

The Eleventh Talk

1. Training Oneself

So far our discussion was on the formation of families and its advantages. In the previous discussion, the advantages were mentioned. One of these is the training of the self within the family. Home is a place for embellishing oneself with noble traits. Within the family, the husband and wife can train themselves, embellish themselves with noble traits. They can not only cultivate good habits themselves, but also motivate other members of the family to follow suit. But in the eyes of sociologists, achieving these two things – training themselves and motivating others, is rather difficult. A person needs some effort for curbing the base traits and planting the sapling of virtue in his mind. Normally people struggle to make a smooth transformation in their natures.

فَلَا افْتَحَمَّ الْعَقَبَةَ

وَمَا أُدْرِكُ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ

فَكَ رَقَبَةً

But he hath not attempted the ascent—

Ah! what will convey unto thee what the Ascent is!—

(It is) to free a slave. (Sura al Balad, 90: 11-13)

Expelling undesirable habits from one's nature is a difficult task. But one has to get rid of them before they assume stormy proportions. When one succeeds in this effort, the person plants the sapling of virtue in his nature. To nourish this sapling one has to make strenuous efforts. He has to persevere. It is said that the *nafse ammara* (base instinct) is like an elephant. The trainer of an elephant has to constantly hit on its head to train it. If there is the slightest negligence on the part of the trainer, the

animal can overcome him. The base instincts and the mean traits in a person are also like the untrained elephant. Believe me, all the Prophets (s.a.) came to the world, with their books, for the sole purpose of guiding the people to curb their *nafse ammara!*

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

He it is who hath sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own, to recite unto them His revelations and to make them grow, and to teach them the Scriptures and Wisdom... (Sura al-Jumu'ah, 62: 2)

The Prophet of Islam (s) came with the Miracle of the Quran for the people to reform their psyches. The Prophets (s.a.) have gone through untold hardships performing this task. But their success was not commensurate with the toil put in by them. The reason for this was that the task was very formidable.

The matter that needs our attention, and particularly that of the ladies, is that they are like a *madrassa* or school at home. They are the foundation for the establishment of the home and the family and are the instructors of morality for the members of the family. In a family the wife is a mentor for the husband, the husband is a mentor for the wife and both together are mentors for the children.

2. Need of Patience

When the husband and wife are intelligent, they serve each other and spend time in grooming of the children instead of spending time on unnecessary arguments, bickering and restlessness. These undesirable traits can totally uproot a person.

The Holy Quran says:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا

إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا

وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا

إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ

Lo! Man was created anxious,

Fretful when evil befaller him

And, when good befaller him, grudging;

Save worshippers (Sura Ma'aarij, 70: 19-22)

The human nature is, no doubt, fickle. Man forgets Allah both when he is well provided for, and also when he is penniless. He is like the pebbles on the street. When someone tramples on the pebbles, they scatter here and there! The fickleness of humankind is such that when they face a small hardship, they become restless. But when they do well and progress, they become conceited. Social scientists consider human fickleness as a negative trait. Such persons get upset by minor things. There are also persons who have the trait of patience and forbearance. About them the Holy Quran says:

إِنَّمَا يُوفَى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

... Verily the steadfast will be paid their wages without stint. (Sura az-Zumar, 39: 10)

Definitely there is reward for every act of piety like prayer, fasting etc. But there is one trait in human beings that will be handsomely rewarded by Allah. That trait is the patience and forbearance that one exercises in dealing with one's spouse, in training and educating the children and dealing with the people in the community. An intelligent person discreetly tolerates the occasional tantrums of his wife and thus promotes an atmosphere of peace and tranquility at home. Heaven has eight entrances and one of them is reserved for the persons who exercise patience in their lives! They remain patient in difficulties and offer prayers in that spirit. These persons will enter Heaven through that door which is at an elevated place and the Immaculate Imams (a.s.) will use the same door for entering Heaven! Our master Imam Husayn (a.s) and all the martyrs, who laid down their lives with forbearance in the way of Allah, will use this threshold to enter the Heaven! When one bears difficulties with equanimity thinking that they are the forerunners of better days, will be rewarded amply in this world and the Hereafter. A woman, who trains herself and her children with patience and equanimity and discreetly faces the occasional misbehavior of her husband, will ultimately come out victorious.

The best thing that a person can do is to banish negative traits from his nature and in its place acquire virtues. This is even better than Paradise. Cleverness is not acquiring Paradise or avoiding Hell. The Shia of Amir al Mu'minin (a.s.) will, anyway, ultimately go to Heaven, although after bearing the hardships of the grave, the *Barzakh* and the Day of Reckoning. There is very little likelihood of their going to the Hell. Even if a *mu'min* goes to the Hell, his stay there will be short and his final destination is Heaven! Cleverness is not avoiding Hell, because even the mentally handicapped will not go to Hell! Astuteness does not lie in becoming an inmate of Heaven. Even children who die go straight to Heaven without any accounting of the deeds! What is so special if you reach Heaven without accounting for your deeds? Perfection, for a person, is in achieving Allah's pleasure through his good deeds. If a person can achieve Allah's pleasure, he is indeed wise and perfect.

