

## SINCERITY

**This** is a story about a hermit of Bani Israel whom the folk informed of a community living not afar, who were worshipping a tree instead of God. "You are a man of God", they told him. "Please do something to prevent them from committing *shirk*." The hermit thought of cutting down the tree to prevent them from worshipping it. So he took an axe and set out to cut the tree. He had gone a little distance when Iblis appeared to him in the form of a human being and asked the hermit where he was up to. The hermit replied that at such and such a place some people have taken a tree as their god. I'm going to cut down that tree. Iblis exhorted him not to cut the tree. When the argument heated up the two began to fight and eventually the hermit defeated Iblis. At this Iblis changed his tactic and said to him, "Respected Sir! You are staying in this desolate place all alone and living a life of hunger and penury. Would it not be better if I deliver you two dinars daily so that you could live off comfortably and carry on your prayers in your hermitage. And so far as this tree is concerned forget bothering about it. It will create so many complications for you." The hermit agreed to the proposal of Iblis and returned to his hermitage. Iblis delivered the money a couple of days but discontinued it on the third day. The hermit became very angry on this breach of faith and made a firm resolve to cut down the tree. He took the axe and was on his feet again. Again Iblis appeared to him and dissuaded him from cutting the tree. Again the argument led to fighting but this time Iblis defeated the hermit. On being defeated he asked Iblis how is it that last time I had defeated you but this time you have defeated me? Iblis replied that the matter was very clear. Last time you had fought purely to seek the pleasure of God therefore you had won. But this time you fought for the sake of dinars not for the sake of God therefore you were defeated.

**There** was a similar episode. *Hazrat* Umme Qais (Radhi Allahu Anha) was among the believers who migrated from Makkah to Madinah. A gentleman left Makkah along with her only with a view to marry her at Madinah. He was not motivated to migrate for the sake of Islam and victory of Muslims. Taking cognizance of it the Messenger of Allah said:

« إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى؛ فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا فَهَاجَرَتْهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ» (متفق عليه)

Translation: "Verily, deeds are only with intentions. Verily, every person will have only what he intended. So whoever emigrated to Allah and His Messenger, then his emigration is for Allah and His Messenger. Whoever emigrated to get something in the world or to marry a woman, then his emigration is for whatever he emigrated for." [unanimous].

### What is *Ikhlaas*?

***Ikhlaas*** (sincerity/earnestness) means that one should do everything solely for seeking the pleasure of Allah (*Ta'ala*). There should be no intention of showing off or hypocrisy. Thus, sincerity is the very soul of action. Right intention must guide actions of every Muslim. Only such actions are accepted by Allah which are undertaken either by fear of Allah or out of love for him. Allah never accepts deeds performed to show off or to seek appreciation or praise of the people. *Ikhlaas* means this. Allah (*Ta'ala*) proclaims:

﴿وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ﴾ البينة: ٥

Translation of Meaning: "And they are ordered for nothing else than to serve Allah, keeping religion pure for Him, as men by nature upright, and to establish *salat* and pay *zakat*. That is true religion." (Al-Bayyinah: 5).

In another place He proclaimed:

﴿أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ﴾ الزمر: ٣

Translation of Meaning: "Hark! Pure religion is for Allah only." (Az-zumar: 3). The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) pronounced:

«إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبَلُ مِنَ الْعَمَلِ إِلَّا مَا كَانَ خَالِصًا، وَابْتَغَى بِهِ وَجْهَهُ» (النسائي)

Translation: "Verily Allah does not accept any action unless it is purely for Him and meant to seek His pleasure." (Nesai). Thus, sincerity and purity of intention is indispensable for every Muslim.

### Sincerity is an Attribute of Prophets

Allah (*Ta'ala*) mentions *Hazrat Musa (Alaihis Salam)* in these terms:

﴿وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا﴾ مريم: ٥١

Translation of Meaning: "And make mention in the Scripture of Moses. Lo! He was [our] chosen man and he was a Messenger, a Prophet" (Maryam: 51). Allah

has mentioned *Hazrat Ibrahim*, *Hazrat Is'haq*, and *Hazrat Yaqub* (Peace Be on All of Them) in the like manner:

﴿وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولَى الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٥﴾ إِنَّا أَخْلَصْتَهُمْ بِخَالَصَةِ ذِكْرِ الدَّارِ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ الْأَخْيَارِ ﴿٤٧﴾﴾ ص: ٤٥ - ٤٧

Translation of Meaning: "And make mention before us of our bondsmen Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, men of [powerful] hands and sights. Lo! We purified them with pure thought, memory of the [ultimate] Home. Lo! Before us they are the select good men." (Sâd: 45-47).

