

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

We will continue reading from the Malfuzaat of Hazrat Masih Maood (as) today as well. Someone spoke about the condition of various Sufi leaders, who indulged in Sufi music and singing (*surud*), and other self-invented practices of this nature. The Promised Messiah (as) said:

“Human beings possess a propensity to derive pleasure in things and this is what moves them to feel pleasure in Sufi music and singing. The inner self of man is deceived into thinking that he is deriving pleasure from the subject matter being sung, but in actuality, their inner self is only concerned with the pleasure that it derives from the music itself, irrespective of whether Satan is being praised or God. When these people become engrossed in this and lose themselves to it completely, be it the praise of Satan or the praise of God, both become one and the same.”

On the occasion of Jalsa Salana 1899, the Promised Messiah (as) delivered a speech on 28th December. He said:

“Would all the gentlemen listen attentively. I wish and desire for my community, and even for my own person and soul, that we must not be pleased with empty words and expressions that are to be found in lectures. Our entire aim and focus must not culminate merely on the spell-binding nature of a certain individual’s speech and the power of their words. This does not please me. What pleases me—and not by any pretence or affectation, but rather as a natural and inherent demand of my soul—is that everything be done for the sake of Allah, and to serve God. If the pleasure of Allah and obedience to His commands had not been my objective, Allah the Exalted knows well that I have always preferred to remain in seclusion and I feel such pleasure in solitude that is beyond me to explain—delivering speeches and sermons is quite another matter.

But what am I to do? My sympathy for mankind draws and pulls me out into the public, and then, I am also bound by the command of Allah Almighty, who has appointed me to convey His message.

The reason that I have mentioned that we must not be pleased with hollow words and expressions is because even in all things that are good, Satan has a part. Hence, when a person stands up to exhort the people, there is no doubt that enjoining goodness and forbidding evil is a most excellent deed; but the one who stands in this place ought to be fearful, for in this deed, Satan seeks to have his share. A part of this relates to the one who delivers the address, and a part relates to the audience. The reality of this is that when speakers stand up to deliver their addresses, it is observed that their purpose and heartfelt desire is nothing more than to deliver a speech that pleases the audience. They aim to use such words and expressions so that sounds of praise and acclaim can be heard from all directions. I find that this is the only purpose of such speakers, just as

the main effort of entertainers, actors, *qawwali* performers and singers is to receive praise from their audience.

Hence, when a person has a large audience before them, which comprises people of all dispositions and levels, the eye with which one perceives God is shut, except in the case of whom God wills. Otherwise, the objective of most people is simply to garner praise and acclaim, and to be applauded and given cheers of appreciation. In short, this is Satan's part as it relates to a preacher or speaker.

The share of Satan, as it relates to the audience that listens to an address, is for them to appreciate and praise a speaker for their eloquence, articulate speech, mastery of the language, powerful expression, and for their apt use of poetic verses and stories and jokes that spur laughter, only so that they may be deemed as ones who have an understanding of poetry and prose. In other words, their purpose is far distanced from God, while the speaker has his own motives. The speaker speaks, but not for the sake of God; the audience listens, but does not give these words a place in their hearts because they do not listen for the sake of God. Why does this happen? Only so that they can feel pleasure. Remember! Human beings experience two forms of pleasure: a pleasure of the soul and a pleasure of the baser self. Spiritual pleasure is a fine and profound secret. If someone were to learn about it or if a person was to experience this pleasure and delight even once in their life, this would be enough to intoxicate them and they would lose their senses.

Carnal pleasures are always short-lived and temporary. Carnal pleasures refer to the pleasure, for example, with which a harlot dances in the streets, and from whom people also derive a pleasure. For example, when a Muslim cleric sings as he admonishes an audience, this pleases the people who sit before him. In the same manner, people are pleased when they hear a harlot sing. This clearly demonstrates that a person's baser self attains the same pleasure from the address of a preacher, as it does from the singing of a prostitute. Despite knowing full well that the woman before them is a prostitute, whose morals and way of life are extremely despicable, if a person feels a pleasure in her words and songs, and is not averse, or does not perceive a foul smell, then know for certain that this is a carnal pleasure. Otherwise, the soul would never be pleased with such a disgusting and fetid thing. In the example I have just mentioned, the pitiful preacher does not know that he is bereft of purity, just as these members of the audience, who wrong their souls, do not realise that they experience nothing but a baser pleasure that has nothing to do with God.

Hence, I seek refuge with God Almighty and pray that may He keep our speeches and speakers, and those who listen to them, free from this foul and impure spirit, and may He fill them with a nature that is wholly devoted to God. Whatever we say, may we say for the sake of God and to attain His pleasure; and whatever we hear, may we hear as the words of God and so that we may act upon them; may the share that we partake from a gathering in which an exhortation is made, not be limited to us merely saying that today a most wonderful speech was delivered.

