

The Alchemy of Happiness – Part 9

Virtues of the Content Dervish

The Prophet (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family) said, “He who is shown the way to Islam and has been given just enough in provisions remaining content, is among the fortunate ones.”

He (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family) said, “O Dervishes! Become happy with the bottom of your heart with Dervishhood so that you receive the reward of poverty (*faqr*). Otherwise, you will not receive this reward.”

He said on another occasion, “There is a key to every door and the key to Paradise is the friendship of patient dervishes, because on the Day of Judgment, they will be granted the blessing of closeness to God.” He further said, “The one most wealthy, in the Sight of God, is he who is content with whatever he is given and is pleased with God for the provisions he receives.”

The Prophet (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family) has also said, “On the Day of Judgment, the dervish and the wealthy alike will hope that perhaps they only received as much in the world as they had needed.”

Commentary: The people of God are closest to God on the Day of Judgment and that is the reason we try to be in the company of such personalities in this world. A principle in the world is that if one befriends he who is close to the ambassador, the minister, the president, the king and so forth, then such a person has befriended the latter. That is why we should try to be as close as possible to those who are close to God, because it is our belief that we become the friend of God by gaining the company of the friends of God (the *awliyyaa*). Likewise those who have vied in attaining worldly wealth become deluded by their connection and friendship to it. On the Day of Judgment they will regretfully say, “Would that I would have received as much in the world as I had only needed.”

God, Most High, revealed to the Prophet Isma‘eel (peace be upon him), “O Isma‘eel! You will find me in the hearts of the broken-hearted.” He asked, “O Lord! Who are these people?” The Lord replied, “They are the true dervishes! (*dervish saadiq*)”. The Prophet (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family) said, “On the Day of Judgment, the True God will say, “Where are Our special and chosen bondmen?” The angels will ask, “O Lord! Who are they?” The Lord will reply, “They are those believing dervishes (*fugaraa*) who were well-pleased with whatever I had given them. Go now and take them into Paradise! They will be in Paradise while others are still being taken into account.”

Abu Dardaa (God be well-pleased with him) said, "He who is pleased with more of this world and who is not sorrowful with the short span of his life has a deficiency in his intellect." Glory to God! (*Subhan-Allah!*) What benefit is there in the world in which more causes decrease in life!

A man went to 'Amir ibn Abdul Qays (God have mercy on his soul), who at that time was eating bread with some greens. He said, "Have you become content with only so little of the world?" He replied, "I have seen some of them who are content with even lesser grade (of provisions) in much less amount." The man asked, "Who are they?" He replied, "Those who have sold the world for the Hereafter. They are content with even less than this."

Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari (God be well-pleased with him) was in discussion with people in a gathering. His wife came along and said, "You're just sitting around unconcerned! By God, there not a thing left in the house to spend." He replied, "Dear wife! Ahead of us is a steep and treacherous mountain that only he who travels light will ascend." On hearing and realizing this, his wife returned home well-pleased.

Commentary: When you undertake a journey, convention has it to travel with less weight, travel lightly. The more you carry the more difficult the journey. On the Day of Judgement people will carry the weight of the excess they had committed in the world.

O friend! Know that there is difference of opinion among the scholars about who is better – the patient dervish (*faqeer saabir*) or the thankful wealthy one (*ameer shaakir*). The truth is that the patient dervish is better, because the traditions that have been related so far testify to it. But if you still need to realize this, then know that anything that prevents you from loving God is harmful for you. The truth is that certain people are turned away from the love of God through dervishhood (*faqeer*) while some are turned away from the love of God by through wealth. The explanation of this is that to receive just enough is better than receiving nothing at all, because this amount of provision is not considered worldly. Rather, it is considered increase in the hereafter. That is why the Prophet (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family) has said, "O God! Give the family of Muhammad only as much as they need". Thus, it is better not to have more than what is just needed. This is only possible for a human being when greed (*hirs* – desire, covetousness, aspiration for the world) and contentment (*qana'at*) are the same, because the greedy dervish (*faqeer harees*) and the greedy wealthy (*ameer harees*) are both enamoured by the world and are vying to achieve more of it. However, the ambition of receiving good news for the dervish loses out. When he tries all he can, yet faces sorrow, he gives up in the world. Lesser the ambition for worldly gain in the heart of the believer, the more God's love enters his heart. Then, when the world becomes like a prison for him, even though he is in despair of it, he dies with a heart undistracted by it.

