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On The Four Pillars Of Isti'adhah

One: *al-musta'ïdh* [the one who seeks refuge]
Two: *al-musta'ïdhu minhu* [that from which refuge is sought]
Three: *al-musta'ïdhu bihi* [the one with whom refuge is sought]
Four: *al-musta'ïdhu lahï* [that for which refuge is sought]

Do know that there are so much detailed explanations for these pillars that are out of our intention. Yet, we are satisfied to mention a summary of them:

The first pillar is concerning *al-musta'ïdh*. It is a humanistic truth from the very first stage of the *sulïk* to Allah till the final end of self-annihilation [*fanï'-i dhïtï*]. "When the absolute annihilation was complete, Satan would perish and the *isti'ïdhah* would take place."

To expand on this summary we may say that as long as man is dwelling in the abode of the self and nature, and has not yet started his spiritual journey and *sulïk* to Allah, and is still under Satan's control in all degrees and affairs, he has not yet understood the truth of *isti'ïdhah*, and the mere utterances of his tongue are useless, or rather they fix and strengthen the Satanic authority, unless Allah, the Exalted, grants him His favor.

When he gets engaged in his journey and *sulïk* to Allah and starts his spiritual travel, what hinders him on the road and thorns his way, as long as he is continuing his journey and *sulïk*, is his own Satan, whether of the Satanic spiritual forces, or of the *jinn* or *ins*, for when the *jinn* and *ins* become thorns of the road, they will, actually, be the assistants of Satan and act on his command. Allah, the Exalted, refers to this in the blessed *sïrah* of *an-Nïs*:

"... From the evil of the slinking whisperer, who whispers in the breasts of men, from among the jinn and men."

If the Satan is from the *jinn*, it is understood from the noble ïyah that the slinking whisperer, i.e. Satan, is originally [*bi 'l-isïlah*] a *jinn* and subordinately [*bi 't-taba'iyyah*] an *ins.* But if Satan is another reality

resembling the *jinn*, it appears from the noble *yah* that these two species, i.e. the *jinn* and the *ins*, are also Satanic similitudes [*tamaththul t*] and his manifestations. In another *yah* it is said:

"...the Satans of ins and jinn."[1]

In this blessed *S rah* the pillars of *isti dhah* are mentioned, as we stated before and as it is clear.

In a word, before starting the journey to Allah, man is not a *musta dh*. When the gnostic [*rif*] comes to the end of the journey, and there remains no trace, at all, of the remnants of servitude, and he reaches the stage of the absolute personal annihilation [*fan –i dh t*], there will remain no trace of the *isti dhah*, *musta dhu minhu* and *musta dh*, and in his heart there will be nothing except Allah and His Divine Sovereignty, and he will be unaware of himself and his heart, and "I take refuge in You from You"[2] is also out of this state.

When there is a state of wakefulness [*sahw*], intimacy and return, there still is a trace of *isti dhah*, but not the *isti dhah* of a *s lik.* For this reason, the Final Messenger of Allah (*s*) is also ordered to do the *isti dhah*, as Allah, the Exalted, says:

"Say: I take refuge in the Lord of daybreak,"[3]

"Say: I take refuge in the Lord of men,"[4]

And

"Say: My Lord! I take refuge in you from the evil suggestions of the Satans, and I take refuge in You, O my Lord, from their presence."[5]

So, man in two states is not *musta dh*: One is before starting the *sul k*, which is the state of being completely veiled, at the Satan's disposal and under his control. The other is when the *sul k* comes to the end, which is the absolute annihilation, in which there is no trace of the *musta dh*, *musta dhu minhu*, *musta dhu lahu* or *isti dhah*.

In two states he is a *musta dh*: One is in his *sul k* to Allah, in which he takes refuge from the thorns of the road of attainment [*wus l*] that are sitting on the straight path, as Satan says in the Qur'an:

"As you have led me astray, I shall lurk in ambush for them on your straight path."[6]

The other is when he is wakeful and returning from the absolute annihilation, in which he does the *isti dhah* [taking refuge] from the coloring seclusions [*ihtij b t*] and others.

The second pillar is concerning *al–musta dhu minhu,* which is the accursed *Ibl s*, the outcast Satan, who prevents man from attaining his goal and implementing his objective, by means of his diverse snares. Some great men of the people of knowledge say that Satan, in his reality, is the entire world in its aspect of being other than Allah.

