

The Nature of Modesty

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Abstract: Modesty has different definitions. To define nature of modesty, first of all, we should know basics of it. That includes: controlling mundane desires, unapproved deeds, monitoring and a person who has modesty. In this article we will explain controlling mundane desires as a basic part of modesty.

Controlling Mundane Desires

Self control and soul management is one of the most basic moral definitions and most important ones religious beliefs. Self-control definition and soul management doesn't necessarily relate to human goodness.

Conflict between desire and prudence necessitates human control and management of his soul that is a center of desires. Soul desires have two aspects: interest to something and requesting it, and sometimes hatred of something and rejecting it. So the soul desire may not comply with human's prudence. Sometimes soul wants a thing that is corruptive and destructive for it. And sometimes rejects something that is good for it. The Almighty God Says:

"It may seem detestable to you. It may better you detest something which is good for you, while perhaps you leave something even though it is bad for you. God knows, while you don't know." (the holy Quran;1:216)

In this verse, human desire is interpreted as "kindness" and "reluctance" and human's goodness and corruption as "Kheir" and "Shar". We can find goodness and corruption in God's do's and don'ts. Since God as He created human, he knows human benefits and harms better than anyone else.

Therefore, God commands human to the things that cause his goodness, and forbids things that are corruptive and destructive toward man.

In other words, everything that is harmful for human is forbidden and everything is useful is commanded.

Imam Ali (p.b.u.h) says:

"God doesn't command but to kindness and doesn't forbid but from wrong things." In conclusion, Self-control and soul management are necessary and their plan is according to religious rules.

The other point is self control which has different ways and one of them is to get help from modesty. Modesty is a controlling power that gives human self management. A modest person lives a very normal life. Such a person can control his soul and reintegrate.

So modesty is the type of soul control and management that has a controlling nature.

Relationship between Modesty and Piety

The relationship between modesty and other qualities poses a challenge inside us. Are they besides each other or is there another relationship? Piety means containment and self-control.

Imam Ali said: piety is abstention.

So he says: a pious person is one who avoids sins.

In another speech says: the one who overcomes his unapproved desires is pious.

In this tradition piety is a general term includes all other controlling factors but it is not similar to any of them. There are different parameters that can control human beings in different ways which their add-up is piety. Terms like patience, suppressing anger, fear and modesty are subsets of this general term.

Another point is going to put this piety into practice; now, it should come under one of its subsets. Piety when it means fear from power, it manifests in the shape of “khouf”. When it means tolerating difficulties and hardships, it manifests into “patience”... .

Due to this, sometimes modesty gets beside one of these manifestations in religion texts. For example, the Quran introduces the reason of Joseph’s success in this way:

“God doesn’t lose track of the ways for those who act kindly ”(The holy Quran; 12:90)

What we witnessed from Josef patience in different types and patience is a subset of piety. As we read: everyone who has piety and has patience, God doesn't spoil rewards of good doers. It is said about modesty: you must have piety because He does see you.