

Friday Sermon – 4th Feb 2022



Hujjatul Islam Ustad Syed Jawad Naqvi

(Principal Jamia Orwatul Wuthqa – Lahore, Jamia Jafaria – Gujranwala)

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Topic: “ITTAQU – Incorrect to blindly follow ancient trends in Tafsir ”

I invite you all towards Taqwa and emphasize you to live your life in accordance with Taqwa. Allah has given the bounty of life and established a constitution for the guidance and security of this life. For its protection an important plan for security has been made which is titled as Taqwa. In Quran Allah (s) has ordered most about Taqwa. If Taqwa is practiced then everything else becomes practical. For Taqwa though there is a lot of emphasis but still it is not understood properly.

If Taqwa is interpreted as fear then everyone is not fearful and if it is abstinence then is everyone abstaining. Those who have desire to understand religion, they do a surficial analysis then write a book as well. This causes misunderstanding because once something is written in book form it is considered as authentic. The mistakes which actual writers do and those who do it out of desire they also do mistakes. One such example of such is Taqwa. Today without discrimination if you see any religious person then the meaning of Taqwa in their minds is fear, abstinence and this has come from these books. When a Tafsir of that reality which Quran guarantees as a means of protection of life is not done properly then definitely it would not be acted upon.

For human life Taqwa is not translated as protection. It is essential that we have to start from scratch to understand the meanings of Quran. The elderly people have understood the Quran as per their era and have written the Tafsir, which was their understanding. Every generation needs their own understanding and the previous can be benefitted from for this new understanding. Allama Tabatabai who has a great Tafsir says after every two years a new Tafsir is needed for Quran as the circumstances change. But in Muslims, something common in both East and West is to follow the ancient trends. This following of ancient trends has been expressed by Iqbal to remain determined on old trends and being stubborn in not accepting new manifestos is the most the difficult phase for generations. To follow ancient trends is the biggest difficulty for Allama Iqbal and cause for lowliness of generations. The generations even though the old things are not worthy of acting upon still they embrace those and consider them sacred. If you see Tafsir, the old Tafsir are considered more sacred and newer Tafsir is not given significance.

There is a vision of Salafi that the right understanding of religion is only present in older generations. In Ahle Sunnah Salafi has become a vision formally but in a covert form present in all sects and schools to considers all elders as correct and those coming current generation as errored. This is against intellect and experience. If we see various segments of life like even in natural sciences as the generations have passed it has become more and more perfect. The same like philosophy and other fields as well where more seriousness and perfection is seen. But to follow ancient trends is a human psychology and should not be considered as Fitrati because many such things are habits and repetitive admonitions. The Fitrati of human beings is always after new paths, trends and realities. On this basis we need a Tafsir of Quran as per the current era.

In Tafsir of Quran to understand the meaning of Taqwa we need to first analyze Taqwa is presented after being associated with which other meanings. The previous trend of understanding is still in practice today whereby they take one hadith and interpret entire religion on one tradition. They do not consider other traditions and Quranic verses on the same topic and the relation of these. They

take one hadith or verse of Quran and issue Fatwah that anyone who does not believes in this is out of religion.

Today's scholars have presented a new base that you take a Qur'anic word and then parse the Quran to see where all and in what context the word is used across. Like what is the actual meaning of Taqwa and then where all Taqwa is used with what associations. Like Ittaqullah where Taqwa is associated with Allah, then Ittaqunnar it is associated with fire. There are several such references where Quran has connected Taqwa with all other things. You need to keep all those things under consideration and then do the Tafsir of Taqwa. In the past the biggest support of Tafsir was Hadith which was the trend. They would present Hadith in Tafsir of Taqwa. They would not consider understanding Quran from any other way other than Hadith. This vision what elderly people have understood is deeper. This is not correct because the ancient people would not narrate hadith as Tafsir of Verse. Pondering (Tadabbur) was not part of their trend in understanding. Even if you see the old Tafsir's now you will see written that so and so companion has said this, such follower of companion has said this.

If we take an analysis of one verse Tafsir across all past generations we will see what comes out. If we compare the tafsir of Allama Tabatabai and Tafsir of Ayatullah Jawadi Amouli which is latest has more deep meanings. Hence we cannot consider the elderly people Tafsir as a final proof. If we look at meaning of Taqwa interpreted in past and then see today's generation and broadness of human activities Taqwa takes some other meaning.

If Taqwa gets interpreted as fear then it does not harmonize with the actual vocabulary meaning of Taqwa. The biggest challenge which Muffasir faced was if they keep the actual meaning of Taqwa in place what would be Ittaqullah ? It would become Protect Allah. That is all believers should protect Allah. This is not correct meaning as what Allah needs to be protected from? Thus from here they concluded that they should not take the meaning of Ittaqullah as protection but instead take that meaning which suits the essence of Allah. Thus they said the meaning in such places would be fear, that is to fear Allah. The conclusion was that if you keep the actual vocabulary meaning in place then it makes no sense in these verses, hence we should leave the actual meaning.

It is correct that to protect Allah does not make sense, but at the same time Quran is giving order for Tadabbur (Pondering). You keep the meaning of Taqwa also in place and interpret these verses also correctly keeping the actual vocabulary of Taqwa intact. The scholars like Motahari presented that Taqwa does not mean fear , it is protection but how to interpret the meaning of Taqwa in these verses was not presented by them because their subject was discussion did not need that.