

The Eighth Talk

Taqwa: the first aspect of Isti'adha

The summary of our discussion is that *taqwa* or piety is the first, and foremost, aspect of Isti'adha. Therefore, this foremost aspect or pillar must be very strong and formidable so that the super-structure built on it too is strong.

The word *taqwa* is derived from the word *waqayat* which means guarding and protecting. In the juridical sense, abstention from acting against *awamir wa nawahi* (commandments and prohibitions) is termed *taqwa*.

It is necessary that *taqwa* should entrench itself to such a degree that the very thought of committing sins becomes abhorrent to us. For example, even if all the friends join together to encourage a man of piety to gossip or backbite against another person, he must desist from doing it. This is termed *malikat e taqwa* wherein a tendency develops in a person that he is able to resist the onslaught of Satan.

Abstinence from Reprehensible (makruh)

To reach the elevated state of piety one has necessarily to abstain from unbecoming habits and things. Then abstention from *Haram* or prohibited things becomes easier for us. By practicing this abstinence, piety will get stronger.

As far as possible we should not miss the optional prayers (*Mustahabbat*). One who is regular at offering these optional prayers, will never think of foregoing the mandatory prayers.

Thorny jungle and the barefoot traveler

Some learned scholars have given a very interesting definition of *taqwa* and have explained it with an interesting example too.

When you walk barefooted through a thorny jungle, how will you traverse the way? Will you keep your eyes up and walk casually or keep every step with due care and observation to prevent the thorns hurting your bare feet?

Taqwa too means that on the path of life Satan has spread thorns and the man of piety has to save himself from getting hurt by them and keep moving forward all the time.

The bait and intrigue of Satan

The exercise of this care is so necessary that Imam *Zayn al-'Abidin* has included the following supplication in the *Sahifa al-Kamila*:

“O Allah! I beseech for your protection against the bait and intrigue of Iblīs!”

You must have noticed that the hunter keeps his net hidden or camouflaged that the animal notices only the bait and not the net. In the urge for eating the bait, the animal gets caught in the net.

The accursed Iblīs uses several baits. He has several camouflaged ditches of sin and perfidy to entangle his prey.

Piety has the faculty of seeing through Satan's baits

The purpose of *taqwa* is to keep the eyes open and not let them get enamored of the attractive things in the environment. They can thus see through the baits of Satan.

People should pray to Allah (S.w.T.) to give them vision to see through the schemes of Satan and don't blindly fall prey to his schemes.

Some necessary examples: the Bazār is Satan's trap

It is narrated from the Prophet of Allah (S.w.T.) that the bazār is the playground of Satan:

“The worst places on the earth is the market places. This is the playground of Satan where he hoists his standard in the mornings and places his chair, and spreads his chess-board. He cheats in the weighing and measuring of things. He sells away adulterated things.”¹

This is the reason that the Infallible Imams have exhorted people not to linger for long in the bazārs. They say that bazār is a place only for negotiations and making deals. It is not proper for people with learning to associate themselves with the bazār.

Being the first to enter a bazār and emerging from it the last of all is an undesirable act because in this

period Satan will be the companion of the person.

It has been narrated in the traditions that Hadrat Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) found Abdur Rahman b. Muljim, the accursed, gallivanting in the bazār on 18th Ramadhan. The Imam (a.s.) inquired, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I am going round the bazār!" The Imam (a.s.) said, "The bazār is the place for Satan." Aimlessly loitering in the bazār motivates a person to indulge in undesirable activities. Even today loafing in the bazār is not considered a good activity. If you wish to be a man of piety you have to tread carefully in the bazār, as does a person on a road full of thorns.

Isti'adha before entering the bazār

When you enter the bazār you must seek Allah (S.w.T.)'s protection in the following manner:

"O Allah! Protect me that I don't get involved in sin by being unfair in my dealings, by telling lies, by insulting others. Save me from cheating and deceit. Prevent me from doing wrong propaganda and save me from the thoughts of greed and avarice. All these are satanic acts."

I don't suggest that one should never go to the bazār and not transact there. My only appeal is that when one goes to the bazār, he should remember Allah (S.w.T.) and use his better sense and care.

One person quotes from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.). He says, "I asked the Imam (a.s.) that I have business transactions with a woman and I have to, perforce, negotiate with her face to face. Is my looking at her face legitimate or not?" The Imam replied, "*Ittaqillah!* (Keep Allah (S.w.T.)'s fear in your heart and exercise care!)"

Imagine, there could be the possible risk of looking repeatedly at the face of the strange woman might give rise to sinful thoughts in the mind of the person and augur ill luck for him!

Satan's trap in the Bazār

Even while walking on the street one has to be careful. If you think that on one street there is a trap installed by Satan, take another and safer street, even if that is more tortuous and can take more time to traverse. For example, if there is a cinema theatre or a place of indecent activities on your way, or there are indecent posters of women on display, it is better to take a diversion and used some other street. You might say that such things on the way never tempt you to indulge in sin. But care is always advisable.

