

Piety

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Introduction

Perfection of moral virtues was one of the most important goals of the Prophet's (s) mission. Human beings can succeed in life only by acquiring moral virtues, and they can manage their lives towards acquiring those virtues and thus perfecting themselves. Living morally or seeking moral virtues requires a comprehensive theoretical and practical plan. One of the best and most fundamental plans in this regard is God-wariness (*taqwa*), which is like a beacon guiding people through vicissitudes of life towards the ultimate destination—that is, closeness to God. The necessity of such planning is in differences between the lives of humans and animals, bearing in mind that if human beings want to be true to their nature, they must be obedient to their intellect, follow certain rules in life, and refrain from blindly following their own temporary desires. Among different concepts in Islamic ethics, God-wariness has a crucial role in humans' achievement of their goals, so much so that it has been called the zenith of morality (Tamimi al-Amidi , 271) and without it, faith has been considered useless ().¹

Lexical and Technical Meanings

Taqwa is derived from the root *w-q-y*, meaning “to keep away from evil and harm” (Ibn Manzur 1414 AH, 15:401). The infinitive form *ittiqā'* is from the same root, meaning “avoiding meanness by keeping away from that to which carnal desires call human beings” (*ÓarĎĪĎ* 1416 AH, 1:449.) Also, it has been said that *taqwa* means “saving oneself from what is feared to cause any harm.” *Taqwa* has also been interpreted as *khawf* (fear), for their proximity in meaning (Raghib al-Isfahani , 1: 881).

In the Quran, *taqwa* means God-wariness, or, more accurately, avoiding God's wrath and punishment, which may afflict a sinner in this world or the hereafter. This feeling of awe is the result of being mindful of the Master of the Day of Judgment; this spiritual fear is different from ordinary fear (Turayhi 1995, 1:451).

Another function of *taqwa*, as mentioned in the Quran, is obeying God's commands and refraining from what He has prohibited. The connection between the concept of *taqwa* and obeying God is noticeable in many verses (e.g., 30:31; 2:183, 187; 7:156). Moreover, the Quran has mentioned *taqwa* as a state of the heart and an innate disposition, which is the essence of human beings' insight about obedience and

¹. For a new theological arguments see (Afroogh 2012)

disobedience in theory and then in practice. *Taqwa* motivates people to observe the obligations and prohibitions legislated by God. Achieving *taqwa* depends on obeying God constantly so that it turns into a permanent disposition. Thus, obeying God is the major requirement of acquiring *taqwa*. The phrases “so that you may be God-wary” or “so that they may be God-wary” at the end of the verses explaining divine rulings (e.g., 2:187; 6:153) support this idea. Also, those verses in which there are some points about *taqwa* and the heart (e.g., 49:3; 22:32) suggest the same idea; for example, in 22:32 we read: “And whoever venerates the sacraments of Allah —indeed that arises from the God-wariness of hearts.” In his commentary on this verse, Allamah Tabataba’i refers to *taqwa* as a spiritual reality which resides in the heart (Tabataba’i, 14:374).¹

The mentioned meanings are closely connected and form the conceptual extension of *taqwa*: fear of God’s punishments leads to observation of obligations and prohibitions legislated by God, and thus one builds a barrier between himself and God’s wrath and punishments, and his obedience towards God gradually causes *taqwa* to grow in his heart.

Studying concepts related to *taqwa* (whether its synonyms or antonyms) in the Quran can help achieve a better understanding of this concept. Some of the concepts opposite to *taqwa* in the Quran are *fujūr* (91:8), meaning disobedience, *ithm* and *‘udwān* (58:9; 5:2), meaning abandoning what is ordered and transgressing divine rules (Abbassi 2003, 7:797-99)

Wara’ has the same meaning as *taqwa* with the only difference that it additionally includes a higher level of *taqwa*, which is keeping away from permissible acts: “*Wara’* originally meant refraining from forbidden acts but later it came to mean keeping away from permissible acts as well” (Ibn Manzur 1993, 8:388).

