

Four Ruining Elements for Man

Friday Sermon Presented by

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Man's interior might be replete with lights, but he should be cautious of the elements that might ruin it. In guiding the believer, the Prophet (PBUH) referred to four elements that are ruinous to the individual and the community. He arranged them in the honored Hadith in which he said:

If you find compliance with stinginess, following whim, worldly life most preferred, and self-complacency, be responsible only for yourself and turn away from the common people, for in the coming time, there will be days of patience". In another version: **"Before you, there will come days of patience in which the patient believer will be as the one who holds the live coal. In these days, the good-doers will have the reward of fifty men of you".** They said: The reward of fifty men of them? He (PBUH) said: **"The reward of fifty men of you".**

The reward referred to by the Prophet (PBUH) would be gained only after hard work and exhausting self-struggle that the one who wants to be steadfast and fortify himself against these ruinous elements has to exert.

In the arrangement of these four elements, there is a Prophetic educational guidance in which the graduation of the attack of these four elements and their breaking into the interior of man is well observed.

The first ruinous element the Muslim is exposed to is compliance with stinginess.

Stinginess is penny pinching of the self and its miserliness. It is abstaining from spending. Compliance with stinginess is a state when stinginess becomes situated within the self. When man is changed into a follower of the self, stinginess becomes the title of his self and the element that fills its receptacle. Consequently, he complies with stinginess.

What makes stinginess described as complied with is that people support this idea, praise it and follow it so that it becomes an obeyed customary habit. When one of the people turn away from it, they consider him abnormal, and they might even ascribe to him ugly attributes such as squandering and extravagance.

The Companions of the prophet (PBUH) whose hearts were filled with faith, relinquished their wealth, their houses and their families desirous of gaining the satisfaction of the Exalted Allah and His Messenger.

Didn't Suhaib, the Roman, gave up all the wealth he had accumulated in Mecca? The unbelievers said to him:

"You came to us an inferior pauper, then you saved up money from our wealth (for he was a weapon maker) and when you became wealthy and well-off, you want to travel to Muhammad (PBUH) in Medina!

He answered them saying:

"You know that I am the most skilful of you in shooting arrows, for it is me who made the arrows for you, and you know well enough that I am capable of shooting you and

killing you one by one with the arrows I have in my quiver. But if you want my wealth, it is hidden in so and so...".

After he defined the place where his wealth was, they released him and let him go. When he reached Medina and met the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), he found him smiling and delighted with what he had done. He (PBUH) said to him:

"Oh Aba Yahya, your bargain has been profitable".

This is the method which the companions of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) were reared on, because they understood the purport of the Exalted Allah's statement:

"To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth" (Al Baqarah, 284).

Their hearts and their inner minds were verified with the truth that everything belongs to the Exalted Allah. Consequently, when the Exalted Allah called them, they found that their hearts were not attached to anything but to Allah.

When compliance with stinginess exists in the individual or in the community, social solidarity becomes non-existent, and expenditure is changed into spending money for self-interests only. Consequently, social ties that guarantee the stability of the community become missing because man's aim has been changed into stabilizing the individual not the community. Hence, community as well as society

become disintegrated when compliance with stinginess spreads among people, and this is the first sign of ruin.

When ruin develops, the interior of man is attacked by the second quality, i.e., followed whim.

Man cannot be replete with lights unless he follows heavenly revelation. Mouthed by the Prophet (PBUH), the Exalted Allah said:

"I but follow what is revealed to me" (Al An'am, 50).

This is the example of the Great Imam (PBUH).

Commanding the believers to follow the Prophet (PBUH), it is said in the Holy Qur'an:

"Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern {of conduct}" (Al Ahzab, 21).

It is also said to the believers:

"So take what the Messenger assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you" (Al Hashr, 7).

The Exalted Allah said:

"But no, by the Lord, they can have no {real} Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction" (An Nisa', 65).

When the inner interest of man is turned away from the law of the people of belief, the people who are keen to follow the revelation of Allah in every step they take and apply what the revelation commands them to do and follow it and apply the revealed order of Allah..., when the disobedient behave in such a way, the alternative that awaits them when they turn away from this law is the whim of the self. Thus, the second ruinous element enters (i.e., the followed whim) into the self. Hence, man turns away from the rule of Allah, and the rule of the universe prescribed for him, and exchanges the balances of the whim for those of *Shari'a* (Islamic legislation).

Consequently, confusion spreads in man's life and behavior, in his family, in his dealings and in his close and remote relationships.

Why does the world suffer from confusion today?

What about the power the people living beyond the seas talk about when they pride themselves upon the positive law they have prescribed?

The Exalted Allah said:

"Allah will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for charity" (Al Baqarah, 276). This is the Law of Allah, and wait for more... .

