

AL-ISLAAH PUBLICATIONS

Part 3

FOR FRIENDS: PART 3 (DISCOURSES OF HAZRAT MASEEHULLAH KHAN SAHEB(R.A.))

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1.FOREWORD

Allhamdu-lillah ,with the assistance of friends, and the Fadhl of Allah Ta'ala and the barkat of our sheikh, this third booklet is ready.

Hadhratjee stated on several occasions that just one discourse is sufficient for anyone with sincerity. In other words, just one discourse has in it enough material - be it a mere sentence - to set the seeker after Truth in the right direction.

Booklet number one, with the main theme of the methodology of self-rectification, has enough material in it to have given most of us direction to our efforts. It not only gives us the logical reasoning behind the system adopted by a sheikh in Tasawwuf, but it also has sufficient practical

points to keep one busy with one's self-improvement: e.g. "paying back" qadha namaz, improving the quality of one's ibadat, etc.

The second booklet on IIm, Jihad and the Khanqa is a "breather" for the beginner while he reads booklet number one over and over again to digest and assimilate the many points made in it.

That is not to say that booklet number two is of any lesser value. Some of the points made in it are as follows:

- It is a superb defence of the khanqa. The bases for the various exercises performed in the khanqa are justified from Qur'an and Hadith shareef.
- If any had the misconception that the khanqa is meant only for sinners who wish to reform, this false idea has also been forcefully demolished.
- The importance and status of IIm and the Madrasah have been emphasised. Befuddled thinking on the important subject of Jihad has been cleared. The aims of Jihad and conditions for Jihad have been laid down quite clearly. Etc., etc.

Most readers will have gained much more from the discourse than the few points made above.

So, we come to booklet number three. The tone and content of this discourse is very different from the others. The value and importance of this discourse will be quite obvious to the reader. Disclosing anything more would be to spoil the surprise awaiting the reader! Varying topics are discussed in this discourse but, for the sake of having a title, I have labelled this discourse "FRIENDS AND FRIENDSHIP; PRAISE AND CENSURE".

A problem facing many readers has been to remember the meanings of the Urdu/ Arabic words. To leave these words out completely would seriously affect the discourse. Dr.I.M.

2.FRIENDS AND FRIENDSHIP; PRAISE AND CENSURE.

[This is a translation of a majlis-e-khas held in Jalalabad, India, on the 2nd April 1989, corresponding to 24th Shabaan 1409.]

If the Sahaba-kiram (r.a.) were to arrive here from the World of Departed Souls (Alime Barzakh) and see us as in our present state, they would be astonished at the strangeness: in what state were we when they left us, and what is our condition now.

3.RESPECT AND HONOUR

Let me quote just one example of their behaviour:

Imam Hasan (or Husain) (R.A.), the grandson of Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyihi wassallam) went to see a Sahabi(r.a.) , who was a mohaddith, to ask some mas'alah on some aspect of Deen. On reaching the Sahabi's (r.a.) residence, he waited outside for the Sahabi(r.a.) to come out. This was the correct etiquette in this situation. When the Sahabi (r.a.) came out, he greeted him. Recognising the honoured guest, the Sahabi (r.a.) said, "You should have called me from inside."

Imam Hasan (or Husain) (r.a.) replied, "I acted according to my grandfather's instructions."

The Sahaba (r.a.) had been ordered not to call out to Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyihi wassallam) when desiring to ask a mas'alah, but to wait outside.

Lo! Those who call thee from behind the private apartments, most of them have no sense. And if they had had patience till thou comest forth unto them, it had been better for them. And Allah is forgiving and merciful.

He continued: "I have come to enquire about some Deeni matter from you." The Sahabi (r.a.) gladly obliged. A discussion took place and the matter was resolved.

It so happened that the Sahabi (r.a.) had to travel someplace. His horse arrived at that moment, and he walked over to his horse. Imam Hasan (or Husain) (r.a.) walked to the opposite side of the horse and held the stirrup steady in anticipation of the Sahabi (r.a.) mounting.

The Sahabi (r.a.) became embarrassed that such an honoured person as the grandson of Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyihi wassallam) should stand in attendance on him. Instead of mounting he walked over to Imam Hasan (or Husain) (r.a.) and said, "It is very gracious of you to hold the stirrup for me, but really, it is not necessary."

Imam Hasan (or Husain) (r.a.) said, "This is just to enable you to mount with ease. It is my grandfather's instructions that one respectfully serves one's ustad."

You will notice that there was no thought as to whose grandson he was and that this service was below his dignity. He had no airs about him.

The Sahabi (r.a.) responded by taking the hand of Imam Hasan (or Husain) (r.a.) and raising it to his lips, he kissed it. "If your grandfather had instructed you in that manner, then he has instructed us in this manner."

4.LOVE AND AFFECTION

Muhabbat! Love and affection! Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyihi wassallam) has said that he desires no service for his progeny. His only desire is that we love them.

Love (muhabbat) is an elevated and noble quality. It springs from the heart. True muhabbat has its source in the central depths of the heart, in the very core of the heart. True muhabbat is no ordinary thing but a very precious gift.

Hadhratwala (r.a.) related an interesting incident:

A buzurg went to see another buzurg...

There is an old saying: Pigeons keep company with pigeons, hawks with hawks.

[cf. English proverb 'Birds of a feather flock together'. - Tr.]

A person tends to keep company with those of a similar temperament.

The one buzurg arrived at the house of another buzurg. After salaam was made, the second buzurg enquired from the first, "What can I do for you?"

The first buzurg replied, "I am in need of 500 rupees."

"Very well." Without hesitation the second buzurg went and brought forth 500 rupees which he gave to the first buzurg, who thanked him and left.

The second buzurg then went back into his house. He went and sat on his bed and started weeping.

Wives are normally personal and informal, as they should be. Husbands and wives have a special intimate and informal relationship which allows them to talk openly to one another. What type of relationship would they have if this informality was not there? But, a pity and a shame! Hai afsos! In this day and age there are no men left - men in the true sense, whether they are husbands or noble heads of families. I have seen another age where the gentry consisted of noble men, and husbands were men of superb qualities. But, times have changed, and this age is as different from that as the heavens differ from the earth. It is a wife's privilege to be personal and informal to whatever degree. Even if she uses the informal "tu" (you) instead of the respectful "tum" (thou) when speaking, she does it out of muhabbat. Dear servants of Allah, do not take her to be disrespectful and rude. Please bear in mind that Allah Ta'ala is addressed mostly as "tu".

To continue: The wife saw her buzurg husband sitting and crying. She said, "Wah, mia! Wah! In unbridled enthusiasm (josh) you handed over 500 rupees. Now mia is greatly aggrieved, crying his heart out at losing 500 rupees! So, why hand over the money in the first place?"

The buzurg replied calmly, "That is not why I am shedding tears."

The wife asked, "Then what is the reason?"

The buzurg said, "I have good cause for shedding tears: After my death I will be brought in front of Allah Ta'ala to account for myself. If Allah Ta'ala were to ask me 'Why was it necessary for your friend to come begging at your door? Why did you not keep yourself informed of his circumstances, and go yourself to his house to assist when the need arose? Why did he have to come to you?' If this is what I am asked, what answer will I give...?"

This incident was narrated to us by Hadhratwala (R.A.). He used to discuss a wide variety of topics in his majlis, all connected with self-rectification (islah). Do not have the misconception that only dharb was discussed: "Illallah! Illallah!" and still louder "Illallah! Illallah!"

It is very easy to make zikr in this manner. It has a joy of its own. But be careful: immersed in the joy of your zikr, do not increase the loudness of your voice. Your duty is to inform your sheikh of your enthusiasm and fervour. He will then use his discretion to increase, decrease or even stop the zikr. This is obedience (ittiba').

Just look: Hadhrat Uwais Qarni (r.a.), despite his passionate desire to see Rasulullah(sallallahu alaihi wassallam), did not undertake the journey to Medina without informing him and obtaining his permission. Incidents related about his great love for Rasulullah(sallallahu alaihi wassallam) would amaze us. Yet his restraint demonstrates what obedience really means.

