

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

We will continue reading about the stages of spiritual development from the book *Barahin Ahmadiyya* (Volume 5) of Hazrat Masih Maood (as). We will resume from where we stopped last time. Hazrat Masih Maood (as) was speaking about the tempest of carnal passions and the havoc that it brings in its wake. He then said:

“This was why Hadrat Yusuf [Joseph] had to say:

وَمَا أَبْرَأُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي

Meaning: ‘I do not hold my own self to be free from weakness; the self is surely most prone to enjoin evil and one cannot be delivered from its onslaught except that God Almighty should Himself show mercy.’ The phrase *إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي* [‘Except that God Almighty should Himself show mercy’] occurs in this verse; similar words also occur in the description of the flood of Nuh [Noah], where Allah the Exalted says:

لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ

‘There is no shelter for anyone this day, from the decree of Allah, excepting those to whom He shows mercy’ (Surah Hud, 11:44).

This is to indicate that this flood of carnal passions is similar in its grandeur and awe to the flood of Noah. And corresponding to this spiritual stage, which is the fourth stage of the spiritual being, is the fourth stage of the physical being, about which is this verse in the Holy Quran:

فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عَظْمًا

Meaning: ‘We then fashioned bones out of the *مضغة* [mudghah—piece of flesh].’ It is obvious that, as compared to *مضغة* [mudghah—piece of flesh], there develops in the bones greater hardness and firmness; furthermore, in comparison to the piece of flesh, the bone is more long-lasting and its remains can endure for thousands of years. Thus, the similarity between the fourth stage of the spiritual being and the fourth stage of the physical being is evident. Since the fourth stage of the spiritual being has greater faith and perseverance, it also enjoys a greater relationship with the Merciful God. In the same way the formation of bones in the fourth stage of the physical being is greater in strength and firmness than the third stage, which is mere flesh, and it is also more strongly attached to the *رحم* [rihm—womb].

Then, after the fourth stage, the fifth stage of the spiritual being is that which God Almighty has described in this verse:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ

Meaning that the believers at the fifth stage, who have gone ahead of the fourth stage, are those who not only possess the excellence of overcoming their carnal passions and gaining a grand victory over such desires, but rather they go a step further and, by fulfilling their trusts and pledges towards God and His creatures in every respect, they strive to walk the finer paths of *taqwa* [righteousness] to the best of their ability. Pledges to God refer to the pledges related to faith which are taken from a believer at the time of entering into the *bai'at* [pledge of allegiance] and adopting a faith, such as not committing idolatry, not killing anyone unjustly, etc.

The word رَاعُونَ [*ra'un*—‘watchful’] that occurs in this verse, means ‘those who are watchful’. According to the Arabic usage, this word is used when someone adopts the finer path of something to the best of his power and ability and undertakes to carry out all the minute details of the matter, leaving no aspect unattended. So, this verse means that the believers who are at the fifth level of the spiritual being strive, to the best of their present ability, to tread the finer paths of *taqwa*. They do not wish to leave unattended any requirement of *taqwa* related to their trusts or pledges and are ever mindful of fulfilling them. They are not content with merely calling themselves trustworthy and truthful in a broad sense, but remain fearful lest they should be guilty of dishonesty in any matter inadvertently. So, to the extent of their ability, they keep examining all their affairs lest there be some latent flaw or drawback in them. This vigilance is indeed what, in other words, is called *taqwa*. In short, those believers who are in the fifth stage of the spiritual being are not unrestrained or heedless in their undertakings, whether such undertakings be in relation to God or in relation to His creatures.

Rather, fearing lest they should come under some culpability in the estimation of God, they keep in mind even the minutest aspects of their trusts and covenants and always keep examining them. And by making use of the penetrating lens of *taqwa* they go on evaluating their inner condition so that no hidden deficiency may arise in their trusts and covenants. And they utilize all of God’s trusts—such as their faculties, organs, life, wealth, and honour—to the best of their ability and in conformity with the demands of *taqwa*, while carefully considering the appropriateness of the occasion. They strive with all their power and full sincerity to live up to the pledge that they made to God at the time when they accepted the covenant of faith.

Similarly, to the best of their ability and in conformity with the norms of *taqwa*, they fulfil the trusts they owe to God's creatures or anything that falls under the purview of a trust. And if there happens to be a dispute, they settle it in accordance with *taqwa*, even if it means incurring a loss for themselves.

This stage is superior to the fourth stage because here one has to employ—to the best of one's ability—the finer ways of *taqwa* in all one's actions and to take every single step in all affairs—to the best of one's ability—while keeping in mind the requirements of *taqwa*. But the fourth stage consists only of a general principle which is to abstain from adultery and licentiousness.

