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Third Means, the Righteous Deeds

It may be derived from the Holy Qur'an that after the belief (*Iman*) the righteous deeds play the most important role in attaining self-perfection, God's Nearness, higher human ranks, and pure delightful life of the Next World. God-Almighty has said in the Holy Qur'an:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنَّىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً ۖ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“Whosoever doth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicken with good life and We shall pay them a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do. (16: 97)

And said:

وَمَنْ يَأْتِهِ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصَّالِحَاتِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجَاتُ الْعُلَىٰ

“But whoso cometh unto Him a believer, having done good works, for such are the high stations. (20:75)

And said:

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

“And whoever hopeth for the meeting with his lord, let him to righteous deeds and make none share of the worship due unto his lord. (18: 110)

And said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ

“Whoso desireth power should know that) all power belongeth to God. Unto Him good words ascend, and the pious deed doth He exalt. (35: 10)

The Glorious God in this verse explains that all power, prestige, and wealth belong to Him and the sacred word that is the clean and pure soul of a Monotheist (*Muahid*) and righteous belief in Monotheism (*Tawhid*) will ascend towards God–Almighty, and this will be made possible through the righteous deeds.

The righteous deeds performed with pure intention and sincerity affect the doer's self thus, nourishing him for attaining perfection. The Holy Qur'an clearly explains that the pure and charming life of the Hereafter and attainment of the most sublime spiritual position of God's Nearness and Countenance is possible only through the combination of belief and righteous deeds.

The Holy Qur'an has emphasized the importance of righteous deeds a lot and regards it as the only means for achieving eternal salvation and prosperity. The value and worth of righteous deeds depends upon their being compatible with religious law and revelations.

Because the Creator of the men as well as of the world who is familiar with the special creation of human beings knows his path of perfection and salvation and therefore, accordingly has revealed it to the Holy Prophet (S) through the revelations so that he may present it to the people for their utilization. God–Almighty said in Holy Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ

“O you who believe, obey God and the messenger while he calleth you to that which quickeneth you. (8:24)

The righteous deeds are the deeds that have been defined by religious law (*shariah*) as mandatory (*wajib*) or recommended (*mustahab*) deeds, and a wayfarer through their performance may undertake his spiritual migration leading him towards God's Nearness. This is the only way and all other ways are deviated and misleading and will never take a wayfarer to his final destination.

A wayfarer must be absolutely obedient to religious law and for his mystical journey should not follow any other path except the religious path and should avoid strictly engaging into invocations and incantations that do not have any authenticity in religious law.

Because, not only they do not take a wayfarer towards his destination instead, carry him farther apart from his destination since deviation from religious law is innovation and sin. To start with, a wayfarer should try his best to perform all religious obligatory obligations correctly in accordance with regulations, because, their renunciation will not result in attainment of higher spiritual positions, however seriously he

may endeavor in performing recommended deeds and engaging into invocations and incantations.

During the second stage the recommended deeds and invocations might be included in the program. The wayfarer at this stage in accordance to his spiritual strength and personal capabilities may perform recommended deeds and the more he endeavors the greater will be the possibilities of his attaining higher spiritual positions.

From the point of view of superiority, it should be pointed out that all recommended deeds are not equal rather some of them excel over others and with the result some of them could be more better and favorite, as have been mentioned in the books of supplication and traditions.

A wayfarer might select some supplications, prayers, invocations, and incantations from these books and then may engage himself on a regular basis. The more and precisely he performs them, the greater will be the purity and illumination of his soul, enabling him to ascend higher and higher up toward the exalted gnostic stations.

Here, we will point out to some of the righteous deeds and for the remaining ones the readers are advised to refer to other books but it should be reminded that mandatory deeds, recommended deeds, invocations, and supplications would be considered as righteous and favorite deeds only if they are performed with sincerity.

The authenticity of a deed and its becoming favorite depends in proportion to the sincerity of the performer. From this consideration; firstly we must discuss sincerity (*ikhlas*), and I will describe some of the righteous deeds later on.

