

Advice for monitoring bad, recurrent ideas and doubts

- ❑ Ideas normally come spontaneously in human mind, do not disturb a person's daily life activities and have no fixed time. It's a blessing of God that ideas help us to perform different activities, solve a puzzle or difficult question, save life or find creative solutions in challenging situations. One must thank God for blessing human beings with a highly creative brain that generates useful and helpful ideas and thoughts which makes them superior to all other creatures on Earth.
- ❑ Ideas and thoughts can be classified as good or bad, useful or absurd, illogical or reasonable, practical or fantasy, etc. A wise person with intelligent mind knows how to differentiate good ideas from evil, useful from absurd and makes sure to recognize and follow those ideas that are worthy of bringing benefit, felicity and success in this world and blessings in the hereafter. He also knows how to control, discard and avoid following evil, absurd and fanciful ideas and thoughts and is aware of the dangerous consequences of mistakes and lapses in this regard.
- ❑ Thus, one must be watchful over his ideas and thoughts on daily basis. If one shifts his attention to activities that are only for the sake of worldly pleasures, inordinate desires and sinful pursuits, then the input to his brain in the form of pleasurable stimuli from visual, auditory and other sensory modalities will gradually dominate his thoughts and his ideas will slowly shift towards evil and will acquire satanic character – the lower *malakuti* realm mentioned earlier.
- ❑ If this state goes unchecked and balance of daily activities and ideas shifts further towards pleasurable worldly pursuits, his brain will generate more evil thoughts. After some time, the person's mind will be totally overwhelmed with corrupt, sinful and pleasure-seeking evil ideas interfering his daily activities. It will be difficult for him to perform good, rational and beneficial actions.
- ❑ An intelligent person should wake up and make a firm resolve to get rid of this evil state. First step is to think over result of such a life – Where will it ultimately lead him to? What tragic end is awaiting him? How long is he prepared to waste precious blessings of God? What if death suddenly visits him leaving him with no time for repentance? Isn't it serious enough to take a concrete action now?
- ❑ The first practical step is to block all the pleasurable stimuli entering brain via eyes, ears, taste and other sensory organs. This will then prevent the brain from getting fuel to generate bad ideas. At the same time, the person should pray God to help him. He should start doing good, reasonable and beneficial actions. Gradually his brain will stop generating bad ideas and will shift towards good, beneficial and reasonable thoughts. His actions will then also change gradually to better and with the help of God, he will get rid of the wretched state.

Conclusion:

- ❑ Imam Ali (a) said: "Fasting three days every month – First and last Thursdays and Wednesday in the middle and the month of Sha'ban cures the stresses of heart and *waswas* of chest." [Al-Khisal, p. 612, hadith # 10]

Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind, from the evil of the sneaking whisperer, Who whispers in the hearts of people...

(Qur'an, chapter 114, verses 1-5)

'Abd Allah ibn Sinan, said: "I mentioned to Abu 'Abd Allah (Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq) (a) (about) a man who was troubled by *waswas* (doubts, insinuations) in his *wudu*, and *salat*, adding that he is a man of intelligence. Thereupon Abu 'Abd Allah (a) said: 'What kind of intelligence has he, when he obeys Satan?' I said: 'How does he obey Satan?' The Imam replied: 'Ask him regarding its cause and he will tell you that it is a work of Satan'."

[Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, "kitab al-'aql wa al-jahl," hadith # 10]

Diseases of the Soul ...

Satanic Insinuations (*Waswasah*)

The Messenger of God (s) said: "There is no believer whose heart does not have two ears: An angel whispers into one of them and into the other, the slinking whisperer (*al-waswas al-khannas*). God confirms believer with the means of angel and that is what is meant by this statement of His, *subhanahu*: "And He confirms them with a spirit from Him" (58:22).

[Al-Tabrisi, *Majma' al-bayan*, vol. 10, p. 571]

Satanic insinuations and divine inspirations

❑ *Waswasah* (or *waswas*) means satanic insinuations, obsessions, suggestions, doubts, lapse of faith, *shirk* and like pertaining to satanic insinuation and devilish promptings and ideas, which Satan puts into the hearts of people. Opposed to it are the divine inspiration and angelic suggestions such as conviction, tranquillity, certainty, steadiness, sincerity of heart and ideas for doing good actions and like.

The realms of *Mulk* and *Malakut*

❑ The human heart is a subtle reality that is attached to two different realms: the realm of *mulk* (physical world (*dunya*), mundane world) through which it pursues the physical aspect of life and *malakut* (internal, spiritual world, *ghayb*, Hereafter) through which it pursues its spiritual and Hereafterly life.

