

## **Why and How Can Satan Be an Obstacle to Growth or an Aid to It?**

### **What Is the True Relationship Between Satan and Human Growth and Progress?**

#### **Can Satan Be an Obstacle to Growth?**

In all our lives, there are certain factors that are obstacles to growth and progress.

-What or who do you think is the obstacle to growth and progress?

-Do you see Satan as a serious enemy and consider him an obstacle to growth and progress, or are you indifferent to him?

-Are you willing to fight against Satan?

-Did you know that for some people, Satan is not an obstacle to growth and progress, but rather he actually contributes to their growth and success?

Undoubtedly, all of us want to be happy and blissful and constantly growing and progressing; however, there are always obstacles on this path that we must fight against. One of the most important of these obstacles is Satan, our sworn enemy, and his attacks <sup>1</sup>. As mentioned in previous lessons, Satan attacks us from four directions: front, behind, right, and left <sup>2</sup>.

In a frontal attack, he frightens us about the future, causing fear, worry, and anxiety. In an attack from behind, he reminds us of past sins, grievances, and failures, causing regret and sorrow over the past. In a right-side attack, he exploits our strengths and perfections, causing arrogance, pride, and vanity. In a left-side

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<sup>1</sup>. Quran, 38:82

<sup>2</sup>. Quran, 7:17

attack, through his whispers, he leads us to commit various sins. As we see, Satan's fourfold attacks cause us negligence, grief, sorrow, worry, and fear, becoming an obstacle to growth, progress, happiness, and peace in this world.

It may be hard to believe, but some people not only do not allow Satan to hinder their growth and progress, but they grow stronger by fighting his attacks! Because they see Satan as a training opponent—which is a correct perspective. The world is a gym, and Satan is a training opponent who can greatly help us gain strength and grow in various dimensions.

But what do we mean by growth and gaining strength in the fight against Satan? Which dimension of our existence is strengthened in these battles? Why do only some of us gain strength through these attacks, while many of us continually suffer from him or surrender to him?

### **Satan: The Training Opponent of the Human Dimension**

As we know, Satan's goal is to mislead us; he waits in ambush on the Straight Path<sup>3</sup> to distract us through his fourfold attacks and prevent us from reaching human perfection. Thus, Satan aims to harm our human dimension and distance us from our main Beloved, God. However, by fighting and confronting him, not only do we deny him this chance, but we also become stronger due to grappling with this training opponent.

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<sup>3</sup>. Quran, 7:16

In reality, Satan tries to keep us from intimacy and connection with God by exploiting and adorning the perfections of the lower dimensions of our being in our eyes. Therefore, Satan is the opponent of our human dimension, and fighting his temptations and attacks strengthens our true self. It is an established principle that to become strong at anything, we need practice; for example, in sports, continuous and hard training is necessary to improve. Martial arts coaches assign training opponents to each athlete; the stronger and more aggressive the training opponent, the stronger and closer the athlete gets to their goal. Sometimes, athletes even complain if their opponent is too weak, seeking a tougher opponent to deal with harder blows. Our situation with Satan is similar: Satan plays the role of a training opponent for us in this world, and the more we fight him, the stronger we become—provided that we accept Satan as an enemy and seriously decide to confront him! Otherwise, the fight is one-sided: Satan keeps striking us, making us weaker and drifting further from the purpose of our creation.

### **Satan's Attacks: Opportunity or Threat?**

For whom is Satan a threat, and for whom an opportunity? As noted, Satan is our enemy who tries to mislead and distract us, so it is natural to regard him as an enemy<sup>4</sup> and strive to fight him seriously. As mentioned, this struggle strengthens us day by day. But why do many of us not take Satan seriously or fail to confront him effectively, continually losing to him? The answer may surprise you: because

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<sup>4</sup>. Quran, 35:6

we do not truly know ourselves or understand the dimensions of our existence. This lack of self-knowledge allows Satan to exploit us and distort everything in our view.

Satan's main tactic is to shuffle our priorities in our hearts and minds, pushing main goals aside and making secondary and trivial matters appear important. Satan enslaves our spirit to the body, arranging things so that from morning to night, we focus only on bodily needs and pleasures, leaving our soul poor and hungry. Satan causes our human and true self—the supra-rational dimension—to be oppressed and captive to the inanimate, vegetative, animal, and intellective dimensions, preventing us from not only reaching but also thinking about the purpose of our creation.

Despite all this, Satan's cunning is weak and his attacks are recognizable; if we attain self-knowledge and constantly care for our soul, Satan's hopes for us are cut off and his power diminishes. If we truly know our true self, the supra-rational or human dimension will govern over other parts, and our hierarchy of love will be proper and regulated. In that state, Satan becomes a training opponent, and fighting him does pose an obstacle to growth and progress but rather it strengthens us day by day—like a wrestler who grows stronger with every practice.

In this lesson, we stated that Satan is our obvious enemy and, through his fourfold attacks, he intends to divert us from human perfections. Therefore, we must seriously regard him as our enemy and fight him wisely. In this case, this very enemy will become a training opponent for us; thus, he will not only fail to be an obstacle to growth and progress in our human dimension but will also cause its growth and strength. The reason many of us do not fight Satan or keep losing to him is that we have not truly defined ourselves as human; that is, our human or supra-rational

dimension does not dominate the inanimate, vegetative, animal, and intellectual dimensions of our existence, and our love hierarchy is unbalanced.

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