The Sincerity

The position of sincerity has been described as one of the highest stages of a wayfarer's gnostic journey and attainment of self-perfection. It is because of sincerity that the heart becomes center of illumination for Divine light, whereby wisdom and knowledge flowing through heart manifest themselves through appearing upon the tongue. The Holy Prophet (S) has said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: ما اخلص عبد اربعين صباحا الا جرت ينابيع الحكمة من قلبه على لسانه

“Whoever devotes himself sincerely for a period of forty days for God–Almighty, streams of wisdom flowing from his heart will appear upon his tongue.”¹

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) said:

قال علي عليه السلام: اين الذين اخلصوا اعمالهم لله وطهروا قلوبهم لمواضع نظر الله

“Where are those who performed their deeds with sincerity for God–Almighty, and purified their hearts so that they could absorb God's special attention towards them.”[2](#)

Hadhrate Fatimah al-Zahra³ (s.a.) the daughter of the Holy Prophet (S) has said:

قالت سيدة النساء صلوات الله عليها: من اصعد الى الله خالص عبادته اهبط الله افضل مصلحته

“Whoever sends pure and sincere worship for God–Almighty, He too reciprocates by bestowing upon Him His best favors.”[4](#)

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: قلوب العباد الطاهرة مواضع نظر الله سبحانه فمن طهر قلبه نظر الله اليه

“Pure hearts of believers are reserved for Glorious God's special attention, therefore, whoever purifies his heart will certainly be blessed with God's special attention.”[5](#)

The Holy Prophet (S) had narrated a tradition from Arch–Angel Gabriel who heard it from God–Almighty who said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: مخبرا عن جبرئيل عن الله عز وجل انه قال: الاخلاص سر من اسرارى استودعته قلب من احببت من عابدى

“That sincerity is a mystery from my mysteries and whoever is loved by me, I will deposit it in his heart.”[6](#)

Sincerity consists of various grades and degrees, the most lowest grade of sincerity is that a believer should perform all his worships strictly for the sake of God–Almighty free from all traces of polytheism, hypocrisy, and ostentation.

This much amount of sincerity is must for the correctness of worships, and without it the doer will not be able to receive God's Nearness. The worth of a deed depends upon pure intentions and sincerity, free from all traces of Polytheism and dissimulation. The Holy Prophet (S) has said:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله: ان الله لا ينظر الى صوركم واعمالكم وانما ينظر الى قلوبكم

“God–Almighty does not look at your faces and deeds rather looks inside your hearts.”[7](#)

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) has said:

قال ابو عبدالله عليه السلام: يقول الله: انا خير شريك, من اشرك معى غيرى فى عمله لم اقبله الا ما كان خالصا

*“God–Almighty said: ' I am the best partner for You, and whosoever associates with me some one else in his deeds, then I will handover the entire deed to that associate, because I do not accept but pure and sincere deeds.”*⁸

Also, he said:

قال ابو عبدالله عليه السلام: ان الله يحشر الناس على نياتهم يوم القيامة

“On the Day of Judgment, God–Almighty will associate people in accordance with their intentions.”

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: طوبى لمن اخلص لله العبادة الدعا ولم يشغل قلبه بما ترى عيناه ولم ينس ذكر الله بما تسمع اذناه ولم يحزن صدره بما اعطى غيره

*“How lucky is the one who worships and prays only for the sake of God–Almighty; does not engage his heart in whatsoever is seen by his eyes; does not forget God's Remembrance because of whatsoever enters into his ears,. and does not become envious in seeing things bestowed upon others.”*⁹

He also said:

قال على عليه السلام: امارات السعادة اخلاص العمل

*“Sincerity in deeds is an indication of doer's salvation and prosperity.”*¹⁰

A worship that is accepted by God–Almighty and earns perfection and His Nearness for the worshipper – is the worship free from all traces of self–conceit, dissimulation, Egotism, and ostentation offered for the sake of Him alone. The only criteria for acceptance of deeds is –sincerity and devotion. The more is the degree of sincerity the greater would be the perfection and merit of the deed.

The worshippers may be grouped in to the following three categories:

1. The First Group: Consists of those who worship God–Almighty because of fear of Divine punishment and Hell’s fire.
2. The Second Group: Consists of those who obey Divine commands for the sake of bounties of Paradise and rewards in the Hereafter.

Although, worshipping with the above aims does not harm their correctness in any way and the doer will earn the eternal rewards and favors, because, the Holy Qur'an and traditions have very often utilized both of the above methods for the people's guidance.

Apart from that the Holy Prophet (S) himself, infallible Imams (a.s.) of his Holy Progeny, and God's Favorite Saints too were afraid of Divine retributions, continuously cried for help and were eager and hopeful for Paradise and its bounties.

3. The Third Group: Consists of those who worship God–Almighty because they consider Him worthy of it and want to thank him for His Divine bounties and blessings. Such aim does not have any contradiction with sincerity –a criteria for the acceptance of deeds.

Therefore, in traditions, in order to encourage people for God's obedience, His bounties and favors have been reminded, so that to show their appreciation, the human beings should obey His commandments. Even the Holy Prophet (S) himself and Infallible Imam (a.s.) of his holy progeny sometimes in order to emphasize the importance and seriousness of worship said:

أفلا اكون عبدا شكورا.

“Shouldn't I be a thankful servant?”

