

HYPOCRISY AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HYPOCRITES

Shaykh'ul Islâm Ibnu Taymiyyah
Rahimahullâh

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allâh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Shaykh'ul Islâm Ibnu Taymiyyah Rahimahullâh said,

“Allâhu Taâlâ opened Sûrat'ul Baqarah with four verses regarding the descriptions of the Mu'minûn, two verses regarding the descriptions of the Kuffâr, and thirteen verses regarding the descriptions of the Munâfiqûn. Every single one from Îmân, Kufr, and Nifâq have pillars and divisions, as the Qur'ân and the Sunnah have denoted, and just as Amîr'ul Mu'minin Alî bin Abî Tâlib Radiyallâhu Anh explained it in the Hadîth narrated from him regarding Îmân, its pillars, and its branches.”

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(728 H)

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Hypocrisy and the Characteristics of the Hypocrites¹

Shaykh'ul Islâm Ibnu Taymiyyah (728 H)

Rahimahullâhu Taâlâ

Major and Minor Hypocrisy

Since Allâhu Taâlâ sent Muhammad Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam and honoured him with Hijrah (migration) and victory, the people have become three groups:

1. A Group of Mu'minûn (pl. of Mu'min; believers): these are those who believed in Muhammad Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam both in the Dhâhir and the Bâtin (externally and internally).

2. A Group of Kuffâr (pl. of Kâfir; disbelievers): these are those who openly manifest their rejection of Muhammad Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam.

3. A Group of Munâfiqûn: Those who externally (seem to) believe in Muhammad Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam while they don't believe in him inwardly (in their inner world).

This is why Allâhu Taâlâ opened Sûrat'ul Baqarah with four verses regarding the descriptions of the Mu'minûn², two verses regarding the

¹ This is the translation of portions related to hypocrisy and the characteristics of the hypocrites excerpted from a long treatise found within Majmû'ul Fatâwâ, 28/424-267. This treatise was also related by Ibnu Abd'il Hâdî in al-Uqûd'ud Durriyyah, Dâru Âlam'il Fawâ'id, 173-226.

² Allâhu Taâlâ said regarding the characteristics of the Mu'minûn:

descriptions of the Kuffâr³, and thirteen verses regarding the descriptions of the Munâfiqûn.⁴ Every single one from Îmân, Kufr, and Nifâq have pillars and

“This Book has no doubt in it - a guidance for the God-fearing, who believe in the Unseen, and are steadfast in Salâh (prayer), and spend out of what We have provided them; and who believe in what has been revealed to you and what has been revealed before you; and they have faith in the Hereafter. They are on (true) guidance from their Lord, and it is these who are successful.” (al-Baqarah 2/2-5).

³ Allâhu Taâlâ said regarding the characteristics of the Kuffâr:

“Surely for those who have disbelieved, it is all the same whether you warn them or you warn them not: they do not believe. Allâh has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil. And for them is a great punishment.” (al-Baqarah 2/6-7).

⁴ Allâhu Taâlâ said regarding the characteristics of the Munâfiqûn:

“And among the people there are some who say: We believe in Allâh and in the Last Day, yet they are not believers. They (think to) deceive Allâh and those who believe, but they deceive not except themselves and perceive (it) not. In their hearts is a disease and Allâh has increased their disease. A painful torment is theirs because they used to tell lies. And when it is said to them: Do not cause corruption on the earth, they say: We are but peace-makers/reformers. Beware, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive not. And when it is said to them: Believe as people have believed, they say: Shall we believe as the foolish have believed? Beware, it is, in fact, they who are foolish, but they do not know. When they meet those who believe, they say: We believe; but when they are alone with their satans, they say: Indeed, we are with you; we were only mocking. Allâh mocks at them, and lets them go on wandering blindly in their rebellion. Those are the ones who have purchased error for guidance, so their transaction has brought no profit, nor were they guided. Their example is that of one who kindled a fire, but when it illuminated what was around him, Allâh took away their light and left

divisions, as the Qur'ân and the Sunnah have denoted, and just as Amîr'ul Mu'minîn Alî bin Abî Tâlib Radiyallâhu Anh explained it in the Hadîth narrated from him regarding Îmân, its pillars, and its branches.