### Purity of Intention

On the eve of the Battle of Tabuk some persons sought the permission of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) to join *jihad*. But they had no weapons and no means of transportation. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) had no wherewithal to help them. So, he was compelled to send them back. They were extremely dejected and returned weeping. Allah had mercy for them because of their keenness to join *jihad* and by the purity of their heart. So He eternalized their memory till the end of the world in these verses:

﴿لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضَى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَحْدُونَ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ حَرَجٌ إِذَا نَصَحُوا لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٩١﴾ وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ إِذَا مَا أَتَوْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَا أَجِدُ مَا أَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ تَوَلَّوْا وَأَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَرْنًا أَلَا يَحْدُوا مَا يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾﴾ التوبة: ٩١ - ٩٢

Translation of Meaning : "Not unto the weak, not unto the sick not unto those who can find naught to spend is any fault [to be imputed though they stay at home] if they are true to Allah and His messenger. Not unto the good men is their any way [of blame] Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. Nor unto those whom, when they come to you [asking] that you should mount them, you told them: I cannot find whereon to mount you. They turned back with eyes flowing with tears, sorrowful that they could not find means to spend [in the way of Allah]" (At-Taubah: 91-92).

When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was getting out of Madinah for *jihad* he addressed his companions in these words:

«إِنَّ أَقْوَامًا بِالْمَدِينَةِ خَلَفْنَا، مَا سَلَكْنَا شِعْبًا وَلَا وَادِيًّا إِلَّا وَهُمْ مَعَنَا فِيهِ، حَبَسَهُمُ الْعُذْرُ» (البخاري)

Translation : "We are leaving behind people in Madinah who though cannot traverse the passes and vallies with us yet they are with us. They have been detained by constraints" (Bukhari).

### **Earnestness in Worship:**

A believer's devotion and supplications are acceptable only if they are meant solely for Allah. They will be rejected if there is the slightest association of some other entity. A tradition speaks thus:

«أَنَا أَعْنَى الشُّرَكَاءِ عَنِ الشُّرْكِ، مَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا أَشْرَكَ فِيهِ مَعِيَ غَيْرِي تَرَكْتُهُ وَشُرْكَهُ» (مسلم)

Translation: "I'm absolutely absolved off *shirk*. If anybody performs a deed associating something as my co-partner, I abandon him and his *shirk*." [Muslim].

All devotional acts of a Muslim and all his activities throughout life are geared towards seeking the pleasure of Allah. He does nothing to seek appreciation or praise of the people.

### **Earnestness in Jihad:**

It is not an easy job to struggle in the way of Allah. It is quite possible that one loses his life in this process. One who proceeds to fight the enemies of Allah knows full well that his children may become orphans. Because human life is precious, therefore, jihad occupies utmost importance and virtue. However, if sacrificing one's life in jihad is not meant purely for Allah then it is unacceptable. If it is not performed earnestly, such a great endeavour is also naught and unworthy before Allah. Once, a person came to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and said, "I want to join jihad to seek pleasure of Allah and also to earn praise from people for my valiance and bravery." The Pophet kept silent and did not respond. On this occasion this ayat was revealed: "Say: I am only a mortal like you. My Lord inspires in me that your God is only One God.

﴿فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا﴾ (الكهف: ١١٠)

Translation of Meaning: And whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous work, and make none co-sharer of the worship due unto his Lord." (Al-Kahf: 110)

**Likewise**, a Bedouin came to the Messenger of Allah asking, "O messenger of God! A man goes to war to get some booty, another fights to get fame and renown, yet another fights to demonstrate his valence and bravery. Who of them is really engaged in jihad?" The Messenger of Allah replied, "One combats so that the word of God becomes ascendant he is the fighter in the way of Allah Exalted and Mighty" (unanimous). The reward for earnestness is magnificent. Most importantly, sincere man remains immune from Satan and his guiles. Iblis is made to address God Almighty in these words:

﴿ قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴾ **الحجر: ٣٩**

Translation of Meaning: "O my Lord! Because you have sent me astray, I verily shall adorn the path of error for them in the earth, and shall mislead all of them" (Al-Hijr: 39).

Allah (Ta'ala) says about the reward of His sincere servants:

﴿ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَخْلَصُوا دِينَهُمْ لِلَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِي اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴾ **النساء: ١٤٦**

Translation of Meaning: "So far as the reward of the earnest and sincere those are among the believers. And Allah shall soon bestow on the believers an immense reward." (An-Nisa: 146)

**Pretentiousness** and showiness is the very antithesis of sincerity. Showiness kills sincerity. Here showiness enters sincerity departs from. Showiness is a sign of hypocrisy and a characteristic of hypocrites. Hypocrisy and sincerity cannot fit together. Allah (Ta'ala) has portrayed the pretentious hypocrites in this way:

﴿ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَدِيعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالَىٰ يُرَاءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴾ **النساء: ١٤٢**

Translation of Meaning: "Lo! The hypocrites seek to beguile Allah, but it is Allah who beguiles them. When they stand up to worship they perform it languidly and to be seen of men, and are mindful of Allah but little." (An-Nisa: 142).

