

## 73) Contentment

Allah, the Wise, has said:

وَ أَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَ الْمُعْتَرَّ

***“And feed the poor man who is contented, and the beggar”***<sup>1</sup>

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) said:

كُن قَانِعًا تَكُن أَشْكُرَ النَّاسِ

***“Be contented so that you may be the most thankful of all people”***<sup>2</sup>

### Short Explanation

It must be realized with conviction that whatever man has been given, has been according to the will and ordainment of God.

A person having faith and conviction in the distribution of God, would never turn towards other means and as a consequence, be free of numerous inconveniences and worries.

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) has said: *Contentment is an empire that never collapses.*

This attribute elevates man to his real abode and thus, one should always be contented and pleased with what has been bestowed upon him by God and be patient with respect to that, which has not reached him.<sup>3</sup>

## 1) The Conduct of Imam Sadiq

Contentment is a trait, admired and praised at all times, and God loves a person who is contented. This attribute becomes more noteworthy at a time when a society suffers from a shortage of food supplies.

Mu'tab, who was responsible for caretaking of the house of Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) relates:

Due to shortage in the market of Madinah, the prices of commodities had shot up. The Imam (peace be upon him) asked me: *How much of food supplies do we have in the house?*

*Enough to last us for several months!* I replied:

Hearing this, he said: *Place all of the supplies for sale in the market.*

Astonished, Mu'tab said: *What kind of directive is this that you give?*

The Imam (peace be upon him) once again repeated his words, but this time with greater emphasis: *Take all the provisions of the house and sell them in the market.*

Mu'tab said: *When I had acted as per the Imam's (peace be upon him) instructions and sold everything in the market, he (peace be upon him) said to me: "Your duty is to procure food supplies for my house on a day to day basis just as most of the average-class people do."*

The Imam (peace be upon him) added: *"The food for my family should be prepared by mixing fifty percent of barley and fifty percent of wheat!"*<sup>4</sup>

## 2) Salman

Abu Waail narrates:

I, in the company of a friend, visited Salman's house. He said to us: *Had the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) not prohibited exhibiting formalities for the guests, I would have taken the trouble of preparing some delicious food for you.*

He then proceeded to place some bread and salt before us. Seeing the food, my friend commented: *In addition to this salt, had there been some vegetable too, it would have made a great meal!*

Salman pawned his pitcher and with the money, managed to purchase some vegetables.

After the meals my friend, praising God, said: *All praise be to God that He made us contented with respect to what He has given us.*<sup>5</sup>

Hearing this, Salman remarked: *Had you really been contented, my pitcher would not have been pawned.*<sup>6</sup> (This incident has also been narrated slightly differently in that the person involved was Abu

Dharr and not Salman, and the thing sought was mint, not vegetable.)

### 3) By Means of Contentment the Soul Becomes Submissive

One of the signs of a contented person is abstemiousness and satisfying himself with that which restrains and subjugates the soul.

Aswad and A'lqamah narrate:

One day when we approached Imam Ali (peace be upon him), we observed that before him lay a tray containing some date fibers and upon which lay two loaves of barley bread, the chaff of barley flour being clearly visible upon the loaves.

The Imam (peace be upon him) picked up the loaves and struck them on his knees till they broke and then proceeded to eat them with some salt. Observing this, we said to Fizza, the slave-girl: *Why did you not remove the chaff from the flour for the Imam (peace be upon him)?*

She replied: *Had Ali (peace be upon him) eaten the delicious bread, its sin would have fallen upon my shoulders.*

Hearing the conversation Amirul Mu'mineen (peace be upon him) smiled and said: *I have myself instructed her not to remove the chaff.*

We said: *But why so, O' Ali?*

He replied: *In this way my soul is subjugated better, it becomes contented, and the Mu'mins shall continue to follow me till I depart from this world. 7*

### 4) Your Food or Your Ruler

Sa'di, in his book Gulistaan, has recorded twenty four narratives in connection with the virtues of contentment, the last of them being the story of a devout worshipper, who after eating the food of the king, abandons his piety and contentment, and turns to greed and avarice.

Sa'di relates:

Once a pious worshipper took up dwelling in a cave where, away from the people, he engrossed himself in worship; he looked upon the kings and affluent ones in contempt, and was uninterested in and indifferent to the glitter and dazzle of the world.

One of the prosperous kings of the region sent the following message to the worshipper: *I hope that your esteemed and noble self would agree to be my guest and grace us by joining us in our meals.*

The worshipper was beguiled; accepting the invitation, he arrived for dinner and ate the food so as to act

in accordance with the customary practice.

The following day the king, in order to thank the worshipper, set out for his cave. As soon as the worshipper's eyes fell upon the king, he stood up in respect, seated him beside him and began praising him. After a while, the king bid him goodbye and left.

Some of the worshipper's friends objected to his behaviour saying: *Why did you lower yourself so much before him and, contrary to the conduct of distinguished and eminent worshippers displayed such affection for him?*

The worshipper replied: *Have you not heard: "If you consume someone's food, it becomes incumbent upon you that you become servile towards him and repay his right!"*<sup>8</sup>

## 5) The Conduct of the Contented Ones

Some people, as soon as they come across an opportunity, lose track of their own selves and endeavour to utilize it to the maximum possible manner for themselves and their children.

However the condition of Sheikh Ansaari, who became the absolute *marja'* after the death of the author of the book Jawaahir, when he died was not different from the time when he entered Najaf as a poor student from Dizfool.

His house bore resemblance to those of the most indigent of people. Despite the fact that every year, more than a hundred thousand tumans (equivalent to hundreds of millions of tumans of today) of legal taxes would be handed over to him, he would content himself with the measliest of incomes such that when he died, he possessed only 17 tumans.

Incidentally, he was in debt by the same amount too. His survivors did not even have the means to establish mourning ceremonies for him; it was a wealthy person who established mourning ceremonies and Qur'an-reciting gatherings for 6 days and nights for the Sheikh.

His restraint from greed and his contentment with the very least became the reason that when his representative in Baghdad came to Najaf and requested to be granted the responsibility of arranging the dowry for his (Sheikh's) daughter, he refused, and had his daughter married to his nephew, Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Ansaari, with a very trivial and ordinary dowry.<sup>9</sup>

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1. Holy Qur'an, ch. Al-Hajj (22), vs. 36.

2. Jaame' Al-Sa'adaat, vol. 2, pg. 102.

3. Tadhkerah al-Haqaiq, pg. 32.

4. Daastaan-ha Wa Pand-ha, vol. 1, pg. 31.

5. الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَتَعَنَّا بِمَا رَزَقْنَا

6. Paighambar Wa Yaaraan, vol. 3, pg. 206.

7. Daastanhai Az Zindagi-e-A'li, pg. 119; Anwaar al-Nu'maniyyah, pg. 18.
8. Hikaayat-ha-e-Gulistan, pg. 184.
9. Seema-e-Farzaanigaan, pg. 457.

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