From the types of Nifâq is **an-Nifâq'ul Akbar (Major Hypocrisy)**, and its perpetrators will be in the lowest depths of an-Nâr (the fire i.e., Hell-fire)⁵, like the Nifâq of Abdullâh bin Ubayy and others. To manifest belying the Rasûl, rejecting some of what the Rasûl came with, hating the Rasûl, lacking the belief of the necessity of following the Rasûl, rejoicing at the downfall of the Dîn (religion) of the Rasûl, or feeling sad at the victories of his Dîn, and so on are traits that can only be found in an enemy of Allâh and His Rasûl Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam.

These traits were present at the time of the Rasûl Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam and they do not seize to exist after him. Rather, it increased greatly after his time. This is because the requirements of Îmân were stronger in his time. If Nifâq was still present (in that era) while the requirements of Îmân were stronger, it is more befitting for the existence of Nifâq in a later era wherein Îmân is weaker.

Just as the Rasûl Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam knew some of the Munâfiqûn, he did not know others. As Allâh clarified this in His statement,

them in darkness (so) they could not see. They are deaf, dumb and blind, they shall not return. Or (it is) like a rainstorm from the sky, bringing darkness, thunder and lightning; they thrust their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps for fear of death, -and Allâh encompasses the disbelievers. The lightning almost snatches away their sight, whenever it flashes for them, they walk therein, and when darkness covers them, they stand still. And if Allâh willed, He could have taken away their hearing and their sight. Certainly, Allâh has power over all things." (al-Baqarah 2/8-20).

⁵ Thus, Allâhu Taâlâ stated,

"Verily, the Munâfiqûn (hypocrites) will be in the lowest depths of the Fire..." (an-Nisâ 4/145).

“And among those Bedouins who are around you there are hypocrites, and among the people of Madīnah as well. They are adamant on hypocrisy. You do not know them. We know them.”⁶

Likewise were his successors and heirs who came after him; they knew some of the Munâfiqûn while they did not know others. There are many Munâfiqûn collectively among the groups who ascribe themselves to Islâm, constituted of the laymen and elite. They are called “az-Zanâdiqah.” The scholars have disagreed regarding externally accepting their repentance. This is because they are not known to repent; since they always manifest Islâm.

These types are frequently found within the philosophers who are astrologers, etc. Then it is found within doctors, less so in scribes. They are also found within the Sûfis and jurists, and they are also found within warriors and commanders. They are also found among the common people. However, they are very common among the sects of the people of Bid’ah, especially among the Râfidhah, because the amount of heretics and Munâfiqûn found among them is not found among the followers of other sects. This is why the Kharmiyyah, Bâtiniyyah, Qarâmitah, Ismâ’iliyyah, Nusayriyyah, and similar Zindîq Munâfiqûn attribute themselves to the Râfidhah.

In these times, many of these Munâfiq people undoubtedly lean towards the state of these Tatars. The reason for this is that the Tatars do not enforce the Islâmic Sharī’ah upon them. On the contrary, the Tatars leave them as they are. Others flee from the Tatars only because of their corrupt conduct in this world, taking possession of their property, shedding blood, and taking captives; they do not flee for the sake of religion.

This is a type of an-Nifâq’ul Akbar (The Major Hypocrisy).

