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COMPANY OF AULIYAA **By Shaykh Zulfiqar Ahmed**

Those of faith are overflowing in their love for Allah [2:165]

Signs of the Believers

Allah ﷻ gives clear signs in the Holy Quran as to the qualifications of a believer and the subsequent reward.

And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord [79:40]

And had restrained their soul from lower desires [79:40]

Their abode will be Paradise most sublime [79:41]

Salvation from Sin

There are two roads that one can take to save oneself from sin, one of love and the other of fear. One either loves the Creator so much that hurting Him through sin seems unimaginable, or fears Him so that one trembles at the thought of being held answerable on the Day of Judgment. Both these paths serve as effective deterrents to sin.

Two Steps to Paradise

A wise sage used to say that Paradise was but a distance of two steps. One of his students asked what he meant and he replied, “If you put one foot on your *nafs*, then surely your next step will reach into Paradise.”

Destroying the Lower-Self (*Nafs*)

Controlling the lower-self (*nafs*) is the key to success and happiness in both worlds. Destroying the lower-self does not mean killing it as one might kill an animal, but rather destroying the love of self that exists within every human being. Instead of being governed by one’s *nafs*, personal likes and dislikes have to be destroyed so that they are replaced by those governed by the *shariah*.

Such specific training of the *nafs* is only begotten through continuous remembrance and company of the righteous and *auliyaa* (Friends of Allah ﷺ). Only after love of self is destroyed in the training of such righteous people does an individual compliant with the *shariah* emerge.

The Most Fortunate Person

The blessed company and insight of the *auliyaa* is so potent that it completely changes a person’s heart and consequently, the person’s direction of life. Hence, the person who can find such blessed company in these times is indeed most fortunate.

Where Allah ﷻ Is Found

Hadrat Ghulam Habib (May the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon him) used to say that vegetables are found at vegetable sellers, meat at meat sellers, and clothes from those who sell

clothing. Likewise, Allah ﷻ is found by sitting in the company of the *auliyaa*.

The Blessing of the Company of the *Auliyya*

Gatherings that remember and praise Allah ﷻ attract love and special blessings from the Throne of Allah, and as they impact the heart a person's direction in life changes from this false world to Allah ﷻ. There is such tremendous blessing and magnetism in the company of *auliyaa* that a person's heart and direction changes in mere moments.

*Such potency in a Wali's eyes did I see
Thousands of destinies changed did I see.
If Shaoib does come then know that
The destination is not far away.*

The Easy Path to Allah's ﷻ Love

Allah's ﷻ love is attracted to gatherings of those who remember Him, and to those who love and obey Him. Consequently, the path to Allah's ﷻ love becomes an easy road to travel if one comes in the company of and spends his life in the service of those who love Allah ﷻ, the *auliyaa*. One forges an easy path to attain the love of Allah ﷻ in the service of such righteous people, in contrast to someone who is not attached to the *auliyaa* in some way.

Recognition of *Auliyya*

The *auliyaa* have been defined thus:

When these people are seen, Allah is remembered [Hadith]

Their entire existence and purpose is focused towards Allah ﷻ and hence the following verse describes them perfectly.

Truly my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and death are (all) for Allah the Cherisher of the worlds [6:162]

Where Eyes Open

Eyes of the soul open in the blessed presence of the *auliyaa*.

*Open the eyes of your inner soul
Life's real purpose is not play.
In solitude call upon Allah (swt),
Your inner soul will speak true.*

*Open the eyes of your inner soul
This world is but amusement,
A false attraction of but a few days.
Weigh against a pair of scales,
Open the eyes of your inner soul.*

Lesson of the Grave

People need to detach themselves from this life's false and misleading attractions because all is reduced to the same dust in the end. The greatest and most prominent people who have walked the earth have all met with the same end where, upon their death, they were lowered into a cramped earthen tomb for insects to devour their bodies.

Those yet living must take heed and learn a valuable lesson from this while there is still time. They must be firm and willing in their desire to seek forgiveness for their past mistakes and start anew.

The Company of *Auliyya*

A major benefit of keeping the company of *auliyaa* is that love for the world decreases from the heart whilst love for Allah ﷻ and the righteous increases. Love for Allah ﷻ is the key to success that pushes the person toward righteousness. Thus obedience to Allah ﷻ not only becomes easy but a delight.

