

## The Thirteenth Talk

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ

***Verily those who guard (themselves against evil) when an evil thought from Satan afflicts them, they become mindful (of God and get awakened) then lo! They see (aright). (Al-Aaraf 7:201)***

### Taqwa or Piety is Achieved With Practice

When we admit a child for the first time in a school, on the first day he is neither able to read nor write. He gets motivated to do any schoolwork in the beginning with difficulty. But when he is slowly initiated into reading and writing, he makes rapid progress. In time he will not have any difficulty in coping with his lessons.

Same is the case of *taqwa* or piety. Man has to strive to abstain from committing sins. Whenever he finds a situation to commit a sin, he should control himself and avoid committing it. The way a child gets used to reading and writing and becomes comfortable at these skills after some time, similarly when one tries with full determination to shun sinning, in good time he will be able to totally stop these undesirable acts. At this stage Allah (S.w.T.) will put a light in his heart that makes avoiding sins easier for him. He will have so much control on his tongue that even for the kingdom of the entire world, he would not tell a lie.

The same sins, the avoidance of which was next to impossible for him, now become very difficult to commit! Man should make efforts to inculcate such will power that he is able to avoid commitment of

sins with ease. With this faculty in his heart, he will draw pleasure from the success of his efforts.

No doubt Allah (S.w.T.) doesn't like infidelity in his creatures. "He has made faith (*Imān*) dear to them. He has made it the adornment for their hearts. And has created abhorrence in him for Infidelity and disobedience."

At last a sinner starts disliking sins. He achieves the state of *Taqwa* where sin appears bitter than the bitterest thing and every small evil act seems the most evil. He thinks that every sin, howsoever minor, worth reproaching to the maximum extent.

The highest level of piety is cultivated after much practice and constant effort. There are a few stages and ranks of this piety.

## Shunning Doubtful Things

When a person gets used to avoiding prohibited things and depending only on fair living, he advances one step, and with more effort he also avoids use of things, which give him some doubt of their being legitimate. Therefore, he not only avoids the use of *haram* objects but also abstains from things about which he has the slightest doubt of being *haram*.

He also abstains from uttering such words that Allah (S.w.T.) might dislike the use of. In stages he achieves total avoidance of the use of doubtful things in his day-to-day living.

## Shunning of The Unbecoming Or Makr<sup>h</sup>

The man now reaches a higher state of piety when he shuns the unbecoming (*makr<sup>h</sup>*) and the stage is set for the use of only the desirables (*mustahab*). Now he has reached such a high state of piety that he does not avoid the desirables although he knows that they are not mandatory and not binding on him. He also meticulously avoids doing or using unbecoming (*makr<sup>h</sup>*) things that are, no doubt, not totally banned.

## Shunning The Permissible For Shunning The Prohibited

He becomes careful in the use of such permissible things that give him doubt that their use might make him avoid certain mandatory things.

For example, it is permissible to remain awake till mid-night in conversation with friends. In that time

there can be two or three rounds of eating snacks. But, if one sleeps late on a full stomach, he might find it difficult to stir out of his bed for the *Fajr* prayer that is mandatory. Therefore, a pious person develops such a faculty in his nature that he takes care to avoid every permissible thing that might cause difficulty in performance of his mandatory duties.

## Saving a Coin a Day For Use During Ramadhan

A baker was our friend. He was very skillful and capable in his trade. The month of Ramadhan came during summer one year. He took off from work the whole month of Ramadhan to avoid the excessive heat of his work place, while he fasted. He could do it by cleverly putting aside a coin from his earnings every day for the eleven months previous to Ramadhan to meet his expenses when he closed his shop during the fasting month.

Although spending this coin every day was permissible and well within his rights, the baker wanted to prepare himself properly for the fasting in Ramadhan that is mandatory!

## Travel Becomes the Reason for Avoiding the Mandatory Duties

It is narrated that a person went to Imam (a.s.) and said, "I am required to travel to a cold country. These days there is so much snow fall there that the entire land is covered with it. It is difficult to get water for *wudhu* (the minor ablution) nor is it possible to do *tayyamum* (the dry ablution). In such a situation what instructions you give me about performance of the mandatory prayers?"

The Imam got angry on him and said, "Why are you undertaking such a journey that can disrupt you obligatory matters of faith? When you are aware that because of your traveling on business to that place your *taqwa* (piety) is affected, then you must avoid such travel"

When attending a gathering is permissible, but there is likelihood of undesirable things happening there, then it is better to avoid attending the party.

But all these doubts and confusions are for people with weak faiths, a man of piety will never falter from the right course.

## The Material Capacities

There are certain permissible acts that might make a person commit *haram* actions. He thinks that in a material sense these acts have lot of meaning. Although an act might be *mustahab* (desirable) or *mubah* (permissible) the man of piety keeps a close watch on its implications and consequences. He seriously considers what effect the performance of the act might have on him. Then only he ventures to embark

on performing it.

In our daily lives why there is waste and profligacy? What use spending lives on unproductive acts? When people don't help their poor relatives and friends cutting into their legitimate expenses, and make heavy expenses through loans on pomp and show, their prayers are nothing short of hypocrisy. They may not be rewarded in the Hereafter.

Taking interest in the pleasures of life is not *haram*. It is in fact legitimate and permissible. But when such things are given unnecessary importance, there can be the likelihood of *Qata ar-Rahm* or depriving the near of kin of their legitimate rights and privileges. Even sometimes people fulfill their desire for pomp by meeting the high expenses with loans. Thus they might incur the risk of rendering their acts *Haram*.

Another example is that good humor is permissible. In certain circumstances it is desirable too. But we see that in excess, this permissible act ends into practical jokes and results in the heart-burn for the persons who are the subject of the humor. This can be tantamount to hurting the feelings of *Mu'min* and is *Haram*.

Therefore it is necessary to adopt *Taqwa* and extravagant indulgence in the material needs and excessive jest and humor must be avoided.

In a nutshell, there are three stages of *taqwa*:

Firstly: mastery in avoiding sins.

Secondly: Mastery in abstaining from the doubtful and the unbecoming things.

Thirdly: avoiding such permissible acts that might be the precursors of sins.

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