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## Explaining how to scientifically and Practically cure the Heart of the Disease of Pretension

Some scholars of the hereafter have made statements in this regard which I would like to cite here briefly with some explanations:

You have come to know that pretension voids the good deeds and causes All®h to hold one in contempt, that it is one of the major lethal sins; so, you have to get ready, be serious and struggle while bearing the hardship of uprooting this tree from the heart. Reaching the ladders of sublime humanity is not easy without bearing hardships. Likewise, getting rid of terminal diseases cannot be achieved except by taking bitter medicines. This struggle, though tough in the beginning, falls within the practical field; its hardship gradually dissipates completely.

Let it be known that the origin of pretension is love for prominence. If love for prominence is analyzed, it will be rendered to three roots:

- 1. Love for praise; man loves to be praised and lauded; he finds pleasure in hearing compliments,
- 2. Flight from ill reputation; man hates to be the source of ill reputation; he is harmed and feels the pain when hearing that his reputation is being chewed,
- 3. Greed for what people possess.

These three often cause pretension.

It may be observed how one does not desire praise, nor does he covet lauding, nor does he look at what others enjoy, but he cannot tolerate to be reprimanded and spoken ill of, so he undertakes a pretentious act. He is like a miser individual who participates in a deed of righteousness when he sees others doing likewise, spending money for that cause. He finds himself among generous people who offer plenty of money by way of charity.

He offers little of it by way of charity so he may not be described as a stingy person. Or he may be like a

young man among youths who are worshipping, keeping themselves busy with prayer and supplication, so he, too, prays and supplicates so that he may not be spoken ill of and accused of being lazy and idle. And there are among the scholars those who do not covet to be praised by people, but he cannot tolerate to be identified as knowing very little.

If he is asked about an issue with which he is not familiar, he is swift to issue a verdict without knowledge rather than convincing himself of asking someone else who is familiar with it for fear he may be held as ignorant. Generally speaking, one can be patient with regard to the pleasure of praise but cannot tolerate the pain of being spoken ill of.

One who treats these three causes has to know that one seeks and desires something due to thinking that it is good, useful and sweet to him, whether it is so now or it will be in the future. If he gets to know that it is pleasurable in the present time but is harmful in its outcome, it will be easy for him not to desire it. It is like one who knows that honey is delicious, so he craves eating it, but if it becomes obvious to him that it contains poison, it will be easy for him to shy away from it. Thus is the case with our subject.

No matter how much a servant of All®h knows that pretension is harmful, that it causes him not to reform his harm, that it deprives him of imminent success and the loss of a station in the hereafter, in the final outcome, bringing him punishment, contempt and infamy, when someone cries out as witnesses testify: "O debauchee, treacherous, pretender, polytheist! Did you ever feel the shame when you traded the obedience to All®h for what the short life offered? Did you not watch people's hearts but did not watch out when you meet the Truth, Praise to Him? Did you not seek popularity among the servants of All®h by doing what brings about wrath from All®h?

Did you not decorate yourself with what makes you look bad in the eyes of All®h? Did you not seek nearness to the servants of All®h by being distant from Him? Did you not seek their praise by being ill spoken of by All®h? Did you not seek their pleasure by exposing yourself to All®h's anger? Did anyone else stand in your eyes as being thus less important than All®h?!" We seek refuge with All®h from such humiliation and exposure.

"If only you could see when the guilty ones bend their heads down before their Lord..." (Qur'sn, 32:12).

So, no matter how much a servant of All®h thinks about this humiliation, comparing it with what he earns from His servants, from making himself look good in their eyes, a status among them attained through the venue of pretension, one which he may not even get, comparing it with what he will face of shame and infamy in the Hereafter..., he will then come to know that pretension is fire that has burnt his good deeds, rendering them into the record of the sinners. He may have lost a high status with All®h by earning this good deed which he spoiled with pretension, a status that places him in the company of the prophets and the righteous.

Surely pretension has taken him out of the latter's company and send him to the row of the accursed,

add to this what he will be exposed to in the life of this world of worries because of trying to please others. To please others is an unattainable objective; whenever you please a group, another is displeased with you. What goal does he achieve when he earns their praise? What does he get when he drops in the eyes of All®h while raising himself in the eyes of His servants while such praise does not increase his sustenance, nor does it prolong his lifespan, nor does it benefit him on the day when he realizes his poverty and want?

So, O pretender who lets pretension covet his good deeds, be informed that All®h, Praise to Him, is the One Who manipulates the hearts to either withhold or to give, and the beings have no choice in this regard, nor is there anyone to sustain them besides All®h. One who sets his hopes on people will never be free of humiliation and disappointment. Even if he arrives at his goal, he will not be without indebtedness to others, without receiving humiliation; so, how could you abandon what All®h has in store with Him in exchange for a false hope, for a bad whim that may hit the mark or miss it: If it hits the mark, its pleasure does not compensate for the pain of its bad outcome and humiliation?!

O pretender! Beware of fearing being spoken ill of! When people speak ill of you, it does not speed up your demise, nor does it postpone it, nor does it render you among the residents of hell if you are a resident of Paradise, nor does it make you contemptible in the eyes of All®h if you are praised by Him, for all the servants are incapacitated: They cannot cause any harm to their own souls, nor benefit, nor life, nor death, nor resurrection; so, perfection is not achieved through their praise, nor is it diminished because of their criticism.

