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The Forty-seventh Greater Sin: Disrespect of Ka'ba

After the Holy Qur'an there is nothing more respected and venerated than the Holy Ka'ba. Every Muslim is well-aware that not only is the disrespect of Ka'ba a greater sin, in some cases it tantamounts to Kufr and apostasy, as mentioned in the chapter of disrespect of Qur'an.

Sad^q (r.a.) narrates from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said,

“Nothing is more honourable in the eyes of Allah than the following Three: The Holy Qur'an, which is His wisdom and Light, His House which He has appointed as the Qibla for men, and the Progeny of his Prophet (a.s.).”¹

He (a.s.) also said,

“Allah has not created any house on the earth more loved by Him than the Ka'ba and more honoured by Him.”²

Every believer and all the Muslims are well-aware of the fact that disrespecting the Holy Ka'ba is a very serious crime. In fact it is obligatory for Muslims to respect the entire sanctuary and the city of Makkah.

Emphasis on Respecting the Ka'ba

Nass is available to indicate that it is a Greater sin to show disrespect to the Ka'ba and the Messenger of Allah (S) has clearly stated,

“It is a greater sin to consider the disrespect of the Holy House permissible.”

Allah (S.w.T.) says in Surah al-M^{ida},

“O you who believe! Do not violate the signs appointed by Allah.” (Surah al-M^{ida} 5:2)

According to *Tafsīrul Mizan* the word *'Ihlāq'* (violate) actually means to consider the disrespect of a sacred thing permissible (Mubah). It refers to the failure to maintain the sanctity of the signs of Allah (S.w.T.). There is no doubt that the Holy Ka'ba is a great sign of Allah (S.w.T.). It is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an that,

“And whoever respects the sacred ordinances of Allah, it is better for him with his Lord.” (Surah Hajj 22: 30)

Some commentators of Qur'an say that the words “Sacred Ordinances” in the above verse refer to the Holy Ka'ba. The term also implies the sacred Mosque, the city of Makkah which is a sacred city; the sacred months and other sanctified things.

Levels of Disrespect

As we have mentioned before, there are different levels of disrespect like tearing up the Qur'an, throwing it intentionally into Najasat and making it Najis; all these lead to infidelity and apostasy. But there are other ways of showing disrespect, some of which are mentioned below.

Defiling the Holy Sanctuary

Every sin and irreligious act committed in the Holy city of Makkah is actually an act of disrespect to the Ka'ba, because to go there and commit such illegal acts show that the person has no regard of its status and sanctity.

According to some traditions any good deed performed in the Holy City carries a double reward and any sinful act committed there earns double punishment. The traditions of the Holy Ahl ul-Bayt (a.s.) indicate that if a person commits an illegal act in Makkah and is penalized for it, he deserves more than the prescribed punishment, because he has performed that deed in the sanctuary of Allah (S.w.T.). Therefore any sin committed within the Holy Sanctuary is a greater sin. According to Shaykh Ahmad Jazaeri in his book *Ayātul Ahkam* every sin committed within the Holy Sanctuary is a greater sin according to the following verse,

“and whoever shall incline therein to wrong unjustly, We will make him taste of a painful chastisement.” (Surah Hajj 22: 25)

Please note that a sin committed within the boundaries of Makkah is itself a greater sin. When a sin is committed it causes disrespect to the Holy Sanctuary and it is an act of defilement. This is a separate crime. Therefore the one who sins earns the punishment for the illegal act as well as the punishment of defiling the Holy House.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“Every act of injustice that a person does upon himself, like stealing or oppressing people, or to cross the boundaries of divine law; is ‘Ilhad’ in my view.”

For this reason extremely pious people refrain from overstaying in the Holy Sanctuary, lest they fall into some sin and bring down upon themselves divine punishment. A few more traditions of this kind are mentioned in the book of *Al Wafi*.

In the exegesis of the above hadith, Allamah Majlisi says that this tradition indicates that there is no harm in settling down within the limits of Makkah for one who can protect himself from sins. A person told Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that there was a ferocious bird in the sanctuary and the pigeons of that area were not safe from its ferocity. Imam (a.s.) said,

“Catch this bird and kill it, because it has committed Ilhād in the Sanctuary.”³

We should know that the boundaries of the sanctuary stretch to a radius of four farsakhs, which is altogether sixteen farsakh (Each farsakh equals Three miles). (*Masalik*)

The Sanctuary is an Area of Peace

No one can touch the person who has committed a crime outside the limits and then taken refuge within the holy boundaries. He should be boycotted in such a way that he would be forced to leave the holy boundaries of his own accord. Then he should be punished for the crime. However, if one commits a crime for which there are prescribed penalties he can be punished within the limits of the Sanctuary.

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) was queried about the person who murders a man outside the holy limits and then enters the sanctuary. Imam (a.s.) said that as long as he was in the sanctuary he cannot be persecuted (killed). Such a person should be denied food and drink and no sort of dealing must be conducted with him. He should not be provided any lodging so that he ultimately leaves the sanctuary. Then he can be punished.

Then Imam (a.s.) was asked about the person who commits a murder or steals within the sanctuary. Imam (a.s.) says that he shall be penalized in the sanctuary itself because he has no respect for the sanctuary.

Sama asked Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) that a person owed him something but he continued to hide himself from Sama for quite a long time. At last Sama saw him going around the Ka’ba one day. So could he demand his money from this person? Imam (a.s.) said,

“No! But do not say salām to him (so that he recognizes you) you must not threaten him till he leaves the sanctuary.”⁴

Killing of Animals and Uprooting of Vegetation

Except for camel, cow, sheep/goat and Chicken it is Harām to slaughter any other animal in the sanctuary. But it is allowed to exterminate snakes, scorpions, rats, mosquitoes and every other pest to get rid of its pestilence. In the same way it is Harām to uproot any vegetation that sprouts in the sanctuary. For details on this topic refer to the Manasik al-Hajj of Maraja al-Taqlīd.

Entering the sanctuary without Ihram

It is not allowed to enter Makkah without donning the ritual dress (Ihram). That is, in whichever part of the year we go to Makkah we have to tie the Ihram from Miqāt, and enter it. Then after performing the tawāf and Sa'ay he can take it off. However, those people who have to frequently enter the limits of miqāt are exempted from this rule. Like postmen, woodcutters, goatherds and doctors etc. Similar is the rule for those who have worn the Ihram less than a month ago. For details refer to the books of Hajj laws. Some scholars consider entering the sanctuary without Ihram a greater sin that falls within the ambit of 'Violation of the Signs'.

Relieving oneself facing the Qibla or with ones back towards it

It is Harām to urinate or defecate facing the Qibla or with ones back towards it. Whether in solitude or in populated areas. It is Harām even if one does it inside a building. Precaution dictates that we do not make even a young child sit facing the Qibla. However, if he does it of his own accord it is not incumbent to turn him away. Mature people of sound mind who are unaware of this rule must be made aware of it. Those who wilfully disobey in spite of knowing the rule should be restrained according to the dictum of Nahy Anil Munkar, the details of which have been explained in the previous chapters. If one sits a little to the left or right such that he is not exactly facing the Qibla or not having his back exactly to it, there is no harm. More details however are available in the books of religious laws.

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1. Khisāl of Sadīq
 2. Man la Yahzarul Faqih
 3. al-Kāfi
 4. Wafi

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