❑ Hence, heart is like a two-faced mirror. When it is turned towards the world of *ghayb*, the hidden forms are reflected. The other side faces the world of *shahadah* (physical, sensed by five senses), and in it the *mulki* and worldly forms are reflected. The mundane forms find their reflection in the outward senses and some of the inner cognitive faculties such as ideas (*khayal*) and imagination (*wahm*).

❑ One's actions are image of one's will, which in turn is image of one's thoughts, which are a reflection of the heart's orientation. Thus, when heart establishes connection with the lower *malakuti* realm, the realm of the jinn, Satan, and evil spirits, it receives satanic insinuations that are of compound ignorance, *waswas* and obscuring veils. Such person's intentions take evil form and his actions become corrupted with sins and as a result his behaviour acquires evil character.

❑ If heart is oriented towards pursuit of Hereafter, its attention is directed towards world of *ghayb* acquiring harmony with higher *malakut*, realm of angels and blessed pure spirits, giving a luminous image of world of nature. The knowledge imparted to it, then, is of a divine and angelic character and thoughts come to mind by divine inspiration. As a result, a state of stability and bliss is created within soul. Actions and behaviour of such a person acquire angelic character.

Common examples and reasons of *Waswas*

❑ Even though the *waswas* is contrary to the laws of *Shari'ah* and the teachings of Islam, many of the pious and those suffering from it do not believe that it is from handiwork of Satan and the persons afflicted may mistakenly believe that their acting upon it is without opposition to the teachings of Islam.

❑ For example, it has been mentioned in authentic traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) that the *wudu'* (minor ablution) of the Messenger of God (s) consisted of single washings (of the face and the forearms). It is an established fact in *fiqh* that it is sufficient to wash the face, the right, and the left hand each with—a single *ghurfah* (handful) of water. However, a person suffering from *waswas* thinks that he should wash it even ten times to make sure his *wudu'* is correct and doesn't realize that after washing more than two or three times, it becomes invalid and then his *namaz* also becomes invalid and if one tries to convince, it has no effect.

❑ Other such examples include saying *takbiratul ahram* (Allahu Akbar) several times or cleaning a *najis* (unclean) part of body or clothe several times than recommended. While such actions will be seen by others as futile, irrational and abnormal, but the person suffering from such *waswas* thinks it is necessary to make sure that he has performed the required action to the level of his satisfaction.

❑ Unfortunately, the *waswas* mentioned above originate or is motivated in a person because other ignorant persons like himself around him consider such actions as one of his virtues and piety and they praise such a person as highly religious. Such attitude provokes the person suffering from *waswas* to do it more.

Few treatments of *Waswas* in acts of worship

❑ It is good for a human being that his acts of worship be based on reflection and thought. He should think about an action that he wishes to perform for the pleasure of God, the Exalted, as to from where and from whom he has derived its details.

❑ Whenever someone finds a trace of obsession in himself during acts of worship, he should turn to other ordinary people or ask the *ulama* and *fuqaha'* about his own conduct to see whether he is suffering from *waswas* or not.

❑ After that, when he has come to know in theory that he is ill, it is necessary to take remedial action which is that he should not pay attention to the satanic *waswas* and the whims that it insinuates. For instance, if he is suffering from *waswas* in the matter of *wudu'*, he should make use of a single handful of water despite Satan's assertions and strong insinuations to do it several times.

❑ If the person ignores Satanic insinuations several times and acts contrary to his suggestions, Satan would take his hands off him in desperation and the person suffering from *waswas* will have a definite cure of his illness and a state of steadiness will return to his soul. While opposing Satanic insinuations, the person must also tearfully beseech God and seek the refuge from the evil of Satan and his own self. God will definitely help him and relieve him of sickness of heart.

❑ Imam al-Sadiq (A) said: “A man came to the Messenger of Allah (s) and said, “O Messenger of Allah, I complain to you concerning the *waswasah* that so troubles me during *salat* that I don't know how much of my prayer I have offered.” The Prophet said to him, “When you enter your *salat*, strike your left thigh with the forefinger of your right hand, then say: In the Name of God and by God, I put my trust in God, I seek refuge in God, the All-hearing, the All-knowing from Satan, the Stoned One. You will exorcize him and drive him away.” [Al-Kulayni, *Furu' al-Kafi*, v.3, p.358]

❑ Abu Ja'far (Imam al-Baqir) (a) said, “When *sahw* (i.e., forgetfulness, absent-mindedness, lapse of attention) occurs often to you during *salat*, disregard it, for that will make Satan leave you. Indeed, *sahw* is due to Satan.” [Al-Kulayni, *Furu' al-Kafi*, v.3, p.359]

❑ The Prophet of God (s) said: “Anyone who observes this *waswas* within himself should say three times: ‘I believe in God and His Prophet’ the *waswas* will leave him.” [Kanz al-Ummal, hadith # 1245]