A poet from Banu Tamim once said, "Praise for me is good, while criticizing me is bad," whereupon the Messenger of All®h (عن) said to him, "You have lied! This applies to All®h: There is nothing good except in praising, nor is there anything bad more than saying something bad about Him. What good would you get when people praise you while you are held in contempt by All®h? And what evil could touch you if people speak ill of you while All®h praises you?"

Generally speaking, it is through thinking about these matters that it is hoped that one's heart is directed towards All®h, so he gets rid of the humiliation of pretension and the cruelty of people's hearts. Lights from his sincerity reflect themselves on his heart whereby his chest is pleased. Through them will beautiful revelations be opened up that increase his feeling of happiness for being in the company of All®h, of being unhappy when he is in the company of people. He will then hold life in contempt while holding the Hereafter with high regards. The status of the creation drops from his heart. The reason for pretension collapses, and the paths of sincerity will be facilitated for him...

### When Showing off Acts of Worship is Permissible: Advice by Imam Khomeini, May I be his Sacrifice, for those who want Admonishment

### **Practical Treatment for Pretension**

Contemplating upon and making plans for the issues which we have stated, though it has a strong effect in treating this disease, ought not suffice to scientifically treat this dangerous ailment. Rather, the disease has also to be practically monitored. The practical medication is that one must accustom himself to hiding his acts of adoration and closing the doors while doing them just as the doors are closed when sins are committed, till his heart is convinced that All®h knows about and is familiar with his acts of adoration, and his soul does not stop him from seeking anyone to know about them save All®h.

It has been narrated that a companion of Ab® Hafs, the blacksmith, spoke ill of this life and of its people, whereupon Ab® Hafs said to him, "You have manifested what you should have hidden. From this day on, do not keep us company." He did not even permit showing this much because in speaking ill of this life there is a sort of invitation to asceticism, and such an invitation often stems out of pretension; therefore, this student made him the object of his teacher's reprimanding

There is no cure for pretension like hiding. This is so even though it, in the beginning, is very difficult to do, but if one perseveres about it by forcing himself, he will be aided by divine acts of kindness, and good success will be his; it will then be easier for him and his burden will fall through support and help from the Almighty.

Let me cite for you, kind reader, some of what has been narrated about the biographies of the Im®ms of Guidance who are the doctors of the souls:

Al-Qummi, the narrator of traditions, may All®h be pleased with him, has narrated saying that Im®m Ali son of Im®m al-Hussain (peace be with them both) used to come out during the pitch dark of the night carrying a sack on his back in which he placed small bundles containing [gold] dinars and [silver] dirhams, and he might also have carried on his back food or firewood.

He would come to a house door and knock it then hand over something to whoever comes out to open it, covering his face meanwhile so the poor recipient may not know who he is. When his corpse was placed down for the burial bath, his back showed marks of swellings as large as camel humps. He used

to sustain a hundred families from among the poor of MedIna.

The son of Aisha is quoted as having said, "I heard the residents of Medna saying, 'We have now lost the secret charity when Ali son of al-Hussain (ع) died.' When he died and was stripped for the funeral burial, they kept looking at the marks on his back. They said that he used to carry flour sacks on his back during the night in order to get them to reach the poor of Medna stealthily, and he used to say that secret charities put out the wrath of the Lord."

The Prophet (ص) has said, "The greatest rewards for an act of worship are for one who hides them."1

The Commander of the Faithful, peace be with him, has said, "One of the treasures of Paradise are: hiding a good deed, persevering while facing calamities, and hiding hardships."2

The Im®ms, peace be with them, are also cited as having said, "The distinction of a good deed done in secrecy over one done openly is that the first will be rewarded seventy times as much."3

There are many other such narratives.

- 1. Safeenat al-Bihar. Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 15.
- 2. Ibid.
- <u>3.</u> I say that the professor, may my soul be his sacrifice, has transmitted this statement from his own great mentor Shah-Abadi (may Allah be pleased with him). But I saw it recorded in the book titled Mirsad al-Ibad by Sheikh Najm ad-Deen, and favor belongs to the one who does a good deed first.

### Ares where Showing Acts of Worship is Permissible

There is no doubt in the requirement of sincerity in the act of adoration and obedience to win the pleasure of All®h Almighty. This is taken for granted as one of the principles that have to be taken into consideration in all conditions and circumstances. No other rational or legislated incentive advances an act for the Divine One more than it. Sometimes what the *nafs* insinuates is not even considered: A deed has a great benefit; therefore, it must be undertaken in order to show people. A pretentious deed gives the person who undertakes it nothing in return as the Holy Qur¹®n clearly states:

"... like those who spend their substance (just) to be seen by men but do not believe in All®h or the Last Day. They are in parable like a hard, barren rock on which there is a little soil; a heavy rain falls on it, leaving it (just) a bare stone. They will be able to do nothing with whatever they had earned" (Qur'®n, 2:264).

