



SPIRITUALITY – THE NEGLECTED SCIENCE

*Transcript of Jumua Khutbah delivered by Bashier Rahim
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After praising Almighty Allah and imploring him to send his choicest blessings and salutations upon His beloved Messenger Muhammed (sawa) and his Purified Household, I remind myself and all of you to observe taqwa or consciousness of Allah and to always consider the appropriateness of all our actions by measuring it in the light of His Pleasure or Anger.

In the past, I have on more than 1 occasion had the honour of delivering khutbah at this time of the year. This past week we have seen the results of the matriculants released and would like to congratulate all learners who have passed and specifically those from our community. Since young people now enter new levels of study, or others at high school consider which subjects to specialize in and the topic of education is on everybody's minds, we have in the past spoken about the importance of acquiring knowledge in the light of the Prophetic saying that "Seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim male and Muslim female."

We have also in the past spoken about what the Prophet (sawa) defines as being knowledge compared to just accumulating information about every topic and that we are not meant to become information depositories. In this regard we have elaborated on the incident where the Prophet (sawa) entered the mosque and found many people sitting around a man who was an expert in the field of the genealogy of the Arabs and regarded this man to be highly knowledgeable and called him "Allamah." The Prophet (sawa) responded that such knowledge neither benefited the one who had it, nor harmed the one who did not have it. He then classified knowledge by saying "Verily, knowledge is of 3 kinds: The firm sign or The just duty or The established Sunnah. All else is superfluous (of no benefit)."

The ulama have classified knowledge into 3 categories based on human needs:

- Knowledge related to the intellect/soul
- Knowledge related to bodily actions
- Knowledge related to the heart

These 3 categories are then reconciled to the abovementioned Prophetic saying as follows:

The firm sign is knowledge related to the intellect/soul ie all the intellectual or rational sciences which strengthens this eg Doctrines of Belief, like Tauheed, Prophethood, Hereafter, etc.

The established sunnah relates to the knowledge of the bodily actions including Fiq, Social Sciences, etc.

The just duty relates to knowledge of the heart.

We have thus in the past said that learners and all of us who continue to seek knowledge should link our knowledge to the abovementioned 3 broad categories. Eg Medicine helps with

understanding Tauheed. Administration helps with understanding and managing human interaction.

Of the 3 categories of knowledge, eventhough we as lay people have some understanding of the intellectual sciences and thus study aqeeda and study fiq in some detail, very little attention seems to be paid to acquiring knowledge of the heart and for this reason I call it the neglected science.

Knowledge of the heart is critical for undertaking the spiritual journey and securing our next world “the day when neither wealth nor children will benefit you except he who comes to Allah with a sound/contented heart” (Shu’ara: 88/89)

On the Day of Judgement we will be informed of our negligence in spiritual development when we will be told “You were certainly oblivious/heedless (ghaflah) of this (Hereafter), But now We have removed your veil from you and so your sight is very clear/acute today” (Qaf: 22)

This will be a revelation to most of us for which the root cause was “ghaflah” or being oblivious.

The verse is saying that knowledge of spirituality and the reality of the hereafter is available to ALL, but we are in “ghaflah” about it in this world, so on that day it will be clear as broad daylight to us.

However, by implication, for those lucky ones who were not in “ghaflah”, knowledge of the Hereafter is clear as broad daylight already in this world.

Allamah Tabatabai explains that “ghaflah” which we translate as being oblivious actually means “not knowing that you know something....however, the knowledge is there in your memory!”

We are told in relation to knowledge of spirituality and the Hereafter that the knowledge is there within us, but we don't know!

And the reason is that in our seeking knowledge, although we are familiar with the intellectual sciences and the fiq, etc, we still don't seem to have knowledge of the Hereafter which is hidden within us because we continue to neglect seeking knowledge of the heart.

We are often told that its unacceptable to have knowledge of aqeedah in drips and drabs and need to study it properly,....and thus as lay people we sit in a structured class for 2 years and learn aqeedah in detail and sit for another 2 years and learn fiq in detail, but how many of us have studied akhlaq (ethics) and knowledge of the heart in detail for 2 years or even more??

And then more importantly, this knowledge of the heart needs to be practiced to qualify to be called knowledge of the heart.

