

٤٥٤. وَقَالَ (عليه السلام): مَا لِابْنِ آدَمَ وَالْفَخْرِ: أَوَّلُهُ نُطْفَةٌ، وَآخِرُهُ جِيْفَةٌ، وَلَا يَرْزُقُ نَفْسَهُ، وَلَا يَدْفَعُ حَتْفَهُ.

454. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: What has a man to do with vanity. His origin is semen and his end is a carcass while he cannot feed himself nor ward off death. [1]

Footnote :

[1] If a man ponders over his original condition and the eventual breaking up and ruining of his body he will be compelled to admit his lowliness and humble position instead of being proud and vain, because he will see that there was a time when he did not exist and Allāh originated his existence with a humble drop of semen which took the shape of a piece of flesh in the mother's womb and continued feeding and growing on thick blood. When on completion of the body he set foot on the earth he was so helpless and incapable that he had neither control over his hunger and thirst nor on sickness and health, nor any command over benefit or harm, or any authority over life and death, not knowing when the energy of limbs may exhaust, feeling and sense may leave, eyesight may be taken away, power of hearing may be snatched and when death may separate the spirit from the body and leave the latter to be cut into pieces by vultures and kites or for worms to eat it in the grave.

An Arabic couplet says : How does one whose origin is semen and whose end is a carcass dare be vain?