The Second Station of the Twenty-First Word

[This comprises five salves for five wounds of the heart.]

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

رَبِّ اَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيَاطِينِ ٭ وَاَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ اَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ[[1]](#footnote-2)

O one who is subjected to the sickness of waswasa! Do you know what your waswasa resembles? A calamity! The more importance is attached, the more it swells. If you do not attach importance, it shrinks. If you consider it big, it grows. If you consider it small, it becomes small. If you fear it, it becomes serious and makes you ill. If you do not fear it, it becomes light and remains hidden. If you do not know its essence, it persists and becomes established. If you know its essence and recognize it, it goes. Therefore, I shall declare only the five most frequently occurring aspects of the many sorts of this calamitous waswasa. Perhaps it may be a remedy for you and for me. For, waswasa is such a thing that ignorance invites it while ‘ilm repels it. If you do not recognize it, it comes. If you do recognize it, it goes.

**First Aspect - First Wound:** Shaytan firstly casts doubt into the heart. If the heart does not accept it, it transforms from doubt into shatm[[2]](#footnote-3). It depicts some unclean memories, which resemble shatm, and ugly states, which are opposed to adab, before the imagination. It causes the heart to say “Ah! Alas!” and to fall into despair. The man suffering waswasa supposes that his heart has acted contrary to adab before his Rabb and feels dismaying anxiety and excitement. In order to be saved from it, he flees from the hudhur and wants to plunge into ghaflah. The salve for this wound is as follows:

Look, O unfortunate man suffering waswasa! Do not be anxious! Because, it is not shatm that came to your mind, but rather, imagining. Just as imagining kufr is not kufr, so too, imagining shatm is not shatm.[[3]](#footnote-4) For, according to logic, imagining is not a judgement, while to say a word of shatm is a judgement. Moreover, those ugly words are not the words of your heart, because your heart is hurt and regretful by them. Rather they come from lummah ash-shaytaniyyah which is near the heart. The harm of waswasa is supposing it to be harmful. That is, it is to suffer harm in the heart by supposing it to be harmful. For, he supposes an imagining, which is devoid of judgement, to be the haqiqah. Also, he attributes the work of shaytan to his own heart. He supposes the word of shaytan to be from it. He considers it harmful and falls into harm. That is anyway what shaytan wants.

**The Second Aspect is this:** When meanings emerge from the heart, they enter the imagination bared of form; from there, they wear forms. As for the imagination, it weaves forms of a sort always beneath a cause. It leaves on the way the forms of the things to which it attaches importance. It either clothes the meaning that passes from that way with those forms or affixes them to it or smears it with them or makes them veils to it. If the meanings are pure and clean, and the forms are dirty and vile, there is no wearing, but there is contact. The man suffering waswasa confuses the contact with being clothed. He says “Ah! Alas! How corrupted my heart is. This wretchedness, this meanness of the nafs cause me to be repelled!” Shaytan takes advantage of this vein of his a lot. The salve for this wound is as follows:

Listen, O you unfortunate! Just as the uncleanness (najasah) of the inside of your abdomen does not affect or invalidate your outward cleanliness (taharah), which is the means of pure adab of the salâh, so the proximity of the sacred meanings with the dirty forms does not harm them. For example, while you do tafakkur on the âyahs of Allah, suddenly a stirring thing like a sickness, a desire, or a need to pass water touches your feeling severely. Of course, your imagination will weave low forms that will see and look at the necessary things for the cure of sickness or answering the need and are appropriate to them, and the meanings that come will pass between them. There is no harm, nor soiling, nor injury, nor peril for the ones that will pass between them. The only peril is to focus on them and suppose them to be harmful.

