

FITAN

HOW TO SAFEGUARD YOURSELF

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A serene sunset scene over a calm ocean. The sun is a bright yellow orb on the horizon, casting a golden glow across the sky and water. In the foreground, a dark, jagged rock formation on the left side of the frame features a natural sea stack archway. Gentle waves with white foam are washing onto a sandy beach in the lower right corner. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and contemplative.

at-tazkiyah

We often hear ‘we are in the era of fitnahs’ and ‘there are many fitnahs in our times’. We come across this word, fitnah, during lectures and talks too. Let us understand what this word means. The word ‘fitnah’ (*plural: fitan*) has various usages in religious text such as punishment, difficulty, calamity, sin, test, trial etc. The appropriate context for our discussion is where the word fitnah is used to mean test or trial. Tests and trials are such that they bring to light the inner condition or ability of a person in whatever field this test is taken. For example, if a person is tested on his knowledge on a certain subject, the test will reveal his level of insight in that subject. Therefore, we can say that fitnah is that which exposes the (true) condition of good or bad in a person.

As Qiyāmah draws closer, fitan will increase. Rasūlullāh ﷺ has stated:

Before Qiyāmah, there will be fitan like portions of the dark night; a person will wake up in the morning as a believer but will leave the fold of Islām by the evening and another will be a believer in the evening but by the morning he will be a non-believer... (Abū Dāwūd)

The nature of these fitan will be such that they will not be simple tests; rather they will be extremely severe and mind boggling. A person will find it extremely difficult to differentiate between truth & falsehood and right & wrong. In this ḥadīth, the fitan have been termed as ‘portions of the dark night’. In places where there is no artificial lighting, a person

will be able to experience the darkness that night has in it. As time passes, the darkness of the night intensifies to such an extent that one feels like a portion of darkness has been replaced by yet a darker portion. Similar will be the fitan before Qiyāmah; they will be severe and will intensify and continue to become more and more difficult as the Final Hour moves closer and closer.

Many aḥādīth discuss the severity of these fitan and our compassionate and loving Nabī ﷺ has warned us for the very reason that we do not fall into such trials. The one who becomes a victim of these trials will be an unfortunate one, as he will not be able to safeguard his Dīn, resulting in him being unsuccessful in both worlds. It is for this reason these fitan are also termed as tribulations and calamities. The degree of severity of these fitan can be gauged from the ḥadīth that a person's Īmān will be at stake and for insignificant worldly benefits, a person will leave his Dīn.

In a ḥadīth of Imām Muslim ﷺ, it is stated:

Hasten towards good deeds before there will be fitan like portions of the dark night; a person will wake up in the morning as a believer but will leave the fold of Islām by the evening or a person will be a believer in the evening but by the morning he will be a non-believer; he will sell his religion for worldly goods.

These fitan will become so severe that they will engulf even those who will merely glance at them. Nabī ﷺ said:

They [fitan] will engulf those who will peek towards them. (Al-Bukhārī)

Further, our Rasūl ﷺ advises:

...the one who finds a shelter or refuge [from them] should take refuge in it. (Al-Bukhārī)

Now the question is what are the things that will give us shelter and refuge from fitan? How can we save ourselves from these fitan? The answer is:

1. Good Deeds

One should hold fast to the entire Dīn, carrying out all the far'īd and wājibāt and abstaining from the ḥarām and makrūhāt taḥrīmiyyah. Moreover, sunan and nawāfil should also be part of our lives. In every aspect of our lives, from beliefs to worldly transactions, Dīn should dictate our every step. Allāh ﷻ states:

O you who believe, enter into Islām completely, and do not follow the footsteps of satan. Surely, he is an open enemy for you. (2:208)

If we hold fast to the whole Dīn of Allāh ﷻ, then our lives will be full of good deeds and it is with the good deeds a person will be able to challenge the fitan as mentioned in the ḥadīth earlier:

Hasten towards good deeds before there will be fitan like portions of the dark night... (Muslim)

2. Have Control Over your Tongue

Controlling one's tongue entails, first and foremost, speaking good. The best thing a person can do is be righteous in his speech. In contrast, saying bad or wrong things is no doubt abhorrent and disliked, hence we should abstain from pollut-

ing the tongue with such speech. Controlling the tongue also includes situations where one is aware of his deficiency in self-discipline, being that he generally falls into evil speech though he initially begins with righteous speech. It is for such individuals Rasūlullāh ﷺ has stated:

The one who remained silent saved himself. (At-Tirmidhī)

Controlling the tongue in essence means that we dictate what emits from it; if both good and evil is being uttered then it is a sign that we are not in control. If only good and righteous speech is being spoken, then we are in control. Therefore, a person needs to assess before speaking and follow the principle: “Think before you speak.” This can be achieved by speaking with full attention towards the speech like that person who is being interviewed. He very carefully evaluates every word he speaks. Likewise, we too need to monitor and evaluate every word we say in our day to day conversations.

