

LIKE A DARK NIGHT

Fitnah . . . now that's a word you must have heard on many occasions in the past. Rasulallah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* predicted the appearance of many *fitan* (plural of *fitnah*) before the Day of Qiyaamah. He also predicted that with the passing of time they would appear more and more frequently and that every *fitnah* will be worse than the previous *fitan*.

بَادِرُوا بِالْأَعْمَالِ فِتْنًا كَقَطْعِ اللَّيْلِ الْمُظْلِمِ

يُصْبِحُ الرَّجُلُ مُؤْمِنًا وَيُمْسِي كَافِرًا أَوْ يُمْسِي مُؤْمِنًا وَيُصْبِحُ كَافِرًا يَبِيعُ دِينَهُ بِعَرَضٍ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا

Hasten towards good actions before the appearance of fitan like the parts of a dark night. A man will be a believer in the morning and an unbeliever by the evening. Alternately, he will be a believer in the evening and an unbeliever in the morning.

He will sell his deen for worldly commodities.¹

By comparing these *fitan* to the *parts of a dark night*, Rasulallah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* meant that just as the night gets darker as it progresses – 10pm is darker than 9pm and 11pm is darker than 10pm – these *fitan* will only get worse with the passing of time. Describing the quick succession with which they will appear, Rasulallah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* also compared them to the beads of a broken necklace.² When the necklace is broken, the beads fall one after the other, with immediate succession. That is exactly how these *fitan* would

¹ Saheeh Muslim, Hadith 328

² Sunan At-Tirmidhi, Hadith 2211

appear, one after the other. People will hardly get over one *fitnah* and they will have to face another.

What is *Fitnah*?

أَحْسِبِ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ

*Do the people think that they would be left alone for saying we believe and that they would not be tested?*³

Fitnah is translated as a test and a trial. (In the above *aayah*, the word *yuftanoon* is derived from the word *fitnah*.) It is a test of one's *imaan*, sincerity and steadfastness. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* spoke of many of the *fitan* that will appear in the course of time. Hudhaifa *radiallahu anhu* narrated that one day, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* told them of every *fitnah* that will appear until the Day of *Qiyaamah*.⁴ "By Allah, I do not know whether my friends have forgotten or they pretend to have forgotten. By Allah, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* did not omit the name of the leader of a single *fitnah* until the end of the world whose followers will equal three hundred or more except that he told us his name, his father's name and the name of his tribe."⁵

Shah Waliullah *rahimahullah* was the first person to introduce the six canonical *hadith* works into the curriculum in the Indian subcontinent. A revolutionary thinker and prolific writer, he analysed the various *ahaadith* concerning the topic and concluded that there are a number of different types of *fitan*.⁶

³ Surah Al-'Ankaboot, Aayah 2

⁴ Saheeh Muslim, Hadith 7445

⁵ Sunan Abu Da'ud, Hadith 5393

⁶ At-Ta'leeq As-Sabeeh V.6 Pg.132

The Individual

The first type of *fitnah* affects the individual. Its consequences are laziness in fulfilling the commands of Allah and deprivation of enjoyment in '*ibaadah* (worship). All Muslims acknowledge the compulsion of the five daily *salawaat*, yet so few of them actually fulfill this most important injunction of Islam. Why, what holds them back? Some perform the five *salawaat*, but haphazardly, void of feeling and spirituality. The same applies to all other '*ibaadaat* (acts of worship), *saum* and *hajj* included. Once again, we ask 'why?' Yes, you are correct. The answer is *fitnah*.

The Family Unit

Going beyond the individual, the second type of *fitnah* affects the family unit. The spiraling rate of *talaaq*, the never-ending mother-in-law daughter-in-law squabbles, ill-treatment of parents and the growing number of elderly people who spend their last days in old-age homes are all symptoms of this type of *fitnah*.

The Community

Put a number of families together and you have a community, town or city. That is the target of the third type of *fitnah*. Put differently, the cause of discord in the community is *fitnah*. Vociferous campaigning for leadership and the appointment of undeserving people to such posts and civil strife, like what is happening in Syria and Iraq, are aspects of this type of *fitnah*. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said, "When leadership is entrusted to undeserving people, await the *Final Hour*."⁷

⁷ *Saheeh Al-Bukhaari*, Hadith 59

A Few Other *Fitan*

Other types of *fitan* include:

1. Rising insecurity – Crime, murder and rape seem to be a way of life for many. Add to this the drone attacks in Pakistan and certain parts of Africa. What about the growing insecurity of Muslims living in Western countries like the US and the UK? All of these are among the *fitan* forewarned by Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. He said, “Time will become short (as we say, there will be no *barakah* in time), knowledge will be taken away, *fitan* will appear, there will be greed and excessive *haraj*.” The Sahaabah *radiallahu anhum* enquired the meaning of *haraj* and he *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said that it is murder.⁸
2. Rising immorality – Same-sex marriages, prostitution, abortion and even incest . . . Do we need to expound?
3. Natural calamities – Earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, cyclones, fire . . . Again, there is no need for elucidation.
4. Prevalence of music – Under the pretext of education, entertainment or simply *unwinding*, music has permeated every sphere of modern life. In our homes, cars, classrooms, offices, departmental stores, supermarkets . . . and some *anaasheed*, music is everywhere. So many people these days do not believe that music is impermissible. Is this not a *fitnah*?
5. Widespread alcoholism – The huge number of Muslims addicted to narcotics demonstrate the extent this *fitnah* is ravaging the *ummah*.

⁸ *Saheeh Muslim*, Hadith 6964

6. Widespread dishonesty and misuse of trust – Explaining the extent trust will be exploited, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said, “. . . Hardly anybody will discharge his trusts. It will be said *there is a trustworthy man in such-and-such tribe*.”⁹
7. The appearance of deviant sects – In this regard the *hadith* of seventy-three sects is all too famous.
8. Criticism of the *Salaf* – The *Salaf* are the earliest Muslim generations, especially the Sahaabah *radiallahu anhum*.
 - ~ We have been commanded in the Qur’aan to make *du’aa* for the Sahaabah *radiallahu anhum*.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

*Those who come after them say O Rabb, forgive us and our brethren who brought imaan before us and do not place in our hearts ill feeling for those who have imaan. Certainly, you are most compassionate and merciful.*¹⁰

- ~ Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* forbade us from criticizing his Sahaabah *radiallahu anhum*. “Do not speak badly of my Sahaabah because if one of you has to spend gold equivalent to Mount Uhud, he will not reach the *mudd* of one of them.”¹¹ In fact, he won’t even reach half of that.”¹² Many other *ahaadith* extol the merits of the Sahaabah *radiallahu anhum*.

⁹ *Saheeh Al-Bukhaari*, Hadith 6132

¹⁰ Surah Hashr Aayah

¹¹ The *mudd* is a measure equivalent to 796,068 grams.

¹² *Saheeh Muslim*, Hadith 6651 and Sunan Abu Da’ud, Hadith 4660

- ~ The Sahaabah *radiallahu anhum* are the *bridge* between Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* and the rest of the *ummah*. Who else but the Sahaabah *radiallahu anhum* conveyed the Qur'aan to the rest of the *ummah*? Hence, by casting aspersions on their integrity, the Qur'aan becomes extremely doubtful. How reliable is the Qur'aan if its transmitters are unreliable?

Criticising the Sahaabah *radiallahu anhum* is therefore a serious *fitnah* that attacks the foundations of Islam.

9. Rejection of *hadith* – Interpretation of the Qur'aan was one of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s primary functions.

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ

*We revealed The Reminder to you so that you may expound for the people what was revealed to them.*¹³

Thus, the Qur'aan mentions broad principles but the finer details are clarified by Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.

- ~ The Qur'aan commands us to perform *salaah* but it does not explain the method of *salaah* and how many *rak'aat* should be performed in each *salaah*. It instructs us to perform *salaah* but it does not inform us that there are two *rak'aat* in *fajr*, four in *dhuhr* and three in *maghrib*. All these details are explained in the *hadith*.
- ~ The Qur'aan instructs us to discharge *zakaat* but it does not tell us how much *zakaat* we have to pay, two and half percent, five percent or . . . Similarly, it does not inform us whether *zakaat* is payable on all our possessions including household items or whether it is only compulsory on certain categories of wealth. Once

¹³ Surah An-Nahl, Aayah 44

again, these details were explained by Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.

- ~ Likewise, we are commanded in the Qur'aan to make *tawaaf* of the *ka'bah*, but nowhere in the Qur'aan are we told that one *tawaaf* comprises of seven rounds. This too came to us from Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*.

These are just a few examples. Nevertheless, they are sufficient to prove that the role of *hadith* in understanding the Qur'aan and implementing its laws is indispensable. Rejection of *hadith* is therefore another evil *fitnah*. Based on what we have explained, it attacks the core and essence of Islam. Can you imagine someone saying, 'Qur'aan does not specify the number of *rak'aat* for *salaah*. Hence, I will perform how many *rak'aat* I wish'? Thus, he performs three *rak'aat* in *fajr*, six in *dhuhr* and seven in *maghrib*. To many people, this may sound laughable. However, it is a reality. Misguided by Shaytaan and his friends, there are people who argue in this manner. Imagine! If they continue arguing like this, what will be left of Islam?

May Allah Ta'aala safeguard our *imaan* and protect us from all forms of *fitan*, *aameen*.

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