5.JOSH AND HOSH

What is unbridled enthusiasm (josh)? Nothing. Sensibility (hosh) even without josh, is something. Hosh is of great use and service. In fact, there is nothing of greater service than sensibility (hosh).

Whereas josh by itself? Don't ask! It is of no service - it is a useless commodity leading to destruction.

Take the illustration of a pot of food cooking on the stove. While the cooking is going on there is a lot of josh - boiling and steaming with a lot of noise - but the food is not ready to eat as yet. It is of no value. Let this phase of josh pass and the food allowed to simmer - it is now so quiet that one may not even be aware that curry is being cooked. Yet, lift the lid and the aroma of delicious food ready to be eaten fills one's nostrils. This end-product is of great value.

There are three stages that a salik goes through in suluk: The FIRST is of the beginner, who is called the mubtadi; the SECOND is of the intermediate, called the mutawassat; and the THIRD is that of the muntahi, the accomplished. The condition of the muntahi is like that food that is finally cooked - tranquil and quiescent. The josh, the unbridled enthusiasm and the stormy turbulence, are features of the mutawassat, the in-between stage. The muntahi does not exhibit these features, except rarely. Even then these features are chance happenings, lasting a very short duration only and at a very low level.

These are important masa'il connected with suluk. These are masa'il related to emotional states and conditions (hal and kaifiyat). One is amazed at that salik who gets himself entangled in these states. Whenever he has to inform his sheikh of his condition he keeps repeating the same emotional states, showing his obsession with them. The sheikh is watching: "Oh yes," the sheikh tells himself, "He is still green, still half-ripe, still bitter-sweet, still immature."

This digression followed the qissah of the buzurg giving his friend, a fellow-buzurg, 500 rupees. BUT - a note of warning! - do NOT deduce from this qissah that you should now act in a similar manner, that you should now give money freely to anybody who declares his friendship. Beware! Don't ever do a thing like that. To imitate an action also requires intelligence - naql requires aql. Do not make a monkey out of yourself - do not be "monkey see monkey do".

6.FRIENDS AND FRIENDSHIP

Let me point out that in our qissah both persons were buzurgs; both had sincerity and honesty. The asking and giving was a once-in-a-while episode and not a regular affair. Fair enough, should you find a friend who has proved himself to be a real buzurg filled with a similar degree of sincerity and honesty, then you may go ahead. Such a person will rarely ask for assistance, and he will do so only when in dire need.

However, in these times such sincerity is rare. Do not be taken in by someone merely proclaiming his friendship. Do not be fooled into thinking that mere statements of friendship indicate sincerity and honesty. Do not judge today's friends on the merits of a bygone age.

Which reminds me of another qissah. There are youngsters present in today's majlis. They especially should listen with open ears.

Hadhratwala (R.A.) narrated:

There was a youngster - like one of today's youngsters - who had become friendly with another youth. The youngster's elderly father noticed his coming home late at nights and enquired, "One

night, two nights, three nights, and now every night you are coming home very late. What is your story?"

The youngster replied, "I go to visit a friend of mine. Sitting and talking with him, it tends to get a bit late."

The father said, "Really? Oho! There are still such friends today?" The father continued, "When you are about to visit your friend tomorrow, let me know. I also wish to meet this dear friend of yours."

The following evening the youngster got ready and informed his father that he was about to leave to visit his friend. His father said, "Very well. I will be with you in a minute." The father kept himself busy with first one task and then another, causing some delay. The youngster became restless.

"Don't fret. I am coming now," the father said. Deliberately he busied himself some more until it became quite late. "At last I am free. Let us go," he said.

The streets were empty. It was close to midnight and most people had retired for the night. On reaching the friend's house the youngster knocked on the door and called out to his friend. His friend enquired from inside. "Who is it?"

(Mind you, the friend still wants to know who it is!)

The youngster gave his name. "Oh! It is rather late...Never mind. Hang on." The friend came to the door and opened it. "Why have you come so late?" he asked.

The father had coached his son along the way as to what to say. Accordingly the son replied, "Some problem has cropped up causing my delay. I have landed myself in some problem."

The word "problem" had a noticeable affect on the friend. He yawned and said, "I was fast asleep. I am still feeling heavy-headed, and my mind is not quite clear. What you do is come back in the morning. Then we will see what is what."

Saying this, the friend closed the door, fastened the door-chain and went back to bed.

After a few moments of deathly silence the father spoke. "I have seen your friend of these times. And so have you. Now you come with me. I also have a friend from the old days. He has gone quite old, and so have I. I have not seen him for ages, but never mind, let me show you what type of friend he is."

Late as it was, father and son proceeded to the house of the father's friend. When they reached there the father knocked on the door and called out to his friend. The knocking woke up the friend and he called back from inside, "I'll be with you in a minute."

(You will note that he did not ask "Who is it?" Even after an absence of several years he had recognised the voice immediately, in contrast to the youngster's friend.)

He did not come to the door "in a minute". There was some delay. And when he did open the door he presented a strange spectacle as he stood in the doorway: in his one arm he was clutching a bag; in his other arm he had a stick; and on his head was balanced a pot!

After salaams were exchanged, the father asked his friend, "What is all this?"

The friend replied, "Nothing really. When I recognised your voice the thought struck me that, coming at this time of the night after an absence of several years, you must have some special problem. I have hurriedly made these few preparations, and this caused the delay in my coming to the door." The friend went on to explain: "This pot on my head has some food: if you have nothing to eat, this is to take home for your family. This bag in my hand contains money: if some creditor is making life difficult for you, this is to settle your debts. Thirdly, it may be that some enemy is after your blood: I may be old but I can still wield a stick quite deftly, and I'll contribute at least two or three shots with this stick."

The father reassured his friend, "No. There are no problems with food or money. There is also no fight. It is just that this son of mine used to come home late at night because of some friend of his. We went and saw this friend. I, in turn, offered to show him my old friend, which I have done. Shukria - thank you very much. Really, I am not in need of anything. Please forgive us for inconveniencing you at this late hour."

"You are welcome. It is your right," his friend said.

Making salaam, father and son took their leave. The lesson on the true friendship that existed in those years had been forcefully driven home to the youngster.

This is not an age in which you will find such friendships. So-called friends have earned some fancy titles for themselves:

- "Chamchi-yar" - "Friend of the tablespoon".

- "Dastarkhan-ke-yar" - "Friend of the table spread".

- "Muhazzab-daku" - "Cultured/sophisticated thief". Etc., etc.

7.SAND AND SILVER

Let me illustrate by relating a sequence of events that Hadhratwala (r.a.) narrated to us:

There resided in Thana Bhawan the son of a wealthy noble. His father had passed away, leaving him much wealth in the form of income-producing property, farmlands and cash. A number of hangers-on surrounded him very quickly and it was not long before all his cash was spent. He then sold all his properties. When the money from the sale of these properties got finished he put up the farmlands for sale.

Some well-wishers, true friends of his late father, saw the deterioration in his affairs and tried to advise him. "Arè mia!" they tried to make him understand, "Just think how hard your father struggled to achieve some security for you, his only son. Don't throw everything away."

The son responded by saying, "My father was a fool! He gave away silver and accumulated sand. I am not so stupid. I am more intelligent: I give away sand and acquire silver."

In those days the rupee coin was made of silver. There was no paper money. In buying property and farmlands (sand) the father had to pay in silver coins. The son considered himself wiser in getting silver (rupees) for the properties and farmlands (sand) that he was selling.

Yet, what does the Hadith shareef say?

In essence this means that whosoever has property, land or farms should not sell them. The reason is obvious. These are solid and permanent investments. Cash, on the contrary, is liquid and changeable. Property will give an income. Farms will produce crops. On the other hand, cash will be spent - cash in itself is non-productive. Yes, if one wishes to buy a better property or farm, then you may sell what you have. In this instance it is more of an exchange than a selling-out. This is the extent to which Rasulallah(sallallahu alaihi wassallam) had concern for us, that he even advised us on worldly affairs for our material well-being and comfort.

