

Degrees Of Pretension's Objectives

Some scholars of the hereafter have said that pretension, with regard to one's goals behind pretending, for surely the pretender has goals, is of three degrees:

The First Degree

It is the most intense and the most serious: One's goal is to commit a transgression against the will of Allāh and to reach what is prohibitive, such as he makes a show of his acts of adoration, or feigns piety and godliness through many supererogatory acts of adoration. He avoids anything that may bring about people's doubt in his regard. His goal is so that people may recognize his trustworthiness, hence positions in the judicial system, or religious trusts, or wills, or whatever belongs to orphans. He will then take them and keep to himself whatever he can.

Or he may be trusted with items, so he takes them and denies having done so, thus reaching his corrupt goals in committing transgressions. One may appear in the attire of the righteous, articulating pieces of wisdom, admonishment, and reminding. Yet his goal is to look good in the eyes of a beautiful woman. Some people may attend meetings of knowledge and remembrance of the Almighty, or even of the Qur'ān, pretending they wish to listen to knowledge and to the Qur'ān while their goal is to look at women, and these pretenders are hated the most by Allāh Almighty because they made obedience to their Lord a ladder to reaching their transgression, using it as a tool, a shop, a merchandise in their sinning.

Close to these, though less in degree, is one who commits a crime of which he is accused, yet he insists on it and wants to keep the charge away from himself, so he feigns piety in order to deny the charge, such as one who denied a trust with him of which people charged him, so he offers charity with the money in order that it will be said he gives away from his money to the poor, so how can it be possible that he seizes the funds belonging to others?

The likes of such folks are many among the Muslims. Individuals may gather funds that belong to the Muslims by the millions through usury or other illegitimate transactions. One may see that instead of returning people's money to them, he offers charity with some of his money, or builds a mosque or a hospital, so that people may see that he is one who builds mosques or hospitals; therefore, how can it be possible that he stretches his hands to people's money and possessions?

Or one may be charged with having committed a sin with a woman, and Allāh, the most Exalted One, removed the covering from him and exposed him among the people. Instead of resorting to a covering from Allāh, Praise to Him, regretting and pleading to Allāh, Who sways the hearts, to change people's attitude about him, he seeks a means through pretension, trying to cover his sin with pretension.

The Second Degree

It is when his goal is to obtain a permissible worldly gain such as wealth or marriage to a beautiful or distinguished woman, etc., so he feigns grief and keeps himself busy with admonishing and reminding others so that funds may be spent on him. He will then sell more of his merchandise if he is a merchant, a businessman, or among money making folks. Or if he wishes to marry a distinguished woman, such as the daughter of a righteous scholar, he pretends to her father to be a man of knowledge and adoration so that he may marry her to his daughter.

This sort of pretension is prohibitive because it seeks through the means of obedience to Allāh the wares of this lowly life, but it is of a lesser degree than the first. What is sought through this pretension is by itself permissible but it is contemptible, and its reality is *shirk*; the absolute authority is the privilege of the True One, the Almighty, when it comes to dealing with His servants.

Third Degree

The pretender does not seek fortune, wealth, or marriage, but he shows off his adoration for fear people may look at him as if he lacks something; therefore, he is not considered to be among the elite and the ascetics, and he is regarded to be among the commoners, such as one who walks to the congregational prayer services, to mosques, in a hurry, and when people see him, he adjusts his walk and abandons haste although it, at that time, was legitimate. But he abandons it so he may not be labeled as one of those who love distraction or negligence and not one of the men of eminence.

Also, if he is the first to burst laughing or demonstrates merriment, so he is afraid he will be looked down upon with eyes of contempt, he follows it by seeking Allāh's forgiveness and pretends to be sad on its account and says, "How unmindful a human being is! But Allāh knows that if such an individual is left to himself, he would not consider doing so as being too much; rather, he fears he will be looked down upon with contempt and not with respect. He is like one who sees a group of worshippers offering supererogatory prayers, or making *tahajjud*, or fasting each Thursday and Monday, as is transmitted about the imām of the nation who ordered the youths (of Hizbollah) to fast both these days, so the man goes along with them for fear he will be described as lazy and thus is not attributed to the party of Allāh.

If he is left alone, he does no such things. And he is like one who endures the thirst on the Day of Arafa, or in days during which fast is highly recommended, so he does not drink water for fear people may get to know that he is not fasting. So, if they think that he is, he abstains from eating as well. Or he may be invited to partake of food, so he abstains in order that he will be perceived as observing the fast. He may openly state that he is fasting or says he has an excuse. Such a pretender combines two contemptible acts: He is seen by others as fasting, then he is seen as a sincere one and not as a pretender.