This was a significant reason for the decadence and downfall of the Muslims. Countless conferences are held, and a plethora of bodies and councils exist, where renowned and prolific speakers and lecturers read out their papers and deliver addresses and poets mourn the state of our religion in their poetry. But why does none of this have any effect? Instead of moving forward, with every passing day, our people only fall further and further into decline. The fact of the matter is that those who participate in these gatherings do not come with sincerity. The aim of the lecturers who speak in these gatherings, as I have just mentioned, whether they are maulvis, leading modern-day intellectuals, or Sufis, is nothing but to hear voices of praise and acclaim. When they deliver speeches, their audience is their god. It is their satisfaction and approval that they seek, not the pleasure of God.

However, this will never be the intention and purpose of the righteous and the divine. Their aim and purpose is God, and true sympathy and sincere compassion for mankind, which is also a great means by which to acquire the pleasure of Allah Almighty. They desire to show the world what they have witnessed themselves.

Their true longing is to manifest the glory of Allah Almighty and for this reason whatever they say, they say without fear of reproach. In their view, the listeners who sit before them are like dead insects, from whom they neither seek reward nor praise. It is for this reason that on certain occasions, the people become agitated on hearing their words and will even stand up and leave in the middle of their speech; often they will curse at them; they do not suffice at hurling verbal abuse alone, but rather, inflict various forms of pain and agony upon them as well.

From this we clearly come to know of those who seek and yearn for carnal pleasure and what is actually implied by ‘carnal pleasure.’ There are people who will stay up all night to watch a prostitute perform and dance, and they have no problem in falling true to the saying:

Zar dadan wa dard sar kharidan

Translation: To give gold and purchase a headache.

However, these same people find it difficult and burdensome to hear even a few words from the holy mouth of a divine preacher, who speaks out of immense sincerity, sincere fervour and true sympathy. However, this community of divine preachers is never worried in saying these things, nor do they tire. Why? Because they have God in view, who manifests Himself upon them with His boundless powers and extraordinary might, and Who sends down tranquility and perseverance upon them. How then could they be bothered by dead materialists?

One ought to bear in mind that human birth is characterized by two aspects.

The soul makes up one part of it, while the baser self, which is expansive and widespread, constitutes the other part. Now you can all easily understand that anything that is larger will carry a greater effect. The fervour of the soul in man, however, may be likened to a foreigner who has come to reside in a place far from home among

strangers. Therefore, the soul which is in a state unknown is given very little attention. A sign of the influence of the soul is that when a godly preacher and divine reformer speaks, he considers his listeners to be non-existent and conveys his words in the likeness of a messenger. In this state, the soul melts until it uncontrollably descends in the likeness of a waterfall that flows from a high river bank to lower ground, after which the soul flows towards God Almighty, and in this flow, it experiences a pleasure and joy which I cannot express in words. Hence, in his expositions and speeches, he looks at the countenance of Allah. He does not care about what his listeners will say when they hear his words. He receives pleasure from another source, and is filled with inner delight over the fact that he is conveying the command and message of His Master and Ruler. The difficulties and pains that he experiences in conveying this message is also a source of pleasure in itself and a means of comfort for him.” (p. 153-156)

We will stop here for today. The takeaway message is that we should always have in our view Allah whenever we do anything. Here the Promised Messiah (as) has spoken about those who make speeches. But this is an instruction that is to be taken into consideration in all spheres of life. We should avoid whatever displeases Allah and we should do whatever pleases Him and strive in all circumstances that we do not let ourselves to be beguiled by Satan.

Concerning calamities that are threatening us or humanity at large, a Muslim should always seek refuge in Allah through tearful eyes and burning heart and Sadqa and even fasts for those who are able to. Although the threat from the corona virus might be alarming yet we should not lose heart and think that we are facing a catastrophic situation. It is not like that up till now. Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has many times recommended in his writings or to his followers directly that under threatening circumstances one should recite as follows:

“*Rabbi Koullo shay’in khademoka rabbi fahfazni wansourni warhamni*” meaning “O my Lord everything is subservient to You, protect me, help me, and have mercy upon me.” If you want to say it in plural you say *fahfazna wansourna warhamna* meaning protect us, help us, and have mercy upon us.” Hazrat Masih Maood (as) was taught that in this prayer is the great name of Allah (*isme Azam*). It is a very potent prayer. We will realize its potency when we use it and see its effects. May Allah in His Mercy protect humanity at large against this virus and may He keep us all safe wherever we might be. Ameen.