If their country is not destroyed now, it will be destroyed later on, because a society that is built on usury will end in destruction.

What was called the Soviet Union formerly was destroyed in a short time though it was not assailed by planes or

tanks, but it collapsed because the constituents of its unity vanished.

Nowadays, whole States in the U.S.A. announce their inability to pay their policemen and clerks' salaries.

Where is the arrogance and haughtiness they used to pride themselves on?

Where is 'the language of the eagle' as they call it?

It is the bias of man, his deviation and his aberration from following heavenly revelation.

When man follows heavenly revelation, he preserves his stabilization because the One Who puts the law of balance that guarantees man's stability is Allah, and when man deviates from the right path and accepts no other law but his own opinion and whim, his stability becomes eliminated.

I wonder at the meeting of some educated people in which they argue and debate about personal opinions.

Oh man, the utmost level your mind can be promoted to is your comprehension of the text of revelation sent by the Exalted Allah, because Allah is the Teacher of man. The Exalted Allah said:

"Taught man that which he knew not" (Al 'Alaq, 5).

When you have the illusion that you are able to present an alternative by means of your mind, you will be ignorant and misled.

You have to inquire about the rule of the Exalted Allah for every event and matter you encounter in your life.

You have to ask about the rule of Allah for every trivial or great matter. Once you know the rule of Allah, you have to be polite and execute it. Neutralize your whims, your inventions and whatever appeals to you, for all these are the result of man's making that might be right or wrong. What appeals to you might be right only when it does not go beyond the limits of the circle of revelation. When you go out of this circle you get lost whether you are close or far from this circle.

The first ruinous element eliminates solidarity and cuts the ties that strengthen community as well as people, because in such a case, man becomes individualist and selfish. When man manages to go past this trial and go beyond this first barrier and first ruinous element, i.e., stinginess, he has to be wary that he has entered into the second domain in which he should be a follower of the revelation and shun the whim as much as he can. He should not prefer customs and traditions to the rules of Allah revealed in His Book. He should adhere to the Sunnah of our Master, Muhammad (PBUH) who said: **"None of you will have faith until he makes his whim subordinate to what I have come with".**

Only when your whim becomes a subordinate, not followed, you will be able to transcend the second barrier and be secure against the second ruinous element.

After the above mentioned, you move to the third level and find yourself before the third ruinous element, i.e., worldly life most preferred.

It is an equation that the Muslim should comprehend quite well. It is: "**And verily the Hereafter will be better for thee than the present**" (Ad Duha, 4)

And:

"But the Hereafter is better and more enduring" (Al .A'la, 17)

The believers can be distinguished from the materialists only by this rule.

This equation is shaken when man prefers this life to the Hereafter in every activity of his, in all his dealings, in every word he says and in every action he does. Man can be evaluated according to this equation.

Didn't the magicians of Pharaoh say: "**Never shall we regard thee as more than the clear Signs that have Come to us; or than Him Who created us**", when they were confronted with the signs of Allah? They preferred the Hereafter and said: "**so decree whatever thou desire to decree**" (Taha, 72).

When man says to the life in the Hereafter: "Never shall I regard you", instead of saying this to this life, he will be confused.

Put the rule of preferring the second life to the first before you when you reach the third level, for when man prefers this life to the second, the balance of his faith becomes confused. Consequently, his faith becomes weaker, then it vanishes. Preferring the second life to the first is a distinguished mark between the believer and the materialist.

When the believer manages to transcend the trials of complied with stinginess, the followed whim and the worldly life most preferred, his heart becomes enlightened. Consequently, he becomes generous and bounteous, and he begins to realize inwardly the suffering of the others. On the second level, he will begin to search for the rules of Allah, and seek the Hereafter. There remains the last trial in which men are shaken and only saints become steadfast. It is: **self-complacency**.

When everyone admires his own point of view, community disintegrates because what disciplines the behavior of the community is consultation and collective opinion. When everyone admires his own point of view community ties vanish. On the other hand, when the individual admits the collective view and prefers it to his, community becomes solidified.

One deviates from the community only when he is self-complacent. When every member in society is self-complacent, the community that is disciplined with the law of consultation deteriorates, for consultation is the fortress and citadel that fortifies the community. But when every member revolts against this law by preferring his own opinion, and when he trifles with the collective opinion and believes that his own opinion is superior to the theirs because he has a specific trait, he will incur ruin upon himself because the isolation of the individual from the community exposes him to swallowing: **"The wolf eats only the lonely goat"**. For even if he apparently agrees with the community, inwardly, he is self-complacent.

In the ruling of consultation, it is mentioned that when man is consulted in a matter and his opinion is applied, he should ask Allah's forgiveness because he might be the cause of the community destruction, and if his opinion is not applied, he should thank Allah and join the opinion of the community.