The writer does not agree with this, because this aspect of being other than Allah, which is a fancied form that has no truth and is void of any sort of realization [*tahaqquq*] and reality, is but one of *Iblīs*' snares in which he gets man engaged. It may be a reference to the point that is said in the *īyah*: ***"Rivalry in worldly increase distracts you, until you come to the graves."***[7]

Or else, *Iblīs* himself is a reality with an abstract ideal, and the reality of universal *Iblīs*, the head of all *Iblīs*es, is the universal fancy [*wahm al-kull*], as the universal abstract intellectual fact, the first man [Adam], is the universal intellect ['*aql al-kull*]. The individual worldly fancies are of the affairs [*shu'ūn*] and manifestations [*mazāhir*] of the universal *Iblīs*, as the individual intellects are of the affairs [*shu'ūn*] and manifestations [*mazāhir*] of the universal intellect ['*aql-i kull*]. A detailed explanation of this subject is out of the capacity of this thesis.

In a word, what becomes a hindrance and a thorn on the road of the divine *sulūk* to Allah is Satan or his manifestations, whose acts are also of Satan's. And what, of the states of the invisible and visible worlds and of the happenings [*awārid*] that happen to the soul, and of its different states, becomes a veil on the face of the Beloved [*janān*], whether of the mundane terrestrial worlds, such as poverty, and richness, soundness and illness, ability and disability, knowledge and ignorance, plagues and defects, etc., or of the invisible, abstract and ideal worlds, such as paradise and hell, and relevant knowledge, even the argumentative intellectual sciences which belong to *tawhīd* and glorifying Allah..., all of them are of *Iblīs*' snares by which he diverts man from Allah and from having intimacy and privacy with Him.

Even diversion through moral [*ma'nawī*] states and standing [*wuqūf*] in spiritual stages, whose outside is to stand at the path of humanity, and whose inside is to stand at the path of Allah which is the spiritual bridge of the hell of separation and parting, and which ends in the paradise of meeting, the bridge which is exclusive to a small group of the people of knowledge and of heart are also of the big snares of the chief *Iblīs*, from which one must seek refuge in the Sacred Essence of Allah, the Exalted.

In short, whatever diverts you from Allah and secludes you from the Beautiful Beauty of the Beloved, the Glorified, is your Satan, be it in the form of an *ins* or a *jinn*. And whatever is used to prevent you from that goal is of Satan's snares, be it of the kinds of positions and ranks or of the types of sciences and perfections, or professions and industries, or luxury and comfort, or hardship and humility, or anything else.

These are of the dispraised worldly matters. In other words, when the heart loves something other than Allah, that will be its world, and that is disapproved. It is a satanic snare from which one should take refuge in Allah. It is quite likely the point to which the Messenger of Allah (*s*) referred by his invocation: "I take refuge in Allah's generous countenance, and with His words, which no pious or impious can pass, from the evil of what descends from the heaven and ascends to it, from the evil of what enters into the earth and what comes out of it, from the evil of the troubles of the night and the day, and from the evil of the knockers at the night and day, except the knocker who brings good."[8]

Taking refuge in Allah's countenance face and Allah's words means being drowned in the sea of Beauty and Majesty, and whatever keeps man off it is of the evils and belongs to the world of Satan and his tricks, from which one must take refuge in Allah's countenance, be it of the perfect heavenly truths or of the earthly imperfect ones, unless it is the knocker that brings good the divine knocker who invites to Absolute Good, that is, Allah, the Exalted.

The third pillar is concerning *al-mustaʿīdhu bihi.* Know that the truth of *istiʿīdhah* is implemented in the *sālik* to Allah, and attained through the travel and *sulūk* to Allah. That is, *istiʿīdhah* belongs to the *sālik* during the stages of the *sulūk.* Therefore, the truths of *istiʿīdhah*, *mustaʿīdh*, *mustaʿīdhu minhu* and *mustaʿīdhu bihi* differ according to the degrees and the stages of the travelers to Allah. A reference to this is probably in the noble *sūrah* of *an-Nās*:

"Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of men, the King of men, the God of men."