When it comes to **an-Nifâq’ul Asghar**, it is the Nifâq in al-A’mâl (pl. Amal i.e., deeds) and its likes, such as to lie while speaking, to prove treacherous when he makes an agreement, to betray when entrusted, or to resort to

⁶ At-Tawbah 9/101.

obscene speech when he disputes. For, it is mentioned in the Sahîhayn (i.e., the two Sahîh; Sahîh'ul Bukhârî and Sahîh Muslim) on the narration of the Nabî Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam that he stated,

*"The signs of the Munâfiq are three: when he speaks, he lies; when he makes an agreement, he proves treacherous; and when he is entrusted, he betrays."*⁷

It is also narrated in an authentic narration,

*"Even if he offers the Salâh (daily obligatory prayers), fasts, and claims that he is a Muslim."*⁸

It is mentioned in the Sahîhayn on the narration of Abdullâh bin Amr Radiyallâhu Anh who narrated from the Nabî Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam that he stated,

*"Whoever has the following four (characteristics) will be a pure Munâfiq and whoever has one of the following four characteristics will have one characteristic of Nifâq until he gives it up. When he speaks, he lies. When he makes an agreement, he proves treacherous. When he makes a promise, he breaks it. When he disputes, he resorts to obscene speech."*⁹

⁷ Muslim, Hadîth no. 59.

⁸ Muslim, Hadîth no. 59.

⁹ Bukhârî, Hadîth no. 34; Muslim, Hadîth no. 58.

The Characteristics of the Munâfiqûn

Turning away from Jihâd (striving/fighting in the cause/path of Allâh) is also from this category, since it is from the traits of the Munâfiqûn, because the Nabî Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam stated,

*“Whoever dies without having fought or thought of fighting (did not aspire to fight in the path of Allâh) has died upon a branch of Nifâq.”*¹⁰
Narrated by Muslim.

Allâh revealed the Sûrah Barâ’ah (at-Tawbah), called **“al-Fâdihah (the Exposer)”** because it exposed the Munâfiqûn. According to what the Sahîhayn recorded from Ibnu Abbâs Radiyallâhu Anh that he said,

*“It is al-Fâdihah (the Exposer); it continued to reveal as “And from amongst them, from amongst them” until the people began to think that nobody will be left (unexposed) except that he is mentioned in it.”*¹¹

It is narrated on the authority of al-Miqdâd Ibn’ul Aswad Radiyallâhu Anh that he said,

“It is Sûrat’ul Bahûth (The Chapter on Probing), since it probes into the secrets of the Munâfiqûn.”

It is narrated on the authority of Qatâdah Rahimahullâh that he said,

“It is al-Muthîrah (the revealer), since it brought forth the shame of the Munâfiqûn.”

It is narrated on the authority of Ibnu Abbâs Radiyallâhu Anh that he said,

¹⁰ With similar wording, Muslim, Hadîth no. 1910.

¹¹ With similar wording, al-Bukhârî, Hadîth no. 4882; Muslim, Hadîth no. 3031.

“This Sûrah is al-Mub’athirah (the scatterer).”

Ba’tarah (scattering) and Ithârah (revealing) are close in meaning.

It is narrated on the authority of Ibnu Umar Radiyallâhu Anh that he said,

“Say This Sûrah is al-Muqashqishah. This is because it purifies from the disease of hypocrisy.”¹²

When a sick is healed from a disease, it is said Taqashqasha.

Al-Asma’î said,

“The two Sûrahs of Ikhlâs (purity; i.e. al-Kâfirân and Ikhlâs) were called al-Muqashqishatân because both of them purify hypocrisy.”¹³

This Sûrah was revealed on the final (military) campaign of Nabî Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam on the Tabûk Expedition, ninth year of the Hijrah. Islâm had been honoured and enlightened. Allâh exposed in this Sûrah the condition of the Munâfiqûn and described them with cowardliness and abandoning Jihâd. He also described them with miserliness in spending in the path of Allâh and stinginess towards wealth. These two are grave diseases: Cowardliness and miserliness. The Nabî Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam said,

“The most evil (two qualities) in a person is an alarming stinginess and unrestrained cowardice.”¹⁴

This is an authentic Hadîth.

