to change his profession or have a second job. Even if she keeps silent, she will compare her financial status with others and may be afflicted with psychological disorders. In contrast, when a teacher marries a young woman from a modest family, his wife will not disrupt his peaceful career and he will be able to put all his energies into making men of knowledge and virtue out of his students.

10. SELECTING STUDENTS

A prerequisite of success in educational career is to select students qualified in terms of talents, morals, and good upbringing. Rumi says:

When you cultivate a fertile land,
One seed will yield one hundred thousand
corns.¹

It would be a waste of time to teach a student as talented as Avicenna when he is not of good upbringing, as striving towards his schooling would be like handing a sword to an inebriated man.

It would be better to give a sword to a drunken
slave
Than to teach the ignoble.²

1. Rumi, *Mathnawī*, Book 5.

2. Rumi, *Mathnawī*, Book 4.

Nevertheless, it would be fruitless to teach an untalented student with good upbringing.

Saline earth will not produce hyacinths.

Throw not away thy seeds or work thereon.¹

Accordingly, a talented student with good upbringing will be an asset to the school. One may try to refute this argument by saying, 'Those endowed with noble qualities are good, but it is important to engender good qualities in those lacking proper breeding.' We reply by saying that it would be a Herculean task to educate and support those endowed with good qualities. Had we been able to educate more students but failed to do so, we would have been responsible for our failure; but our resources are limited and we need to make optimal use of them to make religious men of knowledge out of our few students so that they save thousands, rather than make workers who even if they happen to be God-wary they will have but a faint impact on their society.

For instance, we have a one-acre land on which we may only plant one hundred trees. Should we plant one hundred pear trees of best quality or bitter cherry trees? The fact is that we are in possession of limited means and have no alternative but to educate talented students with good upbringing and noble qualities, but if we spend our resources on unqualified students we will have a heavy

1. Sa'dī, *Gulistān (Rose Garden)*, Chapter 1, The Manners of Kings, Anecdote 4 (Rehatsek).

conscience and will be remorseful before God Almighty and the wise.

It is worthy of note in passing to say something about selecting first grade students. Teachers formerly tested students, but we noticed later on that testing students requires expertise and if their parents happened to be teachers' acquaintances they may pull some strings and entreat them to grant them admission. Administering IQ tests were recently vested with psychologists and educators and the marks are processed by computers. Thus, twice as many students are shortlisted and the final candidates' parents will be interviewed and an investigation of them will be conducted before the announcement of the names of admitted students. Former problems and baseless expectations have been resolved.

Principals are supposed to be steadfast and unaffected by parents' entreaties and influences to the extent that they grant no admission to their relatives or their own unqualified children. I had to let two of our students and close relatives go and the late Mr. Rūzbih did not grant admission to a close relative. It would be in vain to strive to curry favor with everybody and expect to provide our students with quality education and make men of knowledge and virtue out of them.

One praying towards two *qiblah*'s¹ may not
tread the path of monotheism,
One may satisfy either the Friend's wish or
one's desires.²

Gain but the Friend's satisfaction, rather
than anyone else's,
There will be no remorse even if a thousand
seditions be fostered.
Now that I am at peace with somebody like
you,
Let the world rise in a tumult.³

The Seal of the Prophets (saw) said, 'Say there is no god but Allah and find deliverance.'[59] Had he intended to say that success is achieved but by saying there is no god but Allah, why are we not successful in life? Therefore, he obviously intended to say that if we firmly believe in Allah as the only object of worship, we will not prefer the satisfaction of our relatives and acquaintances over that of God. If we seek divine satisfaction, we will succeed in our educational career; otherwise, even if we imagine that we have sought divine satisfaction and have been of some assistance in our educational mission, we should know that we will depart this world empty-handed.

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1. *Qiblah* is the direction to Mecca towards which Muslim worshippers face.
 2. Sanā'ī (d. 1131/1141), *Qaṣā'id*.
 3. Sa'dī, *Maṭwā'iz*.

Love is the fire, when aflame,
 It will consume the world but the Beloved.
 Anything untrue falls a victim to the blade
 of *lā*.¹
 Behold! What remains after the [strike of the]
 blade of *lā*?
 Besides ‘but Allah’ everything else is gone;
 Be happy! O Great love! You set polytheism
 ablaze!²

However, for being granted admission to guidance schools and high schools, students are tested on their knowledge of sciences, rather than their IQ. Further attention must be paid in selecting such students as to their morals and upbringing and an investigation must be conducted of their previous schools, as it is said, ‘Man is affected by his peers.’

In *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* (*Naṣīrean Ethics*), Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī says, ‘It happens at times that a young man socializes with an unworthy person and is thereby influenced by him for two decades. Striving to acquire moral nobilities is like carrying a very heavy rock up a mountain, but acquiring bad qualities is like throwing that rock down the mountain.

Students are affected by their peers. One unworthy student wreaks havoc in the class and

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1. The orthographical form of *lā* (لا) in Arabic script is herein likened to a sword.
 2. Rumi, *Mathnawī*, Book 5.

ruins a school. As the old saying goes, 'A pot of milk is ruined by a drop of poison.' In his book, *Bīst Maqālah* (Twenty Articles), Dr. Chihrāzī¹ writes, 'A class of thirty students is ruined by one envious or disorderly student. Someone afflicted with cholera may spread the contagion in an entire city. A corrupt student is more harmful to a school than a sick man suffering from cholera to a city.'

