

The Cure for Depression (Tafweez)

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Introduction

Ulama-e-Kiraam, dear brothers and respected sisters... Depression, it seems, has become synonymous with living in a society overrun with innumerable problems. It is an ailment which has unfortunately reached epidemic proportions. In the search for a solution, we sink deeper and deeper into the abyss of depression. Hardly a day passes, without some person complaining about his failures or of the acute depression that he is suffering, due to various factors.

What I wish to discuss very briefly is Tafweez. If we learn Tafweez, then we have indeed found the antidote for depression.

We have to clearly understand, that we cannot escape the decisions of Allah Ta'ala with regard to any matter in our lives. Whatever Allah Ta'ala has decided will happen, no matter how much we may wish otherwise.

Our anxieties, depression and worries are all created because we first make the decisions and then expect Allah Ta'ala to conform; whereas what we plan and decide is subject to Allah Ta'ala's confirmation.

Advice of a Sheikh

One Mureed, after having spent many years in the company of Sheikh Abdul Qader Jailani (R.A.), requested some parting advice before taking leave from his Sheikh. Sheikh Abdul Qader Jailani (R.A.) told him: "Do not claim Divinity and do not claim Nabuwat (Prophethood)."

The Mureed asked: "Does Hazrat think that after all these years in Hazrat's company, I will make such a claim?"

Sheikh Abdul Qader Jailani (R.A.) then explained what he meant ... It is imperative that we understand certain sayings of the Auliya Allah, otherwise we may misunderstand and then start issuing Fatwas on the basis of our misinterpretation.

A Famous Anecdote

Once, in Delhi, a Wali of Allah was heard saying: "You are not my ALLAH and I am not your servant. So why should I listen to you; why should I obey you?" Those who heard these statements regarded them as statements of Kufr. However, one sensible person asked the saint: "What do you mean?".

The saint answered: "My Nafs was inciting me to fulfill its desire. I thus addressed my Nafs and said: 'You are not my Allah and I am not your servant. I am a servant of Allah so why should I worship you?'"

Returning to the advice of Hazrat Abdul Qader Jailani (R.A.): He explained to his mureed that, "Do not claim to be Allah." means that do not wish that everything happens according to your will and desire. If you do so, then you are claiming to be Allah; whereas whatever Allah Ta'ala wills, will happen, for it is HE who makes the final decisions in all matters.

As far as we, human beings, are concerned, if we feel that our whims and fancies have to be fulfilled as is, then we are claiming to be Allah.

"Do not claim Nabuwwat" means that no matter how much of piety and Taqwa you acquire with your Tarbiyah and Tazkia, don't make the claim that you are sinless and never in the wrong. This is the sifat (attribute) of the Ambiya (A.S.), for they are 'ma'soom'(sinless) and 'mahfooz'(protected from sin).

Therefore, no matter how much of time you have spent in the suhbat (company) and khidmat (service) of your Sheikh and no matter what high rank you attain to, do not think that you are like the Rasul of Allah and that no slip can occur in your life. Do not claim that you will never err because of the years spent with your Sheikh and because of the Wilayat conferred upon you. Being human beings we are prone to slip.

The Story of the Snake-catcher

Moulana Jalaluddin Rumi (R.A.) relates a story of a snake catcher who once went to the mountains. Due to the winter cold and heavy snow, many very big snakes lay motionless, as if they were dead.

The snake-catcher picked up one of these seemingly lifeless snakes and took it to Baghdad, with the purpose of using it for a show. Showing it off, he made big claims as to how he had brilliantly captured the snake. However, when the sun began to shine and its warmth cloaked the snake, the coldness in its body disappeared. The signs of life were soon apparent and when the snake began to move, the snake-catcher and all those around, fled.

Moulana Rumi (R.A.) then explains that our Nafs is like that snake. With Tazkia (purification), Mushaqqat (effort), our nafs (self) becomes frozen. It appears to be dead. But give it a little heat from the fire of sin and it will bite again. A little exposure to some past sins and the nafs swings back to life.

We should not think that we have killed our nafs and thus become unmindful. Yes, with some mujahadah (striving), suhbat (company) of the Sheikh, tilawat (recitation) of the Qur'aan Sharif, Zikrullah, following Deen and Shariah and in building up that contact and love for Allah Ta'ala and Rasulullah e , the nafs can be frozen. However, a little taste of sin revives the evil nafs.

Hazrat Khwaja Azizul Hasan Majzoub (R.A.) says most aptly:

"Have no trust in this nafs, O devout one! Even if it becomes an angel, remain distrustful of it. Look at the snake of your nafs. As soon as you are negligent here, it bites there."The point being discussed was: "Do not claim divinity."(i.e. that you are Allah) and that everything must happen according to your will and desire.

Depression

Let us now consider the various causes of depression to be found presently in our lives. These simple, little things, which if ignored and we adopt a little Tafweez, we will find our lives free of depression.

To cite an example (and there are true incidents of this nature): A woman goes to a certain family with a proposal for her son, considering her son to be the best person in the world. If the son, himself, goes, then he believes that there is no one like him as a prospective husband. He has everything: the qualities, degrees and character. He is handsome as well.

Hence, mother and son believe that the moment a proposal is put forth, the girl's family will definitely accept, without any delay or further consideration. Thus, a decision has been made: If I propose, they are going to accept it.

This family rejects the proposal. Immediately there is depression and enmity. The mother starts thinking about the reason as to why the proposal was turned down: "What is wrong with us? ... Are we bad people? ... Is my son a drug addict? ... What is wrong with him?". Because Tafweez is not adopted, such thoughts surface and depression seizes the person.

Tafweez in this case would have been that the person put forward the proposal and thereafter left the decision to Allah Ta'ala. If Allah Ta'ala had willed and put an acceptance into their hearts, then they would have accepted. Since everything was done correctly there is no need to be annoyed or upset. Rather believe that there must be some good ('khair') in that.