¹² Al-Khâzin, Lubâb’ut Ta’wîl, 2/332; as-Sam’ânî, Tafsîr, 2/284; Ibn’ul Jawzî, Zâd’ul Masîr, 2/230; as-Suyûtî, ad-Durr’ul Manthûr, 4/121; ash-Shawkânî, Fath’ul Qadîr, 2/379; Ibn’ul Faras, Ahkâm’ul Qur’ân, 3/113.

¹³ Al-Qurtubî, Tafsîr, 20/225; Ibnu Âdil, al-Lubâb fî Ulûm’il Qur’ân, 20/528.

¹⁴ Abû Dâwûd, Hadîth no. 2511.

For this reason, these two diseases may be among the major sins that require entering the Hellfire. Just as the following statement of Allâhu Taâlâ indicates to this,

“And let not those who covetously withhold of that which Allâh has bestowed on them of His Bounty (Wealth) think that it is good for them. Nay, it will be worse for them. The things which they covetously withheld shall be tied to their necks like a collar on Yawm’ul Qiyâmah (the Day of Resurrection)...”¹⁵

In addition, He Taâlâ stated,

“And whoever turns his back to them on such a day -unless it be a stratagem of war, or to retreat to a troop (of his own)- he indeed has drawn upon himself wrath from Allâh. And his abode is Jahannam (Hell); what an evil destination!”¹⁶

As for Allâhu Taâlâ characterizing them with cowardice and being terrified, He Taâlâ stated,

“And they take an oath by Allâh that they are truly of you while they are not of you, but they are a people who are terrified. If they could find a refuge or caves or any place to enter, they would turn to it while they run heedlessly.”¹⁷

Allâh Subhânahu mentioned that even though they take an oath that they are from the believers, they are not from them, however, they fear the enemy.

This is why **“If they could find a refuge”¹⁸** They would take refuge in

¹⁵ Âl-i Imrân 3/180.

¹⁶ Al-Anfâl 8/16.

¹⁷ At-Tawbah 9/56-57.

¹⁸ At-Tawbah 9/57.

fortresses and shelters which those who abandon Jihâd flee to.

“...or caves...”¹⁹ Maghârât is the plural form of Maghârah (cave). Caves were named with this title due to the one who enters it seeping away in it, meaning hiding in it, as water seeps away.

“...or any place to enter...”²⁰, meaning, these are places which are difficult to enter, either due to the narrowness of its door or another reason. It means a place they will enter. Even if entering it would be with difficulty and hardship;

“...they would...”²¹, meaning, (they would escape therein) from Jihâd.

“...turn to it while they run heedlessly...”²², meaning, they would run a running that nothing can turn them back, just like a running horse which cannot be turned back once its bridled when it carries weight.

This is a characteristic that suits many people in our case and in cases before and after it.

Likewise, Allâhu Taâlâ stated in the Sûrah of Muhammad Sallallâhu Alayhi wa Sallam,

“Then, once a decisive Sûrah is revealed, and fighting (in Allâh’s way) is mentioned in it, you notice those who have disease in their hearts, looking to you like one who is faint because of death. So, destruction is very close to them.”²³

Meaning, away with them!

¹⁹ At-Tawbah 9/57.

²⁰ At-Tawbah 9/57.

²¹ At-Tawbah 9/57.

²² At-Tawbah 9/57.

²³ Muhammad 47/20.

"Obedience and good words. So, had they been truthful to Allâh when the matter had become serious, it would have been much better for them."²⁴

Allâhu Taâlâ also stated,

"The believers are only the ones who have believed in Allâh and His Rasûl and then doubt not but strive with their wealth and their lives in the cause of Allâh; they are the ones who are truthful."²⁵

Allâhu Taâlâ has restricted the Mu'minûn to those have Îmân and those who do Jihâd. Allâhu Taâlâ said,

"Those who believe in Allâh and the Last Day would not ask you permission to be exempted from fighting with their wealth and their lives, and Allâh is Knowing of al-Muttaqûn (the pious). It is only those who believe not in Allâh and the Last Day and whose hearts are in doubt that ask you permission (to be exempted from fighting). So in their doubts they waver."²⁶

This is a notification from Allâh that a Mu'min (Believer) does not seek permission from the Rasûl (to be exempted) to abandon Jihâd, for only those who do not have Îmân seek permission from him to be exempted. If this is the case, what is the situation of those who abandon Jihâd without permission?