Besides adhering to this accepted principle of the Shar® a, we say that hiding a righteous deed, although it contains the benefit of sincerity and the absence of pretension, yet, on the other hand, if it is done openly, it may also produce a benefit which is: making it desirable to people. Thus, people may emulate the one who does it even if the deed may be threatened with pretension. The deed in both cases is raised in the Holy Qur'®n:

"If you disclose (acts of) charity, even so it is well, but if you conceal them and make them reach those (who are really) in need, that is best for you: It will remove some of your (stains of) evil from you. And All®h is well acquainted with all what you do" (Qur'®n, 2:271).

Disclosing them is of two types: One is disclosing the act itself publicly, and the other is talking about it after it has been secretly done.

As regarding the first, it in fact has preference over what can be done secretly and what can be done publicly. If the act cannot be hidden, such as performing the pilgrimage, going for a holy war, attending the congregational prayer service, and the like, it ought to be undertaken and not to let the insinuation have room in it. Doing such deeds openly has nothing to do with making a show or with pretension. Rather, the benefit of taking the initiative in such deeds is to let people desire them, but the condition in them, as we stated, is that they must not be done just to show off. They are to be done publicly.

Rather, perhaps the catalyst to hide such forms of worship is pretension as we pointed out before. It is this: Some souls covet to have a status in the hearts of people, so people may think well of them. In such case, what is also known is this: One who knows that they cannot be hidden, that they will eventually be known, he tries to hide doing them. This is so because if people see the action later on, and they will have to, they will think that this person does what he does for the sake of Allsh, praise belongs to Him, and he does not like people to get to know his deeds.

For example, if someone wants to perform the pilgrimage, he knows that this action cannot be hidden from people because later he will have to be seen in Mecca and Mina and perform the rounds and other rituals which will be seen by a huge number of people. And he, once back from the pilgrimage, will be visited by the brethren; so, this deed will imminently be known. But if people come to know about it, they will state that he was hiding the preparations for it, so they will consider him as being sincere in his action and will think well of him. Such an individual is either a fool or a deceiving pretender who wants to hide his pretension from people.

But if the deed can and cannot be hidden, such as offering charity and prayers, it has to be manifested so long as there is no pretension in such manifesting, that there will be no harm in it such as showing the act of offering charity while harming the one receiving it. In such a case, it has to be hidden. But if it has no other harm, it is better to manifest it because it contains a public invitation to others to do likewise. This is proven by the tradition of the prophets and friends of All®h (عص) who has said the following about such a person: "... He will have the reward of doing it as well as that of anyone else who emulates it."

Tradition narrates that doing a deed secretly equals doing it publicly seventy times. There are manifold rewards for doing a good deed secretly, as many as seventy times, if it follows the custom of doing it secretly. As long as the heart separates itself from the impurities of pretension, and sincerity is complete in both cases, there is no doubt that anything good which is emulated by others is surely better. The concern is only about pretension being unveiled. When the impurity of pretension takes place, emulation of others will not avail the doer, and he will perish by it; secrecy in such a case is better.

But one who manifests the deed must take two matters into consideration:

**First**, he must manifest it while knowing or thinking it will be emulated, such as a man doing something good for his family, or a mentor in his quarter, or a scholar in his country, regardless of the variation of individuals' stations. In other words, the emulation intention is sound in one who is apt to be emulated; otherwise, there is no benefit in manifesting it, and he will miss out on the benefit of doing it secretly.

**Second**, one must monitor his heart; it may have hidden pretension, so it invites him to manifest in the excuse of emulation. It, in reality, covets that undertaking the effort to win a station of emulation, and this is a hurdle that cannot be transcended except by the strong ones, the sincere. Others, the weaklings, must not deceive themselves, so they will perish and cause others to perish unknowingly.

The similitude of the weakling in this dilemma is one who does not know how to swim well. He looks at a group of drowning persons, so he feels pity for them and goes to them to cling to him so he may save them from drowning. They cling to him, whereupon this weakling perishes just as they perish. Thus do the feet of the servants of All®h and of the scholars slip away. Some of them hold on to the strong in their manifestation, but their hearts are not strong enough for sincerity, so their rewards are cancelled by pretension.

Notice that this is shrouded with ambiguity. One who wants to know the treachery of his soul and whether his aim in manifesting the good deed is to propagate it and advocate it, or if he has already fallen into Satan's trap, he must subject himself to a test. The test is: He must ask himself if a man of truth, the one who works for All®h Almighty, tells him to hide the deed so people may emulate another scholar or worshipper from among his peers, and he will have the same reward of doing the good deed publicly..., and if his heart inclines to be the one to be emulated, so he manifests the deed, let him know that the incentive of pretension is there rather than the desire for divine rewards. It is the desire for people's goodness because they aspired to achieve goodness through the action of some other worshipper who received his reward.

He obtained it despite his secrecy. So, what is wrong with his heart inclining towards manifesting it other than the eyes of people noticing it, making a pretense for their sake? Let the servant of All®h beware of the soul's deception, for it often deceives, while Satan ever lies in ambush. Love for a public status subdues one's heart. Seldom are manifested deeds safe from perils; so, he must not substitute safety for anything else, the safety in hiding and in manifesting, perils that our likes cannot bear; therefore, we and

all other weaklings ought to be cautious.

