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A Seal of Musk, Sublime Tradition & an Explanation by Imām Al-Khomeini, May his Shade Prolong

As we conclude these sheets, we would like to cite a sacred tradition narrated by al-Kulaini (may Allāh be pleased with him) in his sacred book *Al-Kāfi* from the Master of those who believe in the Unity of Allāh, namely the Commander of the Faithful (ع). Sheikh al-Sadūq (may Allāh be pleased with him) has narrated a similar one from Imām Abū Abdullāh al-Sādīq (ع). It is one of the pieces of advice by the Prophet (ص) to Ali (ع).

The tradition is thus rendered through *isnād* to Abū Abdullāh (ع) who said that the Commander of the Faithful (ع) had said, "There are three distinctive marks of a pretender: He is energetic [in feigning acts of adoration] when he sees people, is lazy when alone, and loves to be praised in all his affairs."

Imām al-Khomeini, may his shade prolong, has said the following:

Since this disgusting sin may be hidden, not known by even the person with which he is afflicted: He claims his deed is sincere, whereas in his innermost, he is among the pretenders. For this reason, they have stated a mark of identification so one may thereby identify his innermost, and he may thus start curing himself of it:

One sees himself, when alone, as having no desire to undertake acts of obedience to Allāh. When he forces himself to perform an act of worship, as he is accustomed to doing, he does so without energy or desire. Rather, he performs it as incomplete, impure. But if he is present in mosques or congregations, he keeps himself busy with an act or adoration as he is seen by the public. So he does it with energy, with connection, with pleasure, and with an attentive heart. He loves to prolong his bowing and prostrating during his prayer, performs what is commendable, well carries out its parts and requirements.

If his mind wakes up to such doing, and if he asks himself about the reason for doing that, the *nafs* will then place its trap on the principles of adoration and, in order to deceive one, says, "Your energy with regard to worship in mosques is more rewarding," or that prayers with a congregation is such and such. Or he may be in a congregation other than the mosques, so it says to him, "It is highly commendable for one to undertake a well done job so others may emulate him, follow his example, or have the desire for the creed." It thus deceives one through any means it can.

The truth is that this happiness and energy are not prompted except by a heart disease with which this poor man is afflicted, while he considers his *nafs* as being sound, not sick. There is no hope that he will be healed. This wretch, in his innermost, in his pith, in his conscience, loves to show people his deed while he is being unaware of it. Rather, he is demonstrating disobedience in the form of adoration, turning pretension into propagation for the creed. Although it is commendable that one performs what is recommended when he is by himself, why does the *nafs* always love to undertake it in public? It weeps for fear of Allāh in public congregations with energy and gladly, but when alone, no matter how it tries, it cannot squeeze a drop out of the eye.

Why does fear of Allāh take place only in congregations? One weeps and supplicates in the presence of thousands of people during the nights of Qadr, offering a hundred prostrations during his prayers, reciting the Greater Jawshan supplication and the smaller one as well as chapters from the Holy Qur'ān without feeling lazy, nor is he tired doing all of that. But if he prays ten *rek'at* in his solitude, he feels a back pain, and he is in such a bad shape! If the deeds that come up of an individual are prompted solely to win the Pleasure of Allāh Almighty, or to attain His mercy, or out of fear of His fire, or out of eagerness for Paradise, why should this individual love people to praise him for them?

Why should he listen to their praise, directing his heart towards them so he may hear someone lauding him or saying that so-and-so is a man of adoration, a worshipper who is keen to be in the forefront when the time of prayers comes, is mindful of what is commendable?! Or so he does so in order that he may hear someone saying that so-and-so, who performed the pilgrimage, is a trustworthy man, a man who can be reliable upon with regard to his transactions, etc.

If one looks forward to Allāh Almighty with anticipation, why should he care for all this profuse love [for public praise]? If [love for] paradise and [fear of] the fire are your catalyst to undertake this deed, why do you care for such love? So, be mindful lest this love should come from the branches of that bad tree, pretension, and try your best to repair what you can repair, and rid yourself of such love.