Taqwa in Hadiths

In the glorious Quran, *taqwa* is introduced as the guide and the path to human happiness and salvation, and observing it has been emphasized. Here are some verses in this regard:

1. “[A]nd be wary of Me [alone]” (2:41).
2. “Beware of the day when no soul shall compensate for another, neither any intercession shall be accepted from it, nor any ransom shall be received from it, nor will they be helped” (2:48).
3. “Had they been faithful and God-wary, the reward from Allah would have been better; had they known!” (2:103)
4. “And take provision, for indeed the best provision is God-wariness. So be wary of Me, O you who possess intellects!” (2:197)

¹. Muhammad Hossein Tabatabaei is the most famous Sadraean contemporary philosopher in the Islamic World. Mulla Sadra has established transcendental philosophy, as one of the three major fields of Islamic Philosophy (Afroogh 2012;2015)

5. "And beware of a day in which you will be brought back to Allah. Then every soul shall be recompensed fully for what it has earned, and they will not be wronged" (2:281).
6. "[One of them] said, 'Surely I will kill you.' [The other one] said, 'Allah accepts only from the God-wary'" (5:27).
7. "O you who have faith! If you are wary of Allah, He shall appoint a criterion¹ for you, and absolve you of your misdeeds, and forgive you, for Allah is dispenser of a great grace" (8:29).
8. "Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-wary among you" (49:13).

Moreover, *taqwa* has a great importance in the eyes of the Infallibles (a). The noble Prophet (s) introduced *taqwa* as the solution for most complicated situations in life: "By God, if [all doors of] the heavens and the earth are closed to a servant who observes *taqwa*, God, the Almighty and the Glorious, will save him from that [trouble]" ().

Imam Ali (a) stated, "Be wary of God, whom will certainly be met, and there is no destination but Him" (Tamimi al-Amidi , 269). Elsewhere, he (a) said, "Be wary of God, who hears when you speak and knows what you think about" (Ibid.). He (a) also said, "Beware! Indeed, *taqwa* is tame camels ridden by the God-wary who are given those camels' reins to take them into paradise"(Ibid.) and also, "The quickest intelligence is *taqwa*" (Ibid.). He (a) also said, "He has advised you to be wary of Him and has made it the highest point of His pleasure and all His request from His creatures. You should therefore be wary of Allāh, who is such that as though you are just in front of Him, and your forelocks are in His grip, and your changes are in His control. If you conceal anything, He knows that. If you disclose anything, He will record it" (*Nahj al-balaghah*, sermon no. 182). Elsewhere, the Prophet (a) said, "God-wariness plays the lead of all virtues" (Tamimi al-Amidi , 271) and also said, "I enjoin on you, servants of Allah, God-wariness, which is the provision [for next world] and with it you are secured. [It is] the provision which takes you [to your destination] and the shelter of the successful" (*Nahj al-balaghah*, sermon no. 113).

What is *Taqwa*?

Taqwa is a spiritual power, which is developed through constant practices. On the one hand, rational abstinence from what is forbidden can be the cause of developing this spiritual disposition, and, on the other hand, such abstinence can be its fruits. This disposition invigorates the soul and safeguards it. If a person who lacks it wants to be safe from sins, he has no choice but to keep away from the causes of sins; and because they always exist in the society, he would have to leave society and seek solitude and in other words takes a weak position. According to this approach, the more avoidant and unsociable a person is, the more he will be known as observing *taqwa*. But if a person gains the spiritual power of *taqwa*, he does not have to leave the society and he will be able to keep himself sinless. These two types of *taqwa* can be called weakness-based *taqwa* and power-based *taqwa* (Mutahhari 2009*, 16:502-4).

Taqwa has different levels and types. Some great scholars have mentioned three levels for *taqwa*:

1. Safeguarding the self from eternal punishments by acquiring true beliefs.

2. Keeping away from disobeying God.

3. Avoiding what keeps one's heart busy and far from God. This stage of *taqwa* is the *taqwa* of noble ones or the *taqwa* of the noblest among the noble (Majlisi , 67:136-37).