This is the method according to which the believer's character should be built up, and be fortified on both levels, personal and collective. If the believer is dexterous enough and seeks to know about the fortified people who protected themselves against the above four mentioned trials, and after too much effort, he finds nothing but complied stinginess, followed whim, worldly life most preferred and self complacency, all spread in society, and

he finds no believer fellow who is fortified against these four mentioned trials to support him, what should he do in such a case?

The Educator, the Prophet (PBUH), directs him saying: "Fortify yourself, protect yourself against these four trials, and do not turn to the people who fail in these trials...".

Fortify yourself: "**thou are held responsible only for thyself**" (An Nisa', 84).

When the believer follows this instruction, he will be saved from frustration and despair. This is the good example of educating man. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "**Be responsible only for yourself**", i.e., be cautious so that you do not apply the four ruinous elements, and fortify yourself against them.

Do not turn to the common people, i.e., do not care about those who fail in the trials.

Why should the Prophet (PBUH) tell about the days of patience?

He tells us about a time full of complexities, a time in which the patient man feels perplexed. That is why he (PBUH) calls these days, '**the days of patience**', and said commenting on them: "**On these days, patience is like holding live coal**".

You have to be steadfast so that you do not fall in the pit of complied with stinginess.

You have to be steadfast in spite of all that goes around you so that you do not be the follower of whim.

You have to be steadfast and prefer the Hereafter though the people around you prefer this life.

You have to be steadfast and do not be self-complacent while the others have self-complacency.

How hard it is for man to be an alien among his own kindred!

How hard it is for man to be an alien among his own friends!

How hard it is for man to be an alien among his own beloveds!

How hard it is for man to be an alien among his own brethren!

This is a state that is more difficult than holding live coal, because in it, man lives in figurative isolation, even if he agrees with the others in words, for all are skilful in speech, but the intrinsic matter is congeniality in states.

The Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) might sometimes feel weak, and become unable to discern wisdom.

Examples of this case are plenty, such as the attitude of the Companions at Hudaibiyyah Conciliation Treaty. In this treaty there was a queer stipulation: "If one of the Mecc inhabitants embraced Islam and went to the Prophet (PBUH) in Medina, the Prophet (PBUH) had to repeat him chained and captive to the unbelievers in Mecca. But if a renegade from Islam went out of Medina heading towards

Mecca, the unbelievers were not obliged to repeat him to the Prophet (PBUH)".

At that time, the Prophet (PBUH) was superior to the unbelievers in Mecca in number and weapon. Our Master Omar (ABPWH) found this stipulation unfair. He said to the Prophet (PBUH):

"Oh Messenger of Allah, how do you do that?"

He thought that according to reason, that was an unfair stipulation for they were stronger. Besides, it was only few steps and they would be able to enter Mecca and open it. So how could they accept such humiliating stipulations?

But before going to the Prophet (PBUH) and saying to him what he thought about this treaty, he passed by Abi Bakr (ABPWH) who was able to be promoted to the level of seeing the matter through the perspective of our master, Muhammad (PBUH). Abu Bakr said to Omar:

"**Oh Omar, adhere to his *Gharza***", i.e., put your hand where the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) put his foot.

In Arabic, '*Gharz*' means the place of the treading of the foot when the knight mounts his horse.

Abu Bakr (ABPWH) said: "**adhere to *Gharzihi***". He did not say: "Hold the reign of his horse", for it is well known that by the movement of the foot, the horse is directed to the desired place.

"adhere to *Gharzihi*", i.e., follow him wherever he goes.

Abu Bakr (ABPWH) said: **"Oh Omar, adhere to *Gharzihi*, for he is the Messenger of Allah".**

When Omar was unable to convince Abu Bakr, he went to the Prophet (PBUH) who said to him: **"I am the Messenger of Allah".**

Days passed, and Omar discovered how wrong he had been when he used his mind and intellect to relate the concrete scene only to the present moment, while the Prophet (PBUH) saw the far remote wisdom of this scene. It was only a little time after which Quraish revoked this treaty, and the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) opened Mecca and entered it victorious accompanied by a tremendous army. He stood at the Ancient House, removed the idols and forgave the wrong-doers from the attitude of the strong. He said to them:

"What do you think that I am about to do with you?"

They replied, **"Good. You are a noble brother, son of a noble brother."**

The Prophet forgave them all saying:

"Go to your homes, and you are all free."

Examples on such a matter are abundant. They are practical applications which the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) directs us to with wide strides.

Allahum..., guide us to You favorably, and make us from those who listen to wisdom and follow the best of it.

I say my words and ask Allah's forgiveness.