

الْفِتْنَةُ وَوُجُوهُهَا الْمُتَنَوِّعَةُ

Many Faces of *Fitnah*

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All praise to Allaah, the Lord of the worlds. I bear the testimony that there is none worthy of worship beside Him and I bear the testimony that Muhammad is indeed His slave and messenger.

Meaning of *Fitnah*

The word *fitnah*, has a variety of connotations that include the following: trials, tribulations, tests, civil strife, war, allurement, enticement, bewitchment, turmoil, obsession, misguidance, sin, unbelief, scandal, disgrace, punishment, misleading others, madness, wealth, children, difference of views, relapsing to sins, etc.

All the meanings that the term has come with go back to one fundamental meaning which is backsliding or making foul of the Deen.

This article therefore seeks to x-ray kinds of relapsing that can occur to a Muslim soul such that he or she will be regarded as having suffered a *fitnah*.

A person will be said to have suffered a *fitnah* in his Deen if he or she was known hitherto to be upright in the Deen and suddenly, becomes sinful and rebellious.

Ibn ‘Aun – Allaah’s mercy on him – said, while referring to what can occur to a soul such that it will be regarded as having fallen short:

‘When desires overpower a heart, a person will praise what he used to dispraise.’ Recorded by Al-Imaam al-Akubaree in *al-Ibaanah*, p.45.

How many are those Muslims who used to be religiously upright but who are today open sinners! Backsliding in Deen has usually been a slow and gradual process. From being on the front row to the back row. We ask Allaah for safety.

Meaning of *Fitnah* in the *Sharee'ah*

There are many references to *fitnah* in the Book of Allaah, the Mighty, and the Sunnah of His Messenger – sallallaahu alahyi wasallam. Below are some excerpts:

When one encounters some positive or negative things in one's life, that is an example of *fitnah*. Allaah said:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ

Everyone is going to taste death, and we shall make a trial of You with evil and with good, and to us You will be returned.
[Anbiyaa: 35]

Ibn Katheer, may Allaah show him mercy, said in his *Tafseer*: 'That is, We shall test you with afflictions sometimes, and with splendour some other time, to see who will be grateful and who will commit disbelief; who will be patient and who will show despair.'

In fact, Allaah the Mighty, has described the wealth and children He has given us as *fitnah*.

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ

Your wealth and Your Children are Only a trial,
[Taghaabbun: 15]

How many are those Muslims that encounter problems through their wealth and children, even wives!

Problems from wealth and family often comes in two perspectives; one, when the wealth and the family prevent one from obedience to Allaah. There are some people who find it difficult to worship Allaah because of their vocation or job. If you ask them why they don't pray, for instance, they will say it is the nature of their job. Many can't leave their family when an act of worship demands; an example is hajj or jihaad. How many are those who get busy with their families such that they forget about Allaah, their creator!

Allaah has indeed warned:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ
ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

O you who believe! Let not your properties or your Children divert you from the remembrance of Allaah. And whosoever does that, then they are the losers. [al-Munaafiquun: 9]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ

O you who believe! Verily, among your wives and your children there are enemies for you (i.e. may stop you from the obedience of Allâh), [Taghaabun: 14]

The other perspective is when the wealth or the family is the actual problem to the religious commitment of the man. He is religious no doubt; he comes to the *masjid*, he attends Muslim gatherings but his family such as the wife or children do not support him or go along with him in his religious way. That is another form of *fitnah*. Allaah told us about the wives of Prophets Lut and Nuh who were disobedient to their husbands.

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأةَ نُوحٍ وَامْرَأةَ لُوطٍ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحَيْنِ فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَقِيلَ ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدَّاخِلِينَ

Allâh sets forth an example for those who disbelieve, the wife of Nûh (Noah) and the wife of Lout (Lot). They were under two of our righteous slaves, but they both betrayed their (husbands by rejecting their doctrine) so they [Nûh and Lout] benefited them (their respective wives) not, against Allâh, and it was said: "Enter the Fire along with those who enter!" [Tahreem: 10]

Another example of *fitnah* in the Qur'aan is the story of two angels by name Haarut and Maarut who were sent to the Babylonians to teach them the secrets of sorcery. Allaah said about them:

وَاتَّبِعُوا مَا تَتْلُو الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَٰكِنَّ
الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السَّحَرَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ
هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ
فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ
أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ

