

The Eighteenth Talk

1. Spiritual And Intellectual Needs

Today's discussion is about the fourth need – the spiritual need. Just as a person needs to be physically satisfied, he needs spiritual satisfaction. This is the main difference between human beings and the animals. Animals only have instincts and physical needs. At the most they need love and sympathy. But man has both the physical as well as the spiritual aspects in his nature. This spiritual aspect has been endowed to him from the *Aalam e Malkoot!* The human being is so spiritually developed that Allah has made a special reference to him highlighting his felicity.

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ

So, when I have made him and have breathed into him of My spirit, do ye fall down, prostrating yourselves unto him. (Sura al Hijr, 15: 29)

Allah ordered the angels to prostrate when He blew His spirit into him. This privilege is endowed only to man. When we consider the material aspect of life, we find that animals have very well defined and strong instincts and needs, which are easily satisfied. Therefore, we can say that the superiority of man lies in his spiritual aspect. Man has two aspects, thus he requires two types of nourishment. One is the material nourishment required for the maintenance of the physical existence. Similarly spiritual nourishment is necessary for him. If both the spiritual and material wants are not satisfied, man perishes! The difference between the two aspects is that when a person dies physically, it is not so important. But if he dies spiritually, according to the Holy Quran, he is worse than the lowliest of the animals and is headed straight for Hell:

وَلَقَدْ نَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَ لَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَ لَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَمِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَقْلُونَ

Already have We urged unto Hell many of the jinn and humankind, having hearts wherewith they understand not, and having eyes wherewith they see not, and having ears wherewith they hear not. These are as the cattle---nay, but they are worse!! These are the neglectful. (Sura al-A'raf, 7: 179)

Allah says that if man doesn't get spiritual nourishment, then his destiny is Hell. Such men have eyes, but they don't see. They don't distinguish between good and evil. They have ears, but they don't pay any heed to what they hear. They have tongues, but they speak not. They have hearts, but they don't think aright! Then Allah adds that such men are worse than the animals. They are like the silk-worms that produce the silk thread, wind it around their bodies and perish in the process!

These, according to Allah, are the neglectful men. If someone has not received spiritual nourishment, his soul is dead. Such people should cry day and night, because of what the Holy Quran says about them. In another Verse the Holy Quran is more forceful:

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

Lo! The worst of beasts in Allah's sight are the deaf, the dumb, who have no sense. (Sura Al-Anfal, 8: 22)

People with dead souls are worst than animals: they have brains, but do not think, they have the ability, but do not ponder. There are many such verses in the Holy Quran. The Prophet (s) has said:

There are two blessings for men—welfare and peace.

Truly, these are great blessings for men. When a man is ill, he loses interest in everything. Sometimes a person is physically well, but his spirit is ill, as the Quran says, their hearts are sick. This according to the Quran is a most dangerous state of affairs. When the heart is sick, the person rises against the Quran, the Prophet (s) and his vicegerents (a.s). He starts to interpret the verses of the Quran to suit himself; he distorts their meaning to suit himself. In the beginning of the Sura Ali Imran there are certain verses indicating that in the Quran there are *Muhkam* (definitive) verses and others that are *Mutashabih* (Ambiguous).

Such men pick up ambiguous verses and try to interpret them to suit their selfish ends. From somewhere they get a tradition and explain it to suit themselves. They invent the speech of revered people, and distort it to suit themselves. When the spirit is ill, it is not like physical illness. This illness has special characteristics. The spiritually ill person is at war with the Holy Quran. Therefore, the Quran says it is a cure, but for the spiritually ill, there is nothing but loss, and more loss!

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَبَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ

But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue, forsooth, that which is allegorical (ambiguous) seeking(to cause) dissensions by seeking to explain it.... (Sura Ali Imran, 3: 7)

Allah's mercy is nothing save loss for the oppressors and the spiritually ill. For example, melons and guava are very good fruits. But they are very harmful to one ailing from inflammation of the intestines. Eating these will further aggravate the pain or even lead to bleeding from the digestive system. The verses of the Holy Quran are very useful. But for the spiritually sick person, they result in losses. This reaction is somewhat like the effect of the melon on one suffering from intestinal inflammation!