A scholar who was propagating the creed was seen in a vision and was asked what was done to him. He said, "When I arrived at the *barzakh* [perhaps equivalent in Catholic theology to the purgatory], I was called upon by my name and was asked what I had done in my lifetime. I said, 'Lord! I wrote many books to promote the faith.' I was asked, 'While propagating the creed, did you intend that the faith was to be promoted, or did you want your own self to be widely known?' I was too puzzled to answer." This is why the tradition states the following: "Be sincere in doing your good deed, for the critic is guite observing."

As regarding the second type, it is one talking about the deed and announcing it after having secretly done it. Like the first, this, too, is dangerous. It is even much more so: The tongue is easy to articulate and move about narrating the tale with ease, and it may increase, decrease or exaggerate. The *nafs* enjoys manifesting claims supportive of love for itself; so, one whose heart is strong, sincere, in whose eyes people look small, it is equal with him whether they speak well or ill of him. If mentioning it to those whom he hopes will emulate it, thus seeking goodness because of it..., it is permissible to talk about the deed.

He will even be required to do so if his intention is pure and free of all perils because it is an invitation to others to do (similar) acts of righteousness, an invitation to do good which is good by itself, especially if one's nature is molded on loving to emulate others and being emulated, feeling the weight of its burdens. Talking plays a strong role in bearing an impact on people's hearts, on their emulating the speaker.

Perhaps a pretender manifesting an act of worship, when people do not know that it is pretension, has a great deal of good in it for people, yet it is evil against the pretender; so, how many sincere people have been the reason behind their sincerity is to emulate one who in the eyes of All®h is a pretender! A narrated tradition states this: "All®h strengthens this religion through the sinning man, and through people who do not ponder on consequences"; it refers to that. Talking about a good deed, if one is sincere without any pretension, is good, although there is something quite interesting which we noticed about great men and which we would like to state here:

The men of divinity, those who rid themselves of desires, used to discourage others from narrating visions while attributing them to their own selves. They used to say instead, "I know someone who does such-and-such" or "Such-and-such happened the following to him by way of self-disclosure," for example, because the objective is achieved through the action or disclosure itself, and it is not needed to get to know who did it except if knowing so also plays a role in impressing, in emulating. It is only then that they used to identify themselves.

# Advice by Imam-Al-Khomeini, May I be his Sacrifice, for those who Wish to be Admonished

So, my dear one, look deeply into your affairs and hold yourself to account in each of its deeds. Pull words out of it in every incident, so you may get to know for what purpose it is willing to do good deeds and honorable acts, why it asks about issues relevant to the night prayer, why it recites supplications in the presence of others... Does it intend that we should learn the answers to our questions from it, or does it teach them for the sake of Allsh Almighty?

Or does it want to be known by people as one of those who perform *tahajjud*? Why does it want people to know it is traveling on pilgrimage to sacred places, or even the number of such travels? Why it does not want people to know about its acts of charity which it offered in secrecy, so it resorts to other means in order that talk will pour into the subject of charity, and it will then announce it offers people charity?

If all of this is done for the sake of All®h Almighty, if you want people to emulate you and you will be implied in this statement: "One who leads to a good deed is like one who does it", manifesting your god deed will then be good. Thank All®h, Praise to Him, with your pure conscience and heart, but be alert lest you should be deceived by the *nafs* and by Satan when they both insinuate to you, and do not let them force you to do a pretentious deed in a sacred manner.

If manifesting is not purely for the sake of All®h, abandon manifestation, for it is nothing but fame, and it comes from the foul tree of pretension. All®h, to Whom all favors belong, does not accept such a deed, and He orders its doer to be placed in Sijjeen. We seek refuge with All®h against the plots of the self, the *nafs*, for they are quite minute, and we all know in general that our deeds are not purely for the sake of All®h Almighty.

Had we been sincere worshippers, why does Satan thus fare with our deeds although he had promised All®h, Praise to Him, that he would never intercept the path of the sincere worshippers of All®h nor stretch his hand to their holy field? Our greatest mentor, may his shade prolong, says, "Satan is the dog that stands at the gate of All®h. A dog does not bark at the friends of the house's owner, nor does he harm them. The dog stands guard at the door; he does not bother those with whom the owner of the house feels comfortable. Instead, he prohibits from entering those whom the owner of the house does not."

If you keep Satan busy about your own self, you must know that your deeds are not purely for the sake of All®h, not for achieving His pleasure. If you were sincerely seeking All®h, why did the springs of wisdom now flow from your heart to your tongue even though you have been for the past forty years doing deeds which you regard as bringing you closer to All®h? This is so although tradition says that if

one is sincere to All®h for forty mornings, the springs of wisdom will flow from his heart to his tongue.

So, be informed that our deeds are not purely for the sake of All®h, nor are we even aware of it. Such is the incurable ailment. Woe unto the folks of obedience and adoration, of Fridays and congregations, of knowledge and faith, if they open their minds and see the Hereafter having opened its pavilions! They will then see themselves as being much worse than those who committed major sins, worse even than the apostates and those who associate partners with All®h!