The son acted contrary to the Hadith shareef. Moreover, he considered himself clever and his father stupid. Can anyone make such a thick skull understand?

As an example of how his friends made use of him the following incident is related:

A friend came to visit him, looking sad and dejected. "Why so sad today?" the son asked.

Friend: "Nothing serious really. There is a fair in Meerath and I had a desire to go. Not being able to go is making me feel rotten."

Son: "Why? What is the problem?"

Friend: "To go there, and also have money for the various exhibitions..."

Son: "That is no problem. Feeling better?"

Friend: "Yes, but...to go alone without congenial company, one cannot really enjoy oneself."

Son: "Sure. Sure."

The son asked how much he required. The friend indicated the sum. The son very generously handed the money over.

This was the manner in which he spent on his friends. The net result was that soon he had no property, no farmlands and no cash. He was reduced to begging and existed on kindly hand-outs from relatives in Hyderabad and elsewhere.

His friends? They had quietly disappeared. This is the friendship of these times.

It is necessary to give a detailed explanation of friendships in modern times, in case you wish to imitate that buzurg who gave his fellow-buzurg 500 rupees. Never mind 500, do not give even 5! Otherwise he will be back the next day for more. Once you give something, he now comes on a regular basis. He is not one in need, but one who has a habit of asking - he is not a sahebe hajit but a sahebe adit.

I speak from experience. Let me relate what happened some years ago. My rooms were across the courtyard from here, upstairs, in those days. I am now speaking of a time when commodities were inexpensive: Have you seen times when one rupee could buy 16 kg. wheat? Or even 8 kg. or 4 kg.? I doubt it.

In any case, one day a perfect gentleman came to see me. He was well-dressed in an achkan and he carried a cane in his hand. He spoke a polished and refined Urdu. From what he said I gathered that he was in some financial difficulty. One does not give such a cultured person, well-dressed and cane in hand, 5 or 10 rupees. I took out 30 rupees and handed the sum to him. 30 rupees of those days most probably equal 3000 rupees nowadays. He accepted the money and left. The following year he was back. And he comes back every year for his 30 rupees!

Yes, one year I gave him less than 30 rupees. He was quick to notice. "Every year you give 30. This time it is less than 30," he reprimanded.

Offo! Very well. I filled in the deficit.

I am going into a fair amount of detail in telling you all about the 500 rupees of our qissah in order to make you fully knowledgeable. It should not be a case of :

In essence, this saying means that a person with half-baked Deeni knowledge is a danger to one's iman, just as a half-baked doctor, a quack, is a danger to one's life.

One does not want the situation where you tell yourself, "Hadhratjee mentioned a qissah wherein the lesson was that friendship was to give money to friends at their homes," and you also go and give money at the homes of those coming to ask. I want to emphasise again that in our qissah both were buzurgs, both had sincerity and honesty, and both recognised the rights and limits of true friendship.

Nowadays, so-called friends prey on others, growing fat themselves, while their victims die thin and frail.

8.ASK FROM A BADSHA OR A WALI

To put the perspective straight: While the Shariat has forbidden asking, it has also allowed asking. If you are forced into a situation where you have to ask from others (i.e. you have become a saheber hajit) then ask from a badshah (king) or from a true wali.

Why?

Here are the reasons: To beg or ask is to put oneself to disgrace. A king, however, has such a lofty worldly status that he is beyond looking with contempt at anybody. He does not look down on those coming to him with their needs. His heart is too magnanimous, and his wisdom too farsighted to stoop to such pettiness. Yes, a king is the person to ask from.

Or ask from a true wali-buzurg, not a bogus one. We said that begging or asking is associated with humiliation. But a true wali does not look with contempt at anybody. On the contrary, he considers himself to be the most despicable creature on earth. So there is no humiliation in asking from such a person who has such a low opinion of himself. Such a wali considers himself to be more miskin than anybody else; he has a desire to die in a state of miskin; and he desires to be raised in the company of the misakin in the Hereafter.

This desire, this du'a, is in keeping with the teachings of Rasulullah (sallallahu alaihi wassallam): "O Allah! Keep me alive in a state of miskin. O Allah! Grant me death in a state of miskin. And, O Allah! raise me up (in the Hereafter) in the group of misakin."

What does this mean? One person who read this Hadith shareef came up to me and said, "Hadhrat, to be in a state of miskin is to be in poverty. This is a very difficult situation to be in. A miskin has nothing to eat and he has nothing to wear. How can one possibly make du'a to be kept in a state of miskin and to die as one?"

Oho! That is not the meaning of miskin, to be financially destitute. The meaning of miskin in this context is ijs-wa- inkisari - humility and humbleness - and kasre nafs - broken nafsani desires. This means: to consider oneself the most wretched creature on earth, and not to look with contempt at anyone else. This is the meaning attached to the word miskin.

So, if you have to ask, ask from a wali: he considers himself to be the most contemptuous creature on earth, and he does not look down on anyone else.

To be in need (sahebe hajit) is one thing. To be in the habit of asking (sahebe adit) is another. In this day and age the sahebe adit are plentiful; those in real need are but few.

Muhabbat - real, true love and affection - is a rare and wonderful quality, more especially in this age. But, do not be fooled by a person merely proclaiming his affection. One has seen enough tragedies resulting from such situations.

9. HYPOCRITES - TWO TYPES

In the time of Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam) there were also those who falsely proclaimed their muhabbat. They even sat in his majlis and made namaz behind him. These were the hypocrites (munafiq) who were insincere in their beliefs (i'tiqad). Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam) was aware of them: he was kept informed about them through Divine Revelation (wahi). This category of hypocrite has ceased to exist according to the Shariat. A person is free to chose belief (iman) or unbelief (kufr). Anybody choosing kufr need not hide behind a mask of iman.

The category of hypocrite seen in abundance now, is in matters of deeds and actions. These comprise the munafiq amali.

Seeing there were hypocrites in the time of Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam), there is no reason to expect hypocrites not to be present in the company of a wali. The difference between the two groups of hypocrites is that the former consisted of hypocrites in i'tiqad and the latter consists of hypocrites in a'mal, as already explained.

The i'tiqadi hypocrites were given due consideration by Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam). Similarly you will find the wali being considerate to the amali hypocrites around him to a greater extent. One reason, among several, for giving consideration to the i'tiqadi hypocrites was the following: the general community as well as foreign countries, were not aware of the hypocrites. In their eyes everybody was Muslim, including these who were outwardly Muslim but who had kufr in their hearts. Any difference in attitude towards them would have been misunderstood by others. Thus each person was dealt with according to his outward presentation as a Muslim. The hypocrites portrayed themselves as Muslims in order to participate in the wealth of the Muslims, so that they could also share in the booty coming to the Muslims.

Similarly, we see in this age the (amali) hypocrite attaching himself to a famous buzurg - one in whom the public has faith and confidence. The hypocrite will be seen visiting the buzurg, staying with him, and proclaiming his affiliation to him.

Why? - The objective is to attain some worldly benefit, some material gain from others, by using this connection with the buzurg. The buzurg may be fully aware of what is going on, but he will not say anything. A wali of Allah prefers to keep silent.

It happened with our Hajee (Imdadullah) Saheb (r.a.). (Hajee Saheb(R.A.) is the sheikh of my sheikh, i.e. your "great-grandpeer" in the genealogy of our silsilah.)

Hadhratwala (r.a.) related this incident:

A person came up to Hajee Saheb (r.a.) and said, "Hadhrat, there is a certain person who is posing as your son-in-law and thereby collecting money for himself from your other mureeds." Of course, Hajee Saheb (r.a.) had no daughter, no son - no children whatsoever!

Hajee Saheb (r.a.) was a unique and wonderful buzurg of the time. He remarked, "Arè bhai - my dear brother - up to now nobody has benefited from me as far as Deen is concerned. If somebody is now, at least, deriving some material benefit from me, shall I stop him also?"

