



Module Ten

Heart-Matters

GRATITUDE—SHUKR

Sidi Ahmad b. 'Ajiba said:

'It is the **delight** felt by the heart after obtaining a favor, while using the bodily limbs in obedience to the One who bestows gifts, and to testify with humility to the bounty of the One who bestows gifts.'

GRATITUDE—SHUKR

According to the scholars, Shukr is linked to the heart, tongue, and limbs. Ibn Hamdun states:

1-Heart: holding the belief that all favors are from Allah—‘Whatever blessing you have, it is from Allah.’

2-Tongue: Praising and thanking Allah verbally. Included in this is speaking about Allah’s favors (*tabdith*) and thanking the intermediaries (‘He who fails to thank the people has failed to thank Allah)—thanking them includes praising them and praying for them.

3-Body/limbs: To do righteous actions with the limbs. Shukr is considered an action too: ‘*Exercise gratitude, O progeny of Dawud.*’

FEAR OF ALLAH

Fear of Allah is a positive virtue and one that every Muslim must have.

Allah describes the believers with khawf:

- ‘And fear me if you are truly believers.’
- ‘Fear not the people, but fear me.’
- ‘Only those who truly know Allah fear Him.’

FEAR OF ALLAH

WHAT IS FEAR?

Imam al-Ghazali said:

‘The reality of fear is a pain and burning of the heart due to anxiety over something hated that may bring a painful outcome in the future... This could be a result of sins, or it could be fear of Allah by way of knowing His attributes that necessarily induce fear—and this degree, for certain, is completer and more perfect. One who knows Allah, must necessarily fear Him. For this reason, Allah said: *“Among the servants, it is only the scholars who truly fear Allah.”*’

FEAR OF ALLAH

LEVELS OF FEAR

1] **The fear of the common folk**—fear of punishment is a bare minimum through which iman is validated. The complete lack of fear means a complete lack of iman. Those who believe in the Hereafter recognize that the divine threats are real, and therefore realize the gravity of their shortcomings and sins.

FEAR OF ALLAH

2] **The fear of the elite** is fear of being made distant and remote from Allah—they will not feel secure until they meet their Lord and have a place in Paradise. They are afraid of not having their deeds accepted. Tirmidhi records that ‘A’isha asked about the verse

(وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ)

‘and who do whatever ‘good’ they do with their hearts fearful, knowing that they will return to their Lord’.

She asked, ‘Are they those who drink and steal?’ He said: ‘No, O daughter of al-Siddiq. They are those who fast, pray, and give charity **while they fear that their Lord will not accept it from them.**’ Then he read the next verse in al-Mu’minun:

أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ

‘It is these who hasten to do good deeds, and they are the foremost of them.’

FEAR OF ALLAH

3] **The fear of the elite of the elite**—this the fear of being veiled due to bad adab. This is hayba (awe) This is the fear of the Prophets and those drawn near.

The ‘Ulama say that fear does not refer to the ‘feelings’ of fear that may occur to the heart; rather, fear is the **internal state that drives one away from disobedience and drives one toward obedience.** The feeling is not enough. It must be a feeling combined with an action (tark).

FEAR OF ALLAH

HOW TO CULTIVATE FEAR OF ALLAH

- 1] Reading Qur'an and reflecting on its meanings.
- 2] Calling to mind how serious and terrifying the matter of sin is.
- 3] Striving to obey Allah and avoid the haram—fear of Allah is a catalyst for this, but if one strives, these actions purify the heart and strengthen iman, and therefore help fill it with love of Allah and fear of His wrath.
- 4] Respecting the hudud of Allah.

FEAR OF ALLAH

5] Knowing Allah's names and attributes

6] Pondering the stories of those who feared Allah and how they reached this status by means of faith and righteous deeds. Imam al-Ghazali said: 'Studying and learning the biographies of the Prophets and the companions is a means of instilling fear of Allah, for if one is not affected immediately, one will be affected later on.'

7] Reflecting upon the verses that speak of punishment and warnings, descriptions of Hell and the condition of its inhabitants, and what they will suffer of eternal misery, wretchedness and torment.