Our knowledge of the heart is nothing more than drips and drabs and we thus have bits of information about the diseases of the heart like ego, arrogance, conceit, hasad, etc and come ethical illnesses like backbiting, belittling others, fault finding, etc and maybe some information about overcoming them, BUT our hearts remain in "ghaflah"

I give you 1 example:

Prophet (sawa) said "The wealth, life and honour of all Muslims are sacred (haraam) on other Muslims." That means that we regard each others' wealth, life and honour sacred and thus take care and safeguard and protect its sacredness.

But ulama inform us that one of the causes for violating a person's honour is gossiping about him. And the Prophet (sawa) said "Guard yourselves against gossiping ("gheebah"), because gossiping is worse than fornication/adultery."

Who of us will feel good about committing adultery? In fact some of us are proud that we are so clean that we never dated a girl in our life and only touched a woman first time once we were married. BUT many of us, and the best of us commit sins which spiritually are worse than adultery because we can't get rid of the ugly habit of gossiping. Imam Ali (as) says "An evil person does not have a good opinion of anyone, because he does not see anyone except through the medium of his own character!"

Why are we stuck in this situation? Because our hearts are in "ghaflah" about the reality of gossiping.

But Allah does not want or desire for us to remain in "ghaflah" forever! At any 1 time, all creation has guidance and human beings have 2 forms of guidance ie our intellects and Prophets or Imams after them.

But in addition to this guidance, Allah sends EACH OF US a spiritual breeze of Divine impulses to wake us up from our "ghaflah". How?

“Do they not see that they are tried once or twice EVERY YEAR, yet they neither REPENT, not take ADMONITION/ADVICE from this” (Taubah: 126)

Everyone goes through serious tests at least once or twice every year. In fact the believer is tested, according to the Prophet (sawa) at least once every 40 days.....but for the masses, at least once or twice per year. When you think back on last year, everyone will personally reflect on the major stress that affected their individual lives.

We are sometimes tested with Allah’s blessing, when all is going well. However, even if the world is at your feet like in the conquest of Makka where people entered Islam in crowds, the Prophet (sawa) is commanded that when he experiences this great achievement “Celebrate the praises of your Lord, and plead for his forgiveness.” (Nasr: 3)

When we have tests where everything is going bad, most people blame Allah “But when He tests him and tightens his provision, he says “My Lord has humiliated me.” Few people see this as an opportunity to seek forgiveness and repentance.

It is the culture of continuously making Tauba in response to Allah’s Divine impulses in the form of tests that result in our remembering Him.

There have been famous people in history, who in response to a Divine impulse made a 180 degree change in lifestyle overnight and even became great urafa.

The example of the great Arif Fuzail bin Ayyaz is a case in point. He is said to have been a thief who used to break into houses and steal from people. Once he was climbing a wall at night to rob a house when he heard a pious man in the house who stayed up late at night reading in a sad and melodious and captivating voice “Has the time not come yet for those who have faith that their HEARTS should be humbled for Allah’s remembrance?” (Hadid: 16)

Fuzail felt as if this verse was revealed directly for him and cried “Yes, O Allah. It is time!! Now is the time!” and he stopped stealing, returned people’s property, stopped all sin and became a great arif – famous in the books of history who lived in the second century AH.

Let’s all reflect on this verse and ask ourselves, if now is not the time that we respond to Allah’s call to acquire knowledge of the heart and the Hereafter, then when will be the time?.....only when we die??

May Allah grant us the inspiration to respond to this call and dedicate this year to spend time acquiring knowledge of the heart, Inshallah.

Second khutbah

Marhoom Ayatullah Behjat (RA) who was a perfect arif was often asked about irfan or gnosis/spirituality and he would often reply that "Irfan is to practise what you know."

But on other occasions when asked by a group of students for specific advice to improve akhlaq and the condition of the heart he said "study one hadith everyday of the chapter Jihadun Nafs in Wasail us Shia by Shaikh Hurr al Amili properly and put it into action....in 1 year you will see how this spiritual tonic will transform the individual".

We need an in depth study of the heart, its conditions, diseases, cures, supplements, tonics, etc to become spiritually strong to change society.

Lots is spoken about leadership and the need for strong leadership in the ummah to bring change in the world. A mere glance at the life of Imam Khomeini shows that in his early years lots of his works focused on developing the self and only in later years the strong social/political element flourished.

To solve all our international problems, from Palestine to Iraq, Afghanistan and all over, we need more Mutaqqi leadership.

This won't happen until we take the study of the sciences of the heart seriously.