Such was our Hajee Saheb (r.a.). We are all aware of the great auliya produced at his hands, by the grace of Allah Ta'ala, yet just see his humble attitude. Others may not be so daring as to pose as sons-in-law. Some content themselves by establishing a relationship with a sheikh, with or without becoming bay't, to derive some worldly benefit. They make no effort to derive any Deeni benefit, but make a point of being seen in the company of the sheikh, trying to impress others as being close to the sheikh. All for material benefit.

10.SIR SYED AHMED KHAN - TWO QISSAS

Something else along the same lines comes to mind:

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's name had cropped up in discussion. Hadhratwala (r.a.) then commented, "People are strange. When some fault of a person is noticed, all the good in him is ignored. All the good gets washed down the drain. One should not do this. One should bear in mind the good in him also. One should not have both eyes closed, but keep one eye open at least. Do not totally condemn a person because of his worldliness. A dunyadar (worldly person) may have qualities of tolerance and benevolence, constancy and faithfulness, to a degree not found in the deendar (religious-minded)."

Syed Ahmed Khan was his actual name. The "Sir" in front was attached when the English conferred a knighthood on him. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had a reputation for being a worldly person (dunyadar). He had some fine qualities and he was a well-wisher of the Muslim community. However, this concern of his was like that of "an immature friend". This concise description was given by Hadhratwala (r.a.), who then continued, "But some qualities in him deserve to be praised." Hadhratwala (r.a.) then went on to relate two incidents.

Before continuing, let me ask you to give these incidents some thought. Use your sense of judgement. These are all matters concerned with islah. These incidents were not meant as

entertainment - Hadhratwala's (r.a.) khanqa was no cinema for entertainment. Every talk had some message, some lesson of a unique nature. The whole object of relating qissas is to take a lesson. The Hadith shareef states:

Fortunate is that person who derives the best of lessons from others.

The Qur'an shareef has numerous qissas concerning the kuffar and mushrikin, the ahle kitab (Nasara and Yahud), and the munafiqin. The purpose is to teach a lesson: These were people who had the truth explained to them time and again, but they refused to take heed. Just see how they were dealt with. So, O Muslims, save yourselves from a similar fate. See that you do not behave like them, for Allah Ta'ala's system is such that eventually His punishment descends on the disobedient. Take note that the punishment of Allah Ta'ala is severe. Do not be fooled into thinking that the respite granted while sins are being committed is a sign of condonation. No! It is Allah Ta'ala's system to give respite initially, before His wrath descends. On the other hand, look at the sincere Sahaba (r.a.): Because of their good deeds they were treated differently. On occasions they were assisted by mala'ekah and their hearts were strengthened with divine inspiration (ilham), so that they remained steadfast at times of trials and tribulations.

There are lessons in these. Fortunate is that person who can derive lessons from others: to be able to see how the good were dealt with and thereby try to improve; and to be able to see the way in which evil-doers were punished and thereby abstain from evil.

Let us now go the qissas related by Hadhratwala (r.a.).

THE FIRST QISSAH: A person applied for a post to the governor. This was during the time of British rule. In his application the person falsely stated that he was the son-in-law of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. He was told to present himself for an interview on a certain day. In the meantime the English governor sent a wire to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan wanting to know if the applicant was his son-in-law.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan realised that it was some impostor, but replied, "Yes, he is my son-in-law." The governor, having established the applicant's relationship to one so well-known to the British, gave him an excellent post.

During his leave this impostor son-in-law arrived at the residence of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had never seen him before and, therefore, did not recognise him. "Who are you?"

The impostor replied, "I am that liar who passed himself off as your son-in-law to obtain a post with the governor."

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan said, "That is no problem. Now what I cannot do is get you married to my daughter to make you my actual son-in-law. You are already married. Yes, what I can do is adopt your wife as my daughter as from today. So now you are, in reality, my son-in-law."

Hadhratwala (r.a.) told us that as long as he lived, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan treated this adopted daughter as his own. Whenever he called his other daughters home he called her too. She and her husband received the same consideration that his own daughters and their husbands received.

"He was a dunyadar," Hadhratwala (r.a.) commented, "but see how faithfully he kept up this relationship. Such faithfulness is rarely found even amongst those who are deendar."

It is no easy task to maintain a relationship in a faithful manner - what is called nibhahna. Young people do not observe this relationship in respect to their fathers; and mureeds do not observe this relationship in its correct context with their sheikhs. One finds that it does not take much for a person to feel offended, and the next thing is that he leaves everything and off he goes.

THE SECOND QISSAH: This qissah is also worth listening to carefully, and pondering over.

It is a hot summer's day. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan is lying relaxed on a couch in his room. A visiting friend from Hyderabad is lying similarly relaxed on another couch nearby. Sweet-scented grass screens hang on one side: a servant stands on the other side of the screens and sprinkles water onto them from time to time, while tugging on the strings of ceiling fans, keeping them in constant motion, causing a cool breeze to pass through the room. The glass doors to the room are closed. In line with the doors, a short distance away, is a well.

A beggar comes along, stops at the well and lays down his bundle. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan observes the arrival of the beggar. Being quick-witted, he sums up the situation and remarks to his friend, "Just watch. This beggar is going to change his clothes and pose as a durwesh and come to us. But I will not give him a single paisa!"

Just as Sir Syed Ahmed Khan has predicted, the beggar takes out another set of clothes from his bundle, takes off the garments he is wearing, and dresses himself as a durwesh. He walks to the door of the room and knocks loudly and confidently. Such people are not the timid type. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, true to his word, ignores the knock. However, such beggars cannot take a hint. The knocking becomes more vigorous and persistent, as if it is a matter of life and death.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan is flustered. Reluctantly he orders the servant to open the door and allow the "durwesh" in. The "durwesh" enters, makes salaam, calmly seats himself on an empty couch, and starts speaking to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

However Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, after giving a very cursory reply to the salaam, pays him no further attention. Seeing this indifference, the voice of the "durwesh" suddenly becomes sharp and high-pitched. "Do you not recognise who I am? I am that person who has had the honour of visiting such-and-such!" The person whose name he takes - he must have picked it up somewhere - was none other than the peer of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

Do not be surprised. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan is well known as a dunyadar, but he was also deendar. He used to be punctual with his five times namaz with jama't; he kept a beard strictly according to the Shariat; he used to recite the Qur'an shareef regularly; and he was punctual with his tahajjud namaz. Admittedly, he held controversial views on some points of aqa'id.

To continue: The "durwesh" is saying, "Yes, I visited him. These eyes of mine have been blessed by gazing at his gracious countenance."

A change comes over Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. He is immediately attentive and sits up respectfully. He apologises, "Please forgive me. I did not recognise you." He turns to the servant and says, "Bring me my cash box." The servant brings a small box which he places in front of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who takes from the box a handful of silver coins. He gets up and walks over to the "durwesh" and respectfully hands him the money. "Huzur (Sir), please be kind enough to accept this gift."

The "durwesh" takes the money - after all, this was the purpose of his visit - and departs.

Watching all this bemusedly is the V.I.P. from Hyderabad. (Important people have important people as friends. They do not take friends from the riff-raff.) He comments, "What happened? You said you would not give him a single paisa, and there you went and gave him a small fortune." He is obviously unaware of the reason for the change in Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's attitude.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan asks, "Did you not hear the name he mentioned?"

The friend says, "Yes, I heard."

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan explains, "Well, that happens to be my peer-saheb. When he said that he had set eyes on my peer- saheb how could I ignore him? I was duty bound to be respectful and present him something. In any case, I got away cheaply."

The friend says, "Got away cheaply? But I saw you gave him quite a big sum."

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan says, "I swear that had he said that I should give him the entire box I would have done so! No. I got away cheaply."

Hadhratwala (r.a.) concluded his narration by saying. "See, these were the qualities to be seen in the dunyadar in those days. Think. Do those who are deendar possess such qualities?"