It must be borne in mind that an untalented student only serves as an impediment to the progress of a class, but if he suffers from poor upbringing he will ruin the goals of the school as well as moral values and religious beliefs. Therefore, extra caution must be exercised in this respect.

A son of the person who owned the building of 'Alawī High School had some moral issue. As a consequence, we decided to expel him. Other students were saying that he could not be expelled. His father protested that he had paid for expenses. It was said to him that [of course] he had done so but the staff members had in effect sacrificed their lives in establishing and running of the school. We threatened that we would return the building to him and the school would be closed down. You see that if we had showed any weakness in this case, the 'Alawī School would not have survived.

If you intend to assist students with achieving spiritual growth and receiving quality schooling, you need to show to people that you are not slaves

1. Ibrāhīm Chihrāzī (1908 – 2010), the founder of the first psychiatric hospital in Iran.

to financial gain. Talented or even average students from religious but poor families are not supposed to pay the tuition fee. Such policy has been followed since the foundation of the 'Alawī School. We not only did not ask needy students to pay the tuition fee, but we provided them with clothing and food. To preserve their dignity we did not divulge the matter. In contrast, we did not allow untalented students or those suffering from moral issues and poor upbringing to enroll, despite the fact that their parents were willing to contribute huge sums of money to the school.

Another factor in selecting students is their physical health. As the old saying goes, 'A sound mind is in a sound body.' A student with ailing health, despite being endowed with exceptional talents, will not be of any assistance to Muslims. When someone decided, in former times, to tread the path of spiritual guidance, his master would send him to a physician to make sure that he was physically fit for the task. The staff members of a school who intend to make great men out of their students are supposed to invest their resources in well qualified students; otherwise, they will not have expressed gratitude for divine blessings. Expressing gratitude to God is to make use of divine blessings most befittingly.

How may an engineer be employed as a laborer? Would it not be an instance of ingratitude to divine blessings if the teaching staff members, who are supposed to make great men out of their

students, spend their resources on slow-witted and unworthy students? It would be of no avail to invest resources in weak individuals. Although there are exceptions, as the Qur'ānic verse says, 'He brings forth the living from the dead'; but we cannot generalize such exceptions to all the cases.

11. SIMPLICITY OF CLOTHES AND APPEARANCE

One of the principles accorded significance was the students' simplicity of clothes and short haircut. The rationale was that students were not supposed to be preoccupied with his their appearance and clothes at the expense of sacrificing their studies and moral virtues. Inappropriate attention to their appearance would entangle them with unbecoming socialization and would lead them into traps set by immoral people. Having a simple appearance and short hair would safeguard them from such perils. One who is not preoccupied with such lowly and worldly matters will not be impeded from attaining to spiritual growth.

Young adults are prone to accord importance to their appearance, but educational staff members are supposed to supervise their appearance and keep them from such perils, as a father would do, and boost their morale in their classes. They need to let them know that it would be below their dignity to be preoccupied with comely clothes and hairstyles and that their simplicity might be derided by their

friends and relatives. They are not supposed to pay heed to their unbecoming reactions. They need to study and tread the path of perfection and, as a result, be able to serve their society in future.

Parents like the comely appearance of their children, but they must be informed that if they like their sons' hairstyle, they may be assured that strangers will be thereby pleased and it will lead their sons astray.

12. HYGIENE, NUTRITION, AND PLAYING SPORTS

Acquaintance with human mind and constitution must be accorded importance in helping others achieve spiritual growth and schooling. Human soul is not an abstract phenomenon, rather a composite of body, spirit, and inward and outward aspects. Some people accord too much significance to children's physical health and nutrition, but ignore the fact that somebody with a sound body but an unsound mind may not succeed in his life. Nevertheless, a sound mind in an unsound body may not be sufficiently active.

The Commander of the Faithful (as) said, 'One whose temperament achieves moderation and purity, will have a soul strong enough to tread the path of perfection and check his thoughts and movements in their entirety. Will not be such a person able to achieve sublime moral virtues and become as pure as angels?'[61]

Avicenna is reported as saying that psychological and mental issues have an impact on human body. Do you not notice that the digestive system of one in fear may not function properly and such individual is physically not function as he should?

Some people neglect this fact but simply emphasize students' moral growth, advising them to keep away from lying and backbiting and memorize Qur'anic verses and hadith, ignoring the fact that a student with an unsound body will be prone to lose his temper.

A car with an empty gas tank may not start. Similarly, human body must function in moderation and the quantity and quality of food impacts intelligence, understanding, and even acts of worship. An unsound body impedes soul from functioning properly. A sound mind is in a sound body. Body is dependent on food; so we need to pay particular attention to nutrition. When digestive system is not functioning properly, the ensuing malnutrition serves as an impediment to having a good memory, keen perception, a strong constitution, and studying industriously. A student once said that studying for half an hour would exhaust him, but following a change in his diet, he could study for eight hours without a speck of exhaustion. The fact is that one may not achieve one's goal without due observance of preliminaries.

There was an abusive student who was diagnosed with malfunctioning thyroid glands

by an indoctrinologist, but he became an angel of compassion following his treatment. A disorderly and noisy student was diagnosed with intestinal parasites and having been treated by antihelminthics his conduct returned to normal.