If we can only learn and understand this that behind each and every decision made by Allah Ta'ala there is goodness and wisdom. It may appear that this person is very good but we can neither predict the future, nor can we foresee into the future. How many times have we heard of a person who was in the Masjid, in Zikr, etc. etc. but after some time the person suddenly changes? (Allah forbid. Allah protect us all.)

"There were so many who were good, who later in life became bad; And there were so many who were bad, Who later in life became 'Walis'" Thus, we do not know what is to happen in the future. The knowledge of what is to occur in the future lies only in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ala.

Istikhara

In Istikhara, as well, we must not think that whatever we have been directed towards is going to be problem free. Take for example: A girl is proposed . She makes Istikhara. The Istikhara is positive. She feels satisfied, with an inclination to accept and she follows this inclination and accepts the proposal.

After some time, problems arise and the marriage breaks down. Such persons come back to us and say: "Moulana, when I made Istikhara and related the dream (or the

feeling) that I had, then you told me that it is good and that I should proceed. Now why is it that the marriage didn't last?"

Istikhara does not mean that the person will have a problem-free life. It means that at that time this was much better than perhaps marrying someone else. It was "the lesser of the two evils". The problems being experienced presently could have been worse had she married another person.

It could also mean that at the time of Istikhara, this was good, but then again, this is no guarantee that the marriage will be successful, if after the Istikhara, the person leads any kind of life, indulges in any Haraam he or she wishes to and displeases Allah Ta'ala and Rasulallah(Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam)

It does not give a license to both, husband and wife, to watch plenty of filth on Television, read any sort of literature, neglect Salaah and then ignorantly and foolishly say: "We made Istikhara, therefore it must work out."... It does not work like that.

So, perhaps, that Istikhara meant that that was 'better than', probably another person she would have married. Here again arises Tafweez: If the person made Tadbeer i.e. made use of the means that Allah Ta'ala has created, but after doing so, the marriage fails, then she adopts Tafweez; accepting that this is the will of Allah Ta'ala, and He knew before hand that this is how the marriage would end.

She knows that both, she and her husband, did not purposely do those things which were contrary to Shariah or against the normal effort that a person should put in. They tried to the best of their ability but it failed ... now this is Tafweez: "Whatever Allah Ta'ala is happy with, then I too am happy with that."This understanding immediately brings consolation and peace to the heart. The person's depression will disappear.

Taqdeer

A person had in mind that when a certain property or building comes onto the market, or comes under his control then, because of the ideal location, etc., business will thrive and he will be successful. The person bids but someone else is successful and the property is gone.

If this person has Tafweez then he will think: I did what was in my capacity to do but it was not in my Taqdeer. It was written in the Taqdeer of the other person, thus he got it. I must search for something else. Allah Ta'ala does not provide rizq (sustenance) through one business house in the world. It is not that I would have succeeded and received my sustenance and livelihood through only that.

The effort, which needs to be made, must then be made. What transpires thereafter is Taqdeer.

Rasulullah(sallallahu alayhi wasallam) has said: "Strive to acquire what is beneficial for you; seek the aid of Allah; do not lose courage and if a setback overtakes you, do not say: 'If I had done this then it would have happened like this (i.e. not what had happened).' Instead say: 'Allah has ordained this. Whatever He has willed, has happened.'

Failure

If a person fails after having made the correct effort, there is no need to resort to alcohol, drugs and suicide.

Many students succumb to such drastic measures. Some students work and study extremely hard but fail. Due to failure, they sink into such depression that they feel they have to take or inject themselves with drugs, tranquilizers, etc. for sleep. Why? Because they failed.

If a person did not make Tadbeer, did not make a serious and concerted effort and thereafter fails, then he must blame himself. However, generally, we do make a reasonable effort but sometimes still meet with failure. For example: A person is fit and healthy when he started something but later becomes sick and is unable to complete what he undertook.

Tafweez is handing our matters over to Allah Ta'ala, trusting Him, placing our matters before Him and believing that in whatever Allah Ta'ala has decided, there is goodness. Outwardly, it may appear as if there is some problem that we are faced with, but great wisdom lies in the decisions of Allah.

The Story of an Eagle taking Rasulullah's sock

Moulana Jalaluddin Rumi (R.A.) narrates a story in his Mathnavi; an incident which occurred during the time of Rasulullah(sallallahu alayhi wasallam):

Once, after having performed wudhu, Rasulullah(sallallahu alayhi wasallam) was about to wear his leather sock when an eagle came along, snatched it and flew away. Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) was most distressed as he was preparing for Salaah.

In a short while, the eagle returned and turned the sock upside down, towards the ground, causing a snake that was inside, to fall out.

The eagle then presented the sock to Rasulullah(sallallahu alayhi wasallam)and addressed him:

"O Rasulullah(sallallahu alayhi wasallam)! The reason for me having taken the sock was that there was a snake hidden inside it. Otherwise I would never harm you, for Allah Ta'ala has ordered me to protect you. It was on account of the snake that I flew off with the sock."

Thus, outwardly there was some distress but it was a means of goodness. Whatever calamity befalls you, consider it warding off a greater calamity.

All Praise be to Allah in Every Condition

One morning, as a Wali was leaving his home, he struck his head against the doorframe (in India, many homes have doorframes which are low). The pain experienced, forced him to lie down. He uttered the words: "Alhamdu lillahi ala kulli haal"(All praise be to Allah in every condition).

In every decision and action of Allah's, there is both wisdom and good for His servant. Sometimes this remains unknown and hidden.

Nevertheless, a short while later, he was informed that on the path which he would have proceeded down, there lay in wait some of his enemies who intended to kill him. A little injury but he was saved from death at the hands of his enemies.

