



FIGHTING AGAINST THE LOWER SELF

O human beings! Remember that your lustful nature orders you to commit evil acts. This enemy is compared to Shaitaan who gains power against you by sensuous desires and lustful appetite. Your lower self wants continuation of tranquillity, carelessness and laziness and its claim is baseless. If you receive a deceiving thing and accept it, it will lead you to hell. The self is not inclined to betterment. This is the root of all troubles and the treasure of Shaitaan. This is the root of every evil.

Allah Ta'ala states in the Glorious Qur'an, "And fear Allah, undoubtedly, Allah is aware of your doings." [Surah 5, Verse 8] Therefore a wise man should resort to repentance for the past sins and he should prepare for the hereafter. He should recite the name of Allah, leave forbidden things, should control his sensuous desires and should not run after them.

When Hazrat Malik bin Dinar (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) was about to leave this world, he felt like eating a warm mixture of honey, milk and bread. After his servant fetched these things, Hazrat Malik bin Dinar (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) took them, looked at them for some time and then said, "O selfish self! You had patience for thirty years, can you not have patience in this last moment of life?" He then placed the bowl on the ground, had patience and passed away. This is the condition of the pious people and friends of Allah, those who abstain from worldly pleasures.

Hazrat Sulaiman (Alaihis Salaam) said that the man who controls his self is braver than the one who conquers the whole city.

Hazrat Yahya bin Mu'adh (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) said, "You should wage a religious war against your lower self by doing religious exercises and prayers. Religious exercise is that you should shorten your sleep, eat less, talk less, enlarge your night prayers and share others hardships." Less sleep purifies your intentions, less talk shields a man from troubles, while tolerance and patience enhance the spiritual station of man. At the same time, eating less eliminates the lust, as excessive eating hardens the heart and removes its illumination. Hunger enlightens inner-self while over-eating drives away a man from Almighty Allah.

Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has stated, "Illuminate hearts with hunger. Wage a holy war against your lower self. Through hunger and thirst continue knocking at the door of paradise, because the reward in doing so is equal to Jihad. Allah Ta'ala likes hunger and thirst above all things. The angels avoid a person who has lost the relish of prayer and is gluttonous."

Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) said, "Since the time I embraced Islam I have not eaten food to the full extent so that I may have relish of prayers. Since the time I have entered in the fold of Islam I drink less as I yearn meeting my Creator." Excessive eating interferes with the prayers, as the body gains weight and man becomes slumberous. His limbs are loose and idle and he is like a carcass in the way. Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "Do not kill your hearts by excessive eating and drinking because the heart is killed in this way just as over-watering spoils the crop."

Once, Prophet Yahya (Alaihis Salaam) saw Shaitaan who was carrying several baits. On this Hazrat Yahya (Alaihis Salaam) asked him, "What are these?" He replied, "These are lusty elements with which I trap human beings." Hazrat Yahya (Alaihis Salaam) asked him, "Is there any trap for

me also?” He replied, “No, but one night you had eaten to your fill after which you were less active in your prayers.” Hazrat Yahya (Alaihis Salaam) said, “Now it has become incumbent on me that in future I should not eat to my fill.” Shaitaan remarked, “After today I shall not be a counsellor to any human being.” This is the condition of a person who has fear of Allah and ate only one night to his capacity. How then can a man who has not starved even for one night truly worship Allah?

The job of a wise man is that he should cut off sensual desires by starving because starvation is a calamity for Shaitaan. Sensuality and excessive eating are the weapons of Shaitaan in misleading a person into forbidden acts. Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, “The devil circulates inside the human body like blood. Therefore narrow down his passage by starvation.” It is extreme destruction for human beings that they should busy themselves in fulfilling the stomach’s desire. The fact is that the stomach in reality is the source of sensual desires.

Allah Ta’ala has created three types of creatures:

1. Angels who have intelligence but no lust.
2. Animals that have lust but no wisdom.
3. Human beings who have both wisdom and lust.

If lust overcomes his wisdom, then animals are better than him and if wisdom overcomes lust, then he is better than angels.

Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, “The best struggle is to struggle against the lower self (nafs).”

When the Companions of Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) came back after fighting the atheists, the Beloved Rasool (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, “We have come from the small struggle (Jihad) to the big struggle.” This was because fight with the sensuous desires of the lower self and Shaitaan is perpetual, whereas with the infidels it is occasional. Secondly, against the infidels the Muslim fighter sees his enemy but Shaitaan and the lower self is not visible, and it is much easier to fight against a visible enemy.

Therefore we should try to act against our lower self whenever it commands us to go towards sin. The way to do this is to follow the teachings of Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), so that we may derive pleasure in our Salaah and attain closeness to Almighty Allah.

May Allah Ta’ala grant us the Taufeeq and Hidayat to fight against our nafs, even if it means reducing our sleep or reducing the amount that we eat, solely for His Pleasure, Ameen.

[Compiled from Makashifatul Quloob by Hujjatul Islam Hazrat Imam Ghazzali Radiallahu Anh]