Physical health of the students is, therefore, an important factor in quality education. Regular medical examinations must be administered in school and parents must be notified of any ailment or weakness in their children's eyes, ears, teeth, digestive systems, etc. so that the complications may be treated. Presently, some of our schools make use of the services of dentists at reasonable costs and some of these dentists are our former graduates.

We need to know that human being is a very sophisticated phenomenon whose creation is mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān as 'So blessed is Allah, the best of creators!'[62] However, the creation of heavens, the earth, plants and animals is not termed as such. Now, we are vested with educating such sophisticated phenomenon, which requires shouldering a big responsibility.

Nutrition and diet impact the students' uptake, morals, and values. Some kinds of food, like lentil, help in having a sharp memory and keen intelligence. A friend once said that Jews bought large quantities of lentil for their schools and daily provided the students with a bowl of cooked lentils. Consuming lentil increases intelligence quotient. Eating turnips is also recommended. A greengrocer

once said that he sold sacks of turnip in the Jewish quarters of Tehran, but he could only sell one sack a week in other quarters.

The point is that they have put our traditions and narrations in practice; as a result, they have made such achievements. They are attentive to their nutrition; but it is unfortunate that we accord no significance to nutrition. Our children eat snack foods like potato chips and other kinds of junk food which are unhealthy (yet quite lucrative for their producers). Nutritive dried fruits like peach, apricot, and fig and raisin were formerly given to children. Food must be richly nutritive, but the quantity is of no importance. Nutritionists maintain that Iranians fill their stomachs simply with pottage made with pulses and noodles (*āsh rishtih*).

A physician friend acquainted with traditional medicine as well said that since this school aimed at helping their students with treading the path of spiritual growth, he considered it his duty to assist the teachers and students of this school with health and nutrition. He paid a visit to the kitchen at times and took away spices, when he found any, saying that spices are not harmful in humid regions, like north of Iran, but they are harmful to the body in Tehran and other arid regions, since they arouse sexual desires. Hence, they are not recommended to be used for young people.

Parents, teachers, and principals must be extra cautious as to using spices and fried food which

whet sexual appetite. He also recommended us to not buy pastries and cakes from the market, as sucrose is harmful to the body; instead the natural forms of sugar, like fructose and glucose, found in raisin, fig, mulberry, and the like must be used.

When the students would swim in pools on their summer vacation, they rushed to eat sugar cubes with their tea. Our physician friend suggested that they swam in cold water and needed calories; as a result, they were eager to have sugar. We were suggested to provide them with washed and dried raisin and they could have some before swimming. Since the time they were provided with raisin, they never rushed to eat sugar cubes. Therefore, we need to find the causes of educational issues and find solutions to them.

He also suggested that cooked rice which had been strained after boiling lost its vitamins and starch, hence not nutritive. They need to be provided with steamed rice which was not strained after boiling it. He also said that fried food is harmful to liver, dries the lips, and causes bad breath and constipation. We did not provide them with fried food. He suggested to us to not use minced meat. He also said that bread must be toasted and potato and vegetables must be steam cooked.

Dried fruits of good quality like sour cherry, mulberry, fig, grapes, apricot, and peach were available at the school shop to encourage them to use natural snack food rather than unhealthy junk food and pastries made outside the school.

Students were provided with apples, oranges, dates, and yogurt drink in the morning.

A teacher suffered from dizziness and medical instructions were of no avail to him but he was treated by having vegetables. Another teacher had a bad breath, but he was cured after a week when he changed his diet. A teacher is supposed to be adored by his students but they do not like a teacher with a bad breath and such teacher may not have a good impact on his students. The Holy Qur'ān says, 'Come into houses from their doors.' [63] We need to pay heed to all these delicacies if we intend to succeed in our educational career. Failure to observe such preliminaries will get us nowhere.

One of our teachers once said that his first two infants were sleepless at night. His wife had been in bed all the time during those two pregnancies and was unable to suckle her infants after they were born. However, she was put on a special diet when she became pregnant with her third child. She was able to suckle her third infant who would sleep comfortably at night.

Why should somebody resort to chemical medication when one is able to cure his or her ailments by proper diet and herbal medicine? A teacher inattentive to such dietary and hygienic instructions may fall sick and cause his students to lag behind in their education. Will not such teacher be responsible for wasting the time of the students? Accordingly, teachers must be attentive to their health.

Presently our children suffer from poor constitution owing to consuming unnatural food. Parents must be provided with instructions as to healthful and natural diet and hygiene so that they are able to raise healthy and intelligent children endowed with excellent memories.

Some students suffer from constipation, the worst memory, and ailing health which must be cured by a balanced, healthy diet. Constipation fades away by drinking, before breakfast, water or London rocket seeds boiled in water. Spices and fried food must not be used, instead steam cooked vegetables and fresh fruit and vegetables must be used, since the fiber in vegetables help with the evacuation of fecal matter in intestines.

Helping students with such simple dietary instructions may cure them of their physical ailments and make them interested in their studies and following the educational instructions of the school.

Playing sports, particularly for youth, plays a significant role in maintaining physical health. Thus, students use their energies in playing sports and will not suffer from sexual problems. Swimming must be included in the schedules of summer camps. Swimming is the best sport. A father said that when his son would attend the swimming classes [that we would organize] in summer, he would require a few hours of sleep in the afternoon and consequently his parents were

rest assured that he would not get involved in any mischief.

