

Chapter 6: On Vivacity and Cheerfulness

Of other cordial disciplines of the *Salat* and other worships, one, which has good results, or rather it opens some doors and uncovers some secrets of worships, is that the *sālik* is to try to worship with vivacity, cheerfulness of heart and gaiety of mind, and to avoid laziness and reluctance in performing worships. He is to choose for worship a time in which he is quite prepared to perform it with animation and freshness, feeling no tiredness or lassitude.

Should one force oneself to worship in times of laziness and tiredness, it would probably bring about bad consequences, such as feeling tired of worshipping and of taking the trouble and bearing difficulty. Then, gradually, one may feel disgusted with worshipping. Furthermore, it may possibly turn man completely away from remembering Allah, and give pains to the spirit from the state of servitude, which is the source of all happiness.

Such worship will bring no luminosity to the heart, and the inside of the soul will not have any reaction, and the image of servitude will not become the image of the inner heart. It has already been said that the aim of worship is that the inner soul should become the image of servitude.

We now say that one of the secrets and results of worships and austerities is that the will of the soul becomes operative on the realm of the body, and its authority is overcome by the majesty of the soul and is annihilated, and the forces and soldiers spread in the kingdom of the body can no longer revolt, disobey and be obstinate and selfish. They actually surrender to the inner kingdom of the heart, or rather those forces gradually dissolve in the invisible heavenly domain, and its command is effective on the visible dominion.

The will of the soul gets stronger and takes the reins of the kingdom from Satan and the commanding soul, and the soldiers of the soul are driven to submission, from submission to contentment, and from contentment to annihilation. In this situation the soul will get to discover some secrets of worship and some actual manifestations will appear.

But all these cannot be implemented unless the worships are performed cheerfully and actively, away

from every sort of laziness and carelessness, so that a mood of affection and love towards remembering Allah, the Exalted, and the state of servitude, with familiarity and consistency, happen. Loving Allah and remembering Him is one of the great affairs, which is very much cared for by the people of knowledge, and is a subject of competition among the people of *sulṭk*.

Physicians believe that if food is eaten with cheerfulness and gaiety, it will be digested much easier. Similarly, psychiatrists stress that if the spiritual nutrition is taken cheerfully and enthusiastically, and with avoiding laziness and affectedness, its effect will appear very quickly in the heart and the inner heart will be purified more quickly, too.

This discipline is referred to in the Glorious Divine Book, the upright Lordly pages, as it, in defiance of the disbelievers and the hypocrites, says:

“...And they do not come to the Salat unless they are sluggish, and they do not spend unless they are reluctant...”¹

And the noble *ṣyah*:

“O you who believe! Do not approach the Salat when you are drunk...”²

The word “drunkenness” is explained in a *hadīth* to mean “sluggishness”. Some narratives refer to this discipline. By relating some of them we shall give pride to these papers.

Muhammad ibn Ya'qūb quoted Abū 'Abdullāh (Imām as-Sādīq) (‘a) to have said: “Do not force yourselves to worship.”³

Abū 'Abdullāh (as-Sādīq) (‘a) is (also) quoted to have said: “The Messenger of Allah (s) said: “O 'Alī, this religion is firm, get into it mildly, and do not cause yourself to hate worshipping your Lord.”⁴

Imām al-'Askar (‘a) is quoted to have said: “When the hearts are active, confide in them, and when they are reluctant, bid them farewell.”⁵ This is a general instruction to deposit in your hearts any information you may when they are lively and gay, and leave them alone when they are restive. So, in acquiring knowledge [*ma'rif*] and sciences this discipline must also be applied, and the hearts must not be forced when they are irresponsive.

It can be deduced from this and other *Hadiths* that there is another discipline, which is also an important chapter of asceticism. This discipline is “considerateness” [*murūfat*]; that is, the *sṭik*, in whatever stage he is, in scholarly or in spiritual and practical austerities and strivings, must consider his conditions, treat his soul with kindness and care, and avoid burdening himself with more than it can bear, especially the young people and the inexperienced, to whom this discipline is quite important.

If the young people do not treat themselves considerately and kindly, and if they do not meet the needs of (their) nature through lawful ways, they will be subject to a great danger, which cannot be compensated. The danger is that when one is too severe with his self and pulls the reins too hard, they

will break off, and then the will gets out of control, and the accumulated natural needs and the sharp fires of desire, under unlimited pressure of austerity, burn out the whole kingdom.

If a *sālik*'s reins break off God forbid! Or an ascetic person becomes unable to control himself, he will fall so deep in a precipice that he can never see the face of rescue, nor can he ever return to the road of happiness and righteousness.

Thus, a *sālik*, like a clever physician, has to feel his own pulse during his progress on the journey and to treat his self according to the requirements of the conditions of the journey. When the flames of desire, which are the vanity of youthfulness, blaze high, one is not to completely prevent his nature from getting satisfaction, but one has to resort to lawful ways to put out the flames of his desire, as gratifying the desire, according to the divine command, is a complete help along the journey to Allah.