From the beginning of the *sulūk* till the limits of the state of the heart, the *sālik* takes refuge with the state of the Lordship: It is possible that this Lordship is the Lordship of Act, so as to conform to "I take refuge with the complete words of Allah."[9] And when the journey of the *sālik* ends in the state of the heart, the state of the divine sovereignty appears in the heart, in which case he takes refuge in the state of "The King of men" from the evils of *Iblīs*' cordial intrusion and his despotic inner authority, as he took refuge, in the first state, from the evils of Satan's breast intrusion, as it is said: "**... who whispers in the breasts of men**" although the "whispering" in the hearts and the spirits is also by the "slinking" Satan.

Perhaps this is because it is in the instance of a general introduction and on the basis of an apparent attribute that suits everybody. When the *sālik* passes the state of the heart to the state of the spirit, which is of the divine "blowing," and whose connection to Allah is closer than that of the sunlight to the sun, in this stage anxiety, passion, attraction, ardent love, and eagerness, begin to appear, and in it he takes refuge in the "**God of men.**"

And when he advances higher than this stage and has before his eyes the Essence without a mirror for the affairs [*shuʿūn*], in other words, when he reaches the state of the secret, he will be suited to say: "I take refuge from you in you."[10] There are, in this respect, other details that do not suit this essay.

However, you may know that to take refuge in Allah's Name suits all stages because of its comprehensiveness, as, in fact, it is an absolute *istiʿīdhah*, while other *istiʿīdhah*s are limited ones.

The fourth pillar is concerning *al-mustaʿīdhu lahu*, i.e. the aim of the *istiʿīdhah*. You may know that what is required essentially [*bi ʿdh-dhūt*] by the *mustaʿīdh* person is of the kinds of perfection, happiness and good, which differ in accordance with the degrees and ranks of the *sālik*s. As long as the *sālik* is still within the frame of the soul and the veil of nature, the aim of his journey is to attain self-perfections and the low natural kinds of happiness.

This belongs to the early stages of the *sulūk*. Getting out of the soul's confinement, and having acquired

a taste of spiritual states and abstract perfections, his goal will be higher and his aim more perfect, neglecting all personal positions, and his objective will be attaining cordial perfections and internal happiness.

Then, turning the rein of the travel away from this state, and reaching at the door of the house of the spiritual secret, the beginnings of the divine manifestations start appearing in his inside, and the tongue of his inside, at the beginning says: “I direct my face towards Allah's face,” and later on, “I direct my face towards Allah's Names or towards Allah,” and after that: “I direct my face to Him.” Perhaps

“I direct my face to the One Who created the heavens and the earth”[11]

Is related to the first stage because of the creatorship [*fطiriyyat*].

In a word, whichever the *sطlik*'s stage, his real objective is to attain essential perfection and happiness. But as with happiness and perfection, in any given stage, there is a Satan with a snare of his snares to prevent him from reaching his objective, the *sطlik* will have to take refuge in Allah from that Satan and his evils and tricks in order to get his original aim and essential objective.

So, the *sطlik*'s objective of the *istiطdhah* is, in fact, obtaining the looked-for perfection and wanted happiness. The aim of the aims, and the final want, is Allah, the Glorified, the Almighty. In this stage, or after it, everything vanishes except Allah, the Exalted, and the *istiطdhah* [taking refuge] from Satan will be a consequent and done in full wakefulness. Praise is Allah's at the beginning and at the end.

1. Sطrah al-An'طm 6:112
2. An extract from an invocation of the Prophet (s) during his Salطt. See Furطع al-Kطfطع, vol. 3, p. 324. Misbطh al-Mutahajjid wa Silطh al-Muta'abbid, p. 308.
3. Sطrah al-Falaq 113:1.
4. Sطrah an-Nطs 114:1.
5. Sطrah al-Mu'minطn 23:97-98.
6. Sطrah al-A'rطf 7:16
7. Sطrah at-Takطthur 102:1-2
8. Bihطr al-Anwطr, vol. 91, p. 215.
9. Iqbطl al-A'mطl, p. 640, the invocation recited on the first day of the month of Rajab.
10. Extracted from an invocation by the Prophet (s) during his Salطt. See Furطع al-Kطfطع, vol. 3, p. 324; Misbطh al-Mutahajjid wa Silطh al-Muta'abbid, p. 308.
11. Sطrah al-An'طm 6:79

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