They will see the tablet of their deeds more black than that of those folks! Woe unto one who enters hell on account of his prayers and acts of obedience! Alas for those whose charity, *zakat* and prayers are portrayed in the most ugly form! So, poor soul, you are an apostate... As for the sinners, they are the ones who believe in His Unity though they disobey Him, and All®h Almighty forgives the disobedient ones through His favor if He wills. But He has said,

### "Allsh does not forgive one who associates partners with Him" (Qur'sn, 4:48)

if he dies without having repented. In the sacred traditions, according to what I have heard, the Infallible Ones, peace be with them, have said, "A pretender associates partners with All®h; one who shows off his religious prominence, his being an im®m, his having studied and earned knowledge, and his fast and prayers..., generally in his good deeds, so he may earn a status in the hearts of people, associates others with All®h," according to the reports transmitted about the ones who are infallible, peace of All®h be with them all.

Forgiveness is not extended to him, according to the sacred verse above. Would you have been among those who committed major sins, openly declaring your being a debauchee, violating the pure sanctities?! But you believed in His Unity, associating none with All®h!

So, my dear one, now think about your matter, cure your soul, and be informed that fame among people who are worth nothing is worth nothing. Had a sparrow eaten those hearts, it would not have satisfied its hunger; they are worthless, equaling nothing. This weakling creature has no power; power is found only in the divine holy presence, and the Holy One is the only doer, the One Who causes things, while if the creatures want to create flies, they will never be able to do so even if each supports the other in the endeavor.

And if the flies rob them of something, they can never reclaim it. Power belongs to All®h Almighty; He is the One Who bears an impact on all things in existence. So, exert yourself through all types of self-training and perseverance to write with the mind's pen on the heart's sheet that none can bear an impact on existence save All®h; none is a doer in the abode of verification save All®h. Enable your heart through all means of practical unifying, which is the first degree of *tawh®id*, and make your heart a believer, admitting this blessed word.

Stamp your heart with the stamp that there is no god save Alleh. Make it the portrait for the tawhed

statement. Get it to reach the station of comfort. Attract its attention to the fact that people can neither do any harm nor any benefit to you but, rather, the One Who can benefit or harm you is All®h, Praise to Him. Remove from your mental vision this blindness, for there is concern that you may be among those who will say, "Lord! Why did You resurrect me blind?", that you will be resurrected blind on the Day when the innermost becomes manifest.

The will of All®h supersedes all wills. If your heart becomes comfortable with this blessed statement, so you surrender it to this creed, there is hope your end will be good, the roots of shirk, pretension, apostasy and hypocrisy will all be uprooted from your heart.

Be informed that this faith agrees with reason and tradition. There is no ambiguity in it about obligation, although it is possible that one who is not knowledgeable about its principles and precepts may charge it of forcing obligations. The hearing faculties of those who make such charges are not accustomed to some requirements. It is not linked to obligation essentially. It, then, is *tawh* d, whereas obligation is shirk.

Such is guidance, while obligation is straying. It is not appropriate to explain what obligation and what destiny is, but the topic is clear for those who are apt to it, while others should not get themselves involved in such pursuit. The One Who brought about the Shar® a prohibits entering into such pursuits [for those who are not qualified to do so]. Anyhow, plead to the Merciful All®h in all circumstances, especially when you are in solitude.

Plead to Him with humility, inability, and submission to guide you to the *noor* of *tawh* d, so He may enlighten your heart with the glitter of the unknown, with sincerity in your adoration, so you may be freed from the whole world and you will see everything in it as being trivial. Humbly seek the Holy One's help to make your deeds dedicated to Him, to guide you to the path of sincerity, of love.

If you achieve a good result, remember that you are a weak servant of All®h, the one who is stripped of the truth, who spent his lifetime following his whims and desires, whose heart, because of the impurity of transgressions and heart diseases, no longer accepts any advice, nor can any verse or tradition bear an impact on it, nor can any evidence, proof or sign. If you do so, perhaps you will be guided to a path that bring about salvation through supplication, for All®h does not turn away a believer who goes to His door; He responds favorably to his supplication.

Having reminded you of these requirements, though you, too, knew them, for they are not new..., take your time to cultivate your heart, to examine your deeds and actions, your motion and stillness. Look into your heart's hideouts, and hold your heart to account as strictly as anyone among the folks of this world who holds his partner accountable. Abandon any deed in which there is the doubt of pretension and flattery, no matter how very honest such a deed may be.

If you see that your public acts of adoration are not being performed sincerely, do them privately, although they are recommended to be performed publicly, although rare is the case when pretension

agrees in the origin of an obligation but is often in its particularities, in what is commendable, in what is superfluous.

Yet, at any rate, purify your heart from the contamination of shirk through a completely serious effort, through a great deal of exertion, so you, God forbid, may not be removed from this [transient] world while being in this condition [to the Hereafter], hence your status will be bad, and there will be no hope for your salvation, and All®h, Praise to Him, will be angry with you. This is confirmed by a sacred tradition in Was®il al-Sh®a which cites Qurb al-Isn®d which in turn traces it back to the Commander of the Faithful (ع) who said, "The Messenger of All®h (ع) said, 'One who makes himself look good in the eyes of people by doing what All®h loves, while being an opponent of All®h in secrecy by committing what All®h hates, will find All®h angry with him, holding him in contempt."

