



An important booklet consisting of essential questions and answers related to the significance of acquiring knowledge concerning sin, darkness of the heart, satanic whispers and internal sins of the heart.

Recognising

Sin

Presented by
Majlis Al-Madina-tul-'Ilmiyyah
Translated into English by
Translation Department (Dawat-e-Islami)

گناہ کی پہچان

Recognising Sin

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An English translation of ‘*Gunah Ki Pehchan*’



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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى سَيِّدِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
أَتَابَعْدُ فَأَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Du'ā for reading this book

Read the following *du'ā* (supplication) before you study a religious book or an Islamic lesson, you will remember whatever you study **إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ**:

اللَّهُمَّ افْتَحْ عَلَيْنَا حِكْمَتَكَ وَاَنْشُرْ
عَلَيْنَا رَحْمَتَكَ يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

Translation

O Allah **عَزَّوَجَلَّ**! Open the doors of knowledge and wisdom for us and have mercy on us! O the One Who is the Most Glorious and Honourable! (*Al-Mustatraf, vol. 1, pp. 40*)

Note:

Recite *salat* upon the Prophet **ﷺ** once before and after the *du'ā*.

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Recognising Sin

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى سَيِّدِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
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The excellence of reciting *ṣalat* upon the Prophet ﷺ

The beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, “On the Day of Judgement, there will be no shade except the shade of the ‘Arsh (divine throne) of Allāh Almighty. Three people will be in the shade of the ‘Arsh of Allāh Almighty.”

It was asked, “O Messenger of Allāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ! Who will those people be?”

He replied, “1. The person who removes difficulty from one of my followers, 2. The one who revives my Sunnah, and 3. The one who recites *ṣalat* upon me in abundance.”¹

صَلُّوا عَلَى الْحَبِيبِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ

The definition of sin

Q: When is the term sin applied to a mistake? Furthermore, does one earn sin for an act of forgetfulness in the Sharī‘ah? For example, a person ate or drank forgetfully and mistakenly in the

¹ Al-Budur al-Saafirah, p. 131, ḥadīth 366

state of fasting, or remembered a prayer after its time had elapsed; what is the ruling on such acts?

A: If a fasting person eats or drinks forgetfully, his fast will not be invalid, let alone it being a sin. If a person remembers he is fasting, and water mistakenly goes down his throat whilst rinsing his mouth, his fast will be invalid in this case, but he will not be sinful. However, it will be necessary to make up for this fast later. The same applies for the prayer. If someone forgot to offer ṣalāh or remained asleep and the prayer time elapsed, he should offer the prayer as soon as he remembers, as it is now obligatory for him to make it up. However, in this scenario, he will not be sinful for missing the prayer. The Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said concerning the one who forgot to pray or remained asleep during a prayer time, “He should offer it when he remembers it.”¹

In this Ḥadīth, the person sleeping only missed the prayer due to sleep, and there was no deliberate neglect of the prayer. So, we are informed that the person is not sinful for missing the prayer. Similarly, if a person did not remember until the prayer time had elapsed, he would not be sinful. However, making up for this missed prayer is necessary in all cases.

¹ *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, p. 227, ḥadīth 695

Four ways of removing rust from the heart

Q: If, due to sins, the heart becomes blackened, rusty, and dead, how can one remove its blackness and rust and revive it?

A: In addition to fearing Allah Almighty, having love for Him and His beloved Prophet ﷺ is the greatest and most effective remedy for removing the rust of the heart. What remains now is for one to identify the following: the aspect of loving the Prophet ﷺ that eradicates rust from the heart, and the form of fearing Allāh Almighty that cleanses the heart of dirt. Remember, the meaning of love primarily refers to the heart's inclination towards something favourable. By virtue of fearing Allah and loving His Prophet ﷺ, when a person is granted steadfastness upon the actions mentioned below, the heart's rust dissipates.

1. Recital of the noble Qur'ān

The noble Qur'ān should be recited with contemplation and understanding whilst observing its etiquettes. Here, observing etiquettes refers to paying attention to the *mustahabbāt* (recommended acts) and rulings of Shari'ah, such as focusing entirely on the noble Qur'ān during its recitation. Reflecting on the divine speech, the reciter should recite as though he is conversing with Allāh Almighty, and he should feel the light of the noble Qur'ān penetrating his heart and washing away the rust of his heart. If someone recites the noble Qur'ān whilst

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contemplating it in this beautiful manner and understanding it, **رَانَ شَأْنُ اللَّهِ** the rust of his heart will vanish very quickly.