Fellow-travellers: a dangerous trap

Sometimes the person(s) traveling with somebody might prove satanic traps. He might be foul mouthed, backbiter or a person of poor intellect. Such a companion should be avoided.

Two companions, particularly when they are women, whose will is generally weak, have tendency to be ensnared by Satan. When they start gossiping, other's matters come up for discussion. As time passes, they shift from innocuous talk to backbiting, insinuations, scandals, mockery and many such prohibited things.

The trap of Iblis is such that in the beginning people talk about each other's health, exchange humor and narrate interesting anecdotes. But then Satan misguides them to fall into his trap and start discussing prohibited things.

You must have witnessed that when two persons get together, their talk initially had no element of fault. But in about an hour's time there will be an element of lies in their conversation that might push them into the morass of Hell. Emerging out of the morass will be a Herculean task. As a follow up to the conversation, even if they go to a mosque, you should not think that they are God fearing persons because Satan continues to be with them.

Recognize yourself

Iblis has so many traps that if a person is not pious and careful, he will get entrapped in such a way that he will not rest till the person is consigned to the Hell.

O people with wisdom! Exercise care and keep your tongue in absolute control. What right you have to find fault with others. Every individual is answerable for his own actions. The burden of one person will not be put on the back of another:

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

...And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another... (Sura al-An'aam, 6: 164)

Remember! Talking against each other, backbiting and carrying of tales are all the traps of Satan. When you are in company of others, beware of this trap.

Woman is the most formidable trap

Women are the most formidable traps of Satan, with the exception of those women who have confronted and fought with Satan all their lives.

It takes some time for Satan to snare men out of the right path. But women are more vulnerable and aid and abet the involvement of men too. Have you not heard that Satan was not able to tempt Adam (a.s.) with all his stratagems? Then he turned his attention towards Hadrat Hawwa (a.s.) and succeeded in

making both of them to do the forbidden.

It is narrated that Satan said to Hadrat Yahya (a.s.), "Whenever I fail in trapping anyone, I use women to fulfill my plans!"

Yes! With the help of women Satan progresses towards his objective and thus involves the men in his schemes.

وَلَقَدْ صَدَّقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِبْلِيسُ ظَنَّهُ

And certainly the Shaitan found true his conjecture concerning them... (Sura Saba, 34:20)

The company of women is the preface to sinning

This is the reason that there are authentic traditions of the *Ahl al Bayt* (a.s.) that excessive company of women makes men hard of heart.

This doesn't mean that men should totally shun the company of women. But care must be exercised because nearness to women is one of the traps that are used by Satan. You must have observed that a single word from a woman can drastically change the thinking of a man! Can render the person emotional and turn him inadvertently towards many sinful acts.

It is a matter of concern that a strange (*Na Mahram*) woman in privacy with a man then the trap of Satan becomes strong and very dangerous.

Shaking hands with a strange woman is *Haram*. Think of the impious animals that how deeply they are entrapped by Satan that they are totally unaware that the bodily touch of a woman is one of the uncanny traps of Satan.

The tale of Barseesa

One imposter, whose name was Barseesa, always used to make the pretense of prayer and lived in seclusion. People used to say that his prayers would help in the fulfillment of their wishes.

The daughter of the king of the time once fell seriously ill. All treatments proved futile. In the end it was thought that the only way for curing her of the illness was the prayer of Barseesa. But the hermit refused to come out of his seclusion to the city or the palace of the king. In the end they reluctantly took the sick princess to his hermitage. They left her alone with the hermit.

If this unfortunate hermit was a true man of piety he would have objected to the leaving of the young

princess alone with him. But he fell in the trap of Satan. He looked at the girl and was attracted by her beauty. He had not experienced such a situation throughout his life. He could not control his baser instinct and raped the girl.

But Satan didn't stop at this. He put doubts in the heart of Barseesa that when people learn of his foul act they would lynch him. To save himself from death he thought of killing the girl and burying her. He also thought that if inquiries are made about the girl, he would say that he didn't know where she had gone.

With these doubts and fears in his mind, Barseesa killed the princess while she was asleep. Then he dug up a trench and buried her.

It is narrated that Satan came in human form to the persons who were searching for the princess and said, "I know where the girl is!" he then guided them to the place where the grave was. The angry team demolished Barseesa's hermitage and dragged him to the court of the king. People started spitting on his face. The king ordered him to be hanged.

In the olden days the hanging of criminals was not such an easy and fast process as it is now. It was a prolonged and torturous procedure. When Barseesa was about to die Satan came to him and said, "Even now if you prostrate to me, I shall save you!" To save himself from death, Barseesa agreed to prostrate to Satan. In his last breaths Satan tempted Barseesa to commit a major sin and earn a place for himself in the fiery Hell.

[1.](#) Safinat al-Bihar, Vol 1, Page 8

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