



Social Independence

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 4

Islam Encourages Independence

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that Islam encourages us to be independent in our personal and social needs, where possible
- Understand that a person who is independent and does not ask from others is liked by people
- We should ask Allah for all of our needs
- Understand that where it is necessary to seek help, we should do so but from appropriate people
- Discuss the qualities of people who are likely to be truly helpful

Indeed one of the greatest honours Allah Bestows upon his servants is blessings to be self-reliant. Imam al-Şādiq (as) has said:

“The honour of a Mu'min lies in nocturnal worship and his esteem lies in his being independent of the people”

One of the companions of the Holy Prophet (saw) once found himself in severe poverty. His wife advised him to go to the Holy Prophet (saw) and request his help.

The man approached the Holy Prophet (saw), but as soon as the Prophet's (saw) eyes fell upon the man, he said:

“If a person seeks something from me, I shall certainly grant it to him, but if he were to exhibit himself as being self-sufficient and free from want, Allah shall make him wealthy.”

Hearing this, the man said to himself, “The Holy Prophet (saww) has intended me by this speech of his”.

Without uttering a word, he returned home and narrated the incident to his wife.

His wife said, “The Holy Prophet (saww) is also human; explain your dilemma to him and see what he has to say.”

The man returned to the Holy Prophet (saw) for the second time but heard the same sentence from him and again came back home without saying a word. When this was repeated for the third time, the man borrowed a pickaxe from one of his friends and set off towards the mountains. Throughout the day he worked hard to

gather firewood, which he sold for some flour and that night, he and his wife had bread for dinner.

The next day, he worked harder and collected more firewood and this continued for several days till he was able to purchase a pickaxe for himself.

After some period, as a result of his hard work, he managed to purchase his own animals and property, and slowly became rich.

One day, arriving before the Holy Prophet (saw), he narrated to him the events of his life and the effect of his words, whereupon the Prophet (saw) responded:

“I had said (before): One who seeks to be independent (of others), Allah shall make him independent.”

WHAT IS SELF RELIANCE?

Self-reliance is the use of our abilities to do actions that we are capable of. This was demonstrated by the companions of the Prophet who would not seek assistance even in something as simple as picking up a stick when it had fallen from a camel-rider- the companions would rather do it themselves. When asked why they did not ask for help in such simple matters they said that the Prophet (saw) had taught them:

“Be wary of asking others for your needs”

Often, we ask for assistance needlessly, either out of laziness or sometimes we think we deserve it (arrogance). For example:

- Do we tell our siblings/parents/friends to do menial tasks like bring a glass of water or pick up something?
- Do we think we deserve welfare payments from the government and therefore neglect to work hard to earn our living?

Imam ‘Ali (as) warns us that:

“One who fails to make effort due to negligence or laziness will find his state to be one of deterioration and decline.”

Allah (SWT) in His infinite wisdom and mercy has given us a tremendous amount of blessings to help us reach whatever goals we set for ourselves. He has given us the tools to reach as far as we wish to. Indeed Imam al-Reḍā (as) says:

“One who cannot raise himself and ascend to the ultimate height of which he is capable, will not be lifted by anything else”.

ADVANTAGES OF BEING SELF-RELIANT

- **Freedom and independence** – One who is self-reliant will not be so easily influenced by others. When we need people, they can influence us more easily.
- **Self-Reliance provides confidence** — in one's own abilities and accomplishments.
- **Self-Reliance bring a sense of responsibility** — and maturity that comes from providing for oneself.
- **Self-Reliance provides intuition** — by learning to trust God’s principles rather than go along with what is popular.
- **Self-Reliance provides success** — positive results for efforts and achievements.
- **Self-reliance makes a community independent and strong**- The benefits flow out to the whole community and are not limited to an individual.

DOES THIS MEAN WE SHOULD NEVER SEEK HELP?

Certainly not...Self-reliance also has extremes; if we are constantly seeking help from others this is disliked as it means we become dependent. At the same time if we are over-confident and never seek help we become arrogant! We have to ensure to keep to the middle ground.

CONSTANTLY SEEK HELP FROM ALLAH (SWT)

We are creatures completely dependent on Allah (SWT) for all our needs and therefore Allah encourages us constantly to seek our needs from *Him* and no one else. He even likes us to *constantly* ask *Him* for even the smallest of things (like salt for food!) No matter how trivial the issue is, or how great it is, we should request it from God. This practice is a great virtue, and is considered a type of remembrance of Allah, the Exalted.

The Imams (as) tell us:

“Gaining closeness to God comes through asking him, and gaining closeness to people comes through refraining from asking them”

SEEK HELP FROM THE RIGHT SOURCE

Sometimes we need to seek help especially when we are being abused, harassed or are having genuine difficulties we cannot get over on our own. In such cases we have to be selective as to whom we approach. The basic characteristics of the people we should seek help from are:

- 1- **Those who actually have the knowledge and expertise to help** -asking a random unqualified person about feeling depressed or anxious does not make sense. It makes more sense to speak to a doctor or counsellor.
- 2- **Those who are trustworthy-** we have to make sure we do not share our personal difficulties with people who may make them public and embarrass us.
- 3- **Those who won't reject us-** Those who would genuinely like to help.
- 4- **Those who will not hold it over us-** We have to be careful about seeking help from those who can in the future hold their help over us and make us feel like we owe them.

There are certain groups of people we should seek help from when we need to: this includes our parents, trusted teachers, the right friends and sometimes even the right relatives.

Class Activity

Discuss briefly what kinds of problems one should seek help with and what kinds of problems one should not seek help with. Be sure to discuss issues of harassment, abuse, cheating, housework etc.

Review Questions

Q1. Self-reliance can be good when?

- a. One seeks help only when required
- b. One constantly seeks help and assistance with everyone and anyone they come across
- c. One never seeks help from anyone

Q2. Those who cannot do something

- a. Should be rejected and shunned as they are lazy or pretending so they can get pity from others
- b. May be genuine and we cannot judge them and should help them where and when we can
- c. Should not try anything they can't do independently