**The Third Aspect is this:** There are certain hidden connections between things. There are threads of connection even within the things you never expect. They are there themselves, or your imagination has made those threads according to the art it occupies and has tied them to each other. It is due to this mystery of connection that sometimes seeing a sacred thing reminds a dirty thing. As declared in the science of style in speech, “As for the opposition, which is the cause of distance in the materiality, it is the cause of proximity in the imagination.” That is, an imaginary connection is the means of bringing together the images of two opposites. The recollection arising from this connection is called the tedâî'[[4]](#footnote-5) of ideas. For example, while you are in a state of performing the salâh, in the du’â, before the Ka'ba and the hudhur of Allah, doing tafakkur on âyahs, this tedâî’ of ideas holds you and drives you to the furthest vile trivia. If your head is subjected to such tedâî' of ideas, do not be anxious. Rather, the moment that you awake, turn back. Do not be occupied with scrutiny by saying: "What wrong have I done?" lest through your attention, that weak connection strengthens. For, the more you display sorrow and the more importance you attach, that weak recollection of yours turns into mastery by practising. It becomes a sickness of imagination. Do not fear, it is not a sickness of the heart. This sort of recollection is mostly involuntary. Especially in sensitive and anxious people, it is more common. Shaytan digs the mine of that sort of waswasa a lot. The salve for this wound is as follows:

The tedâî’ of ideas is mostly involuntary. There is no responsibility for it. Also, there is proximity in tedâî’; there is no touching or intermingling. Therefore, the conditions of the ideas do not spread to each other and do not harm each other. Just as, there is the proximity of shaytan and the malâikah of ilham around the heart, and the proximity of the sinner and the pious and their being in the same house cause no harm, so too, if dirty imaginings, which you do not want, come and enter into your clean thoughts by the urge of the tedâî’ of ideas, they cause no harm. **Unless it is intentional or one is over-occupied with them by the supposition of harm.** Also, sometimes the heart becomes tired. The mind occupies itself with a random thing in order to entertain itself. Shaytan finds an opportunity, and sprinkles dirty things before it and cultivates them.

**Fourth Aspect:** It is a waswasa arising from searching for the best form of an action (‘amal) that the more it becomes severe by the supposition of taqwâ, the more the condition for him intensifies. It even reaches a degree that while searching for better forms of action (‘amal), he falls into haram. Sometimes searching for a sunnah causes him to abandon a wâjib. He says: “I wonder if my act (‘amal) was sound (sahîh)?”, and repeats it. This state continues. He falls into great despair. Shaytan takes advantage of this state of his and wounds him. There are two salves for this wound.

**The First Salve:** Waswasa like this is worthy of the Mu'tazilites. Because they say: “Actions and things, which are the causes of accountability, have beauty in their essences regarding the âkhirah, then in consequence of that beauty they were commanded, or they have ugliness, then in consequence of that they were prohibited. That means, the beauty and ugliness regarding the haqiqah and the âkhirah are essential, and the command and prohibition of Allah follow this.” According to this madhab, the following waswasa comes to man in every action (‘amal) he performs: “I wonder if my action was performed in the beautiful form that exists in the nafs ul-amr[[5]](#footnote-6)?” While Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamâ'ah, which is the haqq madhab, says: “Janâb-i Haqq commands a thing, then it becomes beautiful. He prohibits a thing, then it becomes ugly.” This means beauty comes into existence through command and ugliness through prohibition. The beauty and ugliness look to mukallaf[[6]](#footnote-7) being informed of (ittila’) and they are established accordingly. As for this beauty and ugliness, they are not in the apparent face looking to the world, but rather in the face looking to the âkhirah.

For example, you performed the salâh or took the wudû. Whereas, in the nafs ul-amr[[7]](#footnote-8), there was a cause that would spoil your salâh and wudû. But you never had knowledge of it. Your salâh and wudû are both sound (sahîh) and beautiful. The Mu'tazilites say: “In haqiqah, it was ugly and unsound. But from you, it is accepted. Because you were ignorant, did not know and have an excuse.” Therefore, according to the madhab of Ahl al-Sunnah, do not possess a waswasa about an action (‘amal) that you performed conforming to the externals of the Sharî'ah, by saying: “I wonder if it was sound (sahîh)?”. But say: “Was it accepted?” Do not be proud and enter into self-complacency!