While the wealthy, who gains profit from the world, becoming enamoured by it, separates from the world in extremely difficult. Even in death his heart remains connected to the world. There is a huge difference between the hearts of these two types of people and likewise a huge difference in their worship and supplication, because the pleasure that the dervish receives in remembrance of God (*dhikr*) can never be achieved by the wealthy (ingrate). This remembrance remains only on the tongue of the wealthy and superficially touches his heart. Until the heart is not wounded by love, the taste derived from remembrance (*dhikr*) will not be found deep inside. If we were to accept that the two can be same in contentment (*qana'at*), even then the dervish will have a higher degree over the (content) wealthy. But if the dervish is greedy (*harees*) and the wealthy one is thankful (*shaakir*) and content (*qa'ani*) and wealth is taken away from him then he will not be sorrowful and he will make do with thankfulness, because the heart of the prosperous is purified by way of contentment (*qana'at*) and by not deriving intimacy with the pleasures of the world. On the other hand, the heart of the greedy dervish, by way of his greed, remains impure, but is purified by hard work and sorrow. In this case, both are the same. In other words, their closeness and distance from God will be according to level of their hearts' connection to worldliness.

If the wealthy person's heart is such that possessing wealth or not possessing it is the same to him, and his heart is not of the world, and the wealth that he possesses is used for the benefit of others, just as 'Aisha (God be well-pleased with her) once gave away to the poor a sum of 10,000 dirhams (silver coins) while she did not even have 1 dirham to buy meat for breaking her fast in the evening, then the level of this wealthy person is indeed better than that of the dervish who does not have this attribute. However, when both of their hearts have the same state then the dervish has a higher degree over the wealthy one because the best works of the wealthy is only when they spend on the poor. Despite all of this, certain dervishes sent a note the Messenger of God (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family) that the wealthy people have earned a lot in the world and for the hereafter, because they give in charity, pay the poor-due, participate in the Pilgrimage and in defending the Muslim lands, while the dervishes (the impoverished) are incapable of partaking in these good deeds. So, the Prophet (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family) uplifted them by proclaiming, "Welcome to you and those from whom you have come! You have come from a people whom I have kept friendship with. Tell them, "He who remains patient in his state of dervishhood for the sake of God will receive three degrees over which the wealthy cannot reach. In Paradise they will have tall palaces which, in the sight of the inhabitants, will reach the stars, just like the dwellers of earth view the height of the stars. This is the station of the dervish messenger, the dervish believer, or the dervish martyr. Their second degree is that the dervishes will enter Paradise five hundred years prior to the wealthy. Their third degree is that when any dervish says, "Glory to

God, Praise- or thank-God, and There is none worthy of worship except God, and God is Greater (*Subhan-Allah, wa al-Hamdu Lillah, Wa laa ilaaha illAllah wa Allahu Akbar*)" once only, and the wealthy one says the same while giving away 1000 dirhams in charity, he will still not reach the level of a dervish. When the dervishes heard this they said, "We are pleased! We are pleased! (*Radeena! Radeena!*)" The reason the Prophet (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family) mentioned the dervish saying "Glory to God!" (*Subhan-Allah*) is because remembrance (*dhikr*) is like a seed in the heart that is watered by wordlessness, desperation, and sadness (*dhikr* has greater effect), as opposed to the wealthy one who is happy with the world. For him, remembrance bounces off his heart like water over a hard stone.

