THE NINETEENTH FLASH

The Risale on Frugality (Iqtisâd)

[On frugality (Iqtisâd) and contentment, wastefulness and extravagance.]

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

كُلُوا وَ اشْرَبُوا وَ لاَ تُسْرِفُوا[[1]](#footnote-2)

This noble âyah gives an extremely important instruction of hikmah in the form of an explicit command to frugality and of a clear prohibition of wastefulness. This matter contains **Seven Subtle Points**.

**FIRST SUBTLE POINT:** Al-Khâliq, Who is Rahîm, wants shukr in return for the ni’mahs He bestows on mankind. As for wastefulness, it is contrary to shukr and it is a harmful contempt for the ni’mah. As for frugality, it is profitable respect towards the ni’mah. Yes, frugality is both a ma’nawî shukr, respect towards the rahmah of Allah within the ni’mahs, definitely a cause of barakah, a source of health for the body like a diet, a cause of dignity that will save from the abasement of ma’nawî beggary and a powerful cause of feeling the pleasure in ni’mah and of tasting the pleasure in ni’mahs that are seen as tasteless. As for wastefulness, since it is opposed to the aforementioned hikmahs, it has perilous consequences.

**SECOND SUBTLE POINT:** Al-Fâtir, Who is Hakîm, created the human body in the form of a perfect palace and as a sample of a well-ordered city. The sense of taste contained in the mouth is like a door-keeper and the nerves and vessels are like telephone and telegraph wires — by the sense of taste, they are a means of communication with the stomach which is at the centre of the body — that it informs what material enters the mouth through those vessels. If the body and stomach have no need for it, it says: "Forbidden!" and throws it out. And sometimes while not being beneficial for the body, if it is harmful and bitter, it throws it out immediately and spits on its face.

Thus, since the sense of taste contained in the mouth is a doorkeeper, in the point of administration of the body, the stomach is a master and a ruler. If the gifts that came to the palace or city and were given to the palace's ruler are worth one hundred times, for the doorkeeper in the form of a tip, only five times is appropriate, it cannot be more, lest by becoming conceited and rebellious and by forgetting the duty, the doorkeeper lets rebels into the palace who will give him a bigger tip. Thus, as a consequence of this mystery, now we imagine two mouthfuls. One of them is one cent from nutritious materials like cheese and egg and the other is ten cents from the best quality baklawa. Before entering the mouth, there is no difference in these two mouthfuls with respect to their volume; they are equal. After passing down the throat, they are again equal in nourishing the body rather sometimes cheese worthy for one cent nourishes more. Only, in the point of indulging the sense of taste in the mouth, there is a half-minute difference. Compare how meaningless and harmful waste it is to raise from one cent to ten cents for the sake of half a minute.

Now, while the gift that came for the palace's ruler is worth one cent, giving a tip nine times bigger to the doorkeeper will make him rebellious. He will say "I am the ruler" and allow to enter whoever gives him more tip and pleasure; he will cause a rebellion and start a fire. He will compel one to say: "Oh! Let the doctor come and calm my temperature and bring down my fever!"

Thus, frugality and contentment are acting conformingly to the hikmah of Allah. Accepting the sense of taste as a doorkeeper, he gives a tip accordingly. As for wastefulness, since it acts contrary to such hikmah, he swiftly receives a slap, upsets the stomach and loses a real appetite. It causes to eat more by an artificial and false appetite arising from various sorts of foods and causes indigestion and illness.

**THIRD SUBTLE POINT:** We said in the previous Second Subtle Point that the sense of taste is a doorkeeper. Yes, for the people of ghaflah and for the people who have not progressed by rûh nor advanced in the way of shukr, it is only a doorkeeper. For the sake of its pleasure, one should not waste and raise the price from one to ten.

