

Obstacles to Taqwa for the Muslim Women

Taqwa is mentioned in the Quran as an essential part of the character of the Muslim both male and female. The origin of the word Taqwa is from the Arabic word 'Ittaqa which means to 'be wary and God fearing'. It is not just something that you have in your mind as a belief but it is a mentality that deeply affects your everyday life and drives you to live in a very specific manner in order to please only Allah (swt). Taqwa is mentioned in this context by Allah (swt) in numerous Ayat of the Quran such as Surah Al Hajj verse 37. ﴿لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومَهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤها وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ كَذَٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ﴾ ***"It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah, but it is Taqwa (piety, etc.) from you that reaches Him. Thus have We made them subject to you so that you may glorify Allah for His guidance to you..."***

From this ayah we can see that it is very much the intentions of the believers and their mental awareness of Allah (swt) in their actions that allow them to have Taqwa. We can also understand that Taqwa is linked to acting upon the commands of Allah (swt) and leaving the forbidden matters. Without Taqwa, it is possible to do actions that seem to match the Islamic laws and commands and not have these actions accepted by Allah (swt) as they will merely be robotic motions devoid of Taqwa and do not allow us to receive the immense rewards and success of the Muttaqun in the Akhirah as mentioned in Surah Al Hijr verse 45. ﴿إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ﴾ ***"The righteous (will be) amid gardens and fountains (of clear-flowing water)."***

Given that it is clear that Taqwa is a command from Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw) we must be aware of avoiding any obstacles in achieving this noble goal.

One very obvious obstacle that Muslims are constantly warned about is the love and distraction of the Dounia. ﴿الْهَاهُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ * حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ * كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ * ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ * كَلَّا لَوْ﴾ ***"Rivalry for worldly gain distracts you, until you enter your graves. Indeed you shall know! Again, you shall certainly come to know. Indeed, were you to have certain knowledge. You shall certainly see the fire of Hell. Yes, you will see it with your very eyes. Then, on that day, you shall be questioned about your joys and comforts."*** [102: 1-8]

We must be very aware that we live in a system that does not remind Muslims of Islam on any level, rather, it's secular in nature and designed to separate the presence of God in life and it is driven by purely Capitalist goals to make money from every possible opportunity. As such, people are programmed with the worst personality traits for them to be efficient money machines. Materialism, selfishness, vanity and ungratefulness are all ideas that push us to never be happy with what we have and always compare our success to other people and worldly goals. As a result, our career or academic title becomes more important than if we know how to read Quran properly or have Islamic manners and morals. We may find ourselves chasing endless upgrades of cars, computers and houses not thinking to prepare for our lives in Jannat which is actually the true measure of success that never leaves you and lasts forever. ﴿إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا﴾ ***"Verily, for the Muttaqun, there will be a success (Paradise);"*** [Naba: 31]

The characteristics of Taqwa were perfected in the life of the Prophet (saw) and followed in the example of the Sahaba and Sahabiyat.

Ali ibn Abi Talib (ra) says: 'The signs of the pious are that they are pale out of vigilance: they have weak eyesight from weeping; their lips are withered because of fasting and they are covered with the dust of the devout.'

Omar ibn Abdul-Aziz (rh) says: 'Taqwa is not fasting by day and standing for prayers at night. Rather it is to refrain from what Allah has prohibited and act upon what He has mandated. Whoever is granted anything beyond (this level of obedience), he has been given goodness upon goodness.'