These stages of *taqwa* have been first mentioned in hadiths of the Prophet (s) and Imams (a). The following hadith from the Prophet (s) is mentioned in Shia and Sunni sources: "A servant will not be regarded among those having *taqwa* unless he abandons anything in which there is no problem for the fear of existing a problem in them" (Warram , 1:60). A similar idea has been mentioned in some hadiths related to the theme of keeping away from doubtful matters.¹ It seems that the primary meaning of *taqwa* (i.e., fulfilling obligations and abandoning forbidden things) was later expanded in traditions to include abandoning doubtful matters too. In this regard, there is a hadith from Imam al-Sadiq (a) in which different levels of *taqwa* have been mentioned, "The first is general *taqwa*, which is abandoning forbidden matters to be safe from punishments of the hell; the second is special *taqwa* or 'the *taqwa* from God' in which the person would abandon doubtful issues as well as forbidden matters; the third is special *taqwa* of the special or '*taqwa billah fillah*' which is a level when the person would abandon not only doubtful matters but even some permissible matters as well" (Majlisi , 67:367). This way, the concept of *taqwa* connects to the concept of *wara*.²

Also, *taqwa* can be categorized as the *taqwa* of the body and the *taqwa* of the heart. Sometimes, one does not approach evil to keep himself away from punishment. Although such a person has obeyed God, he has in fact worked for himself. Such a person has *taqwa* only in his actions.

Those who are in the second level of *taqwa* are superior to those in the first level; they observe divine orders and keep away from what He has prohibited, and they do that for the sake of God. Such people's *taqwa* is the *taqwa* of the heart, because they observe divine law for God's sake and not because it guarantees their salvation.

The third group who are higher than the first and the second groups are those who carry out obligatory and recommended acts and abandon forbidden and reprehensible acts not to be saved from hell or enter paradise but because they are orders and prohibitions of God and because God is the Beloved, Great and Most High in essence; thus, whatever is bestowed by or related to Him is great and blessed (Javadi Amoli 2011, 211-13)

Taqwa can be regarded as a program in theory and practice, which is essential in organizing human life and helping humans reach their ultimate perfection and happiness. *Taqwa* is striving and moving on the path delineated by God for human life. Achieving goals and ideals requires tireless efforts, which can be

¹ "O, Aba Dhar, indeed the Godwary are those who are wary of God in things which people are not wary of God, due to their fear of entering a doubtful situation" (Warram , 2:62).

² "Be wary of Allah and save your faith with *wara*"; also "Be Godwary and you will be the best of people in *wara*" (Nuri , 11:367).

fulfilled through patience and *taqwa*.¹ Thus, *taqwa* should not be regarded as leading a reclusive life; rather, *taqwa* is a positive attitude which prepares the human soul to achieve great goals and mobilizes his powers for those objectives.

***Taqwa* in the Views of Islamic Thinkers**

In *Awsaf al-ashraf*, Nasir al-Din Tusi writes the following about *taqwa*:

Taqwa is refraining from transgression in fear of God, the Almighty, and in fear of being distant from Him, just like a sick person who should refrain from whatever may harm him or escalate his sickness until he is healed and his sickness is successfully gone. The same way, an imperfect person who seeks perfection shall keep away from anything which impedes his perfection or challenges its achievement or occupies the person as a wayfarer on the spiritual journey in pursuit of perfection so that anything required for achievement of perfection or helps in the spiritual journey is beneficial. (Tusi 1995, 39)

Story about *Taqwa*

A good-looking young man called Ibn Sirin was an apprentice in a fabric shop. Once, a beautiful rich woman came to the shop and fell in love with him at first sight and plotted to seduce him. Thus, she bought some fabrics and asked Ibn Sirin to carry them to her house. When they entered her house, the woman went to one of the rooms and came back wearing beautiful clothes. Ibn Sirin realized that he had fallen into a trap. The pious Ibn Sirin began warning the woman and talking about God and the Day of Judgment, but his words did not work. When the woman saw that Ibn Sirin refused her request, she threatened him and said, "If you do not make love to me, I will scream and tell people that you want to abuse me. Then, you will see what will happen!" Ibn Sirin was in a difficult situation; on the one hand, his faith and *taqwa* obliged him to preserve his chastity and, on the other hand, rejecting that woman's request would cost his life, honor, and everything. He had no choice but to submit, however, a thought just passed his mind. He thought that he could turn that woman's love for himself into hatred. "If I want to keep away from impurity, I would have to bear a minute of apparent impurity," he thought to himself. So, he went out of the room with the excuse of going to the toilet, and he came back with his clothes filthy with excrement. Upon seeing him, the woman was disgusted and kicked him out of her house (Mutahhari 2009, 18:387).

¹ "They said, 'Are you really Joseph?!' He said, 'I am Joseph, and this is my brother. Certainly Allah has shown us favour. Indeed if one is Godwary and patient Allah does not waste the reward of the virtuous'" (Quran 12:90).

