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## The Tenth Talk

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ

***Verily those who guard (themselves against evil) when an evil thought from Satan afflicts them, they become mindful (of God and get awakened) then lo! They see (aright). (Sura al-A'raaf, 7:201)***

It is proved from the previous talk that the most important aspect of *Isti'adha* is *Taqwa* or piety. If a person is devoid of antagonism of Satan and doesn't submit himself to Rahman, then he is in the trap of Satan and his *Isti'adha* is of no use.

### Why Isti'adha

Here one might ask when there is *Taqwa* in a person, then what is the need for *Isti'adha*. When a person doesn't commit any sins, and is not a transgressor, then there may not be the need for seeking Allah (S.w.T.)'s Protection against the onslaught of Satan.

The reply to this question is that the question itself is topsy-turvy. The fact is that *Isti'adha* is only for the people of *Taqwa*. One who observes *Taqwa* will always submit to Allah (S.w.T.) for His protection lest the evil Satan catch him unawares and achieve control over his heart. Once Satan penetrates his heart, all his actions will be at the instance of Satan.

A person whose heart is free of the influence of Satan and spends his time in prayer and supplication to Allah (S.w.T.), should necessarily seek Allah (S.w.T.)'s protection against the fears and temptations of Satan, and his ilk, because they are always on the lookout for the slightest opportunity to subdue him. A *mu'min* has to exercise utmost care in this matter.

## Good Deeds or Guidance For Evil

Satan strives hard to find a place in the heart of a *mu'min*. It is narrated that even if a *mu'min* escapes unscathed from the trap of Satan because of his good deeds ninety nine times, he might become the victim on the hundredth attempt! It is quite possible that the instigation for the good deeds ninety nine times too was by Satan only to make the person complacent that he fell into the trap on the hundredth attempt! Thus Satan derives satisfaction from destroying in one stroke the effects of the good actions of the person spread over long period. The dividing line between the good and the evil is very narrow and one must take great care not to falter towards evil. Therefore the Imams (a.s.) supplicate to Allah (S.w.T.) thus, *"O sustainer, give me vision in the matter of Faith! That during performance of good deeds Satan doesn't involve me in fears and misapprehensions and thus push me into the morass of evil."*

## Evil Through Good

There is a social function arranged by someone's kin. Satan persuades him to attend it as a matter of (*silat ar-rahm*) giving attention to the welfare of his relations. When the person reaches the venue, he finds that the party was in full swing with dance and song and service of intoxicants. He doesn't like the atmosphere. His heart prompts him to get away from that participating in such gatherings is *Haram*. But Satan tells him 'If you leave the party while it is in progress, it will amount to breaking the party. This step will be *qata ar-rahm* or causing hurt to your relatives.'

Thus Satan misguides people from the path of virtue towards vice.

## To Make One Miss The Mandatory Prompting People To Busy in Optional Rites

Sometimes Satan encourages people to give more attention to optional matters to make them miss the mandatory duties. For example, he prompts a person to proceed on a pilgrimage to the mausoleum of Imam Ridha (a.s.). he convinces him that performing this optional pilgrimage will bring him lots of reward in the Hereafter. The person neglects his mandatory duty of providing for his old parents and family and proceeds on the pilgrimage.

Satan thus makes people overlook mandatory duties in the performance of the optional.

## Losing Interest in Prayers

Sometimes Satan makes a person engrossed in an optional act to such an extent that he loses interest and inclination to perform the mandatory prayers. For example he puts in the mind of a person to proceed for the Ziyarats to Karbala that his sins would be pardoned and his prosperity would increase. Satan also convinces him somehow that if he went illegally without proper papers and permissions, his rewards would be redoubled! The person thus commences his journey. To his misfortune he gets caught for making an illegal entry and is put in jail. Then he curses himself why his legs were not fractured to prevent him from going there. Imagine, how Satan tempted the person to go in a hurry for performance of an optional act and as a result made him lose interest in the pilgrimage of great felicity!

## O Allah! Give Us Vision in the Matters of Faith

The people of piety cannot do without recourse to *Isti'adha*. They are always fearful of the interference of Satan because he keeps trying to divert them from worship of Allah (S.w.T.). May Allah (S.w.T.) give the vision to people that they are able to understand if the acts they are doing are really good or are evil acts that Satan has tempted them to perform. It is the common observation that an act appears good and harmless but in reality it turns out to be otherwise.

To illustrate the point a tradition is mentioned here.

