

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

These days, we are talking about the steps in the development of the soul as explained by Hazrat Masih Maood (as) in his book *Baraheen Ahmadiyya* (Volume 5) where he comments on the first verses of Sura Al Moumenoune (ch. 23) of the Holy Quran. Just to remind the first stage of spiritual development is when one becomes conscious of Allah in such a way that when one prays one shows humility and regret for past sins or mistakes and tears flows from one's eyes. In the second stage, one realizes that one should shun everything that is useless. We continue with what Hazrat Masih Maood (as) writes on this stage in his book:

“And it is this stage which is described in the Word of Allah as:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ

That is, believers are not just those people who adopt humility in their Prayers and exhibit tender emotions. Rather, greater believers are those believers who, in addition to their humility, meekness, and anguish, also keep away from all vain things, deeds, and relationships. They do not allow their state of humility to be wasted by contaminating it with the frivolous; rather, they are naturally averse to all vain pursuits and a repugnance develops in their hearts for all frivolous suggestions and deeds.

This is evidence of the fact that they have acquired a certain relationship with God Almighty, for man turns away from one thing only after he has established a connection with another. So, man's heart only grows cold towards frivolous things, deeds, entertainment, merriment, and companionship when it has attached itself to the Merciful God and is overwhelmed by His majesty and fear.

And so is the sperm saved from being wasted once it has become linked to the رحم [rihm—womb] and comes under its influence, at which stage it comes to be called ‘*alaqah*’—‘clot’].

Thus, the second stage of the spiritual being, whereby a believer shuns all that is frivolous, is also عَلَقَةٌ [‘*alaqah*—clot] in spiritual terms, for it is at this stage that the heart of a believer is overawed by the grandeur of God and forever bids farewell to frivolous things and actions.

This is indeed the state which, in other words, is called *ta'alluq billah* [relationship with God]. However, this relationship with God that results from discarding frivolous things

is only a fragile relationship, for although the believer at this stage has turned away from the frivolous, his heart is still attached to things that are deemed essential for the self and on which his prosperity and comfort depends. So, an element of impurity still abides within him. This is why God has likened this stage of the spiritual being to an عِلْقَةٌ [‘*alaqah*—clot], which is congealed blood and—owing to the blood—there remains an element of impurity in it. This defect remains at this stage because such people do not fear Almighty God to the fullest degree and the awe and grandeur of the Lord of Glory has not fully overwhelmed their hearts. They are only able to relinquish small and frivolous things, but not the others. Thus, their imperfect selves are still left with an element of impurity, so that having established a fragile relationship with God, they do turn away from the frivolous but cannot do away with things that are difficult to abandon. In other words, they cannot, for the sake of God, renounce those things that are essential for selfish pleasures. All this goes to show that mere turning away from the frivolous is not something that is too commendable; rather, it is a lowly state for a believer, albeit a stage above the stage of humility.

The third stage of the physical being has been described in this verse as:

فَخَلَقْنَا الْعِلْقَةَ مِضْغَةً

Meaning that: ‘Then We fashioned the عِلْقَةَ [‘*alaqah*—clot] into a piece of flesh.’ This is the stage whereby the physical being of man comes out of the impurity. Compared to its previous states, it acquires a degree of density and solidity. Both the sperm and the عِلْقَةَ [‘*alaqah*—clot of blood] have a slight impurity in them, and in respect of consistency, too, they are thinner and softer than the مِضْغَةً [‘*mudghah*—piece of flesh]. But مِضْغَةً [‘*mudghah*], which is a piece of flesh, develops a pure state in itself, and compared with the sperm and the عِلْقَةَ [‘*alaqah*—clot], develops a certain extent of firmness. The same is true of the third stage of the spiritual being which is described in the verse:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ

This verse means that the believer who goes beyond the first two stages does not only stay away from vain and frivolous things, but in order to rid himself of the impurity of miserliness that is to be found in every human being, also gives Zakat. That is, he spends a portion of his wealth in the path of God. Zakat (the word *zakat* is from the root *zaka*, which means ‘purification’) is so called because when man gives Zakat— he gives away his beloved possessions for the sake of God— he is freed from the impurity of miserliness. And when the impurity of miserliness—which man is naturally prone to— departs from within a person, he attains a certain degree of purity and so acquires an affinity with God who is Holy in His Being.