Thus, if something does happen, there must not be such concern in our hearts that we rush towards Haraam. To cite another example: A person's car is hijacked. He

must believe that there is some goodness or 'khair'in this; that it was only the car. It could very well have been that the car was hijacked when the family was in the car and they could have been taken to some desolate spot and could have been killed.

Always think of something worse which could have happened. Adopt Tafweez: believe that everything is in the hands of Allah Ta'ala and if He has decided something, then there is definitely goodness therein. Then be satisfied with the decision of Allah Ta'ala. If we learn only this much: that after Tadbeer, follows Tafweez i.e. being pleased with Allah Ta'ala's decision, then there can be no question of depression, anxiety, contemplating or committing suicide, etc.

A Crippled Buck in the Jaws of a Lion

Hazrat Jalaluddin Rumi (R.A.) mentions an example in his Mathnavi Sharif of a buck which had a limp in its leg. As this crippled buck was hopping and jumping along, it was caught by a lion. Even though in the jaws of the lion, it tried to escape. The more it tried to free itself from the lion's mouth, the more difficulty it experienced.

Since it was already in the lion's mouth, it should have accepted the consequences. It could not run away. There was no question of running away, especially since the buck was limping. How could it then escape such a huge lion? It was better for the buck to remain still. It may have happened that the lion saw another buck and left the crippled one to prey on that one.

Moulana Jalaluddin Rumi (R.A.) then explains that this is exactly our condition. Where and how are we going to escape the power of Allah Ta'ala? Can we escape the decision and will of Allah Ta'ala?

There is no doubt in the fact that there will be many tests, trials and difficulties. Allah Ta'ala says in the Quran Sharif: "We will definitely test you with some fear, some hunger and some loss in your wealth, in your health and in the fruits ('fruits'denote many things). Give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere. And when any trial reaches them, they say: 'Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajioon '(from Allah we have come and to Him is our return). They are those on whom are the benefactions of their Lord, and receive His mercy, and it is they who are the guided ones.'"(Al - Baqarah: 155/156/157)

Allah Ta'ala is informing us, that in this world, ordeals are to be expected and patience, tested. Tidings of grace and peace are conveyed to those who patiently withstand such trials, not expressing ingratitude but rather turning to Allah and remembering Him.

Unfortunately, the moment a person suffers a little difficulty, he says: "I must insure everything." A little loss of some goods and the person says that the only way to protect everything is insurance. Instead of turning towards Allah Ta'ala or becoming strict in matters of Shariah, the person turns towards insurance and starts insuring everything. Then he suffers more and more.

Fatwas

Fatwas have, however, been issued because of the weakness of our Imaan. The principle of Shariah; the principles of Jurisprudence are applied. This is so, because of the environment we live in or the circumstances and difficulties we face. Therefore, we find that in the community certain things are made permissible. This does not mean that Haraam becomes Halaal ... some laxity is given to insure certain things in certain areas to a certain extent. A good Mufti should be contacted for details.

For example: if a person is about to die, due to hunger, and the only food available is pork, then even the Qur'aan Sharif permits the consumption of something Haraam like pork. This would obviously not be done with pleasure and enjoyment, rather to just stay alive. Thus, a little Haraam is permitted in such dire circumstances.

A person is in financial difficulty and is extremely desperate. There is no one willing to provide him with any assistance of the Halaal kind e.g. an interest free loan, etc. At this time, if the person takes a loan to the extent that is necessary for him to survive, this would be permissible.

However, if a person rushes towards Haraam simply to live a luxury life or maintain a high standard of living, then this is certainly not permissible. This person's condition is likened to that fish which jumps for the tempting bait, and is then caught and hooked.

If that fish, in its struggle to free itself, starts to jump, the hook will sink deeper into the fish, increasing its desperation, but to no avail. Thus, if a person, in a little difficulty, 'jumps'towards Haraam and after taking the bait, is hooked, then the more he jumps, the more involved he will find himself in Haraam.

The difficulties will increase and everything will be void of barakat (blessings). Presently, there is no barakat in our lives, our homes and our businesses because as soon as a little difficulty or trial afflicts us, we immediately rush towards Haraam.

Thus, due to the weakness of our Imaan, Fatwas are given. Shariat takes everything into consideration; it can accommodate our every condition and solve our every problem.

A Fatwa of Mufti Mahmood (R.A.)

A person, from Bombay, once wrote to Hazrat Mufti Mahmood (R.A.) (a great Wali of Allah who passed away here in South Africa) explaining his plight. He had had a taxi which was 'freehold'and which was the only means of his livelihood. It was his only means of feeding his 5 children and paying his rental (which in Bombay is very high).

The taxi was smashed in an accident. He had tried to secure an interest free loan but without success. If he had to forego another car, it would mean great difficulty for his family. The only other option, which he had, was to obtain a loan from the bank on H.P. (hire purchase) and buy another car, paying in installments. So he asked Hazrat as to what he should do?

Hazrat replied that in his case, the car was the only means of support. If he did not purchase another, his family would suffer considerably. Since he had tried to get an interest free loan but to no avail, he could then take it from the bank. He must, however, regard the payment of interest as Haraam and try to pay it off as quickly as possible. At the same time, he should make plenty of Taubah and Istighfaar.

This was the Fatwa of a Mufti of an exceptionally high caliber. He issued this Fatwa because the person was in a genuine need.

If the person was not in a genuine need, then a Fatwa of this nature would not have been issued. For example: If a person had in his possession many 'luxury'items, then

he would be told to dispose of some of those luxuries and buy another car or try to obtain a loan within the boundaries of Shariah.

Lesson

The lesson of this Majlis is that we must not become despondent. If something does not work out or does not come our way, then we should not despair. If we had made certain decisions or plans which were not fulfilled or we expected some venture to be profitable and it was not, then we should not weaken to depression.

