

In the Name of God the Most Merciful, Most Compassionate

The Alchemy of Happiness – Part 6

Imam al-Ghazali (God have mercy on his soul) has described fear (*khawf*) or awe (for God) in the most beautiful terms. People often think of fear as a scary experience, such as being fearful of worldly things and so forth.

For the people of God, their fear is their love and devotion to Him. They fear that perhaps they will lose closeness to him and they try their utmost to avoid all means that drives them away from the favour of God.

The Quran mentions, “God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him”. Now the question arises: How to create this sort of fear within? What’s meant here is: How to create such love of God within? Imam al-Ghazali (God have mercy on his soul) explains that this rank (*maqam*) is achieved through the knowledge (*ma’rifat*) of God. This fear, in actuality, means the states of “doing without or less” (*zuhd*), sincerity (*ikhlaas*), patience (*sabr*), and repentance (*tawbah*). Through the act of constant remembrance (*dhikr*) and contemplation (*fikr*), a lofty station (*maqam*) becomes one’s destiny. Devotion of one’s being (to God) is love. The lover always fears the loss of the object of love (the Beloved).

After the knowledge (*ma’rifat*) of certainty (*yaqeen*) and faith (*imaan*), indeed fear is that gift (*ni’mat*) which may be identified as the Alchemy of Happiness (*Keemiya-e-Sa’adat*).

At the station (*manzil lit. a place of dismounting or stopping place*) of spirituality (*ruhaniyyat*), one must first strive to attain the station of perception (*‘irfaan*) and certainty (*yaqeen*). When this state is attained, from it you will attain *ma’rifat*, and from *ma’rifat*, fear will be born in you. The more sincere you are in worship, the more you will develop sincerity and patience within your personality.

Through “doing without”, truthfulness (*sidq*), and beautiful character (*ikhlaaq*), your heart will experience the love (*muhabbat*) of God and His friendship. Sincerity is born when the human being repents and starts to love (God). This constant sincerity binds one in the love of God. From this, a special rank is attained which is called the rank of intimacy (*maqam-e-uns*). Intimacy is the highest most level of love. In Sufism (*tasawwuf*) and spirituality, intimacy is the zenith of love and devotion through which God loves his servant to such a degree that he becomes observant or completely obedient (*taabi’*) to God.

In the worldly love, the human being becomes observant and obedient to the one he loves, whereas, in intimacy (*uns*) the lover becomes the beloved of God.

Happiness (*sa’adat*) is the name given to that shining example of worship that only the fortunate can attain to and Alchemy (*al-keemiyaa*) is that medicine which

brings about the good-fortune of the human being. Imam al-Ghazali (God have mercy on his soul) has offered the preceding beautiful definition of the Alchemy of Happiness.

Imam al-Ghazali (God have mercy on his soul) states that one arrives to fear (*khawf*) by three ways:

- Sacred Knowledge and Gnosis (*ma'rifat*)
- Taking to Gatherings of People of Gnosis (*Ahl-e-Ma'rifat*)
- Apprenticeship of the People of Intellect (*'Aaqileen*)

Sacred Knowledge and Gnosis (*ma'rifat*)

When the human being recognizes his own self, then God, he remains in the fear of (loosing) God. The more a servant becomes cognizant of God (*'arif*), the more his level of fear, because he recognizes the awesome loftiness of God. Imam al-Ghazali (God have mercy on his soul) gives the analogy of this state with the claw of a lion. The one subdued by its claw will certainly remain in a state of fear.

The Beloved Messenger of God (God's blessing and greetings upon him) used to beg for the forgiveness of God despite the fact that God Most High had granted him sanctuary (*amaan*). And secrets (*asraar*) and allegory or symbols (*rumuz*) of God are hidden treasures that none other than the Blessed Prophet (God's blessing and greetings upon him) was familiar with.

Taking to Gatherings of People of Gnosis (*Ahl-e-Ma'rifat*)

Imam al-Ghazali (God have mercy on his soul) states that you must stay away from the company of those heedless to the Sacred Law (*ghaafileen-e-shari'at*) to attain fear (*khawf*). Those people who are unaware of the status of the Prophet (God's blessing and greetings upon him) and of the rank of the friends of God (*awliyaa*) should be avoided. Rather, you should take the company of the righteous servants of God.

The one who sits in the company of the Perfume Seller will also smell sweet. Likewise, he who sits in the company of the pious will unknowingly learn good traits.

Imam al-Ghazali (God have mercy on his soul) gives the parable of the boy who had never seen a snake but had certainly seen the fear of snakes in the eyes of his father, which developed the fear of snakes in his own self. Thus, one may learn beneficial things from the experience of the experienced.

Apprenticeship of the People of Intellect ('Aaqileen)

It is also important to avoid the company of those who self-proclaim learning and likewise the false and non-practicing teachers. One should stay away from the company of the non-fearing and unintelligent. Learn from the lives and examples of the pious and the friends of God (*awliyaa*). When such great and shining luminaries are so fearful of God, then who are we to remain heedless? We must be mindful of our actions and try to increase our fear of God.