Causes of Developing *Taqwa* in the Soul

1. Foresight

Taqwa is our provision in the hereafter; therefore, we must learn and acquire what we need for our everlasting future and happiness and keep away from anything that would prevent us from achieving a bright future. Lack of *taqwa* is a result of lack of foresight. One who is not God-wary is devoid of any concerns about his true perfection and thus he gets caught in transient worldly desires. Regarding the important role of foresight in achieving God-wariness, the glorious Quran advises the faithful to watch their actions and correct them so that they can make a happy, bright future for themselves: "O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow, and be wary of Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do" (59:18).

2. Being Aware of God's Knowledge of Our Actions

If a person believes that God watches his actions, God-wariness will develop in him. If people always see themselves in the presence of God and know that not only their actions are watched by Him but also their intentions are known to Him, they will be ashamed of their evil thoughts. In this regard, the Quran says, "And be wary of Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do" (5:8).

3. Friendship with God

Perhaps, divine love can be considered the most important cause of *taqwa*. If one's love for God is true, it will surely make him obedient toward God. In this regard, the glorious Quran says, "Say, 'If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins, and Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful'" (3:31). It also expresses God's love for the God-wary: "Indeed Allah loves the God-wary" (9:4).

In his Sha'baniyyah Supplication, Imam Ali (a) talks about the love and friendship of God as the cause of God-wariness: "O God, I do not have such a power by which to move away from your disobedience, except when you wake me up for your friendship" (Majlisi, 91:98).

4. Noticing Worldly Fruits of *Taqwa*

In the view of the Quran and Hadith, the God-wary benefit from material and spiritual provisions gained through *taqwa* and are relieved from problems and calamities in life. According to the glorious Quran, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day. And whoever is wary of Allah, He shall make a way out for him, and provide for him from whence he does not reckon" (65:2-3). Also, Imam Ali (a) says, "You should know that whoever is wary of Allah, He makes for him a way out of troubles and grant him a light to help him out of darkness" (Nahj al-balagha, Ibid.; Misbah Yazdi 2009, 2:245-47).

5. Associating with the God-wary and Studying Their Lives

The fact that friends have a great impact on each other is undeniable; therefore, associating with the godly and the God-wary can be very fruitful in the development of God-wariness. The noble Prophet (s) reportedly said, “When the disciples of Jesus (s) asked him with whom they should associate, he (s) answered, ‘[With] the one(s) whose visit reminds you of God, whose words add to your knowledge, and whose deeds inspire you towards the hereafter’” (Kulayni , 1:39).

Signs of *Taqwa*

To know the signs of *taqwa*, one needs to learn about the signs of the God-wary. In different places of the Quran, God has mentioned different signs of the God-wary; for instance, in the third chapter of the Quran, we read:

[T]hose who spend in ease and adversity, and suppress their anger, and excuse [the faults of] the people, and Allah loves the virtuous ... and those who, when they commit an indecent act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, and plead [Allah’s] forgiveness for their sins —and who forgives sins except Allah? — and who do not persist in what they have committed while they know. (3:134-35)

In this verse, five signs of the God-wary are mentioned, as follows:

1. Spending in Ease and Adversity

Doing this, the God-wary prove that they embody the spirit of assisting others and helpfulness. It is obvious that spending in ease alone cannot manifest the virtue of generosity in one’s soul; rather, those, who are always generous and help, display this attribute perfectly. It is interesting that here, the first attribute of the God-wary is said to be spending in God’s way, which is opposite to the attribute of usurers and exploiters. Moreover, giving up the property and wealth whether in ease or adversity is the most evident sign of having *taqwa*.

2. Controlling Anger

The feeling of anger is among the most dangerous feelings which emerge in a person upon difficulties and adversities, and if it is not controlled, it will show up as hysteria and loss of control. Most crimes and dangerous decisions leading to a lifetime punishment are made in the state of anger; therefore, controlling anger is mentioned as the second attribute of the God-wary. The Prophet (s) said, “[If] one controls his anger while he has the power to vent it, God will fill his heart with calmness and faith” (Warram , 1:124).

3. Forgiveness

Controlling anger is very good but not enough, because it might not uproot the hatred and enmity from one’s heart; thus, to end enmity, one needs to control his anger and forgive. That is why forgiveness is

mentioned after controlling anger. Nevertheless, forgiveness is only meant to be practiced towards those who deserve it, not sworn enemies, as it may lead to more aggression.