A person whose spirit is dead is harmful not only to himself, but also to others in his environment. He is like a cancer in the society. He will be a source of trouble for his own wife and children. Therefore, we must give special attention to spiritual needs of our families. Both the husband and wife should pave the way for the spiritual progress of each other. Both the mother and the father should look after the spiritual needs of their children, so that they can make spiritual progress. If parents cater only to the physical needs of the children and ignore their spiritual needs or give less importance to their spiritual growth, it is as if they are raising dogs and beasts. It is as if these parents are raising a cancer for the society. What is the nourishment of the spirit? It is salah (prayer), fasting, recitation of the Holy Quran, remembrance of Allah and remaining awake in the night for prayers, and communicating with Allah. If a woman doesn't offer salah, or offers it incorrectly, then her home and her husband are to be pitied. The Holy Quran says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ

O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from the fire whose fuel shall be men and stones... (Sura Tahrim, 66: 6)

If a man has strong faith, he will succeed in saving himself and his family from the Hellfire. This verse indicates that the men and women should be regular at offering salah. They must establish a strong rapport with Allah. They must recite the Holy Quran at home. They must supplicate. They must offer salatul layl (late night prayers). They should pray as soon as the time for salah sets in. If they fail to do offer their salah as soon as the time for salah sets, they will gradually become spiritually dead. If a person does not nourish his soul, his spiritual condition will be just like the physical condition of a person who has not eaten for a few days! A person who starves himself might die physically after a few days of starvation! If the spirit of a person is deprived of its nourishment, it might die too after some time! The spiritual needs are not like the material, emotional and sexual needs of human beings. It is for the fulfilment of this need that a hundred and twenty four thousand Prophets (a.s.) came into this world with their books. It is for the spiritual progress of man that the Prophets (a.s.) and their vicegerents (a.s.) bore untold hardships.

I draw your attention to the *Ziarat* of Aba Abdallah al Husayn (a.s.) that reads:

I bear witness that you established prayer (salah) and gave the zakat and practiced commanding good (amr bil ma'roof) and forbidding evil (nahy anil munkar).

When, on the day of Ashura, most of Imam Husayn (a.s.)'s companions were already martyred, it was the time for *Zuhr* Prayer. One of his companions said, "O son of the Prophet! The time for *Zuhr* has arrived. We wish to offer it behind you!" The Imam (a.s.) smiled and said, "May Allah place you in the ranks of those who offer prayers!" The arrows kept raining from the columns of the enemy but the Imam (a.s.) stood steadfast in the middle of the ground offering salah along with his companions. God forbid that any house should be without salah; such a house is filled with animals, not humans. The inhabitants of such houses may be good looking, but believe me, they are beasts and are destined for dark places.

The Holy Quran says:

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهْوَاتِ فَسَوْفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غِيًّا

Now there hath succeeded them a later generation who have ruined worship and have followed lusts. But they will meet deception. (Sura Maryam, 19: 59)

Those who recite salah but recite it incorrectly, those who are enslaved by sensual pleasures, desires and passions – these are surely the misguided ones. '*Ghay*' in Arabic means misguidance. '*Sawfa yalqawna ghayyaa*' means that they are definitely misguided. These are the men who have gone astray from the right path. Their final destination is Hell. *Ghay* is also the name of a well in Hell. If we disregard *salah*, if someone recites salah but at the very end of the prescribed time, or recites it in a hurry, he is also misguided and does not have the shade of the mercy of the Lord over his head. If one is deprived of the shelter of the Lords' mercy, he becomes entangled in all sorts of deviation.

Mulla Fakhruddin Raazi has quoted a tradition in to explain Sura al Asr. This tradition is very enlightening. He writes that a woman came to the Prophet (s) in a very disturbed state of mind. She said, "O Prophet of Allah! I have committed a major sin. I am a married woman. Even then I was involved in adultery and gave birth to a baby. To hide my sin I put the baby in a cauldron of vinegar. I have already sold that tainted vinegar to people."

Imagine what a grave sin the woman had committed. Truly, if a person does not have Allah's mercy and grace, he can get totally deviated. He gets entangled in all sorts of troubles. The Prophet (s) told the woman, "I think that you have stopped reciting the *Asr* prayers. All this happened because the shelter of Allah's mercy was no longer over you, which was the result of your neglecting salah!" If we become regular at our prayers, and offer salah at the beginning of its appointed time, we will be safe from becoming entangled in such calamities. If you want to become noble, pray regularly at the beginning of the time for prayer, along with the after-prayer supplications (*Taqibaat*), in congregation, while observing the etiquette of salah. Women should pray at a spot in the home earmarked for this purpose. These are

the acts of the truly blessed people!

If there is no atmosphere of spirituality in a house, it will be a troubled place. Its condition will be like that of a spirit suffering from an ailment. What makes the soul ill? It is sin! The Holy Quran, in some places, terms sin as an ailment. This is because sins render a person's heart black, make the heart ill and taint the heart with 'rust'. When a person's heart becomes sick, the first symptom is that he is unable to derive pleasure from worship. On the contrary it derives pleasure from sinning. If there is anyone in this audience who doesn't enjoy prayers but enjoys sinning, let him know that he is spiritually ill. He must get himself treated otherwise his heart will turn black! The Holy Quran pities the person whose heart has turned black on account of sinning! Sometimes the heart has turned black, but to a lesser extent. Sometimes the entire heart becomes pitch black. Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) says that such persons will not get deliverance. The Holy Quran says:

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُم مِّنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