The Meeting of Love and Intellect

A person is either compelled to obey a master because of intense love toward the master or because that person understands the wisdom behind the master's commands on an intellectual level. The same holds true for the relationship between a servant and Allah ﷻ. One's obedience to the Creator is either rooted in deep love or in intellectual understanding of the *shariah*, and the difference between the two is that of night and day.

The intellect is handicapped in the spiritual path of *tasawwuf* because the destination is only reachable on the wings of love. Intellect is cunning and therefore can appear in a thousand disguises whereas love is pure and simple and therefore does not deceive. The person who attains the blessed gift of love for Allah ﷻ is indeed fortunate.

Attaining Love for Allah ﷻ

Love for Allah ﷻ is attained in the presence and company of the *auliyaa*, and if this is unavailable then it is attainable through intense remembrance of Allah. This is such an incredible blessing that it completely changes the heart of

whoever is blessed with it so that the person's life begins to change.

The Love of A Companion ﷺ

One of the noble Companions was a shepherd who would periodically come to Madinah in the quest for any new verses that might have been revealed or new teachings from the Messenger ﷺ of Allah and he would be informed accordingly.

One day the same Companion was told of a new verse in which Allah ﷻ assumes an oath guarantying sustenance and livelihood for all, saying that He is *Ar-Razzaq*. The Companion appeared annoyed at hearing this and said, "Who dared to doubt this, so that my Lord had to swear an oath?"

All praise be to Allah ﷻ, for this is the pinnacle of love.

Waking In the Night

When love enters the heart a person no longer views worship and obedience to Allah ﷻ as an obligation, but rather as a gift. Therefore that person derives tremendous pleasure from worship and obedience. As a result one finds it easy to wake in the night without the need for an alarm clock, for he cherishes each opportunity to worship and remember Allah ﷻ. The internal clock in the heart becomes sufficient as love wakes him and keeps him awake for long periods of the night.

Their limbs do forsake their beds of sleep the while they call on their Lord in fear and hope [32:16]

Madly in love with Allah ﷻ, such people remain restless throughout the night and greet the dawn with longing faces.

Alive and Dead Cities

If one were to have walked through the streets of Madinah in the last portion of the night during the time of the Companions, he would have discovered an entire city alive and illuminated with the blessings of worship. Whether in loud or soft voices, every house would be buzzing with the recital of the Holy Quran like honeybees around their hive.

Unfortunately nowadays the situation is very different. Walking during the same portion of the night through any Muslim city, the same person would encounter only the deathly silence of a graveyard. Sadly, the blessings and glory of late night worship are no longer seen, as people remain sound asleep in their warm beds.

Hadrat Abu Bakr and Hadrat Umar ﷺ

Once when the Messenger ﷺ of Allah entered the Mosque of the Prophet ﷺ in the last portion of the night, he encountered both Hadrat Abu Bakr and Hadrat Umar ﷺ praying tahajjud. Hadrat Abu Bakr ﷺ was reciting the Holy Quran in soft tones while Hadrat Umar ﷺ was reciting it loudly, each being so absorbed in prayer that they were oblivious of each other.

When both completed their prayers, they came to the Messenger ﷺ of Allah who asked Hadrat Abu Bakr ﷺ why he had been reciting softly in his prayer.

The Prophet's ﷺ best friend ﷺ replied, "O Messenger ﷺ of Allah, I was reciting to the Lord of the Worlds Who

knows the inner state of all creation and can hear all. So, I did not feel the urge to recite loudly.”

Posed with the same question regarding his loud recital, Hadrat Umar رضي الله عنه replied, “O Messenger ﷺ of Allah, I was waking those asleep at this time and I was driving Shaitan away!”

Reciting the Holy Quran with Love

A Companion was reciting the Holy Quran at tahajjud as his baby slept nearby in a cradle. The house was very small and therefore his horse was also tied very close to the baby’s cradle. The Companion would become so absorbed in his recitation that he would begin reciting loudly, but then in fear that the horse may become disturbed and kick the cradle, he would control himself and lower his tone.

The same scenario replayed itself throughout the night, where in his devotion, the Companion would become louder and louder but again would lower his voice when the horse would get agitated. He raised his hands in supplication at daybreak and witnessed a fascinating sight. He was amazed to see that bright lights were shooting up into the sky from directly above him.