This tradition carries two possibilities. One of them is when an individual beautifies his good deeds for people while privately committing ugly ones. The other is that he goes out to the public and shows others what he has done while deep down he is only a pretender. At any rate, this tradition contains a reference to pretension because doing what is obligatory and what is commendable, without meaning to make a show, does not incur the wrath of the Lord. Rather, it can be said that the second possibility is more likely because doing ugly deeds publicly is uglier than doing them privately. Anyhow, God forbid that the King of Kings and the most Merciful of those who show mercy should be wrathful with man. I seek refuge with All®h from the wrath of the Clement One.

Here ends his sacred statement, may his shade be prolonged.

#### Notice:

As we have repeatedly stated, the traps of the *nafs* are numerous; Satan lies in ambush against man in order to rob him of his capital for the Hereafter through countless tricks. But the more familiar with these tricks one is, such familiarity may benefit him in being saved from them. Let us add to the above the following:

It may coincide that one spends the night with his adoring friends who stand up for the *tahajjud* and spend the entire or some of the night praying, and he in his customary case may offer *tahajjud*, but he used to rise close to dawn. So, if he sees them, his energy is fired up in harmony with them, so much so that he performs more than what he is used to, or he may pray although he was not accustomed to performing the night prayer. Also, he may be among a crowd of fasting persons, so he is energetic in performing the fast. Had it not been for them, such energy would not have been fired up. In cases such as these, a question is put forth: "Is this pretension, so he has to abandon it?"

The answer is: Not at all. Rather, it can be explained in a way wherein some matters are distinguished from others. A believer, since he wishes to adore All®h, performs the night prayer and fasts during the daytime and may be hindered by obstacles, stopped by being busy, overcome by desires and pleasures, overcome by indifference, etc. If he accompanies those who adore, this indifference may abandon him,

or the obstacles may be pushed away from his path, or he may not keep himself busy doing anything, so he is energized for adoration.

For example, he may be at home more capable of sleeping, enjoying a supple bed, or enjoying his wife, or talking with his children and relatives, or he may be busy with his daily transactions. These distract him from adoration during the first hours of the night, so he has no energy to stand up for prayers at the end of the night. If he finds himself in someone else's home, all these distractions will be removed from him.

Moreover, he may be manipulated by an impetus for righteousness such as seeing his friends turning their attention fully towards All®h, turning away from the life of this world, adoring their Loved One, feeling the pleasure of addressing Him, so the catalyst of goodness moves within him, prompting him not to be late from the field of worship. He will then compete with them in their endeavor. It is in such doing that the competing ones should compete with each other.

There is no doubt that this has nothing to do with pretension. Or one may be robbed of sleep because of not being used to that house, or for any other reason, so he takes advantage of his sleeplessness. But when he is at home, sleep overtakes him. Perhaps it may be added to the above his being always at home, and his soul does not permit him to always offer *tahajjud* except for a short while. His condition will be a cause for such energy.

The same applies to fast. It may be hard for him to fast at home in the presence of delicious foods, and it is difficult for him to keep himself away from them. But if these foods are not present, the religious impetus to fast takes over. The available pleasures are obstacles and catalysts that weaken one's religious practice. If one is freed from them, the catalyst will be strong. Satan in such situations insinuates to him through pretension and says, "Do not do it, for you will then be a pretender, for you used not to do it at home nor offer more than your [regular] prayers."

He must not pay attention to such insinuation but undertake the deed so Satan and his *nafs* may lose hope and not repeat their insinuation. And his desire and energy may be for the sake of their observing him thus engaged, being concerned about what they may say and the possibility of their accusing him of being lazy, especially if they think that he is among those who offer *tahajjud* and adoration. His soul does not permit him to fall in their eyes. It wants to maintain its status. It is then that Satan, contrarily to the first possibility, says to him, "Offer your prayers, for you are sincere, and you do not pray for their sake but for that of All®h, since you used to pray every night. And if you do not pray for one night or more, it is due to the abundance of hindrances. Your catalyst tonight is the absence of the obstacles, not for the desire that they see you."

The diagnosis in both situations confuses those who do not have a keen insight. If it is known that the catalyst is to bring the hearts of the public closer, he may either abandon the adoration or not offer anything more than what he used to do, not even one more prostration. If he comes to know that his

energy is due to the removal of the obstacles and to compete with others for winning the Pleasure of All®h and His obedience, he must take advantage of the opportunity and keep himself busy worshipping his Lord.

The diagnosis in both situations is tough for all those who do not have a keen insight. If one gets to know that the motive is to attract people's hearts, he must either abandon the acts of adoration or not add anything to what he is accustomed to doing, not even a single prostration. If he gets to know that the catalyst is the removal of obstacles and the competition for achieving the pleasure of and obedience to All®h, let him seize the opportunity and keep himself busy worshipping his Lord. But if the matter is confusing to him and he is unable to diagnose the matter, let him ask himself this question: "If these men see him praying at a place where they do not see me, will I be generous with my prayers while they do not notice me?" If there is such generosity, let him pray, for the motive is right. But if he sees himself as having hardship doing so while they did not see him, let him leave it for its motive is pretension.