We need to have an indoor pool for our students and teachers to swim in winter. A teacher will have a livelier attitude after swimming and will be more successful in his educational career.

If you intend to educate your students properly, all these instructions must be considered. For instance, climbing nine steps of a ten-step ladder will not get you to the roof. We need to bear in mind that making use of good teachers and educational facilities is not sufficient in education. Someone responsible for educating students believes that he will be responsible on the Day of Resurrection. Teachers need to be quite attentive to their students' health, diet, and playing sports.[64]

13. COORDINATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND THE SCHOOL

Students spend most of their time at home and are above all impacted by their parents. If we intend to keep them from developing a split personality and wasting the investments made by the school, parents need to be in total coordination with the school. To achieve this end, we need to hold regular meetings with parents. Parents with poor upbringing may not expect to have well-behaved children, since one who lacks some quality may not accord it to others.

How one that has not been endowed with
substance by the One bestowing existence
May bestow existence [on others]?¹

Parents need to be familiarized with three series of discussions. First, delicate spiritual and psychological discussions must be introduced by individuals who are free from worldly attachments aiming at encouraging parents to detach themselves from worldly gains and possessions. The Noble Prophet (saw) is quoted as saying, 'Love for worldly possessions is the worst of sins.' [65]

How may a father, drowned in worldly gains, who dances happily when carrying a carpet home, and a mother, immersed in fashion and luxuries, who will have a heart failure at hearing that her jewelry was stolen, succeed in bringing up children free from worldly attachments, children who will contribute to the wellbeing of their society? One can expect from a hog but a grunt. Children brought up by such parents will be indifferent to other people's agonies and will solely think about their own welfare in future.

We need to discuss the transience of this world with parents, if we aim to make virtuous men out of our students. We need to remind their parents that they will depart this world one day and their children, for whose welfare they leave no stone unturned, will not think of others.

1. Jāmī (1414 - 1492), the Persian poet and mystic.

Care for your own self while living, for your
own [relatives]
Will be concerned with their own greed, not
with a corpse!¹

It is not intended to say that financial gain is unworthy, one must not attach one's heart to worldly possessions so that one may make use of them in the cause of God and reap the rewards in the Hereafter.

The late Mr. Shālchiyān contributed ten millions of rials to establish the Nīkān School wherein hundreds of prospective God-wary physicians and engineers studied; whereas he lived at a modest home covered with some worn out carpets. If you intend to have children blessed with happiness and erudition who serve their society, they must have faith in God, a prerequisite of such belief is that you believe in God and detach yourselves from worldly possessions.

One divested of faith and God-wariness is easily humbled before financial gains and consigns to oblivion God and the Hereafter. How may God-wary and faithful children be brought by him? A God-wary person may make God-wary people by educating others. Accordingly, parents need to make their children understand that the world and worldly possessions are transient, since a child who accords value to financial gains will become a thief and a traitor in future.

1. Sa'dī, *Bustan*, Chapter 2, On Beneficence (Wickens).

The second series of discussions include educational topics which need to be discussed with parents by educators. Mothers spend more time with their children at home and they are more familiar with their educational and behavioral problems; as a result, they are more attentive to educational problems which may be illustrated for them.

Parents whose children are new to the school need to be introduced to the educational regulations and by-laws in late July, since unacquaintance with those regulations may disrupt the coordination of their children with other students. For instance, they may be requested to not undervalue the school before their children and if they have any comments or complaints they may share them with staff members of the school who do not consider themselves to be infallible and once they are informed of such comments in a friendly manner they shall address the issues and strive to find solutions to them.

When some parents fail to attend the meeting, another meeting should be convened wherein the topics covered in the previous sessions should be reiterated for them. If some parents fail to attend the second meeting as well, further meetings are to be held for them. Staff members should take extra care that all parents are familiarized with school regulations and they need to know that if their children unwittingly commit mistakes, they will have a bad influence on other students. The

misbehaving student may be expelled in order to achieve the goals and mission of the school. Accordingly, all disciplinary measures need to be introduced to the parents of new students.

The Noble Prophet (saw) is quoted as saying, 'God Almighty loves a servant who is serious in his endeavors.' We are expected to make sure that all parents are wholly conversant with school regulations.

The third topic to be discussed with parents by staff members deals with educational activities and disciplinary measures.

14. PARENTS' COOPERATION WITH THE SCHOOL

The Holy Qur'ān says, 'Cooperate in piety and God-wariness.'^[67] This blessed verse is saying that firmly grounded beneficence may not be of any avail without cooperation with others, as man innately loves himself and considers his child to be a part of his own flesh. He is interested in his child's upbringing and contributes to his school. Therefore, parents are required to cooperate with the school.

When we intended to have lunch served to students, some parents cooperated with providing the school with good quality provisions at reasonable prices. The stationery required by students was made available at reasonable prices at

the school shop in early August by parents in that trade.

A number of religious minded parents believing in the school mission could be possibly requested to take care of the financial affairs of the school and thereby leave the principal to devote himself to the educational matters the school. The late Mr. Rūzbih asked parents to pay the tuition fee to his financial assistant in order to be free from such occupation.

