

Showiness

Showiness stands for seeking high rank and respect of people by flaunting charity:

“The hypocrites try to deceive Allah but He, in fact, deceives them. They stand up in prayer lazily just to show that they pray, but, in truth they remember Allah very little. (4: 142)”

“Whoever desires to meet his Lord should strive righteously and should worship no one besides Him. (18: 110)”

“ Like the one who spends his property to show off and who has no faith in Allah or belief in the Day of Judgment. (2:264)”

The Prophet (S) said: “A time will come upon people in which their intentions will be evil and their appearances will be deceiving all out of their greediness for the worldly pleasures. Their deeds will not be heartily intended for the sake of Allah. Their religion will be showiness. They will not feel fearful at all. Then, Allah will inflict upon them with such harsh punishment that they will not be responded even if they pray for Him like the drowned¹.”

The Prophet (S) said: “(On the Day of Resurrection,) some people will be taken to Hell. The Lord will order Malik² to tell Hell not to burn those individuals’ feet, because they used them for walking to the mosques, not to burn their faces, because they used to perform the (ritual) ablution so perfectly, not to burn their hands, because they used to raise them in supplications, and not to burn their tongues, because they used to recite the Quran very frequently. Then, the angel in charge of Hell will ask them about their manners. They will answer: We used to do all these things not for the sake of Allah. Hence, we were told to take the rewards of our deeds from those for whom we used to do³.”

Imam as-Sadiq (a) said: “Any form of showiness is polytheism. Certainly, he who does something for the sake of people should take the reward from people, but whoever does purely for the sake of Allah will take his reward from Allah⁴.”

“As for anyone who keeps secret a good deed, Allah will sooner or later reveal a good reputation for

him. As for him who keeps secret an evil, Allah will sooner or later reveal an ill reputation for him⁵.”

Categories of Showiness

1. Showiness of the Belief

This category of showiness stands for pretending faith and concealing disbelief. It is hypocrisy, which is the most serious and the gravest danger on Muslims.

2. Showiness of Acts of Worship

This category stands for practicing acts of worship openly before people so as to show them, while the same acts of worship are neglected in seclusions. As example of this category is to offer prayers openly, show the signs of fasting, prolong the gestures of the prayer, recite in a distinguishable way, frequent to the mosques, witness the collective prayers incessantly, and practice similar acts pretentiously. The showy, in this case, is considered as more sinful than the neglecter of worship because he does so out of his disregarding God and trying to deceive people.

3. Practical Showiness

Under this category lie the pretence of being pious, having the beard unshaved, branding the forehead as a sign of frequent prostration, dressing hard clothes, and the like false appearances of ascetics.

4. Verbal Showiness

Under this category lie the false declamation of wisdom, pretence of enjoining good and forbidding evil, and mentioning the divine reward and punishment.

Incentives of Showiness

- Fondness of high rank is the most important incentive of showiness.
- The anticipation of criticism is a reason that pushes man to pretend to show acts of worship and charity in order to avoid censure.
- Greed is a strong incentive urging showiness.
- The criminals try to dress themselves with false appearances of piety so as to cover up themselves.

Some Facts

For the purpose of completing this discussion, it is suitable to refer to some facts:

Scholars have had different opinions regarding the preference of the concealment or exposure of the acts of obedience. In abstract, deeds are subject to intentions, and each will be rewarded according to his intention. Thus, there is no difference between concealed or open showiness. Likewise, the semi-showiness does not differ, whether it is hidden or shown. In definite situations, it is preferable for those who cannot stand their showiness, because of its intense incentives in their inner selves, to conceal it. On the other hand, if one's deed is purified from blemishes of showiness and intended for a good purpose, such as enjoining charity, it is, in this case, preferable to show the appearances of piety.

☞ In case sincerity is heartily intended in the acts of worship, it is inoffensive to show people such appearances and to be pleased by them provided that the source of such pleasure is the expectation of God's favor.

Once, Imam al-Baqir (a) was asked whether it is acceptable to be pleased by showing one's good deeds before others. He answered: "This is not unacceptable. As a matter of fact, every single individual likes that Allah reveals his good deeds before others provided that such good deeds are not intended for showing off."