Turn to Allah Ta'ala, make extra Zikrullah and you will find in your heart sukoon (tranquillity) and chen (peace). Depression and despondency will not be found in that person who adopts Tafweez.

Tafweez on the path of Sulook

Like we should adopt Tafweez in worldly matters, so too must we adopt it in spiritual matters. Sometimes, Allah Ta'ala gives a person who is making his Islah (reformation), an enjoyment or an experience of ecstasy (In Tasawwuf, this state is termed 'Bast'). The person is on a high. Others take drugs for a 'high', but the Allah Waalas, with their Zikr, Ibaadat and Ma'rifat, experience a special 'high', and there is a world of a difference between these two 'highs'.

Nevertheless, there are times when these pious ones, who despite doing everything correctly and not disobeying or displeasing Allah Ta'ala, suddenly experience a 'low'(In Tasawwuf, this state is called 'Qabdh'). That 'high'is no longer enjoyed. They begin to wonder as to what had happened...Why? And they too suffer depression.

A person, experiencing such a spiritual 'low'should reason that there is the great wisdom of Allah Ta'ala behind this state, otherwise it may be that pride enters the person's heart and he begins to consider himself very great.

This is Allah Ta'ala's way of keeping a balance. This 'low'offsets pride and thus saves a person from spiritual ruin. After this, if Allah Ta'ala so wills, He can always return him to his previous condition.

Thus in worldly as well as spiritual affairs, we need to make an effort and then adopt Tafweez. Ask Allah Ta'ala to make the best decision for us. Plead to Him and beg of Him to give us the best of this world and the best of the hereafter.

A Blessing or Punishment?

Sometimes, a sickness, disease, etc. comes in the form of a blessing and sometimes in the form of an Azaab (punishment). For a Mu'min, it is a blessing and mercy if it causes him to turn towards Allah Ta'ala.

I will conclude with an incident that occurred a few years ago. I went to visit a person who was suffering from cancer. On entering his room, I found him surrounded by 3 television sets - one to his right, one to his left and one in front of him. This was, indeed, very surprising ... a sick person in extreme pain who could well be in his last moments, in such a situation.

On inquiry, his relatives explained, that due to his being confined to bed, it became necessary to turn him in these 3 positions; sometimes left, sometimes right, otherwise flat on his back. The 3 sets were placed in such a manner so that he would not miss any part of the program being watched.

If in that sickness, which was meant to have brought us to the door of Allah Ta'ala, we continue to indulge in sins and more so, then who do we blame for the problems which we thereafter have to face?

May Allah Ta'ala protect us all from losing trust and faith in Him.

From a Supplementary Discourse on Tafweez, Radha bil Qadha and Fanaa'iyat.

As had been discussed , the major cause of depression and worries is that we have not as yet learnt Tafweez, Fanaa'iyat and Radha-bil-Qadha.

These three concepts mean basically one and the same thing: that we hand all our affairs and decisions over to Allah Ta'ala, and that we be satisfied with whatever He decides for us.

However, the illusion we live in, is that whatever we have decided, will happen accordingly. We expect Allah Ta'ala to oblige us, accommodate us and follow through with our decisions, exactly as they are. When this does not happen, then as is expected, we suffer anxiety, frustration, depression and worry. Why? ... Because we forget that we are the slaves of Allah Ta'ala and that He is not our slave. As our Master, He can decide for us, whatever He wishes to. This is His prerogative.

Examples

Several examples had been cited last week and there are many more that could be alluded to. Some which had been mentioned were:

1.) A proposal is put forward with a 'surety' and confidence that it will be accepted, but it isn't. Since Tafweez was not adopted, the person suffers acute depression.
2.) A businessman has his sights on a prospective business venture, which he believes would make him successful. Somewhere along the line the transaction does not go through, and depression seizes him.
3.) A student works very hard for his examinations and then fails, for whatever reason. Depression overwhelms him to such an extent that it leads him to contemplate suicide, if not commit suicide

Within the framework of Shariah, we have to make an effort. After making the correct effort in the desired direction we should hand all our matters to Allah Ta'ala. Just as a person wanting to go to Cape Town, will board a plane headed for Cape Town and not a Johannesburg-bound plane, so too do we need to make the effort towards what we want to achieve... but the final decision must be left to our Infinitely Wise Allah.

Hidayat

In the different fields and spheres of Deen, there is much aspiration to be found in those that are rendering service of Deen. The Jamaat goes out for gusht, taleem and tabligh, desiring to bring Deen into the lives of others as well. The Asaatiza at the Madrassahs and Darul Uloom, impart taleem, endeavour to educate their students and aspire to mould the ways and lives of their students. Likewise others, in

whatever effort they make, they wish to see change, reformation, acceptance and implementation.

Sometimes, an Alim teaching at a Darul Uloom may desire to reform a particular student or a Shaikh may desire to reform a certain mureed and they thus make a concerted effort in Da'wah, Tarbiyyah, etc. towards the change of the student or the mureed. Yet, despite the effort made, the student or mureed does not change. As a result, the teacher or Shaikh sometimes becomes despondent.

A very important incident in the life of Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) is a lesson to heed: Rasulullah's (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) uncle, Abu Talib, had been like a father to Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), bringing him up and caring for him. When Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) declared his prophet hood, then Abu Talib supported him with everything which he had at his disposal. Thus, Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) loved his uncle very much and encouraged him to accept Islam.

When Abu Talib was on his deathbed, Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said to his uncle: "O my uncle! Declare (your faith in) 'La ilaha Illallah', so that I may argue for you before Allah on the Day of Judgement." Despite the effort made and the encouragement given by Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), Abu Talib did not accept Islam and died on Kufr.

Allah Ta'ala informed Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam):

"Surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases; and He knows best those who receive guidance. "

Even though Allah Ta'ala is the one who guides, the pre-condition of being recipient to Hidayat is to WANT hidayat and make a concerted effort in that direction, otherwise Allah Ta'ala states that if a person is not interested in being guided, then He will not thrust guidance down such a person's throat.

