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Sincerity of Friends of God

One of the principal concerns of the Shaykh in training his disciples was emphasizing sincerity not only in belief and devotion but also in all actions. Most often he stressed that:

"The true religion is what is being preached on the pulpits, albeit lacking two things: sincerity and love of God Almighty .These two must be added to the subject matter of the preaching."

All Deeds for God's Sake

One of the Shaykh's most valuable and instructive statements was his following keynote:

"Everything is good, but (only if it is) for God's sake!"

Sometimes he pointed at his sewing machine and said: "Look at this sewing machine! All its small and big parts have the manufacturer's trade mark...denoting that the smallest nut in this machine must bear the mark (name) of the manufacturer too. All the endeavors of a faithful person must also bear the name of God."

In the Shaykh's training school, the spiritual seeker must deliberate before doing anything to see if it is illegal, avoid if for God's sake, and if it is legal and lawful do, it for God's sake. He must also see if it is lawful but pleasing to his carnal soul as well, he must first ask for God's forgiveness for his carnal desire and then proceed with that task for God's sake.

Eating and Taking Rest for God's Sake!

According to the guideline given by the Holy Prophet (s) to Abu Dhar:

"يا ابا ذر، لتكن لك في كل شيء نية صالحة، حتى في النوم والأكل"

"O Abu Dhar! You should have pure intention in all your deeds, even in (lawful) eating and drinking."[1]

The Shaykh would frequently assert to his disciples: "All your tasks must be for God's sake, even your eating and sleeping. Once you drink this cup of tea while remembering God, your heart will be radiated with Divine light. But if you drink it for the sake of satiating your desire, it will turn to what you had wanted (other than God)!"[2]

Ayatollah Mahdawi Kani said: 'At the beginning of my studies as a *talaba* (an Islamic seminary student) when I was about fourteen or so, once I wanted to make a garment for myself–after having given back the clothes I had borrowed from the late Burhan.

I went to a person called Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat, taking the cloth with me to have a garment made. His workshop was in his house at a room near the doorway. I sat for a time, then the Shaykh came in and said: "What do you want to become?" I answered: "A *talaba.*" He said: "Do you want to become a *talaba* or a human being?'

I got somewhat surprised at the way an ordinary man talked to a religious student. He went on to say:

"Do not get annoyed! Being a *talaba* is fine, but it is meant to become a (real) human being. I give you a piece of advice to remember; do not forget your Divine goal from now on that you are still young and are not polluted (with sins) yet. Whatever you do, try to do it for God. Even when you eat a delicious food, eat it with the intention to gain energy to pray and serve in the way of God. Do not ever forget this advice all through your life."

Stitch for God's Sake!

He would say to a shoemaker:

"When you make a shoe, first of all do it for God's sake, and then stitch it fine and firm so that it would not tear apart too soon and last longer."

He would say to a tailor:

"Any cut you stitch, try to stitch it for God and firmly!"

Come Over for God's sake!

One of the Shaykh's disciples described his recommendation on sincerity by quoting him as saying:

"When you come over (to the Shaykh's house), come for the sake of God; if you come for my sake, you'll be at a loss!"

His state of mind was amazing; he called people to God not to himself.

Blow into Fire for God's Sake!

The Shaykh's son related: 'Shaykh Abdul Karim Hamid was an errand-boy at my father's workshop. One day he was blowing into the fire in the iron-the old Iranian iron that heated up by the fire in its cavity-when my father told him:

"Abdul Karim! You know how to blow into the iron?"

He answered: 'No, sir. How should I blow?' My father said: "Purse your lips and blow for God's sake!"

Love them for the Sake of God!

One of the Shaykh's disciples said that the Shaykh told him in a private session:

"Your mind is wandering such and such a place; it's all right, but it should be for the sake of God."

One day I went to visit the Shaykh along with a friend of mine. The Shaykh pointed to my friend's heart and said:

"I see two children there; that's fine, but the heart is the place of God; interest in children must be for the sake of God."

He used to say:

"The religious people's work is all fine, but they have to replace their 'egos' with 'God'."

Kiss for the Sake of God! Ayatollah Fahri described the Shaykh's recommendation for sincerity as follows: 'The phrase he frequently used was "work for the sake of God". He so frequently used this phrase when addressing his disciples that "working for God's sake" had turned into a motto for them. Like a mahout (elephant driver) who repeatedly strikes the elephant's head with the hammer, the Shaykh would also frequently strike his disciples' mind with (the motto) "Work for God".

He would give examples from himself and others in this respect to have them master this instruction. In all states he stressed to everyone to work for the sake of God. He would say:

"God must be present in all your aspects of life; even when you go home at night and kiss your wife, kiss her for the sake of God!"

Those who were trained at the Shaykh's school achieved spiritual stations and intuitions as a result of practicing this instruction.

What have you done for God's Sake?