Perplexed by this, he related all the previous night’s events upon meeting the Messenger ﷺ of Allah in the mosque, saying that only his fear for the child’s safety prevented him from reciting ever more loudly. Having heard the Companion’s story, the Messenger ﷺ of Allah said, “These were angels that descended from the Throne of Allah ﻋﻠﻴﻬﻴﻤﻮﻟﻰ to listen to your Holy Quran. If you had

continued your loud recitation, the people of Madinah would have seen those angels with their very eyes.”

The Companions and those like them were people who used to recite Allah’s ﷻ Book on earth, and angels from the heavens would descend to listen to them. Alas, such magnanimous people are not seen today.

Weeping with Sincerity

The followers of the Prophet ﷺ did everything with unmatched sincerity which is why they are immortalized in history as magnificent models for humanity.

A Companion once wept so profusely in tahajjud that the next morning the Messenger ﷺ of Allah told him, “Your weeping last night even reduced the angels to tears.”

Tears of Pure Love

Tears of the highest value are those of pure love, a blessing that every Muslim should strive for.

*Jewels surface without knowledge of each other
May a tear be ever so precious.*

A Companion’s Love of the Holy Quran

Hadrat Ubay ibn Ka’ab ؓ was a great reciter of the Holy Quran, whom the Messenger ﷺ of Allah once approached in the mosque and said, “Allah ﷻ commands you to recite so that I may listen.”

Hadrat Ibn Ka’ab ؓ was astounded and asked whether Allah ﷻ had referred to him by name when issuing the command. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said affirmatively,

“Yes, Allah ﷻ specifically named you and said that I should listen.”

The incredible heights that the Companions scaled through their love defy all imagination and comprehension, such that Allah ﷻ Himself would issue them commands to recite.

Yearning for Love and Attaining it

Pure love is a blessing only attainable in the company of the *auliyaa*, and it brings the highest pleasures of life to those who attain it. Indeed, there is nothing comparable to Allah ﷻ accepting the heart as an abode and filling it with His love and blessing.

Lives of the Common Muslims

Our lives today are distracted and without purpose, having both love for Allah ﷻ and love for other things beside Allah ﷻ. Love of the temporal world has not only deluded us but also ruined our lives.

If someone has a cold due to which his senses are dulled, he will be unable to detect even the strongest perfume. Thus, this poor individual remains oblivious to the lovely scent of the perfume. The black magic of this world has gripped us and our hearts today just like this cold, and so unfortunately, our hearts remain unaffected by the love of Allah ﷻ. Likewise, we do not even realize our wrong and remain oblivious to this great blessing.

Completing the Holy Quran

Nowadays we may be physically present in our prayer but in our heart, we are absent. The same can be said about the reading of the Holy Quran. Even those who read the Holy Quran find it difficult to complete even a *juz*.

However, the condition of those passionately in love with Allah ﷻ is very different. Just like people today can sit in front of the television for hours on end without noticing the time, the *auliyaa* can sit for longer in reciting the Holy Quran and in prayer. In fact there are magnanimous people living today who are known to have completed the Holy Quran two thousand times.

As an additional example, a venerable elder in Mingora, Pakistan who is a graduate from Darul Uloom Deoband related that his own shaykh had assigned him with the daily completion of a *juz* from the Holy Quran. Dealing with all the daily circumstances and situations of life as all people do, he never once failed to complete a *juz* a day as instructed by his shaykh. Such steadfastness only comes with the love of Allah ﷻ.

How Righteousness Becomes Easy

Acting righteously becomes easy when one starts on the path of tasawwuf upon the wings of love. When the seed of the love for Allah ﷻ starts growing in the heart, everything from reciting the Holy Quran to waking for tahajjud to telling the truth becomes not only easy, but also a delight.

Dua for the Love of Allah ﷻ

As has been stated before, a person can only attain this blessing from remembrance and the company of *auliyaa*. Every person should supplicate to Allah ﷻ and beg for this tremendous blessing.

*Absolute heights of love I seek from Thee
Ah! My humble means and the greatness of what I seek!
A small heart but a lofty desire have I
Just to let you know my heart's desire.*

Benefits of Love for Allah ﷻ

A person's direction in life changes when love for Allah ﷻ enters his heart. His tongue starts telling the truth; his eyes turn away from the forbidden to the good, and his entire life starts conforming to the *shariah*. From the outside, such a person seems ordinary, but his reality is something much greater.