But the sense of taste of the people of shukr, the people of haqiqah and the people of the heart is — a sense of taste as is explained in the comparison in the Sixth Word — a spectator and an inspector of the kitchens of the rahmah of Allah. Its duty is to weigh up and recognize the varieties of the ni’mahs of Allah by the tiny scales contained in the sense of taste to the number of foods; it is to inform the body and stomach in the form of a ma’nawî shukr. Thus, in this way, the sense of taste does not only look at the physical body but rather, it has governance and rank superior to the stomach since it looks also to the heart, rûh and mind.

On the condition that it is not wasted and is purely to fulfil the duty of shukr and recognize and perceive the varieties of the ni’mahs of Allah, and on the condition that its being halal and not being a means of abasement and beggary, one can follow his pleasure. He can prefer delicious foods in order to use the tongue, which bears the sense of taste, for shukr. An event indicates this haqiqah and a karâmât of Shaykh Jilânî:

At one time, under the tarbiyyah of Hazrat Ghawth al-A'zam Shaykh Jilânî (k.s.) was the only son of an aged and delicate woman. This esteemed old woman had gone to her son's cell and seen that he was eating a piece of dry black bread. He attracted her mother’s compassion through his weakness resulting from such riyâzah. She felt pity for him. Then she went to Hazrat Ghawth in order to complain and saw that Hazrat Ghawth was eating a roasted chicken. Out of her delicacy, she said: "O Ustadh! My son is dying of hunger. You are eating chicken!" Hazrat Ghawth said to the chicken: ‌قُمْ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰه[[2]](#footnote-3) By many reliable and trusted people, it has been transmitted by ma’nawî tawâtur as a karâmât of a personage like Hazrat Ghawth whose having wondrous karâmât are world-famous that the bones of that cooked chicken assembled and leapt out of the dish as a chicken. Hazrat Ghawth said: "When your son reaches this rank, then he too may eat chicken." Thus, the meaning of this order of Hazrat Ghawth is this: Whenever your son's rûh rules his body, his heart rules his nafs, his mind rules his stomach and he wants pleasure for shukr, then he can eat delicious things.

**FOURTH SUBTLE POINT:** According to the mystery of noble hadith the meaning of which is: لاَ يَعُولُ مَنِ اقْتَصَدَ "One who practices frugality will not have family difficulties regarding livelihood", the one who practices frugality will not suffer much difficulty and hardship of family regarding livelihood. Yes, there are countless decisive proofs that frugality is a definite cause of barakah and a means of good livelihood.

For instance, according to the testimony of those who have befriended and served me and what I have seen in myself, I say that by means of frugality, I have sometimes seen tenfold barakah, and so have my friends. Even, nine years ago — now it is thirty —, some chiefs, who were exiled to Burdur together with me, worked much to make me accept their zakat in order to let me not fall into abasement and poverty due to lacking money. I said to those rich chiefs: "Although my money is very little, I have frugality; I am accustomed to contentment. I am richer than you." I refused their repeated and insistent offers. It is worth noting that two years later, some of those who had offered me their zakat got into debt due to lacking frugality. Lillahilhamd, seven years after them, that small amount of money was sufficient for me through the barakah of frugality; it did not let me degrade myself, not let me be obliged to present my needs to the people and not let me change my way of istighnâ from the people, which is one of the principles of my life.

Yes, one, who does not practice frugality, is a candidate for falling into abasement, misery and beggary in a ma’nawî manner. At this time, money that will be the means of wastefulness is very expensive. In return for it, sometimes dignity and honour are taken as a bribe. Sometimes, in return, the sacred matters of religion are taken then some evil money is given. That is to say, material goods worth three cents are bought by a ma’nawî loss of one hundred dollars. If he practices frugality and contents with the necessary needs and restraints and restricts his needs with the necessary ones, through the mystery of [[3]](#footnote-4) اِنَّ اللّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ and the explicit meaning of the âyah وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِى اْلاَرْضِ اِلاَّ عَلَى اللّٰهِ رِزْقُهَا[[4]](#footnote-5) , he will find enough rizq to live, in a way he did not expect. Because the âyah undertakes it. Yes, there are two sorts of rizq:

**One is** the true rizq that he will live with it. This rizq is undertaken by Ar-Rabb through the decree of this âyah. So long as the misuse of man’s will does not interfere, he can find this necessary rizq under any circumstances. He will not be obliged to sacrifice his religion, honour or dignity.