From this we get a clear sense that worldly issues are not the greatest priority of those with Taqwa, rather, our vision is constantly set to how we can gain an advantage in the Akhirah and we are ever ambitious for the highest level of Jannat, never to be satisfied with the lower levels as this will be our permanent abode. With this understanding, materialism is easily overcome and satisfaction with what you have becomes your standard personality trait, as Allah (swt) praised this; ﴿إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ﴾ “[Surely He does not love the extravagant]” [Al-A`raf 7:31]

Wasting time is another obstacle to Taqwa as it shows great ignorance of the fact that death can come to us at any moment. ﴿وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُقْسِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ مَا لَبِثُوا غَيْرَ سَاعَةٍ كَذَلِكَ كَانُوا﴾ **“He it is who will cause you to die, and in time will resurrect you. And when the Last Hour dawns, those who had been lost in sin will swear that they had not tarried (on earth) longer than an hour: thus were they won't to delude themselves (all their lives)!”** [Surah Al -`Ankabut 29:64]

Getting older should make us more aware that time is running out to secure our place as the best Muslims to be raised on the Day of Judgment.

Abdullah ibn Dawood (rh) says that they used to roll up their beds (sleep very little) as soon as they reached forty.

Engaging in idle conversations and useless pursuits like gaming, TV soap operas and endless bargain hunting when you don't actually need anything are all going to be hindrances in our progress for Taqwa.

Abu Darda (ra) says: 'If it were not for three things I would not like to live a single day: remaining thirsty for Allah in the afternoons: prostrating in front of Him at night and the company of those who sift the best of conversation like people sift (choose) the best of fruits.'

Time is more valuable than money as it can never come back or be returned to you. We should protect it and look after it more than we protect our gold and wealth in hidden places. The Shaytaan is a thief of our time and although he may not convince us easily to do the great Haram, sometimes wasting time in *mubah* (permissible) activities is enough to hold us back from Jannat as we never know the weight of our scales when good deeds must be heavier than the bad. ﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ * الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ * أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ﴾ **“The believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a fear in their hearts and when His verses are recited to them, they increase them in their faith, and they put their trust in their Lord (alone), who perform prayers and spend out of that which We have bestowed on them. It is they who are truly believers. For them are grades of dignity and a generous provision.”** [Surah al-Anfaal:2-4]

The Media have a very clear anti-Islamic agenda and function to create confusion in the minds of Muslim women and the youth so that they are far away from the Islamic personality and seek the approval of society and friends over seeking Allah (swt) approval. One style used is to have Muslim and non-Muslim celebrity personalities in prominent positions that are constantly discussed and pushed as role models to be admired and followed for all of the wrong reasons. Their success is measured by the superficial standards of wealth, clothing, physical attributes and who they are seen with. The allure of fame-culture can make us feel that such personalities are close to us and are even seen to be doing “good” when they are silent on global wars and abuse and do nothing to remove the real cause of oppression and suffering. The Muslim women must guard herself against these empty hollow personalities

that exist, not to serve the truth or obey Allah (swt), but to make it seem acceptable to live without Taqwa and exist within a secular political context without Khilafah as a need to enforce Quran and Sunnah comprehensively. We are warned about such personalities in Surah al-Baqarah verse 204. ﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ﴾ **“And of the people is he whose speech pleases you in worldly life, and he calls Allah to witness as to what is in his heart, yet he is the fiercest of opponents.”**

The rise of Social Media platforms has been a particularly pernicious force in deviating Muslims from Taqwa with the selfie culture compromising the modesty of public awrah where Muslim women are encouraged to compete in showing off their physical attributes. How opposite this is to the Taqwa shown by the Sahabiyyat as discussed in the Hadith narrated by Aisha (ra);

Al-Bukhari reported on the authority of ‘Ayisha (may Allah be pleased with her) who said:

“May Allah have mercy on the Muhajir women. When Allah revealed the verse: ﴿وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ﴾ “And let them draw their headcovers all over necks and bosoms” [An-Nur:31]

“When Surat an-Nur came down, they took the curtains, tore them and made head covers of them.”

Free-mixing between males and females is normalized online being a leading contributor to Haram relationships and even marriage breakdowns. We should make the Sahaba and Sahabiyyat our role models for life and reject the icons presented to us who are but useless slaves of pop-culture and big business.

Abdullah ibn Masood says: ‘There are so many who are lured to destruction through bounties, there are so many who are tested by praise and there are so many who are deceived (vain) by concealment (of their mistakes).’