They followed what the Shayâtin (devils) gave out (falsely of the magic) in the lifetime of Sulaimân (Solomon). Sulaimân did not disbelieve, but the Shayâtin (devils) disbelieved, teaching men magic and such things that came down at Babylon to the two angels, Hârût and Mârût, but neither of these two (angels) taught anyone (such things) till they had said, "We are only for trial, so disbelieve not (by learning this magic from us)." and from these (angels) people learn that by which they cause separation between man and his wife, but they could not thus harm anyone except by Allâh's Leave. [al-Baqarah: 102]

The crux however was that they were sent as *fitnah* to the people. Allaah said about them (that they said):

إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ

"We are Only for trial, so disbelieve not

Al-Hasan al-Basree – may Allaah bestow mercy on him explains: ‘Allaah sent the two Angels with sorcery to teach the people the test with which Allaah wanted to test the people, but He took a promise from them that they would not teach anybody until they said: ‘We are but trial so do not commit unbelief.’”

Qataadah – may Allaah bestow mercy on him too – said: ‘[They meant to say:] We are a test from Allaah – do not disbelieve.’

In another place in the Qur’aan, Allaah the Mighty said about Nabee Musa – *alayhi salaam* – that he said:

وَاخْتَارَ مُوسَىٰ قَوْمَهُ سَبْعِينَ رَجُلًا لِّمِيقَاتِنَا فَلَمَّا أَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ قَالَ رَبِّ لَوْ
شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُم مِّن قَبْلُ وَإِيَّاي أَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا
فِتْنَتُكَ تُضِلُّ بِهَا مَن تَشَاءُ وَتَهْدِي مَن تَشَاءُ أَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا
وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ

And Mûsa (Moses) chose out of his people seventy (of the best) men for our appointed time and place of meeting, and when they were seized with a violent earthquake, He said: "O My Lord, if it had been Your will, You could have destroyed them and Me before; would You destroy us for the deeds of the foolish ones among us? it is Only Your trial by which You lead astray whom You will, and keep guided whom You will. You are Our Walî (Protector), so forgive us and have Mercy on us, for You are the best of those who forgive. [Al-A’raaf: 155]

Thus, any revelation from Allaah is *fitnah* for the people; will they believe or disbelieve?

Allaah said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ

Verily, Allâh is not ashamed to set forth a parable even of a mosquito or so much more when it is bigger (or less when it is smaller) than it. And as for those who believe, they know that it is the Truth from their Lord, but as for those who disbelieve, they say: "What did Allâh intend by this parable?" by it He misleads many, and many He guides thereby. And He misleads thereby only those who are Al-Fâsiqûn (the rebellious, disobedient to Allâh). [Al-Baqarah: 26].

He the Mighty also said:

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ إِلَّا مَلَائِكَةً وَمَا جَعَلْنَا عِدَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيَسْتَيَقِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَيَزْدَادَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِيمَانًا

And We have set none but angels as guardians of the Fire, and We have fixed their number (19) only as a trial for the disbelievers, in order that the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) may arrive at a certainty. [al-Muddaththir: 31]

Therefore, whoever accepts the guidance from Allaah has indeed passed the *fitnah* regarding what Allaah reveals, and whoever does otherwise is steeped in the *fitnah*. We ask Allaah for His Mercy.

Yet Allaah the Mighty said some people look for *fitnah* regarding what He revealed in His Book. Allaah the Mighty said:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ
مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ
وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ
كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

It is He who has sent down to you (Muhammad) the Book (this Qur'ân). In it are Verses that are entirely clear, they are the foundations of the Book [and those are the Verses of Al-Ahkâm (commandments, etc.), Al-Farâ'id (obligatory duties) and Al-Hudud (legal laws for the punishment of thieves, adulterers, etc.)]; and others not entirely clear. So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation (from the truth) they follow that which is not entirely clear thereof, seeking Al-Fitnah (polytheism and trials, etc.), and seeking for its hidden

meanings, but none knows its hidden meanings save Allâh. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in it; the whole of it (clear and unclear verses) are from our Lord." and none receive admonition except men of understanding. (Tafsir At-Tabarî). [Aal Imraan: 7]

The *fitnah* here refers to the acts of the chiefs of misguidance who seek to mislead their followers under the guise of using the Qur'aan as the basis of their misguidance. That is the method of the heretics such as the Jahmiyyah, the Soofiyyah and others in their semblance.