Although, the deeds of all groups do get accepted, but among them it is the third group whose deeds carry special distinction because they are accompanied with a higher degree of sincerity. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال امير المؤمنين عليه السلام: ان قوما عبدوا الله رغبة فتلك عبادة التجار وان قوما عبدوا الله رهبة فتلك عبادة العبيد وان قوما عبدوا الله شكرا فتلك عبادة الاحرار.

“The worshiper of God–Almighty may be divided into following three groups:

1 First Group: Consists of those who worship God–Almighty for the sake of eternal rewards, which is like –worshipping of merchants, (for the sake of profit).

2. Second Group: Consists of those who worship God–Almighty because of the fear of God and retributions, which is like –the worshipping of slaves (for the sake of fear).

3. Third Group: Consists of those who worship God–Almighty because to express their appreciation and thanks for His bounties and favors which is like the –worshipping of freeman.”¹¹

4. The Fourth Group: Consists of those who worships God–Almighty for the sake of attaining self-perfection and nourishment of their selves. Of course, perusal of this objective does not inflict any

damage to the degree of sincerity and devotion that is the criteria for acceptance of deeds.

5. The Fifth Group: Consists of those who are the most favorite and distinguished servants of God–Almighty. Since they have recognized Him very well and consider Him as the Fountainhead of all Blessings and Perfection –Worship Him.

Because, of their being aware of the Absolute and Infinite Power of the Lord of Splendor and Majesty, and since they have not discovered any other effective source of power except Him – consider Him alone worthy of worshipping, love Him and humiliate and humble themselves in front of His Exalted Glory, And this is called the highest degree of sincerity and devotion. Imam al–Sadiq (a.s.) has said:

قال الصادق عليه السلام: ان الناس يعبدون الله على ثلاثة أوجه: فطبقة يعبدونه رغبة في ثوابه فتلك عبادة الحرصاء وهو الطمع، وآخرون يعبدونه فرقا من النار فتلك عبادة العبيد وهي الرهبة، ولكني أعبدته حبا له عز وجل فتلك عبادة الكرام، وهو الامن لقوله عز وجل "وهم من فزع يومئذ آمنون" ويقول له "قل إن كنتم تحبون الله فاتبعوني يحببكم الله ويغفر لكم ذنوبكم" فمن أحب الله أحبه الله، ومن أحبه الله عز وجل كان من الآمين.

“There are three categories of worshipers:

The first category consists of those who worship for the sake of eternal rewards –which is the worshipping of greedy, because they are motivated due to greed.

The second category consists of those who worship because of fear of Hell's fire which is the worshipping of slaves, since their motivation is due to fear. But since I love God–Almighty –I worship Him, which is the worship of elders, and nobles whose motivation is tranquility and assurance. God–Almighty has said:

وَهُمْ مِّنْ فَرَعٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ آمِنُونَ

“And such are safe from fear that Day. (27:89)

And further said:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحِبُّكُمْ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ

“Say (O Muhammad, to mankind): If you love God, follow me, God will love you and forgive your sins. (3:31)

Therefore, whosoever loves God–Almighty, He too loves him and (on the Day of Resurrection) he will be among those who have been blessed with peace and security”[12](#)

The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: ما عبدتك خوفا من نارك ولا طمعا في جنتك ولكن وجدتك أهلا للعبادة فعبدتك.

“Oh God! I worship you neither because of fear from the Hell's fire nor for the greed of Paradise's bounties, but, since I believe You are worthy of adoration and praise –I do worship you.”¹³

All of the above mentioned groups are sincere and their deeds are accepted but still all of them do not hold a single rank, rather from the point of view of perfection they differ with each other –the fifth group possessing the most distinguished position.

It should be reminded here that the holder of distinguished ranks are not disqualified as for as the requirements of lower ranks are concerned, rather in addition to their being qualified for lower ranks they also possess higher distinguished credentials.

The righteous and sincere slaves of God–Almighty, too are afraid of Him, are hopeful of His Mercy and Compassion, are thankful for His Bounties, and are anxious for attaining spiritual nearness with Him, but their motivation behind worship is not limited to only above things, instead, since they have discovered a better understanding of God–Almighty, they praise and worship Him.

Those distinguished and God's chosen human beings in spite of their attaining exalted spiritual positions have not given up the lower positions, because, a wayfarer traveling upon the road of perfection when reaches relatively higher spiritual stations, also possesses the qualifications of lower stations which have been attained by him earlier in his spiritual journey.

Whatever was discussed so far was related to sincerity and devotion in worship, but sincerity is something which is not limited to worship only, rather a wayfarer gradually reaches to a point whereby he purifies himself as well his heart, for God–Almighty, cleansing the heart's dwelling from all sort of alien existence.