4. Beneficence and Doing Good

The God-wary not only control their anger and forgive those who wrong them but also do good to them and show beneficence and thus uproot any enmity.

5. Not Persisting in Committing Sins

Another sign of the God-wary is that if they commit a sin due to ignorance or temptations of Satan, they do not repeat it. It can be understood from the following verse that one does not commit sins as long as he remembers God; he commits sins when he forgets God and is overcome with ignorance. However, such ignorance does not last long in the God-wary as they make up for it. They believe that they have no refuge but in God and that they have to ask Him for forgiveness: "...and who do not persist in what they have committed while they know" (Quran 3:135).

A hadith from Imam al-Baqir (a) lists other attributes of the God-wary such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, keeping promises, humbleness, generosity, keeping family ties, having sympathy towards the disabled, having good manners, patience, and so forth.¹

To know more about other attributes of the God-wary, we would better take a look at Imam Ali's (a) sermon no. 193 in *Nahj al-Balaghah*. In that sermon, Imam Ali (a) mentions the qualities of the God-wary to one of his God-wary companions called Hammam:

[T]he peculiarity of anyone of them is that you will see that he has strength in religion, determination along with leniency, faith with conviction, eagerness in (seeking) knowledge in forbearance, moderation in riches, devotion in worship, gracefulness in starvation, endurance in hardship, desire for the lawful, pleasure in guidance and hatred from greed. He performs virtuous deeds but still feels afraid. In the evening he is anxious to offer thanks (to Allah). In the morning his anxiety is to remember (Allah). He passes the night in fear and rises in the morning in joy — fear lest night is passed in forgetfulness, and joy over the favor and mercy received by him. If his self refuses to endure a thing which it does not like he does not grant its request towards what it likes. The coolness of his eye lies in what is to last forever, while from the things (of this world) that will not last he keeps aloof. He transfuses knowledge with forbearance; and speech with action. You will see his hopes simple, his shortcomings few, his heart fearing, his spirit contented, his meal small and simple, his religion safe, his desires dead and his anger suppressed.

¹ "Surely, the Godwary have signs, which show their truthfulness, returning the trust, keeping their promises, lack of boasting and stinginess, keeping their family ties, kindness towards the disabled, least favorable towards women, presenting the good, having good manners, forbearing, following the knowledge which draws them near to God, al-Mighty" (Shaykh al-Saduq, 2:483).

Good alone is expected from him. Evil from him is not to be feared. Even if he is found among those who forget (Allah) he is counted among those who remember (Him), but if he is among the remembers he is not counted among the forgetful. He forgives him who is unjust to him, and he gives to him who deprives him. He behaves well with him who behaves ill with him.

Indecent speech is far from him, his utterance is lenient, his evils are non-existent, his virtues are ever present, his good is ahead and mischief has turned its face (from him). He is dignified during calamities, patient in distresses, and thankful during ease. He does not commit excess over him whom he hates, and does not commit sin for the sake of him whom he loves. He admits truth before evidence is brought against him. He does not misappropriate what is placed in his custody, and does not forget what he is required to remember. He does not call others bad names, he does not cause harm to his neighbor, he does not feel happy at others misfortunes, he does not enter into wrong and does not go out of right.

If he is silent his silence does not grieve him, if he laughs, he does not raise his voice, and if he is wronged, he endures till Allah takes revenge on his behalf. His own self is in distress because of him, while the people are in ease from him. He puts himself in hardship for the sake of his next life, and makes people feel safe from himself. His keeping away from others is by way of asceticism and purification, and his nearness to those to whom he is near is by way of leniency and mercifulness. His keeping away is not by way of vanity or feeling of greatness, nor his nearness by way of deceit and cheating. (*Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon no. 192)

Individual and Communal Fruits of *Taqwa*

1. Individual Fruits

1.1 Distinguishing the Truth from Falsehood

“O you who have faith! If you are wary of Allah, He shall appoint a criterion for you.” (8:29)

Reason, which helps understanding the truth, will work better if a person is not dissolute and observes rules of morality, since dissoluteness impedes the correct functioning of the mind. *Taqwa* helps a person control his animal faculties and thus achieve *furqan* (i.e., a “criterion”) to distinguish right from wrong and truth from falsehood through controlling his animal faculties and dominance of reason.