Nevertheless, if Allah Ta'ala so wills then He will use the Ustaadh, Sheikh, and others rendering service to Deen, to be a means of the Hidayat for, sometimes, not just one person but millions of people.

Our endeavor is to make the correct effort and thereafter trust completely in Allah Ta'ala. Depression and restlessness will not draw near to the heart which has resigned itself to the will and wish of Allah Ta'ala. The heart of such a person is akin to a garden.

The outward conditions surrounding the person could be difficult but the heart of that person is a flower blooming amidst thorns. Allah Ta'ala grants this person peace and contentment, because of the Tafweez (i.e. accepting Allah Ta'ala's will) adopted.

The Route to Allah

Hazrat Shah Muhammad Ahmad Saheb (R.A.) mentions in his poetry:

"In whichever condition He keeps me, it is the best condition for me. Through whichever route He takes me it is the easiest route for me." Thus, whatever condition befalls a person, there is Tafweez. Of course, this person will take treatment if he is ill, apply ointment to his wound, if he is injured. On his dua and Tadbeer, restlessness, anxiety and worry will not touch upon his heart. He understands that Allah Ta'ala knows best what is best for him. This condition of heart reminds me of a beautiful explanation which Mullah Ali Qaari (R.A.) has written in his commentary of Mishkaat Shareef about Halawat-e-Imaan (Sweetness of Imaan).

The Sweetness of Imaan

I have mentioned previously that when the sweetness and ecstasy of Imaan enters the heart of a person, then his whole life changes.

When a person does something out of his love for Allah Ta'ala and His Rasool, and not merely out of a sense of obligation, then Allah Ta'ala blesses this person with the sweetness of Imaan.

Fulfilling our Deeni obligations i.e. Salaah, Fasting, Zakaat, etc. just because it is our duty to do so is very different from fulfilling them out of love for Allah Ta'ala and Rasulallah e. Our weakness is that everything we do stems from 'duty' and 'obligation' and not love.

This is comparable to a person working for me and I tell him to go to the post office and fetch the post therefrom. Since no car is available, the person has to take a walk. He will not find enjoyment in his heart in having to walk to the post office.

Take a person who enjoys jogging. It is the pleasure of his life. Now if he is told to run the errand, then if the distance is 5 km, he will consider this too short a distance.

Then again, there are many of us, whose objective in fulfilling our Deeni obligations is that we derive pleasure, enjoyment and happiness as a reward for fulfilling them. We are therefore not Aashiqs (lovers) of Allah Ta'ala, rather Aashiqs of pleasure, enjoyment and happiness.

It is not Haraam to ask Allah Ta'ala for peace, contentment, pleasure, enjoyment and happiness - indeed, we should ask and continue asking Allah Ta'ala for these things. But since, most of the virtuous deeds we do revolve around a sense of duty and not the love of Allah Ta'ala, we don't achieve this sweetness of Imaan.

For example: we render some service to Deen, but we do so because we think: "People are going astray and there is so much of corruption. It is our duty to make an effort."

Yes, indeed, it is our duty, on which, we will Insha-Allah gain Thawaab (reward) but we will not taste of the sweetness of Imaan, because everything done stems from a sense of duty and not from the love for Allah Ta'ala and the desire to gain His pleasure.

Such khidmat (service) to Deen needs to be rendered out of love for Allah Ta'ala, with a deep-felt concern for those going astray, that some attempt be made to save them from deviation and that all the Ummaties of Nabi e follow the path laid out by him and gain salvation in the Akhirah.

Added to this, Deeni work should be undertaken with the understanding that it is Allah Ta'ala who has blessed us with life, with health, with wealth, with the faculties of sight, hearing and speech and He has granted us intelligence, coupled with knowledge. It is thus only befitting that a servant utilizes all these invaluable bounties of Allah Ta'ala for His pleasure alone.

Even though - the reality and essence of the sweetness of Imaan is not acquired so easily. To obtain such a precious commodity, we have to sit in the company of those whose hearts are aflame with the Love of Allah Ta'ala and who thus do everything for His pleasure alone. In their blessed company, where the lessons of Divine love are taught and where we may draw from their hearts, that fire of love, there we will reap the sweetness of Imaan.

Signs of the Sweetness of Imaan

1. Enjoyment in Ibaadat

The acquisition of the Sweetness of Imaan brings immense enjoyment in the Ibaadah undertaken. The pleasure a person finds in his Salaah, impels him to delay his Sajdas. His Zikr of Allah Ta'ala emanates from the deep recesses of his heart, intoxicating him. The requirement for this intoxication and ecstasy is neither wine nor worldly love; the requirement for this 'high' is neither heroine nor cocaine; it is the remembrance of his beloved Allah.

When he recites the Qur'aan Sharif, then it is as if he is conversing and communicating with his Rabb. The speech of Allah Ta'ala, which he recites, deeply impresses upon his heart and establishes a profounder and stronger Imaan within him. With a deep hearted enjoyment, he believes that his Allah is listening to His own Kalaam (speech) from the tongue of His sinful servant.

The mercy and kindness of Allah Ta'ala is such that despite us having used and abused the tongue in Gheebat, lies, false oaths and Qasms and so many other evils, Allah Ta'ala still grants us the 'towfeeq' to read His Kalaam. He would have given it to the angels to read, because to read such pure and untainted speech, we require tongues which are sinless.

The objective will not be to complete as many paras or Qur'aans as is possible and thus read at breakneck speed, hastily and disrespectfully. There will be calm, dignity and beauty which will adorn the Qur'aan Sharif and which will win one special 'audience' from Allah Ta'ala.