2. Dhikr of Allāh Almighty

Similarly, one should perform the dhikr (remembrance) of Allāh Almighty with reflection—void of inattentiveness— and be cognisant of being present in the court of Allāh Almighty. As well as reciting other litanies, one should remember Allāh Almighty with the following phrases:

- لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
- سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ
- وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ
- سُبْحَانَ رَبِّ الْعَظِيمِ
- سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ

He should recall the blessings of Allāh Almighty as he performs dhikr. The blessings of such dhikr significantly increase light in the heart.

3. Remembrance of death

Death, the grave and the Hereafter are three matters which assist greatly in removing the blackness of the heart. When a person

remembers death, his heart softens. When he sees graves and reflects on the death of others, he recalls his own grave. He reflects on being lowered into his own grave and the decomposition of his own body, and his heart becomes tender. When he imagines the affairs of the Hereafter—being presented in the court of Allāh Almighty, receiving the scroll of his deeds, the heat of the Day of Judgement, the thirst of Ḥaṣhr (the Gathering) and traversing the Ṣirāṭ (the Bridge)—the love of this world, the pleasure of sins, and desires leave his heart. Through this, the veils of darkness are lifted from his heart.

This is also called *sharḥ al-ṣadr* (expansion of the heart). It is related in a Ḥadīth that the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, “When light penetrates the heart, it opens.”

It was asked, “O Messenger of Allāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ! Is there any sign by which this light can be identified?”

He replied, “Yes. Remaining aloof from the place of deception (the world), turning towards the permanent abode (the hereafter) and preparing for death before its arrival.”¹

4. Company of the ṣāliḥīn (righteous)

Keeping good company is the most effective, practical step in removing the rust of the heart. Sometimes, one good sitting can remove a lifetime’s worth of rust. There are hundreds of

¹ *Shu’ab al-Īmān*, vol. 7, p. 352, ḥadīth 10,552

incidents where sitting or travelling with a pious person on one journey resulted in a complete transformation of the heart and being granted success in following the Sunnah. Such a major change in a person's life is actually due to the heart's rust being removed, because when the darkness of the heart is removed, such gentleness, light and illumination appear that a person immediately turns towards Allāh Almighty and begins to traverse the path of righteousness. Through the blessings of the company of the righteous, a person is blessed with fearing Allāh Almighty, developing love for Him and His Prophet ﷺ, reciting the noble Qur'ān, having a passion for being immersed in *dhikr* and *ṣalawāt*, and remembering death and the grave.

In short, if more attention is given to being in good company, acquiring all the above becomes very easy. Good company is scarce but not non-existent. Even today, those that truly seek are blessed with good company. If one cannot find a righteous individual to spend time with, the opportunity to spend time in an environment of piety is available nonetheless, such as the weekly *ijtimā'āt* of Dawat-e-Islami and Madanī *qafilahs*. If a person chooses to do this, there is great hope that Allāh Almighty will grant him the blessings of good company.

The method of recognising sin

Q: Is there a way to recognise sin so that we can refrain from it?

A: The first and foremost way to identify sin is acquiring knowledge. There are many facets to this. For example, if the definition of *kabīrah* (major) sin is in a person's mind, he will immediately know the ruling of sin in many cases. Similarly, if he knows the definition of *ṣaghīrah* (minor) sin, he will be aware of many sins. For example, leaving a *farḍ* (obligatory act) is a major sin, whilst leaving a *wājib* (necessary act) is a minor sin. However, repetition of a minor sin is a major sin. Persistence on leaving a Sunnah *mu'akkdah* (emphasised Sunnah), such as repeatedly leaving the four Sunnah rak'āt before the farḍ of Zuhr, causes a person to fall into the sphere of sin. Likewise, those matters which are clearly prohibited in the noble Qur'ān and the sacred Ḥadīth are sins, such as suicide, fornication, adultery and murdering one's children. Allāh Almighty states:

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ط

And do not kill yourselves (by committing murder, or suicide, etc.).¹

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزَّوْنَىٰ

And do not even go near Zina (fornication/adultery i.e. unlawful intercourse)²

¹ [Kanz-ul-Iman (translation of Quran)] (Part 5, Surah Al-Nisa, verse 29)

² [Kanz-ul-Iman (translation of Quran)] (Part 15, Surah Bani Isra'eel, verse 32)

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ

And do not kill your children¹

Similarly, reading all those verses where a command or prohibition has been mentioned specifically leads one to ascertain that such and such act is impermissible and *ḥarām*. For example, a person may recite this verse from the noble Qur'an:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَ
الْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