Fitnah can also mean *Kufr*, that is, sheer disbelief in Allaah and His Messenger – sallallaahu alahyi wasallam. Allaah the Mighty said:

سَتَجِدُونَ آخِرِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَأْمَنُوكُمْ وَيَأْمَنُوا قَوْمَهُمْ كُلَّمَا رُدُّوا إِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ أُرْكَسُوا فِيهَا

You will find others that wish to have security from you and security from their people. Every time they are sent back to temptation, they yield thereto. [an-Nisaa: 91]

Some people thus intrinsically belong to *Kufr* therefore when they have the slightest opportunity of relapsing after faith, they will remain there forever. A poet has succinctly described those people as thus:

'When the nature [of a man] is of evil, no ethics or ethicist will be of help.'

At this juncture therefore, it should be noted that many that suffer *fitnah* in the deen are most often of intrinsic evil origin. This will be elaborated further, Inshaa Allaah.

Allaah said about the hypocrites:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

And of mankind, there are some (hypocrites) who say: "We believe in Allâh and the Last Day" while in fact they believe not. [Al-Baqarah: 8]

A clear indication of that is that such people often go against the injunctions of the Sunnah secretly until Allaah exposes them.

Allaah said:

فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

And let those who oppose the Messenger's (Muhammad) Commandment (i.e. his Sunnah legal ways, orders, acts of worship, statements, etc.) (among the sects) beware, lest some Fitnah (disbelief, trials, afflictions, earthquakes, killing,

overpowered by a tyrant, etc.) befall them or a painful torment be inflicted on them. [Nuur: 63]

You can see that. We ask Allaah for safety.

And He the Mighty said we should be wary of wholesome *Fitnah*:

وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ
الْعِقَابِ

And fear the *Fitnah* (affliction and trial, etc.) which affects not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong (but it may afflict all the good and the bad people), and know that Allâh is severe in punishment. [Al-Anfaal: 25]

The Warning of the Messenger of Allaah about *Fitnah*

The Messenger of Allaah – sallallaahu alahyi wasallam – had forewarned the Ummah about *fitnah* to come in the Deen, whether communal or individual.

The trio Al-Imâm Al-Bukhârî, Ahmad and al-Hâkim recorded that the Messenger of Allâh (sallaLlaahu alahyi wasallam) said:

‘There shall be tribulations, whoever sits therein is better than whoever stands; whoever stands is better than whoever walks;

whoever walks therein is better than whoever paces. Whoever makes himself prominent in it shall be consumed by it. Whoever (however) has the means of safety or refuge from it. Let him take it.'

Amr bnAal-Aas (may Allâh be pleased with him) said to his son: **'O my son, take this advice from me. A just ruler is better than rain (from the sky), a fierce lion is better than an unjust ruler. But an unjust and tyrant ruler is better than a pervading tribulation.'** [Al-Aadab Ash-Shar'iiyah 1/172]

The *fitnah* being referred to by the Messenger of Allaah – sallallaahu alahyi wasallam – was the civil type wherein the Muslims raise swords against one another.

There are also other reports from the Messenger of Allaah – sallallaahu alahyi wasallam – wherein he talked about the *fitnah* of children, wealth and family which he said can all be expiated with observance of Salat and fasting but he delved more on the communal *fitnah* that will shake the Muslim Ummah to the marrows.

He told the Ummah where it will stem from. Al-Bukhaaree recorded that the Messenger of Allaah – sallallaahu alahyi wasallam – said on the authority of Ibn 'Umar: *'The fitnah is from here, the fitnah is from here, where the horns of Shaytaan appears.'*

The first civil *fitnah* in the history of Islam was the murder of 'Uthmaan bn Affaan – may Allaah be pleased with him. A poet had written:

وقد فُتِنَ النَّاسُ فِي دِينِهِمْ ... وَخَلَّى ابْنُ عَفَّانٍ شَرًّا طَوِيلًا

The people have been tried in their Deen...But Ibn 'Affaan strode away from a long evil.

Since the time of the murder of 'Uthmaan, the Muslim Ummah had become dismembered. We ask Allaah for safety.

He – sallallaahualahyiwasallam – also warned that the *fitnah* of his Ummah is in wealth.

إِنَّ لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فِتْنَةً وَفِتْنَةُ أُمَّتِي الْمَالُ

‘Indeed, each nation has its trial; the trial of my Ummah is wealth.’ *Sunan at-Tirmidhee (As-Saheehah: 2/141)*

He – sallallaahualahyiwasallam – also said:

فَوَاللَّهِ لَا الْفَقْرَ أَخْشَى عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ أَخْشَى عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ تُبْسَطَ عَلَيْكُمْ
الدُّنْيَا كَمَا بُسِطَتْ عَلَى مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ فَتَنَافَسُوهَا كَمَا تَنَافَسُوهَا
وَتُهْلِكُكُمْ كَمَا أَهْلَكْتَهُمْ

‘By Allaah, it is not poverty that I fear for you but I fear lest the world is open for you as it was made open for those before you, then you compete regarding it as those before you competed, then it destroys you as it destroyed them.’[Saheeh Al Bukhaaree]

He – sallallaahu alahyi wasallam –also warned about the women.