A person should do such deeds that his heart becomes the abode of his Lord. This is indeed a priceless achievement, not acquiring Heaven. Perfection is not attaining Paradise, but perfection is in making the heart the abode of the Lord, in this world! It is narrated that the heart of the *mu'min* is the abode of the Most Merciful. Who can make his heart the abode of the Lord? It is the person who undergoes the process of ridding himself of bad qualities and adorning himself with good qualities. The home is an excellent place for achieving this. To forgive someone or make sacrifices are virtues possessed even by animals. The home is the best place to train oneself to acquire these virtues while ridding oneself of negative traits like narrow-mindedness and miserliness.

The right way of upbringing is that where no harsh methods are used. Generally the domination of the stronger over the weak is the law of nature in animals. If the man is stronger, should he beat his wife? If you put grass in front of two animals, the stronger will push aside the weaker and eat the fodder. Similarly the stronger nations today dominate the weaker! Such domination is inhuman. Similarly if a man beats his wife at home to get his way, he is not a Muslim, rather, he is not a human being! Even if a wife is absolutely wrong in her attitude, the husband should not beat her. If, may Allah forbid, a person slaps his wife and her face turns red, he shall have to pay *diyāt* equivalent to one *mithqal* of gold. If the man is more aggressive in anger and the wife develops black marks on her body, then the *diyāt* is three *mithqals* of gold. A husband who abuses his wife will be in a burning tent on the Day of Reckoning.

Who is the person who develops in himself the trait of forgiveness and clemency? Who is the person who banishes narrow-mindedness from his nature? Which wife keeps her cool in spite of the misbehavior of the husband? Which wife keeps the confidence of her husband and doesn't complain about him to outsiders, not even to her own parents? Is there any wife who bears the harsh treatment of her husband with a smile and prays to Allah to forgive him and guide both of them and to give them both a place in Heaven? Such ladies attain the place of honor in the eyes of Allah! These ladies will rise with Hadhrat Fatima Zahra (a.s.) on the Day of Reckoning.

Hadhrat Fatima Zahra (a.s.) was a paragon of virtue, patience and forbearance. It is narrated that she had cooked five breads, while fasting, during Ramadan. Just prior to the time for breaking of the fast, a mendicant came asking for food. Hadhrat Fatima (a.s.) gave all the bread to him. The entire family broke their fast with water only. The same thing happened on the second and the third day. Then a verse of the Holy Quran was revealed in the praise of her family.

Don't be under the impression that Hadhrat Fatima Zahra (a.s.) and her family had no Need of that food. They were as hungry as any other person who had fasted the entire day. In addition, it was not that they went without food for only one day. They bore this hardship for three consecutive days!

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

And, (while needing it for themselves) they give away food, out of love for Him, to the poor and

the orphan and the captive.. (Sura Insan, 76: 8)

The lady who bears hardships with calmness and the man who faces difficulties with courage will rise on the Day of Resurrection with Amir al Mu'minin (a.s.).

وَيُؤْتِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

.... And prefer (the needy) over their own selves, though their own lot be poverty;... (Sura Hashr, 59: 9)

The beauty of the revelation of this verse is that it was revealed for Amir al Mu'minin (a.s.) and Hadhrat Fatima Zahra (a.s.) when she was ill and he was bringing a pomegranate for her. The Imam (a.s.) came across a blind beggar on the way who was ill too. When Imam Ali (a.s.) inquired about his health, he said, "O master! It would be fine if I got a pomegranate to eat!" Imam Ali (a.s.) gave him the fruit, that he was taking home for his ailing wife, to the blind person! Any person who wishes to be with Imam Ali (a.s.) on the Day of Judgment has to try to emulate his quality of sacrifice, patience and forbearance. If you wish to seek the Intercession of the Ahl al Bayt, then the men should follow in their lives the example of Ali (a.s.) and the women that of Fatima Zahra (a.s.).

Life is very difficult for those who are not so well-off. Do you realize the status achieved by the impoverished man who bears his lot patiently? Or the wife whose husband cannot meet many of the family's needs, but she is not disrespectful towards him, instead she is patient and appreciates him? It is mentioned in the traditions that when such people will come on the Day of Judgment, Allah (s.w.t) will express His regret. That is, the man who desires a comfortable life for his wife and children but cannot fulfill his desire and the wife who desires a comfortable life for her children but her husband is unable to meet their expenses but despite this she does not ridicule him, rather bears it patiently. When such people will come on the Day of Judgment, Allah (s.w.t) will express His regret. Can there be a more elevated status than this? When Allah will express His regrets to those people who had to bear difficulties in the world, they will become so happy, that they will wish that they had been shredded with scissors while they were in the world, so that they could have achieved a more elevated status today. Therefore it is better to learn to be patient in this world.