Indeed, those who wish that scandal should spread amongst the Muslims, for them is a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah knows, and you know not.²

By reciting or hearing this verse, a person learns that spreading obscenity is *ḥarām*. Similarly, by reciting the next verse, one learns that obscenity, in and of itself, is *ḥarām*. Allāh Almighty states:

وَيَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ

And forbids from obscenity, and evil and rebellion³

¹ [Kanz-ul-Iman (translation of Quran)] (Part 8, Surah Al-An'aam, verse 151)

² [Kanz-ul-Iman (translation of Quran)] (Part 18, Surah Al-Noor, verse 19)

³ [Kanz-ul-Iman (translation of Quran)] (Part 3, Surah Al-Nahl, verse 90)

In similar fashion, by reciting the following verse, a person will become aware of the ruling concerning using the wealth of orphans for oneself. Allāh Almighty states:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا ۖ وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيرًا ﴿١٠﴾

Those who consume the wealth of orphans unjustly; they are actually only filling their bellies with fire, and soon they will go into a blazing section of the Fire¹

Hence, it is clear that knowledge is necessary to recognise sin. For this reason, reciting the noble Qur'ān and the sacred Aḥādīth, understanding them, reflecting on them, and studying religious literature are very important and beneficial for increasing one's knowledge.

Apart from the sins mentioned explicitly in the noble Qur'ān and the sacred Aḥādīth, the noble scholars have mentioned many other sins too. They ascertained these through their knowledge and reflection. Although the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth do not specifically mention these sins, they are implicitly understood to be unlawful. For instance, a Qur'ānic verse stipulates that people should not ruin their deeds because of *riyā'* (ostentation):

¹ [Kanz-ul-Iman (translation of Quran)] (Part 4, Surah Al-Nisa, verse 10)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ

O believers! Do not invalidate your charity by boasting of favours and by causing anguish, like the one who spends his wealth to show off to people!

Other verses also mention deeds being ruined due to ostentation. However, the details of ostentation and its variant forms have been extrapolated by the noble scholars. There is a book called ‘*al-Zawājir*’ consisting of such extrapolations, which is very beneficial in this regard. It has been translated as ‘*Jahannam main lay janay walay a ‘maal*’ (published by Dawate-Islami’s Maktaba-tul-Madīnah).

A point worth noting here is that having knowledge is one thing and acting according to that knowledge is another. Who does not know that prayer is farḍ? Certainly, everyone knows of the obligation of prayer, but a large number of people do not offer prayer despite knowing this. It is clear, therefore, that having knowledge is not sufficient; being eager to do good and having the motivation and intention to act are also necessary. Without these, merely reading books alone is not beneficial. Even people who have read all the *Ṣiḥāḥ Sittah* (the six relied upon books of Aḥādīth) are seen to have no passion to offer prayer or carry out other acts of piety, or they are seen to have shortcomings in

¹ [Kanz-ul-Iman (translation of Quran)] (Part 3, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 264)

other areas. Therefore, in addition to having knowledge, one should also be practising. Being motivated and having the fear of Allah in the heart are very beneficial to induce action. These two things can be attained in two ways.

The first method: One should not only study the legal rulings on matters but should also read about the merits of virtuous actions and the warnings associated with evil actions. Through the blessings of this, the heart is awoken and inclines towards action.

The second method: One should adopt good company as it brings about zeal for action. Otherwise, mere knowledge is not sufficient on the most part.

Tranquillity of the heart

Q: Is there any connection between sin and the heart being content or discontent upon a particular action? Sometimes people act wrongly and when they are rectified, they reply that they acted correctly because their heart is satisfied and there is no burden on their conscience. Is tranquillity of the heart or conscience proof that the action carried out is correct and not a sin?

A: There is some reality to this, but it is not always so. The detail is that the beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said concerning this state of the heart and conscience, **الْإِثْمُ مَا حَاكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ**—“Sin is that

which creates doubt in the heart”¹—meaning, sin is that which creates uneasiness in the heart, and one’s conscience considers it bad and reproaches it.

One should note another Ḥadīth alongside this, where the beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, إِذَا لَمْ تَسْتَجِ فَاصْنَمْ مَا شِئْتَ “If you feel no shame, do as you wish.”² The meaning of this Ḥadīth is that when a person has no shame and modesty, he has no concern and does whatever he wants.

If someone’s state is such that he has no concern for shame and modesty, commits sins recklessly and says that his conscience is satisfied, then such a person’s conscience is given no consideration. In fact, such a person’s conscience is dead. No attention will be given to such a person’s saying that his heart is satisfied. Many a thief and murderer will say such words, and their hearts will be satisfied. مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ Will theft and murder become permissible by this? Certainly not.

