# The Fitnah of Fame: Muslim Influencers and the Cult of Popularity

*Navigating Fame, Likes, and Followers with Taqwa*

By Abu Turoob

In today’s hyper-connected world, influence has never been more accessible. With just a phone and an internet connection, anyone can broadcast their voice, opinions, and lifestyle to hundreds — if not thousands — of people. While this presents unique opportunities for da‘wah, it also introduces a subtle and dangerous trial: the fitnah of fame.  
  
As Muslim students, activists, creatives, or da‘wah-minded individuals, we must pause and reflect — how do we handle visibility in a way that doesn’t compromise our sincerity, modesty, or taqwa?  
  
**The Temptation Behind the Screen**  
  
The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) warned us long ago:  
***“Two hungry wolves let loose among sheep are not more harmful than a man’s craving for wealth and fame is to his religion.” — [Tirmidhi, 2376]***  
  
Fame is deceptive. It often begins with noble intentions — spreading reminders, inspiring change, amplifying Islamic messages. But over time, the desire to be “liked,” retweeted, or applauded can corrupt the heart. The digital world, with its algorithms and attention-based rewards, constantly pushes us toward doing more for visibility than for Allah.  
  
It becomes easy to slip from:  
“I want people to benefit”   
to   
“I want people to admire me.”  
  
This is the subtle shift from Ikhlāṣ (sincerity) to Riyāʼ (showing off) — a spiritual disease that the Prophet (ﷺ) called *"the hidden shirk."* He said:  
***“What I fear most for you is the minor shirk: showing off (riya).” — [Ahmad]***  
  
**The Weight of Being Seen**  
  
In my role as the Public Relations Officer of MSSN Unilorin, I’ve experienced the pull of visibility — being the one making announcements, addressing gatherings, managing public platforms. It taught me something important: it’s easy to be heard, but harder to be sincere.  
  
Fame in Islam is not a badge of honor. Rather, it is often a burden. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, one of the greatest scholars in Islamic history, once said:  
***“I wish I could be in a valley where no one knows me.”***  
  
*Imam Sufyan Ath-Thawri also said:* ***“I have never treated anything more difficult than my intention, because it keeps changing on me.”***  
These were men who were already giants in knowledge and piety, yet they feared the consequences of being known — while many today chase it without caution.  
  
**Taqwa: Holding Steady in a Shifting Digital Age**  
  
**So, how can we use the digital world while staying mindful of Allah?**  
**1. Check your intentions regularly.** Before you post, ask: **Is this for Allah, or for attention?  
2. Be modest in your presence**. Not every moment needs to be shared. Not every good deed must be publicized. **3. Stay grounded in your relationship with Allah.** Let your private worship exceed your public influence. **4. Surround yourself with sincere advisors.** People who can correct you when your content, tone, or purpose slips. **5. Make du ‘ā for sincerity.** The Prophet ﷺ often said: ***“O Allah, purify my heart from hypocrisy and my actions from showing off.” — [Al-Bayhaqi]***  
**Fame is a Tool, Not a Goal**  
  
Having followers is not inherently bad. In fact, if Allah grants you an audience, use it for good. But don’t be deceived. On the Day of Judgment, you won’t be asked how many people followed you — you’ll be asked who you followed, what you stood for, and whether your deeds were truly for Allah.  
  
Let us strive to be influential in the heavens, even if we are unknown on earth.  
  
***“Be unknown among people, but known to the inhabitants of the heavens.” — Advice from early scholars***  
  
In Conclusion  
  
The fitnah of fame is real. Likes and followers can be intoxicating. But for the Muslim, influence must be coupled with accountability, and popularity must never outshine piety.  
  
As we rise in visibility, may we also rise in sincerity. And may Allah protect our hearts from the hidden traps of our own desires.  
  
***“O Turner of the hearts, make my heart firm upon Your religion.” — [Tirmidhi]***  
  
Ameen.