So much so that all actions, deeds and thoughts, are assigned exclusively to God–Almighty, and the wayfarer does not perform any thing but for His pleasure. He is not afraid of other than God and does not trust other than Him, to the extent that even his friendship and enmity are done exclusively for the God's pleasure, and this is known as the highest degree of sincerity. The Commander of the Faithful Imam 'Ali (a.s.) has said:

قال على عليه السلام: طوبى لمن اخلص لله عمله وعلمه وحبه وتغضه واخذه وتركه وكلامه وصمته.

“How fortunate is the one whose deeds, knowledge, love, grudge, possession, renunciation speaking, and silence –all are reserved exclusively for God–Almighty.”¹⁴

Imam al-Sadiq has said:

قال ابو عبدالله عليه السلام: من احب لله وابغض لله واعطى لله ومنع لله فهو ممن يكمل ايمانه

“Whosoever loves, grudges, donates, and refrains exclusively for the sake of God–Almighty –is some one whose faith is perfect.”¹⁵

Also, said:

قال الصادق عليه السلام: ما انعم الله على عبد اجل من ان لا يكون فى قلبه مع الله غيره

“God–Almighty has not bestowed upon a servant any thing superior than –that there should not be anything in his heart except God–Almighty.”¹⁶

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) says:

قال على عليه السلام: اين القلوب التى وهبت لله وعوقدت على طاعة الله

“Where are the hearts who have been donated to God–Almighty, and are committed exclusively for his obedience.”¹⁷

When a wayfarer attains that privileged position, God–Almighty purifies him for Himself and through Divine Illumination, intuition, and revelations makes him immune against sins and transgressions. Such a human being is called God's devoted friend (*Mukhlis*) and they are the most distinguished servants of God–Almighty. The Holy Qur’an says:

إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ

“Lo! We purified them with a pure thought, remembrance of the Home (of the Hereafter) (38:46)

The Holy Qur’an says about Prophet Moses (a.s.):

وَإِذْ كُنَّا فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَّبِيًّا

“And make mention in the scripture of Moses. Lo! He was chosen, and he was a messenger of (God), a Prophet. (19:51)

God's chosen devoted servants ultimately reach to a position whereby even Satan becomes

disappointed in his efforts to make them deviated. The Holy Qur'an quotes Satan when he speaks to God-Almighty:

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمْ الْمُخْلِصِينَ

“He said: Then by Thy might, I surely will beguile them every one, save Thy single minded slaves among them. (38: 82-83)

In the end it must be reminded that attaining such exalted position is not an easy and simple thing rather it requires self-purification, endeavors, and struggle in worshipping. The Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) says:

قال على عليه السلام: الخلاص ثمرة العبادة

“Sincerity and devotion are the fruits of worship.”¹⁸

As has been described in traditions that engagements in worshipping and invocations continuously for a period of forty days and nights might be effective and useful for attaining inner purity enlightenment of soul, and the position of sincerity. But, this could not be accomplished in one single attempt rather should be attempted gradually after passing through various stages of sincerity.

¹. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70. p-242 .

². Ghirar al-Hukm, p-172.

³. Fatimah al-Zahra (s.a.): The beloved daughter of the Prophet from Khadijah, Fatimah was born in Mecca on Friday, 20th Jumadath-thaniyah in the fifth year after the declaration of the prophethood (615 A.D.) She was so loved by the Prophet that he called her “a part of me.” In 2 A.H. / 624 A.D. she married 'Ali ibn Abu Talib from whom she bore three sons, Hasan, Husayn and Muhsin (who died stillborn), and two daughters, Zaynab and Umme Kulthum.

She was at the Prophet's bedside at the moment of his death and struggled for her husband's succession to the caliphate. She died at the age of 18 in Medina on 14th Jummaadi al awwal 11 A.H. (633 A.D.); and is buried in the graveyard of Jannatu'l Baqi in Medina. It is said that when she was born the whole sky became illuminated; therefore she is called al-Zahra' , the “Radiant.” She is the mother of the Shi'ite Imams and is considered the most holy of Muslim women.

⁴. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-249.

⁵. the Ghirar al-Hukm, p-538.

⁶. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70. p-249.

⁷. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-209.

⁸. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-243.

⁹. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70-229.

¹⁰. Ghirar al-Hukm, p-43.

¹¹. Bihar al-Anwar, vol 70, p-196.

¹². Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-197.

¹³. Bihar al-Anwar, p-197.

¹⁴. Ghirar al-Hukm p-462.

[15.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p-248.

[16.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70 p-249.

[17.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-172.

[18.](#) Ghirar al-Hukm, p-17.

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