Another Ḥadīth provides guidance concerning this matter. The beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, دَعْ مَا يُرِيْبُكَ إِلَى مَا لَا يُرِيْبُكَ “Leave that which makes you doubtful for that which does not make you doubtful.”³ Meaning, one should not carry out an act that is doubtful. For example, when one is doubtful as to whether an

¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 1,061, ḥadīth 6,517

² *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 8, p. 29, ḥadīth 6,120

³ *Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī*, chapter 60, vol. 4, p. 232, ḥadīth 2,526

action is permissible or impermissible, he should abandon that and choose an option that is correct and devoid of any doubt. In order to understand this deeply, instil the following in your mind.

There are some matters where the Shari‘ah has clearly informed us of their rulings. Just as the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ mentioned, **الْحَلَالُ بَيِّنٌ وَالْحَرَامُ بَيِّنٌ وَبَيْنَهُمَا مُشْتَبِهَاتٌ** “The lawful is clear, and the unlawful is clear, and between them are doubtful matters.”¹ What should be done about these doubtful matters? The Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, **فَمَنْ اتَّقَى الشُّبُهَاتِ فَقَدْ اسْتَبْرَأَ لِدِينِهِ وَعِرْضِهِ** “Whoever saved himself from doubtful matters, he has indeed cleared himself in regard to his religion and honour.”²

The principle of the Shari‘ah is that if someone’s conscience says regarding a matter which is clearly ḥalāl according to the noble Qur‘ān and the sacred Ḥadīth, “No, this action does not seem correct”, no regard will be given to the conscience in this instance. This is because when the religion has clearly made something ḥalāl, the conscience is given no consideration. Yes, abandoning a *mubāḥ* (permissible) act due to an extrinsic reason, for example, is a separate matter.

In the same way, those matters which the Shari‘ah has clearly made sinful and ḥarām are sins, and it is necessary to abandon

¹ *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, p. 1,318

² *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, p. 1,318

them. If the conscience says, “Do this; there is no problem with this”, again, one’s conscience will be set aside here and given no consideration.

Third are those actions regarding which there is doubt, and in light of various sources, it is not known whether they are permissible or impermissible; there are differences amongst the scholars regarding such matters. Here, the Sharī‘ah has given guidance that doubtful matters should be avoided. Whoever saves himself from them clears himself in regard to his religion and honour. People will not say concerning such a person, “Look at what he is doing”, nor will such a person be affected by uncertainty. Furthermore, in this manner, his religion will be preserved as this is a matter of *taqwā* (piety).

Furthermore, there are some matters about which there can actually be uncertainty as to whether one should do them or not. “Will it be correct to do this or not?” The mind sways both ways. Regarding such matters, which person is permitted to follow his heart’s verdict, and which person is not?

There are some important criteria concerning this. A person who has no shame, is reckless in committing sins and has no passion for acting upon the Sharī‘ah should not refer to his conscience in relation to Sharī‘ah matters. Conversely, a person may act according to the Sharī‘ah, have a mindset to completely avoid sins (and actually do so), love righteous actions (and perform them), and have such love for pious acts that one

experiences joy, tranquillity, illumination of the heart and the sweetness of faith. If such a person was uncertain regarding a matter, there would be no problem if his heart told him, “Do this act.” This is because such a person’s conscience has reached a high level. However, finding such a person is a difficult task, and to consider oneself at such a level is wishful thinking and tantamount to casting oneself into a river.

Sinful heart

Q: In the noble Qur’ān, the phrase “his heart is sinful” is mentioned. This statement is also mentioned by people in common speech. What does it mean for the heart to be sinful?

A: There are many vices of the heart, such as *kufr* and *shirk*, for these are essentially sins of the heart itself, because the meaning of *kufr* is *inkār* (rejection) of any matter from the *ḍarūriyāt al-dīn* (essentials of faith). *Inkār* (rejection) and *taṣdīq* (affirmation) are related to the heart. *Īmān* is affirmation in the heart, and *kufr* is rejection in the heart. There are numerous actions associated with the latter that have been declared *kufr*. However, the original definition is for there to be rejection in the heart in place of affirmation.

In the same way, *shirk* (associating partners with Allāh Almighty) is originally an action of the heart in that a person considers someone a partner of Allāh Almighty in his heart. Following this, the manifestations of this belief become evident.

