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Chapter 11: On Curing The Wandering Imagination

Concerning Showing an Effective Cure for the Treatment of the Wandering and Escaping Imagination that Brings about the Presence of Heart

Know that each one of the inner and outer powers of the soul can be educated and taught by way of practicing a particular austerity. For example, human eye is unable to gaze at a point or at an intense light, such as the disk of the sun, for a long time, without blinking. But if a man educates his eye, such as that which is done by some of the people of false asceticism for certain purposes, he can look into the sun for several hours without blinking or getting tired.

Similarly, he can gaze at a certain point for hours without any movement. This is also true of the other faculties, like stopping breathing, which, as they say, is seen among the people of false asceticism, as there are some who can stop breathing for an extraordinary period.

Of the faculties that can be educated are the faculties of imagination and fancy. Before educating them, they are like two ever–jumpy and restless birds flying from a branch to another, and from one thing to another. If one tries to watch them for a single minute, he will see their many successive movements of very slight and far–fetched connections.

Many think that to control the bird of imagination and tame it is out of the limits of possibilities, and falls within the realm of the common impossibilities. But, as a matter of fact, it is not so. With hardship, practice and time-taking education, it can be tamed, and the bird of imagination can be put under one's control and will be such that it can be confined for several hours and for a certain purpose, according to one's will.

The principal way of taming it is to act to its contrary. That is, at the time of the *Salat* one is to prepare himself to control the imagination during the *Salat* and confine it to action, and, as soon as it tries to slip out of his hand, to recapture it. One should carefully watch it in all the actions, recitations, invocations,

etc. of the *Salat*, observing it so as not to be obstinate. At the beginning, this seems to be a difficult task.

But after a while of strict practice and treatment, it will certainly become tame and obedient. You should not, of course, expect yourself, at the beginning, to be able to control the bird of imagination along the *Salat* completely. Actually, this is impossible. Perhaps those who stressed this impossibility had such expectations. The situation requires deliberateness, careful patience and gradual training.

It is possible that you can first control your imagination during only one-tenth of the *Salat* or even less than that, in which you can have the presence of heart. Then, if one pays more attention, and if he feels himself in need of that, he can attain a better result, and can gradually overcome the Satan of fancy and the bird of imagination, such that they come under his control in most of the *Salat*. However, you should never despair, as despair is the origin of all weaknesses and inabilities, whereas the flash of hope guides man to his complete happiness.

The important thing in this respect, however, is to feel being in need a mood that is little felt by us. Our heart does not believe that the source of the happiness in the Hereafter, and the means of a long-lasting life, is the *Salat*. We take the *Salat* to be an additional burden on our lives. We think it an imposition and an obligation. The love of a thing is seen from understanding its consequences. We understood its consequence and the heart believes in it, and, therefore, we are not in need of any advice or admonition in acquiring it.

Those who think that the message of the Seal of the Prophets, the Hshimite Messenger (s), has two dimensions: one belonging to this world and the other to the Hereafter, and take this to be a pride of the bringer of the Shars'ah and the perfection of prophethood, know nothing of the religion and are unaware of the message and far from understanding the purpose of the prophethood.

Inviting to worldly things is quite alien to the objectives of the great prophets, since desire, sense of anger and the interior and exterior Satans are sufficient for such an invitation and it does not need the sending of messengers. The administration of desire and anger is in no need of a Qur'an or a prophet. The prophets, actually, have come to keep people back from this world to curb the release of the desire and anger, and to limit the sources of worldly interests.

An ignorant person thinks that they invited the people to this world. They say: "Do not acquire wealth by whatever means. Do not satisfy your desire in whatever way available there should be marriage, and there should be (lawful) trade, industry and agriculture though the door of the center of desire and anger is opened by letting them free."

So, the prophets demand them to be chained, not to be set free, and they do not invite to worldly things. They ask for a lawful business so as to prohibit the unlawful ones. They call to marriage in order to curb the nature and prevent debauchery and releasing the power of desire [shahwat]. As a matter of fact, they are not absolutely against them, because it would be against the perfect system.

In short, as we feel we need this world, regarding it to be the capital of life and the source of pleasure,

we get ready to attend to it and to acquire it. But if we believe in the Hereafter-life and feel we are in need of that life, and regard worship, especially the *Salat*, to be the capital for living there, and the source of happiness in that world, we, naturally, will try to do our best to acquire it, and we will not feel any difficulty and fatigue in ourselves; or rather, we will hurry to acquire it with complete eagerness and craving, and endure every hardship and undergo all circumstances for that purpose.

Now, this coldness and weakness, which are manifest in us, are caused by the coldness of the radiance of our faith and the weakness of its foundation. Had all the news of the prophets and holy men [awliy 1] (a) and the arguments of the elite and learned men (may Allah be pleased with them) created "sufferance" [ihtim 1] in us, we could have done better in our attempts and acquirements.

So, we have to regret a thousand times for letting Satan overcome our inside and conquer the whole of our heart and the hearings of our interior, preventing us from hearing the sayings of Allah and His Messengers, and those of the scholars, as well as the admonitions of the divine Books. Such being the case, our ears are changed to those of worldly animals, and the divine admonitions would not go beyond the apparent and the animal ear to the inside

"Most surely there is a reminder in this for him who has a heart or he gives ear and is a witness." (Surah al-Qaaf, 50:37)

One of the great duties of the traveler to Allah and the striver for the sake of Allah is to completely give up self-reliance during the striving and sul k, and, by nature, to pay attention to the Cause of the causes, and by disposition, to belong to the Origin of the origins, asking from His Sacred Existence protection and immunity from sin, and depending on the help of His Sacred Essence. In his privacy he is to implore Him and very seriously request Him to improve his condition, for there is no refuge save Him. And praise be to Allah!

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