To summarize, one's rank is only as high as his closeness to God and his attention to his remembrance of God and his attention should be so that he begins to disdain everything else (that distracts him from God). The wealthy one does not have such intimacy, so how can he be equal to a dervish? If the wealthy one has wealth and still keeps his heart free of wealth (even though he could be fooled by it), the health of his unworldliness would be judged by the standard set by our mother 'Aisha (God be well-pleased with her) who spent all her wealth and thought of it as a seed. If it were possible that a person, while hoarding wealth, considers himself free of it, then why would the Prophet of God (God be well-pleased with him) caution us so much from the world and command others to caution others? In connection to this, the world once presented itself to the Prophet (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family). The Prophet (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family) said to it, "Stay away from me! Stay away from me!" The Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) warned, "Do not become mesmerized by the wealth of the wealthy for its temptation will drain the sweetness of your faith." That is why it has been said that when the sweetness of wealth enters your heart, it prevents the sweetness derived from the remembrance of God, and two sweet pleasures are mutually exclusive in the heart. The world is not free of two things: the Essence of Truth (*dhaat-e-Haqq*) and other than the Truth (*ghayr-e-Haqq*). The degree by which you attach yourself to other than God is the same degree by which you will be broken-hearted of God and distant from Him. Likewise, the degree by which you will be broken-hearted of the world is the same degree by which you will draw closer to God and distant from the world.

Commentary: The people of God are always in sorrow. This does not mean miserable or depressed, but it means in the path of God.

Shaykh Sulayman Daaraani (God have mercy on his soul) said, "The single heave of the impoverished dervish when not able to achieve something he tried hard for is better than 1000 years of worship of the wealthy." A person once asked Bishr Haafi (God have mercy on his soul) to supplicate for him because he was a man with many dependents and poor. He replied, "When your wife says

that there is no bread or flour in the house, and you cannot purchase any (due to your poverty), then supplicate for me at that time for your supplication will be better than mine.”

Commentary: From this we learn that if we are in pain, in tribulation, in sickness, in sorrow, then we should supplicate for others because it is a time when prayers are accepted.

The Dervish Code of Conduct

O friend! It should be known that among the most important manners of dervishhood is that you remain pleased privately with God and not to complain outwardly. The dervish needs to be aware of three states in private. The first is to be thankful and happy in his dervishhood because he knows that dervishhood is a special gift from God upon those who are His friends (*auliyaa*). The second state is if he is unable to be happy, he should not dislike this action of his Creator. Third, he may dislike the action of his Creator, and this is not permissible (*haraam*). This act invalidates the reward of dervishhood. To always dislike this action (of His Creator) is against servitude because no action of God is free of wisdom. Outwardly it is compulsory on every dervish that they do not complain and do not tear the veil that is cast over their pain and sorrow.

‘Ali (God ennoble his countenance) has said, “Dervishhood sometimes becomes a means of punishment and its indication is that the he starts complaining and becomes cross with the decree of God. It sometimes becomes a means of happiness and its indication is that he speaks well, is thankful, and does not complain.” It is related in a tradition (*hadeeth*) that hiding dervishhood and poverty holds the ruling of a very huge treasure.

There is a certain code of conduct of dervishhood:

- 1) The dervish avoids the wealthy
- 2) He is never humiliated and broken before the wealthy
- 3) He never ingratiates (*khushaamad*) himself before the wealthy and is pleased with what Allah has given them

Sufyan Thawri (God have mercy on his soul) said, “When a dervish frequents the wealthy, he is a show off (*riyaa*). If he frequents the king, then know that he is a thief. A dervish should sometimes tighten his belt and prevent himself from his own necessity and fulfil the needs of others.”

The Prophet (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family) has said, “Sometimes a single dirham outstrips one hundred thousand dirhams.” The Companions asked, “O Messenger of God! When does that occur?” The Prophet (blessings and greetings of Allah be upon him and his family) replied, “When a person has only two dirhams and he gives one away in charity then this is better than a wealthy person giving in charity one hundred thousand dirhams.”

The Manners of Accepting a Gift

[Still in translation]