Bad company online and in daily life will be an obstacle to Taqwa, so surrounding yourself with good Islamic company that reminds you of your mistakes and helps you be closer to Allah (swt) is a great blessing to be looked after.

Online bullying, using the internet for revenge actions and hate speech are common practice. Having Taqwa when engaging in Social Media is critical to developing the right mentality to protect yourself from racism and hatred for your fellow Muslims and the disease of self obsession. A cure for this is given in the Hadith of the Prophet (saw). ﴿إِنَّ النَّاسَ مِنْ عَهْدِ آدَمَ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِنَا هَذَا مِثْلُ أُسْنَانِ الْمَشْطِ لَا فَضْلَ لِلْعَرَبِيِّ عَلَى الْعَجَمِيِّ وَلَا لِلْأَحْمَرِ عَلَى الْأَسْوَدِ إِلَّا بِالتَّقْوَىٰ﴾ ***“Surely all of mankind – from the time of Adam until our time – are like the teeth of a comb (all equal to one another) and there is no greatness for an `Arab over a non-`Arab and no greatness for a red-skinned person over a black-skinned person, except due to one’s consciousness of Allah (taqwa).”***

Taqwa is not a purely psychological phenomenon, but is reflected in one’s daily life and actions. It has a profound influence in your spiritual and political direction in life. The Hadith of the Prophet (saw) explained that Taqwa is obedience to Allah (swt) in public and private spheres. «على المرء المسلم السمع والطاعة فيما أحب وكره، إلا أن يؤمر بمعصية، فإذا أمر بمعصية فلا سمع ولا طاعة.» ***“It is the duty of every Muslim to hear and obey whether he likes it or not, except when he is asked to do something sinful, In that case there is no listening or obedience.”*** (Recorded in al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Even when Muslims in Mecca prayed and lived personal lives of worship to Allah (swt), rejecting the pagan gods, this was not enough for the Prophet (saw) as he was commanded to remove false political practices comprehensively and replace oppression of man-made laws to the truth of Allah’s (swt) laws. As a result the Islamic State was established in Medina which expanded to overtake two thirds of the world and became to greatest political entity to improve the lives of entire nations. So much so, that those who lived under Islam remain

Muslims today and did not revert back to the practices that were removed under the Khilafah. The greatest expression of Taqwah is to return back to living by all of Islam and work for the return of the Khilafah as the Prophet (saw) and his Sahaba (ra) did.

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ﴾ **“You (true believers in Islamic Monotheism, and real followers of Prophet Muhammad and his Sunnah) are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin Al-Ma‘roof (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam has ordained) and forbid Al-Munkar (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden), and you believe in Allaah”** [Aal-i ‘Imraan 3:110]

Islam came to be practiced on a personal and global political level, this is the truest expression of Taqwa as none of the laws of Allah (swt) are neglected. Working for Khilafah is an inevitable practice of Taqwa as it reflects the life’s work of the Prophet (saw) and his companions.

We may find endless excuses to avoid political work for Khilafah due to the fear of trial or hatred expressed in the political climate, however, we must remember the covenant we have in our Shehadah that bears witness to one God who cannot be made second to anyone or anything.

Honoring and being true to the Aqeedah of Islam is the essence of Taqwa and is mentioned in Surah Aal-i- Imran; ﴿بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ وَاتَّقَىٰ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ **“Nay, but (the chosen of God) is he who fulfils his pledge and fears God; indeed, God loves the God fearing.”** [3:76]

When we make overcoming the obstacles of Taqwa a priority in life we will find ourselves free from the chains of failure that drag us into despair and hopelessness. We become full of the energy and the will to move forward with a mentality that anything is possible with the help and praise of Allah (swt). For Muslim women we are empowered and raised in this life and the next with Taqwa and the life of Islam as our long term vision and goal, always remembering the promise of Allah (swt) ﴿وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ﴾ **“And the good end [Paradise] is for the [people of] taqwa”** [Surah Taha:132].

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