

Wise Admonishment from the Professor of Theology, Imam–Al–Khomeini, May his Shade Endure

Quite often, it so happens that a pretender does not pay attention to the fact that pretension has penetrated his actions, that his good deeds are a pretense and worth absolutely nothing. This is so because the traps of the self (*nafs*) and those of Satan are quite minute and transparent. Humanity's path is very narrow and dark: Unless man fully examines, he does not pay attention to what he does.

One thinks that his deeds are purely for the sake of earning the Pleasure of Allāh, but they instead please Satan. Since it is the human nature to be egotistical, such love for one's own self veils him from seeing his own faults. For example, earning the science of religion, which is one of the important acts of obedience and adoration, may afflict one with pretension in this great form of adoration even while he is unmindful, unaware, of it.

He, as we have already stated, due to the thick curtain, the curtain of self–love, likes to solve a scholarly problem in the presence of scholars and chiefs in a way which nobody else came up with. It will make him stand out, according to his own thinking. The more he explains the problem sufficiently, attracting the attention of those present, the more elated he feels. If someone opposes him, he has to overcome and humiliate him; he has to make him lower his head before people, forcing his own argument on him, his opponent, whether it is right or wrong.

After vanquishing the opponent, he feels within himself that he has distinguished himself and earned a place of prominence. If a master believes what he says, so much the better. And the poor man is unaware that although he earned a status among the scholars and men of virtue, he dropped in the esteem of his Lord, the King of kings in all domains Who orders the deed of such an individual to cause him to be hurled into Sijjeen.

This pretentious deed was also mixed with various forms of disobedience: scandalizing a believer and

humiliating him, harming the brother-in-faith, insulting and sometimes uncovering his faults. All these are sins and make an independent cause to render such an individual to be among the fellows of hell. If we suppose that the *nafs* places its trap before you and says to you, "My objective is to explain the legislative ruling and show the word of truth, which is the best form of obedience.

My goal is not to demonstrate my distinction, or to brag, "you must ask it about its inner self the following question: If my friend, who is like me in my scholarly degree, explains the legislative ruling, and if he solves the problem himself, and if you were subdued in that meeting place, will your attitude be contrariwise?!" If the case is positive, you will be truthful in your claim. But if the *nafs* approaches you through the venue of trickery, abandoning no deception, saying to you, "There is a virtue for manifesting righteousness, and Allāh rewards for it, and I want you to win this virtue and let you live in the abode of Allāh's rewards," you must say to it, "If we suppose that Allāh, the Praised One, granted you this virtue in case you are subdued and if you believe in righteousness, will you still seek victory over your opponent?"

Upon referring to your inner-self, if you find out that you love victory, too, and fame among the men of virtue as being a man of both knowledge and virtue, and that this scholarly research was in order to gain a status in their hearts, be informed that you are a pretender in this scholarly research which is one of the best forms of obedience to the Almighty and one of the best acts of worship, and that this deed was prompted by love for prominence and distinction which is more harmful to your conviction (*īmān*) than two wolves raging in a flock the shepherd of which is absent, according to a narrative.

You are obligated, as a man of knowledge who seeks reform, one who guides others towards the path of the Hereafter, a doctor of psychological ailment, to reform yourself first and to repair your own temper so you will not be among the scholars whose good deeds are void, whose condition is very well known.

Lord! Do purge our hearts of the impurity of shirk and hypocrisy! Purify the mirror of our hearts from the adornment of loving this world which is the cause of all these matters. Be our Companion, help us, we poor souls who are afflicted with loving ourselves, with loving distinction and eminence, along this dangerous journey, this path that has many obstacles, the narrow and dark one, surely You can do anything at all, *Allāhomma āmeen*.

Among the important acts of adoration in Islam is the congregational prayer service in which the distinction of the imām is greater; therefore, Satan penetrates in it more than in others. His enmity towards the imām is greater. Satan stands to deprive the imām of this virtue, empty his deed of sincerity, thus causing him to be lodged in Sijjeen, rendering him associating a partner with Allāh, the most Great.