فَاتَّقُوا الدُّنْيَا وَاتَّقُوا النِّسَاءَ فَإِنَّ أَوَّلَ فِتْنَةٍ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَانَتْ فِي النِّسَاءِ

‘Fear the world and fear the women, indeed the first trial of Children of Israel was in women.’[Saheeh Muslim]

The *Fitnah* in Questing for Knowledge

It was the appearance of *fitnah* in learning that led to scrutiny of reports in hadeeth. Al-Imaam Muslim recorded in his Saheeh from Muhammad bn Seereen – may Allaah bestow mercy on him – that he said: ‘Before, they were not asked about the chain but when there occurred the *fitnah*, they began to say: ‘Mention your men to us.’ Thence the reports of People of Sunnah would be accepted while those of the people of Bid’ah would be rejected.’

The story of how Waasil b. ‘Ataa disengaged himself from al-Hasan b. Al-Basree, may Allaah bestow mercy on him, regarding the fate of those who are guilty of the major sins where the former said they will be in a point ‘between two points.’ That was the origin of the Mu’tazilah sect.

The *Fitnah* of Our Time

There is no doubt that this period of ours is a period of *Fitnah* – of all types – communal or individual.

The communal one goes to the spread of heretical beliefs and views among the Muslims. Our era is that of fake people parading themselves as the champions of Islam thus earning a bad reputation for Islam.

An example of such people are those who have courted ideologies such as *Jihaadiyyah*, *Harakiyyah*, *Hizbiyyah*, and host of other heresies.

For instance, the *fitnah* the people of Boko Haram have caused for the Muslims in this part of the world will remain indelible for many generations to come. No doubt, the people under that ideology have taken a cue from the self-appointed international ‘warriors’ of Islam being led by the now demised Osama b. Laden of the infamous, al-Qaeda, and the dwindling al-Baghdaadi’s ‘Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.’

Today, a Muslim is seen as a potential trouble maker. If he wants to pass any airport in the world, he is looked upon as a killer who is not safe to travel with especially if he is the type that wears the islamically recommended beards, or she is in a conspicuous garb of Islam such as the *Jilbaab* and the *Niqaab*.

No doubt, there are local groups, steeped in party fanaticism, that openly call to these heretical practices that have put the Muslims on a pitiful pedestal. Names of such groups are just too numerous to mention. But the sad reality is that, many Muslim youths subscribe to them. What is correct Islam and what is otherwise is very scarce to ascertain today. Muslims just wallow in profound ignorance they think is absolute guidance.

The *takfeerees*, those who excommunicate the Muslims from the fold of Islam because of alleged ‘un-Islamic’ practices such as the use of spoon, eating free range cattle, etc., is a good example to cite here. Those who align with the Muslim Brotherhood – that believes Islam should be subsumed in the intricacies of the 21st century such as democracy, that preaches supplanting the Muslim rulers all over the world with those upon their ideology – is another example.

The *Tableeghis*, who wander around the place preaching ignorance which they call pristine Islam, is another *fitnah* the Muslims are facing.

Only Allaah knows the number of Muslims caught in the webs of these callings that are far away from the original teachings of Islam.

Another face of *fitnah* is when there is wanton confusion in a Muslim community due to a spread of civil strife or a heretical thought such that the otherwise knowledgeable ones begin to slip back. An example of that is this usual call to rebelling against the legitimate Muslim rulers. An example of that occurred during the time of AbdulMalik when Ibn Al-Ash'ath rebelled against him and many knowledgeable ones in the society caved in to his rebellion. The aftermath of the rebellion that was severely put out by Governor al-Hajjaaj bn Yuusuf left no pleasant news to read. Many scholars of the Deen went with the strife; notable among them was the illustrious student of Ibn Abbaas, Sa'eed b. Jubair.

When there occurs a *fitnah*, the matter often becomes confusing. The nature of *fitnah* is that when it occurs the intelligent ones will become incapacitated from defending the less intelligent as Shaykhul-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah said.

