



Imagine a mother who comes to visit her beloved daughter after one entire year of separation. The mother makes the necessary travel arrangements and sets out with her husband, eager to be reunited with her child. As she enters her daughter's home, she is delighted to see the dastarkhaan (the cloth placed down for eating) elaborately laid out. It is dotted with all types of fancy decorations, from flowers in full bloom to artistically-folded serviettes. The food itself smells exquisite, and its presentation is so perfect that it seems to magnetically attract her gaze.

However, as she approaches her daughter, the young girl, unaware of her mother's presence, utters a few words to her friend on the phone. She says, "I wish my mother never came to stay! It's so much of work to prepare for her! As it is, I'm busy looking after the kids – and now I have to see to her as well!" On hearing these cruel words, the mother recoils in hurt and disappointment, as these words are like a hard slap to her face...

In an instant, the fancy decorations lose their gleam and glitter, and the scrumptious meal loses its appeal. Even the dessert no longer seems appetising! The reason? ... The daughter did everything with a grudging, unwilling and unhappy heart, indicating that she does not have, within her heart, the level of love that her mother deserves. Now, let alone stay with her daughter, the mother will feel reluctant to even eat a meal with her on account of the lack of love that she displayed!

In the very same way, the relationship of the slave with Allah Ta'ala, his Creator, is one of love. In the Quraan Majeed, Allah Ta'ala describes the people of true imaan saying, "Those who have imaan are most strong in their love for Allah Ta'ala." (Surah Baqarah v165) When a person has true love for Allah Ta'ala, then he will not only ensure that he follows all the commands of Allah Ta'ala and fulfils all the injunctions of Deen. Rather, the demand of love is that he will do it wholeheartedly, with happiness and joy. He will not regard the injunctions of the sharee'ah and the commands of Deen to be a burden or punishment, but will find happiness and joy in obeying Allah Ta'ala.

Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has explained in the hadeeth that a believer will only taste the sweetness of imaan when his heart is pleased and happy to obey Allah Ta'ala, follow the blessed way of Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) and mould his life according to the Deen of Islam. (Saheeh Muslim #151)

The days of qurbaani are swiftly approaching, and in these days, we are honoured to be the guests of Allah Ta'ala. Expressing our devotion, obedience and love for Allah Ta'ala, we fulfil His command of slaughtering the sacrificial animal. When the animal is slaughtered, it is not the meat, nor the skin nor the blood that reaches Allah Ta'ala. Rather, at that time, Allah Ta'ala looks at the condition of our hearts. Did we carry out this great act of worship with happy and joyful hearts, or did we do it unwillingly and grudgingly? Hence, Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has urged us and reminded us to rectify our hearts before carrying out the qurbaani saying, "Happily (and wholeheartedly) carry out the qurbaani." (Sunan Tirmizi #1493)

This aspect, of infusing love into our actions and deeds, applies to all the injunctions of Deen, such as salaah, fasting, zakaah, etc. – not just qurbaani. In order for us to increase and strengthen our love for Allah Ta'ala, we must regularly ponder over His immense favours upon us, the extreme kindness that He shows us and the manner in which He continues to show us mercy, despite us repeatedly sinning and disobeying Him.

Remember, just as a person will only wish to accept a gift if it is offered with true love – it is the element of love that will cause our deeds to gain acceptance by Allah Ta'ala.

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+27 72 566 4856

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