When expending his money in the path of Allah Ta'ala, in charities and Zakaat, then this person does not feel financially burdened. There is an enjoyment in this person's

generosity, kindness, in his concern for the poor and needy and in the fulfillment of the rights of his kith and kin, neighbors and others.

Because every sphere of his life has become an Ibaadat, his entire life is blissful. When a person does any good deed, for the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala, then the heart is rewarded immediately with pleasure and joy.

2. Suppressing the Nafs

Another sign indicating that a person has tasted the sweetness of Imaan, is that this person will overcome and suppress all his evil and carnal desires. He will not succumb to his haraam passions and desires. He will regard them as cursed passions; the fulfillment of which earns him the displeasure of his Beloved Allah.

"We regard such pleasures As worthy of being cursed, By which, O friends, My Lord becomes displeased."

When evil thoughts enter the mind and evil desires enter the heart, then we should overcome them by ignoring them and not entertaining them. Let them pass by, but pay no attention to them. We should not invite these thoughts and lay out the dastarkhan (table) for them and amiably say: "O you wonderful thoughts, please remain in my heart for a long time because I am deriving much enjoyment from this visit of yours."

It is natural that these thoughts and desires will come ... this is expected, but it is sinful to entertain them. At such times, we should immediately focus our attention to something permissible.

Imaan

It is mentioned that some of the Sahabah (R.A.) once presented themselves to Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) and said: "Our condition is that sometimes we experience such evil thoughts and sentiments in our hearts that it is most painful even to mention them."

Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) enquired: "Is it really so?"

They replied: "Yes, this is our condition."

Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) exclaimed: "But that is pure faith..." meaning, that to feel grieved and distressed at such thoughts and sentiments is a sign of good Imaan.

In another narration, a person said to Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam):

"Sometimes such wicked ideas come to my mind that I would prefer to be burnt down and reduced to charcoal than to give utterance to them."

Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) replied: "Praise be to Allah who turned back the matter towards thought and sentiment..." meaning, that it is the grace of Allah Ta'ala that these thoughts and desires were not accepted and adopted but remained as is.

Thus a person who has achieved this sweetness of Imaan, will not act upon his evil desires and thoughts. He will burn up these evil desires in the furnace of Taqwa and light up his heart with the Noor of Taqwa.

Figurative beauty

A beautiful woman passes by and one happens to cast an accidental glance at her. Thereafter a strong desire plagues at the heart of the person and he feels that he simply cannot forego the sight of such a beauty. What is he to do? If he suppresses this desire?

"I will not look, I will not look, Never will I look at one, Looking upon whom, displeases my Lord."

? then Allah Ta'ala rewards him on this sacrifice.

Allah Ta'ala has stated in a Hadith-e-Qudsi: "Verily evil glancing is an arrow from the poisonous arrows of Shaitaan. Whosoever fears Me (Allah) and refrains from it will receive from Me such Imaan, the sweetness of which he will taste (feel) in his heart."

If, on the other hand, he appeases the evil desires of his nafs, and continues glancing lustfully at the woman, then the end results of having displeased Allah Ta'ala will be restlessness, restlessness and more restlessness.

Allah Ta'ala promises a life of restlessness, difficulty and anxiety for those who indulge in sin.

Allah Ta'ala states in Surah Ta Ha:

“Whosoever turns away from My reminder (i.e. neither believes in this Quran nor acts on its orders, etc.) verily, for him is a life of hardship ...”

Ayaaz and the Priceless Pearl

Moulana Jalaluddin Rumi (R.A.) mentions in his Mathnavi, a story of Sultan Mahmood: One day the Sultan decided to test his ministers and ordered them to crush the most prized pearl of his treasury. One by one, each of 65 ministers declined, stating that the pearl was far too valuable to be destroyed.

The King then summoned his closest and trusted courtier, Ayaaz, and ordered him to crush the pearl. Without any delay or hesitation, Ayaaz crushed the pearl into fragments. When the ministers expressed disbelief and shock at such audacity, the King asked Ayaaz to inform them as to the reason for him having broken the pearl.

In response, Ayaaz asked these ministers: “Which is more important, the Royal Decree or the pearl? ”

The question we pose to ourselves is: “Which is more important, the command of my Allah or the desire of my heart?”

The desires of the heart are akin to pearls, which appear to be quite beautiful but we should not fulfil these desires at the cost of breaking the decrees of Allah.

Ayaaz attained closeness to the king through his loyalty and faithfulness and his obedience and submission. Similarly, we will gain the extreme nearness and intimate closeness to the King of Kings through loyalty and faithfulness. This in turn is dependent upon sincere obedience and complete submission to His decrees.

The Test of Imaan

Imaan will not be tested in the Masjid because a Masjid is not a place for the testing of Imaan. It would obviously be very easy to be pious and abstain from sins therein. The testing grounds of Imaan are the streets, universities, bazaars and businesses.

What kind of Imaan do we display, if we indulge in illicit relationships at the high schools, universities, etc., if we cast lustful glances at every woman who passes by us on the streets and if we cheat our customers, commit fraud and employ semi-nude women to work along side us in our businesses, believing that by employing them we will be saving on salary?

Know that at such places our Imaan will definitely be tested. At such times we have to project and assert our Imaan and Islam. If the person passes the tests here, then indeed this person has tasted of the sweetness of Imaan.

3. Sacrifice for Deen

The third sign of the sweetness of Imaan, is that one will be prepared to undergo all forms of difficulties and hardships for the sake of Allah Ta'ala and Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). When a difficulty comes in the way of him fulfilling the commands of Allah Ta'ala, he will say:

“For the pleasure of my Allah and His Rasool (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) , I will suppress my desires and withstand the difficulties which come my way.”

Thus, out of his love for Allah Ta'ala, he will walk to the masjid for Fajr Salaah even on the severest of winter mornings. If, however, he is ill or has some valid reason for missing his Jamaat Salaah, then this is different from not going to the Masjid due to laziness.