Likewise, hypocrisy is also associated with the heart, as a person outwardly performs all the actions of a Muslim—he fasts and prays—but affirmation is absent from his heart. Hence, it is very easy to understand that *kufṛ*, *shirk* and hypocrisy are sins of the heart.

Apart from these, there are many other sins connected to the heart. For example, *takabbur* (pride), where one considers others lowly and insignificant, is a matter of the heart. *Hasad* (jealousy), i.e. wishing for the removal of a blessing from another Muslim, is a wish that occurs in one’s heart. Sometimes this is manifested outwardly and at other times, it is kept within the heart.

Similarly, *riyā’* (ostentation) is also related to the heart. It certainly arises from the heart, whereby people wish for others to consider them a pious worshipper. In addition to pride and jealousy, malice and hatred are also sins of the heart. The perpetrator of these actions incurs sins of the heart. For this reason, in the nomenclature of Sharī’ah, these are known as ‘sins of the heart’, i.e. illnesses of the heart or spiritual maladies. It is mentioned in a Ḥadīth, “Indeed there is a morsel (of flesh) in the body; if it is healthy, the entire body is healthy, and if it is corrupt, the entire body is corrupted. Behold! Indeed, it is the heart.”¹

¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 1, p. 28, ḥadīth 52

If pride, jealousy, malice and hatred leave the heart and *ikhhlās* (sincerity), *ṣabr* (patience), *shukr* (gratitude), *tawakkul* (reliance), *yaqīn* (certainty), *murāqabah* (contemplation), *muhāsabah* (self-accountability) and love for Allāh Almighty are made to enter it, the heart is rectified. Therefore, if the heart is rectified, so too are the limbs. If the heart is corrupted whereby sincerity leaves and ostentation enters, humility leaves and pride infiltrates, well-wishing departs and envy arrives, friendship disappears and malice and hatred appear, then these are signs of the heart's corruption, and when the heart is corrupted, the whole body becomes corrupted. As a result, a person does such acts that are consequential to ostentation, pride, envy, malice and hatred.

Definition of *fāsiq* (transgressor)

Q: Who is a *fāsiq*?

A: The word *fāsiq* is extracted from the term *fisq* (fā, sīn, qāf). The linguistic meaning of *fisq* is to exit or emerge. In the terminology of Shari'ah, it means to leave obeying Allāh Almighty.

Here, two matters should be borne in mind: sins are of two categories, namely *ṣaghīrah* (minor) and *kabīrah* (major). Whoever commits a major sin once is a *fāsiq*, whereas with a minor sin, he becomes a *fāsiq* if he repeats it again and again. Therefore, a person who performs a major sin or repeatedly

performs a minor sin will be considered a *fāsiq*. There are two further scenarios: sinning openly or in secret. If a person sins in secret, he is termed a '*fāsiq ghayr m'ulin*' (hidden sinner), and if he sins openly, he is called a '*fāsiq m'ulin*' (flagrant sinner) or '*fājir*'.

There is a further categorisation of *fisq* (transgression) from another perspective.

The first category is that transgression which is in '*aqā'id*', and the second category is that transgression that relates to '*amal*' (action). Transgression in action has also been mentioned in the noble Qur'ān, for example, eating the flesh of swine has been termed *fisq*, whereas transgression in beliefs has been mentioned extensively. In fact, the words *fāsiq* and *fisq* have been mentioned in the noble Qur'ān mostly in relation to heretics.

Therefore, those whose '*aqīdah*' is deviant are *fāsiq* in creed and have left obeying Allāh Almighty in matters of belief. Examples are the Qadariyyah sect, which arose at the time of the Ṣaḥābah رضى الله عنهم, rejecting *qadr* (divine decree), and the Jabariyyah sect (fatalists), which arose claiming that humans are absolutely compelled and have no choice. Similar is the Khawārij sect, whose major sign was explained by *Sayyidunā* 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما: they apply the verses revealed about idolaters

to Muslims¹, a sign which still exists today. Many heretic Khārijīs, even today, apply the verses revealed about the idols to the noble Prophets ﷺ and saints رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمْ. They claim that just like the idols, the noble Prophets ﷺ and the saints رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمْ are unable to do anything مَعَازِ اللَّهِ. Likewise, the Mu‘tazilah sect (ultra-rationalists) existed. They gave bizarre misinterpretations of the ṣifāt (divine attributes) of Allāh Almighty and denied punishment of the grave. Moreover, rather than considering the *kalām* (divine speech) of Allāh to be a divine attribute, they deviated from mainstream Muslim belief by believing that it was created.