3. Home, A School

The home is a school where one learns to curb the negative human instincts. The person can nurture the sapling of nobility in this institution. A wife, who has a disrespectful and rude husband, should bear with him with patience so that gradually, being patient becomes a habit with her. If she can cultivate this trait of patience within herself, it is better than this entire world as well as the Hereafter. Those men who have disrespectful wives too should deal with them patiently. Those who can uproot negative traits and in its place cultivate patience have achieved something better than the world and all that it contains as

well as Paradise and all that it contains. Allah (s.w.t) bestows His blessings on such people.

4. More Than The Late Night Prayer

Another advantage of the formation of a family is that the home and the family are more felicitous than construction of a mosque. A woman's reward for serving her husband and a man's reward for providing for his wife and children, and for raising the children, is more than every supererogatory prayer. It is even more felicitous than Salathul Layl. Salatul Layl is highly meritorious and according to the Holy Quran brings the person to the elevated place, the *Maqame Mahmood!*

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ عَسَىٰ أَن يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا

And (in a part) of the night, forsake sleep for prayer, in addition to (what is incumbent on) thee; Maybe that exalteth thee thy Lord unto a position praised. (Sura al-'Isra', 17: 79)

No one can understand the *Maqame Mahmood* until a person reaches it himself. But there is more reward than Salatul Layl for the mother who gets up in the middle of the night to feed her child, and lovingly put him back to sleep. Similarly a wife giving comfort and satisfaction to her husband is more felicitous. It has come in the traditions that when the husband and wife take the Bath of Purification (*Ghusl al-Janaba*), their major sins too are washed away!

Similarly it is mentioned in the traditions that when a husband and wife take the Bath of Purification, the drops of water that flow down from their bodies turn into angels who will remain alive till Doomsday! When a wife becomes pregnant, each breath that she takes is deemed a prayer. The difficulties that the mother faces in child bearing too are considered as prayer. When the child is born, it is innocent and at that time the mother too is deemed free of any sin! Allah addresses the new mother thus, "O lady! Start your life afresh from today! Be careful that you don't commit any further sins!"

The Prophet of Islam (s) one day entered the home of Lady Fatima Zahra (a.s.). He found Amir al Mu'minin (a.s.) busy cleaning vegetables. The Prophet (s) said, "O Ali! Do you know how much reward is there from Allah for helping ones spouse with her chores?" Then he said that the reward is equivalent to that of a person who has been martyred in the way of Allah!

A woman once told the Prophet (s), "O Prophet of Allah! I have a question and it is not only for the women of Medina but for the womenfolk of all time! The question is that "Why is there a difference between the status of men and women? Why are men given a higher status than women?" The Prophet of Islam replied, "Islam doesn't believe in giving any special status to men in comparison with women." The woman said, "The women, because they have to take care of their children and the home they cannot attend the Friday congregation, they cannot go to meetings, call on the sick to express their sympathies, cannot go for optional Hajj and are sometimes even unable to perform the more important

Hajj Pilgrimage. It seems that our only function is to look after the home and rear the children!"

The Prophet (s) was very happy to hear this. He smiled and said:

"This is the reply for the women of Medina and all the women who will be in the world till the Day of Reckoning: 'If a woman marries and keeps her husband happy, then this act is equal to the Friday congregation, the optional Hajj and other type of worship.'"

This reply of the Holy Prophet is for all wives, irrespective of whether the lady is the wife of a toiling laborer, a philosopher, a villager or a city dweller. But today's women seem to have forgotten this commandment of the Prophet (s).

It has been mentioned in the traditions that when a housewife prepares food for the breaking of the fast (*iftar*) and serves it to the children and other members of the house, her reward will be equal to the reward of a martyr. Ladies think that there is reward for them only if they go to Mecca. One lady asked me "O Aga! Please pray for me! I wish to perform the optional Hajj in Mecca!" I told her, "If you want to acquire the reward for the optional Hajj you should first spend money on the beggars, old, infirm and sick persons. Imam Musa bin Jafar (a.s.) has said that if someone gives food to a deserving family for one week, the reward for this act will be more than that of performing 70 Hajj pilgrimages! Hearing this the lady told me with a crestfallen face. "You may do what you are advising me! As for me, I want to visit Mecca!"

The ladies seem to have forgotten that there is reward for them in running the household. They have forgotten that there is a reward in the upbringing of children. A husband working hard on his job to provide a better living to his wife and children is like a soldier struggling in the battle field of Jihad. Both are equally rewarding! If the man works for the welfare of his family, smiles for his wife, thanks her, then this gets converted into *Hoorul Ein* for him. Do not compare *Hoorul Ein* with the women of this world. If a single *Hoorul Ein* comes to this world, the people of this world will not need the moon. The man who smiles at his wife when he enters his home and the woman who smiles at her husband when he enters the house, have prepared *Hoorul Eins* for themselves. One who is desirous of acquiring the *Hoorul Ein*, gardens and palaces, should make efforts to do so in this life itself!

The Prophet of Islam (s) saw the angels working in the Heavens on the night of his ascension (*Meraj*). They were working for sometime, then they stopped working for some time. Jibrael (a.s.) told the Prophet (s), "The angels here stop working for sometime because the material with which they build comes from the world. When the material comes, the angels work. When it stops coming, the angels too stop the work."

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