Let us now summarise our discussion on hypocrites:

Firstly: Hypocrisy in the time of Rasulallah(sallallahu alaihi wassallam) was in beliefs (i'tiqad). Hypocrisy nowadays is in deeds and actions (a'mal).

Secondly: Just as i'tiqadi hypocrites presented themselves in the company of Rasulallah(sallallahu alaihi wassallam), one will find amali hypocrites in the company of a wali.

Thirdly: Just as due consideration was given to those hypocrites then, so too will these hypocrites be treated with due regard now, and even more so.

11.PRAISE AND CENSURE

Hadhratwala (r.a.) used to say, "Do not place any faith in any person's devotion to you; and do not feel offended at any person's censure. In this age praise and censure should be equal in your eyes." This was said in an age when there was still some degree of sincerity in people.

What type of buzurg is he who gets elated when he is praised and feels now he is somebody? And when he is censured he is offended. He stops speaking with the one who has criticised him and avoids meeting him.

What type of pious person is he? What type of buzurg is he? What type of tahajjud-guzar is he? When he is praised he becomes conceited and when he is censured he nurtures hatred and malice in his heart!

In this day and age a person will praise you to the skies as long as he can make use of you. The day he finds he cannot manipulate you he starts castigating you, speaking ill of you. Now, tell me: what value would you set on such praise or such criticism?

The following comments of Hadhratwala (r.a.) appear very appropriate. (At the time I was alone with Hadhratwala [-----]. On many such occasions with nobody else present, Hadhratwala (R.A.) would come forth with breath-taking pearls of wisdom.)

"I wish to say something," Hadhratwala (r.a.) said.

"Yes, Hadhrat."

"See here, in this day and age no person is loyal and faithful (mu'taqid) to anyone else, except a few, masha'allah." (Hadhratwala's [-----] tone and expression was something special.) "Each person is a devotee of his own self. As long as you pander to others, agreeing with their whims, talking softly and sweetly, people will express their devotion to you. The moment you say 'No. No;' and people cannot make use of you, both affection and devotion vanish - muhabbat is gone and so is i'tiqad."

(And this has been borne out by experience!)

Hadhratwala (r.a.) then continued, "The thought that people will not speak ill of one is a delusion. Dear brother, if people spoke ill of a nabi, why would people not speak ill of a wali? And if there is nobody speaking ill of that person then he is not a wali. It is impossible that a nabi should have people speaking ill of him, but a wali should have none to speak ill of him."

Hadhratwala (r.a.) narrated a qissah to illustrate this point:

This incident occurred in the age when female slaves - strictly according to the Shariat - still existed.

A person owning a female slave (laundi) had fallen into hard times. He told the laundi (female slave), "You see my condition - I have been reduced to poverty and there is hardly anything to eat. I do not see why you should suffer with me. I have decided rather to sell you."

She said, "Whatever makes you happy. I don't have any complaints. However I do have a request to make."

"What is it?"

"If you do decide to sell me, sell me to anybody except Baqibillah!"

Who was Baqibillah (r.a.)? He was a very great buzurg, a wali of great fame, the sheikh of none other than the famous Mujaddid Alfe Thani (r.a.) of Sarhind shareef, in the Naqshabandi silsilah. Baqibillah resided in Delhi, where he also lies buried.

The owner was surprised at this request of his laundi. "Why ever not?"

The laundi explained, "I have had occasion to go into Delhi for some work on a number of occasions. Wherever I have gone I have heard nothing but praise of Baqibillah. Nowhere have I heard anybody say anything bad about him. I therefore have my doubts as to his being a real wali. That people should speak ill of a nabi but not of a wali, is completely unheard of! What kind of wali is that?"

Her owner said, "Baqibillah is the very person I am going to sell you to. But, to please you, I will request three days' grace, during which I will have the option of taking you back. You remain with him for three days and see for yourself what type of person he is. I will tell him that I reserve the right to take you back within three days. If I do not, you will remain with him."

Three days' grace in a transaction is called "Ba'y Khiare-shart" in the Shariat.

The arrangement satisfied the laundi. The owner subsequently sold her to Baqibillah (r.a.) - with the three days' option - and left the laundi at his house.

Mealtime came. Baqibillah saheb (r.a.) told the newly acquired laundi, "O Allah-ki-bandi, it is time for meals. Go and fetch a light for the fire."

It was before the age of matches. Fires were lighted from burning embers obtained from the neighbourhood. The laundi went to the next-door neighbour and requested a light from the lady of the house. The neighbour told her to go ahead and help herself, and the laundi took some burning embers from the fire. As she was leaving, the neighbour asked, "For whom are you taking the light?" "For Baqibillah saheb," the laundi replied.

That was enough. The name of Baqibillah saheb (r.a.) was enough to set off a torrent of vituperation from the neighbour. Swearing and cursing Baqibillah saheb (r.a.), the woman forced the laundi to return the burning embers and chased her out.

The laundi returned, very upset...and empty-handed.

Baqibillah saheb (r.a.) asked, "Did you not bring a light for the fire?"

The laundi mumbled something.

"No. No. Give me a full explanation," Baqibillah (r.a.) insisted.

The laundi then explained how she had gone to the neighbour, got permission to take an ember, when asked for whom, she had said it was for him, the swearing and cursing that had followed, and finally being chased out empty-handed.

"Offo!" Baqibillah saheb (r.a.) remarked when she had finished, "Never mind Delhi, but we have people just over the wall calling us evil names!"

The laundi understood immediately. She had been given the answer to the doubts she had expressed to her previous owner.

Before three days had passed the previous owner arrived to find out whether she wished to stay or not. The laundi said, "I wish to stay. I have discovered that he is a real wali: I have found that he has a neighbour who speaks ill of him."

The laundi in this qissah is underlining the point made: If a nabi has people talking ill of him then a wali, one who walks in the footsteps of a nabi, will surely have people talking ill of him as well. It is essential that one's gaze should be neither on praise nor on censure. One should have a clear mind, free of all expectations from others.

A wali will not get swollen-headed with praise and he is not offended by censure Why? The reason is that the gaze of a wali has shifted from the creation and is focussed on the Creator. If an individual has not reached this stage, he will get conceited with praise and he will take offence at censure. This is a clear indication that his gaze is focussed on the creation and not on the Creator.

O salik, do you understand?

One's concern should be neither with praise nor with censure, whether one is in one's home or outside; whether praise or censure emanates from those close to you or from outsiders - more so if it comes from those close to you. From time to time you are bound to have dealings with relatives and others close to you. You are bound to face both pleasant and unpleasant situations. Should you get upset at some bitter experience then you are no wali. It is pure foolishness to expect praise and respect from relatives and those close to you - just as foolish as not to expect problems and censure from them. Expect more criticism from them. Relatives and those close to you tend to be very touchy. You shower them with kindness and favours, they are happy with you; you do not give them anything, they are upset with you. This attitude is only rarely encountered from outsiders. That is why Hadhratwala (r.a.) said, "To be desirous of that honour, respect and attention from relatives and those close to you, that others show, is a sure sign of arrogance (takabbur) in that wali."

This does not mean that relatives and those close to one are necessarily rude and disrespectful. What it means is: do not be desirous of the same attitude of respect and honour from relatives and those close to you that others may display towards you. Should relatives and those close to you treat you with the same high regard, well and good. But from your side see that you are not desirous of such respect and honour.

It may happen that an elderly person may honour a young saleh (pious) person. He may stand up in respect, even take his hand and kiss it respectfully. However, should this young man expect his father and grandfather also to stand up for him when he meets them? Obviously not. Do not even turn your thoughts in that direction. It is a different matter if they, on their own, show respect.

Hadhratwala (r.a.) related the following: Maulana Qasim saheb's (r.a.) father was a landowner. He used to smoke a huqqah (pipe) and get the young Maulana Qasim saheb (r.a.) to prepare it for him. A buzurg happened to be passing by one day and he saw Maulana Qasim saheb (r.a.) busy with the routine of preparing the huqqah and presenting it to his father.