One of the Shaykh's children related the following account: 'One day my father and I went to Bibi Shahrbano. On the way we ran into an ascetic, and my father asked him:

"What has been the outcome of your (ascetic) self-discipline?"

The ascetic bowed down and picked up a stone from the ground.

The stone turned into a pear and he offered it to my father, saying: 'Here you are, help yourself!

My father cast a glance at him and said:

"You did this for me, let me know what you have done for God?!" Hearing this, the ascetic burst into tears!

Woe to me! Woe to me!

One of the Shaykh's disciples who had spent around thirty years with him quoted the Shaykh as saying to him:

"I saw the spirit of one of the scholars of spirituality –who had been residing in one of the big cities in Iran –in Barzakh, who pitied himself, beating on his thighs and saying: 'Woe to me! I have come (out of the world) with no pure and sincere actions in hand!'

I asked him why he is doing so. He answered: 'In my life once I made acquaintance with a businessman who introduced to me some of his esoteric features. When I parted with him, I decided to practice asceticism so that I could also acquire an insight to have intuitions and to see the *barzakh* and the unseen. I practiced self- discipline for thirty years before I succeeded. At that time death knocked at my door. Now (in the *barzakh*) they are telling: By the time you ran into that man of spirituality, you were indulged in your carnal desires, and after that you spent about thirty years of your life in achieving intuitions and vision of the states in *barzakh.* Now tell what you have done purely for Us?!"

To Become Good for God's Sake

One of the contemporary scholars who is a professor of ethics and mysticism said: 'I asked the reverend Shaykh Rajab Ali Khayyat about myself to see what he thought of me. He answered:

"Agha Hajj Shaykh! You want to become good but for yourself ! Try to become good for the sake of God!"

Dear readers! you are noticing how the reverend Shaykh, with his Divine insight, could realize the subtle

borders between monotheism and polytheism and warned about them. It is true, these borders make up the path which is thinner than a hair. There are no other ways except this path to attain the reality of monotheism and the paradise of meeting with God.

Go on a Pilgrimage for the Sake of God!

One of the Shaykh's disciples said: Once I asked his reverence if he consented to go on a pilgrimage of Imam al-Reza (a) to Mashhad together. He replied:

"I am not permitted (to do anything) on my own!"

At first his reply sounded a bit weird to me as to how he did not have permission to go on a pilgrimage. Until some time later I found out that a devotee (of God) has no personal opinion other than what God wills for him and that his tasks are subject to God's permission and consent. Later on, a talk about sincerity and pilgrimage to that blessed Imam (a) was raised. The Shaykh said in that relation:

"If we go on a pilgrimage for the sake of God and have nothing in mind other than God's pleasure, the holy Imam (a) will receive such a pilgrim with special favor.

On one of my pilgrimages to Imam al-Reza (a) I had no intention but the pleasure of God, the holy Imam (a) did me such a great favor that I was extremely enamored. If this favor could be put into words I would tell how it felt. However, if you wish to perceive this kindness and favor, you have to purify yourself to be able to see what I saw!"

Fruits of Sincerity

The Shaykh would frequently use the following phrase in his talks:

"Whoever is with Allah, Allah will be with him."[3] Whoever works wholeheartedly for God, God will be for him. He would say:

"من كان لله كان الله له

"You be for God, He and His angels will be for you."

Sometimes he said:

"If one does not manage to act accordingly, even talking about it also makes a desirable impact on one's spirituality."

Divine Guidance

The Shaykh regarded enjoyment of special Divine Guidance as one of the most significant blessings of sincerity. Accordingly, by virtue of the verse,

(والذين جاهدوا فينا لنهدينهم سبلنا)

(And those who strive in Our cause –We will certainly guide them) (al–Ankabut: 69), he expounded the idea as follows:

"If you rise up for God, all the universe's assets will guide and support you. Since their perfection lies in merging in you, they wish to deliver what they naturally possess to achieve real perfection. If man rises up for God, all existing creatures will line up in his cause to present to him what they possess and to be his guide."

The Shaykh regarded as necessary the highest levels of sincerity in order to enjoy special Divine guidance that is indeed God's special training. That is, man must have no other goals in his endeavors than the pleasure of Almighty God; he should even disregard his own perfection too.4

He said in this regard:

"As long as man views his own perfection, he will not achieve the Truth. All faculties and means at man's disposal must be utilized in the way of attaining (union with) God. In this case Almighty God would train man for Himself."

The Fragrance of God in Deeds

The reverend Shaykh asserted:

"Once you know God, whatever you do should be purely out of love and sincerity. Do not even consider your own perfection, as carnal soul is very shrewd and subtle and very persistent in imposing itself (on man's sublime intentions).