**The second is** the metaphorical rizq that unnecessary needs become necessary ones due to misuse, he becomes addicted to them through the calamity of custom and tradition and cannot abandon them. Thus, since this rizq is not undertaken by Ar-Rabb, obtaining this rizq, especially at this time, is very expensive. He takes this inauspicious good without barakah by sacrificing his honour and accepting abasement first of all and sometimes falling into the state of beggary in a ma’nawî manner to a degree of kissing the feet of the vile people and sometimes sacrificing the sacred matters of religion, which are the nûr of his eternal life.

Also, at this time of poverty and necessity, the sorrow that the people of conscience receive from the sorrow of the hungry and needy by means of compassion towards fellow-human beings — if he has a conscience — makes bitter the pleasure received from the money he earned in a haram way. At such a strange time, for doubtful goods,[[5]](#footnote-6) it is necessary to suffice at the degree of necessity (dharûrah)[[6]](#footnote-7). Because, through the mystery of اِنَّ الضَّرُورَةَ تُقَدَّرُ بِقَدْرِهَا[[7]](#footnote-8), one can take from haram goods just enough to get him out of the state of dharûrah; he cannot take more. Yes, an obliged man cannot eat haram meat until he gets full; he rather can eat enough not to die. Also, it cannot be eaten much with perfect pleasure in the presence of a hundred hungry people.

An event indicating that frugality is the cause of dignity and perfection:

One time, Hâtim al-Tâî, who was world-famous for his generosity, was giving a significant banquet. While he was giving plenty of presents to his guests, he went out to walk in the desert. He saw that an old poor man was carrying a load of thorny bushes and plants on his back. The thorns were piercing his body and making him bleed. Hâtim said to him: " Hâtim al-Tâî is giving a significant banquet with gifts. You too go there; you will receive five dollars in return for your load of bushes worth five cents." The frugal old man replied: "I carry and lift this thorny load with my honour. I am not going to become indebted to Hâtim al-Tâî." Later, they asked Hâtim al-Tâî: "Have you seen anyone more generous and esteemed than yourself?" He replied: "I saw that frugal old man I met in the desert was more esteemed, elevated and generous than me."

**FIFTH SUBTLE POINT:** Out of His perfect generosity, Janâb-i Haqq makes the poorest man perceive the pleasure of His ni’mah as the richest man, and the beggar (that is, the poor) as the sultân. Yes, the pleasure a poor man receives from a dry piece of black bread by means of hunger and frugality is greater than the pleasure a sultân or a rich person receives from the best quality baklava eaten with the weariness and lack of appetite resulting from waste.

It is surprising that some wasteful and extravagant people accuse such frugal people of stinginess. Hâshâ! Frugality is dignity and generosity. Stinginess and abasement are the inner face of apparent brave conditions of the wasteful and extravagant. There is an event corroborating this haqiqah that occurred in my cell in Isparta the year this risale was written. It was as follows:

In a manner contrary to my rule and principle of life, one of my students insisted that I accept a present of nearly three kilogrammes of honey. However much I stated my rule, he was not persuaded. Intending to make the three brothers of mine with me eat it and to let them eat from that honey for thirty to forty days in the noble Sha'ban and Ramadhan with frugality and to cause the one who brought it to earn the sawâb and to let them not be deprived of sweet, I am compelled to say to them, “Take it.” I also had nearly one and a half kilos of honey. Although those three friends of mine were mustaqîm and among those who appreciate frugality, they forgot frugality by offering it to each other, flattering each other’s nafs and preferring other’s nafs to their own nafs, which in one respect are lofty traits. In three nights, they finished three kilogrammes of honey. I laughingly said, "I would have made you taste sweet with that honey for thirty to forty days. You have reduced the thirty days to three. May it be health for you!" Whereas I consumed my one-and-a-half of kilos of honey with frugality. The whole Sha'ban and Ramadhan, I ate it and, Lillahilhamd, also gave each of those brothers of mine a spoonful, {**Note:** That is, a largish teaspoon.} at the time of iftar; it became the means of significant sawâb. Perhaps those who saw such a state of mine considered it was stinginess and my brothers' state for three nights was generosity. But in point of haqiqah, we saw that beneath that apparent stinginess a lofty dignity, great barakah and a high sawâb were hidden. And beneath that generosity and wastefulness, If it had not been abandoned, it would have resulted in a much baser state than stinginess, like beggary and depending on others greedily and expectantly.