Likewise, he may be present during a supplication meeting. He looks at them and is overcome with tears out of fear of All®h. But had he heard the supplication while being by himself, he would not have wept. Seeing people weak softens the heart; so, this is not pretension. Rather, he may not be able to weep, so he feigns weeping. This feign weeping, too, may not be motivated by pretension; instead, he fears for his heart lest it should be hard when he sees people weeping and when his eyes do not shed tears; therefore, he forces himself to pretend to be weeping. This is commendable.

The mark of truth in this is that he asks himself this: If he heard them praying while they could not see him, will he be concerned about his heart being hard, so he would feign weeping or not? If he does not find tears while being unnoticed by them, his concern is not due to his heart being hard, but it is out of his fear lest it should be said that he is hard-hearted. In this case, he ought to abandon his pretense of weeping. And the cause of weeping may be due to grief, but it is mixed with pretension during the time when he weeps, so he raises his voice and becomes quite vocal in his wailing; this additional enthusiasm is pretension. He first wept for the sake of All®h but then Satan kept him doing so. Pretension may invite him to keep his tears on his face in order to show it.

On the whole, one's *nafs* and Satan have countless tricks. As a tradition states, "Pretension has seventy doors," keeping in mind that "seventy" is an indication of "many", while each door may open up to many other doors. Another tradition says, "Seek refuge with AllTh against the pretentious submission." The meaning of "pretentious submission" is that the organs, the limbs, not the heart, are submitting to AllTh, although it could have another meaning. In his supplication, the Master of those who Prostrate [ImTm al-Sajjad (¿)] states this: "Lord! I seek refuge with You against my publicly looking good in the eyes of people while looking ugly in Your eyes privately, keeping people feeling pity for me while losing that with which You are more familiar than I am, demonstrating to people my best condition while revealing to You my worst, seeking nearness to people through my good deeds, fleeing away from You through my wrongdoing, hence I will be afflicted with Your contempt, and Your wrath will fall upon me! Do, Lord,

# A Seal of Musk, Sublime Tradition & an Explanation by Imsm Al-Khomeini, May his Shade Prolong

As we conclude these sheets, we would like to cite a sacred tradition narrated by al–Kulaini (may All $\mathfrak L$ h be pleased with him) in his sacred book  $Al-K\mathfrak L$  fi from the Master of those who believe in the Unity of All $\mathfrak L$ h, namely the Commander of the Faithful ( $\mathfrak L$ ). Sheikh al–Sad $\mathfrak L$ q (may All $\mathfrak L$ h be pleased with him) has narrated a similar one from Im $\mathfrak L$ m Ab $\mathfrak L$  Abdull $\mathfrak L$ h al–S $\mathfrak L$ diq ( $\mathfrak L$ ). It is one of the pieces of advice by the Prophet ( $\mathfrak L$ ) to Ali ( $\mathfrak L$ ).

The tradition is thus rendered through *isn* d to Ab Abdull h (ع) who said that the Commander of the Faithful (ع) had said, "There are three distinctive marks of a pretender: He is energetic [in feigning acts of adoration] when he sees people, is lazy when alone, and loves to be praised in all his affairs."

Im m al-Khomeini, may his shade prolong, has said the following:

Since this disgusting sin may be hidden, not known by even the person with which he is afflicted: He claims his deed is sincere, whereas in his innermost, he is among the pretenders. For this reason, they have stated a mark of identification so one may thereby identify his innermost, and he may thus start curing himself of it:

One sees himself, when alone, as having no desire to undertake acts of obedience to All®h. When he forces himself to perform an act of worship, as he is accustomed to doing, he does so without energy or desire. Rather, he performs it as incomplete, impure. But if he is present in mosques or congregations, he keeps himself busy with an act or adoration as he is seen by the public. So he does it with energy, with connection, with pleasure, and with an attentive heart. He loves to prolong his bowing and prostrating during his prayer, performs what is commendable, well carries out its parts and requirements.

If his mind wakes up to such doing, and if he asks himself about the reason for doing that, the *nafs* will then place its trap on the principles of adoration and, in order to deceive one, says, "Your energy with regard to worship in mosques is more rewarding," or that prayers with a congregation is such and such. Or he may be in a congregation other than the mosques, so it says to him, "It is highly commendable for one to undertake a well done job so others may emulate him, follow his example, or have the desire for the creed." It thus deceives one through any means it can.

The truth is that this happiness and energy are not prompted except by a heart disease with which this poor man is afflicted, while he considers his *nafs* as being sound, not sick. There is no hope that he will be healed. This wretch, in his innermost, in his pith, in his conscience, loves to show people his deed while he is being unaware of it. Rather, he is demonstrating disobedience in the form of adoration, turning pretension into propagation for the creed. Although it is commendable that one performs what is recommended when he is by himself, why does the *nafs* always love to undertake it in public? It weeps for fear of All®h in public congregations with energy and gladly, but when alone, no matter how it tries, it cannot squeeze a drop out of the eye.