نیکو اُس پاک سے جو دل لگاوے کرے پاک آپ کو تب اُس کو پاوے

*Whoever gives his heart to that Holy One*

*Must first purify himself, then will he find Him.*

This quality is not found in the first two stages because humility, submissiveness, and supplication and the giving up of vain pursuits can be done even by such a person who still has the impurity of miserliness in him. But when, for the sake of God Almighty, a man gives away his cherished possessions, on which depends his subsistence and which he has acquired with much toil, hardship, and sweat, then the impurity of miserliness leaves him, and at the same time his faith becomes more solid and firm. The two stages referred to above, which are antecedent to this stage, are not characterized by this pure quality, for they still have a concealed uncleanness.

The reason behind this is that turning away from the frivolous only amounts to discarding evil, and that too, of the kind that is not necessary for living and sustenance, and it does not put great hardship on the self to discard them. But to give away one's own hard-earned possessions for the sole purpose of winning the pleasure of God is an act of acquiring goodness, and it leads to the removal of the worst of the impurities of the self—the impurity of miserliness. Hence, this is the third stage of the spiritual being and it is nobler and superior to the first two. And corresponding to this is the third stage of the physical being, that of the مضغة [mudghah—piece of flesh], which is superior than the first two stages of the sperm and the علقۃ [‘alaqah—clot].

It is also characterized by its purity, for both the sperm and the

علقۃ [‘alaqah—clot] have a subtle impurity in them, whereas the

مضغة [mudghah—piece of flesh] is free from it. And just as the مضغة [mudghah—piece of flesh] is more developed and purified in the رحم [rihm—womb] and has a stronger connection with the latter than the sperm and the علقۃ [‘alaqah—clot], in addition to being more solid and hard, the same is true of the third stage of the spiritual being, referring to which God says:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ

Meaning that the believers are those who, in order to free themselves of miserliness, spend their cherished possession in the way of God, and do so out of their own free will.

Thus, in this third stage of the spiritual being, those same three excellences are found as in the third stage of the physical being; that is, those that are found in the مضغة [mudghah—piece of flesh] state.

Because this is a state in which one spends—in order to be free from miserliness—one's wealth in the way of Allah and gives away one's hard earned possessions to someone else purely for the sake of God, it is certainly a state more developed than that of merely shunning frivolous pursuits and vain actions. Within this state one definitely and manifestly attains purification from the filth of miserliness and develops the relationship with the Merciful God. Since giving up one's cherished possession for the sake of God is a far greater burden upon the self than shunning vain pursuits, undertaking this harder exercise leads to a greater relationship with God and, due to undertaking a difficult task, the faith is strengthened and intensified.

Then, after this, comes the fourth stage of the spiritual being, which Allah the Exalted describes in this noble verse:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَفْزُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ

Meaning that the believers who rise above the third stage are those who protect themselves against carnal passions and forbidden lustful urges. This stage is above the third stage because in the third stage the believer only gives away his most cherished and dear possessions in the path of God, but in the fourth stage he sacrifices what is even dearer to him than money and possession, and that is his carnal passions. Man is so enamoured by his carnal passions that he can spend his money like water and squander thousands of rupees for their fulfilment. In fact, he considers money to be nothing when it comes to fulfilling carnal desires. As is often seen that evil-natured miserly people, who would never give a penny to a hungry and destitute person due to their extreme miserliness, will—under the passion of carnal desires—squander thousands of rupees on prostitutes, destroying their home in the process. This shows that the flood of carnal passions is so strong and fast that it can carry away even the filth of miserliness. It is, therefore, evident that compared to the power of faith that does away with miserliness and causes man to give away his cherished possessions for the sake of God, this power of faith that saves man from the storm of carnal passions is extremely potent, hard, and enduring in enabling one to fight Satan because its purpose is to trample underfoot the ancient python of *nafs-e-ammara* [the self that incites to evil].

Miserliness can be overcome even while in the grip of fulfilling one's carnal desires or even at times when one is in the grip of show and ostentation, but the storm that emerges under the domination of carnal passions is a fierce and lasting tempest that can in no way be quelled other than through the mercy of God. And just as in the human body the bone is the hardest organ and endures the longest, in the same way the power of faith that can quell this storm is also very hard and enduring, so that by fighting such an enemy for a long time it can subjugate it—but only by the mercy of God, for the tempest of carnal

passions is so devastating and threatening a turmoil that it cannot be calmed other than through the special mercy of the Most Holy God.”[Barahin Ahmadiyya p. 281-286]

In what follows Hazrat Masih Maood (as) will speak at length by quoting verses of the Holy Quran on how the mercy of Allah is needed to pacify the *nafs* that incites to evil. We will read this incha Allah next week.

May Allah help each one among us and may He open our heart so that we might understand and do what He expects from us incha Allah. Ameen.