**An** honest Muslim is free of showiness and hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is first planted in the heart [mind] and then it is expressed by the organs. One should eradicate it from his mind first. The Messenger of Allah pronounced:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَىٰ أَجْسَادِكُمْ وَلَا إِلَىٰ صُورِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَىٰ قُلُوبِكُمْ﴾ (مسلم)

"Allah does not look at your bodies or at your faces but looks at your hearts" (Muslim).

### **Pretentiousness is *Shirk***

The Messenger of Allah said:

«إِنَّ أَخَوْفَ مَا أَتَخَوَّفُ عَلَى أُمَّتِي، الْإِشْرَاكَ بِاللَّهِ، أَمَا إِنِّي لَسْتُ أَقُولُ يَعْْبُدُونَ شَمْسًا، وَلَا قَمَرًا، وَلَا وَثَنًا، وَلَكِنْ أَعْمَالًا لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ، وَشَهْوَةً خَفِيَّةً» (ابن ماجه)

**Translation:** "The most dreadful fear that I am afraid of about my *ummah* is *Ishraak billah* [assigning co-partners unto Allah]. I do not say they will begin worshipping sun or moon or the idols but that they will be doing deeds for other than Allah and shall be indulging in covert lusts" (Ibn Majah).

**In another tradition narrated of the Prophet he said:**

«إِنْ أَخَوْفَ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمُ الشِّرْكَ الْأَصْغَرَ» قَالُوا : يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا الشِّرْكَ الْأَصْغَرُ؟ قَالَ "الرِّيَاءُ" إِنْ اللَّهُ يَقُولُ : "يَوْمَ تَجَازَى الْعِبَادُ بِأَعْمَالِهِمْ أَذْهَبُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَرَاءُونَ بِأَعْمَالِكُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا، فَانظُرُوا هَلْ تَجِدُونَ عَنْدهُمْ جَزَاءً» (أحمد)

"The most dreadful fear that I apprehend for you is *shirk asghar* [the minor *shirk*]. They asked O Messenger of Allah what is minor *shirk*? He said: pretentiousness. On the Day of Judgment Allah will declare: Go back to them whom you showed your deeds in the world and see what reward they have for you" [Ahmad].

Thus at the day of judgment, those who show off their deeds to others will be deprived of reward.

### **Pretenders shall Dwell in Hell**

**In** one of the religious battles the Messenger of Allah told his companions about somebody that shall enter Hell the companions became curious and kept a watch on him. The companions were surprised more by seeing him fighting ferociously. But very soon he was injured and fell down. To get relief from the ordeal he killed himself by his own sword. Meanwhile, the companions asked him why he did so after fighting so bravely. He replied that he was fighting for the sake of his honour and to prove to the people his valour. He died soon and the word of the Prophet became true.

**The** Messenger of Allah has made it amply clear that on the Day of Judgment punishments will be awarded. Three groups will be in the forefront among the



entrants of Hell: theologians, reciters of Quran and martyrs. These will be the people who were not sincere but did whatever they did to show to the people.

### Pretentiousness Invalidates Worship

If worship is not performed sincerely but done merely to show off it will not be accepted. It will be tantamount to deceiving Allah. Such acts will deserve not reward but punishment. Allah (*Ta'ala*) declares:

﴿فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ ۖ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ۚ ۝٥ الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ ۚ وَيَمْنَعُونَ ۚ الْمَاعُونَ ۚ﴾ الماعون: ٤ - ٧

Translation of Meaning: "So woe unto those performers of Salât (prayers) (hypocrites), (4) Those who delay their Salât (prayer from their stated fixed times), (5) Those who do good deeds only to be seen (of men), (6) And prevent Al-Mâ'ûn (small kindnesses like salt, sugar, water). (7) (Al-Maoun:4-7)

Same is the case of those who distribute charity to earn a name; they will not be rewarded on the Last Day. Their deeds are like barren land. Quran declares:

﴿فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا ۖ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۚ﴾ البقرة: ٢٦٤

Translation of Meaning: "His likeness is as the likeness of a rock whereon is dust of earth; a rainstorm smiteth it, leaving it smooth and bare. They have no control of aught of that which they have gained." (Al-Baqarah: 264).

﴿وَقَدِمْنَا إِلَىٰ مَا عَمِلُوا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ هَبَاءً مَنْثُورًا ۚ﴾ الفرقان: ٢٣

Translation of Meaning: "Their deeds are worthless and dissolve like dust, as proclaimed: "And We shall turn unto their deeds and scatter them like dust" (Al-Furqan: 23).

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