3. Mixing Less and Remaining in the Confines of your Home

One should not leave the home without necessity. This is a general advice addressed to both men and women. A person leaving the home without necessity will make himself prone to fitan, especially where the environment is that of sin.

In our times, being physically at home does not necessarily mean that the person is in the ‘home’, as a person surfing the net is in essence out of their ‘home’. Similarly, when reading literature or when listening to a lecture, a person is no longer in the ‘home’, they are in the company of the author or the

lecturer. The same can be said for the one using social media or a smartphone. To stay confined to our homes is in reality to stay away from every engagement in which one will become prone to disobeying Allāh ﷻ, as any such engagement will essentially mean leaving the vicinity of the home and becoming prone to fitan.

The above two points can be summarised as inculcating the habits of ‘Qillat-ul-kalām’ (reducing the speech) and ‘Qillat-ul-ikhtilāt ma‘al-anām’ (reducing intermingling with the creation of Allāh ﷻ). These two points are from the prescription of soul purification prescribed by the mashāyikh, through which a person nourishes their soul and safeguards it from deteriorating spiritually.

The conclusion of ‘Qillat-ul-kalām’ is that one should avoid unnecessary speech and the conclusion of ‘Qillat-ul-ikhtilāt ma‘al-anām’ is that one avoids unnecessary interaction with people. Avoiding unnecessary interaction will ensure that unnecessary speech is also avoided, as the less a person interacts with others the less chance there is to speak.

A point to note here is that ‘Qillat-ul-ikhtilāt ma‘al-anām’ does not mean that one leaves mixing with people altogether, because so many people have rights over us which we are obliged to fulfil. It is every person’s duty to interact and socialise with family, parents, relatives and others. Therefore, reduction in intermingling means that a person does not exceed the limit by keeping the following points in mind:

- a. To mix only out of necessity.
- b. Not to violate any command of Allāh ﷻ.

- c. Not to get involved in *lā ya‘nī* (futile and baseless activity).

4. Tawbah and Asking for Forgiveness

When making effort in following the commands of Allāh ﷻ, we are prone to making errors. Therefore, it is essential that we repent; and in repenting we should express our remorse and regret by crying to Allāh ﷻ.

The above three points have been mentioned in the ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidunā ‘Uqbah bin ‘Āmir ؓ who asked Rasūlullāh ﷺ, ‘In what lies salvation and safety?’ Rasūlullāh ﷺ gave the above three instructions. These will ensure that we are able to safeguard our Dīn and ultimately save ourselves from fitan.

5. Reciting Sūrah Al-Kahf

In the ḥadīth we find that the recitation of Sūrah Al-Kahf on the day of Friday provides safety from the fitnah of Dajjāl. (Al-Bayhaqī) In another ḥadīth we find that the greatest fitnah that will come upon this ummah is the fitnah of Dajjāl. (Aḥmad) By inference, we can say that if Sūrah Al-Kahf will save a person from the fitnah of Dajjāl, then it will surely save us from all the other fitan which are comparatively inferior.

6. Holding Fast to the Gatherings of the Pious ‘Ulamā

Holding fast to and frequenting the gathering of authentic, reliable ‘Ulamā who fear Allāh ﷻ is a very secure way to save one’s self from fitan. Such company will give us the correct understanding of the Dīn and also the spiritual nourishment to assist us to combat the nafs and shayṭān.

7. Du‘ā

Du‘ā is the weapon of the believer. One should regularly seek refuge with Allāh ﷻ by supplicating to Him. We find in the ḥādīth, narrated by Imām Aḥmad ﷺ, a supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْفِتَنِ، مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ

O Allāh, I seek refuge with You from all tribulations: those that are apparent and those that are hidden.

We should try and make a habit of making this supplication at least three times after every ṣalāh. Al-Mu‘awwadhāt, a compilation by this humble servant, should also be included in one’s daily practices as it contains supplications, from the Qur’ān and the aḥādīth, which seek refuge with Allāh ﷻ from all misfortunes in this world and the hereafter. My late mentor, Ḥaḍrat Ḥājī Muḥammad Fārūq ṣāhib ﷺ used to say:

The one who asks Allāh is not deprived and the one who fears Him is granted protection.

If we hold fast to these few points, inshā‘allāh, we will be able to safeguard ourselves from the ever increasing and intensifying fitan.

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