There is no harm in attracting attention to something in this regard which is: For each of these psychological conditions that are more than the good and the bad aspects, there are many levels. To be characterized by one of the good attributes while being dissociated from a level of bad attributes may be the specialty of those who know Allāh, who are friends of Allāh. As regarding the rest of people, they are as they are in their levels.

To be characterized by what is a shortcoming in the sight of the men of knowledge, of the friends of Allāh, does not seem to them [to these faulty persons] to be a shortcoming. Rather, it may be perfection of a sort. Also, the merits of these individuals seem to be bad to the men of knowledge, to the friends of Allāh. Pretension, which we are discussing, is actually one of these attributes. Salvation from all its levels is the privilege of the friends of Allāh. Others do not share them in it.

The general public of people being characterized by one of its levels is not a shortcoming based on the station in which they are. It does not harm their conviction or sincerity. For example, the hearts of the general public, according to their nature, incline towards showing people what is good about them, even if they do not do so with the intention of showing off. But their souls by nature are inclined to such love, and this does not necessitate rendering the deed as void or describing them as unbelievers, hypocrites and polytheist, although this is surely a shortcoming in the sight of the friends of Allāh, a shirk, a hypocrisy in the view of a friend of Allāh, or one who knows Allāh.

To be totally free of absolute shirk, to be redeemed of all its levels, is the first station of the friends of Allāh who have other stations not suitable for elaboration here. The Infallible Ones, peace be with them, have said that their adoration is one of freemen's, that is, solely out of love for Allāh Almighty, neither coveting Paradise nor fearing hell. It is one of their ordinary stations and the first degree of their mastership. There are for them, peace be with them, in their adoration conditions which are beyond our comprehension.

Based on what we have stated, a combination can be made of the tradition cited above transmitted from the Messenger of Allāh (ص) and the Commander of the Faithful (peace be with both of them), and the other tradition by Zurarah who cites Abū Ja'fer, peace be with him, as narrated by Muhammad ibn Yacoub who traces it back to Abū Ja'fer, peace be with him, saying, "I asked him about a man who does something good. Another sees it and is pleased with it. He said that there is no harm in it, that everyone loves to look in the eyes of people as a man of goodness unless he does something solely for this purpose."

If one loves to be praised, he is regarded in one of the traditions as manifesting pretension, while in the other tradition the harm is removed when someone is pleased with something good coming out of his deed. The common denominator in the combination is the difference of opinion according to the status of the individuals. There is another way to look at the combination of both traditions which we have overlooked.

Here the speech of our professor [al-Khomeini], may Allāh prolong his shade, ends.

I say, perhaps the other way in combining both traditions is that the first tradition examines the love for praise at the time when a good deed is being done, and it is a mark of pretension. The other tradition examines love for praise after a deed is already done.

Or the love for praise in the first tradition is made as a mark of pretension, arranged by the other two

marks, as is linguistically clear, especially since paying attention to the first marks (energy when people see a doer of good deed and laziness when he is by himself), and they must be observed together or separately so they may comprise a mark for pretension; otherwise, if one of them is supposed, say the energy when people see him and also when alone or laziness in both cases, it is definitely not a mark of pretension. If it is added to love for praise, it will definitely be a mark for pretension, a sure revelation of it, and this is contrary to praise alone, for it is not a mark of pretension as the second tradition says.

Or we may say that the first tradition means the pretender, because of being afflicted with the disease of pretension, loves people to praise him in all his affairs, as the tradition states. As for the second tradition, it is similar to partial obligation; it points out to the appearance of goodness from one when pleased; there is no harm so long as he did not do the deed for solely this purpose. Surely Allāh is the One Who knows best, and the last of our supplication is: Praise to Allāh, the Lord of the Worlds.

These sheets have been written down by the indigent, the one needs the mercy of his Lord, Sayyid Ahmed al-Fahri, on the twentieth day of the blessed Month of Ramadan in the city of Damascus in the year 1404 A.H.; with the one who undertook the migration may be prayers and peace.

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