Hadrat Shibli's Love for Allah ﷻ

Hadrat Shibli (May the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon him) was a renowned elder whose life was filled with fascinating events. Before becoming the great Hadrat Shibli, he was the governor of Nahawand District, and went to the king's palace one day when the king summoned all his governors. The king presented all of them with beautiful robes due to a joyous occasion and requested them all to wear the same the following day to an assembly.

All the governors gathered the following day for an assembly and discussion. When the discussion was at its height, with everyone deeply involved, a governor tried to

overcome an incredible urge to sneeze and finally sneezed loudly four to five times when he could control it no longer. Although such things are beyond one's control, everyone looked at him because the discussion had been disturbed.

As he did not have a handkerchief, this governor wiped his nose with a corner of his robe, something that the king saw him do. Seeing the precious robe he had given as a gift used in this disrespectful fashion, the king became so angry that the governor was ordered out of the palace in disgrace for failing to honor his king. Silence now fell over the gathering and thereafter, the king concluded the gathering and everyone went home.

Soon after this event, a palace guard announced that the Governor of Nahawand sought an audience with the king and he was allowed in. The governor began by saying, "My king, I just want to know if my fellow governor's sneeze was within or beyond his control?" The king became irate and said, "I sense the stench of argument in your question. Do not dare to raise such a question again!"

The Governor of Nahawand was not deterred and continued, "Did you have to punish and humiliate him in such a manner by throwing him out of your palace or could a lesser punishment suffice?" The king grew angrier and said, "I urge you to desist or face a similar punishment."

The Governor finally said, "I have understood one thing today, my king. Today, you totally humiliated a person in front of others and threw him out of your palace because he failed to honor the robe that you had given him. Allah ﷻ has also adorned man with the honorable garb of humanity and if he fails to honor this and fulfill its rights, then he too

will be thrown out of Allah's ﷺ Court on the Day of Judgment!"

Saying this, he threw off the robe given by the king and left the palace. He then came into the service of Hadrat Junaid al-Baghdadi (May the mercy of Allah ﷺ be upon him) and became the great Hadrat Shibli who is renowned today as one of the elders of Islam. Hadrat Shibli was especially blessed with the love of Allah ﷺ because of the great sacrifice he had made by turning his back on a governorship.

Hadrat Shibli used to carry sweets in his pockets and upon hearing anyone call out the Name of Allah ﷺ he would put some sweets in that person's mouth. When asked why he would do this, one day he answered, "If I hear the Name of Allah ﷺ and don't fill that mouth with sweet then what else should I do?" Hadrat Shibli would often be lost in his deep love for Allah ﷺ.

The Mercy of Allah ﷺ

Allah ﷺ has a special relationship with those closest to Him. Allah ﷺ once said to Hadrat Shibli, "Shibli, should I reveal your faults to the world so that no one alive will even look at you?" Hadrat Shibli immediately replied, "O Allah ﷺ! Shall I reveal Your true mercy to all so that there remains no one in the world to bow to You?"

Hadrat Shibli was then inspired with this reply from Allah ﷺ: "Shibli, I will keep your secret if you keep Mine."

The Workers of Allah ﷻ: Those in Seclusion (*Itikaaf*)

Those fortunate to sit in seclusion (*itikaaf*) during the last ten days of Ramadan are blessed with the worship and remembrance of Allah ﷻ day and night. To illustrate an example, if a worker labors all day for his master, then at the day's end when the worker is tired and hungry, the master cannot envision sending the worker home empty handed.

If a human master, despite all his human faults and failings, cannot send this worker away without his hard earned pay, then the Master of those working hard during seclusion (*itikaaf*) is none other than the Creator of the Universe Who certainly issues prompt payment. Those in seclusion spend ten days in worship of the Lord Who holds the keys to all treasures and certainly, He will not be turned away empty handed at the end. Indeed, the last day of seclusion is the day to reap the harvest that one has been sowing.

Two Things to Note

There are two valuable lessons to note and take back from gatherings. One is that one should practice the remembrance of Allah ﷻ and attach oneself to the scholars whenever presented with the opportunity to, because it is a blessing from Allah ﷻ. The second of the two lessons is to repent sincerely from past sins and resolve to amend one's ways, and be determined to start a new life in obedience to Allah ﷻ.