**The Second Salve:** لاَ حَرَجَ فِى الدِّينِ There is no difficulty in religion. Since the four madhabs are haqq. Since understanding one’s fault, which leads to istighfâr, is preferable — for such a man suffering waswasa — to seeing one’s action (‘amal) as good, which leads to pride. That is, it is better if such a man suffering waswasa sees his action (‘amal) as faulty and does istighfâr, rather than falling into pride by considering it to be beautiful. Since it is thus, throw away the waswasa! Say to shaytan: “This state is a difficulty. It is difficult to be informed of the reality of the state. It is contrary to the ease of religion. It is contrary to the principle اَلدِّينُ يُسْرٌ لاَ حَرَجَ فِى الدِّينِ[[8]](#footnote-9). Certainly, such action (‘amal) of mine conforms to a haqq madhab. That is enough for me. And at least, by admitting my impotence to perform ‘ibâdah adequately and taking refuge with the compassion of Allah with istighfâr and beseech, it is a means of a humble supplication for my faulty action (‘amal) to be accepted and for my faults to be forgiven.”

**Fifth Aspect:** It is the waswasa emerging in the form of doubts concerning the matters of îmân. The unfortunate man suffering waswasa sometimes confuses the imagining (tahayyul) with the thinking in the mind (taaqqul). That is, he supposes a doubt emerged in the imagination to be a doubt entered into the mind and supposes that his belief has been damaged. He also sometimes supposes a doubt he had imagined to be a doubt harming his îmân. He also sometimes supposes that a doubt he has formed in his mind (tasawwur) has been confirmed by his mind. He also sometimes supposes doing tafakkur over a matter related to kufr to be kufr. That is, he supposes revolving, investigation and impartial reasoning of the power of tafakkur in the form of understanding the causes of dhalâlah to be contrary to îmân. Thus, by being frightened at these suppositions, which are the results of the promptings of shaytan, he says: “Alas! My heart is corrupted and my belief is damaged.” Since those states are mostly involuntary and he cannot put them to rights through his juz' al-ikhtiyârî, he falls into despair. The salve for this wound is as follows:

Just as imagining kufr is not kufr, neither having wahm about kufr is kufr. Just as forming ideas about dhalâlah in the mind (tasawwur) is not dhalâlah, neither having tafakkur on dhalâlah is dhalâlah. For, both imagining (tahayyul), having wahm (tawahhum), forming ideas in the mind (tasawwur) and tafakkur are different from the affirmation of the mind and idh'ân of the heart, they are different. They are free to an extent. They do not listen to the juz’ al-ikhtiyârî much. They cannot undertake the obligations of religion completely. But affirmation and idh'ân are not like that. They are subjected to a measure. Just as imagining (tahayyul), having wahm (tawahhum), forming ideas in the mind (tasawwur) and tafakkur are not the affirmation or idh'ân, they are not considered to be doubt or uncertainty either. But if they are established by being repeated unnecessarily, then a sort of real doubt might be born from them.

Also, by displaying iltizâm[[9]](#footnote-10) to the opposing side continually by considering it to be for the name of impartial reasoning or the sake of justice, he reaches such a state in which he involuntarily displays iltizâm for the opposing side. The iltizâm of the haqq, which is wâjib on him, is destroyed and he falls into danger. A state that will be an unjust representative of shaytan or the enemy becomes established in his mind.

**The most important of this sort of waswasa is this:** The man suffering waswasa confuses "الإمكان الذاتي"[[10]](#footnote-11) (Al-imkân az-zâtî)with [[11]](#footnote-12)"الإمكان الذهني" [Al-imkân az-zihnî (aqlî)]. That is, if he sees something possible in its essence, he imagines it to be possible and doubtful by reason. Whereas, one of the principles of ‘Ilm al-Kalâm is that al-imkân az-zâtî is not opposed to certain (yaqîn) knowledge and does not oppose the necessities of reason.

