

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ. وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.
أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.
اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ.
أَمَّا بَعْدُ،
فَيَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، اِتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَوْصِيكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ، فَقَدْ فَازَ الْمُتَّقُونَ.

Let us all increase our devotion towards Allah the Almighty by performing all that He has decreed and abstaining from all that He has prohibited. Hopefully, we will be blessed in this world and in the Hereafter.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today's *khutbah* (sermon) talks about the process of self-improvement. Humans, as creatures created by Allah the Almighty, have complex souls. The human soul consists of three main components:

1. *Nafs Al-Ammarah*, which is the soul that invites to evil,
2. *Nafs Al-Lawwamah*, which is the soul that often criticizes itself and wants to change,
3. *Nafs Al-Mutma'innah*, which is the soul that is calm and content with Allah's decree.

We all go through this journey of the soul. However, it is our responsibility to improve ourselves so that our souls become closer to Allah the Almighty. The process of self-improvement is not something that happens spontaneously. It requires struggle, determination, knowledge, and authentic spiritual guidance. Sufi scholars organize this process into three important stages:

1. *Takhalli*; which means ridding oneself of bad qualities

Takhalli means cleansing oneself of reprehensible qualities such as arrogance, boasting, envy, love of the world, inappropriate anger, etc. The Prophet (peace be upon him [PBUH]) said in a *hadith* narrated by Imam Muslim:

لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ مِنْ كِبَرٍ

Which means: “Whoever has a speck of pride (arrogance) in his heart, shall not be admitted into Paradise.”

Purifying oneself from these *mazmumah* (detestable) qualities is the first step to opening up space in the heart so that the light of truth can enter.

2. *Tahalli*, which is adorning oneself with praiseworthy qualities

The process of emptying the heart from bad qualities should be accompanied by filling it with *mahmudah* (praiseworthy) qualities such as patience, sincerity, trust in Allah, gratitude, humility, love, and piety. This is what is said to be adorning oneself with the character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said in a *hadith* narrated by Imam Ahmad,

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

Which means: *“I was sent to perfect good character.”*

The formation of noble morals within oneself will produce a soul that is always calm, humble and grateful for the provisions of Allah the Almighty.

3. *Tajalli*, which is to obey Allah the Almighty outwardly and inwardly in life

Tajalli is the result of the process of *takhalli* and *tahalli*. That is, when the heart becomes clear, then a person will begin to feel the presence of Allah the Almighty in every aspect of his life. He will feel the majesty of Allah the Almighty in every step, and his heart will become calm. Allah the Almighty says in the Quran in Chapter 13 (*Surah Ar-Ra'd*) Verse (*ayat*) 28:

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

Which means: *“those who have faith and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah - truly it is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts find peace”*

A heart that is calm in remembering Allah the Almighty will bring attentiveness to worship. They are pleased with Allah the Almighty and He is pleased with them.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In this process of self-improvement, we also need to be careful of external influences that try to replace the concept of Islamic spirituality with a misguided inner approach such as the New Age Movement. These movements often bring

teachings that are a mixture of Hindu, Buddhist, and modern Western philosophies – such as the law of attraction, healing energy, chakras, etc. – which contradict Islamic beliefs. Remember, true self-improvement is not about “absorbing natural energy” or “opening the third eye”, but by repenting, remembering Allah, doing good deeds, and submitting to the *sharia* (laws) of Allah the Almighty.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In conclusion, the process of improving oneself requires *mujahadah* (struggle), sincerity, knowledge, and the correct spiritual guidance. Purifying oneself from *mazmumah* is the first step to opening space in the heart so that the light of truth can enter. At the same time, fill ourselves with *mahmudah* qualities such as patience, sincerity, trust, gratitude, humility, love, and piety. When the heart becomes clear, a person will begin to feel the presence of Allah the Almighty in his life. He will feel the magnificence of Allah the Almighty in every step, and his heart will become calm. In addition, we must distance ourselves from external elements that destroy our souls by replacing the concept of Islamic spirituality with a misguided inner approach.

Let us together strive to renew our intention and enthusiasm to improve ourselves because the path to Allah the Almighty is a long path full of trials and tribulations, and practice this supplication in life.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْأَلُكَ نَفْسًا مُطْمَئِنَّةً، تُؤْمِنُ بِإِقْدَانِكَ، وَتُقْنَعُ بِعَطَائِكَ، وَتَرْضَى بِقَضَائِكَ

Which means: “Oh Allah, I ask You for a soul that is reassured, believes in meeting You, is satisfied with Your decree, and is content with Your giving.”

We must be mindful of Allah the Almighty at all times as He commanded in the Quran in Chapter 59 (*Surah Al-Hashr*), Verse (*ayat*) 18:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍّ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

Which means: “*You who believe! Be mindful of Allah, and let every soul consider carefully what it sends ahead for tomorrow; be mindful of Allah, for Allah is well aware of everything you do.*”

بَارَكَ اللَّهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْءَانِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلَ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ، إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ. أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.