## Satan Praying Suspended in the Sky

It is mentioned in *Bihar al-Anwar* from *Usul al-Kafi* that Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) narrated about a person, in the olden times, who kept himself busy in prayer and supplication to Allah (S.w.T.). He was so deeply engrossed in prayer that Satan, despite all the efforts, was unable to disrupt this activity. Upset at his failure, Satan called a meeting of his retainers to devise ways and means of achieving his desire. He said:

“I have not succeeded tempting the pious person despite all my efforts. Can you think of a stratagem to unnerve him”?

One of his disciples said, “By creating evil desires in his mind I shall motivate him to commit adultery.”

Satan replied, “There is no use. The desire for women has been extinguished from his heart.”

Another disciple said, “I shall tempt him with delicacies and drinks that he gets destroyed consuming *Haram* food and alcohol.”

Satan said, "No use! After years of penance he has lost palate for good food."

A third retainer said, "Perhaps he can be tricked through the way of prayer which is his favorite activity!"

Satan said, "Yes. We might succeed this way."

Anyway, the result of this confabulation was that Satan himself took the responsibility to do the job. He adopted the garb of a human being, suspended himself in the atmosphere sitting on a prayer mat and pretended to be busy in prayer.

When the pious person saw this, he went to inquire of Satan about the prayer that he performed to get the faculty of suspending himself in the atmosphere. But Satan appeared so intently engrossed in prayer that even after repeated calls he did not give any attention to the pious person. Fed up of waiting, the person asked Satan to respond to him under an oath. Satan took a respite from his pretended prayer.

The pious person asked, "What great task you have performed that you are at such an elevated place?"

He replied, "I have achieved this status through commitment of a sin. After committing the sin I have repented and done penance. Even now I continue to be penitent. With my worship I am growing stronger by day. If you desire to achieve the same status you too must commit adultery and then busy yourself in penitence."

The pious man said, "Neither do I know the way of doing adultery nor have I money for the purpose."

Satan gave him two Dirhams and explained the way to the house of a woman of ill repute.

The pious person entered the town and inquired from the people about the exact location of the woman's house. People thought that he was intending to visit her to sermon the woman to give up her foul ways. The man went to the woman and gave her the money and demanded to do adultery with her. At this point Allah (S.w.T.)'s help came to his rescue that the woman thought of preventing him from committing the sinful act. The woman saw piety written large on the face of the person and that he was not habituated of going to such houses of ill repute.

She asked him, "How have you come here?"

The man replied, "This is not your concern. I have given you the money and you must comply."

The woman said, "As long as I don't know the real reason of your coming here, I shall not submit to you."

Alas, the pious man yielded and told the entire story to her.

The woman said, "I might be losing custom by dissuading you from your resolve, but I am sure it was only Satan who has sent you here."

The man said, “You are wrong because he has assured me that I shall be able to get the same status as enjoyed by him if I commit the sin of adultery.”

The woman said, “Don’t be foolish! How are you sure that after committing adultery you will ever get a chance to be penitent and your penitence will get accepted? Believe me! You are under the spell of Satan’s temptation.”

When the pious person was persistent, the woman said, “I am ready to yield to you. But go back to the place once and see if the person is still busy in prayer suspended in the atmosphere. If you find him there, then you can come back to me. But if he is not there, then you must believe that it was Satan who wants to deter you from the path of piety.”

When the pious person reached the place, he found no trace of Satan there. Then it dawned on him that the woman had saved him from falling into the abyss of sin. He offered a sincere prayer for the fallen woman.

It has been said in the tradition that when the woman died, a revelation came to the Prophet (S) of the time that he should join her funeral procession. The Prophet (S) protested to Allah (S.w.T.) that she was a fallen woman. The reply was, “Yes! But she was responsible for sending back to us a pious person who was running away from piety under the deceit of Satan!”

Sermons and moralizing are very valuable. Every effort must be made to dissuade persons from committing sins. Motivate them to be penitent. Allah (S.w.T.) will reward them as well as those who make effort to reform such persons.

It is a matter of great surprise that when we look at the temptations of Satan and our moral weaknesses, we fail to understand what will be our end! Will we be able to reach Him? We only need Allah (S.w.T.)’s Mercy and Munificence for our deliverance.

In a supplication we say:

*Idha ra-aytu maulaya dhunubi faz’itu wa idha ra-aytu karamika tam’itu*

*When I think of my sins O my Master, I am terrified! But when I think of Your Kindness, I become hopeful!*

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