One who ponders over the Qur'ân will see that the like of these statements help one another on this meaning.

Allâhu Taâlâ has said regarding their characteristic of stinginess,

²⁴ Muhammad 47/21.

²⁵ Al-Hujurât 49/15.

²⁶ At-Tawbah 9/44-45.

“And nothing prevents their contributions from being accepted from them except that they disbelieved in Allâh and in His Rasûl (Messenger Muhammad); and they do not come to the Salâh (daily prayers) other than in a state of laziness; and that they do not contribute other than in a state of unwillingness.”²⁷

This is the situation of those who contribute unwillingly; how about those who refuse to contribute from the beginning?

Allâhu Taâlâ has also said,

“And among them there are those who find fault with you in (the distribution of) alms. So, if they are given something out of it, they are pleased, and if they are not given from them, they at once get enraged.”²⁸

Allâhu Taâlâ also said,

“And among them there are those who made a pledge with Allâh: If He gives us (wealth) out of His grace, then, surely we shall give alms and shall be among the righteous. But when He gave them (wealth) out of His grace, they became stingy about it, and went back turning their faces away.”²⁹

Ibnu Taymiyyah Rahimahullâh said in continuation:

As Allâhu Taâlâ said,

“(They lash you) with sharp tongues, indisposed toward (any) good.”³⁰

²⁷ At-Tawbah 9/54.

²⁸ At-Tawbah 9/58.

²⁹ At-Tawbah 9/75-76.

³⁰ Al-Ahzâb 33/19.

Such lashing with sharp tongues occurs through various aspects:

The Munâfiqûn would sometimes say to the Mu'minûn,

"This has befallen us because of your misfortune. Indefinitely, you are the ones who called the people to this Dîn. You fought and opposed them due to this Dîn."

This is what the Munâfiqûn would say to the Mu'minûn from amongst the Sahâbah.

Sometimes, they would say,

"Until now, you indicated that we stay here and be steadfast at this place which is unprotected and feared of being attacked by the enemy, however, if we had traveled before this, this would not have stricken us."

Sometimes, they would say,

"You want to disperse your enemies although you are little in number and weak. Your religion has deluded you."

As Allâhu Taâlâ said,

"When the hypocrites and those who have a malady in their hearts said, "The belief of these people has deluded them." And whoever places his trust in Allâh (becomes victorious, because) Allâh is Mighty, Wise."³¹

Sometimes, they would say,

"You are out of intellect and absent-minded. You want to destroy yourselves and those people with you."

Sometimes they would say similar words, which are severely evil.

Ibnu Taymiyyah Rahimahullâh said in continuation:

Then Allâhu Taâlâ stated,

³¹ Al-Anfâl 8/49.

“They think that the Confederates have not yet withdrawn, and if the Confederates should come (again), they would wish they were in the deserts (wandering) among the Bedouins, seeking news about you (from a far place); and if they (happen) to be among you, they would not fight but little.”³²

Allâh Tabâraka wa Taâlâ has characterized them with three characteristics:

The First Characteristic: Due to their extreme fear, they think the Confederates have not (yet) withdrawn from the city; this is the condition of the coward who has disease in his heart, for the hearts of such people are embarked upon confirming the frightening news and belying the news of trust.

The Second Characteristic: When the Confederates come, they would wish that they were not amongst you, rather they wish that they were in the desert among the Bedouins, inquiring (from afar) about your news asking, “What news is there regarding Madînah, what befell the people?”

And the Third Characteristic: When the Confederates came while they are amongst you, they would not fight except for a little.

These three characteristics suit most of the people in this expedition as is known from themselves and those whom are informed of them know.

³² Al-Ahzâb 33/20.