Everyone can understand that adultery is a most shameless act whose perpetrator, being blinded by his carnal passions, commits an unholy deed that adulterates the lawful human species with the unlawful and causes the spoiling of one's progeny. This is why the Shariah has declared it to be such a major sin that whoever commits it is prescribed a penalty in this very world.

Evidently, it is not enough for the perfection of a believer that he should only abstain from adultery, since adultery is the work of extremely corrupt and shameless people, and it is such an obvious sin which even the most ignorant of the ignorant consider to be evil and no one but a faithless person will be audacious enough to commit it. Shunning it, therefore, is a matter of ordinary decency and no great excellence.

But man's full spiritual beauty lies in treading upon all the finer ways of *taqwa*. The finer ways of *taqwa* are the graceful features and lovely curves of spiritual beauty. It is obvious that to abide by the trusts that one owes to God and by the pledges of faith to the best of one's ability, and to utilize all one's organs and faculties from head to toe—of which the physically obvious are the eyes, ears, hands, feet, and the other organs; as well as the inner capacities such as the heart and other faculties and morals—appropriately at their proper occasion, to safeguard them from the unlawful, and to be wary against their secret assaults, while at the same time fulfilling one's obligations towards God's creation—this is the path on which depends all one's spiritual beauty. God Almighty in the Holy Quran has labelled *taqwa* as raiment. *Libasut-taqwa* ['Raiment of righteousness'] is an expression of the Holy Quran, and this is an indication that spiritual beauty and adornment are indeed born out of *taqwa*. And *taqwa* means that man should abide by all of God's trusts and pledges of faith, as well as all one's trust and pledges towards God's creatures to the best of one's capability, which is to say that he should firmly adhere to their subtlest and minutest aspects".

In two footnotes, he explained further :

1. “For faith, the stage of humility is like a seed. And then by shunning vain pursuits, the faith sprouts its soft greenery. And then by giving one’s wealth as Zakat the tree of faith grows branches which give it a certain degree of strength. And then when one fights the carnal desires, these branches grow stronger. And when one fulfils all the aspects of one’s trusts and pledges, the tree of faith develops a strong and sturdy trunk. And then when it comes to yielding fruit, it receives another bounty without which the tree can grow neither fruit nor flowers. This is the power that in the sixth stage of the spiritual being is called *Khalq-e-Akhar* [‘Another Creation’]. It is at this stage that the fruit and flowers of human excellence start to manifest themselves, and its spiritual branches are not only perfected but also bring fruit.

2 The pledges of faith are the pledges which a person makes at the time of pledging *bai‘at* and accepting faith, for instance, that he will not kill, will not steal, will not give false testimony, will not associate partners with God and will die professing Islam and obedience to the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him”.
(Author)

“This is the fifth stage of the spiritual being, which corresponds to the fifth stage of the physical being which is described in this Quranic verse:

فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَمَ لَحْمًا

Meaning: ‘Then We clothed the bones with flesh and somewhat embellished the physical structure.’ This is a wonderful likeness, because just as God Almighty has at one place described *taqwa* to be the spiritual raiment, so does the word كَسَوْنَا [*kasauna*—‘we clothed’] which is derived from كِسْوَهُ [*kiswah*—‘clothing’] show that the flesh which is wrapped upon the bones is also a kind of raiment to cover them. The two words thus signify that the embellished garb provided by *taqwa* is similar to the one that covers up the bones, lending them an element of beauty.

In the first instance the word is لِبَاس [*libas*—‘raiment’] while in the second it is كِسْوَهُ [*kiswah*—‘clothing’], but they both mean the same thing. The text of the Holy Quran is announcing it loud and clear that the purpose of both is to embellish. Thus, just as the removal of the raiment of *taqwa* would reveal spiritual ugliness, similarly if the flesh that the All-Wise Creator has draped on the bones is removed, the human form will appear repugnant. But even at the fifth stage—whether it is in the physical realm or the spiritual realm—perfect beauty is still missing, for the spirit has not yet been bestowed upon it.” (p. 286-291)

We will stop here for today and we will continue next time. Let us hope and pray that Allah help each one amongst us to understand that what is being explained here (I mean

in this book) should become our life mission. Sometimes we will feel the elation of spiritual progress and sometimes the dejection that follows lapses. Whatever the situation we should never despair in Allah's mercy and keep striving. Incha Allah eventually you will see that you will achieve your goal. Allah has created man and women for the purpose of knowing Him. Whosoever strives in His Path will tread the Path by His Grace incha Allah. Let us hope and pray that as individuals and as a Jamaat we all will do our best to achieve this noble mission of our life. Ameen.