Satan enters into the heart of imāms of congregational prayers from various paths such as conceit and pretension, which is making a show of this form of worship before the public in order to win a status in their hearts and earn the reputation of being great and sublime. For example, Satan sees so-and-so, who is a great worshipper, having attended his congregational prayers, whereupon he increases his submission, bringing him closer to himself through various means and tricks in order to get him in the

end to fall in his trap.

He reminds the imām in his place of meeting, or through another way, to let people know that "So-and-so worshipper attends my congregational prayer service," finding in his heart love for this person who attends his service, demonstrating love and sincerity to him in a degree which he does not demonstrate to Allāh Almighty or to His close servants even for one moment in his lifetime, especially if the attendant of the prayer service is a respected businessman. If, God forbid, a man of distinction attends the prayer service because of losing track of his path, so he joins the ranks in his congregation, the calamity will then be greater.

Satan, at the same time, does not leave the imām alone whose group is smaller in number. He attends and insinuates to him to let people understand that "I have abandoned the world and I pray in the quarter's small mosque with the poor and the indigents." This imām is like his predecessor, even worse, because he nurtures in his heart the vice of jealousy, too, permitting its tree to produce its fruit. Since he had no share of the good things in this life, Satan deprives him of his share in the Hereafter as well, rendering him a loser in this life and in the one to come.

This Satan does not leave me or yourselves alone when we are not imāms of the congregational prayer service not because we shy away from it but our hands fall short of it, so he insinuates to us to defame the group of Muslims, to charge them, to suggest that there are faults with that group, counting our deprivation of the group as our isolation from it and abandonment of this life.

We identify ourselves as being free of love for the self and for prominence. We, then, are in a worse shape than both previous groups. We do not have the complete life enjoyed by the first group nor the incomplete one for the second group, nor do we have the Hereafter. Had we been able, our seeking eminence and our love for distinction and wealth would have been greater than both those groups.

Satan is not satisfied with playing tricks on the group's imām, nor is the fire of his desire quenched by turning the imām into a fellow of hell, but he also enters the rows of those who follow the imām as well to commit his mischief.

Since the first row is the best, and since the right side of a row is better than the left, it is his first target. Satan takes the hand of the poor worshipper and gets him out of his house despite the distance from the place where the group congregates and seats him in the right side of the first row. He starts insinuating to him to inform people of this virtue which he attained. This poor man, too, without Satan tempting him, manifests the distinction of his own self with twinkling and coddling, thus his inner *shirk* shows itself, entering his deed into the Sijjeen (the sinners' record).

Then Satan enters in the rest of rows, mobilizing their folks to hold on to the first row and to throw the poor worshipper, who is sitting in the first rank, with their arrows of defamation and curses while labeling themselves with integrity. It may be noticed that Satan takes the hand of a respected person, especially if he is among the people of knowledge and distinction, to seat him in the other row so that this person

may show people that despite his status among the public or in the world of knowledge, while a man like him ought not emulate such an imām, but "On account of my renunciation of this life and abandonment of the self's desire, I attended his congregational service. Despite all of this, I even sat in the last row..."

The likes of this individual are never seen in the first row at all! Satan does not contend himself with only the imām and those who follow him but sticks to the beard of one who prays individually, taking his rein, pulling him out of the home or market, spreading a carpet for him with twinkling and coddling in a corner in the mosque, a man who does not see any imām as being just, so he prolongs his bowing and prostrating as people look on, repeating lengthy sacred verses.

This person hides inside himself his desire that people must understand the following: "Due to the plentitude of my sanctity and precaution, I abandon the group so I may not be afflicted by praying with an imām who is not just." Besides being conceited and pretentious, this man is also ignorant of the issues of the Islamic Sharḥa because the emulation authority of this person perhaps does not apply any criterion besides a good appearance so he may emulate an imām.

Thus do we place the rest of our matters at the disposal of Satan while whenever this cursed one finds an impure heart to which he resorts, he burns the apparent and the hidden deeds, rendering him among the fellows of hell even through good deeds. Thus ends the wise admonishment of Imām al-Khomeini.

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