Is he whose bosom Allah hath expanded for the Surrender (unto Him), so that he followeth a light from His Lord,(as he who disbelieveth)? Then woe unto those whose hearts are hardened against remembrance of Allah. Such are in plain error. (Sura az-Zumar, 39: 22)

Fortunate is the heart that has illuminated itself with Allah's remembrance. Radiant is the heart that is glowing with the felicity of prayer and fasting. Shame on the heart that has turned black with sin. Sins have turned this heart into stone. The Holy Quran says that the sinning hearts are hardened. Beware of the hardening of the heart. Sin, however small it may be, plays a major role in hardening the heart. Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) has said that when a person commits a sin, a small dark spot appears on his heart. If he does not repent, the spot increases in size. This process goes on till the entire heart darkens. Then the person cannot be reformed. Can you comprehend where those families have reached who listen to music, where the husband and wife backbite, accuse others falsely, oppress others and keep a lookout for faults in others? Their hearts are black; their hearts are brimming with the prohibited. But worse than sinning is the presence of negative qualities in people.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) has said that sins are more harmful for the heart than piercing a knife in someone's stomach. But negative traits are even more dangerous than sins. These traits are present in every one of us and are difficult to eliminate. One may have to struggle for twenty years to uproot the tree of negative traits from his heart. After twenty to thirty years of strenuous efforts one might be able to plant the sapling of virtue in the same heart and make it flourish to bear fruit! None can claim that he is totally free of negative traits. It is our responsibility to fight and vanquish these traits. We have to ensure that they don't assume stormy proportions. What happens to towns and cities when they are flooded? The same thing happens to man when he is flooded with negative qualities – It completely destroys his spirituality. When a fire is small, it can be extinguished with some effort. But when it turns into an inferno, then it goes beyond control. When the negative traits become like an inferno, it is impossible to combat

it. From the very childhood, children should be trained to combat these negative traits. Men should exercise total control over their tongues. Their talk with their wives and the children should be polite and morally upright.

The ladies must know that jealousy is a very harmful trait. When a person turns jealous, she starts the Battle of *Jamal* in spite of knowing the truth.. Who was the cause of this battle? It was a person with a jealous heart. When she was informed that Uthman was assassinated, she said, "Praise be to Allah, that *Na'thal* is dead!" When later on she heard that Imam Ali (a.s.) has become the Caliph, she said, "How I wish I had died before getting this news. If the skies had fallen on me, it would have been better than hearing this news!" Thus the seeds were sown for the Battle of *Jamal*. To quench the fires of this jealousy about a thousand lives were lost.

Do you know Ali (a.s.)? Who was he? Talha and Zubair knew him better than you and I. These two men knew that Ali (a.s.) had grown up in the lap of the Prophet (s). In the Holy Quran more than a hundred verses have been revealed concerning him. These two persons asked Ali (a.s.) to give them money from the public treasury. Ali (a.s.) refused. They asked him to give them positions of power in the government. Imam Ali (a.s.) did not consider them deserving of this either. They went away disappointed and started propaganda that became the cause of the Battle of *Jamal*. The Muslims had to bear much hardship because of this battle. What hardships were inflicted on the Muslims because of this battle? If some one asked you about the causes of the Battle of *Jamal*, your reply should be – the twin causes were jealousy and greed!

When the accursed Ibne Muljim martyred Imam Ali (a.s.) he was under the illusion that he was doing it to attain nearness to Allah! If you are asked who martyred Imam Ali (a.s.), you should reply that it was a stubborn person who committed the heinous act. Imam Ali's personality was such, that all knew him. When this same Ibne Muljim was sitting near the pulpit of the Prophet(s), the Prophet (s) declared, "O Ali! You and your Shias will emerge successful on the Day of Judgement! O Ali! Only you and your Shias will be victorious!" Ibne Muljim was sitting nearby when the Prophet (s) said, "If your Faith and the Faith of all the men, the angels and the Jinn is compared, your Faith will surmount that of all of them put together!" The accursed person, even after hearing all this, martyred the great Imam (a.s.)!

Ladies and gentlemen! Abstain from stubbornness otherwise you too will end up like this. If you don't accept criticism and always insist on only your own point of view, then you refuse to listen to anyone but your own desires. You will reach a stage when you will act only on Satan's instigation. I appeal to every one to take care of the spiritual needs of your homes. In many situations the man is able to meet the material needs of the family. He toils to provide comfort for his family, but his wife becomes his enemy, because his love for her has decreased. He does not fulfil the spiritual needs of the family. Because of the paucity of a spiritual atmosphere in their homes, they turn into dungeons. These homes, in terms of the Quran, have turned dark.

أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ظُلُمَاتٌ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ

Or as darkness on a vast, abysmal sea. There covereth him a wave, above which is a wave, above which is a cloud. Layer upon layer of darkness ... (Sura an-Nur, 24: 40)

The actions of infidels are compared here with the darkness of the deep seas where wave after wave covers the bottom and makes it dark!

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