15. SUPERVISING STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES

Cooperative and organized students may be called to supervise the affairs and activities of the students. We asked such students to admonish other students for their mistakes and when they noticed that their admonition fell on deaf ears, they were asked to let staff members know of the result. Similarly, when a student falls sick, you advise him to see a doctor, but if he fails to do so, you just inform his father to take him to a doctor.

Those students were asked to give pieces of advice, kindly and empathetically, to their friends and admonish them against lying, glancing at girls and women outside the close circle of kinship (non-*maḥram*), and abusing others. Now, what if they replied that they were not in need of being admonished by busybodies? Should they be left alone or should they be saved?

In his epistle to Mālik al-Ashtar, Imam 'Alī (as) says, 'Instruct some honest and faithful people to keep an eye on other people's activities. Such supervision in secret will make them trustworthy.'[68] A friend related to us that once he was visiting the Saint Paul School in London and the principal was showing him around, when he noticed that five or six students were reading in a room. Our friend asked the principal, 'How come that they are not under supervision here?' He replied, 'I am everywhere.' He intended to say that the students were being supervised by individuals appointed by him! They do not believe in our religion, but they follow our religious injunctions.

16. REGISTRATION OF THE SCHOOL AND ELECTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Like-minded and empathetic individuals must assemble to register an educational institution and stipulate in the constitution that the founders and members of the board of directors are not in possession of the properties of the institution and such properties are solely made use of in line with the educational mission of the institution. An impartial and experienced attorney, aware of the regulations governing the registration procedures, is supposed to be consulted in this respect. Thus, the board of directors may expect people to contribute to running the school. Nevertheless,

when real persons are in possession of the school properties, their heirs may not allow the properties to be used by the school in future.

Members of the board of directors are supposed to be people of good reputation who support the school mission. These people are hard to find, but there is no reason for disappointment, since as the old saying goes ‘One who seeks finds.’

The Prophet said that when you knock at a door
 Finally somebody will answer;
 When you dig a well every day,
 Finally, you will reach the pure water in it.¹

Members of the board of directors are not supposed to be elected based on their affluence and the hope that they will contribute to the school mission, since it has frequently occurred that a number of individuals established schools, but owing to the fact that they did not pursue divine goals they were soon in disagreement and the school was dissolved.

1. Rumi, *Mathnawī*, Book 3.

Section TWO

Contents of
Moral and Religious Teachings

*Allāmah
Karbāschiyān*

The Noble Prophet (saw) said to a group of people who had gathered around a man and were listening to him, 'Who is he? What is he saying?' They replied, 'He is knowledgeable and is versed in genealogy of Arabs. For instance, he knows the name of the tenth predecessor in genealogical descent of such and such person ...' The Prophet said, 'It is incumbent on all people to know of divine oneness, religious rulings, and moral precepts. What remains besides these is outstanding merit (*fadl*) and not being endowed with it may not create any responsibility on the part of anyone.'

^[69]

Although the quality of education provided by any school must be high, but as we aim at teaching divine oneness, religious rulings, and moral precepts to our students to guarantee their, as well as other people's, happiness in this world and the Hereafter, the students must be fully acquainted with these teachings.

Besides emotional growth, intellectual and cognitive growth is of fundamental importance in religious education. Those with weak faith are led astray by attending one single propagation session held by our opponents. In his religious sermon on the passions of the Lord of the Martyrs,¹ late Ḥājī Muqaddas explained a religious doctrine in simple terms. For instance, regarding the inimitability (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān, which was the proof of the prophetic mission of the Seal of the Prophets (saw), he said that the Qur'ān has been calling people in

1. *Sayyid al-Shuhadā'*, i.e. Imam al-Ḥusayn (as).

the last 1400 years to bring one single chapter on the model of the Qur'ān. Had the enemies of Islam been able to offer one chapter, though brief, they would not have entangled themselves in unbearable battles. The pillars of faith of the audience were being fortified by such simple expression of this religious doctrine.

Students must be taught religious rulings and precepts in addition to religious doctrines. People were formerly acquainted with religious rulings by preachers addressing congregations from the pulpit. Now, students must be acquainted with religious rulings at school.

It is unfortunate that some people establish schools in the name of religion, but they are quite unaware of the fact that as we make use of the expertise of capable teachers in teaching physics, chemistry, and mathematics, we need to learn religious teachings from experts such that everybody, from the principal to the teachers and the students, must consult that expert about religious teachings and nobody else is supposed to voice opinions on such matters.

When students reach the age of religious obligation, we must teach them religious rulings governing such obligations, e.g. establishment of *ṣalāh*, fasting, minor ablution (*wuḍū'*), major ablution (*ghusl*), and ablution with dust, sand, or stone permitted when water is not available (*tayammum*).

It was said to students in the second year of guidance school¹ that the age of adolescence of boys is marked by completion of 15 lunar years, having wet dreams, and growing pubic hair. Therefore, a boy may reach the age of adolescence before the age of 15 when he is obliged to establish *ṣalāh* and fast.

When a student happens to not know about the age of adolescence and, for instance, fails to observe fasting in Ramadan for only one day, then he has to fast for 60 days instead of that one day, or provide 60 needy people with food. Let's say he learns at the age of 16 that he had reached maturity four years before and has missed all his obligations, like performing *ṣalāh* and fasting, in those four years, he might start doubting the rationale behind such divine obligations. In such case, his father and his teacher are responsible for not acquainting him with the signs of adolescence.