So, he is to marry, as it is one of the great divine laws, which, besides being the base of the survival of the species, has a great effect on the journey to the Hereafter, too. For this reason, the Messenger of Allah (s) said: "He who marries will keep half of his religion." 6 Another *hadīth* says: "He who desires to meet Allah pure, let him meet Him with a wife." 7 The Messenger of Allah (s) is quoted to have said: "Most of the people of Hell are singles." 8

A *hadīth* from Amr al-Mu'minīn ('Alī) ('a) says: "A group of the companions abstained from women (their wives), and from eating in daytime and sleeping at night. The Messenger of Allah (s) was informed about them by Umm us-Salimah (his wife). He came to them and asked them: "Do you reject women (your wives)? I do go into women (my wives), eat in daytime and sleep at night. Whoever disregards my tradition is not of me.

Allah, the Exalted, has revealed:

"O you who believe! Do not forbid the good things which Allah has made lawful for you, and do not transgress. Surely Allah does not love the transgressors. And eat of what Allah has provided you as lawful and good, and fear Allah in whom you believe."9

Generally speaking, the traveler along the road to the Hereafter is to be considerate with respect to the ups and downs of the soul. And, while he is never to curb the needs (of his nature) which, otherwise, would cause big mischief, he is also not to be severe nor to exert pressure upon himself with respect to worship and practical austerities, especially during his youth and on starting the journey, as otherwise this will also cause the soul to feel exasperated and bolt away, and perhaps, lead him to abandoning remembering Allah.

This point is frequently referred to in the noble *Hadiths*. The noble *Al-Kāfī*, quoting Imām as-Sādiq ('a), says: "During my youth I was seriously and earnestly doing my worshipping. My father told me: "My son, act less on that, as when Allah, the Exalted, loves someone, He will accept his little." 10 Another *hadīth* goes almost the same. 11

The same course relates another *hadīth* to the effect that Abū Ja'far (Imām al-Baqir) (‘a), quoting the Messenger of Allah (s), said: “Surely this religion is firm, so go deep in it with mildness, and do not cause Allah's servants to hate worshipping Him; otherwise, you will be like the one whose mount was too tired to go on, so he neither finished the journey nor preserved the mount.”¹² Another *hadīth* says: “Do not cause yourselves to hate worshipping Allah.”¹³

However, the criterion for being “considerate” is that one should be observant of his soul's conditions and act according to its strength and weakness. When one's soul is strong and able to perform worships and bear hardship with good endurance, he should, then, try to perform the acts of worship.

As to those who have crossed the prime of life, and the fires of their desires have subsided to some extent, it is suitable for them to increase their ascetic austerity, and to set foot on the road of self-discipline with manly vigilance and industry. The more they accustom themselves to ascetic practices, the more doors will be opened to them, until the soul gradually overcomes the forces of (their) nature, which will be subjugated to them under the majesty of the soul.

Concerning the noble *Hadiths* which urge the people to strive earnestly in worshipping and praise the people who do so with reference to the worships and austerities of the Imāms of (the Islamic) guidance (‘a), as well as the noble *Hadiths* which recommend economy in worshipping and praise it, both categories are based on the different people of *sulūk* and the ranks and conditions of the soul. The general criterion is the vivacity and the strength of the soul or its weakness and aversion.

1. Sūrah at-Tawbah 9:54.

2. Sūrah an-Nisā' 4:43.

3. Usūl al-Kāfī, vol. 3, “Book of Belief and Disbelief,” ch. on “Equality (moderateness) in Acting and its Persistence,” hadīth 3, p. 129.

4. Ibid., ch. on “Economy in Worshipping,” hadīth 6, p. 138.

5. Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 75, “Book of ar-Rawdah,” ch. 29, hadīth 3, p. 377.

6. Ibid., vol. 100, p. 220, “Book of al-Uqūd wal-‘Aqā‘id (Contracts and Agreements),” sec. on “Marriage,” ch. 1, hadīth 14, p. 220, as quoted from Amālī by Shaykh at-Tūsī, vol. 2, p. 132.

7. Ibid., hadīths 18 and 35, quoting Rawdat ul-Wā‘izīn, p. 373, and Nawādir ar-Rawandī, p. 12.

8. Wasā'il ash-Shāh, “Book of Marriage,” ch. 2, hadīth 6, p. 15.

9. Sūrah al-Mā'idah 5:87-88; Ibid., hadīth 8.

10. Usūl al-Kāfī, vol. 3, “Book of Faith and Disbelief,” ch. on “Economy in Worshipping,” hadīth 5.

11. Ibid., hadīth 4.

12. Ibid., hadīth 1.

13. Ibid., hadīth 2.

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