He is cautious lest he should mention his act of adoration to people for fear he will be seen as a pretender. He, hence, wants to give the impression that he is continuing his act of adoration. If he is obligated to drink, he rushes to remind himself that he has an excuse, either explicitly or implicitly, such as seeking an excuse because of an ailment that causes him to have an acute need to drink water and stops him from fasting.

Or he may say, "Today, I visited so-and-so who pressured me to eat, so I ate." He may not then say that in connection with his drinking water so that he will not be regarded as seeking an excuse as a pretender, but he perseveres then mentions his excuse casually in his narrative of an incident such as his saying, "So-and-so loves his brethren. He so much loves them to partake of his food. Today, he insisted that I should do that, and I had no choice except to cool his heart." Or he may say, "My mother is weak-hearted, compassionate in my regard. She thinks if I fast one day, I will fall sick, so she does not let me fast."

Such is the doing of the ills of pretension. It does not jump to articulation except due to the deeply rooted pretension in one's innermost. Similar to this is something which I have seen more than once. Someone says, "I spent the night over the house of so-and-so. During the *sahar* [pre-dawn] time, I wanted to rise for the *tahajjud*. But I was concerned the owner of the house might think I was a pretender, so I did not stand for the prayers." Or he may say, "I did not worship during a particular time for fear I would be regarded as a pretender."

This poor person sees himself, when he does not pray or worship his Lord, as being sincere to Allāh Almighty, fleeing from pretension whereas in fact he has already fallen into it; both his *nafs* and Satan have taken control of him. In other words, man in such situations has two states: The first is his fear when he prays in someone's house or in the company of a crowd of people that his prayers may be

pretension, yet he knows himself best and his weakness, and that he cannot safeguard his sincerity in public as he used to do in private; in this case, the prayer is abandoned so one may not fall into pretension.

The second is that he is concerned about people considering him as being a pretender, although he feels comfortable that he is not praying pretentiously but purely for seeking nearness to Allāh. In this case, if he abandons a ritual, he will prove that he is a pretender who does not like people to think anything about him except being sincere.

Abandoning the worship in the first case was for the sake of Allāh and in the second for the sake of the *nafs* and its desires, for the *nafs* loves its reputation to be good among the people. Such is love for life and eminence. If one who is sincere to Allāh sees in himself a desire to perform a commendable fast, for example, let him do so; he must not pay attention to what others say about or think of him. And if he does not find in himself such a desire, he must not fast, and he must not pay attention to what is said about him. Rely on Allāh and forget about them all.

A sincere worshipper does not care about how people look at him or think of him. If he has no desire to fast, and Allāh knows about it, he must not want others to believe something different from what Allāh knows about him, thus confusing them. And if he wishes to fast for the sake of seeking nearness to Allāh, he should contend himself with Allāh's knowledge, associating none with Him.

Scientific Point to Eradicate Pretension from the Theological Imam Al-Khomeini, May Allah Prolong his Shade

He, may Allāh prolong his shade, has said, "We would like to state in this regard something that may be effective in treating this heart disease. According to evidence, revelation and observation, as well as the traditions of the Infallible Ones, peace be with them, and the Book of Allāh, the Great, according to His dominance over all beings, His maintenance of all what needs to be maintained..., the hearts of all the servants are under His control and in the grip of His power. Nobody can fare with the servants' hearts without the permission of the Maintaining One and His evolving authorization. It can never be. Even those who have hearts, too, cannot fare with their hearts without His permission, the most Exalted One, and His dealing.

The Holy Qur'ān informs us of this fact, and so do the narratives about Ahl al-Bayt, peace be with them, who stated so by reference, explicitly and implicitly. Allāh, Praise to Him, is the One Who owns the heart

and Who fares with it, while you are a weak servant incapable of faring with hearts without the dealing of the Truthful One, the most High. Rather, His will subdues yours as well as that of everything in existence. So, if your pretension is to attract the servants' hearts and attention, to gain respect and status in the hearts, to earn a good reputation..., all these are outside your control; they are under the control of the Truthful One, the most Exalted.

The Lord of Hearts, the One Who owns them, permits them to incline to whoever He wants. And your behavior may result in the opposite of what you want. We have heard about and seen pretenders with two faces, having impure hearts, those whose affair was exposed and who gained the contrary of what they had desired. There is a reference to this in a sacred tradition recorded in *Al-Kāfi* as transmitted by Jarrah al-Madīni who quotes Abū Abdullāh, peace be with him, saying the following in his explanation of this verse:

"Whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him do righteous deeds and in the worship of his Lord admit no one as (His) partner" (Qur'ān, 18:110): "

Someone does some good deed not for the sake of Allāh but so people may hold him in high esteem. He loves people to hear about what he does. Such person is one who associates a partner in the worship of his Lord." Then he said, "No servant does an act of righteousness then time passes by except that Allāh will bring something good out of it. And no servant does something wrong in secrecy and time passes by except that Allāh will bring out something bad out of it for him."