It must be borne in mind that students are sensitive and curious to know about such matters which must be discussed like ordinary ones, whereby students will be impeded from discussing them with their peers and creating undue sensitivity.

It is suggested in a book on education that when teachers and parents fail to clearly acquaint young adults with sexual issues, they will corruptibly know of them elsewhere.

A father is supposed to say to his son that if he has a wet dream he will need to perform the major ablution or ritual bathing (*ghusl*). The

1. Almost the equivalent of junior high school.

father is supposed to teach him how to perform it and must show that having a wet dream is quite natural to occur to adolescent young men. Once a student said to his classmate that he had made a discovery; he had played with his genital and semen had been ejaculated from his genital. Having heard that account that student fell in the habit of masturbation. We said in our classes that masturbation is forbidden in Islam and entails physical and mental consequences and thereby helped our students to turn away from it and its adverse consequences.

In the second year of our guidance school we talked about *istibrā'*, i.e. the process of clearing the male urethra of urine after urinating, which is discussed in details in the collections of Islamic legal opinions used by ordinary people. We said to the students that when some liquid exudes from their genitals and they are in doubt whether it is urine or not, they may consider it to be pure and their minor ablution will not be rendered void. Nevertheless, if they do not clear the urethra, the liquid is impure and renders minor ablution void. It is worthy of note that failure to clear one's urethra and the ensuring impurity may render *ṣalāh* void for years.

Another issue which must be discussed with students is obsessive thoughts. Some students in high school or even guidance school suffer from obsession in matters of purity, impurity, intention (*niyyah*), performing *ṣalāh*, or in everyday life.

Some of these obsessed people suffer for hours in performing minor ablution, performing *ṣalāh*, and recitation of *Sūrat al-Ḥamd* (Chapter 1 of the Holy Qur'ān), and finally some of them fail to perform *ṣalāh*, saying that they are impure in whatever they do and an impure person may not establish *ṣalāh*!

The Noble Prophet (saw) is quoted as saying that God Almighty appointed him to propagate a religion which is easy to follow.[70] The Holy Qur'ān says, '[God Almighty] has not placed before you any obstacle in the religion.'[71] All Islamic rulings are rendered void when they become unbearable. Someone suffering from obsession would say that his hands or clothes had been stained with blood and he thinks that he forgot to rinse them. So, he needs to exercise caution and rinse all home furniture. They are not attentive to the fact that when following some ruling becomes unbearable it will be rendered void.

Those who have an obsessive-compulsive approach to religion make this easy religion of Islam difficult and eventually end up hating the same religion.

The Noble Prophet (saw) is quoted as saying, 'One may perform minor ablution with less than one *mudd* (one liter) of water and perform major ablution with one *ṣā'* (three liters) of water; nevertheless, some people will say in future that such quantities are not sufficient. They will not follow my religion, but those who follow my

[approach to] religion will be my companions in Paradise.’[72]

A religious young man may not be led astray by satanic temptations to drink intoxicant drinks and develop an interest in prostitutes. It is said to him, ‘Be attentive to perform your minor ablution and establish your *ṣalāh* according to standard rulings!’ The young man lags behind his peers in time and imagines that his religious beliefs are responsible for his failure; as a consequence, he will turn away from believing in God and the Day of Resurrection.

Educators and teachers of religious teachings must be conversant with religious precepts in order to familiarize their students with the religion whose rulings are easy to follow.

If a Muslim deliberately breaks his fast in the month of Ramadan [before the end of the day], he is required to fast for sixty days as a penalty. However, the same fasting becomes forbidden when a Muslim realises that fasting may exact some harm on his body. In short, if we teach real Islamic precepts, our students will be happy in this world and the Hereafter; they will be healthy physically and mentally; they will learn both modern sciences and the precepts of their own religion.

Teachers must bear in mind that only lively classes on ethics may have impacts on students, since students may only learn moral virtues by kindness and fun. Students in those years are imbued with happiness and vivacity. So a bad-tempered teacher will not be successful. We need

to be selfless before students and lower ourselves to their level. The Noble Prophet (saw) and the Commander of the Faithful (as) were like ordinary people when they were among them.

Students neither got marks nor did they take any test for their lessons in ethics, but they would look forward to attending those classes. Students were profoundly impressed by the Qur'ānic verses, traditions (hadiths), pleasant and didactic poems, and stories with morals. There were graduates who, having completed their academic education in Europe and the U.S., would say that they had been saved in tempestuous times by some poems which they had learned in their ethics classes.

CONTENTS OF MORAL TEACHINGS

Contents of ethics classes were simpler in earlier grades and turned more profound in later years, befitting students' age and psychological qualities. These contents included:

A. BELIEVING IN THE SURVIVAL OF SOUL

It is one of the pillars of religion, and a person believing in this principle follows all religious rulings and acts upon his obligations towards people, since he believes that God sees him at all times and all his deeds will be of significance in the Hereafter.

Instances of such survival were discussed in each session. For instance, it was discussed that a

deceased person visited somebody in dreams and notified him of secrets and true interpretations became manifest in real life. Besides those instances, rational arguments were discussed with students in the last years of high school.

Believing in the survival of the soul contributed to the spiritual growth of the students of the 'Alawī School who believed that they would live for evermore. Similar to people who struggle to meet their worldly demands, those students strove to collect provisions for their everlasting lives. Teachers are supposed to impart such belief to their students and reinforce it at all times.