Summary: The lexical meaning of *fisq* is ‘to exit or leave’, and in the terminology of the Sharī‘ah, it means to leave obedience. If someone commits a major sin, or if he is persistent upon a minor sin, he is a transgressor. If he commits it in secret, he is known as a hidden transgressor, and if he commits it openly, he is termed a flagrant transgressor or *fājir*. Further to this is a similar division: transgressor in belief and transgressor in action.

The ruling on obeying people in sinful acts

Q: Sometimes a husband, parents, a leader, teacher or officer command something that is impermissible in Islam. What is the ruling in such a scenario? Will accepting their command be

¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 9, p. 16

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correct, especially if the one commanding is a parent or husband?

A: The creation can only be obeyed in permissible matters, whereas there is no obedience to them in sin. The beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ explained clearly in a Ḥadīth, **إِنَّمَا الطَّاعَةُ فِي الْبِرِّ**, “Obedience is only in good.”¹ In another Ḥadīth, the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, **لَا طَاعَةَ لِمَخْلُوقٍ فِي مَعْصِيَةِ الْخَالِقِ**, “There is no obedience to creation in that involving disobedience to Allāh.”² Similarly, it is mentioned in the verse of the noble Qur’ān:

**وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا
مَعْرُوفًا وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ أَنَابَ إِلَيَّ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥﴾**

And if they both (i.e. the mother and the father) strive to make you ascribe such a thing as a partner to Me, concerning which you do not have knowledge, so do not obey them and (still) support them kindly in the worldly affairs; and follow the path of the one who has turned to Me. Then towards only Me you are to return, and I shall disclose to you what you used to do.³

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, p. 789, ḥadīth 1,840(4,765)

² Al-Musannaḥ, vol. 18, p. 247, ḥadīth 34,406

³ [Kanz-ul-Iman (translation of Quran)] (Part 21, Surah Luqmaan, verse 15)

In this verse, parents are specifically referred to, and it is stated that if they command you to commit *shirk*, you should not obey them, but you should treat them well in worldly matters. Therefore, if parents command sin, it should not be acted upon. For example, if parents forbid one from keeping a beard, this is a sin, and accepting their command is also a sin because the beloved Prophet ﷺ gave the command for keeping the beard: “Trim the moustaches and grow the beards.”¹ Hence, in opposition to Allāh Almighty and the Prophet ﷺ, no one’s words will be accepted, regardless of who the person is.

Explanation of satanic whispers

Q: Why do satanic whispers occur, and what is the ruling concerning them?

A: The *nafs* (lower self) and Shayṭān are the causes of whisperings. Shayṭān casts satanic whispers into the heart from outside. Some people also cast whispers through their words. It is mentioned in the noble Qur’ān:

الَّذِي يُوسُوسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ ۖ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ ۗ

'Those who inculcate evil whispers into the hearts of the people.'
*(From amongst) Jinn and mankind.*²

¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 7, p. 160, *hadīth* 5,893

² [*Kanz-ul-Iman (translation of Quran)*] (Part 30, Surah Al-Naas, verses 5,6)

Meaning, jinn and humans can both cast whispers into people's hearts. Casting satanic whispers is from the major actions of Shayṭān, because this is what Shayṭān primarily does: he casts whispers of *kufr* and sin into the hearts of humankind. On the other hand is the *nafs* (lower self). The lower self is also the cause for a person to become entangled in whisperings. These are known as *wasāwis nafsānī* (whisperings of the lower self). For example, in Ramaḍān, despite the Shayṭān being chained, people commit sin. The lower self, which becomes strong due to its deep connection with Shayṭān, initiates these, and its whisperings are as effective as those of Shayṭān. From this, it is evident that the causes of whisperings are the lower self and Shayṭān.

Method of recognising satanic whispers

Q: How can one identify satanic whisperings?

A: In order to identify satanic whisperings, one should study *Minhāj al- 'Ābidīn* of Imām Muḥammad al-Ghazālī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ. In this, the Imām رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ has provided brilliant discourse on how a person can identify whether the thoughts that come in one's heart are *Rahmānī* or *Shayṭānī*. Furthermore, there are beneficial points in the book '*Satanic Whispers and Cures for Them*' by the renowned spiritual guide and leader of Ahl al-Sunnah, Mawlānā Ilyās 'Aṭṭār al-Qādiri رَضِيَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَنْهُ.

Satanic whispers and sin

Q: Are the whisperings that manifest in the heart a sin?