You, my dear one, ought to seek good reputation with Allāh. Plead to the One Who owns the hearts to let the hearts incline towards you. Work for Allāh, and let your deed be purely for His sake, for the most Exalted One will then make you loved by people in this world plus rewards you with good things and eternal blessings in the world of the hereafter. He will then enhance the impression which you leave on people's hearts and make you honored in both this life and in the one to come. But if you are able, through practices and struggles, to rid yourself of this love, too, do so in order that your heart may be pure, your deed in this direction will be sound, your heart will direct itself towards Allāh, your soul will be cleansed and the impurity of the self (*nafs*) will disappear.

What benefit do you reap from the love of weaklings or from their hatred, or from fame among poor servants of Allāh? Even if we suppose there is a benefit, it will last for only few days, whereas the outcome of this love could drag you to pretension; so, God forbid, you will then become a polytheist, a hypocrite, or an apostate. And if we suppose that one's [prohibitive] matter in this life will be veiled from the eyes of the people, but in the presence of the divine justice, and in the audience of the righteous servants of Allāh, His great Prophets, those who are close to Him and His angels, he will be exposed, and he will surely bear the impact of shame, finding none to help him. You have no idea what a scandal in that Day it will be and what shame and darkness which none knows save Allāh. It is the Day when the unbeliever will say, ***"Woe unto me! If only I were (mere) dust!" (Qur'ān, 78:40).***

But it will be of no avail to him. You, poor soul, for the sake of partial love and fame, which are of no benefit, among the servants of the Almighty, turned away from these blessings, lost the Pleasure of Allāh, Glory to Him. You made yourself an object of His wrath.

You substituted the deeds whereby you can achieve the abode of honor, the eternal life, the everlasting happiness, life in the highest stations of Paradise... with the darkness of *shirk* and hypocrisy, and you prepared for yourself the sighs, the regret, the intense torment, becoming a prisoner in Sijjeen as described in a sacred narrative in *Al-Kāfi* and cited from Abū Abdullāh, peace be upon him. In it, the Prophet (ص) says, "An angel gleefully ascends with the news about a deed of a servant. If he ascends carrying reports about the servant's good deed, Allāh, the most Exalted, the most Great, says, 'Deposit it in Sijjeen, for he did not seek My pleasure when he did it.'" I and you, in our condition, cannot imagine Sijjeen, nor can we understand the record of the deeds of the sinners or see the picture of these deeds that are in Sijjeen, but we see their reality when we are incapacitated and have lost touch with any remedy.

So, wake up, my dear one, from your sleep, do away with heedlessness and laziness, weigh your deeds with the scales of reason before they are weighed in that world. Hold yourself to account before you are held, and rid the mirror of your heart of *shirk* and hypocrisy and of having two faces. Do not permit your heart to rust with *shirk* and apostasy lest it should be afflicted with the fire of the Hereafter. Do not let the light of nature be replaced with the darkness of disbelief.

Do not render to loss the nature whereby Allāh created people, do not betray this trust of Allāh, cleanse the heart's mirror so the light of the beauty of the True One shine in it, thus it will be more precious to you than this whole world and everything in it, and the fire of divine love will then burn in the heart, burning every love that you have in your heart for anything else, and you will not accept to replace one moment of it with the whole world, and you will enjoy the pleasure of remembrance of Allāh compared to which all animal pleasures will be nothing at all.

If you are not worthy of this station, if these images appear in your eyes to be strange, do not abandon the divine blessings in the world of the Hereafter about which the Holy Qur'ān has informed you as well as the traditions of the Infallible Ones in exchange for attracting the hearts of the beings. Do not lose these rewards, do not deprive yourself of such blissful things for the sake of an imagined fame that lasts few days, and do not trade eternal happiness for continuous pain...

Call to Sincerity from the Professor of Theology,

Imam–Al–Khomeini, May his Shade be Prolonged

He, may Allāh prolong his shade, has said, "Be informed that the real Owner of the domain, the One Who truly grants bounties, the One Who grants us blissful things, having prepared them for us even before we came into this world, prepared the nutritional food that is good and suitable to our weak stomach, the One Who cultures and serves with love as great as mountains, so His service may be obligation-free, with suitable environment and air, in addition to all His apparent and hidden blissful things.

He prepared us for the world of the hereafter and that of the *barzakh* before we get there. This Master of blessings wants our hearts to love him, to love His Greatness, with sincerity, and the result of this love will be for our own benefit, too. Despite all of this, we do not listen to His commandment but disobey Him and take a path that does not lead us to His pleasure; so, what a great injustice we have committed! How have we argued with the King of Kings?!