As long as man wants himself and attends to himself, his tasks are mundane and not Divinely motivated. However, once he abandons self–centrism and becomes God–Oriented, his tasks turn Divine and his acts get the Divine fragrance; and that have a sign which is revealed in the words of Imam al–Sajjad (a):

"وما أطيب طعم حبك"

"How pleasant is the flavor of your love!"5

Overpowering the Satan

One of the blessings of working for the sake of God is overpowering the Satan. The Shaykh said in this regard:

"The one who rises up for God's sake will encounter the carnal soul along with seventy five armies and the Satan with its troops who will also stand up to destroy him, but "جند الله هم الغالبون'" The troops of Allah are verily victorious.' Intellect also consists of seventy-five armies which will not let the devoted worshipper be defeated:
(ان عبادي ليس لك عليهم سلطان)(Surely, you will have no authority over My sincere worshippers.) (al-Hijr: 42) If you are not interested in other than God, the carnal self and the Satan will not have any authority over you; rather, they will be overwhelmed by you."

He would also say:

"There is a trial in every breath you take. You should see if it is taken with a Divine motivation or it is mingled with a satanic motivation!"

Opening up of the Heart's Eye

The reverend Shaykh believed that as long as man is directed toward other than God and seeks other than Him, he is in reality a polytheist and his heart is contaminated with polytheism, referring in this respect to the holy verse (انما المشركون نجس)(Verily, the polytheists are impure and filthy.) (al-Tawbah: 28)

As long as the heart is dusted with polytheism, man will not be able to get familiar with realities of Being. Thereupon the Shaykh said:

"As long as man's attention is directed toward other than God, he will be veiled to the realities of Being and unaware of the inward aspects of Creation."

'O Hafiz, you are the veil to the path, move away!
Happy is he who fares this path unveiled.'

However, if man purifies his heart of the dust of polytheism, he will be entrusted with mysteries of creation. The reverend Shaykh said accordingly:

"If one works for the sake of God, his heart's eye opens up. If you watch out for your heart and do not admit other than God in it, you will be able to see what other people are unable to see, and hear what other people are unable to hear."[6]

Material and Spiritual Blessings

The Holy Qur'an asserts that if someone is after the life of this world, obedience of God will not reduce his worldly life; rather, obedience to God will provide him with the eternal pure life as well as the worldly blessings of this life:

(من كان يريد ثواب الدنيا فعند الله ثواب الدنيا والآخرة)

(Whoever desires reward in the life of this world, then (he should know) with Allah is the reward of this life as well as that of the Hereafter.) (al-Nisa: 134)

In other words, the Almighty God is (literally) everything; the one who had God, possesses everything.[7] One of the Shaykh's devotees said: The reverend Shaykh asked me what my job was. I said I was a carpenter. He said:

"Do you strike the hammer on the nail in remembrance of God or in remembrance of money?! If you strike in remembrance of money, you'll only get the money, but if you strike in remembrance of God, you'll both get the money and attain (union with) God."[8]

I taught them for God's Sake

One of the Shaykh's disciples quotes him as Saying:

"A very large crowd had attended the funeral procession of Ayatollah Burujirdi (ra) and it turned to be a very magnificent function. In a spiritual state, I asked him how he happened to be paid such great homage. He replied: I used to teach all *talabas* (Islamic seminary students) for the sake of God."

God Tackled our Problem!

One of his devotees quotes the Shaykh as saying:

"My son was summoned to do his military service, and I was about to go along with him to take care of this problem when a couple came to me to help them tackle their dispute. So I stayed on to solve their problem. In the afternoon, my son returned home and said: Near the military garrison I came down with such a severe headache that my head got swollen. The doctor (in the military garrison clinic) examined me and diagnosed me as exempt from military service. As soon as I left the garrison, I felt not a single trace of the headache and swelling!"

The Shaykh went on to say:

"We (I) proceeded to tackle people's problem, and God tackled our problem."

1. Mizan al-Hikmah, XIII, 6578: 20999.
2. See "Material and Spiritual Blessings", Chapter Four, Part 3.
3. This statement is related in hadith sources such as Bihar al-Anwar, LXXXII, 197; al- Wafi, V, 784; and Rawzat al-Muttaqin, 3, 195 without attributing to any infallible Imam and just with the phrase "as it is related" which denotes its being a hadith. Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi has attributed the statement to the Holy Prophet (s) in his interpretation of the Holy Qur'an I, 76. Research indicated the oldest source bearing this hadith is Khawaja Nasir al-din Tusi's Akhlaq Muhtashami, XII, 122. In that source, however it is not attributed to any of the Infallible either.
4. See "Guidelines of Imam Khomeini (ra) to his son Hajj Ahmad Agha (ra)", Chapter Seven, Part 3.
5. Imam al-Sajjad (a), The Psalms of Islam, XV.
6. See "Opening up the Heart's Eye", Chapter Three, Part 3.
7. As pointed out in the supplication or Arafah: "مالذي فقد من وجدك؟""What lacks the one who has found you?"
8. See "Eating and Taking Rest for the Sake of God!" Chapter Four, Part 3.

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