1.2 Achieving Knowledge

Many hadiths and verses of the Quran indicate that one of the most valuable fruits of *taqwa* is lucidity and knowledge:

“Be wary of Allah and Allah shall teach you” (2:282).

This verse emphasizes that *taqwa* has a remarkable effect on being blessed with knowledge and awareness by God. In a hadith, the Prophet (s) said: “Springs of wisdom will flow from the heart of one who purifies himself for God to his tongue” ().

1.3 Receiving God’s Mercy

A servant’s love for God is manifested in his piety and commitment to the promises he makes to his Lord. This *taqwa* and commitment eventually attract God’s mercy and thus the God-wary are loved by God: “Yes, whoever fulfills his commitments and is wary of Allah —Allah indeed loves the God-wary” (3:76).

1.4 Overcoming Fear and Anxiety

God says: “O Children of Adam! If there come to you apostles from among yourselves, recounting to you My signs, then those who are God-wary and righteous will have no fear, nor will they grieve” (Quran 7:35).

Also, Imam Ali (a) says, “Anyone who is wary of God will be rescued from all distress and find a way out of all problems” (Tamimi al-Amidi , 272).

1.5 Receiving Unseen Assistance

The glorious Quran addresses the God-wary,

Yes, if you are steadfast and God-wary, and should they come at you suddenly, your Lord will aid you with five thousand marked angels. (3:125)

In a hadith, we read, “Indeed, God, the Holy and the Exalted, supports the faithful by a spirit [of Him]; whenever they do good and are God-wary, the spirit will come to them to support them and when they commit a sin, the spirit will abandon them” (Hurr al-‘Amili , 5:297).

1.6 Achieving Dignity and Closeness to God

About the role of *taqwa* in achieving dignity and closeness to God, the Quran says, “Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-wary among you” (49:13).

1.7 God’s Acceptance of Righteous Deeds

With regard to the role of *taqwa* in God’s accepting one’s righteous deeds, the Quran says: “Allah accepts only from the God-wary” (5:27). Also, the Prophet (s) told Abu Dharr,

O Abu Dharr! Be concerned more with doing an action with *taqwa* than doing the action without, because an action done with *taqwa* is never insignificant. How can an action be insignificant if it

is accepted by God? God says, "Allah accepts only from the God-wary." (Misbah Yazdi 2010, 2:251-56)

2. Social Fruits

2.1 Justice and Doing Good

Promoting justice in social relations and also doing good to other people is only possible through *taqwa*. In this regard, the Prophet (s) said, "*Taqwa* in its entirety is mentioned in this verse: 'Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness' [16:90]" (Hakimi , 6:555).

2.2 Construction and Development

"If the people of the towns had been faithful and God-wary, We would have opened to them blessings from the heaven and the earth" (7:96). "Blessings" here means anything of great value, such as security, health, wealth, and children (Tabataba'i 1996, 8:254). According to Allamah Tababtaba'i, this verse refers to social piety and indicates that opening the doors of blessings is the result of the faith and God-wariness of a community, not the faith of a few people, since the disbelief and mischief of a community would not be corrected by the faith and piety of a few people (Ibid.).

2.3 Social Security

It is only through God-wariness that respecting people's honor and rights, defending the oppressed and the deprived, opposing evil-doers and mischief-makers, eradicating poverty, and securing public welfare, which pave the ground for social security, are possible. Mere legislation with no guarantee of implementation does not bring about social security, because law only sets limits, and there must be power in the people to respect those limits, which is called *taqwa*.

Conclusion

Taqwa is what any wise person who has great goals in life needs, since such people always try to avoid or remove obstacles that prevent them from achieving success. In fact, *taqwa* is a comprehensive theoretical and practical program encompassing the entire life of the God-wary. *Taqwa* is also the keystone of a healthy, progressive social life. Living in a God-wary society is very pleasant and delightful. In such a society, everyone respects other people's rights and cares about virtues; justice is promoted and social and individual security is achieved. God-wariness, as a fruit of having faith in God, is the only criterion which separates human beings from animals and gives human beings the power to ascend to highest levels of perfection. *Taqwa* is in fact respecting human dignity. Sins and transgressions tarnish human beings' dignity and lower them to the level of animals or even to a lower level, but *taqwa* safeguards humans and their value.

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