In all ways, the Messenger of Allaah – sallallaahualahyiwasallam – forbade from participating in Fitan. Abu Daawud recorded: On the authority of Abu Musa

Al-Imâm Ahmad (Allâh's mercy on him) was describing the people of desires: **'There are different types in the Book; opposers of the Book; unanimous in opposing the Book. They speak (freely) about doubtful matters confounding the ignoramuses among the masses therewith.'** [Al-Aadaab Ash-Shar'iyyah 1/209]

Al-Imâm Ahmad (Allâh's mercy on him) also said: **'...do not fight in a tribulation; stay put in your house. This is what the scholars of all the regions have agreed upon.'** [Ibn Jauzi's *Manaaqib Al-Imâm Ahmad* 166]

Shaykhul-Islâm Ibn Taymiyyah (Allâh's mercy on him) said: **'The Prophet (sallaLlaahuAlaihiwasallam) forbade from fighting during tribulation. That therefore is from the fundamentals of Sunnah; that is the position of the people of Sunnah and Hadith; so also, the scholars of Madînah, its jurists and others.'** [Al-Istiqamah: 1/32]

The communal *fitnah* among the Muslims also comes in this picture: where the Muslims, especially the youths, get enmeshed in jurisprudential and methodical misunderstandings between the reputable scholars of Islam, local and abroad. We said reputable scholars because it is not every person parading himself a scholar that is a scholar. A clear example of that is the case of that fellow spewing rubbish about the Sunnah and its people at Markaz Agege. Such a fellow need not be spared, he has to be intellectually subdued; intellectually, we said, because that is the only option we are left with.

As for the individual *fitnah* battling the Muslims, this comes to lust for mundane things that can occur to a Muslim in his or her Islamic life.

There have been several cases of otherwise upright Muslims – male and female – becoming bad at a point in their lives. Many used to be 'firebrand' Muslims while on campus but when they graduated they became lowly.

There is no doubt that the beginning of the journey to the Sunnah used to be very volatile, that is, the new embracers of the Sunnah would be vibrant, hyper-active, non-comprising, and so on. They

are always noticeable and identifiable because of their superfluous disposition to the Sunnah. You would see one of them not overlooking the minutest type of the Prophetic practices such as interpreting the *Izaar* (loin cloth) to mean women wrappers only and not minding to wearing them to any place such as lecture halls! You would see one of them wearing tattered cloths about saying that is the real '*badhaadhah* (abstemiousness) the Messenger of Allaah – *sallallaahu alaihi wasallam* – referred to as part of *Eemaan*! You would also see one of them placing the siwaak (tooth stick) on the right lobe of his ears saying one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allaah – *sallallaahu alaihi wasallam* – used to do that.

While they may not be totally wrong in many of those dispositions (though they were sometimes), they would however take the Muslims by surprise when all of a sudden you would see them later in life, some very quickly, some gradually, relapsing to evil practices that go against the teachings of Islam. Like meeting one of them in the bank as a bank official, or one of them becoming a notorious local political or otherwise. If a previously niqaab-wearing lady, you would find her on the national TV anchoring a soap opera.

The backsliding can take many sad and pitiful forms. We ask Allaah for safety. We ask Allaah for safety. The supplication is made twice because a Muslim needs much of such supplications in his life. By Allaah, one of those people that got a pretentious nickname of *Saabe* (a reference to someone like a Companion of the Messenger of Allaah – *sallallaahu alaihi wasallam*) for himself later became a bank worker using skin bleachers, and he is a man!

We ask Allaah for safety and steadfastness.

At this point, nobody should ever think he is immune from backsliding for the souls of all the slaves are between the Fingers of Ar-Rahmaan, He changes them as He wills.

Our prayer however is that whenever we want to relax from our ‘over-activeness’, we do so into the Sunnah.

The Messenger of Allaah – sallallaahu alahyi wasallam – has said:

فَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ عَابِدٍ شِرَّةً وَلِكُلِّ شِرَّةٍ فَتْرَةٌ فَإِمَّا إِلَى سُنَّةٍ وَإِمَّا إِلَى بِدْعَةٍ فَمَنْ
كَانَتْ فَتْرَتُهُ إِلَى سُنَّةٍ فَقَدْ اهْتَدَى وَمَنْ كَانَ فَتْرَتُهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ
هَلَكَ

‘Every worshipper has his point of activeness, and every point of activeness has a point of relax, either to the Sunnah or to the Bid’ah. Whoever’s point of relax is to the Sunnah is guided, and whoever’s point of relax is to other than that is destroyed.’ [Recorded by Ahmad and Ibn Hibbaan. Al-Albaanee mentioned it *Sifatus-Salaah*].