**SIXTH SUBTLE POINT:** There is a great difference between frugality and stinginess. Just as humbleness is a praiseworthy trait that outwardly resembles one of the bad morals of abasement but is different in meaning, and staidness and being dignified is a praiseworthy trait that outwardly resembles one of the bad traits of arrogance but is different in meaning, so too, frugality, which is one of the elevated morals of the Prophet and is indeed one of the sources of the arrangement of the hikmah of Allah in the universe, has no relation with stinginess, which is a mixture of baseness, avariciousness, covetousness and greed. There is only an outward resemblance. An event corroborating this haqiqah:

Hazrat ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar, one of the sahabah among the famous “The seven ‘Abdullahs”, the eldest and most important son of the Khalîfah of Rasûl of Allah, Hazrat ‘Umar Faruq al-‘A'dham, and one of the most distinguished of the ‘ulamâ among the sahabah, one day while shopping in the market, for frugality and to preserve the reliability and integrity on which trade depends, such blessed personage disputed fervently for a matter worth forty cents. One sahabah saw him. Imagining the dispute of the son of Hazrat ‘Umar, the glorious Khalîfah of the face of the earth, for forty cents to be strange stinginess, he followed him in order to understand his state. He saw that Hazrat ‘Abdullah entered his blessed house. He saw a poor man at the door. He stayed there for a bit and left. Then he came out of the second door of his house; there he saw another poor man. He stayed with him for a while too and left. The sahabah, who was watching from the distance, was curious. He went and asked the poor men: “Imam stayed with you. What did he do?” Each of them replied: “He gave me a gold piece.” The sahabah said “Fasubhânallah”. He thought “He disputed for forty cents in the market, then contentedly and pleasingly gave two hundred cents in his house without letting anyone know?”, and left. He saw Hazrat ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar and said: “O Imam! Solve my difficulty! In the market, you did that, while in your house you did this.” As a reply to him, he said: “In the market, it was not stinginess but an attitude arising from frugality, the perfection of the mind and preserving reliability and honesty, which are the basis and spirit of commerce. And the state in my house was an attitude arising from the compassion of the heart and the perfection of the rûh. Neither was the first stinginess, nor the second wastefulness.”

As an indication of this mystery, Imam al-‘A'dham said: لاَ اِسْرَافَ فِى الْخَيْرِ كَمَا لاَ خَيْرَ فِى اْلاِسْرَافِ That is: “While there is no waste in khayr and bestowal (But to the people who has the rights), there is no khayr in waste.”

**SEVENTH SUBTLE POINT:** Wastefulness results in greed. Greed produces three consequences:

**The First** is discontentment. As for discontentment, it shatters eagerness for labour and work. It causes complaint instead of shukr and casts the discontented into laziness.

Abandoning licit, halal and few possessions, {**Note:** Consumers increase and producers decrease due to lacking frugality. Everyone fixes his eye on the office of the government. Then, craft, trade and agriculture, the source of social life, decrease. Such nation gradually declines and impoverishes} one seeks haram possessions free of toil. And he sacrifices his honour in that way and even his dignity.

**The Second Consequence of Greed** is disappointment and loss. It is to lose what he aimed at and is being exposed to detest and deprived of assistance and help. He even confirms the proverb اَلْحَرِيصُ خَائِبٌ خَاسِرٌ. That is “Greed is the cause of loss and unsuccess.”