Why does fear of Allsh take place only in congregations? One weeps and supplicates in the presence of thousands of people during the nights of Qadr, offering a hundred prostrations during his prayers, reciting the Greater Jawshan supplication and the smaller one as well as chapters from the Holy Qur'sn without feeling lazy, nor is he tired doing all of that. But if he prays ten *rek'at* in his solitude, he feels a back pain, and he is in such a bad shape! If the deeds that come up of an individual are prompted solely to win the Pleasure of Allsh Almighty, or to attain His mercy, or out of fear of His fire, or out of eagerness for Paradise, why should this individual love people to praise him for them?

Why should he listen to their praise, directing his heart towards them so he may hear someone lauding him or saying that so-and-so is a man of adoration, a worshipper who is keen to be in the forefront when the time of prayers comes, is mindful of what is commendable?! Or so he does so in order that he may hear someone saying that so-and-so, who performed the pilgrimage, is a trustworthy man, a man who can be reliable upon with regard to his transactions, etc.

If one looks forward to All®h Almighty with anticipation, why should he care for all this profuse love [for public praise]? If [love for] paradise and [fear of] the fire are your catalyst to undertake this deed, why do you care for such love? So, be mindful lest this love should come from the branches of that bad tree, pretension, and try your best to repair what you can repair, and rid yourself of such love.

There is no harm in attracting attention to something in this regard which is: For each of these psychological conditions that are more than the good and the bad aspects, there are many levels. To be characterized by one of the good attributes while being dissociated from a level of bad attributes may be the specialty of those who know All®h, who are friends of All®h. As regarding the rest of people, they are as they are in their levels.

To be characterized by what is a shortcoming in the sight of the men of knowledge, of the friends of All®h, does not seem to them [to these faulty persons] to be a shortcoming. Rather, it may be perfection of a sort. Also, the merits of these individuals seem to be bad to the men of knowledge, to the friends of All®h. Pretension, which we are discussing, is actually one of these attributes. Salvation from all its levels is the privilege of the friends of All®h. Others do not share them in it.

The general public of people being characterized by one of its levels is not a shortcoming based on the

station in which they are. It does not harm their conviction or sincerity. For example, the hearts of the general public, according to their nature, incline towards showing people what is good about them, even if they do not do so with the intention of showing off. But their souls by nature are inclined to such love, and this does not necessitate rendering the deed as void or describing them as unbelievers, hypocrites and polytheist, although this is surely a shortcoming in the sight of the friends of All®h, a shirk, a hypocrisy in the view of a friend of All®h, or one who knows All®h.

To be totally free of absolute shirk, to be redeemed of all its levels, is the first station of the friends of All®h who have other stations not suitable for elaboration here. The Infallible Ones, peace be with them, have said that their adoration is one of freemen's, that is, solely out of love for All®h Almighty, neither coveting Paradise nor fearing hell. It is one of their ordinary stations and the first degree of their mastership. There are for them, peace be with them, in their adoration conditions which are beyond our comprehension.

Based on what we have stated, a combination can be made of the tradition cited above transmitted from the Messenger of All®h (a) and the Commander of the Faithful (peace be with both of them), and the other tradition by Zurarah who cites Ab® Ja'fer, peace be with him, as narrated by Muhammad ibn Yacoub who traces it back to Ab® Ja'fer, peace be with him, saying, "I asked him about a man who does something good. Another sees it and is pleased with it. He said that there is no harm in it, that everyone loves to look in the eyes of people as a man of goodness unless he does something solely for this purpose."

If one loves to be praised, he is regarded in one of the traditions as manifesting pretension, while in the other tradition the harm is removed when someone is pleased with something good coming out of his deed. The common denominator in the combination is the difference of opinion according to the status of the individuals. There is another way to look at the combination of both traditions which we have overlooked.

Here the speech of our professor [al-Khomeini], may All h prolong his shade, ends.

I say, perhaps the other way in combining both traditions is that the first tradition examines the love for praise at the time when a good deed is being done, and it is a mark of pretension. The other tradition examines love for praise after a deed is already done.

Or the love for praise in the first tradition is made as a mark of pretension, arranged by the other two marks, as is linguistically clear, especially since paying attention to the first marks (energy when people see a doer of good deed and laziness when he is by himself), and they must be observed together or separately so they may comprise a mark for pretension; otherwise, if one of them is supposed, say the energy when people see him and also when alone or laziness in both cases, it is definitely not a mark of pretension. If it is added to love for praise, it will definitely be a mark for pretension, a sure revelation of it, and this is contrary to praise alone, for it is not a mark of pretension as the second tradition says.

Or we may say that the first tradition means the pretender, because of being afflicted with the disease of pretension, loves people to praise him in all his affairs, as the tradition states. As for the second tradition, it is similar to partial obligation; it points out to the appearance of goodness from one when pleased; there is no harm so long as he did not do the deed for solely this purpose. Surely Allsh is the One Who knows best, and the last of our supplication is: Praise to Allsh, the Lord of the Worlds.

These sheets have been written down by the indigent, the one needs the mercy of his Lord, Sayyid Ahmed al–Fahri, on the twentieth day of the blessed Month of Ramadan in the city of Damascus in the year 1404 A.H.; with the one who undertook the migration may be prayers and peace.

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