The buzurg took the father to one side and advised him softly, "Be kind enough not to let your son prepare your huqqah. That action causes the Arsh to shake. Kindly refrain him from it."

The father heeded the advice and thereafter never asked Maulana Qasim saheb (r.a.) to prepare his huqqah again.

One does find parents who recognise the goodness and piety in their children, and respect them accordingly. But one should not be desirous of such respect. Such a desire is a fault in wilayet and should not be present.

12. RESPECT FROM WIVES

Amongst those related and close to one, that person who is closest and has the highest degree of intimacy is one's wife. On the basis of what has been said, how can one be desirous of praise from her, and how can one expect to escape censure from her? So, in accordance with the rule that one should not anticipate any praise from those close to one, nor expect to escape from their censure, this rule will be applicable to the highest degree when it comes to the wife. A wife is most unpredictable. A parent or a child, both of whom are closely related, will draw a line in their attitude and behaviour. But a wife draws no lines. She has no regard for any etiquette. Therefore, no matter

what her attitude, no matter what words she utters, no matter what unbecoming language she uses, do not take offence. On the other hand, if she praises you to the skies, it is nothing to get excited over.

Are you married? [Hadhratjee directed this question at a young man sitting in the majlis.] No? Never mind. Just listen carefully first before you do get married.

Praise and censure should be equal in your eyes to an even greater extent where the wife is concerned. Neither her praise nor her censure carries any weight. Do not feel you are in a unique situation if you are hen-pecked. If one looks at the auliya-Allah, most of them were in such situations. There were exceptions, but most had wives who called their wali-husbands harsh and offensive names, and openly expressed their displeasure with their wali-husbands. However at no stage did any wali feel upset at the wife's displeasure.

You must be aware of the Hadith shareef that states that a woman has an intelligence (aql) which is defective.

It follows that a defective intelligence will spout out anything without any insight into its correctness. You (students) may have studied and learnt this Hadith shareef. You are convinced of its truth - you have ilme yaqin. But that is as far as you have progressed. Why do I say that? Because sooner or later you are going to show tremendous displeasure at some incident. This is because the knowledge that you have acquired is at an academic level only and not at the level of wilayet. Mere academic knowledge is of temporary value. Only that knowledge assimilated at the level of wilayet will be of permanent value.

The wali has a deeper understanding. He knows what difficulties some ambiya had experienced at the hands of their wives. He knows how much vexation our Nabi(sallallahu alaihi wassallam) had undergone by the doings of some of his wives. Therefore, the wali realises his own responsibility of faithfully maintaining his relationship with his wife - what we have termed "nibhahna". There are numerous incidents from the lives of the auliya-Allah one can quote.

Hadhratwala (r.a.) mentioned an episode concerning Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.). His original name was just Abul Hasan. The "Nuri" was added on afterwards. Very often people become known by a name connected with some special feature in their lives. So also with Abul Hasan (r.a.): it was noticed that when he used to speak a nur (effulgence/luminescence) used to emanate from his mouth. He thus came to be known as Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.).

Another buzurg who also came to be well known by a nickname is Abdul Karim (r.a.). He lived during the Sultanate period. Differences with the Sultan caused him to spend most of his time in jail. He thus became known as Abdul Karim Jaili (r.a.).

There is an episode concerning him during his stay in jail that is worth mentioning because of the lesson in it:

These buzurgs used to keep with them two sets of garments, one set being worn and one other.

13.REALITY OF ZUHD

Clothes: Let me just stop a while to point out that owning more than one set of clothes is not against the concept of asceticism (zuhd) - you may possess two, four, eight or ten sets of clothes. If Allah Ta'ala has blessed you with wealth you may sew for yourself ten sets of clothes even and it would not be against the concept of zuhd (asceticism). The proviso being that you do not put yourself in debt. It must also be pointed out that to live in ease and comfort at the cost of causing suffering to your wife and children is definitely against the concept of zuhd and wilayet. There is no question that this latter situation is one of asceticism or saintliness.

Residence: Having a double-storey or even a six-storey mansion is also not against the concept of zuhd and wilayet. Even if a person owns ten houses, it is still not against the concept of zuhd. The proviso again being that you do not have to ask from others but that Allah Ta'ala has blessed you with such wealth.

Remember: To ask (beg) is degrading.

Let us take an example: Somebody has four sons. How are all going to stay in one house as the sons grow up and get married? If Allah Ta'ala has blessed you with wealth then provide each one with his own house.

Whenever some mureed wrote to Hadhratwala (r.a.) complaining of friction between wife and in-laws in a situation where everybody was staying together in one house, Hadhratwala (r.a.) used to write back: "As soon as possible go and stay on your own, whether by renting a house or building your own. Do not stay together."

A Farsi saying goes as follows:

"Khane khudra khane digra mitten" - Do not make your home in other peoples' homes.

How can several families stay together, using one entrance, one kitchen, one lounge, bumping into one another day and night? No. Each one's quarters should be separate. If you have four sons, and Allah Ta'ala has blessed you with wealth, provide each son with his own house. You may have only one piece of land. In that case divide the property, making sure that each son has his own quarters - the kitchen and the cooking should be separate, the allowances should be separate, the food-stock should also be kept separate. Do not share from one kitty and one stock-room, but divide out each one's share on its own.

You may be wondering what all this has to do with islah. Be assured that these are matters very important in one's islah. An important principle in islah is that one's mind should be free from unnecessary disputes and worries. The individual should be in a tranquil state. He should not be flustered. His thoughts should not be scattered, but be collected. Taking steps to prevent problems from arising leads to tranquillity. If there is no peace of mind, the person's tilawat and his namaz are recited with a troubled mind. The person's sleep is restless. He cannot concentrate on his work. A mind in turmoil is the very antithesis of building up a connection with Allah Ta'ala.

Food: If Allah Ta'ala has blessed you with wealth, eat good nutritious food of high quality. To eat well is also not against the concept of zuhd.

Do we have any proof for making these statements? Yes, we have. What has been said is not against the sunnah of Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam). Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam) had more than one set of clothes, more than one topi (cap), and more than one pair of shoes. Where the principle is established that it is not against the sunnah to have more than one of an item, then the quantity beyond one will vary with each individual.

For example: Several people have come to visit you. You place some fruit, e.g. mangoes, in front of them to eat. You possess only one knife. Now each guest must, of necessity, await his turn to cut his mango. Is this not bringing on an artificial difficulty? You should have several knives so that your guests are not put to inconvenience.

Similarly you should possess several spoons, plates, tumblers, etc. to be able to attend to your guests with ease.

What about food? You should be familiar with Shama'il Tirmidhi shareef - a Hadith kitab on the lifestyle of Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam). Therein is a description of Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam) having eaten chicken, confirming that it is not against zuhd to eat well.

The Hadith shareef also describes how Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam) once wore a fine quality Yemeni shawl of extreme beauty.

We have established that Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam) ate well and dressed well, just as he is known to have ate simply and dressed simply. Both ways were adopted with due consideration for the Ummat. In this diversity lies the islah of the Ummat: If the well-to-do adopt a high standard of living the poor should not complain, they should not consider the rich to be arrogant. On the other hand, the rich should not be contemptuous of the simple food and attire of the poor. We can see the great wisdom behind adopting the lifestyles of the poor and the rich.

However, when it came to personal preference Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam) chose simplicity for himself. Allah Ta'ala offered to turn Mount Uhud into gold but Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam) preferred a life where he had something to eat at one mealtime and nothing the next.

Let us re-iterate: to eat well, to dress well and to possess more than one of an item, is not against the concept of zuhd. Bear in mind:

Deeds and actions are dependant on intentions. (Hadith shareef.)