Greed and contentment produce their effects in the world of living creatures with an extremely extensive law. For instance, while the fitrî contentment of trees needy for rizq making their rizq run to them, the animals' running after rizq greedily with difficulty and deficiency show the great loss of greed and the great benefit of contentment.

Also, the contentment of all weak young through the language of their being, and a subtle food like milk flowing out to them from a place that they do not expect and beasts greedily attacking their deficient and dirty rizq prove our claim in an evident fashion.

Also, the contented attitude of fat fish being the means of their perfect rizq, and intelligent animals like foxes and monkeys remaining puny and weak since they cannot find sufficient rizq, although they greedily pursue it, again show to what degree greed is the cause of difficulty and contentment is the means of ease.

Also, the Jewish nation finding their abasing, miserable and haram rizq only enough to live through greed, interest (ribâ) and trickery and the contented attitude of nomads (the bedouins) and their living with honour and finding sufficient rizq prove decisively aforementioned claim of ours.

Also, many ‘ulamâ {**Note**: It was asked of Bozorgmehr, the minister (wazir) of the just Persian Shah Nushirvan al-‘Adil and ‘âlim famous for his intelligence, "Why are the ‘ulamâ to be seen at the doors of rulers and rulers not to be seen at the doors of the ‘ulamâ, whereas ‘ilm is superior to rulership?" As a reply, he said: "Because of the ‘ilm of the ‘ulamâ and the ignorance of the rulers." That is to say, due to their ignorance, rulers do not know the value of ‘ilm so that they may go to the doors of the ‘ulamâ to seek it. While the ‘ulamâ, since they know the value of their goods due to their knowledge, they seek it at the rulers' doors. Thus, interpreting wittily the greed of ‘ulamâ resulting from the sharpness of their intelligence, which causes poverty and abasement among them, Bozorgmehr kindly replied. Signed: Husrev} and litterateurs {**Note**: An event corroborating this: In France, a beggar's licence is given to litterateurs because they are so proficient at begging. Signed: Süleyman Rüshdü} being fallen into poverty because of the greed arising from the sharpness of their intelligence, and many stupid and impotent people becoming rich through their fitrî contented attitude decisively prove that halal rizq comes according to impotence and destitution, not through power and will. Rather, such halal rizq is in inverse proportion to power and will.

Because the more children increase in power and will, the more their rizq decreases; it gets further from them and becomes troublesome. According to the mystery of the hadith اَلْقَنَاعَةُ كَنْزٌ لاَ يَفْنَى[[8]](#footnote-9), contentment is a treasury of good livelihood and ease of life, while greed is a mine of loss and misery.

**The Third Consequence:** Greed scatters ikhlas and harms actions pertaining to the âkhirah. For if a person from the people of taqwâ has greed, he wants the attention of people. And one who observes the attention of people cannot find complete ikhlas. This consequence is extremely important and worth noticing.

**In Short:** Wastefulness produces the consequence of lacking contentment. As for the lack of contentment, it shatters eagerness for work; casts the discontented into laziness; opens the door of complaint about his life; makes him complain continuously. {**Note:** Yes, whichever wasteful you meet, you will hear complaints. No matter how rich he is, his tongue will still complain. If you meet with the poorest but contented man, you will hear shukr.} It also shatters ikhlas and opens the door of riyâ. It also shatters honour and shows the way of beggary. While frugality produces the consequence of contentment. According to the mystery of the hadith [[9]](#footnote-10)عَزَّ مَنْ قَنَعَ ذَلَّ مَنْ طَمَعَ, contentment produces the consequence of dignity. It also encourages striving and working, increases the eagerness of the contented and leads him to work. For example, he worked for one day. Through the mystery of contentment with the petty wage he received in the evening, he would work again the second day. While the wasteful, since he does not content, he would not work again the second day. Or even if he works, he will work without eagerness.

Also, the contentment arising from frugality opens the door of shukr and closes the door of the complaint. He will be among the people who offer shukr throughout his life.

Also, by means of contentment, due to having istighnâ from people, he does not seek their attention. The door of ikhlas is opened; the door of riyâ is closed.