A: Normally, the thought of a sin comes in a person's heart, and one brushes it off. There is no sin for these whisperings. However, there are many categories related to the thoughts of the heart. Two of them are as follows:

1) *'Azm* (firm resolve), which means a firm intention. A person is taken to task for a firm resolution, and one incurs sin due to this. It is due to this firm resolve that a person prepares the means to sin and expends effort, even if he is unable to commit the sin for some reason. For example, a person may leave his home with the intention of theft. However, for some reason, he is unable to commit the theft, such as people being awake or the presence of police. In this scenario, the person will be sinful because he made a firm resolve to commit the sin. Wherever there is a firm resolve to sin, the person will be sinful.

2) A person imagines himself committing an obscene act. In this scenario, a person is also sinful.

Good treatment of relatives

Q: How should we treat a relative who mistreats us?

A: A question similar to this was presented to the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ. Someone mentioned that although he treats his relatives well, they mistreat him. He asked if he should continue

this way, meaning, should he continue to keep ties with them and treat them well, or should he treat them the same way they do? The Prophet ﷺ replied that he should continue his good action. The words of the Ḥadīth are as follows:

“A man asked: ‘I have relatives with whom I keep ties, but they sever ties with me. I treat them well, but they mistreat me. I am forbearing with them, but they act ignorantly towards me.’

Upon this, the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘If you are as you say, it is as though you are placing hot ashes in their mouth, and there will remain a supporter with you from Allāh Almighty against them so long as you adhere to this.’”¹

Therefore, one should put up with what relatives have to say and maintain good conduct. In fact, in one Ḥadīth, there is a clear command: *صِلْ مَنْ قَطَعَكَ* “Maintain ties with the one who cuts ties with you.”² Thus, one should attempt to join ties with relatives who sever them.

The summary of a statement from *Bahār-e-Sharī‘at* is presented here. If relatives treat us well and we show good conduct towards them, this is merely repaying a courtesy, which a person does with anyone. Maintaining ties of kinship is to join ties when relatives try to sever them and to treat them well whenever they treat you with injustice. This matter falls under the

¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 1062, ḥadīth 2,558 (6,525)

² *Musnad Aḥmad*, vol. 6, p. 148, ḥadīth 17,457

principle meaning of maintaining ties of kinship where if relatives are unjust, speak ill of you and sever ties, you should try to treat them well. However, one should employ wisdom in dealing with them by adopting strategies so that he does not unnecessarily place himself in a humiliating situation.

He should make attempts on his part and have the following mindset:

I will only supplicate for his good. I will maintain a desire for good towards him in my heart. I will try to benefit him where I can. I will not return his oppression with oppression, and I will not reply to his words of abuse in a similar manner.

Yes, in order to save yourself from the evil of such people, keep yourself at some distance from them and show good conduct to them from time to time.

Explanation of sins of the heart

Q: In the Shari‘ah, what is the significance of the sins of the heart (inner sins)? Furthermore, how important is it for a Muslim to gain knowledge about the sins of the heart?

A: Essentially, the principle concerning all sins is the same: the ruling will differ in each case depending on the scenario. This applies to sins which are *bāṭini* (inward) or *ẓāhiri* (outward).

There are many sins which a person has no access to. For example, a person who has no parents is not required to learn most of the rulings relating to the rights of parents. Similarly, Hajj may not be farḍ on a person, and so learning the rulings of Hajj and the sins that may occur during it will not be obligatory for such a person. Likewise, a person may be unmarried, so learning the rulings relating to a spouse and children will not be necessary for such an individual.

Apart from that, many sins are clear, which everyone has knowledge of, such as theft, oppression and banditry. These are those sins that everyone is aware of. Therefore, seeking knowledge of them specifically is not necessary, except that there may be additional detail concerning some matters which a person may be heedless of, leading to such an individual sinning. For example, everyone knows that theft is impermissible and a sin, but if someone's sandals are stolen at a masjid, upon seeing a similar pair, one assumes, 'The thief took mine and left these.' The juristic definition of theft does not completely apply here; however, in any case, it is a sin, and from one perspective it is theft. Similarly, exchanging slippers in Makkah and Madīnah is also impermissible.

Another example is devouring the wealth of orphans. This is *ḥarām*, and everyone possesses knowledge of this. However, after the passing away of a father, the food of the *niyāz* of the third day, for example, is served from the inheritance of the orphaned children. Now, this *khatam* of the third and fortieth

day are acts of supererogatory charity, and although these are permissible in and of themselves, it is impermissible and a sin to arrange these from the wealth of orphans. Furthermore, the orphans themselves cannot grant permission to eat this food because they are *ghayr-bāligh* (prepubescent), and one who is prepubescent cannot give permission. Now, whoever eats from the food of these gatherings will be consuming the wealth of orphans. However, people do not pay attention to this. In this matter, the basic concept that 'devouring the wealth of orphans is *ḥarām*' is known by many, but its details are not.