Such a person will also be prepared to defend his Deen on the battlefield and will even sacrifice his life for it. Of course, he must not beg or ask Allah Ta'ala for difficulties and hardships, rather for goodness and well being.

We are not of the caliber of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) and the Sahabah (R.A.), yet Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) taught the Sahaba-e-Kiraam (R.A.) to

always ask Allah Ta'ala for Aafiyat, ease and comfort. We too should seek the same goodness from Allah Ta'ala.

Nevertheless, if a difficulty comes this person's way, as a test, he will remain firm and steadfast in his beliefs and actions and endure it for the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala.

Duaa

We receive many calls from people saying that they make dua and read their Salaah, read Ishraaq, Chasht and Salaatul Haajaat and even awaken for Tuhajjid, but then say that despite all this, Allah Ta'ala still does not want to hear their duas (Na-oozo-bil-lahi-min-zaalik)... as if Allah Ta'ala is obliged to do so.

Moulana Jalaluddin Rumi (R.A.) has said: "Sometimes Allah delays in answering the prayers so that one may continue to call on Him earnestly and crying in humility. While this is done, He is Aware thereof and He greatly approves thereof."

Delay in acceptance of one's duas is not a sign that Allah Ta'ala has rejected the dua. On the contrary, it is a sign of the pleasure of Allah; that His servant has recognized Him to be the only one who can fulfill all his needs. In fact, the person who sincerely asks of Allah, not despairing and losing hope in Allah, Allah enshrouds him in His Mercy.

Nabi Yacoob (A.S.) made dua that he be reunited with his missing son, Hazrat Yusuf (A.S.). After 40 years, this dua of Hazrat Yacoob (A.S.) was answered. Thus, Allah Ta'ala, knows best when and in what manner to answer a person's duas. Therefore Nabi e has explained:

"Any Muslim who makes a dua and his dua does not contain a request for anything sinful or anything regarding the severance of family ties, Allah grants him one of three things most assuredly, namely,

1.) What he has asked is granted immediately, or
2.) What he has asked is saved for him as a treasure in the Aakhirah, or
3.) Allah wards away some calamity from him in lieu of the object asked for."

Our condition is that we make dua to just get over the problems we are faced with. There is that restlessness at heart because we are waiting for the problem to make a quick exit from our lives so that we may revert to our old lifestyle. To cite an example: many students are to be found in the Musjids at the time of their examinations ... the dua, Ibaadah is merely done in order that we overcome the difficulty or problem at hand.

4. Sabr and Shukr

In the midst of difficulties, a person with the sweetness of Imaan, exercises Sabr and is neither found to be disturbed nor perplexed. He does not complain of his Master, Allah Ta'ala, rather he adopts patience and views this patience as the gateway to the closeness, Ma'rifat and Muhabbat of Allah Ta'ala.

When blessed with abundance in bounties from Allah Ta'ala, like wealth, prosperity, etc. he makes Shukr and regards this gratitude as the gateway to the proximity, Ma'rifat and Muhabbat of Allah Ta'ala.

In both conditions, the person retains his trust and his faith in Allah Ta'ala. When afflicted with difficulties and trial, then Sabr is exercised and the heart is blessed with the sweetness of Imaan. When granted the best of bounties and gifts, plenty of gratitude and appreciation is expressed and the heart is blessed with the sweetness of Imaan.

Rasulullah(sallahu alayhi wasallam) has said:

"The Mu'min is a wonderful being. If goodness/prosperity comes his way, he praises Allah and offers Shukr (gratitude). And, if hardship/adversity strikes him, he (also) praises Allah and adopts Sabr (patience)."

This relationship with Allah Ta'ala is analogous to two pages stuck firm by glue. That glue has created such a 'strong'bond that the page can be torn, but the two pages will not separate. This is the kind of relationship we need to build with our Allah; that irrespective of the condition, we will not separate ourselves from Allah Ta'ala.

A Lesson from Children

Many a time we have seen mothers slap or hit their children when they have been naughty or disobedient, yet those children cling on to their mothers and refuse to leave them. That little child is teaching us a lesson: Although I am getting a hiding well deserved, how can I leave my mother? Where would I go?

If that child is not prepared to leave its mother, then where are we going to go, leaving our Allah? There is no one else for us, except Allah.

It is mentioned in the Mathnavi of Moulana Jalaluddin Rumi (R.A.) that once Allah Ta'ala said to Nabi Moosa (A.S.):

"I love My bondsmen very much when they behave towards Me like infants, who in spite of their mother's punishment and anger still attach themselves to her, instead of fleeing. When that mother gives him a slap, he still flees to her and while crying, holds onto her strongly. The small child does not want help from anyone save the mother. He even shows no inclination to his father. Instead he looks upon his mother as the source and origin of all good and evil. O Moosa (A.S.), your imagination and connection with us in good and evil is similar to that; that except for Us, your attention is not drawn to anyone else ..."

Thus, no matter what the condition or circumstance, our dependence upon Allah Ta'ala should be as the child's dependence upon its mother.

On the acceptance, patience, tolerance and fortitude exercised, Allah Ta'ala blesses a person with the sweetness of Imaan. As I have mentioned, this quality of Imaan is, however, acquired from the Ahlullah, those who possess the same in their hearts. This then is transferred and kindled into the hearts of those who keep their company.

The companions of Nabi(sallallahu alayhi wasallam) are known as 'Sahabah' because they spent time in the company of Rasulullah(sallallahu alayhi wasallam) and received from his heart, the great wealth and treasure of Imaan and Ishq of Allah Ta'ala.

My Sheikh, Hazrat Moulana Hakeem Muhammad Akhtar Saheb (D.B.) says most beautifully and aptly in one of his poems: "... the condition (of success) is (some) kind attention of the men of love, otherwise this gem of love cannot be had ..."

