

The Muslims Are of Three Types

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Abdullah b. 'Umar said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say, 'My nation will be divided into' three categories in the transient world. The first group are those who do not like to gather (and save) wealth and (also) do not bother in hoarding it. These people are content with the transient world in that amount which will remove the hunger and clothe the nakedness (the bare necessities of life). Their (true) wealth lies in that which makes them reach the next life.

These people shall be protected and upon whom (...shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.) As for the second group, they love to gather wealth from the purest of sources and best of ways (of earning it). They strive to ensure that they maintain family ties, do good deeds to their brothers in faith and that they show consideration to the poor. It is easier for this group of people to chew on hard rocks than it would be to earn even one dirham from prohibited channels or to refrain from paying the obligatory (taxes) from that wealth and to not spend the money in the proper way, and until the time of their death, they hold on to this wealth. Therefore, these are the people who, if He (Allah (SwT)) was to be very strict with (in their accountability), then they would be in torment, and if they were to be pardoned (by Him), then they would remain in a state of security.

The third group are those who love to gather wealth - whether it is from the permissible or the impermissible. They love to withhold it in those areas where it is obligatory to spend. If they spend their wealth, they do so through being extravagant and wasteful and if they withhold their wealth, then they do so through miserliness and hoarding (of their wealth). Surely it is these whose hearts have been taken over by the transient world until the time when they enter into the hell fire due to their sins."^[1]

In this tradition, the Noble Prophet (S) has stated that, his nation would be divided into three groups in the transient world:

1. There is one group who have no love for wealth and do not permit themselves to hoard it. They are content with that amount of wealth which alleviates their hunger and covers their body while their wants (anything above and beyond this), are reserved for the next life. Thus, they come into the world with a light load and leave the world with a light load. These people have no grief or fear of the past or the future.
2. The second group are those who love to collect wealth, however do so from the permissible means. They use the wealth which they earn to strengthen the family bonds and in assisting

their brothers in faith. They are vigilant when it comes to the poor and deal with them in the proper manner. It would be easier for this group of people to sink their teeth into a hard rock than to earn one dirham of wealth in a prohibited way. They pay all of their religious dues while the remainder of the wealth is kept with them. If Allah (SwT) was to be strict with them in the accountability of their wealth, then they would be in torment, and if they are pardoned by Allah (SwT), then they will remain in a state of security.

Question: If this group of believers were truly going after the permissible ways of earning wealth and spending it in the right way, then surely their status and rank must be greater than the first group of people who have not earned anything!?

For example, it has been mentioned that Imam 'Ali (as) freed one thousand slaves with money that he himself earned - is this something bad? Is there any virtue in refraining from earning wealth or does the virtue lie in the fact that one seeks the permissible livelihood and then spends the wealth in the way of Allah (SwT)?

Answer: This is a conclusion drawn from an incorrect understanding of the tradition under discussion. If we properly understood the tradition, then this sort of question would never come up!

If a person was to gather wealth in order to spend it in the way of Allah (SwT), then obviously, such a thing is very good. However, the second group of people love the act of gathering and collecting wealth - meaning that their actual aim is to gain wealth and thus, they end up destroying the outcome of their efforts!

If we were to understand all of the commandments of Islam, then we would definitely conclude that Islam prefers that a person work and then sacrifices the wealth he earns in the way of Allah (SwT). If a person acts in this way and spends any wealth he gains in the way of Allah (SwT) and does not keep it for himself, he would have a rank higher than a Zahid (ascetic)!

3. The third group of people are those who love to collect wealth. For them, it makes no difference if they earn it from the permissible means or the forbidden channels. Both the act of spending the wealth and the way in which they earn it are wrong!

If they spend some of their wealth in the way of Allah (SwT), then they do so in an extravagant manner and with no regard to how much they are spending - meaning that they spend without keeping in mind their needs and also of those who are truly deprived and could use the wealth. On the other hand, if they do not spend their wealth, then they employ the most extreme forms of miserliness - these are people whose hearts have been enchanted by the transient world and due to their sins, shall enter into the hell fire.

The true meaning of asceticism (Zuhd) is that one does not have an attachment to the

transient world - it does not mean that one does not possess anything from the world! If one was to possess the entire world however was not emotionally attached to it, he would be the most ascetic person in the entire world!

When Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib (as) was at the head of the government of the entire Muslim world he used to say, "This position is worth less to me than this old pair of patched up shoes." He was the commander (Amir) of the transient world - not captive (Asir) of it!

Even if a person has so much as a shirt, however has an attachment to it, then that person is !considered as one who is inclined to this world![2

Notes:

[1] Ibid., vol. 74, pg. 184

[2] There are various opinions which have been offered in regards to the two extremes of extravagance and miserliness with respect to wealth.

There are some people who give such importance to this issue that they feel that wealth is the key to solving all of the troubles! It is amazing to see people who believe that they must gather wealth! For them, it is impossible to sit still and in the pursuit of wealth, they do not believe in following any conditions or rules - the permissible and impermissible are equal!

Contrary to such people are others who do not pay even the least importance to money. They seek poverty and believe that there is esteem and honour in poverty! These people even believe that wealth is an obstruction to attaining Taqwa (consciousness of Allah (SwT)) and closeness to Him!

However in the face of these two beliefs there is a belief which resides inbetween extravagance (Ifrat) and miserliness (Tafrit) which is promulgated by a group of people who make use of the Noble Quraf1an and the Islamic traditions. They deduce that wealth is good to have, however with the following conditions:

1. It should be used as the means and not the goal;
2. Wealth should not make a person an Asir or a captive; rather, it should make a person an Amir or leader.
3. In addition, it must be gained through the permitted means and must also be spent in the pleasure of Allah (SwT).

When one has love and an attachment to such wealth, not only is this NOT considered as having love of the transient world, rather, this is actually proof for one having love and (attraction to the next life! (Tafsir-e-Namuna, vol. 27, pg. 219