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Elements of Repentance

Repentance is a turning point of behaviour, an ideological alternation and a change which occurs in the life of an individual or a group. Thus it cannot be achieved in the life of an individual unless other main elements are obtained. Among them are:

1. Knowledge

Man, in order to distinguish his diverse behavioral positions and coincide with them, evaluate them and give final decisions upon them and choose what should be chosen, should know its truth and have full ideological lucidity through which he can differentiate between what is right and what is wrong or what is good and what is bad and, also, differentiate between righteousness and deviation and recognize between good and evil. The ignorant man cannot achieve this condition as long as the way is not clear and right to him.

Both knowledge and consciousness are the right ways which lead him towards the Almighty Allah. They are the ideological means by which man is directed to the right path and the guide towards the welfare of humanity and its perfection. They are both two guides which save him against the pit of collapse and the labyrinths of deviation. As long as this condition is not achieved, repentance can never occur.

Thus, it becomes obligatory for everyone to bid what is right and forbid what is wrong and, also, teach the ignorant in order repentance complete all its necessities and nullify all the excuses, under which the disobedient or criminals, may hide themselves.

For the same purpose, it is obligatory for man to learn every necessity of faith and the obligations upon which his guidance and destination depend; and, also to ensure the relation between faith, guidance and knowledge.

On the one side, the Holy Qur'an condemns ignorance; on the other, it praises knowledge and learning. In various places, it makes a connection between ignorance, misguidance and deviation.

The Almighty Allah says:

"They said: Have you come to us to turn us away from our gods? Then bring us that with which you threaten us, if you are truthful. He said: The knowledge is only with Allah, and I deliver to you that wherewith I am sent, but I see you are an ignorant people." (Holy Qur'an, 46:22–23)

As the above mentioned verse refers to both ignorance and deviation, it, also, refers to both knowledge and faith.

Allah, the Most High, says:

"And those who were given the knowledge said: Woe to you! Allah's reward is better for him who believes and does good, and none is made to receive this except the patient." (Holy Qur'an, 28:80)

"... those of His servants only who are possessed of knowledge fear Allah ..." (Holy Qur'an, 35:28)

Surely knowledge is the source of every psychological and ideological motivation which man holds in the way of repentance:

- Through knowledge, he realizes how to fear of Allah.
- Through knowledge, it creates in him the feeling of hope and desire to meet Allah.
- Through knowledge, the light of the loving Allah shines in him.
- Through knowledge, his conscience is awakened and to him returns his consciousness.

2. Feeling one sinned (caution of conscience)

When the truth of an action is discovered by man and his outer truth is distinguished before his consciousness and pure inner feelings, he starts to understand in truth and, thus, a balanced action is to be found in him between what he owns of good human values and his bitter and painful reality, and his responsibility of its bad role will be explained in its truth. Thus, the embers of refusal and disgust will be gathered in him and the attitude of refusal and protest will grow in him, thus, transformed into a psychological conflict of bitter conscious remorse as a first means to impose punishment upon himself.

Then, the fires of consciousness will rise till he puts it under his control and becomes victorious because, man, in his inborn nature dislikes deficiency and tries to get rid of it; and always strives for self–perfection and wishes to reach for it by different ways and means.

Man through his ignorance, yields to various unreal factors in which he tries to satisfy his psychological inclinations through deviated ways, but, soon this deviated inclination will be disclosed to him through consciousness and knowledge. Thus, he regrets his evil deeds and tries to separate himself from his crimes and get rid of the impacts of his deviation, for he realizes that what is done by him (of crimes and

sins) does not fit with true human existence.

When this regret begins; he starts to feel pain for his evil deeds and his desire to remove this deviated existence, which takes its role as a new force towards change and repentance, moves him to separate from the disliked past in order to make another existence for himself which suits his good human form.

3. Strong-Will

Strong will is an important and active element in the process of repentance, because it is the power which limits the situation; takes a decision after achieving the right conclusion and ideological lucidity, which are provided by knowledge. It is an axis on which one takes action in the process of a psychological and ideological revolution.

If one ventures towards repentance, particularly when one faces psychological conflict, and tries to destroy this behavioral abnormality, taking the direction to Allah; the disobedient and criminal, while are involved in such odd connections with the motives of deviation, need a determination and firm will which enables them to cut off this relation and change their self-direction towards the right path. Without such a will and sincere determination, it is impossible for a man to change from disobedience to obedience. Both sincere determination and firm will are among the psychological starting points for man to take a decision and specify his behavioral position.

How beautifully Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) describes the role of a firm will and its importance in man's life:

"A man never gets weak if he is strengthened with a firm intention (will)."

Consequently, firm will is a power capable of changing a man's route and, also, correcting his direction in life. Consequently, firm will is a power capable of changing a man's route and, also, correcting his direction in life.

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