B. THE SIGNIFICANCE ACCORDED TO OBLIGATIONS TO PEOPLE

We would say to students that if somebody would abandon his religious obligations, he could be divinely forgiven, but one who wrongs others and tramples their rights will not be divinely forgiven unless he is forgiven by the wronged individuals. The Holy Qur'ān says, 'And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.'[73] Dust particles are visible in the sunlight showering into a room. God Almighty is saying in this blessed verse that even one single atom will be considered.

We would say in our classes that someone owed somebody some money. After he passed away his son saw him in a dream and was asked to settle his debt so that he may be freed from entanglement. The son granted his father's request and the latter

was seen in somebody else's dream asking him to let his son know of his release.

The students were educated thus about obligation to people and they did not ruin school furniture and automobiles. They did not pick flowers from gardens. They did not pilfer anything from shops. They did not steal cash from their parents' pockets. They did not jump in lines to buy something. If they had lost some money, they did not touch any found cash before making sure that it was theirs. We would say to them that if somebody made some found item their own they would be morally responsible to return it to its rightful owner. As a result, school disciplines were respected and students studied with peace of mind.

We were attentive to other issues. For instance, we advised parents to provide their children with some pocket money sufficient for one single day and we asked the students to keep their money in trousers pockets, as strangers visited our school and they could lose their money if they kept it in the pockets of their coats which were hung on hangers in corridors. We also asked janitors to keep an eye on students' pockets and bags to see if any cash was pinched from pockets. We would summon those who pinched money and asked them to return it. They would make apologies and would return the money. Thus students learned that they could not commit acts of misdemeanor in school. If necessary measures are not taken and students fall into the

habit of stealing they will commit such misdeeds in society.

C. TRANSIENCE OF THE WORLD

Transience of the world was another topic about which we talked at different occasions. We said to the students that things like money, homes, and automobiles are only means. They need to know that these means would not become their goals in their lives. In other words, they need not sacrifice their hearts, kidneys, stomachs, brains, nerves, and in short their health for the sake of such means. They are means to be obedient to God Almighty and serve the society. They should not be too remorseful for losing them. We emphasized that piety was different from ‘not having’. Piety was ‘not being attached’ to worldly gains.

The men who know well Love's pathway have
sunk in its sea profound,
And yet from the touch of water have never
been found.¹

Therefore, our students were mainly indifferent to worldly gains. They did not talk about food and clothes. They did not brag about their fathers' possessions. Those who were poor did not envy the affluent. When students lost a relative, they were able to maintain their composure. They were quite attentive to their obligations to people. Many of

1. Hāfiz (Bicknell).

them achieved high public positions later in life and were in control of financial resources, but they never took advantage of their posts.

D. VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE

Significance and value were accorded to knowledge, virtues and spiritual growth in our classes and we assisted our students with developing further insightfulness so that they became accustomed to abstaining from lowly desires. We would read the tradition narrated from the Commander of the Faithful (as), 'One who is aware of his own value never accords significance to lowly desires.'[75]

We provided our students in the third year of guidance school with the pieces of advice on the value of knowledge and the qualities of God-wary scholars given by the Commander of the Faithful (as) to Kumayl ibn Ziyād. We would relate to the students the accounts of the lives of true scholars, their God-wariness, devotion to God, and their serving people. In contrast, we would criticize faithless scholars who took advantage of religion to gain worldly gains and posts, aiming to enable our students to draw a distinction in future between true clerics and the turbaned people. We strove to assist them to understand that religion is not responsible for pseudo-scholars' misdeeds and they need not turn away from religion for the sake of their wrongdoing.

We would say to them in their last year, 'Be attentive! You are not supposed to aim simply

at obtaining high school diplomas, BA's, and PhD's but you need to reach the highest degree of scholarship. We would recite these lines to them:

When my eyes glance upwards in seeking
glory,
I never look beneath the highest of the stars.¹

In other words, one is not supposed to be content with achieving the lower stages of achievements, but one needs to pursue the most sublime goals in life. Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) is quoted as saying, 'God loves the most sublime matters and is not satisfied with lowly ones.'[75]

Maintain your loftiness of purpose for great
men of the world
Have achieved exalted stations by loftiness of
purpose.

It is unfortunate that some narrow-minded people imagine that greatness lies in becoming ministers and parliament members and other positions are lowly. Nevertheless, students of the 'Alawī School were taught the truth that greatness lies in achieving erudition and spiritual growth. As a result, our graduates made accomplishments in different fields.

1. *Kalīlah wa Dimnah*, Naṣr Allah Munshī's epilogue.

E. ENJOINING WHAT IS GOOD AND FORBIDDING WHAT IS WRONG

Imam 'Alī (as) says in *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 'Compared to enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong, all good deeds, even waging *jihad* in the cause of God Almighty, are but like a drop of water against deep seas.'