14. IKHTIARI AND GAIR-IKHTIARI

After this digression, let us go back to our qissas. We had started off with Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.), then we had started to speak of Abdul Karim Jaili (r.a.). To continue: Abdul Karim Jaili (r.a.) had two sets of garments. When Friday came he had a bath and washed his clothes. After zawaal he put on his clean clothes and proceeded towards the jail gates with the intention of going for Jumu'ah namaz in town.

Jumu'ah namaz inside a jail is not permissible. One of the conditions for the validity of Jumu'ah namaz is that the site where Jumu'ah namaz is to be performed should be accessible to all members of the community. Obviously, this condition cannot be fulfilled in a prison.

When Abdul Karim Jaili (r.a.) reached the gates, he turned around and walked back. The warders were not going to oblige by opening the gates for him and, it is obvious, that he could not walk through the gates. Friday after Friday he went through the same routine. Some fellow-prisoners noticed this and said, "Hadhrat, why do you take all this trouble? Every Friday we see you wash your clothes, have a bath, dress neatly and then proceed in the direction of the town for Jumu'ah namaz, knowing full well that you will not be able to go beyond the gates. What is the necessity? Why do it?"

Abdul Karim Jaili (r.a.) replied (and herein is the lesson): "As far as it is in my power to make an effort for Jumu'ah namaz why should I not do it? What is within my power and choice (ikhtiar) that much I can do - prepare and proceed as far as the gates. What is beyond my power and choice (gair-ikhtiar) - to proceed farther - I am helpless and I return."

Do you see the lesson?

When a person can, by his own choice (ikhtiar) and determination (iradah), make an effort to do some good, laziness is no excuse. What is beyond his power and choice (gair-ikhtiar) he should not pursue. There should be no hankering after what is gair-ikhtiar - there should be no wasted effort to attain it. It is beyond one's power and choice.

To put it another way: Constant a'mal at the level of maqame ihsan are ikhtiar - it is within the power and choice of an individual to consistently perform deeds at that level where he is aware that Allah Ta'ala is watching him.

On the other hand, certain states are gair-ikhtiar, namely that kaifiyat should come and that halate ajibah should manifest - it is not in the individual's power or choice to bring on emotional states and moods, and to produce states of a wondrous and ecstatic nature.

Why concern oneself with what is beyond one's power and choice? Why be desirous of such states? Why strive for them? Why be grieved at not being able to acquire them? Why be saddened if they vanish, should they have manifested?

15.ZIKR AND KAIFIYAT

It is important to understand the above. An improper understanding can cause the following situation:

An individual complained to me, "I cannot achieve a state of tearfulness. But I saw a person sitting in front of me making zikr in such a way that the tears were just flowing from his eyes." This individual is now upset and dejected. He does not understand that crying is not a voluntary feat (ikhtiar), but is an involuntary condition (gair-ikhtiar). If it comes, well and good. If not then there is no reason to long for it. Should you have the misconception that these states (kaifiyat) are objectives to be pursued, then you are leading yourself into problems. You are going to become disillusioned with suluk. As a result you are going to cease your zikr because you now feel - quite wrongly - that your zikr is not producing any results.

Such misconceptions make the individual a prey for Shaitaan. Abdul Aziz Dabbar (r.a.) relates an incident:

The zakirin were busy making zikr in the khanqa of his sheikh. This is expected of those staying in the khanqa, that they should be punctual with their tahajjud namaz and zikr. What type of talib and salik is he who stays in the khanqa but does not get up for tahajjud and does not make zikr? He has come to the khanqa for these. He has freed himself from his worldly worries, he has left his business, he has left his family, so now he has the free time for these. One is surprised that he is still not punctual with his tahajjud and he is not persistent in his programme of zikr. Just what type of salik is he? No! The tahajjud and zikr are compulsory schedules whilst in the khanqa. Otherwise why come to the khanqa? To be lazy in these matters is a sign of disrespect. Illness or extreme physical weakness are valid excuses, but otherwise there is absolutely no reason for not getting up for tahajjud and not making zikr.

Abdul Aziz Dabbar (r.a.) as we said, narrated that the zakirin were busy making zikr in the khanqa. While making zikr one of the zakirin started crying. The sheikh noticed and said, "Oho! Shaitaan has arrived! The zakir is crying - Shaitaan has caught hold of his little finger." The crying of the zakir increased. The sheikh said, "Oho! Shaitaan has started to overpower him!" The crying of the zakir increased still further, and went on for a long time. The sheikh said, "Oho! He is now completely in the power of Shaitaan!"

This incident is related by the great buzurg Abdul Aziz Dabbar (r.a.) in a kitab recently translated from the Arabic. The kitab is called "Talbis Iblis" (The Deceptions of Iblis - i.e. Shaitaan).

The comments of the sheikh appear strange. What is the reasoning behind his comments? Quite simple: Shaitaan has stopped the zakir from his basic objective, which is to remember Allah Ta'ala. Shaitaan has successfully diverted his attention, and has now directed him to the joy of crying. Shaitaan has got him so involved in the delight of shedding tears that his objective of remembering Allah Ta'ala has fallen by the way.

The lessons to be learnt: Do not run after kaifiyat; do not concern yourself with the fluctuations of these states; do not be deflected from your objective. Your objective is to connect yourself to your Creator and not to the creation. These states (kaifiyat) are, after all, part of creation.

To put it in technical terms: your duty is to be busy with shagl-ba-Haq and not shagle-ba-khalq. Shagl-ba-Haq is part of the a'male ikhtariah akhlaqe mahmudiah (volitional deeds from amongst the praiseworthy qualities). Your duty is not to pursue what is gair-ikhtiari. Become indifferent to matters gair-ikhtiari, and maintain a mind that is tranquil and serene. This is exactly what Abdul Karim Jaili (r.a.) did, in obedience to the Qur'anic ayet:

"O ye who believe, when the call to prayer is made on a Friday then repair unto the remembrance of Allah...." S.62 A.9

He did what was in his power - to prepare for Jumu'ah and go as far as the prison gates. What was beyond his power - to cause the gates to open - he did not bother with.

Do you understand?

We started with one of our great auliya-Allah, Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.), so let us go back to him. Before relating the main qissah connected with the theme "praise and censure" I wish to mention another incident related about him:

One day while in his house Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.) suddenly cried out, "Offo! Offo! They have been killed! They have been killed!" His wife looked up in alarm. "What are you saying?" Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.) had had an episode of kashf. He explained, "At a certain far-off place some people have been killed." The wife said, "Subhanallah! You know what happened at such a distant place, but are you aware that some thieves entered the house and what they did to your child? Of course not. Forget it. Don't come with your fancy stories."

That was just by-the-way.

We have already mentioned that the surname "Nuri" came about because a nur used to emanate from his mouth at times when he spoke. The nur was not seen every time, but only now and then. An important mas'alah of suluk is to be deduced from this: At times when no nur emanated from his mouth he did not feel that his zikr was now useless.

The point to remember is that the moment such a thought presents itself Shaitaan is there to mislead one. These masa'il of suluk are very important. It is imperative to know them. Otherwise one will not be able to defend oneself against the attacks of Shaitaan who tries to overpower us and lead us way from Haqiqat.

Still on the subject of "nur": Pirani saheba, Hadhratwala's (r.a.) wife, related that she saw a nur rising up from Hadhratwala's shahadat finger (index finger of the right hand). The nur rose upwards and spread itself towards the sky. This she witnessed shortly before his demise. The point I wish to make is that Hadhratwala (r.a.) had made zikr with his fingers his entire life, but this nur manifested itself only at that terminal stage of his life. This again underline the points made above.

The incident related by Pirani saheba comes as no surprise. Many years prior to this Hadhratwala (r.a.) had stated, "Alhamdulillah! It is a blessing of Allah Ta'ala." "And the bounty of your Lord, rehearse and proclaim" S.93. A.11.

"All the states that had been experienced by the earlier auliya-Allah have been experienced by me as well, except for one. I have never yet been in a state of engrossment (istigraq) like that experienced by Shah Abdulhaq Ladholwi saheb (r.a.). Though not essential, it would be nice to experience that state as well. There is no remorse, just a desire of the heart."