In addition to this, there are many other sins a person cannot avoid unless their details are known. For example, everyone knows some matters are clearly sinful in trade, such as fraud, lying, treachery and contamination. However, there are many other rulings in the Sharī'ah apart from these that are termed '*uqūd fāsidah* (defective transactions), i.e. such agreements in which there is a defect according to the Sharī'ah. Not every individual knows these details. Therefore, it is incumbent upon a trader that he learns the rulings of trade. If he does not learn them, he will be sinful. And as result of not learning, he will commit many other sins.

Another category of sin is inner sin. Ninety percent of the forms of inner sins are those that are perpetrated due to ostentation and love of fame. However, due to not having knowledge of these, the perpetrator of these sins does not even realise he is embroiled in them. The result of not having knowledge of inner

sins is that a person, despite being ostentatious, says, “I am hardly being ostentatious.” In another example, considering people to be lowly and perceiving himself as belonging to the elite, he says, “Brother! I am hardly being proud. They are my servants after all, my employees; that is who they are.” Here, a proud person will be considering others lowly. However, he will not have knowledge that he is being proud and earning sin. Hence the necessity to acquire knowledge about sins. The way to do so is to study religious books, learn about sins from the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah كَاتِبُهُمُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى and through other avenues of seeking knowledge.

Acquiring knowledge about sins

Q: How can we acquire detailed knowledge about sins instead of their basic details?

A: Detailed knowledge is certainly required concerning many sins, otherwise some sins are such that they are committed with the thought that they are good deeds. Consider the following examples.

First example: The Sharī‘ah’s ruling (i.e. Sunnah) is that males should keep the ankles exposed. In an attempt to act upon this Sunnah, some people fold their lower garment for prayer, which is a sin. This is because for the ankles to remain covered in prayer is *makrūh tanzīhī* (minorly disliked), which is not a sin.

However, folding the lower garment is *makrūh taḥrīmī* (prohibitively disliked), which is a sin.

Second example: Bringing children to the masjid is a good act. However, bringing such young children to the masjid who may urinate, defecate, or cause disturbance, and it is known that they will do so, is impermissible. Therefore, bringing such children to the masjid is a sin. Bear in mind how the one who brought them did so with great enthusiasm, considering it a good deed. However, due to a lack of knowledge, this person committed a sin. It is clear that seeking knowledge is necessary. To live without it is not possible. And the foundation of action itself is knowledge. Therefore, seek knowledge, so that you do not end up committing sins whilst thinking you are performing good deeds.

Aiding someone in sin

Q: How is it to aid someone in sin?

A: The prohibition of helping someone in sin is clearly mentioned in the noble Qur'ān. Allāh Almighty states,

وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ

and do not help one another in sin and injustice¹

¹ [Kanz-ul-Iman (translation of Quran)] (Part 6, Surah Al-Maa'idah, verse 2)

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This is definitive textual evidence from the noble Qur'an stipulating that there is no permission to aid another in sin; rather the command is that one should stop another from sin. There is a very fascinating Ḥadīth in this regard. The Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, **أَنْصُرْ أَخَاكَ ظَالِمًا أَوْ مَظْلُومًا** "Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or oppressed."

The Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ asked, "O Messenger of Allāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ! We can help the one being oppressed, but how can we help the oppressor?"

He صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ replied, "By preventing him from oppressing others."¹

This is helping the oppressor, as it is beneficial for his Hereafter. Helping a sinner means to prevent him from committing sins. Those people who aid others in sinning under the deception of maintaining friendships whilst thinking they are fulfilling the rights of friendship should learn a lesson from this. May Allāh Almighty protect us all from every type of inner and outer malady and sin, and may He make us pious and grant us steadfastness to perform good deeds.

اٰمِيْنَ بِجَايِزِ خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّيْنَ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 3, p. 128, ḥadīth 2,443

STATEMENT OF THE FINAL MESSENGER OF ALLĀH ﷺ

“When light penetrates the heart, it opens.” It was asked, “O Messenger of Allāh ﷺ! صَلِّ السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ وَآلِكَ وَسَلَّمَ! Is there any sign by which this light can be identified?” He replied, “Yes. Remaining aloof from the place of deception (the world), turning towards the permanent abode (the hereafter) and preparing for death before its arrival.”

(*Shu'ab al-Imān*, vol. 7, p. 352, ḥadīth 10,552)



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