☞ Since the Devil uses all trickeries for inducing people so as to prevent them from going on in the plans of charity and obedience, it is necessary to beware of him. The Devil urges to neglect the acts of worship. If he fails in this regard, he induces eagerly to show off. If he fails in this regard too, he casts in minds the idea that they are showing off and that all the deeds are mixed with showiness. Such being the case, it is necessary to reject the devilish inspirations and pay no attention to the inducements and insinuations of the Devil. The true sincere, however, cannot be cheated by such ill inspirations.

On the authority of his fathers, Imam as-Sadiq narrated that the Prophet (S) said: "If the Shaitan inspires you, during your prayers, that you are showing off, you should then offer your prayers as long as you like unless the time of another obligatory prayer begins. The same thing is said about any other act that is done for sake of the life to come. But if the act was for a worldly benefit, you should then rest yourselves⁶."

Disadvantages of Showiness

Showiness, being mere cheating and deception, is undesirable manner indicating self-humbleness. The fickle and the deviant take showiness for achieving their goals without feeling embarrassed. The showy, however, commits two grand sins: he first challenges God because he prefers the servants to their Lord and, second, cheats people by means of hypocrisy and pretense.

Regarding his impudence and foolhardiness, the showy looks like an individual stopping before a great king showing false loyalty, while he, in the meantime, is cheating that king by courting the bondmaidens or flirting with the servants. It is very appropriate for that king to punish such an individual so harshly for his disparagement and ridicule. The showy deserves a harsher punishment, because he disparages God

and cheats His servants. Moreover, care is the share of the showy in the end: as he flatters for gaining the impossible; that is the content of all people, he gains nothing but disappointment.

In truth, ill-heartedness very soon floats on the surface to show the reality. Referring to this fact, the Prophet (S) said:

“As for anyone who keeps something in the mind, Allah will dress him with that thing. If it is good, the dress will be good, but if it is bad, the dress, likewise, will be bad⁷.”

Treatment of Showiness

Practical Treatment of Showiness:

- To challenge the Devil and frustrate his trickeries and insinuations by using logical method of self-satisfaction.
- To reject the devilish inspirations of showiness completely by relying upon sincerity.
- To avoid the fields and appearances of showiness by concealing the acts of worship until self-confidence and sincerity are gained.

Within the anecdotes of showiness, it is narrated that a Bedouin, as he entered a mosque, was highly admired by the prayer offered by a person. ‘I was highly admired by your prayer,’ said the Bedouin. ‘What is more, I am fasting,’ said that person, ‘the prayer of the fasting people are rewarded doubly.’ The Bedouin then handed the reins of his camel to that person as a trust because he had something to do for a while. As the Bedouin left, that person took the camel and ran away. As he was back, the Bedouin did not find his camel or that person. He searched for him for a long time, but uselessly. He then left showing his grief for his camel that he lost because of that man’s showiness.

ï It is also narrated that Ali (a) threatened the Bedouin who did not offer his prayer properly with the stick⁸ that he had in the hand. The man repeated his prayer and, when he finished, asked whether this one had been better than the previous. ‘No,’ answered Ali, ‘the first one was better, because it was offered for the sake of God, while this one was offered out of fear of the stick.’

¹. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 147 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

². Malik is the angel in charge of Hell.

³. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; Chapter: Showing off, page 53 (as quoted from Ilal ush-Sharayi and Thawab ul-Aamal).

⁴. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 137 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

⁵. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 147 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

⁶. Quoted from Bihar ul-Anwar; vol. 15 page 53 (quoted from Qurb ul-Isnad.).

⁷. Quoted from al-Wafi; part 3 page 147 (as quoted from al- Kafi).

⁸. ((It is unfamiliar to read that Amir ul-Mu’minin Ali, peace be upon him, who was famous of his extraordinary humanity and kindness used to have a stick in the hand for threatening or punishing people As a matter of fact, it was Omar ibn al-Khattab who used to have a stick in the hand about which tens of narrations were reported.)) The Translator

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