Reward in Both This World and the Next

Allah ﷻ rewards the servant for his deeds, both in this world and the Hereafter. Whereas man is lazy and always defers his duties and dues to the next day, Allah ﷻ is Supreme and beyond just deferring all rewards to the Hereafter. Therefore, He also rewards righteousness in this world.

One main reason for Allah ﷻ to reward the righteous in the Hereafter is that the immense rewards He wishes to bestow are so grand that they simply cannot be contained in this temporal world, neither in quantity nor quality.

A second reason for reward in the Hereafter is that since this world is finite, any reward given here is also finite and so doomed to end with the world. Allah ﷻ wishes some rewards to be everlasting and thus the reason to award them in the Hereafter is that these rewards last forever.

The Women (*Hurs*) of Paradise

Salt water would turn sweet if a woman (*hur*) of Paradise were to mix her saliva into it; the sun would be overshadowed if she would take off her veil (*niqab*) to reveal her face, and the dead would rise if she were to talk to them. The world is too temporal and petty a place to be able to contain such vast rewards and treasures.

Man might delay payment for lack of funds, but such is never the case with Allah ﷻ Who has infinite treasures. He will reward both in this world and the Hereafter.

Asking Allah ﷻ from Allah ﷻ

Today, the world is full of people who ask Allah ﷻ for large houses and nice cars. There are very few people who ask

Allah ﷻ from Allah ﷻ. People should supplicate and yearn for Allah's ﷻ love and nearness, and people who do so, are sadly in a very small minority. One is indeed fortunate if bestowed with the love for Allah ﷻ because only then will the inner being awaken.

*Make the remembrance of Allah ﷻ, my garment, my Lord
Every utterance from my mouth be Your dhikr, my Lord.
Instead of breath, it should be Your dhikr from my throat, my Lord
Let this dhikr never leave me
And be the last thing on my tongue O Creator.
La Ilaha Illallah
La Ilaha Illallah.*

*In Your Remembrance do I forget all, so remember anyone I cannot
Sacrifice house and home for You I will, so my heart remains for You
Set ablaze all my desires for You I will, and in grief for You remain content
All else from sight I discard, so I have only eyes for You
May You be all and the last for me
La Ilaha Illallah
La Ilaha Illallah.*

Striving to remove all else except Allah ﷻ from their hearts should be our only goal.

Poetry Worth A Hundred Thousand

Hadrat Madzub was the authorized representative (*khalifa*) of Hadrat Ashraf Ali Thanvi (May the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon them) who once composed a beautiful poem. He recited it to his shaykh who was overjoyed and said, "I would give you a hundred thousand rupees for this poetry if I were a man of wealth."

*Every desire have I forsaken
Now come for You alone have I
Sick of the whole world am I
No longer wandering is my soul, for found my love have I.*

The lovers of Allah ﷺ had extraordinary love in their hearts and life would be very colorful if all Muslims were to develop the same.

Drowning in the Love for Allah ﷺ

Hadrat Muhammad Ali Johar (May the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon him) was an extraordinary individual who developed a strong love and connection with Allah ﷻ. During the terrible British occupation, he determined that he would wage war (*jihad*) with the pen until the Muslims won their freedom from British tyranny.

Thus, he journeyed to Britain where he wrote editorials for the newspapers highlighting the Muslim plight in his homeland and urged the British to leave India. For this, he endured great hardships and was even imprisoned a number of times but he had made a commitment not to return until the Muslims were free. While imprisoned, he would often compose poetry.

*You may think I have only loss,
But everlasting life have I in the world to come.
The death that comes in the path of Allah ﷻ
Is the sweetest medicine for me.
What is Tawheed but that Allah ﷻ says on Judgment Day,
Estranged with the world was this person for Me.*

It so happened that his young daughter fell fatally ill at home and the doctors gave up hope. Her mother asked if she had any final wishes and so the daughter said that she would like to see her father for the last time because it had been so long since she had seen them.

The mother advised her daughter to write a letter to Hadrat Ali Johar detailing his daughter's fatal condition and expressing her wish to see her father for the last time. Hadrat Ali Johar received this letter in England. As if in reply to this letter, Hadrat Muhammad Ali Johar wrote a few verses on the back of the letter.

*Helpless am I but Your Lord certainly is not.
Far from you am I, but near to you is He.
Of course your health we desire but if He desires it not,
Then we do not either.*

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