

Some Signs of Ikhlaas (Sincerity)

Summarized from Shaikh Abu Bakr al-Mulla's ﷺ (d. 1270) *Idah al-Masalik ila Minhaj al-Salik*

By Muaz Billoo

The definition of Ikhlaas (sincerity) is that a person's objective through all acts of worship is to acquire nearness to Allah ﷻ, seeking His proximity, and His love without any ulterior motives such as showing off and seeking people's praises.

Imam al-Qushayri ﷺ said, "Ikhlaas is to zone in on Allah ﷻ in acts of worship through one's intention; to seek closeness to Allah ﷻ through one's acts of worship without desiring anything else from pretenses, seeking praise from the people, love of their praise, or anything of the like other than coming close to Allah ﷻ."

Sahl ibn Abdullah ﷺ said, "The intelligent looked into the definition of Ikhlaas and could not find anything but the following: that a person's movements and stillness in private and in public should only be for Allah ﷻ. He should not mix anything with it; neither his desires nor animalistic instincts nor the world."

Abu 'Uthman ﷺ said, "Ikhlaas is to forget that the creation is watching by maintaining perpetual focus on the creator." Junaid al-Baghdadi ﷺ said, "Ikhlaas is to clean one's deeds from all impurities."

Fudail ibn 'Iyad ﷺ said, "Leaving good deeds for the sake of people is ostentation, while doing good deeds for the sake of people is shirk. Ikhlaas is that Allah saves you from both."

Sahl ibn 'Abdullah ﷺ was asked, "What is the most difficult thing for the nafs?" He replied, "Ikhlaas, for it (the nafs) receives nothing out of it."

Dhu al-Nun al-Misri ﷺ said, "**Three things are from the signs of Ikhlaas:**

1. When praises and criticisms from the laity are the same to you
2. Forgetting about people looking at you when doing good deeds
3. Hope for the reward of the good deed in the hereafter."

Ya'qub al-Sanusi ﷺ said, "When people notice ikhlaas in their ikhlaas, then their ikhlaas is in need of ikhlaas." Meaning: those who are truly sincere will not notice their own sincerity. They are always skeptical of their intentions.

Thus, the one who engages in good deeds for the sake of gaining proximity with Allah ﷻ, seeking out His pleasure and His reward, then he is truly sincere. The person who does good deeds for the sake of Allah *and* to show off to the people, then he is ostentatious (i.e., a showoff). His deeds will not be accepted. As for the one who does good deeds purely to show off to the people, and had it not been for the people he would never have done that good deed, then he is in a dangerous position. His ostentation is the ostentation of the hypocrites. We seek Allah's protection from ostentation, and from all tribulations.