5. Radha-bil-Qadha

The quality of Radha-bil-Qadha has also been cultivated within the person who has this sweetness of Imaan and is implemented under all conditions.

Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (R.A.) once asked Hazrat Moulana Abdul Ghani Phulpoori (R.A.):

"Is there any stage higher than Ikhlaas (sincerity)?"

Hazrat Moulana Abdul Ghani (R.A.) replied:

"Ikhlaas is a very high stage; I cannot think of anything higher than that."

Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (R.A.) then said:

"Higher than even Ikhlaas, is Radha-bil-Qadha - that you be satisfied with whatever Allah Ta'ala gives to you."

This does not mean that a person can do the wrong thing and expect Allah Ta'ala to decide in his favour. We must not blame Taqdeer for our own mistakes. If a person takes a knife and slashes his throat, this is not 'Taqdeer'. But if someone else slashed this person's throat, then yes, this is Taqdeer.

One person gave his very young daughter in marriage to a very old man. For some wealth and property, the father pressurized his daughter and so, even though unwilling and unhappy, she was left no choice. As would be expected, plenty of problems surfaced. When the matter was brought before Hazrat Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (R.A.), he asked the father as to where his intelligence had disappeared for him to have arranged such an unsuitable match for his daughter. The father replied: "Taqdeer."

Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (R.A.) got very angry, saying:

"You made the mistake and now blame Taqdeer."

We should not deliberately do the wrong thing and then blame Taqdeer for the end result. Using the means which are available, the correct effort should be made; thereafter accept whatever transpires.

Handing all matters to Allah Ta'ala, resigning oneself to the decisions of Allah Ta'ala and believing that there is great wisdom in His decisions, creates peace in one's life.

Allah Ta'ala has mentioned in a Hadith-e-Qudsi:

"... Some of My slaves are keen to offer special type of (optional) prayers, but I do not let them do so, for it may lead to vanity; some of them are such, who can have sound faith only when in good health, if I destine sickness for them, they are adversely affected; there are others who can maintain their faith only in sickness, if I order health for them, they may go astray. I give orders befitting the affairs of My slaves, because I know all that which is in their minds."

Thus, to protect the Imaan of His servants, Allah Ta'ala, out of His Infinite Kindness, grants some people favourable conditions and blesses them with plenty of wealth and prosperity and keeps them happy; for if He inflicts them with poverty and difficult conditions they may commit Kufr.

To some people Allah Ta'ala gives them poverty and less material wealth, because He knows fully well that if He were to give them plenty of wealth, then instead of coming to Him, making Ibaadah and Shukr, they will expend and squander this money in Haraam avenues e.g. gambling, prostitutes, etc. So Allah Ta'ala deprives these people of wealth so that their Imaan remains intact... such is the wisdom Allah Ta'ala has in everything which He does.

Due to the deficiency in our understanding we do not accept, acknowledge and appreciate Allah Ta'ala's benevolence, loving-kindness and favours upon us as we should. Yet Allah Ta'ala informs us in the Qur'aan Sharif:

"Many a time you dislike a thing while (in fact) it is good for you, and many a time you love a thing while it is evil for you. And Allah knows while you do not know."(Surah Baqarah 2: 16)

Conclusion As the servants and slaves of Allah Ta'ala we should understand that our Master will grant to us only that which is good for us. Our duty and endeavor is that we supplicate and ask of Allah Ta'ala, then make the correct effort (tadbeer) and thereafter leave the final decision to Allah Ta'ala. This brings peace, contentment and happiness into our hearts.

Allah Ta'ala grants the sweetness of Imaan, together with all the accompanying conditions of peace, tranquility, happiness, etc., to those who are faithful and sincere servants. And if the Kings of this world knew of this condition of the heart, they would go to great lengths to snatch it away. However, this is something which Allah Ta'ala gives to whomsoever He chooses to.

Whilst this in itself is not difficult to attain, effort is a precondition. The effort is directed more in suppressing the nafs from Haraam because, in comparison, finding enjoyment in Ibaadat is a little easy. We sometimes derive enjoyment in Zikr, Tilawat, Haj, etc. The real test is in suppressing the nafs from Haraam. On doing this, Allah Ta'ala will ignite our hearts with the Noor of Imaan.

My sheikh mentions an example: he says that that area which is struck by a flood, earthquake or any other disaster, then due to the damage, the government declares it a disaster area and supplies the material - the sand, cement, etc. - for the reconstruction of those homes and buildings destroyed in such a disaster.

In a similar vein, when evil desires make their way into our hearts and we smash and destroy them for the pleasure of Allah, then this fragile building of our heart is shattered into thousands of fragments. On the pain and grief experienced at this destruction, Allah Ta'ala will reconstruct our hearts with the sweetness and the Noor of Imaan.

When a person experiences this, he will then really know and understand what it is ... It will be as if he is here but not here; eating, drinking, laughing and joking, talking to his friends, etc. but his heart will always be connected to Allah Ta'ala ...

“Whilst occupied in the world, he is still with Allah.

And in spite of being with everyone, he is still away from everyone.”

Dua

May Allah Ta'ala grant us all the 'towfeeq'of practising upon the teachings of the Qur'aan Sharif and the 'towfeeq'to follow the beautiful lifestyle of our beloved Nabi, Sayyedena Muhammad(sallallahu alayhi wasallam). May He bless us with implicit trust and faith in Him. May He strengthen our Imaan so that we accept all decisions made by Him, to be the best for us. May He give us the understanding that He is the Creator of means so that after adopting the means we may not trust in those means gaining us our desired objective but instead trust in Allah Ta'ala and pray to Him to grant us success in our endeavors. May Allah Ta'ala forgive us all and bless us with the best of both worlds.

Wa Sal-lal-lahu alan Nabiyl Kareem wa ala aalihee Wa as-habihee ajma'een