For example, the Black Sea sinking into the earth at this moment is possible in essence and it is possible with such imkân az-zâtî, but we judge with certainty (yaqîn) that the sea is in its place and we know it without any doubt. And that potentiality of this possibility and that imkân az-zâtî cause no doubt and does not damage our certainty (yaqîn).

For example, it is possible in its essence that the sun will not set today or that it will not rise tomorrow. But this possibility does not damage our certainty (yaqîn) and causes no doubt. Thus like this, wahms emerging from the aspect of imkân az-zâtî about the setting of the life of this world and the rising of life of the âkhirah, which are among the haqiqahs of îmân, do not harm the certainty (yaqîn) of îmân. Also, the well-known rule, لاَ عِبْرَةَ ِلْلاِحْتِمَالِ الْغَيْرِ النَّاشِئِ عَنْ دَلِيلٍ that is, “A possibility that does not arise from a proof is of no importance” is one of the established principles of both Usûl ad-dîn and Usûl al-fiqh.

**If you say:** “For what hikmah does waswasa, which is harmful and troublesome for mu’mins to such an extent, pestering us?”

**The Answer:** On the condition that it does not reach ifrât and become predominant, the essence of waswasa is the cause of vigilance and of one's doing his best, and a means to seriousness. It removes laxity and repels carelessness. Therefore, in this realm of examination and arena of competition, the Absolute Hakîm put the waswasa in the hand of shaytan as a whip of encouragement for us. He strikes it at the head of mankind. If it hurts excessively, one must complain to Al-Hakîm, Who is Rahîm, and say: اَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ[[12]](#footnote-13)

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1. ("O my Rabb! I seek refuge in You from the prompting of the shaytans, and O Rabb! I seek refuge in You even from their coming near me.") [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. (**Literally:** A reviling. Scurrility. Invective. Abuse. Blasphemy. Swear. To revile, vituperate. Any ugly or bad word.) *(Tr.)* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. (**Note from translators for further explanation regarding the expression “shatm”:** Every word has a meaning. The essence and reality of a word that issues forth from the mouth and exits in the form of a sound are its meaning. The duty of words is to carry the meaning of a thought. That is, our speech is the fruit of our thoughts and derives from them. The meaning of the word spoken exists in the thoughts of the person who spoke them.

The thoughts contrary to adab, morality and respect, which cause a person who thinks of them to feel ashamed even though they are not said nor embodied by the sound of words, are existent by their meanings in the mind and imagination. These thoughts might come to the mind voluntarily or involuntarily. If they come to the mind involuntarily, there is no responsibility. However, if they come into the mind voluntarily — even though they are not said — there is the responsibility as a consequence of the misusage of the faculty of imagination. They have an existence in the imagination in a different form; they form an action negatively performed by the faculty of imagination. By voluntarily thinking, which is the use of the faculty of imagination for the sake of the nafs, they become an obstacle to ma’nawî attainments and perfection.) *Tr.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. (Summoning or inviting one idea to another idea through making a connection and association of them in imagination) *Tr.* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. (The essence and reality of a matter or thing.) *Tr.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. (One who is responsible to Allah in the obligations of religion like îmân and ‘ibâdah. One who has the accountability by way of the obligations placed on him by Allah) *Tr.* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. (The essence and reality of a matter or thing.) *Tr.* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. (There is no difficulty in religion, Religion is facility) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. [A being or becoming inseparable from. A taking upon one's self. Supporting something to the degree of necessity. To requisite something or the duty upon one’s own self to the degree of wâjib (obligation).] *(Tr.)* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. (**Al-imkân az-zâtî:** The possibility in essence. A thing, which is possible to occur in essence.) *(Tr.)* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. (**Al-imkân az-zihnî (aqlî):** All possibilities and potentialities of a thing, which might occur in mind. The state of accepting something that is possible in its essence as if it occurred.) *(Tr.)* [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. ( I seek refuge with Allah from shaytan the accursed.) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)