



Once, some people came to Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) and said, “O Ameerul Mu-mineen! We have an Imaam who is a youngster and leads us in the ‘Asr Salaah. After he completes leading the salaah, he recites some couplets of poetry.” Hearing this, Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) said, “Take me to him.”

They thus proceeded with Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) to meet the youngster. When they arrived at his home and knocked on the door, he emerged and asked, “O Ameerul Mu-mineen! What has brought you here?” Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) replied, “I have received a bad report regarding you – you are reciting couplets after the salaah!” The youngster responded, “The couplets are words of advice which I recite as a reminder to myself.”

When Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) heard this, he requested the youngster to recite the couplets for him, but the youngster expressed reluctance and said, “I am afraid to recite these couplets before you.” Sayyiduna ‘Umar (radhiyallahu ‘anhu) replied, “Go ahead. If the words have an excellent meaning, I will recite them with you, and if they have a bad meaning, I will prohibit you from reciting them.”

The youngster lowered his head for a few moments, and then recited the following couplets:

My heart is such that whenever I caution it (to refrain from evil), it returns to sinful pleasures, trying to exhaust me (by rebelling against my effort to reform my ways).

It seems that it will continue to chase after amusements and pleasures for its entire life span. It has tormented me with its persistence and obstinance.

O evil companion! How long will this childish behaviour continue? Your entire life will pass like this, in amusement and play.

My youth is leaving me and departing, before I am able to use it to achieve my aspirations.

After my youth departs, I anticipate nothing but leaving this world, white hair (old age) will hamper my striving to fulfil my ambitions.

O my carnal self! How I wish that you never existed, and how I wish that I never had evil desires! Adopt taqwa before your Master (Allah Ta'ala), fear Him and remain afraid of Him!

When Sayyiduna 'Umar (radhiyallahu 'anhu) heard this, he repeated the last couplet while crying and said to those present, "If any one of you wishes to recite couplets of poetry, then it is couplets such as these that he should recite."

(Taareekh Ibni 'Asaakir vol. 44, pg. 312 and 'Uyoonul Hikaayaat pg. 75)

Lessons:

1. When a complaint would be brought to Sayyiduna 'Umar (radhiyallahu 'anhu), he would not immediately arrive at a conclusion. Rather, he would ensure that he first investigated it and allowed the accused person to respond and voice his side of the story.

2. These couplets describe the cycle of life. Many people continue chasing after amusement and pleasures, never outgrowing their obsession with entertainment.

Hence, despite being grown adults, and even having children or grandchildren, they continue 'playing' – it is just that the 'toys' change (e.g. from a toy car to a sport's car).

Thus, we need to do as this youngster had done – we need to continuously remind ourselves and others of the Hereafter and our objective on earth.

In this way, we will remain focused on the task at hand – remaining obedient to Allah Ta'ala.

3. The energy, passion, strength, enthusiasm, vigour and motivation that a person enjoys in his youth is not enjoyed afterwards, when he advances in age. For example, it is far easier for a youngster to memorize the Quraan Majeed and become a Haafiz than it is for an older person. Hence, the youth should value their youth, and parents should guide them appropriately, to utilize this period to progress in Deen and gain the nearness of Allah Ta'ala. Sadly, we tend to do the opposite. We neglect our salaah when we are young, and then struggle to perform many years' of qadhaa later on, when we are weak, old and sickly.

4. Evil desires and temptations are part of our human nature and cannot be eliminated. However, we can exercise control over these temptations and desires by restraining ourselves from falling into sin. The most effective way of achieving this is to inculcate the awareness, consciousness and fear of Allah Ta'ala.