And the loss is only our own; His domain is not hurt in the least, nor can we get out of His power and authority. It makes no difference to Him whether we believe in His unity or not. If we are knowledgeable about Allāh, fearing Him, pure of souls, all this is for our own good. And if we are unbelievers or polytheists, we only harm our own selves. Allāh is independent of the worlds, of their obedience, sincerity and worship. His domain is not harmed by our rebellion.

Our *shirk* and hypocrisy do not diminish it. But since He is the most Merciful of those who have mercy, His spacious mercy and great wisdom have required that He leads us to the paths of guidance, the ways of distinguishing goodness from evil, beauty from ugliness, and to show us what causes humanity to slip away, what robs it of happiness, and the great boon for such guidance belongs to Allāh.

The favor belongs to Him for whatever acts of adoration, sincerity and worship we perform. So long as our visions, and the eyes whereby we can see the *barzakh*, are not open, we are unable to comprehend this fact. And so long as we in this narrow and dark world, in this dark nature, are shackled with the chains of time, jailed in the dark extended place..., we are unable to realize the great boons that belong to Allāh Almighty, and we cannot imagine the divine blessings that lie in this sincerity, adoration and guidance.

Beware of thinking that we do a favor to the great Prophets of Allāh, or to His honored friends, or to the nation's scholars who are the guides to our happiness and salvation, who have saved us from ignorance, darkness and torment, who invited us to the world of celestial light, happiness, elation and greatness.

They bear the burdens of hardship and exhaustion while educating us so we may be saved from the

darkness that lies in false beliefs and compounded ignorance and from the pressures and suffering that are the manifestations of a lowly conduct, from the engulfing fearful images of the ugly deeds, and so we may instead earn the celestial lights, the norms of happiness and elation, the pleasures of the soul, the feeling of restfulness, the *huris* with large lovely eyes, and the mansions that we cannot possibly imagine.

Our world of this domain, as greatly spacious as it is, cannot bear one single outfit of those of Paradise. These eyes of ours cannot bear to see a single hair of the *huris* with their large lovely eyes. Yet the angelic picture of beliefs and deeds has been realized, through divine inspiration, by the great prophets, especially by the one who had the total revelation, the inclusive constitution, namely the seal of prophets (ص).

The prophets saw it, heard it, and called us towards it while we, poor souls, are like children who do the opposite of what the wise rule. Rather, humans even call these prophets wrong, argue with them and always do the opposite of what they enjoin. Yet those pure and contented personalities, the good and pure souls, due to their compassion and mercy towards the servants of Allāh, did not fall short in calling upon the ignorant one, pulling them in the direction of Paradise and happiness through any means of power and wealth, without asking them for any reward at all.

The only reward asked by the Messenger of Allāh (ص) was that we be kind to his near in kin. Perhaps the picture of this kindness in the world of the hereafter may manifest itself in the form of the most glittering light for us. This reward is for our own good, too, so it may get us to reach happiness and mercy. Thus, the reward of following the message is credited for us, and we benefited from it:

"Say: 'I ask no reward of you: It is (all) in your interest: My reward is due only from Allāh'" (Qur'ān, 34:47).

How can we, the poor ones, do them a favor, and what a great benefit do we reap from being sincere to them?! What favor do you vest upon the scholars of the nation, upon the scholar who explains the difficult issues and the rulings, or upon the honored Prophet, or upon the Holy One, the most Great?! Each person, according to his level and station, leads us towards the path of guidance.

Indeed, we owe them so much, too much to be able to reward them in this world, the world that is not at all suitable for rewarding them. Indeed, to Allāh, to His Messenger, and to His friends belongs the favor just as the Almighty has said:

"Say: 'Do not count your Islam as a favor to me. Nay! Allāh has conferred a favor on you when He guided you to the faith, if you are true and sincere. Truly Allāh knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth, and Allāh sees well all that you do'" (Qur'ān, 49: 17-18).

If we are truthful in our claim of belief, the favor belongs to Allāh for having guided us to thus believe. Allāh sees what we do not, and He knows the images of our deeds, of our belief, of our submission to

Him in the world of what is unknown to us. As for us, the poor ones, we know none of the truth, so we learn from the one who is knowledgeable about them and feel indebted to him, and we follow the scholar and feel indebted to him, and we offer congregational prayers behind the scholar and feel indebted to him, although we owe them without knowing it. Hence, when we feel that we are the ones who do them a favor, such feeling turns our deeds upside down, hurling them into Sijjeen, rendering them to an utter loss.

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