Shah Abdulhaq Ladholwi saheb (r.a.) is one of the auliya-Allah of our silsilah. He is well-known for his states of engrossment in the remembrance of Allah Ta'ala (istigraq). His absorption was such that he was forgetful of some of the most simple daily routines even.

In any event this state of istigraq was also experienced by Hadhratwala (r.a.) during his terminal illness:

Mufti Jamil saheb came to Hadhratwala's (r.a.) room to administer some medicine. "Barè Abba," he called softly. (Hadhratwala ----- used to be addressed as "Bare Abba".)

There was no response. Mufti Jamil saheb called out in a louder voice, "Barè Abba!" Still no response. Now quite loudly, with his mouth close to the ear, "Barè Abba! Barè Abba!" Hadhratwala's (r.a.) eyes opened. He said, "The attention of one who is occupied should not be diverted to oneself."

What was Hadhratwala occupied with? Istigraq! Shagl-ba-Haq!

Not everybody experiences the same states. States differ, and individuals have their own unique experiences.

We have strayed somewhat from our topic of "praise and censure". Let us try again. The qissah we are about to relate about Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.) also involves Bu Ali Sina, a physician of great repute.*1 Bu Ali Sina felt he should meet this famous buzurg of his time, namely Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.). He thus undertook a journey to Abul Hasan Nuri's (r.a.) town and arrived at his residence. He knocked on the door and the wife answered the knock.

"Who is it?" she asked.

Bu Ali Sina introduced himself.

"What is it that you want?" she asked..

Very respectfully he said, "I have come to visit Hadhrat Sheikh Abul Hasan Nuri."

That was the last thing he should have said! The wife immediately started a tirade against her own husband, censuring him in the harshest terms. The mildest quotable names she called him were: "a crook, a thief and a robber."

Bu Ali Sina was quite bewildered. Disappointed and regretful, he told himself, "It seems he is not what I thought him to be. I made a mistake in travelling all this way." He apologised and took his leave. "But," he thought to himself, "seeing I am here I may as well meet him." He enquired from some people about Abul Hasan Nuri's (r.a.) whereabouts. They explained that he normally went into the woods to collect firewood which he would sell in the bazaar. This is the manner in which he earned his livelihood.

Bu Ali Sina proceeded to the woods. After walking quite a distance he noticed a saintly looking person coming in his direction. What was amazing was that a lion was walking alongside him. Moreover, the lion was carrying a bundle of firewood. He realised immediately that this saintly person could be no other than Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.).

Bu Ali Sina slowed down his pace and then stopped completely out of fear of the lion. Salaams were exchanged from a distance. Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.) then said, "Bu Ali, are you afraid of the lion? He does not harm humans. You need not be afraid."

Bu Ali Sina was somewhat reassured and he approached nearer. "Hadhrat," he spoke deferentially "I had gone initially to your house to visit you. Your wife answered my knock. She enquired what I wanted. I merely replied that I had come to visit Hadhrat. But she started saying such horrible and disrespectful things about you that it was most embarrassing to stand and listen."

Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.) offered an apology.

Bu Ali Sina continued, "But there is a strange thing that puzzles me."

Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.) asked, "What is that?"

Bu Ali Sina said, "What I can't understand is that your wife has the upper hand over you. Yet you have the upper hand over this fierce lion!"

Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.) said, "Arè mia! If one is unable to bear the burden imposed on one by that ewe, how is this lion going to bear our burden? It is because we carry the burden of her attitude that this lion bears our burden!"

Are you listening, children?

Praise and censure. The wife calls him horrible names. There is absolutely no acknowledgement of his saintly status from her. Only the heart of a wali can bear such censure. A mu'min wali, a wali in whom the demands of iman has caused him to leave off all sin and caused him to adopt piety (taqwa) and humility, a wali whose tongue and heart are engaged in constant zikr (zikr lisani and qalbi) so that his gaze is on the Creator and not on the creation, only such a wali will have the capacity for such wisdom. Remember the above well.

That person who does not have these qualities, is no man, just a mere kitten - he is no "mia", merely a "miauw".

Only that person whose gaze has shifted away from the creation and is now firmly fixed on the Creator treats praise and censure as being equal, irrespective of whether they come from his household or from outsiders. He is more tolerant to those close to him - censure rather than praise is to be expected more from them than from outsiders.

The one who is closest to him, the one who is labelled in the Hadith shareef as having a "naqise aql" (a defective intellect), namely his wife, will be the cause of such trials more than anybody else. Any individual with a "naqise aql" is incapable of seeing the consequences of his or her actions. Just look at other situations as well to see the truth of this. So the wife is the same - she will use her tongue with great liberty, unaware of the consequences.

A wali is that person to whom praise and censure are equal. Praise does not make him conceited. Censure does not produce any malice (keenah). Conceit is a sign of kibr (arrogance). Both of these, kibr and keenah, are internal evils. A wali is pure of internal illnesses - he has neither kibr nor keenah - so that praise and censure are treated as equal impostors.

We had mentioned that Hajee Imdadullah saheb (r.a.) was Hadhratwala's (r.a.) sheikh. He was also the sheikh of Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (r.a.).

A mureed is expected to write regularly to his sheikh. No letter had been received by Hajee saheb (r.a.) from Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (r.a.) for an unusually long period. Hajee saheb (r.a.) then took it upon himself to write to Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (r.a.):

"A time has elapsed. No letter has been received concerning my dear friend's condition. No notification of your states (ahwal) has been forthcoming."

Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (r.a.) wrote back: "States (ahwal) are for the sahebe-ahwal. Of what significance is this servant's condition? Yes, one thing though, now praise and censure are equal to me."

Hajee saheb (r.a.) wrote back: "Mubarak! Congratulations! My heart is happy. Tajalli-af'ali has manifested itself." (The meaning of this will be explained in some future discourse, insha-Allah Ta'ala.) Hajee saheb (r.a.) was congratulating Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (r.a.) on a great achievement.

16.CONCLUSION

A number of topics have been discussed today. We have seen how the i'tiqadi hypocrites were given due consideration in those days; and how the amali hypocrites are also given due consideration today. Incidents showing Hajee saheb's (r.a.) and the dunyadar Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's attitudes to impostors have been related. Both showed exceptional qualities of loyalty and faithfulness (nibhahna).

Good qualities are not produced merely by the recitation of tasbihs, but flow from one who is a true wali. An item is recognised by the effects it produces.

The sheikh is constantly assessing how much and to what extent these effects manifest in the mureed. The sheikh does not look only at his namaz. Yes, in this era of our decline - these are days of our downward slide - the sheikh may content himself if some reach only a stage of performing namaz punctually and correctly. However, when a sheikh notices that a mureed is striving hard in suluk, the sheikh's attitude and treatment is accordingly different. The rare sight of a mureed making full effort during these days of degeneration gladdens the heart. Obviously such a mureed will be handled differently from one not so inclined.

Praise and censure have been discussed in detail: both should be equal in one's eyes. There should be no desire for praise; and censure should produce no ill-feelings. A wali is not perturbed by either. A sufficient number of incidents have been related in this regard.

A qissah concerning Abdul Karim Jaili (r.a.) has also been related to illustrate the role of effort in matters ikhtiari and gair-ikhtiari. The topic of zuhd was also dealt with in-between.

A perspective on zikr and kaifiyat was given. It was also stressed that a khanqa is a place where one should be punctual with tahajjud and zikr. A khanqa is also a place where tranquillity (sukun) descends. Therefore there should be tranquillity and serenity of body and soul, of tongue and heart. Just as khushu' is essential for the perfection and acceptance of one's namaz, khushu' is the desired state out of namaz: Kiushu' should be constantly with us.

Rasulullah(sallallahu alaiyhi wassallam) made a du'a,

"O Allah! Verily, I seek refuge in You from a heart wherein there is no Kiushu'...."

May Allah Ta'ala give us all the tawfiq, with sidq and ikhlas, to spend our time properly, whether in the khanqa, at home or outside.