Maintaining religious faith depends on these two principles. When the enemies of Islam noticed their significance, they strove to make Muslims indifferent to these two fundamentals. In his *Memoirs* Mr. Hempher, the English spy to the Middle East, writes, 'My mission in Muslim countries was to disseminate the beliefs that "Jesus follows his own religion and Moses does likewise!", and "I will not be interred in his grave!" '

The enemies of Islam strove to make people insensitive to these two principles, and it is unfortunate that they accomplished their mission; as a consequence of which, some Muslims act upon their religious obligations, like performing *ṣalāh*, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca, but they are indifferent to these two principles which are said by Imam 'Alī (as) to be the most significant principles. Accordingly, Muslims who are conscious of the significance of religion and strive towards Muslims' happiness and progress are supposed to emphasize these two principles and propagate them among people. Thus, we frequently discussed their vital importance in our classes and emphasized that it would not be sufficient to simply believe in religion

and follow religious instructions, but they needed to follow the path of the prophets and help others to do likewise; in other words, we encouraged them to enjoin others kindly to do good deeds and forbid others from doing misdeeds.

Many of our students even influenced their parents and relatives and later guided other students in the university. Some of them later took up educational careers and taught children and young adults and propagated religious teachings at meetings devoted to religious beliefs and rulings as well as ethics.

F. MARRIAGE

Students were encouraged in their last year in high school to marry after graduation in order to maintain physical and mental health, since even if unmarried people lead stressful lives to abstain from committing unlawful acts they will be afflicted with mental disorders. Particularly, those who decide to further their studies abroad need to marry. The late Mr. Rūzbih said, ‘It is a crime (*jināyat*) to send children abroad to continue their studies before completing their high school. It is betrayal (*khīyānat*) to do so after their graduation from high school. Nevertheless, if it is necessary it would be a service to society (*khidmat*) if they do so after completing their undergraduate studies and marriage.’[77]

Greetings be to you and divine mercy and blessings.

‘Alī Aṣghar Karbāschiyān

June 2003

This book came to an end ...¹

We wish we had realised that the great master would one day depart this life to dwell in the everlasting abode! We would then further avail ourselves of the fragrance of the pure rose water of his spiritual guidance. Great men live with such passionate love that it is hard to believe that they depart this life one day. Now, his students feel the loss that they failed to obtain more firebrands from the flames of his blazing fire of love.²

This short treatise is more reminiscent of our feeling of loss, but its publication is a desideratum and we are grateful to God that this became a reality. We wish that we could have further made use of the purity of his thoughts and words.

1. Opening lines of a *ghazal* by Sa‘dī.

2. An allusion to the Qur’anic verse 27:7.

ENDNOTES

- 1 *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 403.
- 2 2:159.
- 3 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 154.
- 4 *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 163.
- 5 *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 12, p. 391.
- 6 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 32, p. 448.
- 7 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 374.
- 8 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 478.
- 9 3:110.
- 10 5:99.
- 11 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 23, p. 236.
- 12 2:194.
- 13 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 1, p. 177.
- 14 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 16, p. 210.
- 15 People follow their practice of their chiefs.
- 16 5:2.
- 17 42:38.
- 18 3:159.
- 19 *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 5, p. 216.
- 20 It is worthy of note, in passing, that the great master assumed that the council would make use of the opinions and expertise of experienced people and experts.
- 21 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 145.
- 22 *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 2, p. 884.
- 23 *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 8, p. 516.
- 24 33:21.
- 25 61:2.
- 26 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 5, p. 198.

- 27 3:139.
- 28 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 403.
- 29 Ibid, Sermon 201.
- 30 *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 44.
- 31 *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtārah*, p. 136.
- 32 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 5, p. 198.
- 33 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 73.
- 34 *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, vol. 2, p. 884.
- 35 *Awālī al-La'ālī*, vol. 1, p. 452.
- 36 61:2.
- 37 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 68, p. 423.
- 38 25:72.
- 39 24:22.
- 40 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 46.
- 41 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 140.
- 42 35:28.
- 43 11:6.
- 44 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 267.
- 45 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 352.
- 46 *Ghurar al-Hikam*, margin on page 3881.
- 47 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 44, p. 139.
- 48 *Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, vol. 11, p. 315.
- 49 *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 12, p. 40.
- 50 16:96.
- 51 Figuratively used in the sense of self-conceit and vanity.
- 52 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 11, p. 298.
- 53 Rāwandī, *Nawādir*, p. 4.
- 54 *Kashf al-Khafā'*, vol. 1, p. 288.
- 55 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 16, p. 210.
- 56 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Epistle no. 31.
- 57 36:82.
- 58 *Kashf al-Khafā'*, vol. 1, p. 205.
- 59 *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 18, p. 202.

- 60 6:95; 10:31; 30:19.
- 61 *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, vol. 1, p. 213.
- 62 23:14.
- 63 2:189.
- 64 The great Master was quite experienced in matters of health and nutrition and imparted his experiences to teachers and students based on their needs.
- 65 *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 12, p. 40.
- 66 *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, vol. 2, p. 84.
- 67 5:2.
- 68 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Epistle no. 53.
- 69 *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 32.
- 70 *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 5, p. 494.
- 71 22:78.
- 72 *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 1, p. 347.
- 73 99:8.
- 74 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 449.
- 75 *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, vol. 12, p. 47.
- 76 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wisdom 374.
- 77 These only included some of the topics discussed in the great Master's lessons on ethics. He also talked about other topics, e.g. believing in God; obedience to God; sincerity and selflessness; *ṣalāh* and obedience; human value and significance; independence of thought and practice; tolerance, moderation and abstention from going beyond the bounds of reason; respecting and beneficence to parents; censuring gluttony. He also illustrated his discussions with examples from everyday life and practically educated the students.