Very unfortunate therefore that many Muslims have relaxed into *kufir* such as democratic politics. Some into sheer disbelief, like those who because of women forsook Islam saying the Muslim women are not cooperating. Likewise, there are some Muslims in the academia today who have become atheists knowingly or unknowingly. And sadly, there are some one-time Sunnah preachers who are today marabouts that make magic and fetish for some I-want-to-get-rich-quick fellows.

The examples above are indications of sudden turnarounds meanwhile it used to be an inherent problem which many people

might not notice. Some people embraced the Sunnah for reasons other than Islam. There are some quarters whereby not professing the Sunnah is socially unacceptable thus many people because of fear of social opprobrium would reluctantly accept the Sunnah.

Allaah the Mighty refers to such people when He said:

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ
إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِئُونَ

And when they meet those who believe, they say: "We believe," but when they are alone with their Shayâtin (devils – polytheists, hypocrites, etc.), they say: "Truly, we are with you; verily, we were but mocking." [Al-Baqarah: 14].

Thus, when you see someone snapping pictures while he was known to abhor the act before, then know that he has been faking the Muslims all along, he thinks it is time he makes himself known.

One of the individual types of *fitnah* is courting a ruler. Many people don't see anything wrong with this. Therefore, many of the Sunnah-professing brothers are afflicted.

The Messenger of Allaah – Sallaahu alahyi wasallam – has said: **"..... Whoever goes after the ruler will put himself to trial."** [SunanAbeeDaawud no 2859, Musnad Ahmad no 3352, 8619 and 9390 and Al-Mujtabah no 4311].

This comes at the end of another narration:

"... The nearer one goes to a ruler, the farther he keeps away from Allah." [*Musnad Ahmad* no 8169 and *SunanAbeeDaawud*. Al-Albaanee said in *at-Targheeb* no 2240: Imām Ahmad mentioned it with two chains, the narrators of one them are authentic.

And with the same reporters:

"....whoever comes to the door of the Sultan, he will suffer a *fitnah* (that is, he will be corrupted) [*Sunan at-Tirmidhee* no 2358, Al-Albaanee graded it authentic].

Abdur-Rahmaan Mubārakufūree said:

(Visiting a ruler) without a necessity or demand for his visitation will fall into the fitnah: If he (the ruler) grants him what he visited him for.... (in this case). He has risked his deen. But, if he doesn't grant him, he has risked his dunya. [Tuhfatul Ahwadhee 6/533].

Al-Mundhhir said:

"...Whosoever visits a ruler and flatters him, he (the person) had fallen into Fitnah. But whoever does not flatter him, (but rather) admonishes him, commands him good and prohibits him from evil, his visitation is (one of) the best jihad." [At-Tuhfah 6/533, Aunul Ma'būd p.1218 and Ad-Dhaakheerah 33/173].

[This aspect of *visiting the rulers* has beencourtesy of the work of Al-Akh, Dhikrullaah Adebayo, Abu Sahl, on the matter].

Thus, *fitnah* is of varying types. We seek refuge in Allaah from its smallest and most prominent.

Ways Out of Fitnah

Tribulations whether in the life of a Muslim or in the general community of the Muslims will not cease to be because it has been in the Universal Plan of Allaah to let it be.

However, one of the ways out of Fitnah is always referring matters to the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah. ‘AbdurRahmaan b. Abzaa asked Ubayy b. Ka’b after ‘Uthmaan b. Affaan was killed: ‘O Father of Mundhir, what is the way out?’ the latter answered: ‘The Book of Allaah as it is clear to you, act by it. Whatever is not clear to you, refer it to whoever has knowledge about it. [*At-Taarikh al-Awsat*, 1/64].’

Also, there must be continuous efforts towards warning from fitnah, commanding general good and forbidding evil. A Muslim should stick to obedience and should be part of any splitting in whatever guise. Hearsays spread during fitnah, a Muslim should not be a party to that. One should also not forget making supplications to Allaah for safety and steadfastness in the all times. One should carry on with seeking for knowledge and try to put what is learnt into actions.

Being sincere in one’s dispositions is also a very important way out of fitnah.

O Allaah save us from all forms of *fitnah* and make us steadfast in the Deen.

WasallaLlahualaanabiyyinaamuhammadinwaaali-hi wa sahib-hi ajmaeen.