I witnessed the dismaying harm of the lack of frugality and wastefulness in a broad sphere. It was as follows: Nine years ago, I came to a blessed city. I could not see the sources of wealth of that city due to winter. Several times the Mufti of that place— may Allah grant heavenly bliss to him — said to me, "Our people are poor." These words touched my compassion. For the following five or six years, I always felt pity for the people of that city. Eight years later in the summer, I again came to that city. I looked at the gardens of it. The words of the late Mufti came to my mind, I said "Fasubhânallah!". The crops of these gardens are far greater than the needs of the city. The inhabitants of this city should be very rich. I was amazed. Then I understood through a memory of a haqiqah which does not deceive me and is my guide in understanding the haqiqahs: The barakah had been taken away due to lacking frugality and wastefulness so that the late Mufti was saying: "Our people are poor" despite such sources of wealth.

Yes, just as giving zakat and practising frugality are to be the cause of barakah proven by experience, so too, there are innumerable events that prove that wastefulness and not giving zakat are the cause of barakah being taken away.

The Plato of Islamic philosophers, the shaykh of physicians and the ustadh of philosophers, the famous genius Abu ‘Ali Ibn-i Sina expounded (tafsir) the âyah كُلُوا وَ اشْرَبُوا وَ لاَ تُسْرِفُوا[[10]](#footnote-11) just from the point of view of medicine. He said:

جَمَعْتُ الطِّبَّ فِى الْبَيْتَيْنِ جَمْعًا وَ حُسْنُ الْقَوْلِ فِى قَصْرِ الْكَلاَمِ

فَقَلِّلْ اِنْ اَكَلْتَ وَ بَعْدَ اَكْلٍ تَجَنَّبْ وَ الشِّفَاءُ فِى اْلاِنْهِضَامِ

وَ لَيْسَ عَلَى النُّفُوسِ اَشَدُّ حَالاً مِنْ اِدْخَالِ الطَّعَامِ عَلَى الطَّعَامِ

That is "I summarize the science of medicine in two lines. The beauty of the word is in its shortness. When you eat, eat little. After you eat, do not eat again for four or five hours. Healing (Shifa) is in digestion. That is to say, eat as much as you can digest easily. The heaviest and most tiring state for the stomach and nafs is to eat foods one on top of the other." {**Note:** That is to say, the most harmful thing for the body is to eat without having a break of four to five hours or to fill the stomach with a variety of foods one on top of the other for pleasure.}

A tawâfuq which causes astonishment and is a warning: The Alifs of each copy of the Risale on Frugality written by five or six different scribes three of whom were inexperienced, in different places far from one another, who write out from different copies, whose handwriting was different from each other’s and who did not consider the Alifs at all, have a tawâfuq with the number fifty-one without the du’â and fifty-three with the du’â at the end; and also their tawâfuq with the date the Risale on Frugality was written and copied, which was 1351 according to the Rumi calendar and 1353 according to the Hijri calendar, undoubtedly, cannot be random coincidence. It is an indication that the barakah within frugality has risen to the degree of karâmât. And this year is worthy of being named 'The Year of Frugality.'

Yes, two years later, during the Second World War, time proved this karâmât of frugality through the hunger, destruction and waste everywhere, and through mankind and everyone having compelled to be frugal.

سُبْحَانَكَ لاَ عِلْمَ لَنَا اِلاَّ مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

1. (Eat and drink, but do not waste.) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. (Rise with the permission of Allah!) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. (Surely it is Allah Who is Ar-Razzâq, the Lord of Power, Al-Matîn.) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. (There is no moving creature on earth whose rizq is not provided by Allah.) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. (**Doubtful goods:** The goods which its being halal is doubtful or questionable.) *Tr.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. (Please refer to the article on *dharûrah* and the compilation of *What is dharûrah?*) *Tr.* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. (The duration of the dharûrah is restricted to the duration of its cause.) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. (Contentment is an inexhaustible treasure.) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. (The contented is highly esteemed, and the greedy is abased.) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. (Eat and drink, but do not waste.) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)