8] Reflecting upon the stories of the wrongdoers and sinners whom Allah punished for their sins

HOPE

Definition:

- Desiring what is with Allah with the condition that one works to acquire the means to it.
- The heart's attachment to something beloved that will come in the future.

HOPE

HOPE VS WISHFUL THINKING

- Hope drives one forward—to seek what one hopes in, and avoid what will block them from what they hope in.
- Wishful thinking is accompanied with laziness, inaction. Ibn ‘Ata’illah said: Hope is that which is paired with action, otherwise it is wishful thinking.

We see this in the Quran: *‘Those who believed and migrated and struggled in the path of Allah, it is they who hope in Allah’s mercy.’*

HOW DO WE STRENGTHEN HOPE?

- 1] Strengthening our iman and conviction in the oneness of Allah.
- 2] Knowing that Allah loves those who seek forgiveness
- 3] Relying on Allah—our good deeds do not benefit Him, and our sins do not harm Him. We don't rely on our deeds. If they are good, we ask Him to accept them (without reliance); and if they are bad, we ask Him to forgive (without despair).
- 4] Know that the mercy of Allah encompasses all things—and you are a *shay'*.

HOW DO WE STRENGTHEN HOPE?

5] Know that Allah only tests us to purify and refine our souls—only giving us what we can bear.

6] Remembering that one of Allah’s names is al-Shukur—He appreciates the small good deeds and does not leave any small act unrewarded.

7] Be among those devoted servants He describes in the Quran:

تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

“Forsake their sides from (their) beds; they call their Lord (in) fear and hope, and out of what We have provided them they spend.”

8] Banish from your mind the idea that Allah hates you, or wants bad for you, or is ‘out to get you’ or make you life unbearable. Don’t fall into the evil of despair and think that Allah cannot forgive you.

LOVE

Definition:

The scholars say that **‘Love is not defined with a definition clearer than it already is. The various definitions and liminary descriptions increase it in nothing but obscurity. Definitions are coined in sciences, whereas love is an experiential state that engulfs the hearts of the lovers—whatever has been said regarding love is nothing more than an explanation of its effects, a clarification of its fruits, and a detailing of its causes.**

LOVE

The closest we get to a definition is found in a narration from Junayd al-Baghdadi. Abu Bakr al-Kattani said: ‘A discussion about love took place in Mecca during the time of the pilgrimage. The Shaykhs who were present spoke about this matter, and al-Junayd was the youngest of them. They said to him: ‘O ‘Iraqi, what do you have to say?’ He lowered his head and tears flowed from his eyes, then he said:

‘A servant who has left his own self; continuous in the remembrance of his Lord; establishing the rights of his Lord; looking upon Him with his heart; the light of awe has set ablaze his heart; it is a drink from the vessel of true and pure love; the Compelling One (al-Jabbar) uncovers for him the veils of His unseen. When he talks, it is by Allah; when he speaks, it is from Allah; when he moves, it is by the Command of Allah; and when he is serene he is with Allah—he is by Allah, for Allah, and with Allah.’

MEANS OF INCREASING LOVE

- 1] Reciting the Quran with contemplation, reflection, and seeking to understand its meanings and what is intended. Read with purpose—**read as if you are hearing it directly from Allah, or hearing the Prophet s recite it.**
- 2] Nawafil—after the fard.
- 3] Remembrance of Him in every state: with the tongue, heart, actions, and spiritual state.
- 4] Preferring what He loves over what you love – especially during times in which the lower passions overcome the servant, and to scale the levels of His love, even if it may be difficult.

MEANS OF INCREASING LOVE

4] Allowing the heart to witness, experience, and know His Names and Attributes, and to move about in the garden of this knowledge – whoever knows Allah by His Names, Attributes, and actions, will love Him by necessity.

This means to witness Allah. What does it mean to witness Allah when we know that we cannot see Allah in this life? It is to witness the effects of his Names and Attributes in this realm and witness Him as the Doer. This applies to witnessing Him in times of ease and difficulty.

5] Witnessing His kindness, favours, and goodness; both outward and inward. This invites to His love.